



ALLAboard:

Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy

Welcome

Welcome to a special edition of the Newsletter.

ALLAboard, Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy started in May 2009. The strategy celebrates more than 10 years of reducing poverty in Manitoba. It brings together, under one plan, the programs that work to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion. It also creates new initiatives to build on our past successes.

As co-chairs of **ALLAboard**, we are pleased to share our plans. In this newsletter, we will talk about new programs happening in the third year of our strategy.

In 2011/12, the Manitoba government will spend just over \$1 billion to fight poverty and promote opportunities for low-income Manitobans. Priority areas include providing education and training, making it easier to find child care, helping low-income people get healthy foods and helping community projects that reduce poverty and include everyone.

Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Act became law in June 2011. This important legislation will require the government to include the Poverty Reduction Strategy in the annual budget. It

also requires that we form a Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Committee, that will include three community members. Based on advice from our stakeholders, the Act also requires a set of measures to determine the progress of **ALLAboard**. The measures will be the basis of our first annual report.

We will continue to ask people for their thoughts and ideas about how we can best reach our goals.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. We encourage you to make regular visits to the **ALLAboard** website at www.manitoba.ca/fs/allaboard. Tell us what you think of the newsletter or ALL Aboard plans by emailing ALLAboard@gov.mb.ca.



Minister Gord Mackintosh and Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross

Co-Chairs, ALLAboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy

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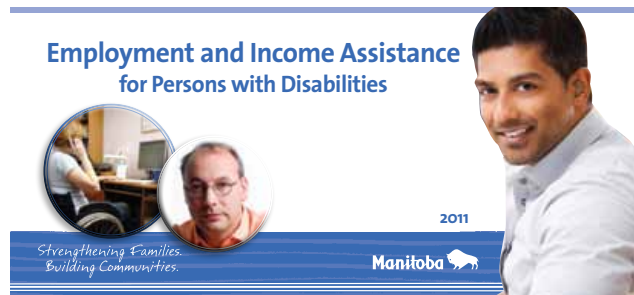
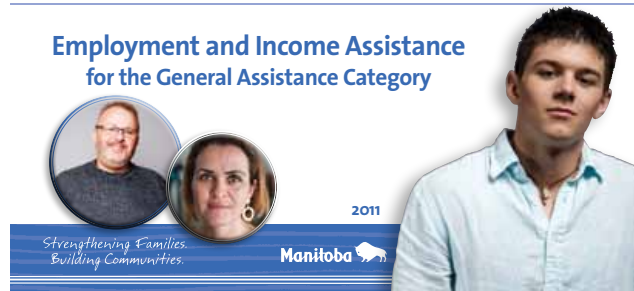
Employment and Income Assistance New Plain Language Brochures

Using plain language is a way to make information easy to read and understand. By using simple words and sentences, we can help people better understand what we are trying to say.

The Manitoba Ombudsman's May 2010 *Report on Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance Program* recommended using plain language for print materials in the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program. The report suggested that information about EIA benefits and how to get them was not always available or easily understood.

The EIA Program has since developed a series of plain language brochures for single parents, persons with disabilities, adults without children and two-parent families. The brochures include general information about EIA benefits, including how to apply, the rights and responsibilities of program participants and benefits available to them when they get jobs.

These brochures will be available online and in EIA offices so they are easy to find. Manitoba Family Services and Consumer Affairs (FSCA) is dedicated to quality service. We continue to look for ways to improve access, accountability and communication between government and the public.



We developed a service statement and standards to guide our work. These guidelines are posted in offices throughout the province and on our website at www.gov.mb.ca/fs.

Enhancements to RentAid

Safe, affordable housing is important to move individuals and families out of poverty. Manitoba has made lots of progress in reducing poverty, but the availability of rental housing continues to challenge low-income households.

RentAid (formerly the Manitoba Shelter Benefit) is a monthly benefit to help low-income seniors, families, persons with disabilities and some who get Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), pay their rent.

Manitoba recently announced improvements to RentAid to give more

help to low-income Manitobans who need affordable housing.

