

Manitoba Housing's Three-Year Action Plan Under the National Housing Strategy

Purpose

Housing consultations were undertaken by Manitoba Housing to help guide the creation of the final three-year action plan under the National Housing Strategy (NHS).

Overview

Housing is central to the health and well-being of individuals and families. Achieving positive housing outcomes for Manitobans requires collaboration between all levels of government, communities, non-profit organizations, and the private sector.

The Manitoba government and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) signed a multi-year bilateral agreement in June 2019. The province is scheduled to receive up to \$320.61 million in federal funding, cost matched by Manitoba and Canada, between 2019/20 and 2027/28.

The objective of the agreement is to increase access to housing, reduce housing need, and achieve better housing outcomes for Manitobans. The agreement provides funding for three provincially-administered funding streams:

Manitoba Priorities supports regional priorities related to increasing supply (construction and conversion), preservation of units (repair, renovation, or adaptation), and affordability supports (rent supplements, shelter allowances, and homeownership). There is \$48.8 million available in this funding envelope, which began in 2019/20.

The Canada Community Housing Initiative is intended to replace expiring Social Housing Agreement funding. It aims to protect, regenerate, and expand social and community housing and avoid the loss of social housing units through the expiry of operating agreements. There is \$176.5 million available in this funding envelope, which began in 2019/20.

The Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit provides a portable rent subsidy targeting youth leaving the care of Child and Family Services, people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness, and people with mental health and addiction issues, and survivors of genders-based violence. There is \$95.2 million available in this funding envelope, which began in 2020/21.

As part of the NHS bilateral agreement, Manitoba is required to submit an action plan every three years that describes how funding will be used to maintain, expand, and support social and affordable housing in Manitoba. Manitoba's first two action plans (2019/20 to 2021/22 and 2022/23 to 2024/25) prioritized vulnerable populations and

women and children fleeing domestic violence, supported homeownership and housing affordability, and invested in improvements to existing social and affordable housing, including investments in community housing. The action plans are available on the Manitoba Housing website at www.manitoba.ca/housing/three-yr-plan-2020.html and <https://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/three-yr-plan-22-23to24-25.html>.

During summer 2024, Manitoba Housing released a survey to help guide the creation of the final three-year action plan (2025/26 to 2027/28). This report summarizes the feedback received from online survey respondents under three themes: Housing Priorities and Gaps, Population Groups in Housing Need, and Solutions. A glossary of terms used in this report is included in Appendix A.

Engagement Overview

Online Public Survey

The online survey, hosted on the Manitoba government's EngageMB platform, collected feedback from Manitobans on housing needs, priorities, populations in housing need, and solutions (see Appendix B). The survey asked respondents to rank or select top answers to a series of questions and provided the opportunity for qualitative feedback. Survey respondents were also asked demographic questions to provide a gender-based analysis and to help identify housing needs relevant to specific communities in Manitoba. Invitations to complete the survey were sent out to key stakeholders across the province.

In total, 76 people completed the survey between August 30, 2024, and October 4, 2024. Most respondents (62 per cent) were from Winnipeg, while 29 per cent lived in southern Manitoba, and 4 per cent in northern Manitoba. The remaining 5 per cent of respondents did not specify their community of residence. More women (56 per cent) than men (28 per cent) and other genders (6 per cent) responded, and 9 per cent chose not to provide their gender identity.

Summary of What We Heard

Housing Priorities and Gaps

The Manitoba government has identified addressing chronic homelessness and building more social and affordable housing as priorities. Within this context, survey participants were asked to identify housing priorities and gaps in the housing market. Their responses are summarized in the following sections.

When asked to rank housing priorities, respondents ranked constructing and acquiring new social and affordable rental housing as the most important housing priority, followed closely by creating affordable homeownership opportunities and providing supports to help keep people housed. Other priorities identified were improving the condition of existing social and affordable housing and building community capacity to meet local housing needs (i.e., housing that is owned and managed locally).

