

# **Urban Rivers – Expanding Our Vision: The 1985 Winnipeg Rivers Conference Summary**

**Occasional Paper No. 16**

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**by Donald Epstein  
1986**

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**The Institute of Urban Studies**





THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WINNIPEG

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**URBAN RIVERS – EXPANDING OUR VISION: THE 1985 WINNIPEG RIVERS CONFERENCE**

**SUMMARY**

**Occasional Paper No. 16**

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The Institute of Urban Studies is an independent research arm of the University of Winnipeg. Since 1969, the IUS has been both an academic and an applied research centre, committed to examining urban development issues in a broad, non-partisan manner. The Institute examines inner city, environmental, Aboriginal and community development issues. In addition to its ongoing involvement in research, IUS brings in visiting scholars, hosts workshops, seminars and conferences, and acts in partnership with other organizations in the community to effect positive change.

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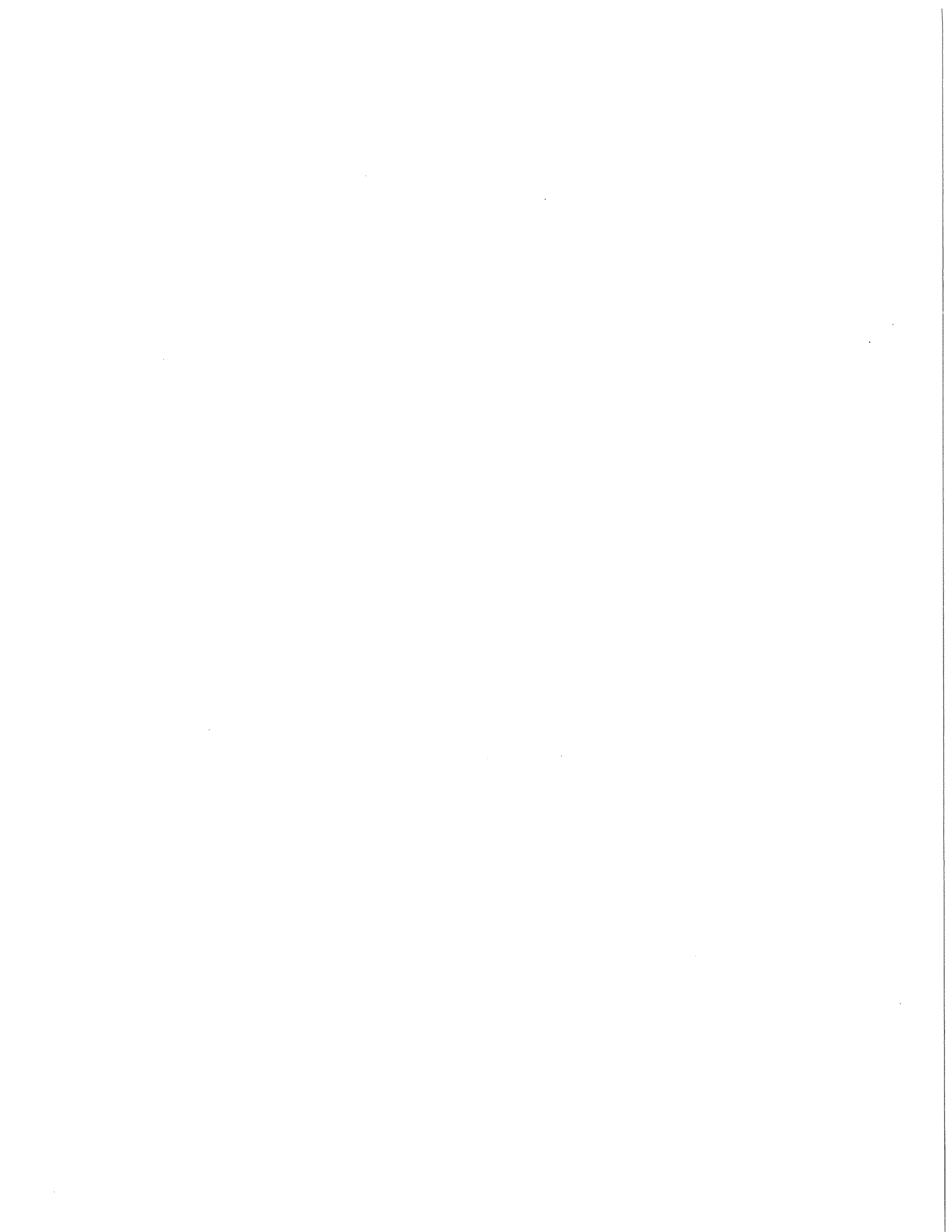
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents iii

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 WINNIPEG'S RIVERS: THE PRESENT SITUATION	2
2.1 Regulatory Control and Co-ordination	5
3.0 REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CN EAST YARDS	6
4.0 ORGANIZING FOR DEVELOPMENT	12
4.1 Development Guidelines	15
4.2 Private Sector Involvement	18
4.3 Community Involvement	19
5.0 POST-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES	20
6.0 CONFERENCE PROGRAM	23
7.0 CONFERENCE SPEAKERS	27



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The first Winnipeg Rivers Conference sponsored by the Institute of Urban Studies was held at the University of Winnipeg on October 25-26, 1985. Fifteen persons from Winnipeg made presentations, as well as visiting speakers from Saskatoon, Austin and Boston. A number of displays and proposed plans for river conservation and development were viewed by participants who were also taken on a narrated boat tour of portions of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

Approximately 200 registrants attended the conference, including representatives from the three levels of government, academics, professionals, riverbank property owners, and other concerned Winnipeg residents. Post-conference reports indicated it was a most successful event -- one that provided a great deal of useful information and challenging ideas, resulting in substantial enthusiasm among the participants. Support was evident for follow-up workshops, seminars, and public consultations in the months to come.

