

**North End Winnipeg's
Lord Selkirk Park
Housing Development:
History, Comparative Context, Prospects**

By Jim Silver

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Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 2 | Executive Summary |
| 5 | Introduction |
| 7 | Part One: Winnipeg's Historic North End |
| 7 | a. The Pre-Second World War North End |
| 11 | b. Post-Second World War Changes in the North End |
| 12 | c. Housing Problems in the Post-War Era |
| 16 | d. Urban Renewal—At Last |
| 23 | Part Two: The US Experience With Public Housing |
| 23 | a. The Origins of Public Housing in the USA |
| 24 | b. The Early Promise of Public Housing |
| 25 | c. The Deterioration of American Public Housing |
| 30 | d. HOPE VI |
| 37 | Part Three: The Canadian Experience With Public Housing |
| 37 | a. The Origins of Public Housing in Canada |
| 37 | b. The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Canada |
| 39 | c. The Power and Danger of Popular Discourse |
| 41 | d. The Early Promise of Public Housing |
| 42 | e. The Problems With Public Housing Now |
| 45 | f. The Redevelopment of Regent Park |
| 47 | g. The Explanations for the Problems |
| 49 | Part Four: Winnipeg's Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development: 1967-2006 |
| 49 | a. Problems in the Development Today |
| 56 | b. Evidence that Things were Good at the Beginning. |
| 59 | c. What Has Been Happening Lately? |
| 63 | Part Five: Conclusions |
| 66 | Part Six: Recommendations |
| 70 | References |

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Executive Summary

This paper examines North End Winnipeg's Lord Selkirk Park public housing development. It surveys the history of Winnipeg's North End, and the historic Salter-Jarvis neighbourhood where Lord Selkirk Park now stands. It describes the debates and struggles leading to Winnipeg's first urban renewal project, which involved the bulldozing of Salter-Jarvis and the building of Lord Selkirk Park. It analyses and compares the post-war experience with large, inner city public housing projects in the USA, and in Canada, especially Toronto's Regent Park. And in this broad, historical context, it discusses the experience of Lord Selkirk Park since its establishment in 1967, and the revitalization efforts now being made—led by the North End Community Renewal Corporation.

The paper argues that while large, inner city public housing projects like Lord Selkirk Park have everywhere been plagued with problems, the cause of the problems is not public housing itself. The cause of the problems associated with public housing is that they have become 'housing of last resort' for very low-income people, and therefore home to a highly concentrated and often racialized form of poverty. This in turn is attributable to dramatic changes in North America's urban political economy over the last quarter-century and more, and associated changes in government policies. The paper concludes that Lord Selkirk Park could become, for low-income inner city families, a place of opportunity and hope, rather than a place of poverty and despair.

The story of the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development is best seen in the context of the history of Winnipeg's North End. The North End was originally the home of the mostly Eastern European workers who fueled the city's great economic boom of the early 20th century. They located in the North End where the jobs then were, in small, cheaply-built houses on cramped lots constructed by developers looking for quick profits. Inadequate housing has always been a North End problem. In addition, the pre-Second World War North End and its residents were stigmatized by the city's Anglo majority and Anglo ruling class. Despite the rich and vibrant culture created by the largely Eastern European and Jewish workers of the North End, they were discriminated against, referred to disparagingly as 'hunkies', 'bohunks', 'polacks' and more, while the North End was starved of the public resources needed to improve the housing stock and life chances of its residents.

When the combination of post-Second World War suburbanization and the relaxing of discrimination directed at Eastern Europeans and Jews made relocation possible, vast numbers of those most able to do so left the North End for the suburbs. The already inadequate housing deteriorated further. Much was bought up by slum landlords uninterested in maintenance and repairs. Those people in the worst financial circumstances and with the fewest economic prospects congregated where cheap housing was most

readily available. The worst of these areas was around Jarvis Avenue off Main Street, and this—the Salter-Jarvis area—became home to Winnipeg's first urban renewal project, the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development.

From the outset there were problems. The still healthy part of the neighbourhood was bulldozed; most of those relocated did not experience improved housing; and the new Development was starved of the social spending that was needed to make it a success—as had always been the case in the North End.

Despite this, the first tenants in the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development were happy with their new accommodations. This has been the experience everywhere in North America—large, inner city public housing projects worked well in their early years.

When the problems emerged, it was not because of public housing as such; it was because of broader forces. These can be thought of in terms of two levels of analysis. First, public housing has become 'housing of last resort', concentrating large numbers of the poorest of the poor. It is the concentration of poverty that is the problem, not public housing. The concentration of poverty was the result of a process—the pattern of which is everywhere the same—by which changes in policy resulted in public housing projects becoming the home not of low-income working families, with a minority of tenants on social assistance, as was initially the case, but of families on social assistance, with a minority of tenants in the workforce, as is now the case. Public housing projects became home to concentrated, racialized poverty, and to all of the problems associated with concentrated and racialized poverty.

A still broader level of analysis involves a consideration of what caused these con-

centrations of racialized poverty. This paper argues that because public housing was linked to 'slum' removal, it was located in inner cities. Inner cities throughout North America suffered from the process of suburbanization, which resulted in the 'hollowing out' of the inner city—those most able to move did so; businesses and social infrastructure followed—leaving behind those least financially able to move. This was followed by the dramatic economic restructuring of the past 30 years and more, which included a de-industrialization which removed from inner cities the very kinds of decently-paid jobs that would otherwise have enabled many of those now among the poor to pull themselves out of poverty.

In Winnipeg, at the front end of this continent-wide process, beginning in the early 1960s, Aboriginal people began slowly at first, and then in waves, to move to the city. Most were poorly prepared for modern urban life, having lived in rural and often remote communities without adequate educational opportunities and without much experience in the paid labour force, and having been subjected to the damage of colonization. Faced with unrelenting discrimination and racism—a constant in Winnipeg's history—upon their arrival in the city, they congregated where housing was least expensive—in the inner city, and particularly in the Salter-Jarvis area. The combination of their lack of education and experience, the damage caused by colonization, the disappearance of well-paid jobs, and the discrimination and racism that they faced, led to high rates of poverty and associated problems. These were made the worse by the continued inadequacy of public investment aimed at poverty alleviation, an inadequacy accentuated by the public funding cutbacks that started in earnest in the late 1970s—early 1980s in response to the changing global economy.

It is these broader issues—the changes in the global economy and its de-industrializing effects, the cutbacks in public spending, the severe disadvantages faced by a growing urban Aboriginal population—that led to the concentration of racialized poverty in Winnipeg’s inner city, just as it led to concentrated racialized poverty and its associated problems in large urban centres throughout North America. Public housing, located as it was in the inner city, was in effect asked to respond to the damage created by these broader forces. And so public housing became ‘housing of last resort’ for those most adversely affected by the dramatic changes of the late 20th century. To conclude from all of this that public housing is the problem is to confuse cause and effect.

The broadly comparative, historical analysis advanced in this paper is important now for several reasons. First, it makes clear that—contrary to what has been argued by those in power throughout North

America—public housing is not the problem. On the contrary, public housing ought to be seen as part of the solution. It is part of the solution because, given adequate social supports, it can provide good quality low-income rental housing at a time when that is in perilously short supply. Second, it makes clear that the problems seen to be associated with public housing have deep roots that go far back in time, and thus will not be solved quickly. Any solution in Lord Selkirk Park must of necessity be a long-term solution, one that promotes and supports tenants’ involvement, and builds their capacities and their self-confidence and self-esteem. Third, it makes clear that this is a path now being embarked upon in the Development, led by the North End Community Renewal Corporation. The work done to date is no guarantee of future success. Much hard work remains. But finally, after decades of neglect, the Lord Selkirk Park housing development is moving, however slowly, in a positive direction.

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Introduction

Winnipeg's North End has suffered a century-long experience with inadequate housing. When Eastern European immigrants poured into the North End at the turn of the last century, 100 years ago, developers slapped up quickly-constructed, cheaply-made housing on smaller than normal-sized lots, often disconnected from sewer and water lines, and with inadequate provision for recreational spaces. Large profits were made. When the post-Second World War process of suburbanization led to large numbers of people of Eastern European descent leaving the North End for the new housing and larger lots of the suburbs, the already inadequate housing stock deteriorated further. Much fell into the hands of absentee landlords. North End housing conditions worsened. New waves of internal migrants began to arrive in Winnipeg in the 1960s, and located where housing was least expensive—in the North End. Governments at all levels were reluctant to invest in public housing, preferring to leave the provision of housing largely to the forces of the market. The housing market did not serve the North End well.

In the 1960s, after years and even decades of delay, the three levels of government finally were pushed into creating public housing, including the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development, located in what had once been the heart of the Jewish North End. The Development, as it is now called by those in the area, is a large, 1960s-style public housing development.

The people who first moved into the Development were happy with their new housing, despite the many flaws in the urban renewal process leading to its creation. Yet now, 40 years later, the Development has a reputation that is largely negative. A stigma is attached to those who live there.

What happened? How did the Development come to be the place that it is today? How does its experience compare with the experience of similar public housing initiatives in the USA and elsewhere in Canada? What strategies are now being adopted beyond Winnipeg to revitalize public housing projects? And what, if anything, can be done here in Winnipeg to revitalize the Development?

The central argument of this paper is that, despite all the negative issues generally associated with public housing projects—Lord Selkirk Park included—the root of the problems lies not with public housing as such. The root of the problems lies in the severe concentration of poverty in inner city public housing projects, which in turn is the consequence of deeper forces—in particular, changes in the political economy of North American cities, and in government responses to these changes. Public housing is not the cause of these problems. Rather, it has become the 'housing of last resort' for the victims of these broader forces. What follows from this analysis is that, far from being torn down, as is now being done in public housing projects across North America, Lord Selkirk Park Housing De-

velopment should be and can be reclaimed as a site of and a force for community revitalization.

This paper reaches this conclusion by undertaking a broadly comparative historical analysis of public housing in Winnipeg, in large American cities, and in Toronto. In Part One the paper examines some aspects of North End Winnipeg's history, leading to the building of the Lord

Selkirk Park Housing Development in the mid-1960s. In Part Two we examine the US experience, and in Part Three the Canadian experience—especially Toronto's Regent Park—with public housing. In Part Four we examine changes in the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development from its opening in 1967 to the present. In Parts Five and Six we offer some conclusions and recommendations, based on the analysis developed in the paper.

Part One: Winnipeg's Historic North End

a. The Pre-Second World War North End

In the late 19th century the indigenous inhabitants of what are now the Canadian prairies were pushed off their traditional lands and moved onto reserves, in order to turn the prairies over to the growing of wheat. To grow and transport the wheat required a massive infrastructure of railways, bridges, grain elevators and towns, the construction of which generated an industrial boom centred in Winnipeg. At the heart of the boom were the railways: vast rail yards, repair shops, freight sheds, office buildings, power houses, stores, scrap yards and stations were constructed in the city. Construction materials and work clothes were made in Winnipeg to supply the needs of farms and railways, and the city became a major wholesaler, supplying a hinterland stretching from the Lakehead to the Pacific. Metal shops and foundries manufactured the machinery for country elevators and structural steel for railways and bridges, while the produce of the farms became the raw material for flour milling, meat packing and a host of related industrial activities.

The rail yards—noisy, dirty and bustling with energy and activity—cut the city in half. The area north of the yards became the North End. It was here that the immigrants who flooded the booming city after 1896 located, in such large numbers that the North End came to be known as the 'Foreign Quarter'. In the North End could be heard all the languages of Europe—Ukrainian, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, German and more.

Living conditions were hard. Developers, seeing easy profits, hastily erected cheaply-built houses squeezed tightly together on narrow, 25 or 33 foot lots—“not

one of the rules of good design were followed” (Artibise, 1975, p. 161). More than half the houses were not connected to the city's water supply system. Infant mortality in the North End was 248.6 per 1000 births in 1913, compared to 116.8 per 1000 in the West and South ends (Artibise, 1977, p. 66). Typhoid and smallpox were concentrated in the North End; in 1904 and 1905 Winnipeg had more cases of, and more deaths from, typhoid than any city in North America (Artibise, 1977, p. 104).

J.S. Woodsworth, Director of the All Peoples' Mission on Stella Avenue, now the North End Community Ministry, conducted a study in 1913 showing that “a normal standard of living” in Winnipeg required an income of at least \$1200 per year. But few people in the North End were earning that much, and “large numbers of workmen are receiving under \$600 per year, many under \$500, half of what is necessary” (Artibise, 1975, p. 187).

Poverty-level wages caused many problems. Houses were overcrowded. With overcrowding came insanitary conditions and health problems. Food consumption was inadequate, leading frequently to undernourishment. Children were often forced to work long before the completion of high school to supplement their family's meagre income, a fact considered by authorities to be the “source of much truancy and juvenile crime”. Artibise (1975, p. 16) describes the North End of the pre-1914 era as being characterized by: “Overcrowded houses and tenements, lack of sanitary installations, dirty back-yards, muddy, foul-smelling streets, and poor lighting conditions”.

Typically such problems and conditions were blamed on the moral failings of the

poor. The Associated Charities Bureau wrote in 1912 that “the large majority of applications for relief are caused by thriftlessness, mismanagement, unemployment due to incompetence, intemperance, immorality, desertion of the family and domestic quarrels”. For this reason it was thought wrong to provide adequate levels of social assistance to those in need. Doing so, argued the Associated Charities Bureau, would “simply make it easier for the parents to shirk their responsibilities or lead a dissolute life” (Artibise, 1975, p. 188).

The issue, however, was less a matter of shirking responsibilities than of the poverty-level wages earned in the North End. Most North End residents were working, many for the railways and associated industries, others as builders, or in factories and small shops and stores. People in the North End worked hard; they were the working class. The problem, as Woodsworth had showed, was that wages were too low—a problem that echoes across the decades to today’s North End (Just Incomes Coalition, 2005).

Winnipeg then, as now, was deeply segregated—a city divided—with the North End cut off from the rest of the city by the vast CPR yards, and distinguished from the rest of the city by its ‘foreign’ character. As a 1912 publication put it: “For many years the North End... was practically a district apart from the city”, and “those who located north of the tracks were not of a desirable character” (Artibise, 1975, p. 160).

The problem then, as now, was poverty and inequality. John Marlyn’s novel, *Under the Ribs of Death*, is set in the early part of the century in Winnipeg’s North End, which is described as being “a mean and dirty clutter... a howling chaos... a heap seething with unwashed children, sick men in grey underwear, vast sweating

women in vaster petticoats”. By contrast, the lead character, a Hungarian immigrant living in the North End, visits Crescentwood, the south end home of the Anglo-Saxon ‘elite’ who dominated the economic, social and political life of the city.

“In a daze he walked down the street. The boulevards ran wide and spacious to the very doors of the houses. And these houses were like palaces, great and stately, surrounded by their own private parks and gardens. On every side there was something to wonder at” (Marlyn, 1957, pp. 64-65).

Little wonder that Artibise (1975, p. 160), in his masterful social history of Winnipeg, should conclude that: “Winnipeg in 1914 was a severely divided city, both geographically and socially”.

Those in the city’s south end reacted scornfully and even hatefully to the Eastern European, working class immigrants of the North End.

“the Slavs were the despised ‘men in sheepskin coats’, ‘dumb hunkies’, ‘bohunks’, ‘garlic-eaters’, ‘Polacks’, ‘drunkards’—and on and on; the Germans were the much hated enemies of the last war; and finally, the Jews faced extreme anti-Semitism, ranging from ethnic slurs, housing covenants which excluded them from certain parts of the city and a quota system which kept their children out of the medical school at University of Manitoba, to actual violence against their persons and property” (Mochoruk, 2000, pp. 5-6).

Such discriminatory and even hateful attitudes served to reinforce the geographic segregation of the North End.

Yet, the North End was home to much that was positive. Selkirk Avenue was a thriving commercial centre, filled with a daz-

zling variety of stores and shops, whose owners typically spoke several of the Eastern European languages used by their North End customers, and made credit available when needed. Small grocery stores could be found on most North End street corners, their owners living above or behind the stores. On Main Street, between Flora and Stella, across the street from today's Lord Selkirk Park housing development, was a thriving public market: "That whole area was just one big market place. The farmers would come with their trucks and wagons and they'd line them up. You could go there before winter... buy your carrots and cucumbers, tomatoes" (Quoted in August, 2000, p. 9).

Almost everything was available in the North End, and could be reached on foot or by streetcar. In 1925, on Selkirk Avenue alone, in the five blocks between Salter and Parr, there were 128 businesses—including Oretzki's Department Store, known as the Eaton's of the North End, located initially at 493 Selkirk Avenue and later spanning from 487 to 493 Selkirk Avenue, the current site of the Winnipeg Education Centre, relocated to Selkirk Avenue in 2005. An old-time resident of the North End said:

"Selkirk Avenue was a [hive] of activity. Saturday night was a way of life. People would take their families. The big event was looking at the stores and shopping and chewing sunflower seeds. And they didn't necessarily come in to buy merchandise.... Money they didn't have. Everybody was in the same boat. So a walk down the street with an ice cream cone and a bag of sunflower seeds and walking into a store like Oretzki's was definitely a way to spend an evening" (quoted in August, 2005, p. 20).

The area immediately around what is now the Lord Selkirk Park development

was, early in the 20th century, the heart of the Jewish North End. Jim Blanchard (2005, p. 198) has recently provided a rich and detailed description of this neighbourhood:

"In 1912 the densest concentration of Jewish residents was just north of the CPR yards in the district bounded by Jarvis and Selkirk avenues and Main and Robinson streets. Here, almost every second house was home to a Jewish family, with the concentration of Jewish homes being greater on the south side of the neighbourhood, along Jarvis and Dufferin avenues. The area was known to some non-Jews as Jerusalem and to others it was 'Jew Town'. Among Jews it was often called *Mitzraim*, which is the Hebrew word for the Egypt of the captivity: a place from which to escape. In 1912 this district was the centre of a thriving and energetic Jewish community with its own synagogues, schools, social agencies, newspapers, a complex political landscape, and a Yiddish theatre".

The Beth Jacob Synagogue, serving the largest Orthodox congregation in western Canada, was located on Schultz Street, between Jarvis and Dufferin, immediately south of where Lord Selkirk Park is now located, while the Talmud Torah School was on the north-west corner of what is now Lord Selkirk Park, at Flora and Charles (Blanchard, 2005, p. 193). The streets near what is now the Development were inhabited by Jews and others from Eastern Europe, especially Ukrainians and Poles, who did a variety of jobs:

"The streets south of Selkirk Avenue were inhabited by working class and lower-middle class families. On Flora Avenue between King and Salter, among other people, there lived three labourers, several caretakers, two

clerks, a warehouseman, and a peddler. There were also tradesmen, some with shops on Main: a blacksmith, a printer, a tinsmith, a plumber, and a harness maker. There were three tailors, one of whom, Hyman Gunn, was a manufacturer employing other tailors in his factory on Logan. Living next to Gunn, at number 309 Flora, in the other half of a duplex, which Gunn may have owned, was Rabbi Kahanovitch of Beth Jacob Synagogue. The Rabbi always lived on Flora, first at 309 and later at 281, until his death in 1945. On Stella Avenue, the street south of Flora, lived people with a similar mixture of occupations: six labourers, eight clerks, and a number of tradesmen" (Blanchard, 2005, p. 205).

A remarkably wide range of social, cultural and educational organizations were built in the North End early in the century. It is not an exaggeration to say that the North End of the time was a thriving cultural centre. There were newspapers published in many European languages, churches and synagogues, music and drama societies, literary associations, sports clubs, a wide range of alternative schools which kept alive traditional cultures and languages. There were frequent public speeches, dramatic productions, musical events. A thriving co-operative sector emerged, meeting the needs of many North End residents. Labour temples were constructed, mutual aid societies created. And radical politics of a bewildering variety of kinds emerged out of the socially and culturally thriving, yet economically disadvantaged, North End.

The result was a real sense of pride about being a North Ender. As Roz Usisken (p. 18) has described it:

"Contrary to middle class, dominant stereotypes which depicted the East

European immigrant as 'uncultured', as suffering from cultural deprivation, many of the North End inhabitants brought with them to the new country an extensive cultural heritage of ancient traditions... [from which] they derived a dignity denied them by the dominant society".

Most of this North End richness was unknown to the largely Anglo-Saxon south end of the city. The segregation promoted ignorance, and lack of tolerance. As Artibise (1975, p. 173) describes it: "Many Winnipeggers never lived in mixed neighborhoods and thus failed to develop the tolerance which must exist in such areas.... many residents escaped the demands of respect for different goals and values". Among Winnipeg's elite, the segregation promoted not only ignorance and lack of respect, but also the callous attitudes that were expressed in public policies that ignored the needs of the North End:

"Sheltered in their lavish homes in Armstrong's Point, Fort Rouge and Wellington Crescent, and engaged in a social and business life centred around the Manitoba Club, the Board of Trade and the St. Charles Country Club, the governing elite's callous stance was often the result of ignorance.... for the most part they gave little serious thought to the social problems in their midst" (Artibise, 1977, p. 54).

Those in positions of authority looked upon the residents of the North End with scorn, and "spent only a small fraction of their budgets on such community services as sanitation, health departments or welfare" (Artibise, 1981, p. 216).