When asked about gaps in available housing options, most respondents answered housing with on-site supports (e.g., mental health and addictions supports) as a current

need in their communities. Respondents also identified mixed income housing, accessible housing for people with mobility issues (seniors' housing was highlighted), housing near amenities (e.g., childcare, schools, grocery stores, healthcare), and housing with multiple bedrooms (e.g., to support larger families, many generations within a household) as additional housing options that are needed in Manitoba.

Online survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional feedback on housing priorities and gaps through open-ended questions; their feedback is summarized below.

Affordable Housing Supply

Participants called for the creation of new affordable housing supply to be prioritized under the final action plan. The need for affordable rental options for middle to low-income families in urban centres, like Winnipeg, was emphasized due to rising rents in the private market and low vacancy rates. Many survey participants also identified a lack of affordable studio and one-bedroom rental units for single young adults and seniors on fixed incomes living in smaller rural communities. Respondents noted that Manitoba is lacking a centralized online resource to help Manitobans locate safe and affordable housing options across the province. Overall, the construction of more affordable and rent-geared-to-income housing was identified as the most important housing priority for survey participants.

The lack of affordable supply in Manitoba is not limited to rental housing; survey respondents also expressed challenges with entering the homeownership market with house prices outpacing average household incomes in Manitoba. Survey participants mentioned that first-time home buyers in particular need greater supports to access homeownership, especially in urban areas where house prices remain high. To help more people be able to afford a house, participants felt that down-payment assistance, rent to own models, and other financial incentives for homeownership were potential solutions. Other respondents called for increasing the supply of affordable homes by using wartime housing designs, which can be built faster and for less cost than average single-family homes, producing a lower house price for buyers.

“There's a serious lack of mid-level affordable housing/apartments in this city [Winnipeg] with rent skyrocketing. You can either live in a 500 square foot bachelor apartment or a \$600,000 house in Bridgwater. There needs to be a middle ground.”

Housing with Supports

Survey respondents identified a need to prioritize the creation of more housing with on-site supports in their communities. Examples of supports that were identified include social workers, addictions and mental health counsellors, tax and financial planning resources, and educational supports for youth. Increasing the supply of transitional housing spaces that provide wrap-around supports to individuals exiting homelessness was also highlighted as a priority. Respondents suggested that renovating existing supportive housing buildings to add density may be a way to increase the supply of housing with onsite supports.

Participants also identified a lack of housing with supports for seniors in rural areas and called for more personal care homes, assisted living facilities, and accessible housing options to enable people to continue living in their communities as they age. Survey respondents also noted the importance of building seniors housing near amenities to allow easier access to community services and activities that may not be offered on-site.

“The biggest one [housing option] I see that is missed is the one that has supports that are on site. That would make it better for individuals to keep moving forward and not have to go far for support. People need supports to have quality of life. We all deserve quality of life.”

Different Housing Models

Participants called for a wider range of housing options in Manitoba, including rooming houses and congregate living facilities. Both models provide individual private units with shared common areas (e.g. living room and kitchen) which respondents felt would house more people and create a greater sense of community. Survey participants also suggested creating more communities of tiny homes.

“We have lost rooming houses at an alarming rate. They can provide low cost, barrier free, supportive housing.”

Respondents highlighted a need for more cooperative housing where residents collectively own and manage their housing, reducing the likelihood of annual rent increases and maintaining affordability. Survey participants also noted the need to create more mixed-income housing so that affordable housing options are spread across neighbourhoods, rather than concentrated in one geographic area.

Population Groups in Housing Need

Online survey participants were asked to select five population groups that they felt could benefit from additional housing and/or supports in Manitoba. Over half of the respondents identified Manitobans experiencing or at risk of homelessness as the group with the highest need for support, followed by single-parent families, low-income seniors, low-income single-person households, and persons with disabilities.

Participants were also asked to identify any population groups that may have been missed and to suggest supports that would be most beneficial to these groups.

Manitobans Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness

Respondents felt that Manitobans experiencing homelessness would benefit from safe, stable affordable housing and access to a mailing address for employment purposes. For homeless persons living with addictions, access to safe on-site substance abuse programs was identified as an important support. Participants felt that supports for those living with mental health conditions would also be beneficial to help people maintain their housing.

