



MANITOBA
REAL ESTATE ASSOCIATION

RESTORING MANITOBA'S HOMEOWNERSHIP ADVANTAGE:

A Vision for Affordable and Inclusive Ownership

Written Submission to Manitoba Finance for Budget 2026

January 26, 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manitoba's home ownership affordability advantage is under pressure.

Our association proposes two strategic themes for Budget 2026 that align with this government's commitments to affordability, reconciliation, and economic growth for Manitoba.

The Manitoba Real Estate Association (MREA) applauds the government for its homeownership affordability tax credit and encourages further enhancing this vital credit. To further restore Manitoba's affordability advantage, other initiatives should be considered as outlined below.

MREA also recognizes that Manitoba is facing extraordinary challenges. With the recent droughts, rising tariffs, and devastating wildfires, this has placed unprecedented fiscal pressure on our province and its people. In this environment, Manitobans need government programs and services more than ever, especially in housing, where urgent investment is required to ensure we do not fall further behind.

Our association supports the government taking bold action, including running a deficit, if necessary, to invest in housing programs and services at this critical time. We believe that when Manitobans are facing extraordinary circumstances, the priority must be to invest in people, communities, and the future of our province, even if that means temporarily departing from a balanced budget.

While we remain committed to the principle of fiscal responsibility and believe in returning to balanced budgets over the long term, the environment and pressures facing the province have changed dramatically since the new government took office. We urge the government to make investing in Manitobans its top priority in Budget 2026. Strategic investments in housing today will help restore Manitoba's affordability advantage, support families, and ensure our communities remain strong and resilient for years to come.

THEME 1: Launch a Down Payment Assistance Program for first-time buyers.

- Provide sustained annual funding for Manitoba Tipi Mitawa (MTM) through two streams:
 - Women-focused stream under the *Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag* initiative through the department of Families.
 - Sustained annual funding for MTM for qualifying First Nations families under the department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.
- Remove Land Transfer Tax (LTT) for first-time buyers, including those purchasing through designated non-profit programs (i.e., MTM, Habitat for Humanity, etc.).

THEME 2: Increasing Affordable and Supportive Housing Supply

- Implement brownfield reclamation, a 2023 election commitment.
- Conduct a provincial land audit to unlock surplus public lands for housing, a 2023 election commitment.
- Introduce LTT relief for seniors downsizing, freeing up family homes for move-up buyers.

POLLING AND PUBLIC SENTIMENT

Recent polling conducted for the MREA in September 2025 demonstrates that Manitoba's housing affordability advantage is at risk, and the dream of homeownership is increasingly out of reach for many Manitobans.

Key findings include:

- 78% of Manitobans are somewhat or very concerned about housing prices, up 9% from last year. Nearly two-thirds (64%) believe the availability of affordable housing has been going in the wrong direction over the past four years.
- **Financial Pressure:** 14% of mortgage holders now pay more than 50% of their after-tax income on their mortgage, up from 6% in 2024. Renters are twice as likely as homeowners to be affected by this burden, with 32% spending over half their income on housing.
- **Land Transfer Tax (LTT):** The majority of Manitobans support eliminating the LTT for first-time buyers (65%), and 75% support LTT relief for seniors downsizing.

- The top two most significant barriers to homeownership according to Manitobans are affordability-related:
 - 42% cite “housing options available in my price range” as a major barrier.
 - 34% say the down payment is a major barrier (rising to 51% among renters and 52% among households earning \$80,000/year or less).
- More than one in four first-time buyers relied on financial assistance from family for their down payment, and 76% of those used family funds for more than half of the required amount.
- 73% of Manitobans believe the provincial government has a great deal or fair bit of responsibility for managing housing affordability.

Why it matters:

- Manitoba’s historic affordability advantage is eroding, threatening the province’s ability to offer economic stability and independence through homeownership.
- The polling shows Manitobans want government action to restore affordability, break down barriers to homeownership, and increase housing supply.
- Policies such as down payment assistance, sustained funding for Indigenous homeownership programs, LTT exemptions for non-profit affordable ownership, and unlocking land for new housing directly address the barriers identified in the polling.

The data indicates that Manitobans are worried about housing costs and want the provincial government to take the lead on affordability. Budget 2026 offers a chance to protect Manitoba’s affordability advantage, support families in achieving financial stability, and keep homeownership within reach for everyone.