This summary and commentary on the Conference focuses on major significant problems and constraints to riverbank and waterway development, and on various developmental and organizational visions for Winnipeg's rivers, especially with respect to the redevelopment of the CN East Yards and The Forks.

The first section summarizes the most important comments on the existing condition of the city's rivers, and indications of some needed research and fact-finding studies. The need for improved authority and coordination in the regulatory system is highlighted.

Second, comments on the preliminary plans currently proposed for the redevelopment of the CN East Yards and The Forks are considered in some



detail. Some general advice and development guidelines, often drawn from other experiences in Canada and the United States, are summarized, as well as ideas about organizational and financial mechanisms for implementing projects.

Third, the nature and importance of private sector and community involvement in waterfront development are discussed.

## 2.0 WINNIPEG'S RIVERS: THE PRESENT SITUATION

To Elizabeth Ballantyne, Chairperson of RiverBankers Inc., a new association of owners of riverfront property, Winnipeg's river environment is:

the last wild frontier within our urban environment.... There is no one to control, protect, resolve conflicts, prepare a development plan, set aesthetic guidelines, promote historical and heritage areas, ensure safety, or educate the public.

This lack of control has led to conflicts between boaters and homeowners, between neighbours who do and those who do not want to shore up their riverbanks, between power boaters and canoeists, and between skiers and fishermen, to name a few. When these and other problems are discussed, however, conflicting advice and opinions are received as to their causes and solutions. Individual solutions often create further problems, as when bank stabilization activity of one property owner resulted in severe and rapid erosion of neighbouring banks. A substantial research program is required to come up with needed answers, she concluded. Only after the facts are obtained and appropriate strategies identified can effective collective action be taken.

Landscape architect Rob Graham, author of a recent 100-year study of Winnipeg's rivers and streams, concluded that water pollution and the

conditions and stability of the riverbanks are our two greatest problems. The Red River still receives a sewage loading equivalent to a city of 90,000 people. Add to that, urban runoff from streets, dust, cars, and animal and vegetable waste, and you have a river which meets neither primary nor secondary recreation levels. Although river pollution levels south of the city are within acceptable limits, once the river enters the city it is no longer suitable for recreational purposes.

The banks of the La Salle and Red Rivers, for example, are so overgrown with poplar, willow, and other growth that in many places people can hardly get to the river. Clearing of this growth causes rapid erosion, however, as evidenced in the mid-1800s when clearing and flooding caused the shores to recede as much as 200 feet in some places. Graham cited a study done of 140 banks; 135 of these were shown to have slippage problems.

Dutch Elm Disease poses a more recent and very imminent threat to the riverbanks, many of which have very heavy elm growth. The clearing of trees for pathways, generally seen as a desirable means of increasing our contact with and enjoyment of the rivers, ironically has the effect of adding to bank instability. The wash from power boats and erosion caused by spring ice further weakens the banks.

Stabilization itself poses many problems. Individual shoring up of riverbanks with boulder riprap, for example, can be very expensive and only causes rapid erosion of the banks on either side of the stabilized section. The City's standard policy of 9:1 grading of riverbanks, designed to minimize erosion, also creates an artificial and uninteresting appearance. Graham concluded that a comprehensive study is required, including a typology of river stabilization characteristics and techniques to provide the scientific basis needed for effective stabilization projects.

Lack of public ownership of all riverbank property poses obvious problems for concerted action. As Len Vopnfjord, the City's Chief Planner, demonstrated: "while there are substantial stretches of riverbank already in public or quasi-public ownership, there are substantially more that are not." Although some people advocate the "return of all riverbank lands in the City to the public domain," Vopnfjord contends there are more important priorities for City funds:

Downtown revitalization, inner city neighbourhood improvement, home repair, job creation and the maintenance and upgrading of a steadily deteriorating street system all command a higher priority on the public dollar than a comprehensive program of riverbank acquisition.

On the other hand, Ian Dickson, General Manager of the Manitoba Agreement on Recreation and Conservation (ARC), sees some positive changes in future resource allocations:

There is evidence suggesting a public preference for increased expenditures related to heritage, cultural and recreation resources...(a public preference) to substitute the hustle bustle and plastic of the 1960s and 1970s for the education, relaxation, pleasure and enjoyment associated with a better appreciation and use of our natural and heritage resources.

The ARC program may have been an important catalyst for these changes.

The Honourable L.L. Desjardins, Manitoba Minister of Urban Affairs, summed up the situation:

Metro's and the City of Winnipeg's efforts, as well as ARC's legacies, have been successful in getting Winnipeggers to look once again at their rivers. On one hand, these programs have awakened Manitobans to the historical significance and scenic and recreational potential of their waterways. On the other, they have attracted notice to the sorry state of some parts of the Red, Assiniboine, Seine, LaSalle, and other streams. The litany of problems include the pollution of our river waters by sewage outfall, salt-laden snow dumping and industrial effluent, the serious erosion of the riverbanks by rapid seasonal draw-down, silting, boat wakes, etc., and the absence of a co-ordinated

approach by government agencies and individuals to protect and develop the rivers' amenities for future generations of Manitobans. It is these problems that we are called to address today.

## 2.1 Regulatory Control and Coordination

The absence of any one authority to control and regulate the rivers and riverbanks was a concern of many. As City Councillor Harold Taylor stated, the City has no influence over the rivers, the Rivers and Streams Authority has very little control, and effective intergovernmental coordination is often lacking. As an example, while the Province has most of the responsibility for pollution control, the City is responsible for monitoring levels. The City's monitoring is done, however, mostly by private citizens phoning the City with specific pollution complaints. To actually contact someone with enforcement authority over boat discharge, however, one has to go all the way to Thunder Bay.