The historic, pre-Second World War North End was a remarkable place. The poverty was deep; the deprivation severe. Segregation and discrimination prevailed. Those with economic and political power

looked upon the North End and its people disrespectfully, even scornfully and hatefully, and such attitudes found expression in government policies which further disadvantaged the North End. But there was also energy, and creativity, and a strong sense of community in the North End. For many people it was, for all its hardships, a good place to be poor in.

b. Post-Second World War Changes in the North End

In the post-Second World War period the North End changed dramatically, although the seeds of change had been present earlier. Large numbers left the North End—part of the continent-wide process of suburbanization, a process heavily subsidized by governments. Between 1951 and 1961 the number of Jews in the North End, for example, declined by half, from 12,389 to 6536; the number of Ukrainians dropped by 10 percent (Artibise, 1977, p. 174). In 1941, 2.4 percent of Jews in Winnipeg lived in the suburbs; in 1961, 44.2 percent lived in the suburbs—most in West Kildonan, River Heights or Tuxedo (Rosenberg, 1961). The decline continued for decades, as more and more people who could afford to do so left for the suburbs. One study found that from 1941 to 1976 the population of the inner city as a whole declined by 29 percent, while the population of the suburbs grew by 200 percent (Johnston, 1979, pp. 39-49). Another determined that from 1941 to 2001, while the population of Winnipeg as a whole was growing from 300,000 to 674,000, the population of the inner city declined from 153,700 to 93,800, or from 51.2 percent to 13.9 percent of Winnipeg's total population (Lezubski, Silver and Black, 2000, p. 30). In short, there was a massive movement of people out of the North End, and the inner city more generally, to the suburbs.

Those who left the North End were, for the most part, those who were doing relatively well economically. Many were second and third generation Eastern European immigrants who had grown up in the North End, and had done well in school, and/or landed good jobs in the post-war economic boom. One long-time North End resident described this post-war process by saying: "This was the poor part of town you know—so you wanted to get away from it" (August, 2004, p. 38). This was made possible, among other things, by the fact that the discrimination experienced earlier in the century was beginning to dissipate: "during the 1950s large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxons acquired a relative degree of affluence and were accorded by the charter group increasing degrees of respect and tolerance" (Artibise, 1977, p. 174). Occupations like medicine and law, closed to non-Anglo-Saxons throughout the first part of the century, were opened, and these opportunities were seized upon by many of Eastern European origin who had grown up in the North End. Many of the North End's most skilled and talented sons and daughters left the North End for the bigger spaces and newer homes of the suburbs.

As they left, the thriving commercial life of the North End atrophied. Children chose not to take over the small corner grocery stores that their parents had owned, and in the back or on the top of which many had lived. It is not hard to see why. Even before the post-war exodus, life as a small North End shopkeeper was difficult. Most were poor. There were too many stores; not enough purchasing power. And the bigger outlets were starting to appear on Selkirk Avenue even before the War. As early as 1925:

"The first Ladies Ready-to-Wear shop opened on Selkirk Avenue—offering manufactured garments, where previously on Selkirk, ladies' clothing had

been available primarily at dress-makers' shops.... The arrival of factory-made clothing and shoe shops, and a chain grocery store in the North End's business milieu, were the harbingers of problems to come for the colourful array of small shops" (August, 2004, p. 19).

By the mid-1930s Safeway and Jewel stores had moved onto Selkirk Avenue; in the post-Second World War period cars were more readily affordable, and businesses shifted from the North End to the suburbs—parallel to the movement of people.

"Lots of stores closed. See, we used to have a lot of corner grocery stores... What really influenced the change were the big stores, you know, the Safeways. That's what made the big change. And then of course the malls started. That's what really tore everything apart, that's what broke up the type of community life that you had in the area. The little corner groceries closed down—couldn't compete. They couldn't compete" (quoted in August, 2004, pp. 36-37).

The relocation of large numbers of skilled, working age people from the North End to the suburbs, and the demise of the once-thriving, small store commercial life centred on Selkirk Avenue, took its toll on the rich social and cultural life of the North End. It too, began to atrophy:

"The Halls began to suffer and the organizations suffered as well. There was a Jewish synagogue right over here on McGregor and Magnus, where there is [now] a filling station. And there was a Jewish school right next door. That's gone. People moved and so the churches... began to disappear" (quoted in August, 2004, p. 39).

The drama and music societies, literary

associations and sports clubs, the public speeches, ethnic newspapers and radical politics, all atrophied. The North End changed, and changed dramatically.

c. Housing Problems in the Post-War Era

What did not change was the shortage of good quality affordable housing in Winnipeg's North End. In 1942 the *Winnipeg Tribune* wrote that "a housing shortage of unprecedented scale was reported in the 1941 housing survey". Mayor John Queen, who repeatedly called for action on this front, added: "Housing conditions are so bad in our city that we cannot neglect the situation any longer. There is a constant violation of health bylaws but we cannot put the people out: they have no where to go" (*Winnipeg Tribune (WT)*, Jan. 28, 1942).

This theme—the inadequacy of housing for low-income people in Winnipeg, and particularly in the North End—is a constant throughout the 20th century. The private for-profit housing industry has never produced enough good quality, affordable housing for low-income people to meet the demand. As a result, large numbers of Winnipeggers have been poorly housed. That continues today. Yet the City, in the 1940s as today, did not have the fiscal capacity to solve the problem. If government was to intervene to fill the low-income housing gap left by the private market, the federal government had to provide a part of the funding. In the 1940s they did not. A 1947 fact-finding Board reported to City Council that 7000 additional housing units were needed.

"the provision of low-rental shelter is a chronic, country-wide problem and its solution can be achieved only on a national basis.... So far, the federal government has refused to recognize the provision of low-rental housing as a national responsibility. The munici-

palties, by and large, have not sufficient financial strength to meet the responsibility alone" (WT, July 4, 1947).

In 1947 the City built a 100 unit emergency housing subdivision on Flora Place. This was important because it was "a symbol of public acceptance of the principle of subsidized low rental housing". But these 100 units did not come close to meeting the demand. As a result, the City could not respond to the many health violations committed by landlords — there was no place to put tenants who would have to be moved. Between 250 and 300 families were living in the old CPR and CNR immigration sheds, which were then being used as temporary housing (WT, July 4, 1947).

In 1949 William Courage, Superintendent of Emergency Housing, told Council that the City's emergency housing was at its limit. Some consisted of "converted air force huts", and "the situation is so bad that the Welfare Committee is considering placing in hotels certain families now living in garages and slum conditions". The "lack of low-rental housing in Winnipeg has forced people to live in houses condemned as unsanitary by the Health Department". A *Tribune* editorial said: "Housing has... now become one of society's most urgent problems" (WT, Feb. 12, 1949). Yet Councillor Jacob Penner's 1949 motion to create a housing authority — modelled on that formed to administer Toronto's new Regent Park public housing development — to negotiate with the federal and provincial governments for the provision of low-rental housing, was defeated, even while more than 1000 people still lived in emergency shelters (WT, Sept. 20, 1949).

While investing heavily in support of suburbanization, governments under-invested in low-rental housing in the North

End. As the *Tribune* (Sept. 15, 1949) put it, while the market, heavily supported by governments, worked well to produce single-family dwellings for those who could afford to buy a house, "it still remains true that the lower third of the housing demand has not been touched. In the past this 'lower third' has occupied overcrowded tenements or the run-down and derelict housing abandoned by the middle income group".

That year, 1949, changes were made to the National Housing Act authorizing the federal government to put up 75 percent of the cost of low-rental housing projects if a provincial government put up the remaining 25 percent. Now it was up to the City and the Province to advance proposals for low-rental housing. The *Tribune* (Dec. 17, 1949) reported:

"There can be no question of the need. There are 3000 applications on file from veterans seeking wartime houses in Winnipeg and the applications are still coming in at the rate of 70 a month. On the average, 300 families a month apply for emergency accommodation while placements average only about 30."

With demand for low-rental housing still so high, and the possibility of federal funding now available, Jacob Penner moved that the City enter into negotiations with the province to enable the provision of 1000 units of such housing. The motion was defeated by way of a referral to committee. The *Tribune* commented that "many similar motions have been defeated or referred to housing committee before", while Penner said to Council, in exasperation: "Refer, defer, that's all you do" (WT, Sept. 5, 1950).

In May of 1952 the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce came out in opposition to a plan to build 800 low-cost houses for rental purposes in Winnipeg. As the *Trib-*

une reported: “the Chamber was opposed to providing subsidized housing for one group of citizens at the expense of others”. Winnipeggers seem to have agreed. When in October, 1953, Winnipeg residents were called upon to vote on a \$1.1 million bylaw to build low-cost housing, the proposal went down to defeat by a two to one margin.

Attitudes toward subsidizing low-rental housing began slowly to change when it increasingly became apparent that allowing the persistence of poverty and inadequate housing created a net cost to government coffers. In 1957, the *Tribune* ran a table based on a 1944 report, comparing costs in District 1 and District 2 of what they called ‘the slum area’ (in the North End), with costs in the city as a whole. The figures are per 1000 of population, and although drawn from a 1944 report, the *Tribune* argued that more recent partial surveys had produced similar results.

As Table One shows, various health, police and social service costs were *much* higher in North End neighbourhoods than in the city as a whole. Further, the low-income neighbourhoods, because of the deteriorated condition of their housing stock, generated lower property tax revenues. This was the case elsewhere. In June, 1957, Montreal’s Director of Planning was quoted as saying that “slum

properties do not return nearly as much in taxes as the value of the services they receive” (WT, June 22, 1957). The same case was being made in Toronto: “Time after time, proponents of slum clearance pointed to the disproportionate rates of disease, social service costs, fires and crime in run-down neighbourhoods”. (Brushett, 2001, p. 122; see also p. 247). Some people in Winnipeg began slowly to see that an investment in adequate low-rental housing was a productive investment that would improve the City’s fiscal situation.

A 1959 report by the City Welfare Department revealed that payments to those on welfare were flowing straight through to a small number of slum landlords who were racking up large profits, while repeatedly incurring housing violations. The report showed what the four landlords—called A, B, C and D—paid in taxes, and earned in rent, and the numbers of buildings they rented (Table Two).

These four landlords took in rent 10 times the annual taxes paid on their many properties. In 1958 they incurred 388 violations of the Health Act. From 1955 to 1958 they had a total of 1497 such violations, including: 117 for defective walls, floors and ceilings; 86 for bed bugs; 66 for insufficient plumbing; 54 for cockroaches; 38 for insufficient heat; and 10 for rats.

| | District 1 Pop’n 29,479 | District 2 Pop’n 23,246 | Rest of City Pop’n 170,292 |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Municipal hospital costs | \$825 | \$1608 | \$593 |
| Admission to public wards | 91.1 | 101.4 | 52.9 |
| Arrests by police | 21.1 | 52.2 | 6.5 |
| Infant mortality | 85.5 | 52 | 42.5 |
| Deaths from TB. | 4.6 | 7.9 | 2.9 |
| Social welfare cases | 16.1 | 19.3 | 6.7 |

Source: *Winnipeg Tribune*, Jan. 5, 1957.

The City was subsidizing slum landlords—the housing component of welfare payments was going directly into slum landlords’ pockets, and little of that money was being reinvested in the provision of adequate, affordable housing. These revelations added to the growing pressure for what the *Tribune* called “alternative low-rental housing” (WT, Oct. 14, 1959).

Yet as the *Tribune* described it, progress was slow because the majority on Council were ideologically bound to oppose the subsidizing of housing for those of low incomes, even while heavily subsidizing suburban sprawl (WT, Dec. 29, 1959). Councillor Edith Tennant charged that Winnipeg was “10 years behind the times”, adding that: “It is shocking to see the progress in other cities and then to realize that Winnipeg has nothing off the drawing board so far” (WT, June 22, 1960). A *Tribune* editorial of October 12, 1960, was stronger still:

“Winnipeg’s record on urban renewal and the provision of housing for low-income families borders on the disgraceful. For years there have been plans upon plans, and talk on talk. But nothing has happened. Nothing has been accomplished”.

In April, 1961, the *Tribune* pointed out that “nearly 9000 public housing units have been built in 45 cities and towns across Canada while Winnipeg was making up its mind whether public housing is a good idea” (WT, April, 1961).

“Since 1944, the federal government has proclaimed its willingness to put money into slum clearance. Since 1954, Ottawa has stood ready to pay 75 % of the cost of low-rental housing projects, including annual subsidy needed. But Winnipeg has been unable to claim a penny of this money because we have done nothing about the slums except talk about them and draw up reports and resolutions” (WT, June, 1961).

The *Tribune* editorialized:

“Children have been born and have grown to adulthood, their lives marked by the impact of the slums, while Winnipeg City Council has been talking about slum clearance.... We’ve been talking about it for a generation but we haven’t cleared any slums. If the social and economic cost was reckoned to be enormous 24 years ago, what must it be now?”

This represented a massive failure on the part of the City and the Province to invest in the North End in the wake of the post-war flight of people and capital to the suburbs. When we ask, today, how did the inner city come to be in the condition that it is in, here is a major part of the answer: a City Council totally committed over a long period of time to promoting suburbanization, with all the public subsidies that this involved, but resolutely unwilling to invest in the hollowed-out inner city left behind. So reticent was City Council to invest in public housing that

| | Taxes paid | Rent received | Ratio: rent to taxes | Buildings |
|----|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| A. | \$7442 | \$75,405 | 10 to 1 | 13 |
| B. | 3597 | 35,124 | 10 to 1 | 21 |
| C. | 7675 | 70,890 | 9 to 1 | 18 |
| D. | 2048 | 29,282 | 15 to 1 | 29 |

Source: *Winnipeg Tribune*, October 14, 1959.

Mayor Stephen Juba told the story of how he had been 'bawled out' once in Ottawa for Winnipeg's failure to get 'slum clearance'/public housing projects off the ground (WT, May 29, 1962). This long-time failure to invest has brought us to the point that we are at today in Winnipeg's inner city and North End.

d. Urban Renewal—At Last

Finally, in 1960, the City identified the Salter-Jarvis area as the site of Winnipeg's first 'urban renewal' project, and recommended the creation of the 168-unit Burrows-Keewatin public housing project in the city's north-west corner, to house at least some of those to be displaced from Salter-Jarvis.

A part of the reason for action finally being taken appears to have been a shift by the Chamber of Commerce, long-time opponents of subsidizing low-income housing. The Chamber now believed that it made financial sense to invest in low-rental housing. And pressure was growing from the community more broadly. In 1961 representatives of 28 Winnipeg organizations—including labour, social service, business, church and women's organizations—were urging the government to act on the creation of public housing (WT, April, 1961).

The project of urban renewal that the City was finally prepared to move on was to take the form of 'slum clearance'. Urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s meant 'slum' clearance.

That there was a massive housing problem in Winnipeg, and especially in the North End, was undeniable. It could have been solved in a variety of ways. But 'slum clearance'—bringing in the bulldozers, knocking down existing houses, erecting blocks of new housing, and calling the process 'urban renewal'—

was the generally accepted approach of the time. That was what was being done elsewhere, that was what would be imported to Winnipeg.

The Salter-Jarvis neighbourhood comprised the area from the CPR tracks north to Selkirk Avenue, and from Main Street west to Salter Street—what had been in the pre-Second World War era the heart of the North End's Jewish quarter, the *Mitzraim*. The portion of Salter-Jarvis between the tracks and Dufferin Avenue had particularly deteriorated. Industrial firms and scrap yards had located along the railway. Squeezed between the tracks to their south and residential areas to their north, they had no room to expand. They began to purchase houses with a view to future expansion. The result was that "a process of deterioration began" to set in. Jarvis Avenue was the worst. Manley Steiman, City of Winnipeg Health Inspector, "cites Jarvis Avenue itself as being, undoubtedly, the worst street in the entire city" (Yauk, 1973, pp. 45-46). Many houses on Jarvis had been little more than shacks from the beginning of the century; many lots, small as they were, had two or more dwellings squeezed onto them.

After the Second World War the situation worsened. In the decade before 1960, 75 percent of the Jewish families in this heart of the historic Jewish quarter left the neighbourhood, part of the flight to the suburbs. "In the wake of this migration, deterioration continued, aggravated by increases in slum landlordism" (Yauk, 1973, p. 47).

Early in the 1960s Aboriginal people began to move into the city. Many located on Jarvis and in the surrounding area where housing was cheap. Strangers to the city, they were vulnerable to those who would profit from the weak, and particularly to slum landlords. "Houses became hovels and landlords fed on the

Writing in the March 12, 1961 edition of the *Winnipeg Tribune*, Val Werier described the Salter-Jarvis area as follows:

“When the CPR came through Winnipeg in 1881, it gave birth to a settlement north of the tracks. It was in effect a CPR village, consisting of clerks, brakemen, firemen, conductors, switchmen. Other residents included building trades workers, small shopkeepers, peddlers, teamsters, labourers. As immigrants from Europe began to settle there by the turn of the century, CPR workers moved to better districts. In a pattern of social status followed in other city areas, different racial groups displaced others. Today, some of the residents include the recent wave of Indians and Metis to the city.

“The district has deteriorated partly because of its age. But from the start it was never destined to last....Anything went in the early days. There was no zoning or planning. Makeshift houses sprang up without foundations and some still exist today....It’s an area with an unusually large number of ‘1/2’ addresses. These addresses are on homes which share half a lot. They were built in front or behind.”

ill-informed Indian and Metis people who found accommodation in the area” (Yauk, 1973, p. 47).

Aboriginal people living on Jarvis and nearby took over from the pre-war Jewish families as the new targets of racial abuse. In August, 1962, the *Tribune* ran a column that began: “The police, with ponderous legal irony, call it Jarvis Boulevard. Others, with more bitterness, have named it Tomahawk Row” (WT, Aug. 25, 1962). In September the *Tribune* described a Winnipeg Police Commission report.

“The Report, signed by Inspector Robert Young, says the area has been a ‘problem’ for many years. It adds it has become worse recently with the arrival ‘of more persons of Indian racial origin. The district now appears to have become an Indian and Metis community’, says Inspector Young’s report. Some 27 single and multiple dwellings are completely occupied by persons of Indian origin.... The report says over 100 persons, mostly Indians, have been arrested in the area so far this year” (WT, Sept., 1962).

As had been the case throughout the twentieth century, the most recently-ar-

rived, non-Anglo Saxon inhabitants of Winnipeg’s North End were blamed for the area’s poverty. The former heart of the Jewish North End—home to dilapidated slum housing for 50 years and more by this time—was now occupied by Aboriginal people, who became the latest targets of racial abuse.

Typically, the report condemns an entire group, and makes no attempt to *explain* the observed behaviour of some members of the group. No mention is made of the racism that Aboriginal people faced upon arrival in Winnipeg. No mention is made of the nefarious activities of avaricious slum landlords. No mention is made of the devastating impact of colonization upon Aboriginal people—that they were stripped of their lands, that their economic and political systems were destroyed, that they were pushed onto often distant reserves, denied the right to practice their spirituality and their culture, forced into residential schools, denied the right to speak their languages. Now, in the early 1960s, some began to move into cities where they faced a modern industrial culture for which many were simply not prepared. They moved to where housing was available at the lowest cost, just as

Jews and Slavs had done earlier in the century. And as had been the case earlier in the century, the newcomers were subject to vile and vicious forms of racism. Winnipeg has a long and dishonourable history of subjecting the inhabitants of the North End to racism. Councillor Joseph Zuken responded angrily to the police report. As the *Tribune* (Sept., 1962) reported it, Zuken said: “The police are throwing around racial tags. Indians get a raw deal—there isn’t a people in the world more exploited”. And “Jarvis Avenue should be declared a disaster area for human beings”.

Yet there were voices, even at this early date, making the case for a genuine form of Aboriginal community development. Jean Legasse, Director of the Community Development Services branch of the provincial Department of Welfare “believed that Indian and Metis can organize successful community developments if they are allowed to solve their own problems in their own way” (WT, Oct., 1962). Urban Aboriginal people have been doing that, quietly and effectively, for the past four decades, and the results have been impressive (Silver, 2006, especially Chapter 5). Yet most in Winnipeg would remain oblivious to the many positive achievements of urban Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, just as they had remained largely oblivious to the remarkable social and cultural achievements of the Eastern European immigrants of Winnipeg’s North End in the first half of the century. Aboriginal people would continue, throughout the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, to be the victims of racist condemnations from Winnipeg’s dominant culture, just as their Eastern European predecessors in the North End had been in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Salter-Jarvis neighbourhood was similarly the object of blanket condemna-

tion. The neighbourhood was bifurcated by Dufferin Avenue. South of Dufferin toward the tracks, and especially on Jarvis, there was serious deterioration. And Jarvis set the tone, in outsiders’ minds, for the neighbourhood. Yet while Jarvis was deteriorating, Dufferin Avenue itself continued to thrive, with many small owner-occupied stores still in business, while to the north of Dufferin and west of King housing remained in quite good condition, particularly in the area between Flora and Selkirk Ave. The area south of Dufferin was in bad shape, and needed replacement; the area north of Dufferin was a healthy, albeit low-income neighbourhood—what one long-time resident, Morry Zeilig, described as “a good area to be poor in” (Yauk, 1973, p. 46).

Yet what City of Winnipeg urban planners saw when they looked at this part of the North End was only “slum”, “blight”, “deterioration and decay” (Yauk, 1973, p. 52). Yauk argues that urban planners looked at the North End from the outside, with middle class values, and with no real personal knowledge of the area nor its people. Where North Enders saw ‘a good area to be poor in’, urban planners saw only a ‘slum’. And in the era of urban renewal this meant bulldozing entire neighbourhoods—the good along with the bad. The City’s response to the serious problems in the southern portion of the Salter-Jarvis area—the area around Jarvis Avenue itself—was to apply to the *entire* area, including the healthy albeit low-income part of the neighbourhood north of Dufferin, “a bulldozer operation lacking both an insight and perception of the slum problem itself” (Yauk, 1973, p. 2).

