

2020-9 Affordable & Social Housing

Mover: Right to Housing Coalition

Whereas: Although vacancy rates in many Manitoba cities are creeping up, places like Brandon, Steinbach, and Winkler continue to have low vacancy rates and many Manitobans continue to experience a housing crisis as vacancy rates for affordable units in the private market are few and far between. Far too many households spend 50% or more of their income on rent, putting them at significant risk of losing their housing, their health and their spirit.

Whereas: Federal tax structures and the lack of a national housing strategy (until recently) have, over the past 40 years, slowed the creation of social and affordable rental housing. Our existing stock is eroding through aging, demolition, asset sales, expiring federal operating agreements and conversion to condominium, and is not being adequately replaced. These factors have escalated rents to make them unaffordable to a growing number of people, especially the most vulnerable (those on a fixed income, persons with disabilities, persons living with mental health challenges or mental illness, newcomers, women, trans people, Two Spirit people, gender non-conforming people, and Indigenous people). The Province of Manitoba has increased rents for people living in social housing from 25% of the household's income to 30%.

Whereas: New housing construction is needed to accommodate the distinct needs of specific demographics. Women experiencing domestic violence or sexualized violence and exploitation require housing that is designed to optimize their safety, and that is accompanied by trauma-informed supports. Persons with disabilities require housing built to high standards of accessibility. People experiencing homelessness require access to housing with tenancy supports. Youth aging out of the child welfare system require transitional housing with supports that enable them to move into permanent affordable housing. Many large low-income families, including Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee families who live with extended family and friends, require housing with three or more bedrooms. Indigenous Peoples, immigrant, and refugee families also require housing that is appropriate to cultural needs. All of these housing types are in short supply.

Whereas: Social and affordable housing is a key piece of neighbourhood renewal and a necessary foundation for neighbourhood and family stabilization. As housing costs increase, people are forced to spend food money on rent, making personal debt and food banks sad necessities for survival. When housing needs are met, children do not need to move from school to school, parents have reduced stress and the means to provide the necessities for their families (food, winter clothing, transport, school supplies, etc.).

Whereas: All three levels of government have to play a role in affordable and social housing. The Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg can be proactive in working with the federal government as it implements and funds its national housing strategy.

Whereas: The Province of Manitoba can add to the supply of social and affordable housing through new builds and new subsidies, however, it has no current commitment to increase supply. Rent Assist continues to be available to support low-income Manitobans in private rental housing although cuts since 2016 have eroded the program, making fewer people eligible and reducing benefit amounts for some existing program participants. The Province can also help build the capacity of community organizations to take advantage of funding opportunities to create new social housing. Ongoing

investments in addressing expiring federal operating agreements as well as in capital repairs and maintenance in public housing units are needed to preserve the existing stock. However, the Province of Manitoba has reduced annual expenditures from a high of \$120M in 2015/16 to \$25M in 2018/19. Public housing tenants require access to resources and opportunities (e.g. mental health services, literacy training, job training, education and childcare) that enable them to maintain their tenancy, meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life.

Whereas: The City of Winnipeg passed the Housing Policy Implementation Plan in 2014. It commits to the creation of 750 new rental units, only 10% of which are to be affordable. Other Canadian cities are developing affordable rental housing at a significantly higher rate.

Whereas: The City Of Winnipeg is committed to supporting neighbourhood renewal and the creation of affordable housing through the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve (HRIR), however, the HRIR budget allocation is not sufficient to address the current rental housing shortage. The HRIR provides funding for housing development and renewal to the five Housing Improvement Zones. The Housing Policy Implementation Plan will expand access to funding for other neighbourhoods. Significant increases to the HRIR allocation are required to ensure the City has sufficient capacity to support neighbourhood renewal and affordable housing development.

Whereas: The City of Winnipeg has developed two documents that direct it to be more proactive in housing and that outline how this could be achieved: Innovative Practices in the Provision of Affordable Housing and the Complete Communities Direction Strategy, part of the OurWinnipeg development plan.

Whereas: The City has senior staff and City Council representation on the board of the autonomous Winnipeg Housing and Rehabilitation Corporation (WHRC), which develops, renovates, owns, and manages affordable housing primarily in Winnipeg's inner city.

Whereas: The City of Brandon passed an Affordable Housing First policy for surplus land disposal. A significant constraint for the development of additional affordable housing is the availability of reasonably priced residential land. Brandon's policy can help ensure that full priority is given to mobilizing potential partners for the creation of affordable housing on surplus land before the property is disposed of through traditional market means.

Whereas: Providing housing is cost effective compared to the costs associated with homelessness. It costs on average \$48,000 a year to leave someone on the street versus \$28,000 a year to house them. Long-term social housing is one of the most cost-efficient ways to house someone. Furthermore, housing can be used to create employment and training opportunities for people commonly shut out of the workforce, including social housing tenants. This helps generate new tax revenues and keeps money circulating in the local economy.

Be It Resolved That the City of Winnipeg:

- A. Supports Provincial and National affordable housing initiatives by using the planning, regulatory and financial tools and powers at its disposal to support affordable rental housing and social housing.
 - B. Continues to fund the Housing Rehabilitation and Investment Reserve or subsequent relevant budget reserve and develop a regular and transparent process for reviewing and adjusting its size to ensure it adequately meets housing needs in Winnipeg.
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- C. Municipal governments in Manitoba regulate the conversion of rental stock to condominiums when vacancy rates fall below 4%.
- D. The City should provide the WHRC with a stronger mandate and increased resources to bring multiple levels of government together to initiate and coordinate the funding and development of new affordable and social housing options throughout Winnipeg.

Be It Resolved That the Province of Manitoba:

- A. The Province of Manitoba and all Manitoba municipalities establish a policy for all surplus land disposals that ensures non-profit and cooperative housing providers are prioritized for receiving surplus land for the purpose of creating affordable housing.
- B. The Province of Manitoba invests in 300 net new social and affordable units built by the public, non-profit, and co-op sectors annually, including transitional and permanent supportive housing. New units should be built in a variety of neighbourhoods to offer choice, and near essential services.
- C. The Province of Manitoba continues to make Rent Assist available to low-income Manitobans on and off of EIA and return the regulatory formula for deductible levels to pre-2017 numbers for all Rent Assist recipients.
- D. The Province of Manitoba ensures there is no net loss of social housing as a result of asset sales, expiring federal operating agreements, and deferred capital repairs. Investments of at least \$130M are needed to meet the estimated need for capital repairs and maintenance in public housing units by 2020.
- E. The Province of Manitoba ensure that all Manitoba Housing tenants have access to tenant-driven resource centres that offer comprehensive supports either on site or nearby.
- F. The Province of Manitoba builds the capacity of non-profit and co-op housing providers to create new social housing projects in order to ensure that communities in most need of housing have improved access to housing funding.
- G. Create a new joint Community Housing Fund accepting contributions from all levels of government and the private sector, to create a pool of capital for new construction and housing retrofits to meet standards for safety, water, and energy efficiency of non-profit social housing and co-ops. The fund could also be supported by development fees and density/inclusionary zoning differential fees or off set fees.

How the Resolution will be Advanced: CCEDNet Manitoba will work with the Right to Housing Coalition in advancing this policy resolution.