In answer to the question, "Who's in Control?," Taylor acknowledged: "I'm not sure -- everybody, and some days, nobody." He discussed several possible models for a permanent independent "river authority" to coordinate all waterway activities in the city: a tripartite federal, provincial, municipal agency; a bipartite provincial, municipal agency; and a modified Rivers and Streams Authority. The bipartite agency, including citizen members, he suggested, had perhaps the greatest advantages and might be the recommendation of the City's Rivers and Streams Committee. Whatever the model selected, the authority and jurisdiction of any new body would have to be clearly defined; for example, would it operate within the City's boundaries, or over a broader regional area?

Donald Epstein, a member of the Provincially - appointed City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee, suggested an alternative approach. He rejects the model of a "separate authority serving as both a planner/developer and a

regulatory and administrative substitute for political decision-making and governmental responsibility." While improvements to the regulatory and development approval systems are clearly needed, any new authority structure should not be independent but should remain under the direct control of responsible governments, consistent with the principle of political accountability.

Epstein went on to suggest that a second independent organization, a Winnipeg Rivers Corporation, could then be formed to provide for the "development and management" of riverfront projects and lands in the city. This corporation would be a "government-sponsored, publicly-financed, independently-managed, not-for-profit 'development and management' corporation." He sees this as the best vehicle for "initiating, planning, conserving, developing, implementing, and managing" the waterways and related projects and programs.

### 3.0 REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CN EAST YARDS

Certainly the vision that captured the attention of most conference participants was the federal government's preliminary concept for re-development of the CN East Yards:

the waterfront development component, which in part incorporates adaptive re-use of existing structures on 40 acres of land, will include a national historic park, a marina, a farmer's market, a tourism pavilion, a rail museum, and a multi-cultural facility with attendant restaurant, retail and performing arts space.

Len Vopnfjord, Chief Planner for the City of Winnipeg, discussed the East Yards concept within the context of the City's policies and objectives regarding the Natural Watercourse Parkway System, as enunciated in Plan Winnipeg (Section 80). This "system" is a "series of nodes connected to one another by certain linkages," either acquired by easement, developer dedication, or outright purchase, or provided through the use of adjacent

roadway/bicycle paths. Virtually all of the system is designed to be "really more bucolic in nature than truly urban."

In Vopnfjord's view, therefore, the portion of this system demanding highest priority is the CN East Yards area, because that is

where our two major rivers join and there is a void there;...it complements concerted efforts now underway to revitalize our Downtown and Core Area; (and) it affords us an opportunity to create an urban type of riverbank experience that to all intents and purposes is absent in Winnipeg.

Echoing statements made by Winnipeg Architect Steve Cohlmeier, Vopnfjord expressed his vision of this development:

We do need a place in Winnipeg where the city spills up to and opens onto the river. A place where people can assemble, sip a glass of wine, enjoy special events, shop, mill around and enjoy themselves...right at the water's edge...and feel like they're really in the middle of a city.

Winnipeg Mayor Bill Norrie expressed similar thoughts. Although over 3200 acres (42%) of the City's parkland is located on our primary or secondary waterways, these provide "passive" park experiences, and none of these is in the downtown area. What the City is missing is an "urban" park:

a major place of public assembly, a drawing together of community activities that moved right down to and included the hard edge of the riverbank (and)...involve(d) river-edge promenades; river-edge restaurants; river-edge art and culture, music and dance.

The Mayor also believes there is an increasing recognition of the importance of rejuvenating and revitalizing the centre of the city, as evidenced by the Core Area Initiative and the North Portage Development. There is "an instinctive recognition that our identity as a city is inextricably bound up with the fork of the rivers; that that piece of land was once central to our existence and growth as a city, and now must be again." Because the East Yards/Forks site is an historic and aesthetic

resource not just of Winnipeg, but of Canada, it is "the proper concern of senior levels of government as well."

Citing several examples of successful cooperation between municipal, provincial and federal levels of government, Mayor Norrie made it clear that in these cases "only the direct financial or political initiative of the senior levels of government...made possible the important steps that (were) taken."

Development of the Forks was identified as the major federal component of the 1978 ARC Program. As Ian Dickson pointed out:

Perhaps ARC's greatest contribution...was to focus attention on the historical significance of the Forks,...to promote the development of the CN East Yard properties,...and to influence the nature of the proposed development.

Tim Sookocheff, Chief of Management Planning for Parks Canada's Prairie Region, outlined the objectives established to guide planning and development of "The Forks National Historic Park": to complement adjacent development, other ARC projects, and historic programs, resources and facilities managed by other agencies in the region. This is to include year-round interpretive facilities and programs regarding the historical significance of the Forks, orientation to other related projects and resources, and vicarious interpretation of more remote historic sites where thematic connections exist.

Time has been a significant constraint to Parks Canada's efforts, as evidenced by the six years it took for CN to agree to the transfer of a 10-acre site for the historic park: The smaller 10-acre land base itself (compared to the original 30 or more acres anticipated) is another major constraint, both because of its reduced size, and the fact that some of the historic resources now fall outside of the acquired area.

An additional constraint is the lack of adequate funds. Costs of remedial site treatment, such as bank stabilization, extension of streets and transportation services, and the cost of inflation over the seven-year period, have left little for the provision of facilities, interpretive elements, etc. Flood zone restrictions further reduced the developable area of the site.

The announcement by the Honourable Jake Epp, M.P. of a commercial tourism development concept at the south end of the East Yards came at the time Parks Canada realized that their own effort "would not be sufficient in scope to meet the original intent" if carried out unilaterally. "The opportunities of dovetailing (these two efforts) are presently being incorporated in the preparation of a number of site development plan alternatives," Sookocheff said. These plans include "opening up sight lines to the river and across to St. Boniface, installing viewpoints and interpretative features...and the possibility of providing facilities/spaces to accommodate programmed animated presentations."