Families

Another population group listed by the survey participants was single-parent families not in the workforce. Survey participants suggested that this population would benefit from additional social services, such as life skills programs, education, and training. It was noted that an increase in Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) benefits and additional childcare support would help single-parent families find employment and support themselves.

Survey participants also noted that low-income working families were a population group that would benefit from greater rent control and access to supportive services (including addiction services, where necessary).

Other Population Groups in Need

Other groups identified by survey participants included students and recent graduates, domestic violence survivors, and 2SLGBTQI+ youth, who all require assistance in accessing transitional and affordable housing. Another population group identified from survey responses was individuals with changing needs, including those transitioning from hospital care who require full-time or part-time housing assistance.

Some participants had difficulty prioritizing populations in need of support. A common sentiment expressed by these respondents was recognition that affordability challenges are being felt by everyone, across all populations. In terms of solutions, responses included access to safe and affordable housing, support services, higher EIA benefits and more efficient management and use of government resources.

“Canadians are truly suffering, especially when they have to make the tough, life-changing decision between rent and food.”

Solutions

Survey participants were given the opportunity to provide ideas and solutions to address housing challenges in Manitoba. The following provides an overview of the most frequently recommended solutions.

Improving Housing Affordability

Most respondents suggested government interventions could improve housing affordability including greater control on rent increases, enhancing tenant and landlord protections, reducing taxes, introducing measures to discourage the purchase of multiple single-family homes by individuals, and offering grants to decrease energy costs. Participants also suggested municipal governments review policies, permitting processes and zoning regulations to allow for higher density and simplified/faster construction of new housing.

The second most frequently identified solution was to increase the supply of affordable housing. Participants suggested that this could be achieved by converting non-residential or government buildings to housing, constructing new affordable housing (including seniors housing and housing cooperatives). Other ideas included issuing provincial bonds that could be used to fund the development of new affordable housing

and creating an acquisition fund aimed at preserving the affordable housing supply. Respondents also noted that government-owned land could be used to create additional housing opportunities across the province.

Many responses pointed toward the types of housing supply that is needed. Some suggested that building tiny homes on smaller lots and incentivizing secondary suites could allow for higher density and greater affordability. Other responses suggested constructing more multi-family dwellings instead of single-family homes and building more housing outside of Winnipeg could help address the need for new affordable housing supply.

Repair Existing Housing for Low-Income People

Many survey participants suggested that the provincial government should increase funding for repairs and maintenance of existing community housing, including increased use of social enterprises to complete repairs in units owned by the province.

Many responses identified that landlords should be accountable for the repairs and quality of housing they provide, however others noted that tenants have an important role to play as well. One of the most common recommendations was to provide community-based classes on home repairs. Other ideas included providing support to tenants to improve their housing conditions (e.g. raising tenant awareness about pest control, educating tenants about available community resources and advising tenants about their responsibilities for general unit upkeep). Some suggested that people living in Manitoba Housing should have the option to have their rent further subsidized in exchange for helping with home repairs, while gaining new skills such as repair work.

Survey participants also suggested that there be repair programs for low-income homeowners. Ideas include reintroducing government funded repair programs, Manitoba efficiency grants, and partnering with post-secondary programs to involve trade students in training. Survey participants also suggested that creating a repair program like Habitat for Humanity, where low-income homeowners provide “sweat equity” and learn skills while receiving funding for home repairs, would provide support to maintain the existing housing stock.

Building Community Capacity to Meet Local Housing Needs

Participants emphasized the importance of partnerships between non-profits, corporations, local community groups, and all levels of government to create more housing supply. One of the main themes that emerged was the need to strengthen community involvement in local housing initiatives to become more of a decision-maker. Some respondents noted that housing development should be holistic and include partnership with local community groups who are better positioned to consider community needs and supports required. Some survey participants called for increased education and support for non-profit housing organizations to learn how to access federal, provincial and municipal government funding. It was suggested to establish a resource center for vulnerable populations and work on keeping seniors in the communities where they have lived their lives.

