



Budget 2026 falls short on housing

by Kirsten Bernas and Shauna MacKinnon

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The Manitoba Government released Budget 2026 on March 24. While the NDP government made important progress on housing and homelessness in its first two budgets, this year required bolder action to meet the scale of the crisis.

Instead, Budget 2026 slows that progress, leaving Manitoba further behind. Because the government has repeatedly underfunded housing for many years, future budgets will now need to be even larger to catch up to the level of housing low-income Manitobans need.

In 2024, the Right to Housing Coalition identified the need for 10,000 new social housing units over 10 years. Social housing includes public, non-profit and co-operative housing, with rents set at no more than 30 per cent of household income. The government typically combines social housing with affordable rental housing in its commitments. However, affordable rents are more broadly defined and can include units with rents upward of the median market rent, which are not affordable to low-income households.

Three budget priorities must be met to address continued housing precarity and homelessness in Manitoba. These include

expanding the supply of social housing, investing in maintenance to preserve the existing supply and allocating sufficient funds to ensure that tenants with complex needs are sufficiently supported so that they and other tenants are safe and sustainably housed.

Here's how the budget measures up.

The government committed to 350 units of affordable and social housing in Budget 2024 and 670 in 2025. With just 215 units committed to both affordable and social housing in Budget 2026, progress has stalled considerably.

Over three years, this brings the total to just 1,235 units of social and affordable rental housing. This means that we will be more than 1,765 units short of affordable and social housing and even further short of the social housing we know is needed.

With only 215 social and affordable housing units targeted in the 2026 budget, we are losing the little momentum we have seen since the NDP was elected in 2023. The previous Conservative governments stalled progress made by the Selinger government, with only 58 units added between 2019 and 2022. Budget 2026 takes us in the wrong direction, repeating past mistakes that led to the housing crisis.

In addition to falling behind on expanding the supply, for far too long, Manitoba has underinvested in the



maintenance and repair of the existing social housing supply.

In 2024, the Coalition identified a need for increased investment of \$150 million annually for 10 years to bring existing social housing up to standard. After investments of \$67.8 million in Budget 2024 and \$71 million in 2025, this year's small increase of \$75 million brings the three-year total to \$213.8 million — that is \$236.2 million behind where we need to be.

Although most low-income households simply need housing they can afford, some people require significant support. The Coalition continues to call for government investment in highly trained addictions, mental health and primary care professionals and community support workers, available 24-7 in cases of highest need.

Budget 2026 includes an additional \$10 million investment in what is often referred to as “wraparound supports” for tenants exiting homelessness. This increased investment is critical to achieving long-term tenancies, ensuring the safety of all tenants and preventing returns to homelessness.

But Manitoba continues to face a shortage of health-care professionals and housing support workers available to all tenants who need them, alongside high turnover driven by low wages and limited benefits. Without sustained investment in people, housing alone cannot succeed.

The government of Manitoba has said that it will eliminate chronic homelessness in eight years. If it is going to do that, while also ensuring that others don't slip through the cracks, it will need to scale up its commitment in all three areas.

It will need to expand the supply of social housing, maintain what exists and ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to support tenants.

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