THEME 1: EXPANDING AFFORDABLE PATHWAYS TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

1. Down Payment Assistance Program

Proposal:

We propose the launch of a Down Payment Assistance Program for first-time homebuyers, a groundbreaking housing initiative that is fiscally responsible. Our proposal is a unique program designed to provide substantial financial support to first-time homebuyers and is comparable to successful initiatives in other provinces.

This program would provide up to \$42,500 (or 10 percent) in down payment assistance, delivered as a five-year pilot with flexibility being possible on an income or home purchase price threshold to ensure those who need it most are targeted. The program is designed to help Manitobans overcome the most significant barrier to homeownership, the initial down payment, especially for families lacking generational wealth or unable to save due to living paycheque-to-paycheque.

Why it matters:

Polling shows 34% of Manitobans cite the down payment as a major barrier to homeownership, rising to over 50% among renters and lower-income households. By directly addressing this challenge, the program will help more Manitobans transition from renting to owning, build equity, and achieve financial stability. The program's strict eligibility criteria and verification processes will ensure support is targeted to those who need it most while ensuring there are no defaults and applicants are set up for success.

Mandate alignment:

This proposal aligns with the government's commitments to affordability, economic growth, and supporting families while remaining fiscally responsible. It also responds directly to Minister Sala's request to revisit this initiative for Budget 2026, demonstrating responsiveness to government priorities and stakeholder feedback.

Comparative Jurisdictional Analysis:

Since MREA's initial proposal in the 2025 budget submission, several provinces have explored, adopted or expanded down payment assistance programs:

Nova Scotia:

- **Program Details:** Offers interest-free loans of up to 5% of the purchase price (max \$28,500) for first-time homebuyers, repayable over 10 years. Income cap is \$145,000, and price caps vary by region.
- **Impact:** Since 2021, over 600 first-time buyers have received assistance. Recent enhancements increased the price and loan caps to keep pace with rising home prices, especially in Halifax and East Hants.
- **Success:** The program is credited with helping more Nova Scotians enter homeownership, especially as prices rise. Regular reviews ensure the program remains relevant and the success of its first launch has resulted in the program being expanded since.
- **Resource:** [Nova Scotia Down Payment Assistance Program](#)

Yukon:

- **Program Details:** Provides low-interest loans (2.5% fixed) covering up to 50% of the required down payment (capped at 5% of the purchase price). Repayment is deferred until the mortgage is paid off, refinanced, or the home is sold.
- **Impact:** Launched in 2025, the program is expected to help 40–80 residents annually. Priority is given to recent post-secondary graduates. The initiative aims to bridge the gap for those struggling to save while renting.
- **Success:** The program is seen as a significant step in making homeownership accessible for Yukoners, especially younger residents and those returning after education.
- **Resource:** [Yukon First Home Program](#)

Prince Edward Island (PEI)

- **Program Details:** The PEI Down Payment Assistance Program (DPAP) offers a conditionally interest-free loan of up to 5% of the home purchase price, to a maximum of \$17,500, for first-time homebuyers with modest incomes. The loan is repayable over 10 years, with payments applied to principal only; accrued interest (set at 5%) is forgiven upon full repayment. Eligible households must have incomes of \$100,000 or less, and the home purchase price cannot exceed \$350,000. Applicants may defer payments for the first year to ease the transition into homeownership.
- **Impact:** Launched as a pilot program and extended through March 31, 2026, this program addresses one of the primary barriers to homeownership in PEI, saving the minimum down payment while facing rising housing costs and rental pressures. The program is targeted to residents who otherwise cannot accumulate a 5% down payment, helping to convert stable renters into homeowners.
- **Success:** The program is widely viewed as a practical and effective support for first-time buyers in a tight housing market. Its flexible repayment structure, combined with interest forgiveness, reduces long-term financial risk for participants. Continued extensions of the pilot indicate strong government confidence in its relevance and effectiveness as a pathway into homeownership.
- **Resource:** [PEI Down Payment Assistance Program](#)

Federal: The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) Advocacy

- **Program Proposal:** CREA is urging the federal government to introduce a down payment assistance program for first-time home buyers, targeting young Canadians and those struggling to save while renting.
- **Key Features:** CREA recommends limiting eligibility to first-time buyers to avoid driving demand for existing homes. Assistance could be delivered as low- or no-interest loans (similar to programs in PEI and New Brunswick's Homeownership Assistance program: [New Brunswick Homeownership Assistance Program](#)) covering up to 5% of a home's cost, or by reducing minimum down payment requirements, potentially cutting them in half for renters with a strong record of on-time payments.
- **Rationale:** This approach is designed to keep pathways to homeownership open for young Canadians, address affordability barriers, and support those without access to generational wealth.