In March, 1961, City Council approved Winnipeg’s first ‘slum clearance’ program, a four-stage, six-year plan to bulldoze most of Salter-Jarvis, construct 300-plus public housing units, and add 168 units in Burrows-Keewatin, in the city’s north-

west corner, to be used to house some of those displaced by 'urban renewal'. By late October, 1963, people were moving into Burrows-Keewatin; by late summer 1964, it was fully occupied. Construction of Lord Selkirk Park began in November, 1966. Most of those eventually displaced from Salter-Jarvis did not move into Burrows-Keewatin—they moved into privately-owned housing in neighbourhoods immediately north or east of Salter-Jarvis.

From the outset, governments were told that North End housing problems could not be solved simply by knocking down old houses and putting up new ones. The problems were complex. Their solution required a comprehensive approach with a strong social component. In June, 1962, both Albert Rose, a leader in the promotion of public housing in Toronto and author of a book on Regent Park (Rose, 1959), and Leonard Marsh, a pioneer in the building of Canada's social security system, were in Winnipeg and spoke to the proposed public housing project in Lord Selkirk Park. Rose said:

"There's a tremendous social task of building the community in this area. We've found that you can't just provide physical accommodation and then stop.... you can't develop urban renewal and assume the people are going to settle in their new environment without giving them a tremendous amount of assisted social adjustment" (WT, June 7, 1962).

Marsh said much the same:

"When you rebuild you must rebuild the neighbourhood and not just set up a housing project. It simply isn't enough to get rid of wretched houses. This mistake has been made again and again in Great Britain and to a certain extent, Toronto" (WT, June 7, 1962).

This early call for a comprehensive ap-

proach to neighbourhood revitalization—one that included strong social supports, not just bricks and mortar—would go completely unheeded. So too would similar pressure from within the community. Rev. Charles Forsyth of St. Andrews Elgin United Church criticized City Council for focusing solely on the physical and not the social aspects of urban renewal. "There are men (sic) on Council who haven't had a spark of social conscience for the last 20 years. All they're worried about is how to keep the mill rate down". He added that racism was a part of the problem: "Whether you admit it or not, there is a tremendous race problem in Winnipeg—it's worse here than in Georgia" (WT, Feb. 8, 1963). Despite such warnings, little effort was put into the social side, the people side, of the public housing initiative. The implicit assumption appears to have been that the erection of new housing units would, by itself, solve the problems associated with 'slums'.

In May, 1963, the expropriation of property in Salter-Jarvis began. Residents received no prior notice, and no assistance with relocation. Many found private housing nearby, in houses that themselves were soon to be cleared. With Burrows-Keewatin full by late summer 1964, and Lord Selkirk Park not to open until 1967, most of those displaced from Salter-Jarvis after May, 1963, were on their own. Of the 480 households moved in Stage One of the four-stage relocation process, "420 were relocated to existing dwellings, mostly in the North End" (Yauk, 1973, p. 102). By the end of Stage Three of the process, "850 dwelling units had been eliminated, with only 56 households having been accommodated in public housing units" (Yauk, 1973, p. 119). The result: most of those moved in the name of urban renewal did not end up in public housing; and the already desperately-short supply of low-rental housing was *further* reduced.

This has repeatedly been the experience both in Canada and the USA—urban renewal, and in later years other projects aimed at ‘solving’ the problems of ‘slums’, led to significant reductions in the numbers of low-income housing units. In Boston in the 1940s and 1950s, where urban renewal schemes were being undertaken, “only between 2 and 12 percent of those who lost their homes were provided with apartments in the housing project that displaced them, even though, BHA [Boston Housing Authority] records suggest, between 50 and 80 percent of displaced families submitted applications” (Vale, 2002, p. 55). Hugh Garner, author of the Depression era novel, *Cabbagetown*, set in the area that would be cleared in 1949 to make way for Canada’s first public housing project, Regent Park, wrote that:

“There is an embryo movement on foot to clear Cabbagetown of its slums [and] the people who live there don’t like it; what is to become of them when the slums are cleared? They will have to move into other slums. And when the new houses are built, how can they move back into them? They have no money. It will indeed be a miracle if they are taken back into the new houses.... [people in Cabbagetown] think that this slum clearance scheme is one to make the sight of the poor districts easier on the eyes of the beholder. The new houses will cause the slum dwellers to move and scatter” (Quoted in Brushett, 2001, p. 116).

Yauk (1973, p. 83) saw the same thing happening with the clearance of Salter-Jarvis: “the people as pawns are one by one swept away to make way for better things to come. Better for whom?”

There is no doubt that much of Salter-Jarvis was in need of revitalization. “Almost half (48.5%) of all households resided in premises which were severely

deteriorated. Most of these were unfit for habitation” (Yauk, 1973, p. 94). The quality of housing into which relocatees moved was, on average, an improvement. But overcrowding worsened, and half of those relocated in Stage One of the move experienced rent increases—for more than one-quarter, the rent increase was 50 percent or more (Yauk, 1973, p. 100). Almost 60 percent of all households moved within a one-mile radius, many to North Point Douglas, east of Main Street, and many others to the area between Selkirk and Redwood, north of Salter-Jarvis. In many cases:

“Their move was met with apprehension and coldness on the part of the communities to which they migrated. Established residents were resentful of the welfare recipients and were especially discriminatory towards the Indian and Metis” (Yauk, 1973, p. 101).

In September, 1966, 30 residents of the Magnus-McGregor area appeared before City Council to complain about the influx of people from the Salter-Jarvis area. They called the new arrivals “undesirables”, saying that “the moral standards of the new residents shouldn’t be tolerated anywhere”, and the whole process had “just shifted the slum from the Lord Selkirk development to the Magnus Ave-McGregor St. area” (*Winnipeg Free Press*, Sept. 27, 1966).

Many of the original inhabitants of Salter-Jarvis simply moved from one low-income neighbourhood to another nearby:

“It is evident that for a great many families, and single persons, Lord Selkirk Park Urban Renewal meant only a change in address. I say this in reflection upon the elderly single persons who traded one dingy room for another, the tenant families who moved to better, or worse, accommodations at rents they could ill afford,

those denied access to public housing by virtue of welfare status or poor housekeeping, those who moved down Jarvis Ave. to an adjacent slum and those alienated from the new communities to which they were moved" (Yauk, 1973, p. 151).

Most of those expropriated were not adequately compensated for their houses. They did not receive enough to purchase a similar house in a viable neighbourhood. They should have received replacement value; instead they received market value.

Many in the neighbourhood were of Slavic origin, and did not want to move at all, because in Salter-Jarvis they could still get by in their own languages. All Jewish shopkeepers in the area, for example, spoke several Slavic languages (Yauk, 1973, p. 164).

In the end, some 740 households were relocated from Salter-Jarvis, with only 70—less than 10 percent—being accommodated in new public housing units in Burrows-Keewatin or Lord Selkirk Park. Most of those who did get such units were happy with their new housing—rents were affordable, they were close to their old neighbourhood, and it was new (Yauk, 1973, p. 135). But the supply of new low-rental public housing was not nearly sufficient to meet the demand. Shortly after Burrows-Keewatin was completed, with its 168 units, the Chairman of the Housing Committee for the Community Planning Council pointed out that: "The City condemns 160 houses a year—not suitable to live in. In effect we have only now completed a one year supply". Even once Lord Selkirk Park was up and running, with its proposed 345 units, making a total with Burrows-Keewatin of 510 new units, there was at the time "a critical need for 1113 units. This means that families are now occupying this number of units which are so sub-standard as to be beyond repair"

(WT, Dec., 1963). The number of units of public housing created was not sufficient to meet the demand at the time, let alone future demand.

What is more, those most in need of affordable housing were not accepted into the new public housing complexes. Public housing authorities screened applicants, admitting only the 'deserving poor'. Heather Robertson (WT, Oct. 22, 1966) described the process this way:

"Where do the leftover people go? When a slum is torn down for urban renewal, only a handful of the 'upper class poor' get accepted into new low-rent housing [because of the screening of applicants]. Hundreds of displaced families—the rejects and leftovers from the new housing projects—get another old, run-down house much like the one they left. Now they may be living on Logan Ave or Isabel St—a few blocks from Jarvis Ave—but their problems traveled with them. These are the new 'Displaced Persons' of our society".

In short, most of the low-income families in Jarvis-Salter did not move into new public housing units, and in fact the number of low-rental housing units was reduced by the entire process. This was consistent with the experience elsewhere. Herbert Gans, writing about the experience with urban renewal in the USA, said:

"Not only did it [urban renewal] reduce the supply of cheap housing to low-income people, but poor relocation methods and the virtual absence of relocation housing, forced them to move into other slums or to pay much more rent than before, thus multiplying their problems" (quoted in Yauk, 1973, p. 164. See also Biles, 2000, p. 147 and 154).

At the same time, the commercial opera-

tions that could be found on every corner of Salter-Jarvis disappeared at about the time that Lord Selkirk Park was erected. In 1963 there were 148 firms of a wide variety of kinds—62 retail, 49 industrial, 35 wholesaling food processing, 2 warehouses—in Jarvis-Salter. More were closed by the end of the 1960s. By 1973, 75 percent of businesses operating a decade earlier had closed (Yauk, 1973, pp. 159-164).

Nevertheless, most of those who initially moved into Burrows-Keewatin or Lord Selkirk Park appear to have been happy with their new housing. The public housing complexes thrived.

There is evidence that the new developments of Burrows-Keewatin and Lord Selkirk Park were deeply appreciated by those lucky enough to find accommodations there. Heather Robertson observed (WT, Oct. 15, 1966) that:

“Social and emotional problems have not disappeared from Burrows-Keewatin. But they are no more severe than in any other community in Winnipeg—they are just more obvious

because the glare of civic attention is constantly focused on ‘the project’, as it is known to social workers in the area. Police seldom visit the development.... They spend less time in Burrows-Keewatin than they do wealthy River Heights. Children play hookey less and do better in school than they did on Jarvis Ave.... Delinquency and crime have decreased. Alcoholism is being controlled. Employment is high”.

Yet by the time that the Hellyer Task Force came to Winnipeg in 1968, Burrows-Keewatin and Lord Selkirk Park were the targets of fierce criticism. Hellyer, then the federal Minister in charge of housing, in his hugely influential study of housing in Canada, claimed that large public housing projects created social and psychological problems, and described them as “ghettos of the poor” (Hellyer, 1969).

How did public housing projects like Lord Selkirk Park become ‘ghettos of the poor’? To find the answers to this question, it is useful to consider the US and Canadian experience with public housing.

Part Two: The US Experience With Public Housing

a. The Origins of Public Housing in the USA

Although some public housing had been built earlier in the Depression for job creation reasons, it was the 1937 Housing Act which created the United States Housing Authority, and “put public housing on a permanent footing” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 425). The 1937 Housing Act formally linked public housing to slum clearance, as did the Housing Act of 1949. Thus began the era of ‘urban renewal’, and the confinement of most public housing to inner cities, since the connection of public housing to slum clearance—what came to be called ‘urban renewal’—“virtually assured that low-income housing would be built in distressed, often undesirable, urban locations” where slums were located (Turbov and Piper, 2005, p. 5). This in turn “meant that private developers would not face significant competition for land on the desirable suburban fringes of American cities” (Radford, 2000, p. 111).

The link between the building of low-income public housing, and ‘slum clearance’, has its origins in the widespread 19th century belief that urban slums created a malevolent environment that adversely affected peoples’ lives, and that the removal of slums could, in itself, cure social ills. Slums were seen to be “the nexus of all civil evil”. This was “a theory of environmentalism that traced epidemics, crime, alcoholism, vice, hooliganism, and political revolution to squalid housing” (Bauman, 2000, p. 7. See also Sewell, 1993, p. 12). Knock down ‘slums’ and build new housing and these problems would automatically be solved, it was believed. This thinking would lead to vast programs of slum removal—which came to be called ‘urban renewal’—and their replacement with public housing.

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, tens of thousands of new public housing units were constructed annually in American cities (Bratt, 1989, p. 57). From the beginning, US public housing developments had a distinctive appearance. Intentionally designed to be different from surrounding low-income, inner city ‘slum’ housing, they typically took the form of apartments in large complexes. These design features, “originally intended to distinguish the projects in a positive way, would in time become a stigma for public housing” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 430). Many took the form of high rise projects, especially those in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and St Louis. Influenced by Swiss modernist architect Le Corbusier, whose vision was of soaring towers located in the midst of vast expanses of park-like grass (Hall, 1988, esp. Ch. 7), public housing in these cities came to be synonymous with row upon row of high rise blocks. In St. Louis the most famous, or infamous, was the Pruitt-Igoe project, which consisted of 33 eleven-story buildings. Even more vast was the world’s largest public housing project, the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, “a two mile stretch of twenty-eight 16-story buildings containing over 4300 units”, completed in 1963 (Hoffman, 1996, p. 433).

These vast, high-rise, concrete projects located in American inner cities would become home to the poorest of the poor, and to disproportionate numbers of African-Americans. Taylor Homes originally housed some 27,000 people, “of whom approximately 20,000 were children, all were poor, and almost all were Black” (Biles, 2000, p. 149). By 1998, of the 11,000 tenants in Robert Taylor Homes, 99 percent were Black, 96 percent were unemployed, 84 percent earned less than

\$10,000 annually, and 70 percent were under the age of 21 (Biles, 2000, p. 265). In Chicago, of the 51 public housing projects approved between 1955 and 1966, 49 were in Black-dominated inner city neighbourhoods. Of the 54 public housing projects operated by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) in 1968, 91 percent were located “in areas which are or soon will be substantially all Negro” (Biles, 2000, p. 150).

Many have argued that public housing became a means of *confining* African-Americans to inner cities, while Whites fled to the suburbs, thus “preserving racial ghettos” and spatial segregation (Biles, 2000, p. 150; Hirsch, 1983). Attempts to build public housing in the suburbs met with aggressive opposition (Biles, 2000, p. 151). In 1946 and 1947 attempts to build public housing for African-American veterans in White suburban Chicago neighbourhoods triggered “a violent white backlash.... At Airport Homes near Midway Airport, whites overturned cars and hurled rocks at the apartments occupied by black veterans. In 1947, the move-in of black veterans to Fernwood Homes on the Southwest Side generated even greater levels of white violence”. Local governments supported White segregationists. For example:

“In 1948 and again in 1950, the City Council blocked nearly all the CHA’s [Chicago Housing Authority’s] requested sites in white areas and forced the CHA to build nearly all its housing in black neighbourhoods. This pattern was repeated in the late 1950s under Mayor Richard J. Daley’s rule. As a result, nearly all postwar public housing in Chicago was built in African-American neighbourhoods” (Fuerst, 2003, p. 5).

It is difficult not to see this as a deliberate strategy. As Crump (2003, p. 181) argues:

“to maintain pre-existing patterns of racial segregation, large public housing projects were constructed in or on the edge of existing urban ghettos. Ghetto boundaries were made visible by highways or other spatial barriers and the design of public housing set it apart from the urban fabric, making it easy to identify public housing residents and keep them within the well-defined borders of ‘the projects’”.

In short, large public housing projects in the USA came to be inextricably bound to inner cities, to poverty, and to the racialization of poverty.

b. The Early Promise of Public Housing

The evidence is that at first, tenants in US public housing projects were happy with their new accommodations, and considered the projects good places to live. In a study based on interviews with 79 people who lived or worked in Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) projects in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Fuerst (2003, p. 2) shows that CHA projects:

“helped thousands of Chicagoans escape slum housing conditions and enter a world that offered first-rate housing, a close-knit community, and the positive pride that comes from a shared experience. In short, public housing and the CHA once worked—spectacularly well”.

An African-American man who lived in the later infamous Cabrini Homes in Chicago until 1953 said: “I think I had a childhood second to none. I remember those years as golden years, frankly. I cherish having grown up in Cabrini” (Fuerst, 2003, p. 133). A man who lived in the Ida B. Wells Homes between 1941 and 1950 said:

“We were poor, but we didn’t know we

were poor, because we lived in this little development. We had new facilities. Central heat. The apartments were new and clean.... We wanted for practically nothing” (quoted in Fuerst, 2003, p. 52).

A woman who moved into Chicago’s Harold Ickes Homes at the age of eleven said:

“You would not believe how the Ickes Homes looked when we first moved in there. Gorgeous! They had green grass, they had flowers.... There were swings for the kids, there was a playground.... And there were no—as far as I know—there were no drugs at that time, and there was no fighting. You could walk up and down at night, nobody would bother you. Oh, but go down there now and look, ooooh!” (Fuerst, 2003, p. 89; see also Feldman and Stall, 2004, pp. 72-78).

The same was the case in other US cities. Vale (2002, p. 20 and p. 12), for example, writes that: “In Boston, as in many other American cities... those who gained new apartments were delighted”. One Boston public housing project in 1940 “boasted twelve softball teams, an eight-team bowling league, two Girl Scout and three Boy Scout troops, a newspaper, a credit union, and a symphony orchestra—as well as numerous other clubs and societies that provided financial assistance, health care, and even programs for children living outside the project”.

Radford (2000, p. 105), referring to the public housing built in the 1930s by the Public Works Administration, said:

“Popular acceptance, not just critical success, greeted the agency’s work. Ordinary citizens expressed their approval by moving into the federal developments—even when they might have afforded other accommodations”.

Public housing in large American cities worked well at first. It housed the working poor, and created a positive sense of community. By the mid-1960s, however, this was no longer the case. Large public housing projects came to be identified with racialized poverty and violence. Biles (2000, p. 152) says: “To many Americans ... public housing had metamorphosed into a dumping ground for society’s unfortunates and an absolute last resort for anyone who could not possibly do better elsewhere”. What caused this transformation?

c. The Deterioration of American Public Housing

From the beginning, powerful forces opposed the idea of good quality *public* housing. As early as 1936 a US Senator complained in Congress that “the houses that have been constructed in New York, Cleveland and Boston and elsewhere are really in competition with private property” (Radford, 2000, p. 105). Private developers, Chambers of Commerce and politicians opposed the development of *public* housing; it provided competition to private developers, and cut into profits (Bratt, 1989, p. 56). This is at least a part of the reason that most large public housing projects are located in inner cities, take the form of high-rise towers to save on property costs, and were poorly built, also to save on costs.

As the US economy weakened in the 1970s, and the global economy restructured in various important ways, and governments responded with severe cut-backs in public spending, public housing further suffered. This is an important part of the explanation for the deterioration of public housing.

While the general public—and many in government, media and academe—came to see public housing as both symbol and

cause of urban problems, the more accurate interpretation is that public housing came to be a receptacle, or 'warehouse', for those most badly damaged by the broader changes in the political economy of urban America. The problem is not public housing, as such. The problem is much broader. But public housing has been asked to deal with the worst *effects* of the problem, and in doing so has come to be identified with, and even mistakenly seen as a *cause* of, the problem. Public housing has taken the fall for—been blamed for—problems that it did not cause, but whose victims it was asked to house. And it was asked to do so in rapidly deteriorating inner city environments, and with steadily declining resources.

For most large public housing projects, building was done on the cheap. Public housing was specifically intended not to compete with private developers, and was deliberately designed to be of lower quality than private housing (Quercia and Galster, 1997, p. 536 and 540; Bratt, 1989, p. 56). Turbov and Piper (2005, p. 5) argue that "public housing began to be constructed as high-rise developments to save on land costs", and "were built cheaply and to minimum housing standards" (see also Popkin et al, 2004, p. 16). Soviet housing officials visiting Chicago's Henry Horner Homes in 1955, during construction, expressed surprise at the use of poor-quality building materials, and said they would be fired if they constructed buildings that way at home. In an editorial the next day, *The Chicago Daily News* said: "there is little use for luxury in building subsidized low-cost housing" (Kotlowitz, 1991, p. 22). The effects would be felt in later decades as public housing projects, which came to be home to the poorest of the poor, physically deteriorated beneath their feet.

The demographics of public housing also

changed, from two-parent working class families to larger numbers of social assistance recipients and lone-parent families. This happened for several reasons. Fuerst (2003, p. 3) argues that in the early years, public housing in Chicago was well-managed and adequately-funded, and prospective tenants were screened so that those living in public housing were mostly two-parent working families. And "in its first twenty years the CHA fostered an environment that created a strong sense of community—these projects were true 'villages' raising children". However, since the 1970s:

"Public housing in too many big cities is operated as the warehouse for families who have serious social problems and who need drug treatment, health care, job training, and basic educational skills. But the program was not designed to deal with this overwhelming level of need.... they converted the public housing into a modern day poorhouse by making the CHA the provider of the city's housing of last resort" (Fuerst, 2003, p. 195 and 199).

Vale (2002, p. 6) advances the same argument:

"A half-century before, public housing had valiantly serviced the working poor, but now it struggled to house America's most desperate urban residents. As the 1990s ended, only about one in five public housing households reported earned wages as its primary source of income, and more than three-quarters of households were headed by a single female. Moreover, since the majority of public housing residents were Black or Latino, the program as a whole faced increased political marginality".

