

# MANITOBA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

## A Community-Sponsored Alternative Proposal

### **Introduction:**

The recent announcement by the Manitoba Government of a \$40,000,000.00 investment at MDC has prompted the development of an alternative approach that embraces more completely the widely accepted concept of community living. This principle of “inclusion” or “non-segregation”, is in keeping with the policy statements of the Manitoba Department of Family Services and Housing, the American Association on Mental Retardation, the Canadian Association of Community Living, the United Nations, and the Vision statement of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, to name but several major organizations. This principle is being lived out throughout North America and Europe as provinces, states and disability organizations are closing institutions and developing ranges of community options.

This proposal has been drafted by Community Living – Manitoba, but has been endorsed by the over 70 non-profit community associations, organizations and agencies in Manitoba who support citizens with intellectual disabilities. The proposal says that the time is now ripe to complete the very successful 1980’s New Democratic-inspired Welcome Home initiative which successfully saw over 50% of the then residential population of MDC moved to community living alternatives and the Pelican Lake closure which saw 68 people move into community settings. The proposal further suggests that this can best be done by an active, positive government/community partnership.

### **The Challenge:**

Today there are approximately 400 residents at the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage la Prairie. A majority of these residents are over 45 years of age and many have challenging developmental and behavioral needs. By policy, there are to be no new admissions to MDC, except under most exceptional circumstances. Thus it is safe to assume that even if nothing is done now, slowly but certainly the numbers at MDC will decline as individuals reach the end of their life span. But the Government is absolutely correct in its assessment that the physical state of MDC buildings is sub-standard and in some cases unsafe. Thus the challenge to be met by this proposal are seen as four-fold:

1. To develop appropriate living situations for all 400 people, which produce improvements in their quality of life. These alternative living situations need to be cost-neutral in the mid to long term when compared with the total costs of the MDC redevelopment plan.
2. To utilize the experience and expertise of as many staff as possible who are presently employed as provincial civil servants at MDC.

3. To create an active, supportive, non-confrontational government-community partnership to work out all practical details of the plan as summarized in this proposal.
4. To assure the most minimal disruption to the economy of Portage la Prairie and environs.

## **The Plan:**

### **A. Summary:**

- Place all individuals presently at MDC in a range of living situations within communities and overseen by non-profit, community Boards (now in existence or new) by December 30, 2010. Approximate allocation by geography to be as follows:
  - B. Portage la Prairie – 140;
  - C. Remainder of Central Region – 20;
  - D. Winnipeg Region - 132;
  - E. Westman Region – 26;
  - F. Eastman Region – 22;
  - G. Parklands Region – 22;
  - H. Interlake Region – 20;
  - I. Norman Region –8;
  - J. Burntwood region – 10.
- Create a government/community/university task force or working group to plan and oversee all aspects of this initiative over a seven year time span.
- Create a unique, non-profit corporation based in Portage la Prairie to assume ownership and operating responsibilities for specific administrative/recreational buildings at MDC and to operate services for the 140 individuals now at MDC who will move to the community. This would include becoming the employer of those civil servants at MDC who will remain working in their field in Portage la Prairie.
- Create a Government/Portage la Prairie partnership mechanism to work on mitigating the results of fewer provincial civil servants working in Portage la Prairie, and to plan for the eventual use of land and capital assets that will become available by 2010.

### **B. Portage la Prairie Strategy:**

The existing administrative expertise at MDC would be utilized in the creation and start up of a non-profit Board to run additional community services in the Portage la Prairie area. The new agency would establish 40 homes with an average of 3.5 residents per home over a time span of 5 years (homes may vary with two, three or four people living together). Staff presently employed at MDC would be given priority for staff positions in the new community homes. Front line staff who transfer to new positions in the community homes from MDC would retain their salary levels and benefits.

Some, if not all, professional “expert” staff would be retained by the newly formed agency to provide speech, occupational and physical therapy to the region. Psychology services would also be retained and could be utilized throughout Central Region. These specialized staff, plus the administrative staff necessary to lead and run the new agency, would be located in offices within the Aspen Centre.

The autism unit with its existing staff, which presently serves 8 people, would be moved to two or three of the new homes in the Portage area depending on compatibility and needs.