Creating Environmentally Sustainable Housing

Most respondents emphasized the need for increased provincial funding to develop more energy-efficient housing. Ideas included offering incentives (e.g. grants, low-cost loans) to developers, community housing providers, and homeowners for implementing energy-efficient solutions such as solar energy, improved insulation, and other efficiency upgrades. Some respondents felt that funding should be used to create education programs about energy consumption for tenants and homeowners. Some participants suggested allocating funds to municipalities to assist in the development of environmentally sustainable options that make sense locally.

Some participants recommended incorporating more environmentally friendly designs in new buildings, constructing smaller homes, upgrading to more energy-efficient options, and using recycled materials in the construction and renovation of social housing. Other participants felt that creating environmentally sustainable housing is not a priority at this time due to its higher cost and wait time, suggesting that Manitoba's focus should instead be on providing housing for people in need first.

Addressing Homelessness

Many participants suggested that assistance must be based on an assessment of individual need, and that the root causes of homelessness should be addressed prior to providing housing. Participants emphasized the importance of providing integrated supportive services when housing people experiencing homelessness. They suggested having mental health and addiction support on-site, offering easier access to housing resources and social services, like counselling. Participants suggested enhancing the staffing capacity of existing support services and called for improved service coordination to support individuals experiencing homelessness.

"If you want to address homelessness, you need to address the reason they are homeless in the first place and need to ensure as many supports are in place as possible to continue to monitor and address those concerns once the tenancy is in place, at least at the beginning until better habits and tendencies for the tenant are established to enable them to keep their tenancy going in a positive direction."

Survey participants also highlighted the importance of increasing the number of social and affordable housing units and suggested developing 'small home' villages, 'transient pods,' or slab houses, with on-site services.

Creating Livable and Inclusive Communities

Participants recommended building more accessible housing and building housing that is located near amenities and services. Respondents also called for housing that has convenient access to public transportation including improved public transit in rural communities. Some respondents called for communities that are pedestrian-friendly (e.g. improve condition of sidewalks, walkable communities). It was suggested that new housing developments consider community-focused design that offer supports, provide a sense of safety, and spaces for people to gather. Addressing NIMBY-ism by educating the public about various social issues was also noted as an important factor to help create livable and inclusive communities.

Other Housing Issues

Participants highlighted a variety of other housing issues that were not identified above. This included the lack of insurance for landlords to cover damage costs, the growing trend of housing as an investment rather than a home, the impact of immigration on housing, a need to address the large number of abandoned homes and racial discrimination by landlords. Ideas to address these issues included government policy and regulation changes, changes to taxation, and developing new insurance policies to cover landlords' insurance deductibles.

Written Submission

In addition to survey responses, Manitoba received feedback in the form of a standalone written response from a non-government agency that provides social services across the province. The organization gathered responses from service providers across rural, suburban, and urban areas and emphasized that each region has different housing priorities that require different solutions tailored to their unique needs.

Identifying priorities for use of action plan funding

Rural and urban service providers rated supports to help people remain housed as a top housing priority to help ease demand for shelter and transitional housing spaces. Rural respondents also noted a significant shortage of social and affordable housing and called for adding supply and improving the condition of the existing social and affordable housing stock. Representatives from urban and suburban areas highlighted the importance of prioritizing affordable homeownership options, while also enhancing efforts to help individuals stay housed.

The submission noted significant need for additional shelter and transitional housing spaces for individuals who are unhoused and other vulnerable populations. Two specific housing priorities were noted by frontline workers: interim safe shelter spaces for individuals with addictions awaiting treatment program acceptance, and temporary housing for perpetrators and survivors of gender-based violence, as inadequate housing options can prevent court orders from being followed, leaving survivors without an alternative to shelters or homelessness.

Population groups that require housing in your community

Respondents across Manitoba highlighted populations in housing need including survivors of gender-based violence, low-income families (including single parents) and new Canadians. Respondents in suburban areas noted that seniors, students, and young families face significant housing affordability challenges.

Urban respondents observed a high concentration of housing need in core areas, with a particular need for housing for women with cognitive differences, women facing sexual exploitation, and people living with addictions. Urban participants also identified a need for housing for youth aging out of care, young families, individuals discharged from hospitals, and Indigenous peoples.

