

PRESS RELEASE

Manitoba CMHA's join Make Poverty History Manitoba and Right to Housing at Pre-Budget Rally

Thursday, April 23 (Winnipeg) – CMHA's from across Manitoba will be joining Make Poverty History Manitoba and Right to Housing at the steps of the Manitoba Legislature today to ask Finance Minister Greg Dewar and his colleagues to walk a mile in someone else's shoes as they prepare Budget 2015. Organizers will be presenting Dewar with a pair of used shoes.

Not all CMHA's can travel to the rally, so CMHA staff from the Interlake and Winnipeg regions will also be bringing shoes to the rally: four pairs, each representing a region that wanted to attend the rally, if only in spirit.

“Our province is big and so is the housing need,” says Tristan Dreilich, Mental Health Resource Developer from CMHA-Interlake Region who will attend the rally. “I will be standing beside my colleagues in Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Swan River and Thompson – whose participants live the housing need every day.”

The rally calls on the government to increase Rent Assist to 75% of median market rent for Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) recipients in this year's budget and for Manitoba Housing's budget to be increased by \$30 million to adequately fund existing commitments to increase the housing supply.

CMHA's across Manitoba provide emergency, transitional and affordable housing in Manitoba's rural communities to people with low-incomes many of whom face addiction and mental health issues.

“The need for housing and housing supports for people with addictions and mental health issues far exceeds the existing availability of housing stock or the current allocation of housing supports,” says Dreilich.

Regional CMHA's report waiting lists of several hundred people who are looking for low-income or transitional housing and emergency shelter. Across the province, not including emergency shelters, CMHA's 130 units are at maximum capacity.

“Our transitional and emergency housing is often being used for long periods as people struggle to find a permanent place to live that is decent, affordable, and available,” explains CMHA-Central Executive Director Leisa Mines from Portage la Prairie.

CMHA's across the province also facilitate Portable Housing Benefits to over 300 and provide community mental health supports to over 500 Manitobans annually. An estimated 30% of people accessing CMHA support services are working to get and keep decent, affordable housing.

“Without an increase to the housing budget, current commitments to increase supply can only be met at the expense of other important existing housing initiatives,” says Dreilich. “Manitobans such as CMHA's participants deserve better.”

The rally is organized by Make Poverty History Manitoba and Right to Housing. Make Poverty History Manitoba is coalition of organizations and individuals working to end poverty in Manitoba. The Right to Housing Coalition is a broad base of organizations concerned about the shortage of affordable and social housing in Manitoba.

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CMHA's across Manitoba are (with main office location in brackets):

CMHA-Westman (Brandon)

CMHA-Central (Portage la Prairie)

CMHA-Interlake (Selkirk)

CMHA-Parkland (Swan River)

CMHA-Thompson (Thompson)

CMHA-Winnipeg and Manitoba (Winnipeg)