



Right to Housing

453 Montrose Street
Winnipeg Manitoba
R3M 3M2
204.488.1786
info@righttohousing.ca
www.righttohousing.ca

January 10, 2014

Right to Housing Annual Report, 2013

Right to Housing Coalition, (R2H), is a non-profit, volunteer advocacy coalition made up of 50 supporting organizations, an active membership of over 40 individuals and an email circulation list of 190. Although R2H is based in Winnipeg, we maintain contact with housing advocates in Brandon, Thompson and Selkirk. I appreciate this opportunity to report on the past year's activities. At year end we had a bank balance of \$1300, all contributed by supporting organizations and individuals. These funds are used to pay our membership fees and to buy supplies and supports for our actions.

2013 was another busy year for R2H. While there were some gains in terms of better policies to encourage the creation of affordable and social housing and some improvements in overall vacancy rates in Winnipeg rentals, there are still too many homeless people, too many households in core housing need and not enough new supply of social and affordable housing.

R2H has played a key role in trying to revive a pan-Canadian coalition of groups working for social housing. We continued to work with like-minded housing advocacy groups across Canada to push the Federal Government for three major items:

1. Protect existing social housing and the 600,000 households that live in them by maintaining the annual operating grants of \$1.7 billion annually in social housing subsidies.
2. Re-establish permanent federal funding for social housing construction and programs and services to eliminate homelessness.
3. Initiate and coordinate a pan-Canadian housing strategy which respects provincial jurisdiction, is based on human rights and provides federal resources to implement such a strategy. Canada remains the only G8 country without a National Housing Strategy.

R2H's Federal Working Group continues to advocate for the Federal Government to provide tax relief for developers building affordable rental housing in order to increase the supply.

Here in Manitoba we were pleased to see that our government has nearly completed its commitment to support the creation of 1500 units of affordable housing and 1500 units of social housing by 2014. As well there is a new commitment for 500 units of affordable and 500 units of social housing to receive government support over the next three years. While R2H cannot take credit for these increases in supply, we believe that our Provincial Working Group's continual advocacy has been well received and has encouraged government to proceed in this direction. We are also relieved to hear that up to 2016-7, Manitoba Housing has agreed to pick up the cost of subsidies for social housing units when the current operating agreements expire. We were also relieved to hear that the pilot project to gradually convert an apartment building of social housing

to a limited equity co-op housing development seems to have been shelved. We have no quarrel with co-op housing, but to use social housing units that are in such short supply to do this was unacceptable. We were disappointed that the basic housing allowance for Employment and Income Assistance recipients was not increased to the degree that would allow individuals on social assistance to be adequately housed.

The City of Winnipeg has passed a Housing Policy based on the principles in the Our Winnipeg policy document. The Housing Division is in the process of crafting an implementation plan to bring these policies into fruition. R2H's City Working Group has carefully reviewed the policy and provided feedback to the City and will monitor the City's progress as the implementation plan is enacted once developed. Winnipeg's vacancy rate has crept up from less than 1.7% last year to 2.5% this year. While this generally reflects vacancies in the higher rent units, it does show that the supply side market is responding. Now the task is to increase the supply of housing for households in core housing need.

A Summary of Some Key Activities in 2013

Presentations	5
Demonstrations and sponsored events	3
Letters to the Editor	2
Letters to the Minister of Housing	4
Letters to the Premier	2
Letters to Opposition MLAs	1
Letters to the Prime Minister	1
Letters to the Manitoba Minister of Finance	1
Meetings with Members of Parliament	1
Meetings with Minister of Housing	2
Meetings with Opposition MLAs	2
Meeting with City Counselors	1
Papers and Reports	3
Media Advisories	3
Petitions	1
These tangible deliverables represent many hours of regular coalition meetings and consultations.	

Although R2H is located in Winnipeg Manitoba, it is important for us to be connected and be informed by developments in the rest of the country. In that regard several of our members have been attending national conferences that inform us of the broader issues and trends in affordable and social housing. In the past year we were well represented in April at the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Congress in Ottawa and in October at the International Right to Housing Conference in Toronto. Tim Sale represented Right to Housing on the CHRA Task force on Rental Housing and Linda Ring represents Manitoba on the CHRA board.

With the assistance of SPARK, a service of the Canadian CED Network (Manitoba Office) and volunteer Ken Murdoch, the Right to Housing Coalition launched a new website in September (www.righttohousing.ca). Please visit us there and on Facebook for more information about our work. We are always glad to speak to community interest groups. Individuals are welcome to any of our monthly meetings. They are held at Crossways in Common on the third Tuesday afternoon of each month.

Clark Brownlee

Coordinator