The Deaf/Blind or Rubella unit would be housed in three or four of the new homes. The option of renting several apartments in one building would also be explored to enable sharing of staff and interaction between residents. All present staff would retain employment to utilize their expertise as interveners.

Blue Bell and Parkhaven units at MDC, which house people with very challenging needs and who have few family members, would also be located in Portage to make best utilization of staff who are familiar with them.

In total 40 homes for approximately 140 MDC residents would be developed in the Portage area. Day programs would also be developed. The day program at MDC has many qualified staff who could continue to deliver support in community based programs and utilizing the recreational facilities at the Aspen Centre when appropriate.

The new facilities (primarily residential houses, townhouses or apartments) would be developed through a range of options including purchase of existing units, building of new units and rental agreements all negotiated by the new agency. Funding for these capital acquisitions would utilize funds identified by Government as being available over five years

### **C. Central Region (excluding Portage la Prairie) Strategy:**

4-5 living situations would be developed, most predominantly in the southern portion of Central Region to accommodate 20 individuals. Commitments to consider development of services contingent on compatibility, individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- Rainbow Residence,
- Altona District Association for the Mentally Handicapped
- Visions for Independence
- Gateway Resources.

**D. Winnipeg Region Strategy:**

38 living situations would be developed to accommodate 132 individuals. Commitments to consider development of these services based on individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- Arcane Horizon
- D.A.S.C.H. Inc.
- Hope Centre Residential
- L.I.F.E Inc.
- L'Avenir Cooperative
- Prairie Places
- Simaril
- St. James Assiniboia Industries
- Waso Inc.
- Visions for Independence
- Pulford
- Winserv Inc.
- Shalom

**E. Westman Region Strategy:**

8 living situations would be developed to accommodate 26 individuals. Commitments to consider development of these services based on individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- ACL Virden
- Brandon Community Options
- Family Vision
- Rollingdale Enterprises
- Southwest Community Options
- Spirit Sands Support Services.

**F. Eastman Region Strategy:**

5-6 living situations would be developed to accommodate 22 individuals. Commitments to consider development of these services based on individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- ACL Beausejour
- ACL Steinbach
- Dawson Trails Opportunities Inc.
- Wings of Power.

**G. Parklands Region Strategy:**

5-6 living situations would be developed to accommodate 22 individuals.

Commitments to consider development of these services contingent on individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- Parkland Regional Community Linc
- R.O.S.E.
- Grandview Residential Services Inc.
- ACL Swan River
- Samtak Cooperative Inc

**H. Interlake Region Strategy:**

6 living situations would be developed to accommodate 20 individuals.

Commitments to consider development of these services contingent on individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- ACL Selkirk
- ACL Interlake
- Hearthstone.

**I. Norman Region Strategy:**

2 living situations would be developed to accommodate 8 individuals.

Commitments to consider development of these services contingent on individual needs and planning have already been received from:

- Norman Community Services
- The Pas Association for Human Development Inc.

**J. Burntwood Region Strategy:**

3 living situations would be developed to accommodate 10 individuals. A

commitment to consider development of these services contingent on individual needs and planning has already been received from:

- Cambridge Residence.

## **“Welcome Home 2005 Transitional Task Force”:**

The above name is only one suggestion made now to express the importance of properly naming the mechanism charged with completing a very important social agenda, so that Manitoba citizens, professionals, government employees, politicians, relatives of individuals with intellectual disabilities et al can understand and identify with a very significant change for some of their most vulnerable sisters and brothers. This proposal is based on the belief that only a strong government/community partnership could ever hope to achieve such a positive change. Our belief is that the Task Force needs to be small and workable (no more than 10 members?) but also representative of all sectors with the greatest stake in seeing this initiative achieve a successful outcome. Some suggestions for composition are:

- University appointee as Chair
- A.D.M. or Director from Family Services and Housing
- MDC Executive Director
- Community Living - Manitoba Executive Director
- Service Provider representative from rural Manitoba
- Service Provider representative from Winnipeg
- Parent/family member of MDC resident
- Member of People First of Manitoba

As well, a staff position with responsibility to act as a Parent / Family Liaison must be established in each region to ensure that family members of the residents can approve all placements and take part in the planning. The position would be a contract employment and would be supervised by the above-noted Task Force. The liaison staff would meet with parents, ensure they are present at planning meetings and introduce them to potential service providers. They would also serve to find resources to meet individual need.