Mr. Epp and Anthony Reynolds, Regional Executive Director of the Department of Regional and Industrial Expansion, both spoke about the relevant lessons learned from the Granville Island development in Vancouver and in Toronto's Harbourfront. Both developments were to "accommodate a mix of land uses...offices, retail outlets, industry, cultural activities, (and) community facilities." As Mr. Epp said in reference to Granville Island, these components were to reflect "the diversity of the city and not some monolithic notion imposed...artificially upon it."

Development should be planned to occur incrementally, with each new facility building on the success and experience of the area as a whole.... To begin with a fully formed plan, engraved in stone, is to invite disaster.

Part of the explicit mandate of Harbourfront was "to provide space and facilities for community groups and special interest groups who were



not well established elsewhere in the city." At the same time, one goal common to both Granville Island and Harbourfront was that they "should not compete for any development which might as easily locate in other parts of the city." In planning for Harbourfront, care was taken, therefore, to design the project so as not to compete with either of the other attractions nearby -- the CNE or Ontario Place. Mr. Epp believes this to be "an essential consideration when looking at similar redevelopment projects," such as the East Yards.

Robert Fenton, Faculty Associate at the Institute of Urban Studies, followed up this theme, expressing his concern that we not allow the East Yards to be developed at the expense of the health of the downtown area. Citing as an example the decline of the north side of Portage Avenue following development of the south side, Fenton asks, "What effect will the next focus have?" He was concerned about the danger of allocating all of our resources into one "crown jewel," instead of looking at the broader possibilities, such as using some of our heritage buildings along Bannatyne to tie into the Alexander Dock area.

This theme was expanded also by Donald Epstein, a Winnipeg planning and development consultant and organizer of the conference:

I believe the Forks Project must be as special as we can make it. In the current vernacular of the Tourism Agreement, it must be 'world class'.... It must be beautiful. The East Yards represents our last major chance to do something truly excellent at the city's centre.... We must take enough time and effort, therefore, to do it right.

He cautioned, however, that

...in being done right, in being special and beautiful, the Forks project also must not be allowed to be detrimental to our other special qualities and urban attributes.... It must not be allowed to detract from or damage, albeit unintentionally, other existing, often struggling, and still fragile downtown precincts.

Applying the principle, and citing a recent feasibility and planning

study he prepared for the Core Area Initiative and the City of Winnipeg, Epstein suggests that the Heritage District is the one distinctive area in the city

providing that special ambience and unique environment most desired for a (year-round public, festival market). I also believe that such a market development is just the kind of contribution that this potentially wonderful, but fragile, area of the city needs to solidify its future.

While acknowledging that a market could be made to work in the East Yards, the water-based concept

is perhaps now somewhat overdone and all too common, and not necessarily the best for a river environment such as ours. Thus we shouldn't easily accept as our model either Vancouver's Granville Island or Toronto's Harbourfront. We should not jump at the Forks, therefore, as the "natural" site for a Winnipeg festival market, especially when a century of building quality, a unique ambience, and immediate downtown access awaits us in the Heritage District.

Epstein believed that multicultural facilities as well "should remain and be encouraged in the city centre, rather than the East Yards." And, because the special quality of Folklorama depends "on its decentralization in the variety of ethnic and other communities around Winnipeg," any thought of relocating that event to a central building at the Forks "should be resisted at all costs."

Epstein shared his vision of a canal through the site:

...a controlled water channel cut into and meandering through the site from the Assiniboine and then back out again into the Red... It could provide a controlled, safe downtown circuit for boaters, cyclists, walkers, and skaters in all seasons. Brought virtually to Main Street near Portage, it could provide an important and inviting downtown connection, just as it would link the attractions and facilities now conceived of for the site.

In addition to this, he would like to see a year-round "pleasure garden," a kind of Manitoba Tivoli, at the Forks. This would combine

"the beauty and peace of Copenhagen's historic Tivoli, the qualities of Winnipeg's heritage and historical development, and the exciting potential of our 20th century technology."

Finally he stressed the importance of bringing people to live in the area:

Housing is the key to success at the Forks...(other uses)...should be selected as much for their compatibility to housing and incentive for residential development, as for their individual pizzazz and tourism potential.... It may now be possible to look seriously at new and innovative ways of merging city-wide needs and neighbourhood needs in this development.

#### 4.0 ORGANIZING FOR DEVELOPMENT

A number of speakers devoted considerable attention to the issue of how best to organize and manage new development along the city's rivers.

Mr. Desjardins pointed out that

recent experiences with development projects in Winnipeg, like the Core Area Initiative and ARC, demonstrate the collective merit of co-ordinating and concentrating the energies and financial resources of all levels of government in addressing the complex problems of our urban environment.... With the need for a wide spectrum of community involvement in mind...consideration could be given to setting up a non-profit authority to promote, plan, protect and develop, with the private and volunteer sector, Winnipeg's riverbanks.

Such a group could, for example, "develop and implement a continuous cyclist/pedestrian and ski pathway system along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers." Mr. Desjardins sees such a group as also being able to offset costs to taxpayers by utilizing "government monies to leverage private donations, corporate and community sponsorship to fund sections of the pathway," as has been done successfully elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Desjardins ended his address with a challenge to the federal government to work in partnership with Winnipeg and Manitoba, as they

have done in Toronto and Vancouver, to transform the vision into reality.

Mr. Epp also cited the importance of cooperation and involvement of all levels of government from the outset. The initial federal administration of Harbourfront "did not sit too well with the levels of government somewhat closer to the project" and, as a result, in 1976 a non-profit company was created to administer the project.

Heather MacKnight, Planning and Development Coordinator for Saskatoon's Meewasin Valley Authority (MVA), offered some useful advice with respect to waterway authorities and development strategies. She pointed out that the tremendous distrust of the Authority that emerged in its first years is attributed to the fact that its first actions were regulatory. The MVA was seen as another bureaucratic body "intent on further restricting basic rights and fundamental freedoms."