These improvements will benefit persons with disabilities and non-disabled adults without children on EIA who are renting in the private market. It will also help low-income seniors, families and persons with a disability not on EIA who are renting in the private market.

The province is giving about \$1.6 million more annually to ensure that low-income individuals and families can get help paying their rent

in the private market.

About 10,500 households on EIA and 2,000 low-income seniors, families, and persons with a disability not on EIA will benefit from these improvements.

Effective December 2011, RentAid improvements will include increasing:

- benefits for those on EIA to \$60 per month (an increase of \$120 per year)
- the amount of rent used to calculate benefits by three per cent (ex: an increase of \$10 to 14 per month for average households receiving less than the maximum benefit of \$210)

Increase in Employment and Income Assistance Northern Allowance

The Northern Allowance is added to the basic rate of the EIA budget for households living in certain areas of the province.

There are three levels of northern allowance, based on the cost of food, for people living:

1. in or around Thompson, The Pas or Flin Flon
2. in remote areas that have all-weather road, rail or water access
3. in remote areas that do not have all-weather access

Research shows that northern Manitobans pay more for food than southern Manitobans. In small northern communities, residents can pay 18 to 89 per cent more for food than shoppers do in Winnipeg, depending on the remoteness of the community.

The northern allowance for households receiving income assistance was increased by five per cent for northern and remote communities to help about

1,700 low-income households pay for food. The new rates took effect in January 2011.

This increase builds on increases to the Northern Allowance in 2005 and 2007.

Households getting the Northern Allowance also receive the Northern Energy Cost Benefit (NECB), a monthly benefit of \$25 to help residents with the increased cost of household basics affected by rising energy costs (ex: cost of transporting goods). The NECB was introduced in February 2006.

The increase in the northern allowance complements the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative (NHFI). The NHFI encourages residents to grow their own food. It supports and promotes gardening, greenhouses, community food programs and food business development. These can help northern Manitobans make healthier food choices and make healthy foods more available. Over six years, the program expanded to include 70 participating communities.

Examples of the increases, as of January 2011:

FAMILY SIZE	ANNUAL INCREASE
Single person – general assistance	\$72.00
Single person with a disability	\$92.28
Single parent with one child (age four)	\$138.12
Two parents – general assistance (non-disabled) with two children (ages four and six)	\$255.72

Increase to the Community Unemployed Help Centre

The Community Unemployed Help Centre (CUHC) is a non-profit organization that gives information, advice and representation to unemployed Manitobans with federal **Employment Insurance (EI)** problems. They also work on other issues related to unemployment. All services are free.

While CUHC mainly helps people solve issues with EI, they also support EIA participants who are having trouble getting Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) Disability benefits. The centre staff also do presentations on Employment Insurance, unemployment issues and training.

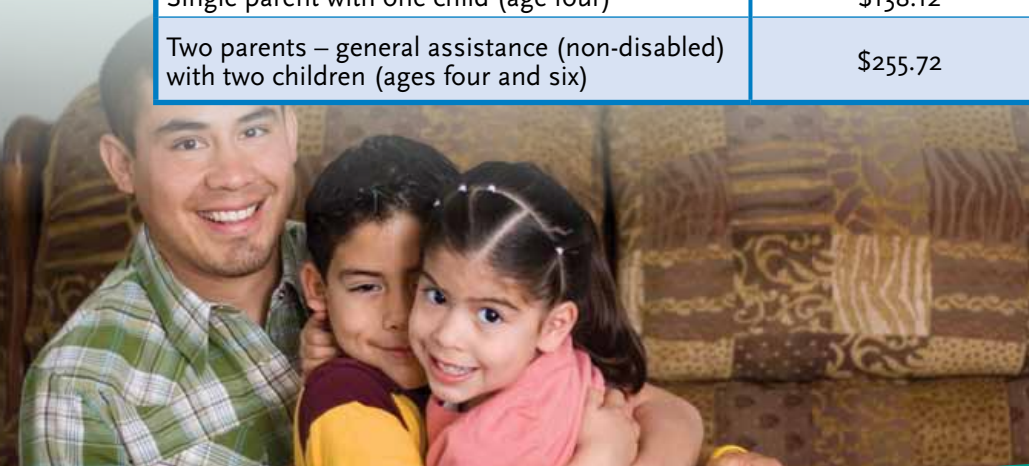
The CUHC was set up in 1980 to protect the rights of unemployed Manitobans. The centre has five main goals:

- representing people with EI problems
- giving EI information to the public
- giving counselling and referrals
- studying government policy
- working for the best interests of unemployed people

In 2009/10, CUHC provided services to 1,345 Manitobans. Between 2008/09 and 2010, the number of clients served by the agency increased by 19 per cent.