These programs have demonstrated measurable success in increasing homeownership rates, especially among younger families and those without access to intergenerational wealth. Manitoba's proposed program would position the province as a leader in progressive housing policy and affordability.

Financial Sustainability:

Our program proposal is designed to be fiscally responsible, offsetting costs through a pay-back system and see profits from this program through increased land transfer and property tax revenues as more Manitobans enter the housing market.



2. Sustained Funding for Manitoba Tipi Mitawa (MTM)

Proposal:

We request a renewed investment of \$1,125,000 from the Department of Families for the *Mino’Ayaawag Ikwewag* fund, supporting 20 First Nations women in achieving homeownership.

Additionally, we invite collaboration with the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness to build on MTM’s success and broaden its impact by expanding funding opportunities. This would allow us to support a wider range of First Nations families in Manitoba, ensuring that more demographics, such as single parents, multi-generational households and those facing systemic barriers, can access safe and affordable homeownership.



Component	Maximum Amount per Applicant	Notes
Down Payment Support	\$60,712	Up to 15% of a \$404,750 home
Closing Costs Support	\$7,000	Legal fees, land transfer taxes
Total Allocation	\$67,712	Maximum per applicant
Home Purchase Price Cap	\$404,750	3-bedroom home in a safe community
Income Threshold	\$106,212	Household income cap

Program Impact:

- MTM has enabled 36 First Nations families to achieve homeownership, with a 100% success rate, no foreclosures and thriving families.
- The program’s comprehensive support includes financial literacy training (SEED Manitoba), home maintenance education (CAHPI-certified inspectors), modern financing solutions (Assiniboine Credit Union), and ongoing post-purchase support.

- MTM’s impartial selection process and robust financial model (developed with MNP) ensure assistance is targeted, sustainable, and effective.
- Demand remains high, with a current waitlist of 704 First Nations families seeking access to homeownership support. 63% of current MTM homeowners are First Nation single-parent women

This proposal directly advances reconciliation, supports Indigenous women and families, and addresses systemic barriers to homeownership. It aligns with government priorities for affordable housing, reconciliation, equity, and community stability.

3. Land Transfer Tax (LTT) Exemption for First-Time Buyers, including Non-Profit Affordable Ownership Programs

LTT Exemption for First-Time Buyers: Rationale and Impact

LTT is one of the most significant upfront costs faced by first-time homebuyers in Manitoba. Unlike mortgage payments, which can be spread over many years, LTT must be paid in full at closing and cannot be financed. This creates a major barrier for young families, renters, and those without access to generational wealth, often making the dream of homeownership unattainable.

Polling shows strong public support for LTT relief:

- 65% of Manitobans support eliminating LTT for first-time buyers.
- 63% of renters say they rent because they cannot afford to purchase a home, and 71% do not expect to afford a home in the next three years.
- The top barriers to homeownership are affordability-related, with LTT cited as a key obstacle.

Why a broader exemption matters:

- **Reduces upfront costs:** Making homeownership more attainable for young families and low- to moderate-income households.
- **Supports economic stability:** Homeownership is a foundation for financial independence and community stability.
- **Aligns with government priorities:** Directly supports affordability, economic growth, and inclusion.

Policy alignment:

A broader LTT exemption for first-time buyers would complement federal initiatives such as the GST exemption for new affordable housing and aligns with Manitoba's commitment to restoring its affordability advantage and supporting families.

Targeted Relief Through Non-Profit Affordable Homeownership

While a general LTT exemption for first-time buyers would have a broad impact, it is especially critical for those purchasing homes through designated non-profit affordable ownership programs such as Manitoba Tipi Mitawa (MTM) and Habitat for Humanity Manitoba.

Current barrier for non-profit buyers:

- Non-profits are exempt from LTT on land acquisitions, but the families they serve must pay LTT on the market value of their homes.
- Organizations like Habitat for Humanity Manitoba and MTM often pay this tax on behalf of families, adding to their mortgage and straining organizational resources.