## **Individual Planning**

A critical need for the success of developing new supports for people is the planning based on individual dreams and needs. Several agencies have offered person centered planning facilitation. Community Living – Winnipeg and Community Living - Manitoba have offered to coordinate and resource the planning meetings and facilitators. Community Living – Winnipeg will coordinate all planning in the Winnipeg area and Community Living – Manitoba will develop a schedule and roster of facilitators in all areas outside of Winnipeg. Facilitators will be arranged at times convenient to participants, their families and community resources.

## Projected Costs

### A. Capital Costs

115 new residences will be required to house the 400 people at an average of 3.5 persons per home. As indicated earlier, and based on current experience, residential options would include a range of alternatives ie. purchasing or building new homes, purchasing/renovating existing homes and rental arrangements. For purposes of this proposal it is important not to underestimate costs and thus our costing estimate is based on the purchase or building of 115 new homes, which is seen as the most costly option. After consultation with existing service providers and after attempting to balance urban-rural housing cost variations, the following maximum capital cost projection is made:

- Average cost of new home-----\$200,000.00
- Start up furnishing costs @\$3,000/person-----\$10,500.00
- Disability specific house modifications (ramps etc.)-----\$20,000.00
  
- Total capital cost/house-----\$230,500.00
  
- Total capital cost for 115 houses----- \$26,507,500.00

### B. Operating Costs

For the purpose of this proposal, which is written without detailed information on the individual needs of the 400 people currently at MDC, we looked at the cost of running a 4-person residence for people with complex needs that already exists in the community. Although some situations exist where individuals are funded at a higher cost (and some at a lower cost), we are told by service providers that the following costs are on the high end of the continuum and accurately reflect their own present day funding for people with very complex needs. Please note that mortgage amortization amounts have been excluded from these calculations, as the previous capital cost section included full capital costs. Of course if down payments and mortgages were the course followed (as is the normal practice today in funding to non-profit service providers) then the capital cost figures would decrease and the operating cost figures increase. Thus, the actual operating costs of the 4-person Winnipeg residence used for actual current costing are:

- Salary and operating expenses/year, less mortgage costs-----  
\$261,925.00
  
- Operating costs/person/year, less mortgage costs -----  
\$65,481.25
  
- Costs for 400 persons/year, less mortgage costs -----  
\$26,192,500.00

### **C. Costs Summary**

Comparing the costs of this proposal to the MDC costs (both proposed \$40,000,000.00 capital and current MDC operating/person), no one could conclude that redeveloping the MDC is the clear fiscal “winner”. Indeed, proponents of community living and this proposal might indeed argue that their cost projections demonstrate a clear and substantial “cost savings”. However, two additional factors stand as reality and must be noted as follows:

1. The proposal includes maintaining specialized units in Portage la Prairie and continuing salary levels for existing MDC staff who would work in these specialized functions and in other Portage la Prairie and area residences. This would increase the operating costs noted above as Civil Servant salaries are in a higher range than those paid to non-profit service employees.
2. In the short-term conversion period, costs would clearly be increased as past experience proves that it is impossible to precisely match institutional cost decreases with community cost increases as a “de-institutionalization” conversion is taking place. However, once the conversion was complete, costs would decrease to “normal” levels.

Notwithstanding these two facts however, the cost projections and comparisons noted above can only lead one to conclude that cost considerations ought not to be a major factor for governmental decision makers as they are examining this proposal and comparing it to the MDC redevelopment plan.

### **The Human Resources**

We are fortunate in Manitoba to have a wealth of community and government resources with a proven record of serving people with intellectual disabilities. This certainly includes many people at MDC who urgently want to participate in an initiative such as this. We also are blessed with many national and international friends who stand at the ready to offer their expertise in this initiative, for they have been in Manitoba before and have witnessed the many remarkable advances already achieved through previous partnership initiatives. We will supply a listing of the many specific organizations and individuals whom we know and believe will step forward with enthusiasm to make this initiative a success.