Provincial funding to the CUHC was recently increased by \$32,500 to a total of \$139,700 per year. Increased funding will help the CUHC meet increasing demand and work on other complex issues.

Manitoba funds agencies, such as CUHC, that provide important information, advice and support on EI- and poverty-related issues in the community.



Children's Opticare



Starting in January 2012, the Children's Opticare Program (COP) will provide optical benefits to the children of families receiving the monthly Manitoba Child Benefit. COP is part of Rewarding Work, Manitoba's four-year strategy to help people move from welfare to work.

The Manitoba Child Benefit was introduced in January 2008. It gives up to \$420 per child, per year, to help low-income, working families pay for their children's needs. In March 2011, 8,600 children received the Manitoba Child Benefit.

Research shows that about 25 per cent of children need eyeglasses to see properly. Some lower-income families may not be able to pay for this important need, especially those without health insurance coverage. Children who can't get vision care may have problems in school, with activities and friends. COP will help solve these concerns.

The maximum payment per child is \$84, or 80 per cent of the current EIA optical fee schedule rate for eyeglasses (\$105). Benefits may be higher for children with special vision needs.

Families will pay for their children's prescription glasses upfront and then submit their receipts to the province to be repaid.

Families who are eligible to receive the Manitoba Child Benefit, and who do not have optical coverage from another program, will automatically be eligible for COP when it comes into effect in January 2012. The program will help about 1,665 children every year.

For more information, or to apply for the Manitoba Child Benefit, call toll free 1-800-563-8793 in Manitoba, or go to www.gov.mb.ca/fs/assistance/mcb.html.

Centre Flavie-Laurent

Centre Flavie-Laurent is a non-profit organization that provides free goods (ex: furniture, household goods, clothing) to people in need. The centre is located at 164 Marion Street in Winnipeg.

Since the centre opened in 2005, more than 14,000 families or individuals have registered for help and the number continues to grow. About 50 per cent of those families receive income assistance.

No referrals are necessary. Persons may go directly to the centre, Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Since April 2007, the Manitoba government has financially supported the Centre Flavie-Laurent, providing \$378,500 to help pay for their operations and service delivery.

The government is proud to announce an additional \$50,000 in annual funding to the centre. In total, Manitoba will provide an annual grant of \$135,900 to help the centre meet growing service demands.

Exemption of Canada Student Grants

EIA participants who are going to college or university will not have to worry about losing their welfare benefits if they receive a Canada Student Grant.

EIA participants can apply for the Canada Student Grant for Students from Low-Income Families, offering up to \$3,000 per year of study. In addition to this grant, families with children under 12 years old are also eligible for the Canada Student Grant for Students with Dependents, which awards \$200 per child for each month of study.

Under the Rewarding Work program, the Get Ready policy allows EIA participants to receive EIA while going to school as a part of a plan to become financially independent. Students are expected to get other funding, including student loans or sponsorships (ex: band funding) to pay for school (ex: tuition, books, supplies). In the past, if the funding students received was more than their school costs, the extra money would be deducted from their welfare payments. Now, EIA participants can

keep their full Canada Student Grants and receive all of their welfare benefits, even if the grant is more than the amount they have to pay for school.

This change comes into effect August 1, 2011, for the beginning of the 2011/12 school year. The new rule will be applied to all student loan applications for courses starting this fall.



Rewarding Work in Education

Rewarding Work in Education is a \$314,000 community internship program that will support up to 120 people in culturally-appropriate, community-based training to become certified education assistants or child care assistants. The program will help more low-income, newcomer and Aboriginal people get the training they need to work in important jobs in schools and child care centres.