Why extend the exemption to non-profit programs?

- Removes a major financial hurdle: Directly benefits low-income, first-time buyers who are most in need.
- Empowers non-profits: Frees up resources to reinvest in expanding housing supply and serving more families.
- Targets those who need it most: A means-tested exemption, based on income or program eligibility, ensures support is focused and administratively simple.

Recommendation:

We urge the Manitoba government to implement a comprehensive LTT exemption for first-time buyers, with a specific provision for those purchasing through designated non-profit affordable ownership programs. This change would remove a major financial barrier for low-income homebuyers, empower non-profits to deliver more homes, and help restore Manitoba's homeownership advantage.

Closing Remarks – Theme 1

The proposals outlined under Theme 1 are designed to directly reduce the most significant barriers to homeownership and help those who need it most. These measures reflect our shared commitment to affordability, inclusion, and reconciliation.

In addition, MREA supports exploring broader Land Transfer Tax (LTT) relief for first-time homebuyers as part of future affordability initiatives. Reducing this unfinanceable, upfront cost would have a meaningful impact on housing affordability for Manitobans and ensure that pathways to homeownership remain open for young families and those without access to generational wealth.

Reducing this unfinanceable, upfront cost would have a meaningful impact on housing affordability for Manitobans and ensure that pathways to homeownership remain open for young families and those without access to generational wealth.

Together, these actions will maintain Manitoba's affordability advantage, expand inclusive housing opportunities, and strengthen communities across the province.

THEME 2: INCREASING AFFORDABLE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SUPPLY

Manitoba is experiencing significant pressure on its housing supply, while concerns regarding affordability have reached unprecedented levels. In response to the 2023 election commitments made by the Premier, MREA is advancing practical solutions to address Manitoba's housing supply and affordability challenges. Recent polling shows 64% of Manitobans believe the availability of affordable housing is moving in the wrong direction, and 42% cite "housing options available in my price range" as a major barrier to homeownership. The provincial government is seen as having a leading role in managing housing affordability and supply. While immediate measures are needed to support families today, increasing housing supply remains the most effective long-term solution to restoring affordability and ensuring that Manitobans have access to a range of housing options for years to come.

4. Brownfield Reclamation

Brownfield reclamation: revitalizing and repurposing underutilized or contaminated sites, offers a practical solution to increase housing supply while supporting environmental sustainability and urban renewal. These sites can be transformed into vibrant communities, providing new opportunities for affordable and market-based housing, creating jobs, and increasing local tax revenues.

Proposal:

MREA recommends the government prioritize brownfield reclamation as a key step in expanding housing supply. We propose working collaboratively with the province to design incentives, streamline approvals, and support partnerships that accelerate the redevelopment of eligible sites for housing, especially affordable and supportive housing.

5. Provincial Land Audit

A comprehensive provincial land audit will identify surplus, underused, or strategically located public lands that can be unlocked for housing development. This approach enables better planning, faster delivery of new homes, and ensures that housing supply meets the needs of Manitoba's growing and diverse population.

Proposal:

MREA supports the government's commitment to a provincial land audit and recommends a collaborative approach to identify priority sites, develop transparent criteria, and enable partnerships with municipalities, non-profits, and Indigenous organizations. By activating public lands for housing, Manitoba can address supply constraints and deliver homes across the continuum.

Call to Action:

Rather than isolated initiatives, MREA proposes working with the government to integrate brownfield reclamation and provincial land audit efforts into a coordinated overall supply strategy for increasing housing supply in Manitoba. This collaborative approach will ensure solutions are targeted, effective, and aligned with provincial priorities for affordability and inclusion.

6. Incentivizing Seniors to Downsize: Unlocking Family Housing Supply

Polling shows that 70% of homeowners with more space than they need have considered downsizing, and 38% say tax credits on closing costs would increase their likelihood to move. Land Transfer Tax (LTT) relief for seniors downsizing is especially popular, with strong public support for measures that help older Manitobans transition to age-appropriate housing and free up larger homes for move-up buyers.

Proposal:

MREA recommends the government introduce Land Transfer Tax (LTT) relief or targeted incentives for seniors (65+) who sell their home and purchase a smaller primary residence in Manitoba. Options could include automatic LTT credits, time-limited relief, or equity-sensitive thresholds to ensure the policy is focused on those who need it most.

