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GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA, MANITOBA AND WINNIPEG COMMIT TO 23 NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR NEW CANADIANS AT WELCOME PLACE

Winnipeg, September 25, 2009 – The Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg are making a joint investment to create new affordable housing and support services for new Canadians.

The Honourable Steven Fletcher, Minister of State (Democratic Reform), on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the Honourable Gord Mackintosh, Minister of Family Services and Housing, and Mike Pagtakhan, City of Winnipeg Councilor for the Point Douglas Ward made the announcement today at the construction site in Winnipeg.

All three levels of government are supporting the construction of a new \$4.4 million, 25,000 square foot apartment complex and settlement service facility for newly arrived refugees called Welcome Place. The facility, run by Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council will have a flexible design that will allow for different sized suites depending on the number of refugees who need housing. Construction is currently underway, and will be ready to take new residents in spring 2010.

“The Government of Canada is working to provide Canadians a hand up so they can one day join in the Canadian dream and own their own home,” said Minister Fletcher. “Through this investment, the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council will be able to help refugees and new immigrants who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless achieve self-sufficiency and full participation in society.”

Today's announcement includes more than \$3 million in shared funding under Manitoba Housing's HOMEWorks program, and the federal government through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and the City of Winnipeg. The top three floors of the new building will have 23 units that will be designed so they can be modified to suit different family sizes. The Homelessness Partnering Strategy investment of \$703,000 (included in the \$3 million funding support) will be used towards the construction costs of the support service facility on the main floor of the building to be located at 519 Bannatyne Avenue in Winnipeg.

"Manitoba recognizes the importance of supporting new Canadians and there's nothing more important than having a safe, affordable place to live," said Minister Mackintosh. "Today's announcement demonstrates that when governments work together and involve the community, we can make great things happen."

Representing Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz, Councillor Mike Pagtakhan said, "Welcome Place will be just that, a welcome for new Canadians, opening doors to the many opportunities we enjoy in Winnipeg and Canada." He added, "The City is proud to be a partner in this project, and proud of the people in our community who will make it work."

The Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC) served more than 1,300 individual refugees or refugee families in 2007 and has outgrown its current facilities. Combining housing and supportive services in one location will enable MIIC to efficiently deliver urgent need services and support services to their clients as well as help refugees move towards autonomy and self sufficiency. These services include orientation to Canada, counselling, education, life skills, settlement services and volunteer services. Welcome Place also has the support of community groups like the Winnipeg Foundation, whose contributions will assist with ongoing operations and programming.

"A lot of time and energy has been put into this wonderful project, and we're glad to be a part of the effort to build momentum towards the creation of more affordable housing" said Marty Dolin, the Executive Director of the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council.

In Winnipeg, these investments are being delivered through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI), a partnership between the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg. The partners work together to deliver funding provided through each level of government for affordable housing, to address homelessness, and to assist in the revitalization of Winnipeg's older neighbourhoods by providing rehabilitation and repair loans. These investments are part of the Government of Canada's \$1.9-billion commitment for housing and homelessness for low-income Canadians. As part of this investment the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), the renovation programs for low-income households and Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) were extended. In Manitoba, these initiatives are jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments through contributions totaling over \$34 million for the next two years.

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