Three community agencies are working with Red River College on the Rewarding Work in Education program. The Urban Circle Training Centre will be offering both Education Assistant (EA) training and Child Care Assistant (CCA) training to low-income Aboriginal people. The Family Centre of Winnipeg and the West Central Women's Resource Centre will offer CCA training to low-income, newcomer, and Aboriginal childminders.



The EA training has been improved to include life skills, culturally-appropriate content and more time learning in community schools. A coaching certificate program is also offered to help education assistants guide the trainees on the job. As many as 18 EIA clients will be able to take this training. The CCA training has been improved

to include life skills, culturally-appropriate content and support. Under Rewarding Work in Education, CCA training is being offered free to people not already working in child care.

The 11-month EA training begins in late July 2011. CCA training sessions start in September 2011.

Opportunities for Employment

Opportunities for Employment (OFE) is a faith-based, not-for-profit corporation. Since 1996, OFE has offered services to Winnipeg job seekers and employers. Their goals are to get people ready to start jobs and introduce them to employers who are hiring.

In June 2011, Manitoba announced increased support to OFE to help up to 500 EIA participants find and keep jobs.

All participants take part in two weeks of job search classes. They also participate in computer literacy and other work-related workshops. The

participants are then introduced to a specific employment counsellor who helps them find and keep jobs. OFE's main goal is to have all participants working by the end of the three-month program.

Poverty Reduction Act Becomes Law



The Manitoba government sees that reducing poverty is important to the social, economic and cultural development of our province. Legislation was passed in June, 2011, to further strengthen Manitoba's

ALLAboard Poverty Reduction Strategy. This will ensure a long-term commitment to reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion.

Manitoba launched **ALLAboard**: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy in May 2009. Community consultations were held over the past two years and many people said it was important to make the strategy into law.

ALLAboard was built on the understanding that there are many causes of poverty and social exclusion. The idea is that any attempt to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion needs to consider many different factors and work with all government departments.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act requires the government to:

- have a long-term strategy to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion across Manitoba
- include the poverty reduction strategy in its annual budget
- measure the strategy's progress
- provide annual reports to the public

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act also requires that a committee on poverty reduction and social inclusion be formed. It must include government ministers, three community members and a member of the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship. This committee will review and provide advice on the strategy and find community partners.

Homeless Outreach Mentor Funding for the West Central Women's Resource Centre

On May 21, 2009, the province launched the Homeless Strategy with a focus on housing for people with mental health challenges. This strategy aims to reduce and prevent homelessness by helping homeless people, and those with mental health challenges, find safe housing and support services in the community.

Part of this strategy is the Homeless Outreach Mentor (HOM) project, now running in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and The Pas. The mentors work with homeless people to meet their needs by getting them needed support services and permanent housing. The mentor also builds relationships with important key people in the community, such as landlords, to help make sure the new tenancies are successful and lasting. Mentors connect people with income, housing, health

and social supports to help them move from the street, or emergency homeless shelters, to transitional or permanent (ex: long-term) housing.

This program is based on the idea of "housing first" – that the best place to start dealing with issues is from the dignity and security of a person's own home. The idea focuses on finding stable housing first, and providing support services as needed.

The province is providing new HOM funding to the West Central Women's Resource Centre (WCWRC). Through its involvement in the HOM program, WCWRC is working with the west central community, and other HOM agencies, to meet the needs of homeless women.

Helping Manitobans Eat Healthy Foods



In April, the Manitoba government announced its plans to spend money to make it easier for low-income children to get healthy food. To promote healthy eating, especially among children, the provincial government gave money to the following projects:

- The Northern Healthy Foods Initiative (NHFI) helps northern Manitobans grow healthy foods in their own communities. When healthy food is easy to get, it is more

likely to be eaten. NHFI supports many different activities, such as:

- o gardening and greenhouses
- o organizing school programs
- o raising chickens and turkeys
- o buying freezers so Manitobans can store healthy foods
- o teaching people how to preserve healthy foods
- o giving information about foods that are good for you
- o teaching people to compost to reduce garbage and make soil to help plants grow
- o encouraging young people to choose healthy foods

Led by Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, NHFI is made possible by six government departments working with five regional partners to help more than 70 communities.

