



Invest in Housing in Budget 2015

What is needed? Right to Housing and Make Poverty History Manitoba are calling on the Province of Manitoba to make the following investments in Budget 2015:

- 1. Increase the housing budget by \$30 million to adequately fund existing commitments to increase supply without reducing other important housing initiatives including the existing social housing stock.**
- 2. Increase the maximum Rent Assist benefit level to equal 75% of median market rent.**

Background

Access to safe, quality, and affordable housing continues to be a serious challenge for Manitobans living with low incomes. Low vacancy rates combined with a growing population and increased demands for affordable housing have contributed to rising housing costs. Rental rates across Manitoba have increased by 60 to 65 percent since 2000. As housing costs become more unaffordable in the private market, the demand for social housing has gone up.

The solution requires a multi-pronged approach that includes increasing the supply of social housing and increasing financial assistance to help low-income Manitobans pay for their housing costs. The Province has made important commitments in these areas that need to be adequately funded to ensure low-income Manitobans don't lose access to other important housing and income related initiatives.

New Social and Affordable Housing – addressing the supply side of the equation

The Province of Manitoba has taken significant steps in recent years to increase the supply of social and affordable housing across the province. However, much more needs to be done to address the need. The Province's most recent commitment is to build 500 new units each of social and affordable housing by 2016. However, the department responsible for housing did not receive a funding increase in Budget 2014. Community groups are concerned that without an increase to the housing budget, commitments will be met at the expense of other important existing housing initiatives. For example, funds are needed to invest in addressing expiring operating agreements for non-profit, cooperative and Provincial housing providers to ensure that there is no net loss of social housing units.

Rent Assist – addressing the demand side of the equation

In 2013, more than 145 organizations across Manitoba endorsed Make Poverty History Manitoba's call to increase the rental allowance to 75% of median market rent. The Province of Manitoba responded in 2014 by introducing Rent Assist - a new financial benefit to help low-income Manitobans with housing costs. By making the benefit available to people on and off EIA, Rent Assist acknowledges the importance of ensuring all low-income Manitobans have access to income supports for housing. The Province has committed to increasing the maximum Rent Assist benefit level to 75% of median market rent within four years. However, Manitobans need improved access to affordable housing now. Funding for Rent Assist should be increased now without reducing other important benefits available to low-income Manitobans.

For more information contact Clark Brownlee at coordinator@righttohousing.ca

Right to Housing is a Winnipeg-based coalition consisting of 50 organizations working together to promote affordable and social housing.

Make Poverty History Manitoba (MPHM) is a multi-sectoral coalition committed to changing public policy to achieve a Manitoba without poverty. More than 145 organizations across Manitoba endorsed MPHM's call to increase the rental allowance to 75% of median market rent.