

August 15, 2000

The Honourable Drew Caldwell  
Minister of Education

Dear Mr. Caldwell:

Re: RRC Campus Expansion

Let me start off by saying whom the organization is I represent and serve currently as its president. Established in 1903, the Winnipeg Real Estate Board is the longest running board in the country. It is a professional and industry association representing over 1,300 real estate brokers, salespeople, appraisers and financial members active in the local real estate market. The Board has been active in civic affairs for some time and is keenly interested in issues relating directly to housing and real estate development.

One of the issues we have outlined in our 1998 civic and legislative affairs position paper was downtown revitalization and inner city redevelopment. To this end, we struck a task force last year to look at the issue of mixed-use development in the downtown with the aim to encourage more residential activity and intensification. The task force came up with a number of recommendations which, I am proud to say, are being acted on in various forms and activities. I have attached a copy of them for your perusal.

Recommendation number five – ‘That the City of Winnipeg initiate partnerships with the private sector and consider the development of financial incentives to encourage development in the downtown’ - in our report fits in very well with the proposed Red River Community College expansion plan on Princess Street. Here, you have an exciting partnership where a number of things come together. You have a major node of activity being created that has many positive spin-offs including the potential of creating new demand for downtown residential projects. There are already several million dollars of private sector funds positioned to enhance this expansion through redevelopment of other properties for housing, office and retail. The number of buildings available in the Exchange District for a variety of uses would support spin-off development as well as enhance RRCC’s ability to meet the needs of its students.

The tax concessions from the heritage building tax holiday offer RRCC considerable operational savings not possible under the alternative site. RRCC

will benefit from a proposed fibre optics network along Princess Street and from becoming a very visible part of the downtown business, cultural and social community. I also think this latter point is especially germane since RRCC offers courses which are technically and job-oriented and thus conducive to student co-op opportunities with downtown businesses.

Placing RRCC and U of W together may in fact have less of a beneficial impact on the community and the institutions than separating them. The Board certainly has not the background nor expertise to weigh in on this issue however suffice to say that from an economic point of view I believe the additional investment and development from a Princess Street expansion will be far greater than what can take place at Spence Street. The other issue with Spence Street is land assembly since we have heard some land necessary may not even be available for sale.

In conclusion, by supporting RRCC's plans for expanding on Princess Street and likewise respecting U of W's aspirations to expand on Spence Street to meet their needs, two critical areas of the city that are badly in need of revitalization can be addressed. You should also be encouraged to know a number of housing groups including the Board's Housing Opportunity Partnership are actively pursuing housing rehabilitation in the West End area.

The Board would be glad to participate in any way you deem helpful to come up with a satisfactory solution to what on the surface appears to be a great opportunity to meet a number of laudatory objectives including education.

Sincerely yours,

Rick Preston, President  
Winnipeg Real Estate Board