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## Affordable housing gets \$24M

**Province funds 282 units in 22 downtown projects**

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The province announced Wednesday a \$24-million investment toward 22 affordable-housing projects in the Winnipeg downtown core, targeting projects that will benefit students, families, seniors and refugees. In total, 282 new housing units will be constructed, along with the renovation of buildings to the benefit of 1,474 households.

The investment is part of a broader \$327-million, two-year commitment toward housing initiatives in the province, including the contribution of almost \$100 million from the federal government.

"All of us love our downtown, and all of us know that we have to do more to revitalize the shopping district and the area around that," said Gord Mackintosh, the provincial minister of family services and housing. "And we know the most important way -- the most effective way -- to revitalize downtown is to have people living there."

The investment was announced in conjunction with the launch of a new long-term affordable-housing strategy, created with the help of the University of Winnipeg's Prof. Tom Carter, who has studied Manitoba's housing needs in depth.

"No longer can we just think about providing accommodations. We have to think as well about the transformation of communities and families, we have to think about how we connect to other social policies," Mackintosh said.

"This strategy now will formalize that integration of Manitoba Housing into the broader social objectives of what we hold dear to us."

Treasury Board President Vic Toews was also on hand for the announcement, on behalf of the federal minister for human resources and skills development, Diane Finley.

"It's very encouraging, as a longtime resident of Manitoba, to see development that is taking place in the core area of Winnipeg," he said.

Toews also heaped praise on the Greenheart housing co-op, a nearly completed housing complex located on Sherbrook Street, near Portage Avenue.

"I'm very assured that you're not simply erecting a building, that you in fact are creating a community," he said.

The co-op -- which got a \$2.6-million chunk of the funding Wednesday-- will offer some of its 24 units at market price, but subsidize the rest for lower-income tenants.

"This is an excellent way to proceed, that we integrate various income levels," Toews said, adding that he's seen similar projects work successfully in other provinces. "I believe that keeps us from ghettoizing certain areas."

Another \$2 million has been invested toward the University of Winnipeg's new McFeetors Hall residence, set to open Aug 1. The residence will include 168 dormitory-style units but also townhouses for mature students who may have a family and want to return to school.

"We can help eliminate one of the major barriers that those who are in the adult ages have when they go back to school -- to provide good effective housing," said university president Lloyd Axworthy.

He added the townhouse units would be available to any mature student pursuing post-secondary education, be it at the university, Red River College or the Winnipeg Education Centre.

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