By the mid-1960s, "pressures from civil rights groups" (Vale, 2002, p. 17) led to the end of the tough screening policies

that had characterized the earlier period. The poorest of the poor, whose need for good quality, low-rental housing was least likely to be met by the private for-profit housing market, began—probably with the best of intentions—to be admitted in ever-larger numbers, so that public housing increasingly became ‘housing of last resort’. This was made more the case by the effects of suburbanization, as a result of which the ‘pool’ of applicants for public housing changed, because most public housing was located in inner cities from which White families and later African-American families who could afford to do so had fled. The poorest of the poor were left behind, confined to deteriorating inner cities. Venkatesh (2000, p. 276), in his analysis of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes, observes that:

“In its first three years, Robert Taylor was a success by any definition, in large part because the CHA and tenants had the freedom and resources to meet household needs. The two parties screened applicants rigorously, mixed working and poor families in the high-rises, and drew on the resources of the wider community to support tenants and decrease their sense of isolation. By the mid-1960s, the deluge of impoverished households that came to the Housing Authority seeking shelter made this conscious planning and social engineering unworkable. Buildings soon became filled with households in poverty, the CHA and organizations in the complex were stretched beyond their capacities”.

Adding to the problem was that families whose incomes rose above a certain level were required to leave public housing projects. This was made particularly the case by amendments to the Housing Act in 1969, 1970 and 1971 (Quercia and Galster, 1997, p. 538), which removed

from public housing many upwardly-mobile working class tenants. “Access to public housing was thereby restricted to the most economically disadvantaged segments of the population” (Venkatesh, 2000, p. x). Public housing became a warehouse for those most adversely affected by a rapidly changing urban political economy. Today, public housing serves a tenant base that is *very* poor: “The average public housing tenant has an annual income of \$6000” (Quercia and Galster, 1997, p. 541). This was not the case in the 1960s, when public housing tenants represented a spread of income categories (Quercia and Galster, 1997, p. 566).

Not only did these changes remove many working class families from public housing, replacing them increasingly with the non-employed poor, but also they reduced the amount of rent revenue available for repairs and maintenance. The result was a downward spiral of deterioration:

“Caught between rising costs and falling rents, city officials began to cut maintenance and security budgets for the deteriorating projects. Then the Brooke Amendment to the 1968 Housing Act placed a ceiling on rents of 25 percent of the tenants’ income, further reducing the amount of funds available for operating expenses” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 436. See also Turbov and Piper, 2005, pp. 5-6).

During the 1960s and 1970s the Chicago Housing Authority:

“neglected basic maintenance, attributing this neglect to lack of federal funds. Working class families with options fled in the early 1970s, triggering a budget crisis that brought about a further deterioration of conditions. A highly predictable downward spiral ensued, and the CHA’s ineffective leadership made little effort to stem the bleeding. Public housing was

allowed—through poor leadership and neglect—to become the city’s housing of last resort” (Fuerst, 2003, p. 6).

Most large public housing projects were located in inner city neighbourhoods which were suffering the effects of post-war suburbanization and de-industrialization. Inner cities were ‘hollowed out’; those left behind were disproportionately the poor; few jobs were left. Those in the worst circumstances—and particularly women with children—were directed to public housing, which thus became ‘housing of last resort’, the new, late 20th century poorhouses. Querica and Galster (1997, p. 538) refer to the “dramatic spatial transformation of America’s urban landscape during the last four decades”, which “left many public housing tenants in inner city areas with few opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Moreover, public housing developments found themselves in neighbourhoods with ever greater concentrations of poverty and the attendant social consequences”.

High proportions of those left in the ‘hollowed out’ inner cities were, and are, African-Americans. They, in particular, have been adversely affected by these broader socio-economic changes. Public housing served to confine them, in their poverty, to the inner city, enabling the maintenance of late 20th century urban, de facto segregation:

“The loss of manufacturing jobs devastated African-American communities and as social problems associated with joblessness spread, the spatial isolation of large public housing projects... acted as a spatial containment policy” (Crump, 2003, p. 181. See also Venkatesh, 2000, p.x; Popkin et al, 2004, p. 8; Fosburg et al, 1996).

As the deterioration set in, criticism of public housing mounted. One book “condemned Pruitt-Igoe and other giant

projects as human disaster areas” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 436, referring to Rainwater, 1970). Pruitt-Igoe was torn down—dynamited—in the early 1970s, determined by civic authorities in St Louis to be beyond redemption. In 1973 President Nixon declared a moratorium on the construction of new public housing.

Pruitt-Igoe and its problems came to be seen, in the dominant view, as evidence of all that is wrong with public housing. Yet the problem at Pruitt-Igoe was not public housing. It was the concentration of racialized poverty, as the result of the dramatic restructuring of the political economy of urban America. As one critic of the dominant view points out, in an attempt to bring light to the ‘Pruitt-Igoe myth’:

“ What issues are not discussed in this myth are issues of race—the over 10,000 residents of Pruitt-Igoe were 98% African-American—and issues of poverty.... with an annual median family income of \$2,454 and a family including, on average, a mother and 4.28 children” (Birmingham, 1998, p. 1).

From the beginning, in 1951, “whites could not be convinced to move into the project”. As a result, “Moneys for the project began to dry up immediately... as the population was increased, money for landscaping and any services (public spaces like gyms, playgrounds, a proposed grocery, even public bathrooms) disappeared” (Birmingham, 1998, p. 3). By the early 1970s, “the only tenants who stayed were those with nowhere else to go, most often single mothers with more than four children” (Birmingham, 1998, p. 8).

The open, park-like spaces in which the soaring, Le Corbusier-inspired towers of the largest public housing projects were set increasingly became home to vandal-

ism and crime. By the 1980s, the large high-rise public housing projects were dominated by gangs and drugs and violence (see Popkin et al, 2004, Ch. 2; Venkatesh, 2000, esp. Ch. 3). Kotlowitz (1991, pp. x-xi), in his vivid description of the lives of two young African-American boys in Chicago's Henry Horner Homes in the mid-1980s, writes:

"I was unnerved by the relentless neighbourhood violence he [Lafayette, the older of the two boys, then 10 years of age] talked about. In fact, I had trouble believing it all. And then I asked Lafayette what he wanted to be. 'If I grow up, I'd like to be a bus driver', he told me. *If*, not *when*. At the age of ten, Lafayette wasn't sure he'd make it to adulthood".

The book's title, *There Are No Children Here*, arises from the comment made by the boys' mother to the author: "But you know, there are no children here. They've seen too much to be children". Kotlowitz (1991, p. 32) describes the level of violence in the summer of 1987: "By season's end, the police would record that one person every three days had been beaten, shot at, or stabbed at Horner. In just one week, they confiscated twenty-two guns and 330 grams of cocaine. Most of the violence here that summer was related to drugs". Venkatesh, describing the gang domination of Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes, quotes a tenant saying: "It used to be our community, but it's theirs now. [The gangs] have taken over". Another tenant added: "Gangs have always been part of the community, they always will be. It's just that now, they control us" (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 3). The rise of crack cocaine added to the problem:

"The potential revenue from crack economies escalated conflicts between gangs, and increasingly weapons were used during these disputes,

often in public spaces where tenants and their children were present" (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 111. See also Kotlowitz, 1991, p. 38).

This rise in drug-related gang violence coincided with the severe economic recession of the early 1980s. "People was messed up, wasn't no work", said one man. Another, speaking in 1980, added: "Things are different now, things are tense now. The young people have nothing to do. No jobs. No recreation. So they are rowdy. They don't go to school. They make trouble" (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 119). Manufacturing jobs were largely gone from American inner cities, and in many cases from the USA generally (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982). Governments, especially starting with Reagan in 1980, were cutting public funding dramatically—the Reagan administration cut funding to Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by 76 percent from 1980 to 1988—and responding to the inevitable rise in social problems with increased state repression. Public housing, and those who lived in public housing, were badly hurt.

"In the waning years of President Nixon's administration... federal funding for mediating institutions in the ghetto, ranging from job training centres to social work programs, withered and there was little buffer between law enforcement agencies and the citizenry. By the dawn of the Reagan administration, funding priorities for policing in inner cities shifted almost wholly to the use of law enforcement techniques such as mass arrest, infiltration and covert surveillance, and surprise interdiction that disrupted public space, rather than policing it in a manner that promoted its usability" (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 119).

The political Right, opposed from the outset to the idea of good quality public hous-

ing, seized upon these problems with a renewed determination to eliminate public housing. Crump (2003) argues that the Right waged:

“a relentless campaign of individual and territorial stigmatization designed to undermine political support for the [public housing] program.... Widely disseminated media images of welfare mothers living in decayed public housing projects were used to develop a linkage between the morally loaded concept of welfare dependency and the material landscape of public housing. These campaigns helped to convince the public that the only solution to inner city decay and disorder is the demolition of public housing”.

The oppressive policy of pushing ever more Black youth into penal institutions contributed to the problems:

“It was an outgrowth in the 1970s of the increasingly large population of incarcerated Black youths. Prison officials, using gangs to help maintain social control, effectively enabled gangs and their leaders to organize—often members joined simply for protection against indiscriminate physical harassment—and to consolidate, form alliances, and grow in number and strength. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, members returned to ghetto streets and found few legitimate work opportunities but increasing opportunities to sell heroin, cocaine, and marijuana, and to join car-theft rings and extortion rackets” (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 133. See also Kotlowitz, 1991, p. 36).

In this environment, where there were few legitimate opportunities to live out “the American dream”, and young African Americans were abandoning “an irrelevant and poorly funded educational

system”, the lucrative drug trade created the real opportunities, the alternative opportunity structure (Venkatesh, 2000, pp. 149 and 162). Black youth did not feel welcome in ‘good’ jobs, and the stigma attached to large US public housing projects—the design of the projects, and especially the high-rise projects, set them apart as “stigmatized warehouses of the poor” (Hirsch, 1983, as quoted in Hoffman, 1996, p. 436)—further contributed to the isolation by race and class, to their spatial and social confinement to the ‘projects’.

“No place in the United States, with the possible exception of prisons and certain hospitals, stigmatizes people in as many debilitating ways as a distressed inner city public housing project.... these stigmatized individuals have accumulated in environments that themselves only added to the stigma” (Vale, 2002, p. 13).

Venkatesh (2000, pp. 164-169) describes how African-American youth in Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes were affected by their identification with the ‘projects’: “Their social standing as black Americans who live in the ‘projects’ and in the ‘ghetto’ affects their expectations of success”. They do not expect to ‘succeed’ in conventional terms. Kotlowitz (2005, p. 121) describes a young man in Chicago’s Horner Homes, who “had thought about the future, something most young men in this neighbourhood rejected—often for good reason—as a waste of time”.

And so, given the absence of opportunities in the mainstream economy, and given the belief that any such opportunities, even if they were to exist, are beyond their project-bounded reach, many young men join the gangs:

“Gang activity affords them space to ‘be a man’. It is a life that is not far afield of the classic rags-to-riches American

success stories, particularly the idealized organized crime narratives in which immigrants rise above their slums but remain closely wed to people living there. Like ethnic immigrants, the leaders want to leave poverty behind and gain independence, and their experiences as job seekers—and as observers of other aspiring ghetto dwellers—have not provided evidence that the legitimate labor force will support their dreams. Their frustration and their preference for remaining among their peers lead them to withdraw to the ghetto and to the drug trade” (Venkatesh, 2000, p. 173).

The result is large, inner city, public housing projects that are home to extreme concentrations of racialized poverty, and that are the breeding grounds for gangs, drugs and violence. The problem is *not* public housing. The problem is the broader forces of a rapidly changing urban political economy, which have left many inner city residents behind, and then warehoused them in the public housing long since built there.

That the problem is not public housing as such is made evident by the fact that not all public housing in the USA has been a disaster. Public housing for seniors has continued to provide much needed, good quality affordable housing. “Moreover, many thousands were and are content to live in the inexpensive apartments that public housing projects offered, as long as some semblance of personal security was included in the bargain” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 436). As Naperstek (2000, p. 3) notes: “The great majority of these [public housing] projects are neither large nor distressed. In accordance with HUD mandates, most provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing”.

It is the high-rise, inner city-located and

Le Corbusier-inspired public housing projects that have become ‘housing of last resort’ and home to drug-driven gang violence that are associated in the public imagination with the failure of public housing. And even in their case, the cause is not public housing as such. Fuerst (2003, p. 209), for example, makes a strong case, based on the early experience with public housing in the US, that with good management, adequate funding and reasonable screening, “public housing for low-income, female-headed families can be sanctuaries, not penitentiaries”.

d. HOPE VI

The severity of the problems associated with public housing led, in 1989, to the creation by Congress of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing. The Commission produced a National Action Plan calling for a 10 year strategy “to eliminate severely distressed public housing by 2000” (Turbov and Piper, 2005, p. 7). In response, Congress created HOPE VI.

HOPE VI—Home Ownership for People Everywhere—was launched in 1993. It has been described as “a dramatic turnaround in public housing policy and one of the most ambitious urban redevelopment efforts in the nation’s history” (Popkin et al, 2004, p. 1). The program is premised on the belief that the high concentration of poverty and unemployment “was a major contributor to the high levels of social problems in distressed public housing”. The solution is to deconcentrate poverty by knocking down parts of large public housing projects, replacing them with mixed-income housing sold or rented at market rates, and providing vouchers to those low-income tenants displaced in the process, enabling them to relocate to better neighbourhoods. The result has been “a massive demolition and

reconstruction effort” (Querica and Galster, 1997, p. 549). The hope is to create new, healthy, mixed-income neighbourhoods that no longer look like, nor have the stigma now attached to, large high-rise public housing projects.

Much of the discourse around HOPE VI is about improving physical design—a move from high-rise towers to a more garden apartment/townhouse design. In this, HOPE VI embodies the ‘new urbanism’—a movement among city planners, architects and developers that rejects ‘modern’ planning, and takes advantage of the positive impacts yielded by traditional planning designs. There is some evidence that the strategy is producing successes. Turbov and Piper (2005, p. v), for example, start their recent analysis of HOPE VI projects by saying that:

“Across the United States, attractive mixed-income developments and revitalized neighbourhoods are being created where distressed public housing once stood.... By leveraging other public and private dollars, the HOPE VI program has converted the nations’ worst public housing projects into the foundations of healthy neighbourhoods, providing quality affordable housing while attracting new market activities and radically changing the urban landscape”.

Turbov and Piper (2005, p. v) add, based on their analysis of HOPE VI projects in Atlanta, Louisville, Pittsburgh and St. Louis, that:

“Early evidence shows that there have been discernible market improvements in these formerly distressed neighbourhoods, from the time of pre-redevelopment to as late as 2004. Household incomes in each of these case study projects grew at a faster pace than that of their city or region, after redevelopment. Unemployment

and workforce participation rates have improved. Crime levels have dropped dramatically, as much as 93 percent in Atlanta’s Centennial Place. Where revitalization efforts focused on school quality, student test scores dramatically improved. Finally, these redevelopments were able to attract and retain residents with a broad range of income levels while still serving public housing families. With market-rate renters and home-buyers getting a foothold in these renewing neighbourhoods, property values and new investments have also soared in these more viable, mixed-income communities” (Turbov and Piper, 2005, p. v).

Despite these impressive achievements, there are reasonable and important criticisms of HOPE VI. To the extent that the program is based on the argument that the problem with public housing is a problem of design, it is flawed. The ‘failed architecture’ argument (Hackworth 2005, p. 44)—ie., that the problem with public housing is its design—obscures the deeper problems associated with the changing political economy of urban America, and the massive cuts to public funding. And it enables a framing of HOPE VI as ‘progressive’, despite its elimination of so many low-income rental units, and resulting displacement of the poorest of the poor who were its tenants. For example, Henry Cisneros, former HUD director and key promoter of HOPE VI in the mid-1990s, frames HOPE VI in this positive light, arguing that gains are being made and that they are attributable to design changes:

“We are replacing the worst of the housing units... that have, for too long, been the settings for our children’s urban nightmares... Instead of the super blocks of Cabrini-Green, grids of traditional streets are being designed. Instead of mammoth apartment

buildings, small-scale townhouse-style housing is being constructed” (quoted in Hackworth, 2005, p. 45).

But what is really happening is the mass demolition of public housing. Individual Public Housing Authorities are competitively awarded HOPE VI grants to revitalize large public housing projects, but are not required to replace all of the units eliminated as part of a redevelopment plan. Most “do not replace anywhere close to 100 percent of the felled units. Only slightly more than half of the units to be built with HOPE VI dollars will be even nominally ‘public’ (ie, affordable to the existing tenantry), and only 50.7 percent of these units will actually be available to the residents whose homes were originally demolished” (Hackworth, 2005, p. 35). This smacks of the effects of ‘urban renewal’ in the 1950s and 1960s, which reduced the total number of low-income rental units available, and is consistent with what Yauk (1973) described when the Salter-Jarvis area was cleared to make way for the building of the Lord Selkirk Park housing development in Winnipeg. There is, in short, a risk of repeating with HOPE VI, at least some of the problems created in an earlier era by urban renewal.

Chicago, for example, “is in the middle of the largest housing demolition program in history, with plans to tear down all fifty-one of its high-rise public housing buildings. Numerous buildings at projects like the Robert Taylor Homes, Henry Horner Homes, and Cabrini-Green have already come down” (Fuerst, 2003, p. 205). Not all the public housing units are being replaced: “Although fifty thousand units have been authorized (to be torn down), only thirteen thousand new units have been built in the program’s first six years—a drop in the bucket of what’s needed” (Fuerst, 2003, p. 193). Vale (2002, p. 1) observes that:

“On the basis of HUD data, researchers estimate that 11,000 units of public housing are being demolished each year, most of these previously occupied by residents earning less than 30 percent of the area’s median income. When replacing these apartments with ‘mixed-income communities’, housing authorities are mixing in only about 4000 public housing units—and most of these are targeted to households with higher incomes than those of current housing residents”.

The displacement process particularly targets ‘troublemakers’, and does so in a harsh fashion, punishing entire families. Hackworth (2005, p. 36), who sees HOPE VI as a neo-liberal initiative, points, for example, to the ‘one strike and you are out’ policy, which makes possible the eviction of those families any of whose members are convicted of a criminal offence. Crump (2003, p. 179) argues, like Hackworth, that HOPE VI is consistent with recent welfare reform initiatives aimed at privatizing social service provision and moving people out of public housing and off of the welfare rolls. What follows is that the improved neighbourhoods and reduced crime statistics cited by advocates of HOPE VI may simply reflect yet another occurrence of the historic pattern of ‘slum clearance’—by which the poorest of the poor are pushed from one low-income neighbourhood to another. Crump, (2003, p. 185) argues that “as the widespread demolition of inner city public housing projects proceeds throughout the United States, the built environment of the inner city is being remade. Public housing is rapidly being replaced by new urbanist townhouses, intended to re-engineer the class and racial structure of the city by bringing middle class European-Americans back to the inner city”. This is a form of gentrification.

Many public housing tenants believe that this is what is happening, and have opposed HOPE VI as a result. There have been many localized struggles against HOPE VI initiatives in US public housing complexes, much as there were many struggles against urban renewal earlier in the century. In New York City, “the fear of displacement was sufficient to organize tenants against the HOPE VI program in the mid-1990s” (Hackworth, 2005, p. 38). At Chicago’s Cabrini-Green, the demolition of low-rental public units has led to opposition from existing tenants fearful of losing their homes.

“Reducing the number of public housing units in order to make redeveloped sites ‘mixed-income’ is an issue in Chicago, where most of the plans call for only one-third of the units to be public housing, with the rest either ‘affordable’ (80-120 percent of area median income) or market-rate. At Cabrini Green... residents fought in court to ensure that those who wanted to stay could be included in the new community that the city envisioned for them. They also fought to get more control over the process to ensure that replacement housing be built first and that demolition happen afterwards, whenever possible. Their view... is that while the physical design is important to residents, having enough replacement public housing is essential to the success of housing plans. Otherwise, this ‘new urbanism’ is just another form of displacement of poor people” (Smith, 2002, p. 1).

Popkin et al (2000) concur: “The demolition of public housing projects and their replacement by mixed income developments is resulting in a significant reduction in the amount of low income housing available. For example in Chicago it is estimated that there will be a net loss of over 14,000 units of affordable housing.”

Those pushed out of public housing as a result of the loss of units become the new urban refugees:

“The question of what has happened to the original residents of the revitalized HOPE VI developments has become a major—and contentious—focus of concern.... To date, approximately 49,000 residents have been relocated from HOPE VI properties across the United States. Unfortunately, there is only limited information about how these residents have fared, although early analysis suggests that relatively few will return to the revitalized HOPE VI developments” (Popkin et al, 2004, pp. 21 and 27).

For many public housing tenants, HOPE VI “is another form of ‘urban renewal’ that is displacing poor households from gentrifying neighbourhoods” (Popkin et al, 2004, p. 28). At Cabrini-Green, for example, the fact that the project lies in close proximity to Chicago’s posh Gold Coast district fuels the suspicion that the entire process is about gentrification.

