



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

N E W S R E L E A S E



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For Immediate Release

Downtown University, Community & Governments
Celebrate Historic Transformation
Spence Street: Open for Renewal

WINNIPEG—With the launch of *Spence Street: Open for Renewal*, The University of Winnipeg today celebrated the historic transformation of Spence Street into a community-pedestrian mall in the heart of the campus.

“It is time for Winnipeg’s downtown University to take up its role in the Renaissance of our city,” said President Lloyd Axworthy from a stage on Spence Street. “The Renewal of Spence Street provides a core for these initiatives—a vibrant, downtown piazza or village square for campus and community to gather, dream, debate, and respond to the needs of our downtown.”

The celebration took the form of a street festival replete with musicians, performers, and vendors. City of Winnipeg Mayor Sam Katz joined Axworthy along with Anita Neville, MP (Winnipeg South Centre) and Minister of Transportation Ron Lemieux to mark the occasion.

"Today Winnipeg is another step closer to reclaiming its rightful position as a City of Opportunity," said Mayor Sam Katz. "With the addition of The Spence Street community-pedestrian mall alongside the MTS Centre, Manitoba Hydro, and the Millennium Library, another vital piece is in place in the renewal of downtown Winnipeg."

The transformation of Spence Street follows months of public consultations and the April 27, 2005 unanimous endorsement by Winnipeg City Council of the University’s request for a campus- and community-friendly street. Spence Street between Portage and Ellice avenues will provide enhanced services and amenities to students and the neighbouring community, improved and safer transit services, much-needed green space in our urban environs, and a safer and more vibrant campus. A one-way transit lane and paved bicycle path are in operation and effective immediately vehicular traffic is restricted to delivery, construction, emergency vehicles, and handi-transit.

“There is much work still to be done,” said Axworthy, “and it must continue to be done in partnership with elders and community, business, and government leaders. Together we will design and conceive programs that reflect the unique needs of this city’s cultures and traditions—providing a place that is an open door for all the people of this community and our city.”

At the morning event, Axworthy announced that students, parents, and visitors arriving on campus in September will experience an invigorated attitude toward campus and community safety. Following a safety and security audit by its own Criminal Justice Studies department and recommendations by a specially-tasked Safety Committee, the University unveiled its innovative Campus Community Ambassador program.

Coordinated by Hugh Coburn, a 26-year veteran of the police services, the new program will be run with community and student volunteers like Riley Kowalsky, a second year Criminal Justice Studies major. Volunteers will be uniformed and trained to educate, problem solve, and interact on a day-to-day basis with members of both the University and neighbouring communities. Ambassadors will patrol on foot, by bicycle, or in a new van purchased by funds provided by the Province of Manitoba.

Funds provided by the Province will also enable the University to put into play several unique safety initiatives that draw on the expertise of faculty and researchers in the areas of Criminal Justice Studies, Conflict Resolution, Education, and Urban Studies. The SafeWalk and SafeRide programs, sponsored in part by The University of Winnipeg Students' Association, will continue to offer courtesy escort for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Enhanced lighting will augment existing stock. Additional cameras will be placed strategically throughout the campus to assist our Campus Safety Officers. And "blue phones" linked directly to our Campus Safety Office soon will be seen, adding an additional safety feature on campus.

During Phase One of the project, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to ease the transition for University students, parents, visitors, faculty, staff, and community members to the transformed Spence Street:

- The City of Winnipeg has posted signage and barriers at Spence Street at Ellice and Portage avenues to inform drivers of the changes and regulate the flow of transit-only traffic.
- A new staffed University kiosk, located adjacent to the Duckworth Centre, will direct motorists to the new Duckworth Centre drop-off point and assist with any other traffic concerns.
- The addition of 62 metered spots behind the University's soon-to-be-opened Wai Chai Wai Ka Nak Learning Centre of Ellice Avenue.
- A new paved bike path along Spence Street between Portage and Ellice avenues.

Phase Two will include an expanded student drop-off zone on Ellice Avenue (Lockhart Hall doors). A new campus entrance is already operational on Balmoral Avenue halfway between Portage and Ellice avenues. Plans include expansion of classrooms, office space, and student services; sidewalk cafés and amenities; community recreational facilities; and, student and community housing. At every step along the road to renewal, the University is looking for ways to be more sustainable from the design and construction of new "green" facilities to working closely with environmental groups on campus.

Public consultation regarding ongoing Spence Street renewal will continue with members of the community having opportunity for input into proposed design concepts.

Heartfelt thanks were given to Barkman Concrete, T & T Seeds, Downtown Biz, Stantec, and Scatliff+Miller+Murray Landscape Architects' Doug Clark for his creative vision. And as community children, government officials, and University representatives placed flowers in one of many decorative planters that line the renewed Street, President Axworthy concluded the celebration, saying, "May we continue, together, to be the change we wish to see in the world as we work to enrich our civil society for generations to come."

Located in the heart of downtown, The University of Winnipeg is a compact, diverse, multicultural academic community committed to access and excellence. Ranked by our graduates in Maclean's magazine University Graduate Survey (November 15, 2004) in the Top Ten of all Canadian universities when asked about their "Entire Educational Experience," UWinnipeg is home to more than 8,700 full- and part-time students.

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