Identifying gaps in the housing market in your community

When identifying gaps in the housing market, urban respondents aligned with what was heard in the online survey, emphasizing the urgent need for more permanent supportive housing with comprehensive wrap-around services. Urban respondents further specified that support services tailored to women are needed. Both rural and suburban participants identified a lack of small-scale affordable housing options such as tiny and modular homes and emphasized the potential benefits of alternative housing models like cooperatives and community living to help foster community integration. Participants also highlighted a shortage of affordable rental options, including rent-geared-to-income and rent-to-own choices in rural communities.

Identifying solutions

Respondents across the province called for increased funding for housing benefits and subsidies and increased social assistance payments to address affordability challenges for low-income Manitobans.

Suburban responses echoed the online survey recommendations, suggesting the development of smaller affordable housing options that are easier to maintain. Urban participants called for more housing options, including women's group homes, cooperative housing with wrap-around service provisions, and more rent-geared-to-income housing (e.g. converting non-residential spaces to create more social housing).

Rural participants called for more funding for repairs and maintenance to preserve the existing social and affordable housing stock. Respondents in rural areas also suggested solutions to foster a sense of community (e.g. development of community gathering spaces, inter-generational spaces) along with investments in public transportation and more wrap-around supports to enable rural residents to stay in their communities.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

We heard from Manitobans that more social and affordable housing options are needed because affordability challenges are widespread. People experiencing homelessness need housing with supports to help provide them with a successful path forward, seniors need affordable housing options in their communities so they can age in place, low-income single parent families need access to social housing, and middle-income Manitobans need more affordable homeownership opportunities.

We heard about the importance of partnerships between all levels of government, non-profit organizations, the private market and local community groups in tackling the housing crisis. Respondents suggested a holistic approach to housing solutions that incorporate local perspectives to address unique needs of communities across the province.

We are grateful to the Manitobans who took the time to provide their feedback on this initiative; their perspectives will help inform Manitoba's final three-year action plan under the NHS, which will be posted on Manitoba Housing's website in spring 2025.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Manitoba Housing at housing@gov.mb.ca.

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

2SLGBTQI+ – an acronym representing Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and additional people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities

Action Plan – three-year plan under the National Housing Strategy developed by Manitoba Housing in accordance with the mutually agreed targets and outcomes between Manitoba and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Affordable housing/housing affordability – housing is affordable when costs to the household are less than 30 per cent of the total before-tax household income

Appropriate housing – housing which meets the different needs of different households. This includes housing assistance, which is appropriate to household size, household type, and to support needs

Assisted living – housing for seniors or people with disabilities that includes housekeeping and meals

Bilateral agreement under the National Housing Strategy – a funding agreement between Manitoba and the Government of Canada to support the expansion, repair, and ongoing operations of community housing

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) – Canada's national housing agency which supports housing affordability, conducts housing research, and advises on the housing industry

Community housing – means community-based housing that is owned and operated by non-profit housing corporations and housing cooperatives or housing owned directly or indirectly by provincial, territorial or municipal governments and includes social housing

Congregate living – a type of housing where residents have a private bedroom or living quarters, but share with other residents a common dining room, recreational room, or other facilities

Cooperative housing – a form of homeownership collectively owned and controlled by its residents

Cost matching – funding provided by the federal government is matched dollar for dollar by the Manitoba government

Homelessness – describes the situation of a person without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. This can be a result of not being able to afford a home or being unable to maintain it because of health status or other barriers

Household – a generic term to include individuals, families or groups of unrelated people who live in the same home

Mixed-income housing – apartment buildings or other dwellings that include affordable housing units and market-rate units in a single development

NIMBY-ism – an acronym for "Not In My Back Yard". The term characterizes people in opposition to proposed real estate development and/or infrastructure development in their local area

Non-profit housing – housing that is affordable and sustainable for low- and moderate-income households

Personal Care Homes – housing that provides personal care services to individuals who can no longer manage independently at home with family support and community services

Rooming houses – a dwelling where multiple rooms are rented out individually, with kitchen and bathroom facilities shared by residents. Also sometimes called a multi-tenant house

Social housing – rent-geared-to-income housing provided to people on low incomes or employment income assistance that is owned and operated by local governments (public housing) or non-profit organizations. Also see "community housing"