Advocates of HOPE VI argue that housing vouchers enable former public housing tenants to relocate to higher-income neighbourhoods. However, there is evidence that policies aimed at moving people out of low-income neighbourhoods into higher-income neighbourhoods have not worked as well as first thought. The most well-known of such initiatives was the Gautreaux program, which originated in Chicago as a civil rights initiative. In 1969 the courts ruled in *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority* that the CHA’s tenant placement amounted, in effect, to segregation, in that the tenants in large public housing projects were overwhelmingly African-American. The remedy was to move public housing tenants to suburban neighbourhoods where it was thought “that thriving suburban locales will im-

part superior schooling and employment to the poor who are moved there” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 440). The Clinton administration expanded the program to Baltimore, Boston, Los Angeles and New York, as well as Chicago, in the form of the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program. However, careful studies of the outcomes of Gautreaux and MTO found that those who moved gained little if anything relative to those who remained in inner city public housing (Hoffman, 1996, p. 441). Many of those who have used vouchers to move to the private market are having trouble making their rent payments (Popkin et al, 2004, p. 30). Middle class neighbourhoods have generally resisted such programs (Hogan, 1996). And serious questions about the methodology of earlier and more positive studies of the Gautreaux program have led Popkin et al (2000, pp. 929-930) to conclude that: “it would be a mistake to view this research as conclusive evidence of the potential benefits of dispersal programs”.

The destruction and non-replacement of low-income rental units is a major problem, and represents the deep flaw of HOPE VI. It is reminiscent of the widespread displacement of ‘slum’ residents during the ‘urban renewal’ programs of the 1950s and 1960s. Those most in need of affordable rental housing will now have even less such housing available to them. As Goertz (2003, p. 256) puts it:

“A responsible antipoverty policy should not lead with demolition of low cost housing and the forced relocation of the poor. This nation’s history with the urban renewal program suggests that without complementary actions to reduce exclusionary barriers and incentives that foster and facilitate growing socioeconomic disparities... the scattering of poor people, in itself, accomplishes little”.

However, there may be, despite its flaws, some positive aspects to HOPE VI programs. These are the product of those elements of the program which go beyond bulldozing and redesigning to address people and community. Naperstek et al (2000, p. iii), for example, make the case that HOPE VI is making a genuine difference “because of the critical provision written into the original HOPE VI legislation to address people and opportunities as well as bricks and mortar”. The key, they argue, is that HOPE VI partners are “working with an approach that we call *community building*”, an approach rooted in an asset-based philosophy, and committed to resident involvement and a holistic approach to service provision (Naperstek, 2000, pp. 1-2). Training and job placement are central features of this approach. Naperstek et al (2000, p. 61) argue that:

“Public housing communities can become effective training grounds and launching pads for underprivileged or marginalized citizens who want to become self-sufficient and a catalyst for the revitalization of the larger neighbourhood”.

They describe an employment development approach being used in Chicago public housing projects that links employers and tenants. “In the most effective employment programs, housing authorities identify prospective employers and tie the training process to job commitments”. An example is the partnership between the Chicago Housing Authority and Walgreens drug store chain. Walgreens has agreed “to install retail training centers in community facilities at two HOPE VI sites—the Cabrini Green Dantrell Davis Center and the Robert Taylor Homes Boys and Girls Club”. Walgreens supplies actual equipment—store counters, price scanners—to set up a virtual store and training site, and

Walgreens trains people in this on-site facility, while they simultaneously get 'soft skills' training. Jobs are made available to graduates. "By August 1999 two dozen HOPE VI residents were employed by the drug store chain, while another 12 completed the training" (Naperstek et al, 2000, p. 63). This is consistent with the important work being done in many US cities to get low-income people into good jobs by involv-

ing employers in the process from the outset (Loewen, Silver et al, 2005).

From this long history of the rise and decline of public housing in the USA, we can draw a strong, cautionary note, leavened by a glimmer of hope. The real hope lies not in demolishing and redeveloping, but in 'reclaiming' public housing by means of a strategy of community development and gradual destigmatization (Vale, 2002, p. 36).

Part Three: The Canadian Experience With Public Housing

a. The Origins of Public Housing in Canada

The pattern of public housing in Canada—its construction, deterioration and current attempts at revitalization—parallels that in the USA, although on a smaller scale. The Canadian experience can be discerned through a consideration of the first, largest and perhaps most famous/infamous of Canada's public housing projects, Toronto's Regent Park. As Brushett (2001, p. 98) argues: "Regent Park represented the first salvo in Toronto's, and indeed, Canada's modern war on slums, and soon became the paradigm for urban renewal throughout the nation".

Canada has experienced a shortage of adequate, low-income rental housing throughout the 20th century, the consequence of low incomes, racism, and bad landlords on the demand side, and of the limited number of low-income rental units produced by the largely private, for-profit developers on the supply side (Purdy, 2003b, pp. 458-460). "Unlike almost any other consumer good, the free market cannot, as social reformers have long lamented, supply decent affordable housing for the entire range of incomes" (Brushett, 2001, p. 59). This failure of the market to deliver much-needed housing for low-income people was the backdrop to urban renewal and public housing in Canada.

Despite the demonstrable need, Canada was slow in getting into public housing, lagging behind the USA (Brushett, 2001, p. 238). Even now, Canada has "the smallest social housing sector of any Western nation except for the United States", with only 5 percent of Canadian households living in social housing (Hulchanski, 2003,

p. 3). This has been largely attributable to government and business opposition to public housing in favour of the private, for-profit provision of home ownership, the latter benefitting from the support of "a well-financed lobby, sympathetic ministers and deputy ministers, and a majority of Canada's voters" (Hulchanski, 2003, p. 5). In 1946, C.D. Howe said in the House of Commons that: "It is the policy [of this government] to ensure that as large a portion as possible of housing be built by the private sector" (quoted in Sewell, 1994, p. 7). Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent said in October, 1947: "No government of which I am a part will ever pass legislation for subsidized housing" (quoted in Rose, 1958, p. 85). Thereafter, in the post-Second World War period, almost all federal housing programs were aimed at home ownership, and at those who could afford home ownership, rather than at rental accommodation for those with low incomes (Sewell, 1993, pp. 91-92).

b. The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Canada

Nevertheless, there was in Canada, as in the USA, a brief period—between 1949 and 1968—when large public housing projects like Winnipeg's Lord Selkirk Park and Toronto's Regent Park, were constructed. As in the USA, they were built as part of a 'slum clearance', or urban renewal program. The provisions were set out in the 1949 National Housing Act (NHA), which required that the federal government pay 75 percent of the costs, the remaining 25 percent to be paid by the province (Sewell, 1994, p. 133). Under the 1964 NHA, the federal government would pay 90 percent of capital costs, share op-

erating losses equally with the provinces, and leave ownership vested with the provinces. The 1964 Act was a “turning point” for the development of public housing in Canada: “In 1964 there were about 10,000 units of public housing in Canada; by the end of 1974 that number had risen to 115,000” (Sewell, 1994, p. 135).

Numerous reports had been published in the period leading up to and immediately after the Second World War, drawing attention to the ‘slum’ conditions in large Canadian cities, and calling for some version of ‘urban renewal’, featuring the tearing down of ‘slums’ and their replacement with public housing. “Extensive studies of Halifax, Hamilton, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Montreal, and Toronto in the early 1930s showed a proliferation of dilapidated housing conditions, lack of affordable housing units and rampant social distress” (Purdy, 2003c, p. 52). The Bruce Report of 1934, officially called the *Lieutenant Governor’s Report on Housing Conditions in Toronto* (Sewell, 1993, pp. 66-72; Rose, 1958, pp. 37-45; Brushett, 2001, p. ix), for example, “contains the first slum clearance and rehousing plans for Cabbagetown, which later became Regent Park” and “soon became the ‘bible’ of social housing activists, not only in Toronto, but across Canada” (Brushett, 2001, pp. ix and 105). Its philosophy was typical of the 19th century-inspired belief—environmental determinism—that all social problems were caused by slums, and could be solved with the eradication of slums:

“the authors of the Bruce Report declared that better housing would cut mortality rates and stamp out prostitution, reduce crime and eliminate juvenile delinquency, but only if they could completely remodel the environment, by wiping away the old and build again on a grand scale. Only the elimination of the entire slum neighbourhood, not just the individual slum

houses, could mitigate the pathological effects of slum areas” (Brushett, 2001, p. 110).

In Toronto, especially, despite corporate and government opposition, there was consistent public pressure for government involvement in housing. A reform coalition led by the Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association successfully pushed for a question on the ballot for the 1947 Toronto civic election calling for the expenditure of \$5.9 million for the creation of Regent Park North, and voters supported it (Sewell, 1993, p. 71; Brushett, 2001, p. 126; Rose, 1958, p. 68). This was six years before a similar question in Winnipeg, on the 1953 civic election ballot, failed, largely because in Winnipeg, unlike Toronto, there was at that time no powerful citizens’ group calling for urban renewal and public housing.

The 1947 approval of civic money for public housing led directly to the razing of the Toronto ‘slum’, Cabbagetown, and its replacement with Regent Park North (RPN). The design of RPN was typical of large urban renewal/ public housing projects of the time: “get rid of the street system; demolish as many buildings as possible; create great chunks of open space; and build functional structures that looked entirely different from everything else” (Sewell, 1993, p. 150).

The impact on residents of the ‘slums’ was typical of the experience elsewhere. Brushett (2001, p. 99) observes that: “slum clearance and its later euphemism, urban renewal, soon ran roughshod over the rights and interests of the very people it intended to benefit. Like all other projects that would follow it, the destruction of Cabbagetown and its renewal as Regent Park was both brutal and authoritarian in its implementation”. As we have seen, the same was the case in Winnipeg’s Salter-Jarvis area.

In Toronto, a series of urban renewal projects were built between the 1940s and 1960s: Regent Park North and Regent Park South; Moss Park; Alexandra Park; Don Mount (Sewell, 1993, pp. 152-155). Each involved the destruction of existing neighbourhoods and their replacement with public housing that was largely inconsistent with, and physically distinct from, the character of the pre-existing neighbourhoods. The total number of units of low-income housing was reduced, ie., more housing was destroyed than was replaced by public housing (Purdy, 2003c, p. 55). And as was the case in the clearance of Winnipeg's Salter-Jarvis area, and urban renewal programs of the time throughout North America, large numbers of those displaced moved within a one-mile radius of their original residence, and in at least some cases, ended up in worse housing situations (Brushett, 2001, p. 340).

However, the attempt to do the same in Toronto's Trefann Court met stiff opposition from neighbourhood residents, who insisted upon resident input into planning and the selection of planners, and a design that maintained the existing street structures and included infill housing (Sewell, 1993, pp. 161-162). Sewell argues that "Trefann Court spelled the end of urban renewal in Canada", and led to the establishment in 1968 of a federal task force headed by Paul Hellyer to review housing policy (Sewell, 1993, p. 162. See also Brushett, 2001, p. 35).

The report of the Hellyer task force was extremely critical of urban renewal, and called for its end. Hellyer's Task Force on Housing and Urban Development, whose report was released in January 1969, said the following about urban renewal and public housing, echoing voices south of the border:

"The big housing projects, in the view of the Task Force, have become ghettos

of the poor. They have too many 'problem' families without adequate social services and too many children without adequate recreational facilities. There is a serious lack of privacy and an equally serious lack of pride which leads only to physical degeneration of the premises themselves. The common rent-gear-to-income formulas do breed disincentive and a 'what's the use' attitude toward self and income improvement. There is a social stigma attached to life in a public housing project which touches its inhabitants in many aspects of their daily lives" (Hellyer, 1969, pp. 53-54).

c. The Power and Danger of Popular Discourse

Despite the commonality of views about large public housing projects being expressed at the time in Canada and the USA, it is important to be cautious about, and even skeptical of, the ways in which low-income urban areas, including public housing projects, are described in popular discourse. The language applied to such areas—describing them as 'slums', for example—conjures up specific images, which can drive public policy. The question is, are those images and is that discourse an accurate representation of life in those neighbourhoods? Too often, they are not.

Brushett (2001, p. iii) argues that the process of urban renewal, and its destruction of low-income neighbourhoods—'slums'—"was due, in large part, to the way in which these neighbourhoods were portrayed in popular discourse".

"All too often Toronto's working class neighbourhoods were viewed through the lens of the 'Victorian slum' and universally portrayed as landscapes of disease, despair and degeneracy—both physically and morally. The

inability of Toronto to move beyond a kind of 'Victorian environmentalism' to comprehend the diverse realities of inner city neighbourhoods led to the physical and social destruction of much of working class Toronto" (Brushett, 2001, p. iii).

The words used to describe inner city Toronto neighbourhoods such as Cabbagetown, in addition to 'slums', included: 'cancer', 'diseased', 'decay', 'criminal', 'dark', 'squalid', 'blight', 'festering', 'immorality' (Brushett, 2001, p. 15). Slums were places of "disease, distress, disorder, disaffection and decay" (Brushett, 2001, p. 3). "Images of poor housing conditions, poverty, filth and moral wickedness were condensed into one striking picture of abject misery that was propagated en masse by the reform lobby, state officials and the main media outlets in Toronto and nationally" (Purdy, 2005, p. 530).

This language, this slum narrative, was used to justify the wholesale destruction of neighbourhoods. In this way, Brushett (2001, pp. 1-2) argues: "Toronto's poor neighbourhoods — slums — were imagined communities... constructions of language and culture". The result is that, for many, "To discuss slums is to deal with words, with discourse, with signs and the concepts they communicated as much as with the social geography of inner cities".

In short, outside observers were not really seeing the low-income neighbourhoods; they were 'seeing' the imagery created by their depiction, in language and in imagery, as 'slums'. Edward Said, in his classic study *Orientalism*, described how an elaborate system of myths, symbols and representations of the Middle East was created by scholars and governments, obscuring and distorting the Middle East in order to advance imperial ambitions (Said, 1978). The same,

Brushett (2001, p. 4) argues, has been the case with low-income urban neighbourhoods. The language, the signs, the representations of the 'slum', create 'imagined communities' comprised largely of stereotypes. These stereotypes have had policy effects:

"slum stereotypes were crucial to the advancement of particular political agendas. Close attention must be paid to the words and images used to construct slums in the popular imagination, because they relate directly to the solutions proposed and acted upon to solve 'the problem of the slum'.... there were many ways to solve the housing problems of Toronto's poor, but there was only one way to solve the problem of the slum — that is to erase it, to wipe the blots from the face of the city through massive urban renewal and public housing projects which were the most costly solution of all".

The problem was that in constructing low-income neighbourhoods as slums, "planners, state officials and social reformers fundamentally misunderstood poverty as well as the lives of the poor" (Brushett, 2001, p. 27; see also Purdy, 2003c, p. 57). Yauk (1973) has made clear that this was precisely what happened in Winnipeg's Salter-Jarvis neighbourhood. Viewed through middle class eyes by planners with no direct knowledge of the neighbourhood nor its people, Salter-Jarvis was seen simply as a 'slum', and was bulldozed in its entirety. The results were devastating for many who had lived there, and who had seen it as a 'good neighbourhood to be poor in'.

Nor is this a phenomenon confined to the past. Purdy (2005, p. 524) argues this is what has happened recently with Regent Park, which has been socially constructed as an "'outcast space'... a 'branded space',

and its tenants as social 'outcasts'". He analyzes the effect of the NFB's documentary film, *Return to Regent Park* (1994), in creating a "powerful place-based stigma [which] ... would complement the damning and pervasive characterizations of Regent Park residents by social workers, academics and the media". Purdy (2005, p. 530) argues that:

"Considerable historical research has been conducted on external, often racialized, depictions of 'slum' neighbourhoods, for instance, showing that the substance and rhetoric of slum representations revealed more about the distinctly white, middle class notions of what constituted a proper neighbourhood and requisite behaviour than they did about the actual physical, social and cultural environments of the poor and minorities. From the disorderly, Victorian slums of the 19th century to the dangerous 'no go' neighbourhoods of today, these slum representations have had a tenacious hold on the imaginations and practices of 20th century urban reformers, the media, state officials and the wider public".

The danger is that a similar process may still be at work, creating distorted images of life in the 'projects' as the basis for HOPE VI-type programs. Purdy (2003c, p. 42), for example, observes that: "the [current] discourse of redevelopment is reminiscent of the 1940s arguments for urban renewal, condemning tenants for their slum pathologies and arguing that environmental transformation will make Regent Park a healthy community."

d. The Early Promise of Public Housing

As was the case in the US, public housing in Canada was initially successful. Regent Park was "hailed as a universal success

at the time it was built", and for the next two decades was widely upheld "as evidence of how the principles of modern planning could magnificently transform the lives of society's poorer members" (Brushett, 2001, pp. 42 and 98).

Early tenants of Regent Park were happy with their new housing. "In place of a home in often deplorable condition at a rent that took a large portion of the family income, they were moved into a large new apartment with rent based on income" (Sewell, 1993, p. 72). Hugh Garner, author of the classic Canadian novel, *Cabbagetown*, writes in the Author's Preface to the 1968 edition that:

"The new housing was a godsend to the ex-Cabbagetowners, a relief to the police force and a welcome change to the district firefighters. The social agencies now had fewer calls, and the charities fewer local recipients. The new generations of Cabbagetowners had money and jobs, which most of those who came before them had not" (Garner, 1968, p. viii. See also Rose pp. 120-121, and pp. 134 passim).

Purdy (2003c, p. 135) adds:

"There is substantial evidence from the first decades of the project, furthermore, that residents, most of whom were former renters living in sub-standard housing, were fond of their dwelling units. Early newspaper reports show that people were genuinely pleased with the new spacious accommodations and facilities, a finding shared by oral histories of the early days of American housing projects.... More recent oral and documentary testimony gathered by the author confirm these sentiments. Many found the apartments spacious, well kept and in sound condition".

Tough screening of applicants confined

Regent Park in the early years largely to two-parent working families, particularly veterans. Applicants underwent a personal home visit by a Regent Park staff member, were evaluated on a five-point scale for 'Suitability as a Tenant' (Purdy, 2003a, p. 8), and 'problem families' — those "whose family relationships, behaviour and moral standards, and standards of housekeeping are so far below the accepted standards that they are judged incapable of improvement" — were kept out (Rose, 1958, p. 205). There were long waiting lists to get in (Purdy, 2003b, p. 461):

"Even before RPN [Regent Park North] had been completed in 1957 there were 7000 applications on file for the project. From the inception of the waiting list for RPS [Regent Park South] in 1957 to the end of 1959, there were 13,527 inquiries received by the MTHA [Metro Toronto Housing Authority]. By 1959 the waiting list for these units was almost 10,000 names long. By 1970, the Metro Toronto housing registry office had 38 employees to receive 10,000 calls a month and 2000 new applications a month. Applications on file reached 16,000 in 1969" (Purdy, 2003b, p. 465; see also Brushett, 2001, pp. 363-364).

This huge demand for public housing is evidence of the need that public housing projects like Regent Park were meeting.

e. The Problems With Public Housing Now

Within 20 years of its establishment Regent Park was being condemned as a 'new slum', a 'colossal flop' (Purdy, 2003a, p. 2).

"Regent Park became the symbol of all that was wrong with modern planning and public housing: it was too large,

too impersonal, too bureaucratic, and was largely alien from the interests of its residents.... the massive super-block projects created 'ghettos of the poor' by physically and socially isolating them from the rest of the city. By the 1970s Regent Park had returned to the landscape of poverty, crime, and despair that had once marked Cabbagetown in planners "bad books", and had animated their plans for its removal" (Brushett, 2001, pp. 98-99).

In 2002 the *Toronto Star* described Regent Park "as a 'poster child for poverty'" (Purdy, 2003a, p. 2).

Purdy examines the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Regent Park tenants over a 40 year period, from the 1940s to the 1970s. He finds that the socio-economic composition of Regent Park tenants began to diverge dramatically from that of Toronto as a whole, starting in the mid-to-late 1960s (Purdy, 2003a, p. 3).

The proportion of Regent Park tenants who are single parents went from around 7 percent in the late 1950s, to approximately 17 percent in the mid-1960s, to more than 50 percent in 1981 (Purdy, 2003a, p. 12). Incomes for women and men in Regent Park were about on par with Toronto as a whole when Regent Park opened in the 1950s. The gap began to widen slowly at first, and then "especially from 1970 to 1990, the gap widened radically between public housing residents and the general population in Metropolitan Toronto: family income figures in Regent Park South were less than half that of Metropolitan Toronto from 1970 to 1990 while wage earners in Regent Park North earned less than one-third of Metropolitan Toronto wage earners in 1980-90" (Purdy, 2003a, p. 17). The same trend applies with respect to unemployment levels: from the 1970s to the 1990s the gap

between Regent Park unemployment levels and those of Toronto as a whole widened, particularly in the 1980s and especially for Regent Park youth (Purdy, 2003a, pp. 19-20). Rose (1958, p. 125) shows that this trend started early. At July 1, 1954, there were 19 families in Regent Park North on municipal relief, "a year later there were 25, and on July 1, 1956, there were 32 families on relief". These figures, he says, "are an indication of the admission of more families from outside the project area who are dependent on public assistance". In the 1950s and early 1960s families on social assistance were limited to 15-20 percent of the Regent Park total. That changed dramatically over time (Purdy, 2003c, p. 103).

Women were particularly affected. With a shortage of low-rent housing, a shortage of daycare, and labour market discrimination against women leading to lower than male incomes if they could get jobs at all, women in particular were in need of public housing. And "those most needing public housing were mother-led families and those on social assistance, which explains the particular social composition and abysmally low incomes of tenants in the project" (Purdy, 2003a, p. 33). Purdy (2003b, p. 462) says: "In the 1960s, more and more applications for public housing appear to have been motivated by the desire to escape from abusive men. Robert Bradley, RPN manager, claimed that applications from 'broken families', 98 percent of them women and the majority fleeing abuse, increased over 100 percent in 1965".

