



# Right to Housing

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Right to Housing Coalition (R2H) is a volunteer, non-partisan, secular housing advocacy coalition made up of volunteers and fifty-eight supporting organizations. (See the attached list). R2H started over ten years ago when a group of faith communities in River Heights tried to rent some of the then-empty houses on Kapyong military base to house Indigenous and off-shore newcomers to Winnipeg. This plan was not successful. Many things have changed since then, but the need for more social and affordable housing for Canadians is not one of them.

The housing shortage can be traced to a series of policies by consecutive governments at all levels (including the Federal government’s lack of action to address critical needs in housing, education and employment in First Nations communities). In response, R2H has created working groups that target policies at the Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels. Our advocacy work includes presenting briefs, hosting events, speaking to interested groups, engaging the media and lobbying politicians as well as public servants about the need for changes in housing policies. This is slow work as we are aware that today’s governments have decided not to allocate the financial resources necessary to meet the housing needs of low-income Canadians. Recognizing this, our work aims to raise awareness about housing for all low-income Canadians, on the public agenda. This year, as in last year, I can say that there has been some progress.

The encouraging signs include a new government in Ottawa that has made many progressive promises, some of them touching on the housing needs of lower income Canadians. In the lead-up to the Federal election, a lot of our energy went into raising the issue of housing. Fortunately our message resounded as we were joined by organizations and individuals across the country. Politicians listened. This is a significant change and an important one as the Federal Government controls the policies of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which until 1993 reinvested its profits into creating low income housing. Since then CMHC’s billions of dollars of profits have been added to the government’s bottom line – over \$20 billion in the last decade. A major reinvestment of CMHC profits in social and affordable housing is one of the policies we are now advocating.

For the second straight year the provincial vacancy rates for rental housing are creeping up which although mostly in the medium to higher price apartments, could show that Manitoba’s initiatives to create more social and affordable housing are having a positive impact. There were 127 social housing units started in 2015, up from 74 a year earlier. There are also slow but positive signs that the problem of homelessness in Winnipeg will be dealt with in a more coordinated way as the three levels of government and the United Way have committed funding to the Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg over the next five years. Another hopeful sign is the creation of more rental housing in downtown Winnipeg. A small portion of this is affordable, because of incentives offered by the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba, all policies we have supported and continue to advocate for more to be done.

### Right to Housing Statistical Report<sup>i</sup> 2015

	2013	2014	2015
Meetings and Consultations	?	37	37
Letters	14	21	9
Conferences	3	4	4
Conference Calls			4
Letters to the Editor	2	5	2
Media advisories	3	2	4
Papers and Articles	3	7	3
Presentations	5	6	9
Staged Events			
	3	4	3

<sup>i</sup> The meetings and consultations indicated are only those external to our organization and do not include our regular planning and monthly meetings

## A Snapshot of our Activities

### Federal Working Group

- Wrote, published and presented a Federal Brief, *Housing For All Manitobans*
- Met with the Parliamentary Housing Critics from the Liberal and NDP parties during the Canadian Housing and Renewal Congress in Winnipeg in May 2015
- “Once Around the Block: The Launch of *Housing for all Manitobans*. The launch of our Federal brief included a guided walk for the media, the public and Federal Party candidates. It was attended by about 40 people and received positive media coverage.
- Presented at “Manitoba Matters V”, a policy event of the Liberal Party of Manitoba
- Participated in Google Group “HousingforAllNetwork”, a cross-Canada housing advocacy network
- Presented to the Winnipeg Rental Network
- Wrote several Op-eds and Letters to the Editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press* critical of the way CMHC uses its profits to increase the Government’s bottom line rather than reinvesting them in housing for low income Canadians.
- Prior to the federal Election, met with candidates of the political parties to advocate better housing policies.

### Provincial Working Group

- Advocacy meetings were held with all political parties to support R2H contributions to Make Poverty History Manitoba, and the 2015 *The View from Here* Poverty Reduction Plan.
- Advocated for the successful implementation of Rent Assist and R2Hs main ask for 300 net new Rent-Geared-to-Income, (RGI) units per year for the next 5 years commitment.
- Worked to support the Housing First model, renewal of tenant association groups, new builds, rent supplements, and concerns over a net loss of units due to expiring operating grants, and improving the public perception of social housing.
- In 2016 the Provincial working group is planning for the Provincial election, and will initiate internal strategic planning.
- A representative of Right to Housing sits on the Minister of Housing’s Housing Advisory Roundtable.

### City Working Group

- Met with Mayor Bowman and Councilors Gerbasi and Orlikow to advocate more City of Winnipeg initiative in creating affordable housing.
- Sits on the Housing Supply Working Group for the End Homelessness initiative.
- Attended all meetings of the City of Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee.
- Organized and attended a consultation with Richard Drdla on inclusionary zoning

On October 22, Right to Housing highlighted our coalition’s work during a day-long forum in conjunction with the launch of the book, *Poor Housing*.

In closing, I want to thank the many individuals and organizations that have supported our work by volunteering and by donating money. Without these resources, we would not be able to carry on our work.

Clark Brownlee, Coordinator

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## Right to Housing Revenue and Expenses 2015

**Balance as of Jan. 1, 2015** **692.13**

### Revenue

Siloam Mission	200
Mennonite Central Committee	400
New Journey Housing	200
Winnipeg Foundation	10,800
Harrow United Church	190.25
Ladco	1200
United Lutheran Service Club	100
NovaTuri Group Inc.	100
Individuals, (6)	630

**Total** **13820.25**

### Expenses

CHRA	10800
Dave's Quick Print	82.87
Centre For Christian studies	55
Graham Stuart	80
Tim Sale, (printing)	700.62
Tim Sale (printing)	393.82
CCEDNet	100
Make Poverty History MB.	100
Canadian Housing and Renewal	358.75
Can. Centre for Policy	
Alternatives	100

**Total** **12771.06**

**Balance as of Dec. 31, 2015** **1,678.32**