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## **Winnipeg Convention Centre Unveils Expansion Plans**

Zivan Saper, Chairman of the Board of the Winnipeg Convention Centre today unveiled plans for an expanded convention centre which will be built on the empty parking lot site directly south of the current building.

When it opened in 1975 the Winnipeg Convention Centre was the first of its kind in Canada. It became a major attracting force for a wide range of national and international conferences covering corporate, association, and faith based organizations.

“But over the years” Saper said, “other cities have passed us and left us far behind as the needs of convention planners evolved.”

“Today’s convention planner wants more and more space to satisfy the needs of a trade show component, whose revenues help underwrite the costs of major conferences.” Saper added.

It is proposed, and discussions are continuing, that the funding of the Convention Centre be shared by the three levels of government plus new revenue generating concepts out of the Convention Centre itself. The most significant of these options is a proposed hotel to be built on top of the expanded facility.

Saper praised current and past boards for their diligence in analyzing trends in the conventions and meetings industry, and for applying creativity to finding new credible options for self financing a portion of the construction and financing costs.

In 2005 the Winnipeg Convention Centre board commissioned PKF Consulting to report on the opportunities and challenges which would lay ahead for the centre with or without an expansion.

The report was unequivocal in stating that without expansion 23,000 room nights would be lost annually by the City’s hotel industry. However, with expansion the hotel industry could expect demand for room nights to grow incrementally by 64,000 room nights.

A subsequent study demonstrated that a hotel built in conjunction with the expansion would be feasible, profitable, and be an asset to planners by offering more rooms in the downtown core.

A formal request for proposals will be published and available through appropriate government channels in the near future Saper said.

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