The marginalization and social exclusion of people of colour in both Canada and the USA has meant that they, too, are disproportionately represented among the tenants of public housing: "until the 1970s, the vast majority of public housing applicants and residents in English Canada were of Anglo-Canadian origin. Only in

the 1970s and 1980s did larger numbers of Caribbean and Asian families opt for state-assisted housing in Toronto". The proportion of Regent Park residents born outside of Canada went from just under 20 percent in 1961, to 60 percent in 2001 (*Globe and Mail*, Apr. 2, 2005). Murdie (1994) shows that from 1971 to 1986, while the proportion of Blacks in Toronto grew from 2.5 to 5 percent, the proportion living in public housing grew from 4.2 to 27 percent. As a consequence of these changes, "Bitter relations between police and youth, especially young Black men, and the special educational, employment, and cultural needs of immigrants have been two of the most pressing issues in the Regent Park community in the last two decades" (Purdy, 2003b, pp. 462-463 and p. 25).

While these changes in the socio-economic characteristics of Regent Park tenants were occurring, funding for public housing was being cut, starting in the 1970s, consistent with cuts to other social programs, by governments that were "always penurious, half-hearted supporters of public housing" (Purdy, 2003a, p. 30).

During the same period, dramatic changes in the political economy of urban Canada reduced job opportunities in the manufacturing sector. This was the case in Toronto, and especially downtown Toronto where Regent Park is located. Regent Park tenants were adversely affected:

"Project level data for 1949, 1953, and 1961 show that numerous Regent Park North residents worked at large industrial establishments, which would be gradually caught up in suburban industrial decentralization and high contraction and plant closure rates from the 1950s to the 1980s.... the locational shift and contraction or loss of large, unionized, and relatively well-paid manufacturing industry employ-

ment in postwar Toronto limited the possibilities of finding well-paid work close to the downtown Toronto location of Regent Park, especially with the majority of families in the project unable to afford a car" (Purdy, 2003a, p. 32) .

By the 1980s this had made drug-related opportunities more attractive. Increased crime, violence and gang activity resulted (*Globe and Mail*, Apr. 2, 2005). This in turn added to the stigma attached to Regent Park and its residents. As Purdy (2003a, p. 34) describes it:

"Condemned as too large and badly designed by academics, as a haven of single mothers, welfare families, and deviants by governments and the media, a magnet for crime and drug problems by police and law and order advocates, and the site of potentially explosive 'racial' problems by many popular commentators, Regent Park had come full circle in the public mind from the 'ordered community' of the 1940s" (Purdy, 2003a, p. 34).

And as was the case in large American public housing projects, Regent Park youth came to feel confined to their public housing project, limited in the opportunities open to them.

"The streets surrounding Regent Park... marked not only the physical but also the ideological boundaries of Regent Park for many young people, beyond which a different world resided. Considerable research on identity formation among inner city youth has found that ideas about employment, education, and relationships with other groups are crucially shaped by internal spatial contexts such as neighbourhood" (Purdy, 2003a, pp. 35-36).

Purdy (2003c, pp.34-35) describes the stigmatization process that affects those who

live in large inner city public housing projects with the use of such concepts as 'territorial stigmatization', and 'branded spaces', and says "neighbourhood frames many important aspects of identity formation". In particular, "the spatial containment of low-income neighbourhoods through cultural labelling and material discrimination have had harmful effects on their inhabitants, especially young people". The voices of Regent Park tenants reflect that feeling. The mother of a youth who lived in Regent Park and was shot and killed in 2001 said: "No one cares what happens to a boy like my son. Everyone judges you when you come from Regent Park. They make you feel like a piece of shit. That's how they made my son feel, and that's how they made me feel". A young woman added: "You can feel like there's no way out. It overwhelms people, and takes away their energy" (*Globe and Mail*, Apr. 2, 2005).

The result is that public housing, which came to be the 'housing of last resort' for the poorest of the poor, and for a particularly racialized form of poverty in hollowed-out inner cities in Canada as in the USA, became deeply stigmatized, worsening the problems of its tenants, and contributing to the association between public housing and gang-based, drug-related violence. Yet the problem, as in the USA, is less the public housing as such, than the problems created by the dramatic changes in North America's urban political economy, whose victims have disproportionately ended up in public housing. They have ended up in public housing because of the paucity of alternatives: "Indeed, after the long economic boom ended in the 1970s, lack of affordable housing has been one of the chief features of the new urban poverty in all advanced capitalist countries" (Purdy, 2003b, p. 471).

f. The Redevelopment of Regent Park

A plan to revitalize Regent Park is now underway. It draws on the US experience, but includes some more progressive features, and *may*—this remains to be seen—avoid the worst problems of displacement. As in the HOPE VI approach, the Regent Park plan has two components: a massive bulldozing, redesign and rebuilding of bricks and mortar; and an intensification of people-oriented, community-building programs.

The bulldozing, bricks and mortar part of the strategy for the redevelopment of Regent Park appears to be built on the assumption that the problem to be solved is primarily one of design. The plan—called the Regent Park Revitalization Study, prepared by the Regent Park Collaborative Team (RPCT, Dec. 2002)—proposes to demolish all of the existing 2087 units in six phases over 10-12 years, starting in the Fall of 2005, and to replace them with buildings that “will be generally mid-rise and mixed-use along the main streets and low-rise and residential within the neighbourhood on internal streets” (RPCT, 2002, p. 2). In addition to replacing the 2087 existing units, the plan also contemplates an additional 2400 units of “market housing” to be constructed by the private sector. Subsidized housing would be mixed with units rented at market rates and owner-occupied homes. The project, previously set apart from the surrounding area by its typical, large public housing design featuring numerous tower blocks, would be reintegrated with the surrounding area by reintroducing a grid street system and realigning buildings so that they face onto streets.

“The main theme that links all of the elements of this plan together is the importance of striving for diversity as a key organizing feature of the revitali-

zation process: diversity of building types, designs and heights; diversity of tenures; diversity and mix of incomes; diversity and mix of uses; diversity of builders; and diversity of activities” (RPCT, 2002, p. 5).

On the people-oriented, community-building side, space would be made available for various employment and business development initiatives; some innovative educational programs already in place or being contemplated—for example, the York University teacher-training program now located in Regent Park; the Pathways to Education program; the University of Toronto’s 10 week pilot course for Regent Park tenants—would be built upon; and the coordination of community services would be enhanced (RPCT, 2002, pp. 41-46).

The document is rife with references to HOPE VI, as is reflected in its two-part approach with the primary emphasis upon redesign. The total cost is anticipated to be approximately \$450 million.

This plan is subject to all of the concerns that arise with HOPE VI, although it *may* be that the worst problems arising from HOPE VI—the displacement of low-income tenants because of the reduction in the numbers of low-income rental units—will be avoided. That remains to be seen.

There are at least two ways of interpreting and assessing the revitalization of Regent Park. One argues that the buildings at Regent Park have never been adequately maintained, and so have to be torn down and replaced, and if this is going to be done, it is best that a mixed-income community be built to replace what previously existed. Further, pressure from tenants and community-based organizations at Regent Park has been an important factor in the development of a Social Development Plan, which complements the bricks and mortar plan, and requires

that any approvals for physical changes be subject to the Social Development Plan, and requires also that every rent-geared-to-income (RGI) unit that is knocked down be replaced by a new RGI unit, so that there is not the net reduction in the numbers of low-income rental units that has characterized the American HOPE VI initiatives. The optimistic way of viewing the revitalization of Regent Park is to say that planners have learned from, and are not repeating, the worst of the mistakes made south of the border.

The second and alternative way of viewing the revitalization of Regent Park is to say that, as is the case with HOPE VI, it is yet another version of 'environmental determinism' — the view that the social problems of 'slums' are caused by their physical character, especially the character and condition of the houses, with the corollary that the solution is to bulldoze the 'slums' and build new housing. The new environment and the new housing, this approach holds, will solve the problems. This is an idea that has its origins in the Victorian era, and that has already been tried with the bulldozing and rebuilding of the 'urban renewal'/public housing era in the 1950s and 1960s. Replacing 'slums' with new housing does not, in itself, solve socio-economic problems, because it does not get at their roots. This is especially the case when the revitalization of Regent Park, despite its enormous cost and despite the continued need for affordable rental housing for low-income people, is intended to add, on a net basis, not a single additional unit of subsidized rental housing.

What is worse, there are fears that the revitalization of Regent Park may be about gentrifying the neighbourhood as much as it is about improving the lives of those who live there. In a speech to the Economic Club of Toronto in March, 2005 — titled, perhaps revealingly, "Unlocking

Value in Toronto's East Downtown: The Revitalization of Regent Park" — Dr. Mitchell Kosny, Chair of Toronto Community Housing, the civic agency responsible for Regent Park, said: "I want to make one thing perfectly clear: Rebuilding Regent Park will be a true partnership between Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the private sector... and *we are now open for business*" (his emphasis). He explained that the area around Regent Park "has been experiencing an impressive economic rebirth", is close to downtown and to related culture and entertainment pursuits, and "the development opportunity is obvious". A tenant, expressing the views of at least some in Regent Park, is reported to have said: "They're tearing down Regent Park because rich people want the land" (*Globe and Mail*, Apr. 2, 2005).

However, like HOPE VI, the social side of the revitalization of Regent Park offers some real hope. For example, the educational initiatives already underway in Regent Park and intended to be expanded, are likely to improve the lives of Regent Park tenants. The Pathways to Education program, developed and run by the Regent Park Community Health Centre, appears successful. Started in 2001, the program is aimed at the 50 percent or more of Regent Park residents who are under the age of 19 years, and is a response to the relatively low rates of high school graduation among RP youth. Pathways to Education has four elements. *Intensive tutoring* is offered in all high school subjects by a large pool of tutors, many of whom are university students and/or former residents of Regent Park who seek to give back to their community. *Mentoring* is offered, focusing on life-skills and communication for students in grades 9 and 10, and on career and leadership development programs for those in grades 11 and 12. *Financial assistance* is made avail-

able to all Regent Park students in the program—and 95 percent of Regent Park youth are in the program—in the form of free bus passes to get to school, plus a \$1000 scholarship per student per year of high school completed, to be used for post-secondary tuition. And *Student Parent Support Workers* provide a link between students, parents and schools to advocate for and support students and their families, and to ensure that students are progressing. It is claimed that as a result of the program, student absenteeism rates have been cut in half, and 75 percent of the cohort of students first enrolled in the program in 2001 are expected to graduate in Spring, 2006 (www.pathwaystoeducation.ca, accessed 1/3/2006; Acker, personal interview, April 20, 2006; Rowen, personal interview, April 20, 2006).

What is notable, however, is that this program has been initiated and has achieved considerable success *before* the redesign and rebuilding of Regent Park. Its success has not been the result of, nor has it required, the redesign of Regent Park. This suggests that real gains can be made by focusing more on ‘people programs’ than on bricks and mortar. What is more, people programs can be implemented much more economically. Pathways to Education will cost \$3.25 million in 2006, most of it paid by businesses, community groups, unions and individuals. The provincial government will contribute \$500,000 of the cost (Rowen, personal interview, April 20, 2006. See also *Globe and Mail*, editorial, Sept. 28, 2005). By comparison, the bulldozing and rebuilding of Regent Park over 10–12 years is expected to cost approximately \$450 million.

Interpretations of the revitalization of Regent Park differ, depending upon who is asked. Many believe that Regent Park housing has not been adequately maintained, and therefore has to be torn down

and replaced, and that the new Regent Park that emerges in the place of the old—because it will be a mixed-income community and because there is expected to be no net loss of low-income housing—will be a much better place to live. Others are more skeptical, fearing that the plan is yet another gentrification initiative in disguise, and that without constant vigilance the promises to maintain the existing numbers of low-income rental units will not be kept. These skeptics point to the fact that Toronto Community Housing has already said that, while they will replace all of the low-income rental units, not all of them will be on the ‘footprint’ of the Regent Park site. Some will be in surrounding neighbourhoods. The fear is that this may be a ‘slippery slope’.

It is not yet clear what the outcome of the revitalization of Regent Park will be. Those tenants and community-based organizations who argue that, given the American experience with HOPE VI, constant vigilance will be necessary, are probably being appropriately prudent. The outcome remains to be seen, and because it is Regent Park—Canada’s oldest and largest public housing project—the outcome will be important for public housing everywhere in Canada.

g. The Explanations for the Problems

A dominant explanation for the problems associated with public housing in Canada, as in the USA, is design. The argument is that the design of the large public housing projects, influenced by Le Corbusier, has created unsafe conditions. This is an argument advanced most cogently by Jane Jacobs (1961), Oscar Newman (1973), Alice Coleman (1985) and John Sewell (1993). Jacobs, writing in the foreword to Sewell’s 1993 book on urban planning in Toronto, in referring to the 1950s and

1960s urban renewal era, says: “Not to mince words, planners and their working colleagues did not know what they were doing. Their remedies for slums, congestion, and other maladies were frauds” (Jacobs, in Sewell, 1993, p. x). Jacobs et al argue that the solution to the problems of large public housing projects is to redesign the projects, reintegrating them into the existing street grid, ensuring that units face onto streets and have front and back yards, and eliminating pedestrian pathways (Sewell, 1993, pp. 228-229).

But the burden of the argument advanced in this paper is that these design changes deal only with the surface manifestations of the problems of public housing, and that a deeper understanding requires an examination of broader societal trends and socio-economic forces.

From the beginning, public housing in both Canada and the USA was strongly opposed by business and governments. Partly as a consequence, many public housing developments were poorly constructed. Evidence of this in the US case has already been provided. Dennis and Fish (1972, pp. 174-175) offer clear evidence that Canada’s federal government deliberately set out to construct low-quality housing that would not compete with the private for-profit housing providers (see also Rose, 1958, p. 74; Purdy, 2003c, p. 82).

Also, public housing’s being linked to urban renewal necessitated that most public housing was built in inner cities, which over the course of the 20th century became increasingly distressed. Public housing did not cause the deterioration of the inner cities; broader forces did. Inner cities were ‘hollowed out’ by the powerful forces of suburbanization and de-industrialization. But because so much public housing was constructed in inner cities, public

housing was left to deal with the resulting human problems.

Coincident with, and largely as a consequence of, this process, the socio-economic composition of large public housing projects like Regent Park and those in the USA began to change dramatically – from two-parent, working class families in the 1950s and early 1960s, to lone-parent families on social assistance from the 1970s to the present. Inner city public housing projects increasingly became ‘housing of last resort’ for the victims of broader socio-economic forces, and disproportionately these were women with children on social assistance, and people of colour. With the shortage of good quality, low-income rental housing – and this has been the heart of the problem – such people had nowhere else to go. And as public housing became home to those most adversely affected by the dramatically changing urban political economy, governments cut spending on repairs and maintenance. A stigma became attached to public housing, and those who were its tenants.

By the 1980s, with an increasingly underfunded public housing stock serving as housing of last resort for large numbers of those most victimized by the hollowing out of the inner city, the drug trade arose to offer economic opportunities for increasingly stigmatized project youth who had – and who were increasingly convinced that they had – few other alternatives. Gangs seized upon the projects to recruit members and earn big money, and public housing, already stigmatized, became home to drug-driven, gang-related violence.

The decline of public housing over a 50 year period in Canada and the USA has less to do with its design, than with these tragic broader forces.

Part Four: Winnipeg's Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development, 1967–2006

a. Problems in the Development Today

The Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development—the 'Development', or 'the D', as it is called in the area—experiences the same problems that have plagued large housing projects elsewhere in the past 40 years. This became clear when interviews were conducted in May, 2005, with 20 people involved in providing services in the Development.

Those interviewed told us that the Development is plagued by drugs, gangs and violence. Much good work is done in the 'D'; there is no shortage of highly-dedicated and skilled people doing the work; and there is a small core of tenants dedicated to improving the Development. But the problems associated with gangs, drugs and violence are significant.

Seniors, for example, feel vulnerable. One woman who works with seniors told us that: "A lot of seniors just don't want to leave their homes. They feel vulnerable... and they feel targeted.... There's a lot of gang activity in this particular neighbourhood", and they "make life very difficult for most people who live in the area".

The tower building in the 'D' is a seniors' complex, but Manitoba Housing allows non-seniors to rent there. The result is drug-dealing, gang activity and violence right in the building. Many seniors are afraid to leave their apartments. One senior told us, when we asked about the problems in the neighbourhood: "Well, especially here it's drugs, that's number one... There's more drugs in this thing here than I think half of the pharmaceutical companies in the country, especially here in the Development, eh? There's coke, there's

crack, marijuana, everything.... I live in the Towers here, and I know people in there that are dealing drugs". This is made the worse by the strong sense of social exclusion experienced by many of the mostly-Aboriginal seniors. Many "have a great deal of difficulty negotiating the system, and have quite an unwillingness to ask somebody for help with that". In at least one case, some women seniors were placed by Manitoba Housing in the Northern Hotel—a rough hotel on north Main close to the 'D'—where "their housing conditions were absolutely appalling".

Children, too, are adversely affected. One youth worker told us that:

"In the last two years I've watched kids who were doing well with their lives just go straight down hill because they got hooked on drugs with these drug dealers, they give 'em free drugs and they're gone. It's really sad, it's very hard to sleep some nights when you don't know whether those kids are gonna be alive the next day".

Nor is home a refuge for some of these children. The youth worker continued:

"Some of these kids don't have a home to go to. They have an address, but it's not a home for them, they just don't want to go home. We had some kids sleeping in vans here, 40 below, broke into a van that was parked for the winter and slept in there for three days. They just didn't want to go home, because all there is is alcohol and violence there".

The gangs are a central part of this tragedy. "High, high influence of gang members in here. Drug-dealers. Big. I'd say maybe 40 percent or more.... it's just, in

almost every one of those row houses there's a drug-dealer in there. Now, they're working on cleaning them out, but it's still happening".

A woman who works in an agency adjoining the 'D' described a 7 or 8 year old boy who had come to her program — which is not a youth program — and said: "Can you help me, I don't want to join the gangs, they're always after me". He became one of the kids who was lost to the gangs. "The boy, he's now 18, he's right into the gang thing. You feel so frustrated!"

Violence against women is common: domestic violence; the violence of the street sex trade. In many cases the term 'street sex trade' is completely inappropriate because those involved are children, some as young as 12 years old. They are more accurately thought of as sexually exploited. "And a lot of the really young ones are from the Dufferin-Lord Selkirk Park area".

Safety is, for many in the Lord Selkirk Park neighbourhood, the number one concern. One woman said:

" Safety is a huge one. It's a huge challenge. People don't feel safe. They're afraid. They're afraid of teenagers. They're afraid of our youth. People are afraid of their own kids, they're afraid of their own partners, they're not safe in their own home".

Given this environment, people's involvement in the neighbourhood is low. When asked what is not working well, one person said: "Getting the community involved". She described it as a cycle: "with drug addiction leading to crime that becomes inter-generational, which then seems to lead to people really not being involved in their community. It seems to all be part of a very large, very unhealthy cycle for people".

People become trapped. Controlled by outside forces, they cannot see a way out. The problem becomes "when you're stuck in that mode of being controlled by whatever it is, whether it's the system, or a person, or the neighbourhood, or the gangs.... When you're in it, you can't see differently", you can't see a way out, an alternative to your present circumstances. Hope is lost; despair sets in; and change is exceptionally difficult.

A major part of the problem is the ongoing effects of the colonization of Aboriginal people. The 'D' is largely Aboriginal. Aboriginal people have long been subjected to the process of colonization (see sidebar, p. 51), with its false assumptions about Aboriginal inferiority and its promotion of shame about all things Aboriginal. Many Aboriginal people have internalized those false beliefs, and carry a personal sense of inferiority and shame about being Aboriginal. Some people working in the 'D' see this clearly. "It's about the youth learning who they are, to learn their history, to know who they are, to stand in their truth so that there is no more shame in who you are as a human being, just because you're brown". But many do not understand this truth. Many do not see it. "The community itself doesn't realize that. Never mind that White people don't know; our *own* people don't know what happened to them.... That's why we're in the state we're in.... Children don't have a sense of knowing who they are... they don't know where they came from, their parents don't know who they are or where they came from". The harm done to Aboriginal people over many long years has been colossal, and the results are acted out daily in the 'D'. The stigma typically attached to tenants of large, 1960s-style public housing projects is felt by those who live in the Development, and is accentuated by the effects of colonization.

Aboriginal People and Colonization

A central part of Canada's history is the colonization of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have been dispossessed of their lands, pushed onto reserves and thus isolated from the dominant culture and institutions of Canada, subjected to the colonial control of the Indian Act and the domination of the Indian Agent, forced into residential schools. At the heart of the process of colonization was the deliberate attempt to destroy Aboriginal peoples' economic and political systems and their cultures and religions, and to replace them with European institutions and values. This was the strategy and policy of 'assimilation'. It was, and for many Canadians still is, justified on the false grounds that European institutions and cultural and religious values were and are believed to be superior to those of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people themselves may come to believe the all-pervasive notion that they are inferior. This is common among oppressed people. As Metis scholar Howard Adams puts it, many Aboriginal people "have internalized a colonized consciousness". The results are devastating:

"Once Aboriginal persons internalize the colonization processes, we feel confused and powerless....We may implode with overwhelming feelings of sadness or explode with feelings of anger. Some try to escape this state through alcohol, drugs and/or other forms of self-abuse" (Hart, 2002, p. 27).

