

## ***A Social Housing Action Plan FOR MANITOBA***

Housing is a basic human need, essential to survival, health and well-being. Housing provides the foundation to address poverty, crime, addiction, poor health, unemployment, gender-based violence, and the apprehension of children by Child and Family Services. Additionally, we cannot end homelessness without ensuring access to low-rent housing.

In Manitoba, thousands of people are unable to find stable housing. The private rental market is increasingly unaffordable to people experiencing poverty and homelessness, exacerbated by rent regulations which allow landlords to hike rents in specific circumstances. Households in the lowest income quartile spend an average of 68% of their incomes on housing. This has escalated the demand for non-market, social housing where rents are capped at 30% of a household's income. Nearly 6,000 households are on the waitlist for a social housing unit. With nowhere else to go, many people end up staying with friends/family, in shelters, or outside. According to the 2022 street census, there are more than 1,200 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in Winnipeg alone.

Since the federal government began reducing spending on social housing in the early 1990s, the Manitoba government has relied almost exclusively on the private market to produce low-rent housing. It is clear that this 30-year-old experiment has failed. Other sectors are joining the growing consensus among housing advocates that the housing crisis won't be solved without re-investing in social housing. For example, Scotiabank released a report in 2023 calling on governments across the country to "double the supply of social housing". The report notes years-long waitlists to access social housing and states that "the moral case to urgently build out Canada's anemic stock of social housing has never been stronger".

**It is time for all levels of government to finally do what is necessary to address the housing crisis.**

The Right to Housing Coalition has put forward a social housing action plan for Manitoba that pulls together solutions based on decades of research and consultation. The coalition is calling on the Manitoba government to commit to implementing a social housing action plan that features the following five key pillars:

 **1**

**Increase the social housing supply by 1,000 rent-geared-to-income units annually for at least 10 years.**

 **2**

**Protect existing social housing to ensure no loss of rent-geared-to-income units due to disrepair, lack of subsidies, or the sale of properties.**

 **3**

**Increase and stabilize funding to ensure all social housing tenants have access to comprehensive supports with a minimum ratio of 1 support worker per 100 units.**

 **4**

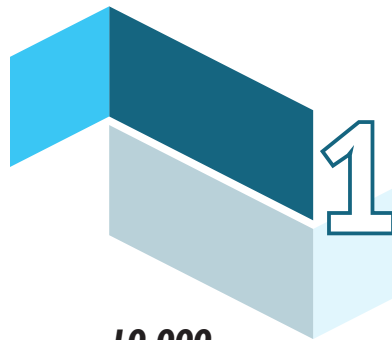
**Enhance security of tenure by limiting exemptions to rent regulations, limiting above-guideline rent increases, disallowing rent discounts, enhancing compensation for no-fault evictions, and ensuring evictions occur as a last resort.**

 **5**

**Support and partner with social enterprises to provide people facing barriers to employment with training and employment in the construction and maintenance of social housing.**



## ***A Social Housing Action Plan*** **FOR MANITOBA**



**10,000  
additional  
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**1**

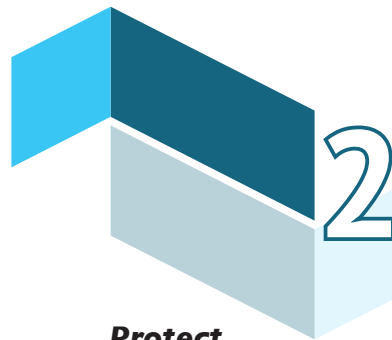
### **Increase the social housing supply by 1,000 rent-geared-to-income units annually for at least 10 years.**

According to the housing needs analysis conducted by the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association in 2023, Manitoba requires at least 10,000 additional units of social housing right now to meet the housing needs of the lowest-income Manitobans. This includes people whose income comes from social assistance, disability benefits, or seniors benefits as well as the working poor.

At least half of new units should be publicly-owned and the remainder owned by non-profit, co-operative, and Indigenous-led housing providers. New units should be prioritized for

communities, populations, and household sizes with the greatest need. Newly constructed units should be built to the highest efficiency and performance standards.

The Manitoba government will need a plan that explores all opportunities for expanding supply through new construction, the acquisition and redevelopment of existing properties, and the use of public land banking and land trusts. A funding mechanism is required to ensure new supply can operate with rent-geared-to-income rents for as long as it is needed.



**Protect  
existing  
social  
housing.**

**2**

### **Protect existing social housing to ensure no loss of rent-geared-to-income units due to disrepair, lack of subsidies, or the sale of properties.**

New social housing supply will not help to reduce homelessness and housing insecurity if we don't prevent the loss of existing units. There are social housing units in Manitoba that sit vacant or have been demolished because of inadequate investment in capital repairs and maintenance. Publicly-owned units have been sold to the private sector and no longer offer affordable rents. Non-profit social housing providers have had to increase rents or sell their properties to the private sector when government subsidies were not renewed or replaced after they expired.

Going forward, the Manitoba government must prevent these losses to ensure new social housing supply results in a net gain. This requires: a \$1.5b (over 10 years) capital maintenance fund to bring existing buildings up to standard; retaining ownership of public housing assets; legislation to prevent the sale of non-profit owned social housing that has received government funds; and a new funding mechanism to sustain rent-geared-to-income rents and the operation of public, non-profit, co-operative, and Indigenous-led social housing when subsidy agreements expire.



