

QUALITY OF LIFE

MPAC Chair Lorne Weiss Speech at “Breakfast with the Premier”
December 13, 2005

Mr. Premier, fellow REALTORS® & guests:

It was less than two years ago that I stood before many of you introduce a new philosophy of social and political action that Past President Deb Goodfellow and I had been learning about with our counterparts at the BCREA. This, of course, was the Quality of Life program that had originated in the State of Washington. Right from the start, we received an overwhelming level of support from you at the board and the individual level. And today.....we are receiving calls on a weekly basis from our members and the public re-enforcing that commitment..... And for that we thank you.

When we first decided that Quality of Life was to be the platform for REALTOR®'S political & social action we did so because we believed it would meet the goals we had set for ourselves.

We wanted to raise the profile of the MREA and our members in a positive way. We are well on the way to achieving that goal through participation with other groups and associations on issue related subjects and through extensive media exposure.

One of the things that bothered us was the feeling that REALTORS® themselves did not have a strong positive self image about their role in our communities. The calls and the comments I'm hearing from our members over the past few months about our Quality of Life initiatives tell me that's changing.

I've saved our most important goal for last because I want to dwell on this a bit..... and that's our mission statement *“REALTORS® are committed to improving our Quality of Life by supporting quality growth that encourages economic vitality, provides housing opportunities and builds better communities with good schools and safe neighborhoods.”*

Building better communities..... Who knows better than REALTORS® what the issues are and what's on the mind of those who live there? After all, we spend more time around the kitchen or dining room table discussing quality of life issues with tens of thousands of Manitobans every year, than any other professional. We know what their concerns and aspirations for their neighborhoods are. But beyond that role we have another vested interest. We often live right there. These are our neighbours, our friends. Our children or grandchildren go to school and play sports with their kids. We attend the same houses of worship and drive down the same roads. So who knows better than us what the issues are and what Manitobans want?

I would like to digress for a moment to talk about the role that real estate plays in the economy. Since the stock market devaluation preceding the tragedy of 9-11 one of the key drivers of the recovery of the economies of all of the western nations has been real estate.

In Manitoba we expect to sell approximately 15,000 properties on the MLS® system this year. Clayton Research, in a study commissioned by the Canadian Real Estate Association reports that during the years 2002-2004 the economic benefit resulting from MLS® sales in the prairies was \$18,200 per sale not including any commissions paid. This year that contribution to the Manitoba economy from MLS® sales alone, will be approximately \$275 Million dollars. This level of economic contribution to our economy earns us the right as well as the responsibility to help to mold the social and economic fabric of Manitoba.

Well, enough preaching to the converted... I'd like to spend a few minutes updating you on some of the activities of Quality of Life over the past year.

Nationally the Quality of Life concept has spread from BC and Manitoba to include the provincial associations in Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI . By far the majority of our approximately 80,000 members are now involved in or contemplating social and political action through the Quality of Life philosophy.

On a provincial level, we played an active role supporting the development of Waverly West, taking the position that a vibrant community had to have choices for all its residents and a balanced development approach had to include acceptance and encouragement for both infill and suburban housing.

The Manitoba Association and the member boards were the first in Canada to endorse political candidates during an election. This happened during the past Federal Election and the civic by-election. Once again during the coming Federal election we will publicly endorse candidates on a non partisan basis based on their support of the Quality of Life principles.

We have also opened files on and are monitoring issues such as rent controls, universal access to property insurance, and issues related to accessible and affordable housing.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a Quality of Life issue that has been very high on our radar screen this past year and will continue to be a focus in the months to come. That of course is reforming the funding model for education in Manitoba. Your association has taken a lead role along with some forty other groups and organizations in Manitoba representing over 200,000 Manitobans who are asking the provincial government to commit to a program to eliminate funding education based on property ownership rather than ability to pay.

Our latest survey shows that we have the support of 62% of the population on our position and when the demographics are considered this figure rises to 72 % of seniors.

However, not all of our efforts are directed to being adversarial. In the coming months you will be hearing more about an exciting new Quality of Life initiative, being Chaired by Harry Deleeuw, a past president of both the Canadian Real Estate Association and the Manitoba Real Estate Association. We intend to create a model for Aboriginal off reserve home ownership largely using existing funding. Harry has already met with Federal Housing Minister Fontana and hopes to meet soon with the Provincial Minister. Without going into too much detail the model will include input from all the stakeholders as well as strong pre-screening, education and follow up components. We are indeed fortunate to have someone such as Harry DeLeeuw, who has already given so much of his time to the benefit of our profession, take a leadership role in a project which I truly believe will be one of the defining initiatives in Manitoba's Quality of Life program.

In the past few minutes I've tried to give you a snapshot view of where we've been and where we're going. We are at the beginning of a path that will take us to new places where we will have the opportunity to build better and stronger & safer communities. Communities where we will be proud to work and live.....and I thank you for the opportunity to walk down that path on your behalf.