The Resilient Community – Winnipeg's Exciting Experiment

December 8, 2000 – Two years ago, Winnipeg's United Way began a challenging community involvement initiative it calls *Journey Forward.* The exercise is nothing less than an effort to involve all sectors of the city in creating a community agenda for social action.

To lay the groundwork for deciding priorities, *Journey Forward* produced an environmental scan assessing the current situation. Among its findings; the number of teen births per thousand in Manitoba is twice the Canadian average; 50% of households, and 80% of Aboriginal households in Winnipeg's inner city live in poverty; gangs, arson, urban decay, drug abuse and crime are taking their toll; families with the resources to leave are fleeing the inner city for the suburbs; a dollar invested in early intervention with young children and their parents saves $7 later by reducing crime, teen pregnancy and the number of parents on welfare.

Last year, the United Way asked more than 3,000 Winnipeggers what they regarded as their most pressing social issues. From the results of that survey *Journey Forward* identified five priority issues for community action and, for each, a goal to attain;

- marginalization – to move from a situation where people feel left out, to a community of belonging and opportunity
- declining feelings of safety and social civility – to move to a community that builds harmony towards becoming a civil society
- poverty – to move from a situation where people are unable to meet their basic needs to a community that generates choice for all its citizens
- barriers to self-sufficiency and independence – to move to a community of dialogue focussed on people not processes
- stressed families, children and youth – to move to a community of supportive and nurturing environments

Last month, *Journey Forward*'s The Willing Community Conference brought together some 300 representatives of the private and public sectors, along with social agencies and representatives of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to map out a plan of action. CPRN's President, Judith Maxwell, gave the keynote address. She called her speech "Resilient Communities". In it she examined some of the factors that have undermined community resilience and what we need to do to rebuild self-reliance and resilience in our citizenry and repair the "connective tissue" of a supportive and active community.

You can read a PowerPoint version of her remarks by clicking here.

For more information on the Winnipeg United Way's *Journey Forward* initiative, visit their Web site at http://www.unitedwaywinnipeg.mb.ca/

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