- The Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM) supports healthy breakfast and snack



programs for more than 15,000 kids, helping them get a good start to their day. These free programs are open to everyone. Every year, CNCM helps more than 130 school- and neighbourhood-based healthy eating programs. The CNCM also offers a fruit and vegetable snack program to encourage teachers and students to choose healthy foods. Eating more fruits and vegetables helps prevent diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. In the first two years of the program, more than 3,400 students in 26 schools and community centres participated. For more information, go to www.childnutritioncouncil.com.

- The Farm2School Healthy Choices Veggie Fundraiser first started at 65 schools in fall 2010. Its goal is to give Manitoba-grown vegetables to parent groups as healthy products to sell for school fundraising. This fall, the program will be offered to every school in Manitoba. Once again, the program will be organized by the Manitoba Association of Home Economists, with Peak of the Market giving vegetables at cost and free delivery to schools. To sign up for the fundraiser, go to www.farm2schoolmanitoba.ca

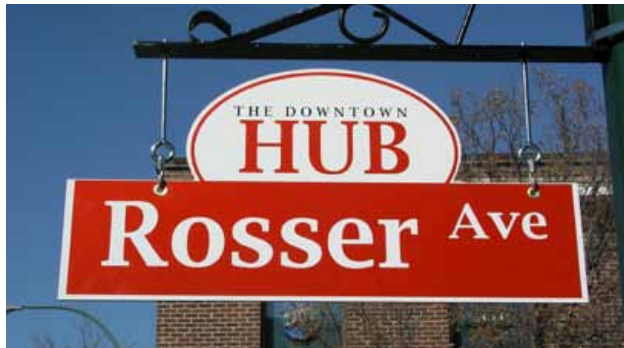


Downtown Brandon Initiatives

The Manitoba government is working with the City of Brandon to improve its downtown neighbourhood. We will continue to work with the City of Brandon and other interested groups in making plans to make the most of the city's downtown area, now and for years to come.

Some of the things we plan to do will build on the success of projects already in place:

- **Neighbourhoods Alive!** – Since 2000, the provincial government has supported the improvement of Brandon's oldest neighbourhoods. Working with the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, this program has already given \$6.5 million for housing and other community projects.
- **Supporting Renaissance Brandon** – Since 2008, we have supported the City of Brandon's work in improving its downtown neighbourhood. The provincial government has given over \$664,000 to support new buildings and other projects that improve the quality of life in the area.



Introducing the Triple P – Parent Line

Healthy Child Manitoba is introducing a convenient new resource for parents - the *Triple P Parent Line*. Healthy Child Manitoba works with Health Links-Info Santé to offer the phone line. It will provide Manitoba parents with free, confidential parenting support based on the Triple P Positive Parenting Program.

Parents, guardians or caregivers can call the line at **204-945-4777** or toll free **1-877-945-4777 (in Manitoba)** to discuss parenting concerns, such as bedtime problems, tantrums and toilet training. Parents can also participate in Triple P programs or get information about how to find a Triple P group in their neighbourhood.

The Triple P Parent Line is not a crisis line for parents. Crisis calls will be referred to community services better able to help with these situations.

Call the Parent Line anytime from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. weekdays. This summer, the Parent Line will expand its hours to serve parents to 12 hours a day. You can leave a message any time and a counsellor will call you back soon.

Improving Neighbourhoods Across the Province

The Manitoba government's Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) program was set up to help neighbourhoods be their best. It has worked so well that the program is being made bigger to help even more communities help themselves.

NA! works with local residents to make neighbourhoods safer, stronger and nicer looking. The program helps community groups pay for projects that will improve

neighbourhood recreation, create jobs and make their neighbourhood more attractive and healthier.

The 2011 provincial budget introduced an enhancement to NA! called the Localized Improvement Fund for Tomorrow (LIFT). This program will give \$450,000 for projects in five Winnipeg communities (Elwick, Weston, Osborne-Mayfair, Lavallee, South Pembina) in need, every year for the next four years.