Because the legislation enacted for the MVA was incongruous with its planning objectives, and gave it powers that even it didn't perceive as needing, a "general mistrust (developed) about Meewasin's future actions and the effect these actions would have on landowners." She advised others to be sure to adopt legislation suitable to their planning objectives.

MacKnight also suggested that any new authority or corporation make sure that its "first public actions are positive." She recommended that one or two "demonstration" projects be undertaken as symbols of what the organization stands for. These projects should be "on public land, high profile, easily developed, significant in scope and fit well within (the) development strategy being prepared." As an example, she cited the Meewasin Valley Trail, a 12 kilometer paved riverbank trail "planned, designed and constructed in about six months." This project, which the MVA "stumbled onto" as their gift for Saskatoon's Centennial, "almost singularly, turned around public attitudes toward Meewasin."

She also advised: "Keep it small, efficient and effective" -- one thing that Meewasin "did right the first time." MVA's small staff of 15 to 17 people operates more efficiently, processes projects "from planning to construction in a compacted time frame," and takes advantage of outside expertise when needed. If they "had the opportunity to do it over again, (they) probably would consider bringing staff on during the initial planning process and prior to the Act's proclamation to provide more continuity in the planning process."

MacKnight attributes the effectiveness of the MVA organization to its "solid and reliable financial base" which "cannot be varied without amending the Act." This, together with its registered charity status, and the fact that it does not have financial responsibility for operation and maintenance costs, have enabled it to continue to "plan and develop." Their only disappointment in this area is that "land acquisition funds must be voted on and acquired from the partners, separate from the statutory revenue." As MVA is presently experiencing a freeze on requests for these funds, she recommends the establishment of a capital fund for land acquisition as a preferable situation.

In his later presentation, Donald Epstein elaborated on his concept of a new Winnipeg Rivers Corporation with a defined planning, development, conservation, heritage, design review, and managerial mandate, extending to all the watercourses and related lands in the Winnipeg region. Having considered the experiences of Meewasin, Wascana, the National Capital Commission, and other institutional models, the City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee will be making a detailed recommendation in its Report with respect to the authority, purposes, structure, financial support, and other features of such a Corporation.

The key to the success of this model, in his view, is the "balance" achieved between "an activist non-governmental organization" and "the

political responsibility exercised by legitimate governmental institutions." Such a corporation "must be as free as possible of the political and bureaucratic constraints that often interfere with vigorous, creative, and future-oriented action." As a development mechanism it must be able to be "strong, resourceful and relatively independent" to provide a "counterweight to government inaction or inability." But the Corporation would still have to convince the political decision-makers and the public of the merits of its proposals when making applications for approval. The elected officials would still be accountable for either supporting or blocking those proposals.

Epstein sees the shareholders of the Corporation as the Provincial and Municipal governments, and possibly the University of Manitoba. The Federal government is not suggested as a shareholder because, in his view, "Ottawa's long-term interests and existing concept of its responsibilities do not extend to this area." Federal contributions to river development should be encouraged, of course; they can best be made, however, through continuing and new agreements, initiatives and incentives in partnership with a new Winnipeg Rivers Corporation.

The East Yards project could be one of the first projects of a new Rivers Corporation. Len Vopnfjord indicated that he expects negotiations to be concluded soon, funds to be made available, and a quasi-public corporation similar to the North Portage Development Corporation (to) be established to implement the (East Yards) plan and the remainder of the 100 acre area largely for residential purposes in conjunction with the private sector.

#### 4.1 Development Guidelines

A number of participants offered their advice on guidelines that should be employed in the design and development of projects along our waterways. Roy Mann, a landscape architect from Austin, Texas, expressed

some dismay at the East Yards plans on display ("balloons don't do it alone!"). He cautioned against "a lot of hard paving and buildings" and urged Winnipeggers: "Don't sterilize, energize!" Having seen some poor examples along the Assiniboine River, he warned against allowing the "canyonizing" effect of an unbroken line of tall apartment buildings constructed parallel to the river. Mann further urged us to avoid any unnecessary environmental impact by "determining whether we are exalting or exploiting the resource."

Mann suggested that Winnipeggers identify the magical qualities in our city and at The Forks site, and to work with them, not destroy them. He cited the decision by Montreal to leave the natural grove on Ile Ste. Helene intact beside the rest of the Expo '67 development, compared to Boston's decision to bulldoze and flatten Thompson Island in order to build buildings for their exposition.

The major focus these days, according to Gary Hack, Head of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at M.I.T. in Boston, seems to be to let natural and ecological factors govern. But he pointed out that some of the most interesting places today wouldn't be there if we had left them environmentally intact. The Boston River would still be a marsh, full of mosquitos, and posing great transportation difficulties for the city. He feels that Boston is better for having tampered with its environment and ecology. "For human needs and interest," he said, "perhaps we should tamper."

Hack went on to say that we must also be willing to accept some environmental pollution for the sake of the interest provided. He cautioned, "Don't sanitize too much. Don't push the Coast Guard out; and don't push the fishermen out; (it is) these things (that) provide interest to the area." He cited Vancouver's Granville Island, where the fully functioning concrete plant has been left as part of the development,

even though it has some environmental disadvantages.

The same sentiment was expressed by Jaap Schouten, Executive Director of the National Capital Commission's Planning Branch, when he asked, "Has the NCC gone too far in getting rid of the rail yards?" In building new museums, and providing access to them by water, "perhaps they should have left some of the tracks there so trains could be used to transport people to these museums."

In his comments on the urban design of river developments, Winnipeg architect Steve Cohlmeier stressed the importance of the manner in which the river relates physically to public use spaces. Having public access to the river is not enough. That access must be perceived to be public, to be safe, and to be of interest. Parks, such as Dominion Street park, give "an uneasy sense of intrusion by the public into the private domain" because of the narrow access to the park between private properties.