Supportive housing – housing that provides a physical environment that is specifically designed to be safe, secure, and provides support services such as meals, housekeeping, and social and recreational activities, to maximize residents' independence, privacy and dignity

Transitional housing – housing that is considered an intermediate step between emergency shelter and permanent housing. The length of tenancy is typically between three months and three years

Vulnerable population groups – population groups that experience systematic housing challenges. Those groups can include, but are not limited to the following:

- Women and children fleeing domestic violence
- Persons with disabilities
- Homeless or people at risk of becoming homeless
- People with mental health and addiction issues
- Veterans

- Racialized groups

Wrap-around supports – integration of multiple systems and the development of individualized plans of support for individuals with complex need

Youth aging out of care – the process of youth transitioning from the formal control of the foster care system toward independent living

Appendix B: Online Survey to inform Manitoba's Final Three-Year Action Plan under the National Housing Strategy

1. Identifying priorities for use of action plan funding

The Manitoba government has identified addressing chronic homelessness and building more social and affordable housing as priorities. Within this context, in your opinion how should National Housing Strategy funds be allocated? Please rank the following from 1 to 8, with 1 being the top priority and 8 being the least important housing priority for Manitoba:

1. Constructing/acquiring new social and affordable rental housing
2. Converting non-residential spaces (e.g., vacant offices) into social and affordable housing
3. Improving condition of existing social and affordable housing
4. Providing supports to help keep people housed
5. Building community capacity to meet local housing needs (i.e., housing that is owned/managed locally; having local organizations that can help people locate and maintain housing)
6. Providing more shelter and transitional housing spaces
7. Enhancing existing benefits that make housing more affordable in the private market (e.g., Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit)
8. Creating affordable home ownership opportunities

Are there other housing issues that you feel we may have missed?

2. Population groups that require housing in your community

The NHS is meant to prioritize funding towards vulnerable populations. In your view, which of the groups below could benefit from additional housing and/or supports in Manitoba? Choose your top five:

1. Manitobans experiencing or at risk of homelessness
2. Single-parent families
3. Low-income seniors
4. Low-income single-person households
5. People with disabilities
6. People living with mental health needs
7. Persons with addictions
8. Youth aging out of care of the child welfare system
9. Survivors of gender-based violence
10. Indigenous Peoples
11. New Canadians (e.g., asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants)

12. Students

Are there any other groups that we may have missed in the list above? What group comes to mind, and what supports do you believe would be most beneficial to that group of people?

3. Identify gaps in the housing market in your community

Please check your top three housing options that you feel are missing in your community:

- Housing with a large number of bedrooms (e.g., to support larger families, multiple generations within a household)
- Accessible housing for people with mobility issues
- Culturally appropriate housing
- Buildings that house people with a range of incomes
- Housing with on-site supports (e.g., mental health and addictions supports)
- Housing near amenities (e.g., childcare, schools, grocery stores, healthcare)
- Housing near public transportation

Are there other housing options that you feel are missing in your community?

4. Identifying solutions

If you have ideas that could help address any of the following housing issues, please share them in the spaces provided.

Providing solutions to every issue below is not mandatory; you are free to pick and choose which issues you would like to respond to.

- Improving housing affordability

- Repairing existing housing for low-income people

-
- Building community capacity to meet local housing needs

-
-
-
- Creating environmentally sustainable housing

-
-
-
- Addressing homelessness

-
-
-
- Creating liveable and inclusive communities

-
-
-
- Are there any other housing issues we haven't identified? If so, please describe them below:

-
-
-
- If you have ideas that might help address this problem, please share them in the space below:

5. Tell us about yourself

The information in this section will help us identify housing issues that are relevant to specific demographic groups of Manitobans or local communities.

Responding to the questions in this section is voluntary. Any questions that you do not want to answer, you do not need to respond.

Are you responding on behalf of an organization? (Yes/No)

Please briefly describe the type of work you do, and the community you serve:

Which community do you live in? _____

How do you identify?

DROP DOWN: Male

Female

Non-binary

Prefer to self-describe: _____

Prefer not to answer

You have now completed the survey, and your responses have been submitted. Thank you for participating.