



**MINISTER
OF FAMILIES**

Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8
CANADA

JUN 24 2021

Alan M. Campbell
President, Manitoba School Boards Association
191 Provencher Blvd
Winnipeg, MB R2H 0G4

Dear Mr. Campbell, *Alan:*

I received your letter regarding the importance of affordable housing for low-income people to achieve their educational pursuits. As the Minister of Families, I am pleased to respond.

Manitoba Housing is committed to providing safe, affordable housing and supporting families throughout the province. Currently, we support approximately 21,000 public housing units which provide affordable rental homes for an estimated 50,000 people across Manitoba. Under the National Housing Strategy, the province has agreed to increase the unit count by 12.4% over the next seven years.

Manitoba Housing has used sponsor management for many years to deliver social housing. Currently, over 4,000 units are managed by sponsor groups. Local housing providers help us better deliver social housing to households across Manitoba. The organizations chosen to manage the properties continue to deliver the Social Housing Rental Program with rent-gear-to income rates and program eligibility, including income limits, established by Manitoba Housing. These agreements maintain the current number of subsidized housing units.

The number of applicants on Manitoba Housing's eligibility list has reduced significantly. Manitoba Housing accomplished this by expediting the repair of vacant units and offering them to applicants and they increased the frequency of contacting applicants to confirm any changes to their application, including their continued need for subsidized housing. Lastly, effective April 1, 2021, Manitoba Housing decreased the number of areas for housing choice in Winnipeg to five regions. This will help address the issue of applicants who choose to remain on the eligibility list while they wait for a specific neighbourhood or property.

In regards to the sale of units, Manitoba Housing does offer the Rural Homeownership Program for individuals with low to moderate incomes who want to own a home. The properties sold through this program are in areas with no demand for rental housing. Manitoba Housing provides the down payment and assistance with other costs associated with purchasing the home.

Rent Assist is a shelter benefit for low-income Manitobans who are renting in the private market. It is available to eligible applicants who are receiving Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) and those who do not receive EIA. Rent Assist helps ensure that all Manitobans have access to safe and appropriate shelter by providing benefits that are based on income level and family size. Benefit rates are based on the actual costs of renting in the private market, and are increased annually in July. For eligible EIA recipients, rates will be indexed to reflect 75 per cent of the median market rent in Winnipeg. This year, for the first time, Rent Assist recipients not enrolled on EIA will have their benefits indexed to 80 per cent of median market rent, which will result in significant benefit increases for many current recipients. The Manitoba government has made significant investments in non-EIA Rent Assist in recent years; in 2021 the total budget is \$62 million, more than quadrupled the 2015/16 budget of \$13 million.

Thank you for taking the time to write. I trust this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RSquires', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Honourable Rochelle Squires
Minister of Families