Endless, open park space along river edges, such as Churchill Park, have too little drawing power, and their limited use and large area combine to give the public a sense of insecurity due to lack of surveillance. Roy Mann also spoke about the importance of night time use and the continuous presence of people to the success of any project, and urged us always to provide a minimum of two pedestrian accesses to the shoreline for the sake of public safety and security.

Cohlmeier stressed the importance of the "park's green space intruding up into the city, and city development going right down to the river's edge." He cited examples in Winnipeg where the public is brought naturally and easily into contact with the river, such as the Alexander Dock, Omand's Creek, the docking facility below the Bridge Drive-In on Jubilee Avenue and the footbridge from there to Kingston Crescent, as well as the dock at Dubrovnik's Restaurant. These examples, according to Cohlmeier,



are proof of the importance of "not shying away from real, hard contact with the river," as long as it is well planned.

On the question of timing, Gary Hack suggested that there may be a way to take initial steps without having to make all decisions at the start. We could take a two-year period to "plan, think, and tailor tools" so that we have a clear sense of the vision. We would produce "not a master plan, but a long-range image."

#### 4.2 Private Sector Involvement

To Jake Epp, the Granville Island project demonstrated that government initiative could spur private investment which, together, has worked to produce an excellent facility. This cooperation of public and private interests was also demonstrated in Toronto's Harbourfront development. Although much of the project was financed with public money, there are new substantial revenues returning to the non-profit corporation through rents, concessions and corporate sponsorships. This income along with admission revenues last year totalled approximately \$9.2 million. One major private development of an old terminal warehouse building has already been built, with six more private developments underway.

Gary Hack expressed concern, however, that the role of the private sector was being overstated. In his view, governments have to take risks, both financial and environmental: "no risk equals no interest." Government, therefore, should take the risk-taking role in these developments and create the spirit of the area. It should finance the operation until it is profitable, and take the losses if it fails.

Hack considers the role of the private sector to provide the active functions, such as riverboats, restaurants, stores, businesses, and so on. Again, the government should take the risk in front-ending costs to

"stimulate activity so that private groups can see their way clear to possibly making a go of an enterprise." The government, through their programming efforts, can "expose and deliver markets" to private sector operations.

The private sector can also be involved collectively in ways that as individual entrepreneurs they couldn't. He cited an example from Boston where all the businesses fronting a public square agreed to take over its maintenance and management. This worked because the businesses had a collective self-interest in maintaining that open space.

Larry Desjardins felt that public-private cooperation and the work of his proposed Winnipeg Rivers Authority, involving governments, the community, business and labour, should not stop with the East Yards. He suggested developing other sites along the rivers, such as the Buchanan Marina now owned by the Province, which with innovative development including a "restaurant, and an array of recreational activities...would encourage year round use."

Desjardins went on to point out that the revitalization of our rivers has the added, indirect benefits of creating jobs, spurring economic development, and boosting the Manitoba tourist industry. "We need a diversity of attractions at a variety of locations to satisfy the demands of Manitobans and out of province visitors," he said.

#### 4.3 Community Involvement

Virtually all conference speakers expressed their firm belief that an important ingredient for successful change is an effective program of resident participation to secure community commitment to the development process from conception to completion.

Heather MacKnight warned Winnipeg about the dangers of not involving all levels of government and the public: "One of the greatest failures of the process of establishing the Meewasin Valley Authority was the lack of a comprehensive program of public consultation, education and information."

After tremendous opposition from rural interest groups and municipal councillors, Meewasin learned that "You cannot rely on political and administrative representatives to inform and educate for you; you must communicate the message yourself." MVA now has an "elaborate system of two-way communication that includes the public in all stages of planning, design and implementation, and administrative staff of the City and Meewasin in regular monthly meetings."

Ian Dickson attributed much of the success of the ARC program to its broad and solid base of support, from conceptual design to operation. Although the involvement of so many parties did pose some challenging difficulties and obstacles, "much of the success of the ARC program can be attributed to the support by the general public and other participating agencies and interests."

Mr. Desjardins, in advocating his Winnipeg Rivers Authority, stressed that "it (is) essential that community, labour and business people participate fully in any revitalization program regarding Winnipeg Rivers," along with all levels of government.

## 5.0 POST-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

The conference concluded with a question and general discussion period. It was generally conceded that it was premature to deal with conference resolutions. On the other hand, a number of suggestions were made for convening a variety of post-conference events, such as workshops on specific topics, a public involvement process on the East Yards

redevelopment, educational programs in the public schools, and a media campaign to inform a wider audience.

It was suggested that funds be procured from government sources to establish a steering group to plan and implement follow-up events. The idea of organizing a Second Winnipeg Rivers Conference, perhaps in one and a half to two years, received widespread support.



CONFERENCE PROGRAM

FRIDAY,  
OCTOBER 25, 1985

Centennial Hall, Room 3C00  
University of Winnipeg

0800 - 0900  
REGISTRATION  
0900 - 0915

WELCOME

Dr. Robin Farquhar, President  
The University of Winnipeg

INTRODUCTION

Donald Epstein  
Conference Coordinator

0915 - 1045

URBAN RIVERS -  
EXPANDING OUR VISION

Moderator/Commentator:

Donald Epstein  
President,  
Epstein Associates, Inc.

