



Press Release – Sent on April 11, 2017

## **Budget 2017 reduces funding available to house low-income Manitobans including the homeless, says The Right to Housing Coalition**

For immediate release – Budget 2017 provides \$150M less to the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation compared to last year’s budget. “We are concerned that this will increase homelessness and perpetuate the poverty experienced by the thousands of Manitobans who cannot get ahead and enjoy a decent quality of life because they cannot access safe and affordable housing,” says Kirsten Bernas, representative of The Right to Housing Coalition.

The Coalition called on the Province to commit to building 300 net new social and affordable housing units built by the public, non-profit and co-op sectors annually. Budget 2017 does not set any target and timeline for building new social and affordable housing.

The budget mentions \$12.8M to improve housing supply and quality. However, these are not provincial dollars. Much of this federal funding is expected to go toward improving quality. But even if the whole amount went to supply alone, it would barely add another 45 social housing units to the market.

“Now is not the time for Manitoba to step back from investing in affordable housing. Now is the time to take advantage of a federal government that is interested in supporting provinces and cities to address their housing challenges,” added Bernas. “Reduced spending by the Province is a missed opportunity for the two levels of government to collaborate to put a dent in Manitoba’s affordable housing crisis.”

The Right to Housing Coalition is pleased to see ongoing investments in Rent Assist, a program that provides an income benefit to low-income Manitobans to top up their rent. Its budget line was increased, but this benefit won’t do much good if the physical housing is not there for people to live in. *The Plan to End Homelessness in Winnipeg* says 7,500 units are needed just to house the homeless in Winnipeg, never mind the rest of the province.

Under the previous government Manitoba became a leader in the construction of social housing to help prevent falling further behind meeting Manitoba’s affordable housing needs. Progress was being made with the addition of 1,500 units each of affordable and social housing between 2009 and 2014, and a further commitment to build another 500 of each by 2016. But that last commitment has not been completed under the new government, and the lack of any target in Budget 2017 suggests that progress is coming to a halt.

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