

NewsRelease



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\$24 MILLION FOR MORE AND BETTER AFFORDABLE HOMES IN DOWNTOWN WINNIPEG: MACKINTOSH, TOEWS

Province Launches New Long-term Strategy Backed by \$327-million Investment

Winnipeg MB, June 24, 2009 – Hundreds of students, new Canadians, seniors and families are among more than 1,700 households that will benefit from new and improved housing in the downtown Winnipeg area.

The Honourable Vic Toews, President of the Treasury Board and Member of Parliament for Provencher, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and Gord Mackintosh, Minister of Family Services and Housing for Manitoba, made the announcement today.

“Our Government is moving aggressively to ensure Canada’s Economic Action Plan is implemented rapidly here in Manitoba and across Canada,” said Toews. “I’m pleased that more lower-income individuals, families, seniors and persons with disabilities will benefit from safe, affordable housing in their communities.”

The Province of Manitoba is contributing \$227 million over two years for housing initiatives in Winnipeg and across the province. The federal contribution is close to \$100 million over two years under Canada’s Economic Action Plan, the two-year extension of federal funding for the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) and the renovation programs for low-income households, for a combined investment of \$327 million.

“A new vision, a historic investment and strong partnerships help us create more and better affordable housing where they are most needed,” said Mackintosh. “At the same time, we are building more vibrant communities across the province.”

An investment of \$24 million will fund construction and renovation of 22 affordable housing buildings in Winnipeg’s downtown area under the province’s expanded HOMEWorks! strategy. Downtown Winnipeg will be revitalized with 282 new housing units and 1,474 households will benefit from refurbished and improved buildings.

The Province has committed to 90 housing initiatives overall in Winnipeg. These include private-sector and non-profit partnerships, homeownership, public housing and co-ops such as Greenheart.

“Greenheart is the first new multi-family housing in downtown Winnipeg in many years,” said Dennis Kwan, Associate, Prairie Architects. “This co-op is also on its way to becoming the first multi-family building in Manitoba to achieve LEED certification.”

Among the other projects being built under this initiative is the University of Winnipeg's McFeetors Hall: Great-West Life Student Residence.

"As a university located in the heart of Winnipeg, we are committed to renewing the downtown area," said University of Winnipeg President and Vice-chancellor Lloyd Axworthy. "A project like the McFeetors Hall: Great-West Life Student Residence is part of our modern, sustainable campus in the downtown that gives students and the surrounding community more green space and state-of-the-art facilities in which to live."

In addition, the Manitoba Shelter Benefit will increase by \$15 a month from \$35 to \$50 for 11,000 households receiving income assistance who are renting in the private market and from \$15 to \$30 for people living in room and board. The increase will be for July and a second increase to benefits will follow in January 2010.

A Portable Housing Benefit of up to \$200 per month will assist up to 600 low-income individuals with mental-health issues access housing in the private rental market. As well, 600 more households will receive assistance to help them keep the cost of rent at less than 30 per cent of their income.

A new long-term strategy to improve affordable housing was also announced today. It is based on recommendations in *Housing For Manitobans: A Long-Term Plan* by Tom Carter of the University of Winnipeg.

The strategy builds on existing initiatives and includes sustaining existing affordable housing, increasing the supply of affordable housing, supporting community development and revitalization, and co-ordinating housing and social services.

"Housing is in the middle of everything, so Manitoba Housing has rightly broadened its mandate to play a more active role to address long-term housing priorities," said Carter. "This will help ensure that housing plays a supportive role in other policy initiatives, such as neighbourhood revitalization, community development, environmental initiatives, improved health and educational outcomes and poverty alleviation."

Carter's reports, *Housing for Manitobans: A Long-term Plan*, *HOMEWorks! A housing strategy and policy framework for Manitoba* and *HOMEWorks! Investing in communities: The Province's two-year plan*, are available at www.manitoba.ca/housing.

Today's announcement is part of ALL Aboard, Manitoba's poverty-reduction and social inclusion strategy.

To find out more about how the Government of Canada and CMHC are working to build stronger homes and communities for all Canadians, call CMHC at 1-800-668-2642 or visit www.cmhc.ca/housingactionplan. For more information on Canada's Economic Action Plan, call

1-800-O Canada.

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