- *Saskatoon's Meewasin Valley*  
Heather MacKnight,  
Coordinator  
Planning & Development Review  
Meewasin Valley Authority,  
Saskatoon
- *Rivers in the Cities: The North  
American Experience*  
Roy Mann, Principal  
RMA/Texas Landscape Architects,  
Austin, Texas

1045 - 1100

COFFEE

1100 - 1230

WINNIPEG'S RIVER REALITIES

Moderator/Commentator:

Bill Rannie, Department of Geography,  
University of Winnipeg

• *The Real Red and Assiniboine*  
Rob Graham,  
Landscape Architect,  
Winnipeg

• *Whose Rivers Are They Anyway?*  
Elizabeth Ballantyne,  
Chairperson,  
RiverBankers Inc.,  
Winnipeg

• *Governing Our Rivers: Who's  
In Control?*  
Harold Taylor,  
City Councillor & Chairman  
Ad Hoc Committee on Jurisdiction,  
Rivers and Streams Authority  
No. 1

1230 - 1600

THE RIVER EXPERIENCE

Narrated Tour of the Red and  
Assiniboine Rivers. Lunch aboard  
the M.S. RIVER ROUGE.

• Jennifer and Tom Shay,  
Ecologists  
University of Manitoba/Manitoba  
Naturalists Society

• Ian Dickson, General Manager  
Canada/Manitoba ARC Authority

• Chuck Brook, Urban Design  
Coordinator  
City of Winnipeg Planning  
Department

1600 - 1730

RECLAIMING OUR HERITAGE - SEEKING  
OUR FUTURE

Moderator/Commentator:

Gary Hack, Head  
Department of Urban Studies &  
Planning. Massachusetts Institute  
of Technology, Boston

• *The Forks National Historic Park*  
Tim Sookocheff, Chief of  
Management Planning  
Parks Canada, Prairie Region  
Winnipeg

• *Rivers and Urban Design*  
Steve Cohlmeier, Principal  
Cohlmeier Hanson  
Architect/Designer

• *River Environment and Urban  
Development*  
Len Vopnfjord, Chief Planner  
City of Winnipeg

1730 - 1830

EXHIBITS AND CASH BAR

Centennial Hall, Third Floor

1830 - 2030

BANQUET AND ADDRESSES

Riddell Hall, University of Winnipeg

Host: Alan F.J. Artibise, Director  
Institute of Urban Studies

• *Government's Roles in River  
Revitalization*  
The Hon. L.L. Desjardins  
Minister of Urban Affairs

The Hon. Jake Epp  
Regional Minister for Manitoba,  
Government of Canada

His Worship William Norrie  
Mayor, City of Winnipeg

SATURDAY,

OCTOBER 26, 1985

Centennial Hall, Room 3C00

University of Winnipeg

0900 - 1045

LEARNING FROM THE PAST -  
TOMORROW'S POTENTIAL

Moderator/Commentator:

Robert Fenton  
Faculty Associate,  
Institute of Urban Studies

• *Lessons and Legacy of ARC*  
Ian Dickson, Secretary  
Canada/Manitoba Agreement  
on Recreation & Conservation  
(ARC)

• *Our Rivers - Winnipeg's New  
Tourist Attraction?*  
William Regehr, Deputy Minister  
Manitoba Business Development  
and Tourism

• *Canadian Waterfront Projects:  
A Federal Perspective*  
H. Anthony Reynolds, Regional  
Executive Director  
Department of Regional  
Industrial Expansion,  
Government of Canada

• *Role of the Private Sector in  
River Revitalization*  
Gary Hack, Head  
Department of Urban Studies  
and Planning  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology, Boston

1045 - 1100

COFFEE

1100 - 1230

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Moderator/Commentator:

Jaap Schouten, Executive Director,  
Planning Branch, National Capital  
Commission, Ottawa/Hull

• *What Can We Learn from the U.S.  
Experience?*  
Roy Mann, Principal  
RMA/Texas, Landscape Architects  
Austin, Texas

• *If We Could Do It All Over Again:  
The Meewasin Experience*  
Heather MacKnight, Coordinator  
Planning & Development Review  
Meewasin Valley Authority,  
Saskatoon

• *A New Rivers Authority for Winnipeg*  
Donald Epstein, Member, City of  
Winnipeg Act Review Act Committee