A vicious cycle is created: the assumption of Aboriginal peoples' cultural inferiority, initially advanced as a means to justify the European domination of North America, becomes internalized by Aboriginal people themselves; in response, many Aboriginal people lash out in self-abusive ways; such behaviour then reinforces in the minds of the non-Aboriginal majority the assumptions of Aboriginal inferiority that lie at the heart of the colonial ideology. The more:

"Aboriginal people move further into internalizing the colonization processes, the more we degrade who we are as Aboriginal people. All of these internalized processes only serve the colonizers, who then are able to sit back and say 'see, we were right'. In colonizers' eyes, the usurpation is justified" (Hart, 2002, p.28).

It is not possible to exaggerate the importance of the internal damage and pain that many Aboriginal people carry as a consequence of the effects of colonization.

The intense poverty that grips the 'D' is at the heart of this problem. Approximately 90 percent of families in the Development have incomes below the Statistics Canada low-income cutoff (LICO); most have incomes *far* below the LICO. A wide range of problems is associated with this intense, concentrated poverty. One person, when asked about the problems of the neighbourhood said: "Poverty, poverty, poverty, poverty, and poverty, are the major prob-

lems. Racism, violence against women, violence against girls. Gangs. Drug dealers. Addiction. And poverty". The data in Table Three show that while poverty and related indicators have always been high in the Development, they have grown worse over the years since 1971.

Two metaphors occur repeatedly in the comments of those interviewed. One is the notion of a complex web—a web of poverty, racism, drugs, gangs, violence.

The other is the notion of a cycle—people caught in a cycle of inter-related problems. Both suggest the idea of people who are trapped, immobilized, unable to escape, destined to struggle with forces against which they cannot win, from which they cannot extricate themselves. The result is despair, resignation, anger, hopelessness, which then reinforce the cycle, and wrap them tighter in the web. “That’s what’s happening here. These people don’t have a clue that they can change. They think they just have to accept what’s coming to them, accept that poverty.... You need to change the mind-set”.

The problem is now deeply-entrenched in the ‘D’. We asked those we interviewed in 2005 what initiatives seem to be working well. Many responded negatively, even despairingly: “right now I don’t see anything. I don’t see anything at all”; “not much seems to work, there’s a lot of failures”; “I don’t know of any program that works well here”.

Nevertheless, there are some strengths in the neighbourhood. There are strengths in all neighbourhoods. Perhaps most importantly, there are many outstanding community-based organizations (CBOs) working in and around the ‘D’, and a very high proportion of staff in these CBOs are exceptionally dedicated to the community.

One person said these CBOs are “just wonderful organizations”. Another de-

scribed them as doing “tremendous work”, providing “great programming for youth”, and doing “wonderful community development work”. Another said there are “Just wonderful agencies that are out there”. Schools in the area were described similarly: “the Principals and other staff at the schools are wonderful”. And the School Resource Officer Program, in which police officers are placed in a number of North End schools to build positive police-youth relations was described as “a really great way for children in our schools to build trust with the police, and vice versa”. The same is the case for the community beat officer whose area includes the ‘D’.

The small core of people in the ‘D’ active in trying to build a stronger community was mentioned repeatedly.

“There’s a small core of people who will not leave the neighbourhood for anything. They’re very dedicated. They have a strong network with each other, and they do whatever they can to improve their community.... they are incredibly dedicated”.

A good deal of the work being done in the ‘D’, especially but not only the youth work, has a strong Aboriginal cultural component—a necessary response to the damage done by colonization. One youth worker told us that: “It’s through our culture... hearing the traditions of the First

| Table Three: Lord Selkirk Park Neighbourhood, Including the Development—Selected Indicators, 1971 and 2001 | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| | 1971 | 2001 |
| Population | 2,115 | 1,345 |
| Families | 405 | 220 |
| -% husband/wife | 70.4% | 52.3% |
| -% lone parent | 29.6% | 47.7% |
| Labour force participation rate | 46.9% | 35.8% |
| Unemployment rate | 16.4% | 23.4% |

Source: Census of Canada, 1971 and 2001, data compiled by D. W. Lezubski

Creating Opportunities for Gang Members

A four-year old program in Winnipeg's North End uses an innovative approach to creating employment opportunities for gang members. And it's working.

Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK) began when some gang members approached the North End Housing Project about finding work for members who were getting out of jail or wanting to leave the street.

Now ten young men, mostly in their 20s, work with two trained carpenters and the project coordinator in renovating houses in their North End neighbourhoods. They learn the practical skills of housing renovation; they learn about such life skills as financial management; and they learn about and practice their Aboriginal cultures.

None of these young men are returning to prison. Most are now enrolled in an introductory university course, being taken while they work. Many other young men in similar circumstances are coming to OPK and asking for the opportunity to work.

These are hard-core gang members. Many have spent much of their young lives in penal institutions, locked up off and on since the age of 12 or 15 years. They are marginalized from the mainstream economy. Solutions are not easy.

Why then is OPK successful? Says the project coordinator:

"We have two carpenters who are themselves ex-offenders, it's all Aboriginal, and so there's a good peer support ...where they have role models that have been through the same thing that they've been through, so our guys don't give these carpenters a hard time because they know that they've walked the same path as them....A lot of the people are from the area, have experienced the same things they have, the poverty, oppression, unemployment, all those things".

But maybe the program is too expensive? The project coordinator says not:

"Not if you look at it in terms of how much it costs to lock somebody up. You have to look at how much it costs to lock somebody up, and if they're with a partner, they go on welfare, how much it costs the Province to pay for the family. Then you have to look at marriage break-up, you have to look at addictions, all these things that come about....I think the program is cheap in relation to all of that".

Nations people and the spiritual path, that's how we're going to heal the whole community". Many young people respond very well to being introduced to a knowledge of their culture. Parents may as well. An elder told us that: "I've had kids come over from the projects, you know, Lord Selkirk, and after about three or four sweats their Moms would start coming with them"

Why then, with such dedicated people and strong community-based organiza-

tions, do the problems in the 'D' seem so deeply entrenched, so intractable?

The answer—as is the case with public housing projects elsewhere in North America—is that the 'D' is characterized by concentrated poverty, and is what one respondent accurately called an "artificial community". Most people living in the 'D' have not chosen to move there: they have been placed there by 'the system'—by some agency in the social service system—because their lives are particularly

troubled. One respondent said: "I think it's a real problem when people at the lowest point in their lives are *forced* to live together in a very small area." And for those in the 'D' who do manage to get their lives together, they quickly leave: "those individuals, when they get their life back together, their vision is not to stay in that community, their long-term goal is to move out and to move to a place where their children will benefit from the advantages of living in a different community".

The result is that a disproportionate number of those who are there at any given time are people in trouble: "once they're doing better they leave, and are replaced by other people who are also struggling, and there's never anybody there for any length [of time] who's successful". The problems of poverty—the interconnected web or cycle of problems—which are fairly highly concentrated in the inner city generally, are *intensely* concentrated in the 'D'. As one respondent said: "If you've got a group of people who *don't* have a vested interest in the community, do not have a long-term commitment, then how do you build a neighbourhood out of that?"

Another added: "They tend to get lumped in this neighbourhood because, really, there's no place else for them to go". There's no place to go because of the continued shortage—a shortage that has plagued the area throughout the 20th century—of adequate low-income rental housing. The Development, like public housing almost everywhere, has become—for reasons having to do with broader socio-economic forces—'housing of last resort'. When tenants in the 'D' get things together they leave, "so that the transiency in that neighbourhood is really high... you'll get a good organization together, a group of residents that are making good things happen, and then people move out of the neighbourhood and

they're gone, and you start from scratch again, so it's one step forward, two steps back a lot of the time."

What is the solution? Is there a solution?

Intense community development and community organizing work needs to take place in the 'D'. A major part of the problem in the 'D' is that residents are not engaged, are not involved in building solutions to their own problems. Many of the community organizations are doing wonderful and necessary work, but not much of it is old-fashioned, face-to-face community organizing, and that is what is needed now. One respondent said: "It literally means going door-to-door and saying, 'can I come in for a cup of tea'", and getting to know people personally. Another said: "Building relationships is key... working one-on-one with people and getting to know the neighbourhood and the residents is a huge first step".

It is likely that most of the community leaders identified in this way will be women. As one person said: "I see women doing it. Because women are the leaders of our community. Go to any organization, most of the leaders are women".

In addition, a real solution to the problems of the 'D' has to be holistic and long-term. This is precisely what the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC) is attempting to implement: a holistic, ten-year effort to turn around the Development. This means ensuring that all the agencies and CBOs working in and around the 'D' organize their work jointly, as part of a common, long-term plan. As one person interviewed put it, we need "a key stakeholders' multi-year plan to support community-based initiatives". This is a process now well underway, as we will show below.

And the solution has to be long-term. Over and over again we were told that a major

problem in the 'D' is the prevalence of short-term funding for pilot projects. This does not work. In fact, it makes matters worse. People gradually become involved with a project, and begin to work to make change; then the funding is terminated and the project is over. Getting them involved the next time is that much more difficult:

"You're not going to do it in two years, and you're not going to do it in three, it's going to take a long, long time, you have to bring those people out... you got to develop a relationship with them, they've got to start to feel a sense of safety with you. It takes a long time".

One person said: "Sometimes when you've been let down and rejected by so many people in your life, it takes a long time before you build trust in people, you know." Another added, referring specifically to youth programs that come and go: "they see that, and that stuff goes on in their own lives and their homes", and so just adds to the sense of abandonment, and the lack of stability in their lives. He emphasized repeatedly the need for consistency over time, as opposed to the current emphasis on short-term funding. Said another: "The funding people get is so short term. What's happening in the inner city didn't happen over night, it took many, many years". "Lots of starts and stops. So nothing, again, long-term". Over and over we were told, in very frustrated tones, that a long-term commitment to the neighbourhood is needed.

This has to do in part with how governments approach the community-based work being done in the inner city. Governments are the primary funders, and the frequently-expressed view is that they are too committed to small, disjointed, short-term projects, as opposed to holistic and longer-term strategies.

"It's all well and good for government to say, well, put a plan together and develop a program and we'll provide some funding but it's not going to be long-term.... And you know, all levels of government do this – to a community that's having a hard time just making it through the day without a crisis in their homes. And I'm not overstating it. I think I'm understating it".

But this reliance upon short-term funding, this failure to provide long-term funding over a sustained period of time, is short-sighted.

"The government has got to quit playing games with organizations, whether it's mine or any other organization out there trying... to bring programming to the Aboriginal communities. They save in the long run... because if they don't pay now they're going to be paying later... whether it's on welfare, in the courts, prison, hospitals".

There is frustration that governments are not dealing with inner city problems seriously. One woman told us that governments have to stop demanding that inner city programs become 'sustainable'. Most *cannot* become sustainable, ever, and it is the role of government to use our collectively-generated tax dollars to solve the kinds of problems facing the inner city generally, and Lord Selkirk Park particularly. Another woman said: "If we were in the real world of real money and real politicians who cared they would say, OK, let's set something up".

b. Evidence that Things were Good at the Beginning.

The Development was not always so troubled. There is evidence that tenants were relatively happy in the early years. This is consistent with what we found in large

American public housing projects, and in Toronto's Regent Park. About Burrows-Keewatin, for example, Val Werier reported in 1969 that:

"Burrows-Keewatin, the first new rental housing development in Winnipeg, is four years old this week.... A stranger would not know it as public housing for it appears as an attractive development with buildings of dark red brick and white stucco, green lawns and flowers.... More than half of the 165 tenants have gardens in their front yards.... The development has been a tremendous step forward in the provision of good housing for 900 people who would otherwise be living in mean crowded quarters.... For most people in Burrows-Keewatin, there is no question that public housing has done great things" (WT, Oct. 4, 1967. See also WT, Feb. 8, 1969).

A major story about Lord Selkirk Park in the *Tribune* in 1970 opened by saying: "Nobody this reporter spoke to in a series of interviews gave complete praise to the project; nor did anyone condemn it outright". Referring to a tenant who offered some complaints, the reporter said: "Still, he says, the development is much better than low rent housing generally available on the open market". The reporter described the housing units by saying that "the new units are quite like suburban town houses", and concluded the long report with the observation that: "Any praise generally comes for the housing itself. People often criticize, but then quickly add some details on the bad conditions of their old housing, and then with some relief talk about the promptness of repairs" (WT, March 7, 1970). On balance, and despite some specific problems, tenants felt positively about living in the Development in 1970.

Some of the problems existing at the time are familiar today. As early as 1970 the Lord Selkirk Park Tenants' Association (LSPTA) was calling for increased police protection, "because as things stand now it is just not safe to go outdoors after night-fall. We like living here, inside. But outside we're just like ants that can be crushed at will" (WT, Nov. 20, 1970). Gangs were active in the area even then. "The local junior high school, Aberdeen [now Niji Mahkwa, the Aboriginal elementary school], was described by some as a 'high school for delinquents' because of [the] many gangs in the area. Youngsters who don't join gangs are often beaten up" (WT, March 7, 1970). It appears that the gang problem *preceded* the construction of the Development.

Similarly, people were concerned even then about the relative lack of social facilities. The LSPTA charged that "police protection and recreational facilities in the area are sadly lacking" (WT, May 12, 1971). The Director of the Peoples' Opportunity Services said early in 1970 that: "A project of this kind was meant to meet a social need, but the social component of the need was not included in the planning" (WT, March 7, 1970). Yauk (1973) made the same case, as shown earlier. The historical pattern in the North End, as seen earlier, was that the area was starved of public funding for social and recreational amenities. That did not change with the creation of the Development. The quality of the housing was an improvement, most tenants said, but the social problems of the neighbourhood remained, and continued to be largely ignored.

The implicit assumption driving governments' approach to the Development appears to have been — as with 19th century Victorian-era 'environmental determinism' — that the construction of new hous-

ing would, by itself, solve deep-seated social problems, and thus there was no need for any expenditure beyond the cost of the housing itself.

Further, and precisely as was the case in large public housing projects in the USA and at Regent Park in Toronto, there were specific policies in place in the Development's early years that created a demographically and socio-economically different group of tenants than those who now occupy the Development. For example, according to the Manager of Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development, the policy in 1970 was to limit the number of tenants on social assistance to 25 percent of the total number (WT, March 7, 1970). Similarly, there were restrictions on who could be admitted to the Development:

"To protect itself, the housing authority sends workers to the homes of prospective tenants (there's a waiting list of 700) to look at the housekeeping, to see standards are high enough and that the residents would be unlikely to damage housing. The authority also does a credit check or else 'we'd get some nuts who never pay any bill'" (WT, March 7, 1970).

People renting in the 'D' could be "thrown out for bad housekeeping or causing disturbances" (WT, March 7, 1970). These are the measures adopted in the early years of public housing throughout North America, with the result that public housing at that time was home primarily to low-income working families.

Part of the reason for the positive change, Robertson argues, is that "many poor families—the hard-core poor—have been kept out. These are the people with most of the problems.... Only 42 of the 165 families receive welfare. This is maximum—no more than one-quarter of the population can be on welfare. The Winnipeg Housing Authority, which runs Burrows-

Keewatin, feels, with justice, that a higher proportion of welfare or problem families would turn the project into a slum".

There was a waiting list of people wanting to get into the Development in 1970. The official list was 700 names. A social worker with the welfare department said he had 50 families in the private rental market in need of better housing, "if only something better presented itself". A community development worker with Peoples Opportunity Services said the real waiting list was closer to 3000, because "lots of people who need its accommodation haven't bothered to apply" (WT, March 7, 1970).

In short, Lord Selkirk Park was meeting a real need in an area historically short of adequate, low-income rental housing, and tenants lucky enough to get in were generally satisfied with their housing. Their complaints were about gangs and violence in the area—problems which appear to have pre-dated the creation of the Development—and a relative lack of social facilities, also a problem with a long history in the North End.

The general satisfaction with public housing in the early years can also be seen at Burrows-Keewatin, whose construction preceded Lord Selkirk Park. The manager of both the Lord Selkirk Park and Burrows-Keewatin developments said about the latter that when that development was first discussed, there was almost "a little revolution" by area residents, "a 'there goes the neighbourhood' syndrome. But by now, he said, the barriers have been broken. Grocers are happy with the additional business, children living in the public housing are indistinguishable in school from children living in other homes in the area" (WT, March 7, 1970).

A study of Burrows-Keewatin by Professor William Morrison in 1967 found that the sample of tenants that he interviewed

were happy with their new housing. Approximately 75 percent “said that they would recommend friends to move out where they were living. This can only be interpreted as a positive vote of confidence in the renewal project” (Morrison, 1967, p. 72). Morrison also found that, to the extent that his sample accurately reflected the total composition of the public housing development, the tenants were overwhelmingly of British and Western European origin. Only 17 percent were Aboriginal (Morrison, 1967, p. 9). He concluded, consistent with the later work of Yauk (1973), that most of those who moved into Burrows-Keewatin had not moved from the Salter-Jarvis area. The people living in Burrows-Keewatin at the time of his study, Morrison said, “cannot be considered as representative of the people who were living in Census Tract 10 before the redevelopment program began” (Morrison, 1967, p. 11).

The demographic and socio-economic composition of tenants in Lord Selkirk Park changed over the years consistent with the case in large public housing projects in the USA and elsewhere in Canada, and for similar reasons. The original limits on the numbers of tenants on social assistance, and the screening to ensure that prospective tenants met certain standards, were modified over the years, and these changes are likely to have been made for the most well-intentioned of reasons. For example, in 1970 the Director of Peoples Opportunities Services said: “The people who could benefit most from public housing are the ones who often find it hardest to get into it, because of the housekeeping provisions” (WT, March 7, 1970), and because of the limits on welfare cases. There was a severe shortage of low-income rental housing. There were many people in great need. But many of those in the greatest need, particularly those

with children, could not get in. Councillor Joe Zuken continued to make this case.

“Alderman Zuken says the need for housing probably runs at 5000 units right now, and that the total of 580 units in Lord Selkirk Park and Burrows-Keewatin is lower than the number of houses that have deteriorated while they have been built” (WT, March 7, 1970).

Zuken is reported to have said: “There is a gap, almost a chasm between what could or should be done and what is being done”. He added that private landlords were being especially hard on low-income people with children. Many privately-owned blocks did not allow children, leading Zuken to say: “There’s a war on kids going on, as though kids were a crime” (WT, March 7, 1970). These pressures, created by the failure of the private for-profit rental housing market, led eventually to a relaxation of the restrictions originally placed on admission to public housing developments. As these restrictions were relaxed, more of those most in need were admitted to Lord Selkirk Park. It eventually became, as was the case elsewhere, ‘housing of last resort’. This was never the intent for Lord Selkirk Park, nor for any public housing. As Tom Yauk (interview, March 30, 2005) has put it: “Nobody dreamed that it would be 100 percent social assistance recipients”. And yet that is close to what it became, because there was no other place for people in the greatest need.

From there being a limit of 25 percent on social assistance recipients in Lord Selkirk Park at the outset, the pressure to meet the real housing needs of those most in need led to changes in policy. The 25 percent limit was lifted. Requirements respecting housekeeping were removed. The Development became ‘housing of last

resort', the place where those at the lowest point in their lives were concentrated. The "most difficult cases were put in Lord Selkirk Park", and social workers would say to 'troublesome' clients, by way of a threat, "how would you like to live in Lord Selkirk Park?" (Yauk, March 30, 2005).

The resulting concentration of poverty, and of particularly complex cases of poverty, has severely adverse effects. The problem is not public housing. The problem is that the private for-profit rental market does not come close to meeting the needs of low-income people, whose numbers—for reasons having to do with broad socio-economic forces—have grown over the past 25 years. As the Development became home to those in most difficulty, to large numbers of people on social assistance, problems began to emerge. The seeds of those problems were there from the start—gangs were a presence in the neighbourhood in 1970, and probably earlier. By the 1980s, however, the situation in the Development had become so bad that "people just didn't want to live there anymore", and by the 1990s the 'D' was 50 percent vacant (Yauk, March 30, 2005). Because Manitoba Housing gave priority for housing to those women leaving violent relationships, they found homes in Lord Selkirk Park, and in the mid-1990s social service agencies were moved into the neighbourhood in large numbers (Yauk, Mar. 30, 2005).

To argue that the Development itself is the cause of the problems described above is to confuse cause and effect. The Development has represented affordable rental housing for those in need, when the demand for such housing far outstripped the supply. With the best of intentions, the doors of the Development were opened to those in the greatest need, thus concentrating poverty—and often the most complex cases of poverty—in one small geographic area. The

Development did not create these problems; broader socio-economic forces did. The Development has been left to deal with the worst effects of these forces. To solve the resulting problems will require long-term public investment.

d. What Has Been Happening Lately?

Beginning in the late 1990s there has been a renewed interest in the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development. Efforts have been made to encourage resident involvement and to increase the extent to which organizations and agencies active in the neighbourhood work together. Gains have been made. A social infrastructure that meets the expressed needs of residents of the Development is systematically being constructed. This is something that should have been a part of the Development from the beginning, but as we have seen, has not. The history of the North End throughout the 20th century has included a severe under-investment in social infrastructure, and that problem is now, finally and belatedly, being tackled effectively in the Development. There is a long way to go yet, but a beginning is being made.