Impact:

By making downsizing more affordable for seniors, Manitoba can increase the availability of family-sized homes, support aging in place, and help move households along the housing and home ownership continuum. This approach addresses supply challenges, supports intergenerational mobility, and aligns with Manitobans' priorities for affordability and choice.

Closing Remarks – Theme 2

MREA urges the province to take bold, collaborative action on housing supply in Budget 2026, in direct response to the 2023 election commitments made by the Premier. By prioritizing brownfield reclamation, activating public lands, and incentivizing seniors to downsize, Manitoba can deliver more homes, improve affordability, and meet the needs of families across the province.

Looking ahead, MREA is committed to working with government and partners to build these recommendations into a comprehensive housing supply strategy for 2026, one that integrates land activation, redevelopment, and mobility incentives to ensure Manitoba's housing market is accessible, inclusive, and sustainable for all.





WHY THESE POLICIES ADVANCE GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

MREA deeply appreciates the NDP government's commitment to tackling housing affordability, advancing reconciliation, and building a more inclusive province. The policies and proposals in this submission are designed to directly support and accelerate the government's priorities in several keyways:

Affordability:

Measures such as the down payment assistance program, Land Transfer Tax (LTT) relief for seniors, and LTT exemption for non-profits are proven, targeted solutions that directly impact housing affordability for Manitobans. By reducing upfront costs and removing barriers, these policies help those who need it most maintain Manitoba's affordability advantage and keep the goal of homeownership within reach.

Housing Supply & Inclusion:

Expanding housing supply is essential as rising costs threaten Manitoba's historic home ownership affordability. Our proposals support the government's focus on opening up more inclusive housing options for all Manitoba families, ensuring that supply keeps pace with demand and that no one is left behind.

Reconciliation:

The MTM proposal and the recommended LTT exemption for non-profits like MTM are direct actions that support reconciliation. By supporting Indigenous women and families in achieving homeownership, these policies address historic inequities and advance the government's commitment to reconciliation in a tangible, lasting way.

Economic Growth:

Every new homeowner strengthens Manitoba's economy. By moving more Manitobans into the housing market, these policies generate economic spinoff, creating jobs, stimulating local businesses, and building stronger communities. Housing is a foundation for prosperity. These measures ensure that growth is both inclusive and sustainable.

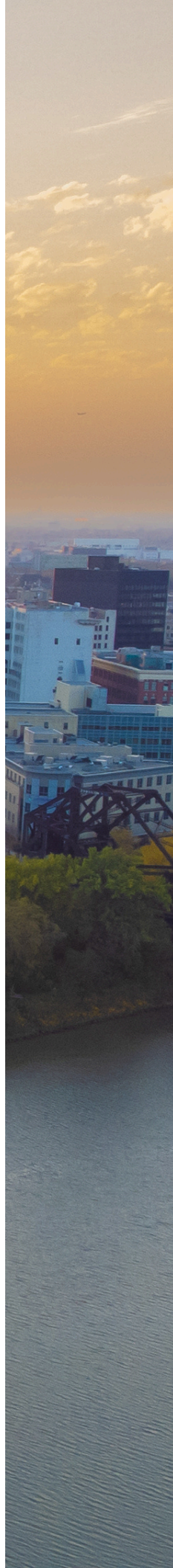
CONCLUSION

Manitoba stands at a pivotal moment. The policies explored today will shape the future of our communities, our economy, and the opportunities available to every Manitoban. MREA is proud to support the government's commitment to affordability, reconciliation, and inclusive growth. The policies and proposals outlined in this submission are designed to help Manitoba maintain its affordability advantage, expand home ownership opportunities for families, and advance reconciliation in meaningful ways.

By reducing barriers to homeownership, supporting Indigenous families, and enabling more Manitobans to enter the housing market, these measures will strengthen our communities and generate positive economic spinoff across the province. We recognize and appreciate the government's leadership and progress in these areas, and we are committed to working together to build on these foundations.

Looking ahead, MREA is prepared to collaborate on a comprehensive home ownership supply strategy for 2026, one that ensures Manitoba remains a place where Manitobans can access safe, stable, and affordable housing, and where our economy and communities continue to thrive.

Let us continue to build Manitoba as a province with a true affordability advantage, where opportunity, inclusion, and prosperity are accessible to all.





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