**Ensure all social housing tenants have access to comprehensive supports.**

**3**

### **Increase and stabilize funding to ensure all social housing tenants have access to comprehensive supports with a minimum ratio of 1 support worker per 100 units.**

People who live with low incomes often face challenges accessing physical and mental health care, food, transportation, childcare, education, training, and employment. Poverty also increases the risk of experiencing gender-based violence, physical and mental illness, addiction, and involvement with the child welfare and justice systems. These experiences can threaten tenancies and trap people in poverty.

There are many organizations in Manitoba that help low-income households stabilize their tenancies by connecting them to resources related to landlord-tenant mediation, basic needs, budgeting, pest management, and hoarding. They also help households achieve other goals and improve their economic conditions by

connecting them to resources related to family reunification, newcomer settlement, reintegration from incarceration, Indigenous cultural practices, health, trauma, mental health, substance use, childcare, education, job training, and employment.

The Manitoba government can help prevent evictions and homelessness by increasing and stabilizing funding to expand proven models for delivering supports to social housing tenants. This includes funding for resource centres located onsite or nearby, funding to operate transitional and permanent supportive housing, and funding for mobile support workers that can meet tenants where they're at in the community.



**Enhance security of tenure.**

**4**

### **Enhance security of tenure by limiting exemptions to rent regulations, limiting above-guideline rent increases, disallowing rent discounts, enhancing compensation for no-fault evictions, and ensuring evictions occur as a last resort.**

Manitoba's Residential Tenancies Act prevents the loss of housing through unforeseen and unreasonable rent increases by establishing a guideline that limits the percentage rate of annual rent increases. Unfortunately, the rent regulations do not cover all buildings. Units rented at \$1,615 a month or higher are exempt. Units in buildings first occupied after 2005 are also exempt for 20 years. The law also permits landlords to seek rent increases above the annual guideline if they can establish operating cost increases or capital costs, such as repairs. Unlike jurisdictions such as Ontario, there are no limits to the increase that can be granted and few limits on what expenses can be claimed. Manitoba's amortization period is also much shorter, resulting in higher rent increases. Landlords are able to unfairly increase their profit margins through this process; after the expenses have been fully paid by tenants through higher rents, the rents do not go back down.

The severe loss of low-rent units in the private market is largely the result of rent increases, though conversions to other uses like short-term rentals and demolitions play a part. Another issue that threatens affordability is the ability for landlords to remove, with little notice, rent discounts tenants receive when there is insufficient demand to charge legal rents. Renters can be forced to find more affordable housing, placing them at risk of homelessness, and increasing the demand for rent-geared-to-income housing. Investment in social housing must be paired with strengthened rent regulations and tenant protections that ensure evictions occur as a last resort and that tenants receive adequate compensation for no-fault evictions. This will help ensure that Manitoba renters, regardless of the type of housing in which they live, have stable, secure homes.



**Support and partner with social enterprises.**

## **Support and partner with social enterprises to provide people facing barriers to employment with training and employment in the construction and maintenance of social housing.**

Public investment in social housing stimulates the economy. The construction, maintenance, renovation and retrofitting of social housing offers opportunities for training, apprenticeship, and long-term employment. The Manitoba government can partner with construction-based social enterprises that can help ensure some of these opportunities are provided to low-income people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to enter the workforce. This approach can deepen Manitoba's pool of skilled workers, which are desperately needed to fill the growing labour shortage within the construction industry - a shortage that is fuelling the affordable housing crisis across the country.

Partnering with social enterprises can generate a greater return on public investments in the construction and maintenance of social housing. When previously unemployed workers become attached to the labour market, their wages help fuel the economy. This model generates new tax revenues while reducing poverty, and decreases associated costs related to social assistance, child welfare, health care and incarceration. The Manitoba government can help maximize these outcomes by expanding social procurement practices within Manitoba Housing, enhancing funding for training within social enterprises, and implementing a social enterprise strategy to support sector development and expansion.



*The Right to Housing Coalition is a group of individuals and organizations concerned about homelessness and housing insecurity experienced by low-income Manitobans. The Coalition calls on all levels of government to prioritize investments in social housing to ensure all Manitobans can access a home that is affordable, safe, secure, and culturally appropriate.*

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## **Meeting the Housing Needs of Manitoba's Indigenous Peoples**

Indigenous people are over-represented in data related to homelessness and housing insecurity. 90% of people experiencing homelessness in Thompson's 2022 Point-In-Time Count identified as First Nation, Métis or Inuit. In Winnipeg the number was 68.2 percent. The 2021 national Census found that Indigenous households experience a higher rate of core housing need (16.2%) compared to non-Indigenous households (7.1%).

The disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing need is a result of systemic racism and colonialism, including landlord

discrimination against Indigenous tenants; structural poverty; disproportionate representation in the child welfare system; inadequate supports when aging out of care; and a limited supply of good quality, affordable housing that meets Indigenous households' needs.

Manitoba's social housing action plan must include dedicated funding, policies, and programming designed and delivered by Indigenous stakeholders to address the distinct causes and experiences of Indigenous housing need, based on self-identified priorities.