Meetings will be held in each neighbourhood to talk about what needs to be done, what the residents would like to do to make their community better and how LIFT could help. More details are coming soon about meetings in your area. Applications will soon be available for projects that start this fall or winter.

Two-Year Plan Cuts Red Tape, Offers Stable Funding for Non-Profits

On April 8, 2011, Premier Selinger announced a two-year, four point strategy to cut red tape for non-profit organizations. The plan will help non-profits spend less time on paperwork and focus more on delivering key services. The strategy recognizes the vital role that non-profit organizations play in providing services to citizens and improving the quality of life for all Manitobans.

"Our plan will make it easier for our non-profit partners to dedicate more of their energy and effort to the important services they deliver and communities they serve," said Selinger.

The strategy complements the Manitoba government's **ALLAboard** Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy by making it easier for non-profits to provide valuable services for Manitobans by:

- giving multi-year, multi-program funding to a representative group of non-profits with proven track records of success to start
- launching a single-window application process with a target of spring 2012 for an online non-profit web portal

- eliminating duplication in reporting requirements for organizations working with multiple provincial programs while strengthening accountability
- helping organizations save money by sharing services, such as legal, human resources and accounting functions

"The government's plan allows Art City to focus our attention on quality programs for youth rather than filling out forms," said Wanda Koop, artist and founder of Art City. "This strategy acknowledges the work we do every day – and where our time is best spent – providing constructive activities for young people."

Art City is among the 35 non-profit organizations that were selected to participate in the multi-year, multi-program pilot. Many agencies that work with government already benefit from multi-year, stable provincial funding. It helps them recruit and retain staff and make long-term plans. The two-year strategy builds on these successes. It will also lead to greater efficiencies for government and non-profits.

Caring for Our Children

The Manitoba government knows it is important to have a quality child care system to help our province's children and families. This year's provincial budget includes an extra \$21.3 million so Manitobans can get quality child care across the province. Since 1999, we have increased the number of funded child care spaces by more than 80 per cent and the child care budget has increased by 157 per cent.

The Family Choices plan, released in 2008 put forward a number of goals. Some of the ways we will reach those goals are:

- adding 2,100 more child care spaces, especially for infants and nursery schools
- paying for 25 new child care sites, more than originally promised
- giving money to 21 child care centres that want to get bigger and better
- helping child care workers make a better living, including a good pension plan, so more people will want to do this important work

Recently, Manitoba launched Canada's first province wide online child-care registry (www.manitoba.ca/onlinechildcareregistry) to make it easier for families to find licensed child care in Manitoba.



Helping People with Addictions

The Sharon Home Kanee Centre in north Winnipeg is being turned into the River Point Centre, a place to help meet the needs of people being treated for addiction. It will also provide 24 one-, two- and three-bedroom temporary apartments for rural and northern Manitobans who must come to Winnipeg for medical help.

Addictions services from around the community will be brought together in the new centre. This will make it easier for people to get help, so they will not have to wait for treatment. Centre employees and management will be able to work together to provide the best services possible.

The new centre will have:

- one starting point for all government-funded addictions services

- 20 new beds for adults coming off of drugs or alcohol
- 38 beds to make the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba's men's live-in treatment centre bigger (to serve 456 clients each year)
- 10 new beds for people who have had treatment for addiction and need a place to stay before they find a home
- services to help people before and after their addiction treatment

The addictions services offered at the River Point Centre will be connected to mental health and social service programs in the community to make sure clients get the help they need at all stages of their treatment.

The new centre will open in early 2013.

New Tools to Protect Manitoba Families and Create Safer Communities

New laws will soon give Manitobans more ways to shut down drug dens and prostitution houses to make their neighbourhoods safer.

The new law would expand the range of activities that investigators could bring before the courts to include the criminal-organization provisions in the Criminal Code. Investigators could then take action in properties where criminal organization offences or offences that aid or benefit a

criminal organization occur. It would also make sure anyone buying the property knows about what has happened there before.

If there is a problem place in your neighbourhood, call the Public Safety Investigations Unit at 204-945-3475 in Winnipeg or toll free in Manitoba 1-800-954-9361. You do not have to give your name.