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PROVINCE, FIRST NATIONS MOVE FORWARD ON FIRST-IN-WINNIPEG CARE HOME FOR ABORIGINAL ELDERS

The province is partnering with eight Manitoba First Nations to develop Winnipeg's first personal-care home for Aboriginal elders, a project that will help elderly Aboriginal people age with dignity in an environment that respects traditional approaches to aging, Health Minister Theresa Oswald and Healthy Living Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross, minister responsible for seniors, announced today.

"This new personal-care home builds on our commitment to Manitoba's seniors and meets an identified need for elder care in our First Nation and Aboriginal communities," said Oswald. "We're connecting the best in long-term care with traditional knowledge to build a facility that will be welcoming, supportive and culturally relevant."

The new 80-bed, 52,000-square-foot facility will provide Aboriginal seniors with the health care and supports they need to remain in their community, close to family, friends and other resources. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer.

"Elders at this new facility will find its design has traditional significance and provides an opportunity for an intergenerational experience," said Irvin-Ross. "Elders will continue to provide guidance and support to generations in a holistic environment."

The Southeast Resource Development Council (SERDC), which represents eight First Nations in southeastern Manitoba, will contribute funds and the land for the project. One of the SERDC's long-standing goals is to provide appropriate care for Aboriginal elders from First Nations, Métis, Dene, Inuit and non-status communities. The new care home will be located in Winnipeg's south end on land adjacent to Southeast Collegiate, an SERDC-operated school for First Nations youth.

"This will provide wonderful opportunities for interaction between the generations," said Sheldon Kent, SERDC board chair and chief of Black River First Nation. "This interaction is important, as communication between young people and elders is essential for the preservation of First Nations culture."

"SERDC was selected as project sponsor through a competitive process some years ago. It has been a pleasure working with SERDC in planning this project and we look forward to the next phase of construction and opening of this new facility," said Réal Cloutier, vice-president, long-term care, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. "This important project will fill an important need in the First Nations and Aboriginal communities."

The new personal-care home will also be one of the most environmentally friendly projects of its kind. It will meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver environmental standard and will incorporate numerous green design elements that will minimize the project's environmental impact and reduce energy costs over the life of the building.

This new facility builds on previous commitments to strengthen elder care. In April 2008, the provincial government invested \$3 million to support residents at six First Nations personal-care homes across the province.

These initiatives also support Manitoba's Aging in Place strategy, which was announced in January 2006. The province is funding the development of new personal-care spaces, building new supportive housing facilities and developing community-based resources to:

- expand capacity for long-term community care options such as supportive housing, specialized supports and supports for seniors in group living;
- replace three- and four-bed rooms with one- and two-bed rooms to help improve quality of life in personal-care homes; and
- develop more living spaces to ensure more seniors can receive the care they need.

The ministers noted the goal is to make Manitoba the most age-friendly province in Canada.