



# ACCESS

## MANITOBA

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### A LOOK AT WD'S MANITOBA INITIATIVES

By Sandy Gillies

As a department focused on encouraging economic diversification in Western Canada, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) has many programs and initiatives that span across all western provinces, but what about those specifically for Manitoba?

WD is currently providing funding for entrepreneurs with disabilities through service delivery and capacity building agreements with the **Independent Resource Living Centre (IRLC)** which provides services to disabled clients within the City of Winnipeg. The IRLC, in turn, contracts with **SEED Winnipeg** to undertake the business plan preparation, assessment, training and aftercare.

Across the West, WD has established micro loan programs with a variety of financial institutions to help small businesses take advantage of flexible financing solutions. In the Winnipeg area, the **Assiniboine Credit Union Micro Loan Program** provides access to loans for small business start up or expansion. Loans may be used to finance such costs as marketing, product development or purchasing equipment, or other assets, and can range to a maximum of \$20,000 with up to five years for repayment. Assiniboine Credit Union determines loan approval and interest rates.

Under the **Francophone Economic Development Initiative**, WD provided the **Conseil de développement économique des**

**municipalités bilingues du Manitoba (CDEM)** with funding to offset the day-to-day operating costs and ensure the continuation and expansion of the organization's current services. The CDEM, which is an economic development council of Manitoba's bilingual communities, provides the gamut of French language services to support the start-up and expansion of businesses in Manitoba. It was launched as a project by Manitoba's bilingual municipalities to support community economic development in bilingual rural communities and three bilingual suburbs of Winnipeg, although its provision of services is not restricted to these communities because its focus is language-based.

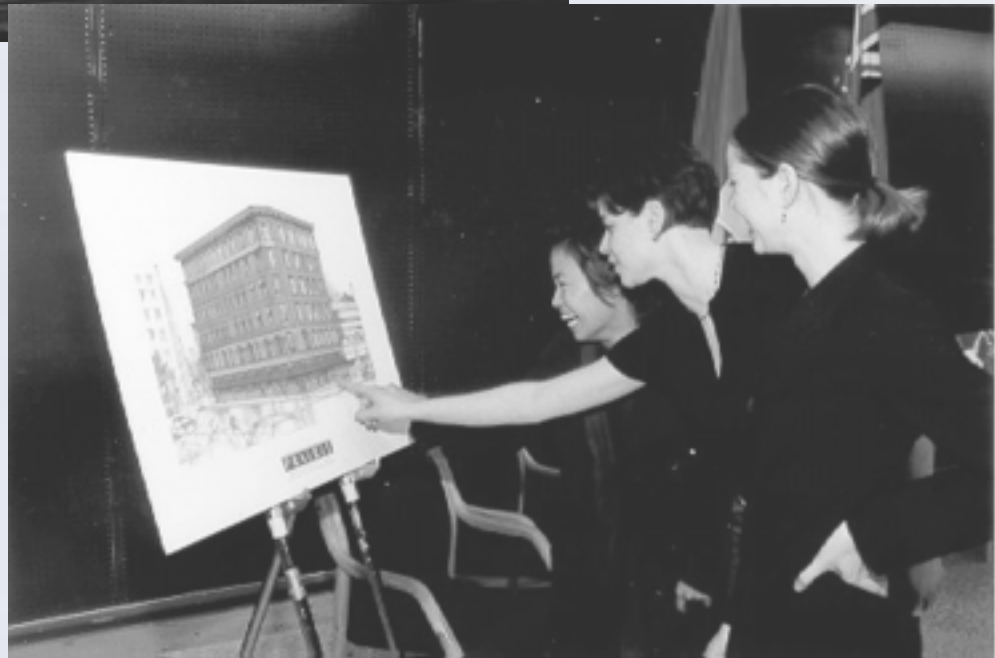
The CDEM provides unique services such as the Mystery Shoppers program to assist entrepreneurs in identifying areas to improve and increase sales. Recently it launched a business incubator and it is currently developing a mentorship program to support new businesses in rural communities. CDEM is also involved in a national initiative spearheaded by Human Resources Development Canada, whereby all Francophone communities (outside of Quebec) are focusing on economic development in four priority sectors: tourism, knowledge-based, rural development and the integration of youth. It manages a SEED program (intended for Francophone entrepreneurs) in partnership with the Province of Manitoba. ♣



# ACCESS MANITOBA



The Big 4 Building as it looks today.



Dancers look at a sketch of the restored building.

WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION CANADA

# RESURRECTING WINNIPEG'S HISTORICAL EXCHANGE DISTRICT

By Kelly Keith

To the north of Winnipeg's famed corner of Portage and Main, lies 20 city blocks of one of the most historically intact turn-of-the-century commercial districts, housing 117 existing buildings built prior to 1914. Designated a National Historic site in 1999, the **Exchange District** is why Winnipeg was known as the "Chicago of the North" 100 years ago. The Exchange District derives its name from the numerous stock and commodity exchanges that developed between 1880 and 1920.

Now, following the turn of another century, the heart of Winnipeg is undergoing lifesaving surgery. Mayor Glen Murray has aptly called it a "dynamic renaissance underway in Winnipeg's downtown." A \$31.5 million plan to overhaul a strip of Princess Street to create a downtown campus for Red River College is encouraging a more rapid pace for other development and will help to anchor the area.

Thanks to \$1.4 million in funding from the **Canada/Manitoba Economic Development Partnership Agreement**, one more building will be saved from destruction and add to the renewal of the area. Premier Gary Doer and John Harvard, MP for Charleswood St. James-Assiniboia, on behalf of the Honourable Ron J. Duhamel, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Francophonie), made the announcement inside the dilapidated building.

The funding will allow the basement, and first and second floors of the former Ashdown Hardware Store to be renovated

for the School of Contemporary Dancers, the Manitoba Conservatory of Music & Arts and Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers. Other floors of the building will hold Crocus Investments and an artist's co-op.

More recently known as the Big 4 Building, the structure at the corner of Main and Bannatyne was once owned by James H. Ashdown, a civic leader and hardware merchant. Behind its relatively modern face is a building first constructed in 1904. During renovation, the building will be returned to its original grandeur.

"This is another brick in the ongoing process of rebuilding our historic Exchange District," said Mr. Harvard, "and while doing that, we're meeting the needs of the arts community. Arts and heritage in our city is important for our quality of life and ability to attract talent, investment and tourism. In the recent Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada reiterated its commitment to working with private and not-for-profit sectors and other governments to strengthen Canada's cultural infrastructure."

The total cost of renovating space for the three arts groups is estimated at \$2.65 million, the total project is anticipated to be \$6 million. The **Winnipeg Development Agreement** has also contributed \$225,000 to the historic restoration of the building. ♣

# UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG LAUNCHES P.L.U.T.O.

By Mark Gale



Winnipeg South Centre MP Anita Neville looks on as children upgrade their computer skills.

No, the University of Winnipeg is not the new *NASA* of the North!

The University of Winnipeg's Education faculty recently launched the **P.L.U.T.O.** project thanks to support of \$210,000 from the **Winnipeg Development Agreement (WDA)**. P.L.U.T.O. stands for "*Please Let*

*Us Take Off*" and is the name of a new community-based program aimed at helping "at-risk" Winnipeg children and youth. Manitoba's newest Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre, Anita Neville, made the funding announcement at the project's storefront office on behalf of Ron J. Duhamel, federal minister responsible for the Winnipeg Development Agreement.

Through the P.L.U.T.O. project, the University of Winnipeg Bachelor of Education Program has taken a collaborative approach by establishing partnerships with the Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC), the West Broadway Community Groups, and Gordon Bell and Fort Rouge Schools. By working together, the partnership is providing direct, tangible support to people who live in Winnipeg's inner city.

Project P.L.U.T.O. is assisting youth develop their talents and helping young parents develop their early years foundation-forming skills, such as literacy and technological

proficiency to better enable them to provide a supportive environment for their children.

"I am pleased that the Government of Canada is funding this community-based project which will benefit inner city youth and their families by enabling their untapped potential to be realized," said Neville. "Investing in our young people today is an investment in our future, and through this project and the storefront location we will break the cycle of low literacy among at-risk families."

The P.L.U.T.O. project consists of two components:

### ***Component I - Mentoring "at-risk" children and youth.***

The Bachelor of Education Program has designed a new course on this issue. From the class group, individuals are selected for the practicum-mentoring project. The targeted "at-risk" youth will be between 8 and 17 years of age. Mentoring involves providing the time, attention and direction that most at-risk youth lack in terms of basic academic support and guidance, as well as life skills such as dealing with cultural diversity, social issues and personal growth development.

### ***Component II - Establishing a storefront for early years enrichment.***

The mentors from the practicum portion of the program are available on-site at the storefront location to train and support parents in developing literacy skills in their children and to introduce parents to computers in a non-threatening way.

The Winnipeg Development Agreement is a five year, \$75 million commitment by the governments of Canada, Manitoba and Winnipeg to the long-term sustainable economic development of the city. The city-wide initiative focuses on labour force development, strategic and sectoral investments, and the development and safety of Winnipeg communities. ♣