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## UNIQUE INNER-CITY PROJECT WILL CREATE NEEDED, NEW ACCOMMODATIONS FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

**WINNIPEG, July 24, 2006**—Low-income residents of Winnipeg’s inner city will have access to more affordable housing with the construction of “pocket suites” through a new pilot project developed by S.A.M. (Properties) Inc. in collaboration with several community organizations. The project is being funded with over \$1 million from the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI).

The project was officially announced today by James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development; the Honourable Christine Melnick, Manitoba Minister of Family Services and Housing; and Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz.

“This is a very unique project and one the Government of Canada is pleased to support,” said MP Bezan. “The design of these pocket suites will provide safe, affordable, decent and most of all, independent accommodations for people on fixed incomes.”

“This exciting and innovative project will create a type of rental accommodation that offers individuals an alternative to substandard rooming houses, a better quality option,” said Minister Melnick. “Not only will these community-designed pocket suites provide dignified accommodation, all main floor units are barrier free for easy access and four of the new suites will be fully accessible for people with mobility limitations.”

“Having a safe, comfortable home is one of the basics of human security,” said Mayor Katz. “This housing project will provide individuals with a more affordable and dignified place to live, and is ideally suited to serve the needs of low-income residents.”

The so-called pocket suites are designed to accommodate one individual. The units are smaller than an apartment but offer more privacy and other features not available in a typical rooming house, such as an individual bathroom and a kitchen unit and each suite will also include furnishings.

The Spence Neighbourhood Association and the Centennial Residents group have also had a role in developing the plans. The project involves the construction of four buildings on four vacant lots provided by the City of Winnipeg. The new pocket suites will have a total of 32 units for rent. The lots are located at 592 Ross Ave. and 156 Kate St. in the Centennial neighbourhood and at 372 and 409 Maryland St. in the Spence neighbourhood.

Total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.6 million. Support includes \$980,000 from the governments of Canada and Manitoba under the cost-shared Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative; \$51,000 from the City of Winnipeg based on the assessed value of the property and associated demolition costs; and \$16,000 from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in proposal development funding. The balance of the funds are coming from private financing.

To keep the rents affordable for low-income households, the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) will provide rent supplement assistance for 16 of the units that subsidizes the difference between the approved market-rental rate charged by the landlord and the rent-geared-to-income paid by the tenant.

“We are very excited about our pocket suites housing project and we’re very pleased with the positive response we have had from community groups and the general public on its unique design aspects,” said Laurie Socha, general manager of S.A.M. (Properties) Inc.

The funding is co-ordinated by the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI), 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 over \$78 million to repair, rehabilitate or construct over 3,000 units of housing as well as assist the homeless or those at risk of being homeless. The WHHI is 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.

Contact information follows.

For more information, please contact:

Brian Williamson  
Service Canada/WHHI  
Ph: 984-0592

Laurie Socha  
S.A.M. (Properties) Inc.  
Ph: 942-0991