1230 - 1300

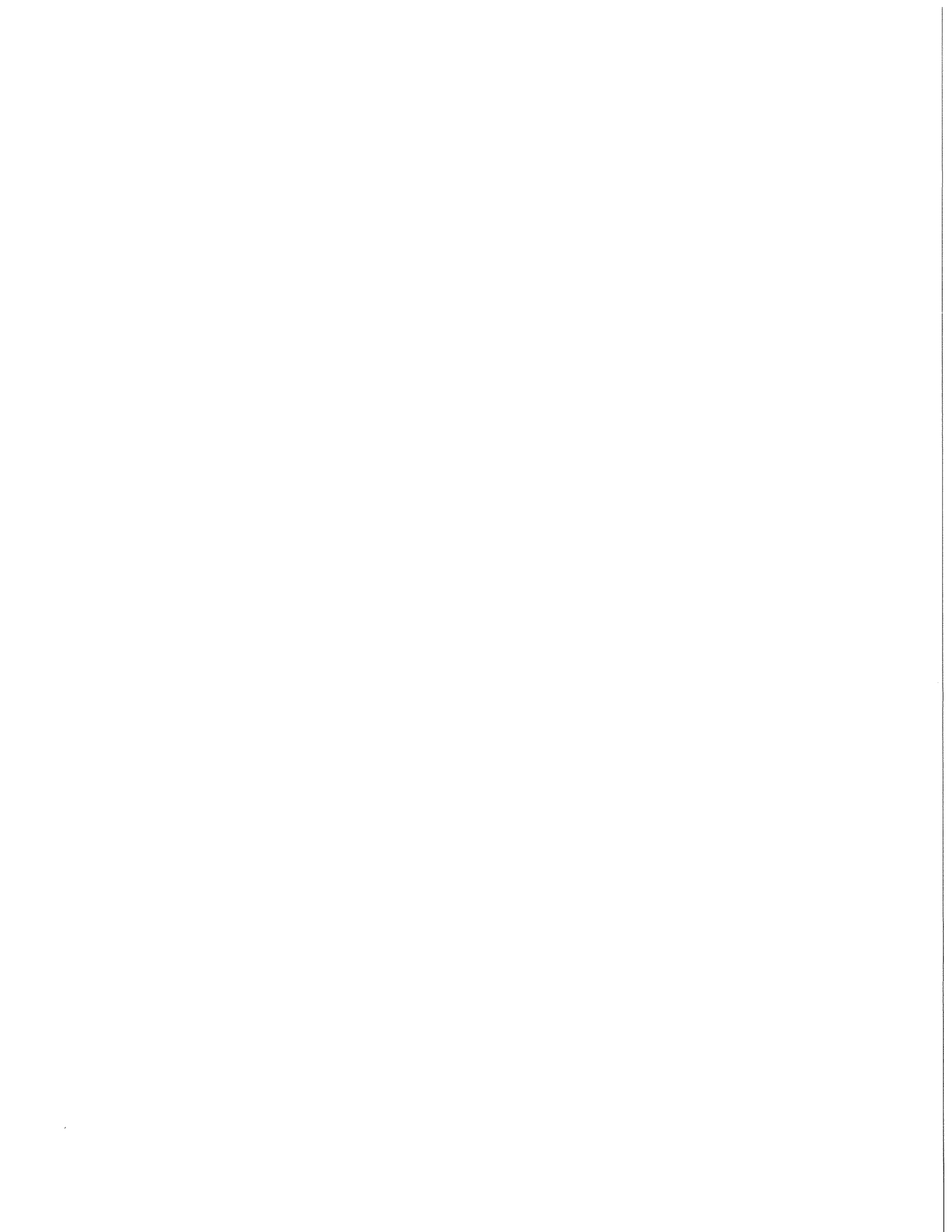
THE NEXT STEPS

Moderator: Donald Epstein  
Conference Coordinator

General Discussion and Resolutions

Summary and Closing.

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Winnipeg Rivers Conference Speakers

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Winnipeg Rivers Conference Speakers (Continued)

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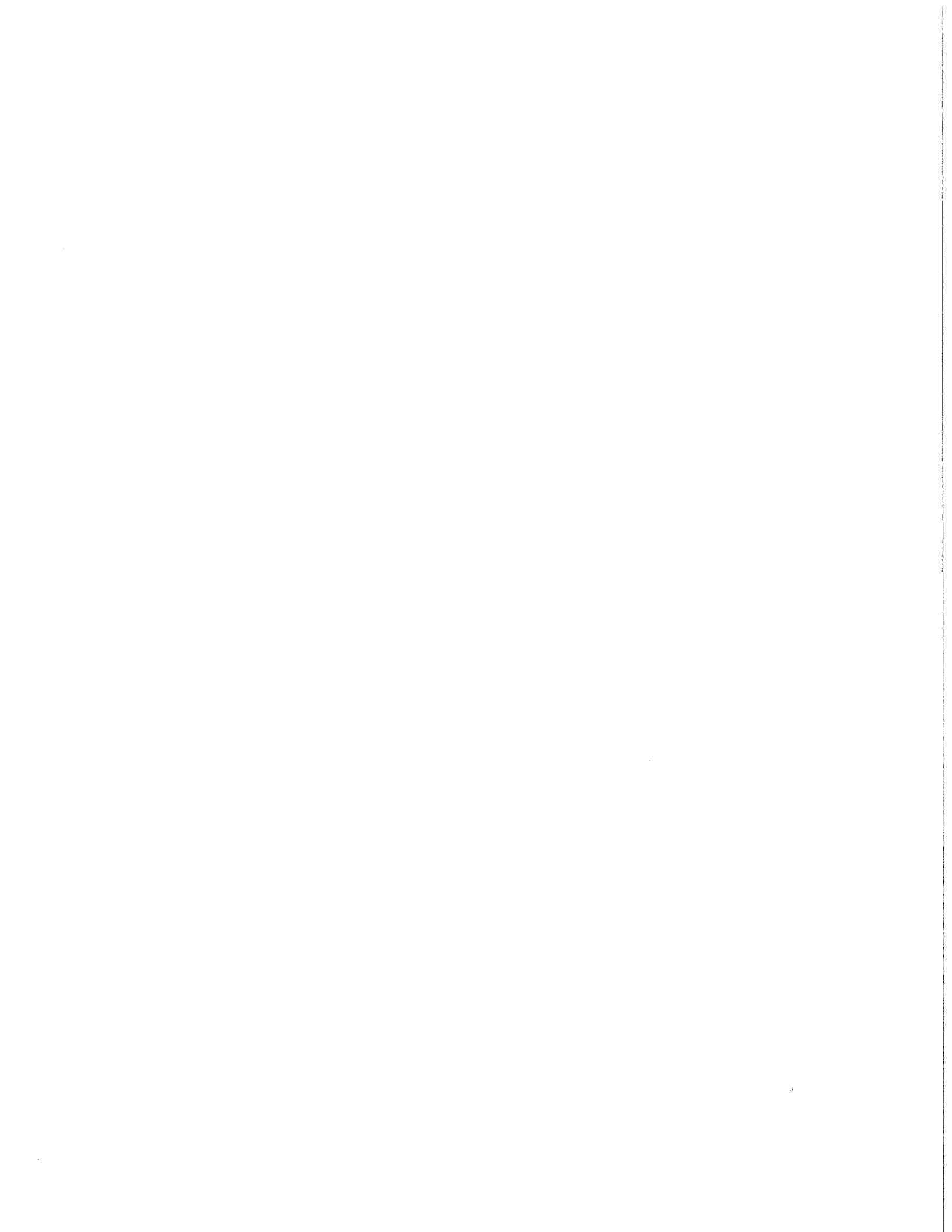
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