

Bulletin #2023-10

MUNICIPAL RELATIONS **Outcomes and Strategic Policy Division**

Important Notice to All Elected Officials and/or Chief Administrative Officers

Transit Planning and Affordable Housing

This notice serves to publicly report on the distribution of \$20.7 million in funding provided by the Government of Canada to the Government of Manitoba to address 2022 transit operating losses, and efforts to improve housing supply and affordability with linkages to transit planning, as a shared objective of this funding. This funding has been provided to each of the five municipalities across the province that provide public transit services: Winnipeg, Brandon, Selkirk, Flin Flon, and Thompson.

Municipal Relations is also pleased to highlight provincial and local efforts and initiatives regarding housing affordability, development innovations, and linkages to transit planning that are broadly applicable to many municipalities across the province. These initiatives serve to provide examples that may encourage other local governments across Manitoba to advance similar work in their communities.

Recent Provincial Efforts on Affordable Housing

The Government of Manitoba is taking responsibility to ensure that the regulatory processes in our province operate in an efficient, transparent and consistent manner and achieve the desired outcomes. New mechanisms, such as mandated timelines for planning decisions and independent appeals system will reduce delays to development while ensuring the local governments lead the decision-making process on private sector capital investment opportunities in their communities.

The establishment of the Capital Planning Region and the adoption of a regional plan within two years will support coordinated economic development, deliver a long-term strategy to guide regional investment in key infrastructure and facilitate service sharing among member municipalities. A regional plan will ensure member municipalities maintain autonomy over local matters (zoning, permits, development plans) while working towards achieving an overarching shared vision for the benefit of the region as a whole.

Through the Department of Families, [Manitoba Housing](#) introduced a \$12 million Municipal Grant Program for new affordable housing supply initiatives in 2021/22, and will work with municipalities to meet federal funding conditions. Ten municipalities received this funding to assist with the construction of new affordable housing that meets the needs of vulnerable Manitobans in Brandon, Dauphin, Flin Flon, Morden, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Steinbach, The Pas, Thompson and Winkler. Manitoba Housing is also engaged on all federal housing initiatives and will work with municipalities across the province on future housing initiatives.

Recent Federal and Provincial Efforts on Transit Operations

In 2022, the Government of Canada agreed to provide one-time federal funding of \$20.7 million to the Government of Manitoba. The purpose of this funding is to ensure that municipalities have additional resources to address transit operating shortfalls related to reduced transit ridership resulting from the extraordinary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to improve housing supply and affordability. In 2020, similar federal transit funding of \$33 million was distributed.

While the economic impacts of the pandemic have begun to subside, municipal transit systems may require additional support. Building on earlier federal funding of over \$53 million, the 2023 Municipal Relations budget includes up to \$13.4 million in additional one-time provincial transit support to be distributed to Winnipeg, Brandon, Selkirk, Flin Flon, and Thompson.

Current Examples of Municipal Leadership

There are strong linkages between housing availability and transit services. Where public transit services are needed, municipal efforts to improve housing supply, density, and affordability can be directly connected – and integrated with – the provision of efficient and effective transit systems. Manitoba currently has five municipalities that deliver ongoing public transit services. Key innovations from each of these cities are provided below.

Winnipeg – Process (e.g. Zoning/Incentives)

A Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zoning district option was created in 2016 to support high density, mixed-use development adjacent to Rapid Transit Stations. A TOD handbook helps guide site design/development. A zoning by-law review will accelerate the development of affordable housing, increase the range of housing types, reduce parking requirements, and streamline the approval process. At present, affordable housing is encouraged with a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) incentive (\$52 million in 2022) working in partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Also, surplus lands within Winnipeg's identified Housing Improvement Zones and lots acquired through tax sale are offered at a discount to non-profit housing providers.

City of Winnipeg TOD Handbook available at:

<https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/ppd/Documents/CityPlanning/PoliciesGuidelinesStudies/Transit-Oriented-Development-Handbook.pdf>

Brandon – Projects/Funding

Through Manitoba Housing's Municipal Grant Funding program, in 2021 Brandon received \$4.1 million in support of affordable housing development. Four housing projects have been initiated: Fleming, 20-27th Street, Van Horne Avenue, and eight single detached homes to be built for personal ownership by Habitat for Humanity. 26 units of accommodation will be ready for occupancy in March 2023. Brandon is also currently working with potential partners to advance a 24 unit transitional housing facility to provide support for vulnerable populations under the Rapid Housing Initiative. The City is working with CMHC to advance approval of this \$5 million project for construction in 2023, aligning with transit-supportive secondary planning conditions.

Selkirk – Policy/Strategy

The City of Selkirk Strategic Plan identifies housing and transit as key challenges to be addressed, including considering housing density, an appropriate mix of housing stock, and encouraging increased transit use by citizens. A range of policy, planning, and financial mechanisms are used to address Selkirk's strategic goals. Selkirk's Sustainable Growth Incentive (SGI) Policy is designed to encourage higher density, multi-family projects; with financial incentives available. Selkirk will initiate a new development planning process in 2023, which will include community and land use patterns supportive of transit function. The City and the Selkirk Transit Authority are working to update the Community Transportation Strategy to

support current/future transportation planning, determine transit priorities, and encourage high-density, mixed-use projects – to help address the City’s long-term housing and transit needs.

Flin Flon – Process (e.g. Zoning/Incentives)

A recent zoning by-law change will allow multi-family residential in a recreation area which is close to amenities, public transit, and other seniors housing. With Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) support, a first time home buyer program is in place to encourage housing purchases by low to moderate income families. Funding is provided for an 8% down payment, and if purchase price is \$100,000 and above, an additional 8% can be applied to cover housing repair/rehabilitation. Program interest is growing. The City of Flin Flon has also been working to purchase Provincial Crown Lands within the city, to provide more options for developers that are considering new single/multi-family projects.

Thompson – Planning

Thompson’s Established Neighbourhoods Policy prioritizes infill housing projects over other development that may require the extension of municipal services. Thompson has recently completed one housing infill plan, while a second plan is underway. A former church property is currently in the process of being rezoned to facilitate multi-family apartment accommodations and a student dormitory, as part of an innovative educational training facility. A new 12 unit, three storey complex is currently in the planning stages, to be advanced by the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre (to be supported by MHRC and CMHC) as an inclusive Indigenous-focused facility. This project will provide affordable seniors' housing on a site which formerly contained a condemned building. All projects are located on arterial streets and transit routes.

Key Funding Programs

The Department of Municipal Relations acknowledges all municipalities that are participating in the Government of Canada’s current Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) as well as to those municipalities that may be considering potential project applications through CMHC’s new Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF): Please see the CHMC website regarding HAF information sessions scheduled for April 6 and April 13, 2023: [Housing Accelerator Fund | CMHC \(cmhc-schl.gc.ca\)](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca).

Many municipalities outside of Winnipeg also sponsor paratransit (handi-transit services), and receive funding through the Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program: [Province of Manitoba | Mr - Mobility Disadvantaged Transportation Program \(gov.mb.ca\)](https://gov.mb.ca).

All municipalities are encouraged to review the federal government’s Rural Transit Solutions Fund, which has recently opened a new Capital Projects Stream which may offer an option for municipalities wishing to explore new and existing transit/paratransit funding needs: [Infrastructure Canada - Rural Transit Solutions Fund: Capital Projects Stream](https://infrastructurecanada.ca).

Should you require additional information on the above initiatives, or have any questions, please contact Municipal Funding Policy and Programs at MFPP@gov.mb.ca.

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Outcomes and Strategic Policy
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