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URBAN ABORIGINAL HOUSING CONSTRUCTION PROJECT BEING LAUNCHED IN WINNIPEG

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA – The first urban Aboriginal housing project in Manitoba in over a decade will soon provide 10 new rental homes for Aboriginal families with low incomes living in the Centennial neighbourhood. The project is being made possible with \$1.6 million from the Government of Canada, Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI), to Kinew Housing Inc, an Aboriginal owned and operated organization.

The funding was announced today during a sod turning ceremony at 619 Elgin Street, one of the sites. The Honourable Christine Melnick, Manitoba Minister of Family Services and Housing, the Honourable Anita Neville, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for the Status of Women with special emphasis on status of women, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing, and Deputy Mayor Mike Pagtakhan, on behalf of the City of Winnipeg, participated in today's ceremony.

“This important support is the catalyst for Kinew to carry out the first Aboriginal-driven housing construction in Manitoba in more than 10 years and will help the group meet community-based goals and will create new homes,” said Minister Melnick. “We are pleased as well that this partnership provides more opportunities for low income Manitobans to access affordable rental housing and will boost neighbourhood revitalization.”

“This project is an excellent example of government and the community working together to provide quality, affordable housing for Aboriginal families in Winnipeg,” said MP Neville. “The construction of these homes marks an important step forward in Kinew's history of helping Aboriginal people access rental housing and home ownership.”

“Kinew sponsored the very first urban Aboriginal housing project in Canada in 1970, and they continue to make a significant difference today, over three decades later,” said Deputy Mayor Pagtakhan. “The exciting work that Kinew is doing in the Centennial neighbourhood, with these 10 new rental homes, is a testament to their ongoing commitment to quality, affordable housing, to revitalizing inner-city neighbourhoods, and to improving conditions for Aboriginal families. I applaud the efforts of Kinew and of our community and government partners.”

Total project costs are estimated at \$2 million. Funding includes \$1.5 million cost-shared by the governments of Canada and Manitoba under the Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative's New Rental Supply Program, \$150,000 from the Government of Canada's Urban Aboriginal Strategy and \$100,000 for land and assembly costs from the City of Winnipeg's Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve. The balance of the costs are being provided through private financing and other funding sources.

The project involves the construction of 10 new homes by Kinew Housing Inc. on vacant lots supplied by the City of Winnipeg, for rental to low income Aboriginal families. The houses will be three-bedroom units built to an energy efficient R-2000 standard, with basements that can easily accommodate a fourth bedroom. The homes will also be easily adaptable to be "visitable" by a person with a disability. Construction is expected to be completed by April, 2006.

To keep the rents affordable for low income Aboriginal families, Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) will provide Rent Supplement assistance for the 10 units. Rent Supplement subsidizes the difference between the approved market rental rate charged by the landlord and the rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) paid by the tenant.

Kinew Housing Inc. is a non-profit Urban Native housing group that owns and manages almost 400 units of housing in Winnipeg. Kinew was incorporated in 1970 and was the first non-profit housing corporation in Canada sponsored, owned and managed by Aboriginal people. Kinew was the sponsor of the very first Urban Aboriginal housing project in Canada 35 years ago.

"These homes will not only help address affordable housing issues for low-income Aboriginal people, but they also demonstrate the collaborative effort among Kinew and the community to improve the quality of life for the residents," said Lawrence Poirier, Manager of Kinew Housing Inc. "We are pleased to work with the WHHI in being able to provide these homes to those who need them most."

The funding is coordinated by the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, a partnership established by the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg to address homelessness, declining housing stock and the revitalization of Winnipeg's older neighbourhoods. Since 2000, the WHHI partnership has committed close to \$72 million that has or will contribute to the repair, rehabilitation or construction of over 2900 units and 137 rooms or beds, as well as assist the homeless or those at risk of being homeless. Located at 361 Hargrave Street, the WHHI serves as a single-window office for community organizations to access information on government funded housing and homelessness programs. For information, organizations or citizens can call 940-3070.

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