In September, 1997, a Lord Selkirk Neighbourhood Council was established for the purpose of developing a strategic plan for the neighbourhood that would identify issues, objectives, action steps, resources required and potential projects. The Lord Selkirk Neighbourhood Council was a 13-member committee of homeowners and tenants elected at a series of public meetings. Working with City of Winnipeg and Winnipeg Development Agreement (WDA) staff, and funded by the WDA, the Neighbourhood Council produced a strategic plan through a process of public consultation and public meetings in the neighbourhood. The strategic plan was adopted by the Lord Selkirk Neighbour-

hood Council at a meeting held June 30, 1998, and by City Council July 22, 1998 (City of Winnipeg, July, 1998).

Two themes were consistently expressed throughout the process leading to the creation of the strategic plan. One was that everyone in the neighbourhood—residents, tenants, businesses, governments, community-based organizations—had to work in partnership rather than in isolation if the revitalization process was to be successful. The second was that residents had to be involved in the decision-making process, in a fashion consistent with the principles of community development. A key feature of the strategic plan was a proposal to develop a Neighbourhood Resource Centre on the Development site. The strategy that arose from the exercise was that “the program will be a community development project, which capitalizes on partnership in the coordination of resources using a Neighbourhood Resource Centre model of service delivery” (City of Winnipeg, July, 1998, p. 3).

At about the same time, the North End Community Renewal Corporation was being established. The North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC) is a non-profit community development corporation established in 1998 by a coalition of inner city community-based organizations. The NECRC has its headquarters on Selkirk Avenue, with a mandate to serve the North End community from the CPR tracks to Carruthers Avenue, and from McPhillips Street to the Red River. Now a \$1.2 million per year operation with a staff of 20, the NECRC was established in order to move efforts to revitalize the North End beyond a host of isolated programs, to a more systematic and comprehensive approach. The NECRC adheres to the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCED-Net) philosophy that “what distinguishes the most success-

ful community economic development groups is that they take the form of ‘development systems’ as contrasted to ‘projects’”. The non-profit organization is community-based, with a 16-member Board of Directors comprised of a broad range of community representatives—business, residents, Aboriginal organizations, community service organizations, religious and labour organizations. The NECRC has played a central role in efforts to revitalize Selkirk Avenue, once the thriving commercial heart of the historic North End, but in recent years home to large numbers of boarded-up buildings. Selkirk Ave is now slowly but definitely beginning to turn around, thanks in no small measure to the efforts of NECRC. The community development corporation has also played a central role in creating residents’ associations in several North End neighbourhoods, increasing resident involvement in those neighbourhoods, promoting employment, housing and business development in the North End, and encouraging service delivery organizations to work more closely together. Its creation in 1998, with its holistic and grassroots philosophy, fit very well with the ideas expressed in the Revitalization Strategy, and NECRC would soon become the lead organization in trying to promote and coordinate the revitalization process in the Development.

In October, 2002, the NECRC was successful in applying for four month funding from the provincial government’s Neighbourhoods Alive! Program “to support the creation of a community revitalization strategy in the Lord Selkirk Park community” (NECRC, April 25, 2003). NECRC hired a Community Planning Facilitator to build on the 1998 Revitalization Strategy and to get the process moving. The main difficulty faced was that the efforts of the 30 or more agencies working in the neighbourhood (for a partial list of these,

A Partial List of Organizations Working in and Around the Development

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Wahbung Abinoonjiiag</i> | <i>Ndaawin</i> |
| <i>Ndinawemaaganag Endaaawaad</i> | <i>Indian and Metis Friendship Centre</i> |
| <i>Kekinan Centre</i> | <i>Mount Carmel Clinic</i> |
| <i>Aikens Street Community Health Centre</i> | <i>Manitoba Housing Authority</i> |
| <i>Ma Marwi Wi Chi Itata Centre</i> | <i>Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre</i> |
| <i>Native Women's Transition Centre</i> | <i>North End Women's Resource Centre</i> |
| <i>David Livingstone School</i> | <i>R. B. Russell Vocational High School</i> |
| <i>Anne Ross Day Nursery</i> | <i>Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club</i> |
| <i>CEDA</i> | <i>Sage House</i> |
| <i>Neechi Foods</i> | <i>Lord Selkirk Park Aboriginal Women's Group Youth Alliance Program</i> |

see p. 61) were not well coordinated. The problem was described as a "lack of communication, coordination, and partnership between agencies, organizations and programs; duplication of services and resources; competition for similar funding resources and sources" (NECRC, April 25, 2003). However, the Community Planning Facilitator was successful in creating what would become the Lord Selkirk Park Community Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives of most of these agencies plus some tenants. He also worked with the Lord Selkirk Tenants' Association, and organized a large and well-attended community consultation process. The challenges were formidable: "The majority of these challenges stemmed from the sheer number of agencies, organizations and programs contained within the Lord Selkirk Park neighbourhood" (NECRC, April 25, 2003).

An outcome of the first four months of work in Lord Selkirk Park was a community consultation in February, 2003, that included 26 neighbourhood residents and representatives of 10 agencies and organizations. A PATH process was used. PATH stands for Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope, and is a planning exer-

cise in which participants identify goals and means of reaching those goals. This PATH exercise asked: "What is the 'Dream' for the Lord Selkirk Park community" (NECRC, Feb. 26, 2003). Many goals were identified during the process, including, for example: more organized sports programs for children and youth; "a curfew for kids and youth"; "more education/training programs and jobs for all ages". Among the specific goals identified to be achieved within one year were the creation of a volunteer base of 40 people, the production of a monthly community newsletter, the creation of a Youth Board (which did meet for the first time in September, 2003), and the re-establishment of a daycare facility at the Turtle Island Recreation Centre (NECRC, Feb. 26, 2003). The community was beginning to become engaged in thinking about building a better future, but the direction to be taken was still somewhat scattered, and there was a long way to go yet.

In May, 2003, the NECRC successfully applied for another two years of funding from Neighbourhoods Alive! to enable them to continue work in the Lord Selkirk Park neighbourhood. Further progress was made. Agencies "noted the high de-

gree of collaboration that is emerging and beginning to produce positive neighbourhood effects”; the role of the Lord Selkirk Park Project Coordinator, originally called the Community Planning Facilitator, was strongly supported as a necessary part of the process as someone “who oversees neighbourhood activities, increases awareness, and attempts to coordinate the ‘big picture’ of neighbourhood renewal”; a new Citizens on Patrol Program (COPP) was established, and it was seen as “bolstering the perception of safety in the neighbourhood, and benefitting the community at large”; and unanimous support from the agencies in the community was expressed “for a centralized and complete employment service agency in the neighbourhood” (NECRC, Feb, 2004). A year later, in May 2004, it was reported that the Lord Selkirk Park Community Advisory Committee, which was officially formed in April, 2004, was considering the establishment of a Lord Selkirk Park Tenant Resource Centre (NECRC, May 31, 2004).

In November, 2004, the NECRC successfully applied to the National Crime Prevention Centre and Neighbourhoods Alive! for funding for a Comprehensive Community Initiative (CCI) in the neighbourhood. This initiative fit with the notion that social programs and initiatives can contribute significantly to a reduction of crime. The NECRC stated that “the overall intent of the CCI is to implement the recommendations contained in the

Neighbourhood Revitalization Strategy that was created in 1998 through project funding from the Winnipeg Development Agreement” (NECRC, Nov., 2004, p. 10). What NECRC was aiming to do was to assemble the long-term funding that would enable them to work in the neighbourhood consistently over a ten year period. The problems of the Development and surrounding neighbourhood are not susceptible to a ‘quick fix’. In their *Comprehensive Community Initiative Interim Report* for the period from May to September, 2005, the NECRC reported that a Resource Centre was almost ready to go—it is now operational as of January, 2006—and that steps were being taken to make it somewhat easier to evict tenants around drug use issues, and to revise intake procedures for the Development.

A great deal has been achieved in the Development since 1998. Much of what has been achieved is not yet visible, even though it has taken very considerable effort. There is now a viable Lord Selkirk Park Community Advisory Committee that has had the effect of coordinating service provision. There is a tenant Resource Centre that is staffed and has office space in the Development. Much of the groundwork has now been laid for the development of the social infrastructure that can create new opportunities for residents of the ‘D’, and provide the supports to enable them to realize those opportunities.

Part Five: Conclusions

Large public housing developments have acquired a bad reputation. The conclusion that has been reached by most is that large public housing developments must be torn down and replaced with mixed-income housing because they are so deeply flawed that they can no longer be made to work. That is now happening all across North America.

This thinking would be a mistake if applied to Winnipeg's Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development. The Development does not need to be torn down — doing so, the evidence makes clear, would simply aggravate an already severe shortage of low-income rental housing. What is more, this paper has argued, the problem is *not* public housing as such. Public housing has come to be blamed for a problem for which it is not the cause.

The cause of the problems with which public housing is associated is broader than public housing itself. This can be seen by thinking in terms of two levels of analysis. First, public housing has become 'housing of last resort', concentrating large numbers of the poorest of the poor. To the extent that this is the case, the problems are caused by the concentration of poverty — the effects of which have been well-described (Wilson, 1987; 1996) — not by public housing. When its tenants were comprised of large numbers of low-income working families, as was the case when large public housing projects were first built — public housing was seen by its tenants as a god-send compared to their previous housing. This was the case in the USA, at Regent Park in Toronto, and at Burrows-Keewatin and Lord Selkirk Park in Winnipeg. However, a process began, the pattern of which is everywhere the same, by which changes in policy resulted in public housing projects becoming the

home not of low-income working families, with a minority of tenants on social assistance, but of families on social assistance, with a minority of tenants in the workforce. Eventually, public housing projects become home to concentrated, racialized poverty, and home also to all of the problems associated with concentrated and racialized poverty.

The still broader level of analysis leads to a consideration of what caused these concentrations of racialized poverty. This paper has argued that because public housing was linked to 'slum' removal, it was located in inner cities. Inner cities throughout North America suffered first from the process of suburbanization, which resulted in very large numbers of those who could afford to do so moving to the suburbs, and taking many businesses with them, thus 'hollowing out' the inner city and leaving behind those least able to move. This was followed by the dramatic economic restructuring of the past 30 years and more, which included a de-industrialization which removed from inner cities the very kinds of decently-paid jobs that would otherwise have enabled many of those now among the poor to pull themselves out of poverty.

In Winnipeg, at the front end of this continent-wide process, beginning in the early 1960s, Aboriginal people began slowly at first, and then in waves, to move to the city. Most were unprepared for modern urban life, having lived in rural and often remote communities without adequate educational opportunities and without much experience in the paid labour force, and having been subjected to the damage of colonization, and faced with unrelenting discrimination and racism upon their arrival in the city. They congregated where housing was least ex-

pensive—in the inner city. The combination of their lack of education and experience, the harm caused by colonization, the disappearance of well-paid jobs, and the discrimination and racism that they faced, led to high rates of poverty and associated problems, which were made the worse by the continued inadequacy of public investment aimed at poverty alleviation, an inadequacy accentuated by the public funding cutbacks that started in earnest in the late 1970s-early 1980s in response to the changing global economy.

It is these broader issues—the changes in the global economy and its de-industrializing effects, the cutbacks in public spending, the severe disadvantages faced by a growing urban Aboriginal population—that led to the concentration of racialized poverty in Winnipeg’s inner city, just as it led to concentrated racialized poverty and its associated problems in large urban centres throughout North America. Public housing, located as it was in the inner city, was in effect asked to respond to the damage created by these broader forces. And so public housing became ‘housing of last resort’ for those most adversely affected by the dramatic changes of the late 20th century. To conclude from all of this that public housing is the problem is to confuse cause and effect.

In Winnipeg, the story of the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development has to be seen in the context of the broad history of Winnipeg’s North End. The North End was the original home of the British and especially the Eastern European working class who fueled the great economic boom of the early 20th century. They located in the North End where the jobs then were, in small, cheaply-built housing located on cramped lots built by developers looking to make a fast profit. The North End and its residents were stigmatized by the city’s Anglo majority and Anglo ruling class. Despite the rich and vibrant culture cre-

ated by Eastern European and Jewish workers of the North End, they were referred to disparagingly as ‘hunkies’, ‘bohunks’, ‘polacks’ and more, and the North End was starved of the public resources needed to improve the housing stock and life chances of its residents. When the combination of post-war suburbanization and the relaxing of discrimination directed at Eastern Europeans and Jews made relocation possible, vast numbers of those most able to do so left the North End for the suburbs. The already inadequate housing deteriorated further. Much was bought up by slum landlords uninterested in maintenance and repairs. Those people in the worst financial circumstances and with the fewest economic prospects congregated where cheap housing was most readily available. The worst of these areas was around Jarvis Ave off Main Street, and this area—the Salter-Jarvis area—became home to Winnipeg’s first urban renewal project.

From the outset there were problems. Many good houses were knocked down; the still healthy part of the neighbourhood was bulldozed; most of those relocated did not experience improved housing; and from the beginning, the new Development was starved of the social spending that was needed to make it a success, just as had always been the case in the North End. Despite this, those who first located in the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development, and in Burrows-Keewatin, were happy with their new accommodations. When the deterioration set in, it was *not* because of public housing as such; it was because of broader forces.

This broadly comparative, historical analysis is important now for several reasons. First, it makes clear that—contrary to what has been argued by those in power throughout North America—public housing is not the problem. The problem is the broader socio-economic forces,

in the face of which public housing ought to be seen as part of the solution. It is part of the solution because, given adequate social supports, it can provide good quality low-income rental housing at a time when that is in perilously short supply. Second, it makes clear that the problems seen to be associated with public housing have deep roots that go far back in time, and thus will not be solved quickly. Any solution in Lord Selkirk Park must of necessity be a long-term solution, one that

promotes and supports tenants' involvement, and builds their capacities and their self-confidence and self-esteem. Third, it makes clear that this is a path now being embarked upon in the Development, led by the North End Community Renewal Corporation and the newly-established Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre. The work done to date is no guarantee of future success. Much hard work remains. But finally, after decades of neglect, we are moving in a positive direction.

Part Six: Recommendations

The recommendations advanced below arise directly out of the findings of this study. They are not intended to displace the preferences expressed by the tenants of the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development. Those preferences should be the basis of a strategy to revitalize the Development. However, we can learn from the lessons of history, and from the experience elsewhere, and what follows draws on this paper's historical and comparative analysis of public housing in North America.

1. Do Not Tear Down nor Even Physically Redesign the Development

The approach that has been adopted in the USA and at Toronto's Regent Park is to tear down large public housing projects and replace them with mixed-income housing. The result in most cases—although it remains to be seen whether this will be the case at Regent Park—is a net loss of low-income rental housing units. Winnipeg cannot afford to lose low-income rental housing. Further, this paper has argued that the problem with public housing is not the design of the public housing developments. The problem is not public housing as such. So tearing down or redesigning Lord Selkirk Park would not only be likely to result in a net loss of much-needed low-income rental housing; it also would not get at the cause of the problem. The amount of public money that would have to be spent if the Development were to be torn down and redesigned is large, and could be much better spent.

The better approach is to view the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development as an

asset. It represents a significant number of affordable rental housing units at a time when and in a place where the demand for such housing far outstrips the supply. The Development is an asset that can be built upon, in an asset-based community development fashion.

2. Focus on Developing the Social Infrastructure in and Around the Development, as the North End Community Renewal Corporation Has Begun To Do

The positive side of the HOPE VI programs that have been implemented in large US public housing projects, and at Toronto's Regent Park, is the development of a social infrastructure designed to create new opportunities for tenants, and to support them in seizing those opportunities. This is the direction that the North End Community Renewal Corporation is taking at Lord Selkirk Park, and it is the appropriate direction to take.

The problem with the large public housing projects, this paper has argued, is not their design. It is the fact that public housing has become the place where the very poor are physically concentrated, and it is the concentration of poverty that is the problem. This needs to be addressed directly. A large part of doing so is engaging tenants, in community development fashion, in solving their own problems, and providing them with the supports that they need to solve those problems. This is exactly what the NECRC has begun to do, by laying the foundations for the creation of the social infrastructure that will enable residents of the Development to be actively engaged in solving their own problems.

Throughout the 20th century we have *not* invested in the social infrastructure of Winnipeg's North End to the extent that was needed. We did not invest in the social infrastructure of the Development when it was built, and have not done so since. Residents of the North End, and tenants of the Development, have been largely left to their own devices. The implicit assumption was the 19th century Victorian notion—generally referred to as 'environmental determinism'—that the problems of 'slums' could be solved simply by building new housing. We know that more is needed. We know that marginalized, low-income people need social supports to enable them to realize their human potential.

3. Create a More Focused, and More Clear, Sense of Direction For The Work Now Being Done in the Development

Tenants in the Development have been consulted on numerous occasions about what they see as the problems and the solutions. This is what should have happened. Tenants and service providers have offered a great many observations and recommendations that are useful.

What is needed now is a focus, a clear sense of direction. The NECRC realizes this, having identified in an April, 2003, review of their work in the Development, "the need for a specific focus and/or clear objectives regarding programing requirements", and "the need to prioritize issues to be concerned and addressed".

One possibility is to identify the Development as a 'learning community', one in which a myriad of opportunities are created and supports are provided to enable adults, youth and children to become en-

gaged in a process of learning—both formal and informal learning.

'Learning' includes formal education—the kinds of supports for high school education that we have seen in Toronto's Regent Park; the kinds of Aboriginal adult education strategies developed in Winnipeg at the Urban Circle Training Centre; the innovative Teaching Assistant program recently put in place in Winnipeg's Centennial neighbourhood; the kinds of job training put in place at Chicago's Cabrini-Green, in association with Walgreen's, for example—and informal education—teaching children and youth about their Aboriginal cultures, for example, or developing strategies similar to OPK, described above (p. 53), to enable young people to exit gangs when they are ready to do so. Everything that is done in the Development can be oriented around the idea of a 'learning community'.

4. Revise the Process by Which People are Admitted to the Development

Public housing across North America, including Lord Selkirk Park, has become over the last 40 years 'housing of last resort' for those in the greatest need. This was not the original intention for public housing. It has created many problems, because it has led to the concentration of poverty, and in particular the concentration of individuals and families in greatest distress.

Admissions policy should be changed to admit those who, while still poor and in need of low-rental housing, are able and prepared to take advantage of the opportunities created by living in a 'learning community'. This is not a call for HOPE VI-style mixed-income housing and the

admission of higher-income individuals and families. Potential tenants should be screened, not for the size or source of their incomes nor the quality of their housekeeping, but for their willingness and perceived ability to take advantage of the opportunities created by a 'learning community'.

The result would be that the Development, with its strong social infrastructure and its range of learning opportunities and supports, would become a place that low-income people want to *live*, rather than a place that people want to *leave*. People who want to live in the Development, and want to take advantage of the opportunities and supports available there, would create an engaged and vibrant community.

The Development would become a demonstration of what is possible when people—no matter how poor and distressed they may be—who want to improve their circumstances and their community are afforded the opportunities and the supports to do so.

5. Maintain the Cap on Rents So That People Who Begin to Earn Good Incomes are not Induced to Leave

The cap or ceiling on the rent that can be paid for housing in the Development has the effect of keeping at least some of those people who benefit from the opportunities and supports in Lord Selkirk Park as tenants of the Development. It should be maintained. The result will, in time, be the creation of a mixed-income development—one in which a significant proportion of those living there are employed in the labour force. In this way the concentration of poverty will gradually be broken down.

6. Involve Employers in the Employment Development Program

There is a growing body of literature pointing to the importance of involving potential employers directly in employment development programs. Employers can identify the training that they consider necessary for potential employees, and can participate in designing and even delivering that training. The result is a direct 'pipeline' from training to employment.

As we have seen, such a program has been developed at Cabrini-Green, one of Chicago's largest and most notorious public housing projects, and it has been putting tenants into jobs. Throughout the USA, innovative employment development strategies have been tried and evaluated over the past 10 years. What works best is now much better understood. And one of the clearest and most important findings is that rather than focus only and entirely on the 'supply' side of the employment development equation—ie., assisting low-income people in looking for and preparing for a job—it is important to work also on the 'demand' side, by involving employers in need of employees (Loewen, Silver et al, 2005).

This approach would mean scaling up and modifying the current, fledgling employment development program at the Development. It is essential that Lord Selkirk Park be a 'learning community' in which there are direct, tangible results attached to tenants' learning.

7. Create Childcare Spaces For All Those Participating in the 'Learning Community'.

One of the most important supports in a 'learning community' is the provision of

adequate and affordable childcare to enable parents to take advantage of opportunities. A childcare centre could also create opportunities for the development of parenting skills, for volunteering, and for training and employment.

8. Develop Strategies Specifically Aimed at Improving Safety

Much of what has been described above will contribute to improving safety in the Development. It gets at the social determinants of crime. In addition, however, specific strategies aimed at providing opportunities to gang members and prospective gang members are needed. Exactly what these would look like is best determined by gang members themselves, and those who work closely with them. But in general terms, it is important to provide to gang members real choices about their lives, by creating opportunities to live well in a non-gang environment.

9. Build More Public Housing In Order to Increase the Supply of Low-Income Rental Units

Large, 1960s-style public housing units have acquired a negative reputation in recent decades. This paper has attempted to offer explanations for that reputation. The problem, the paper has argued, is not with public housing as such. Indeed, we need *more*, not less, public housing. Far from bulldozing large public housing projects, we should be embarking upon a concerted effort to significantly increase the total supply of good quality public housing available to meet the needs of the large numbers of low-income people in Winnipeg who need it. With a greater supply of good quality public housing, there would be less need for particular housing projects to become 'housing of last resort' for those in greatest need, and the problems that arise from the concentration of poverty would be eased.

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