

Employment and Income Assistance and Rent Assist

INNER CITY
VOTES

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The Issue

Over 70 thousand Manitobans depend on Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) to meet their basic needs. However, the amount they get to live on has not kept pace with the rising cost of living. Households on EIA have not had an increase in their Basic Needs budget – meant to cover food, clothing, hygiene, etc. – since 2004. The basic needs budget for a single individual on General Assistance has been stuck at \$195 per month for more than 10 years. This leaves people with just over \$6 a day to cover food and other necessities. In 2018, the Provincial government also eliminated a \$25 "job seekers" allowance for single adults without disabilities.

While the amount EIA recipients receive for food and other necessities has not increased for decades, there has been some improvement for shelter benefits since the introduction of Rent Assist in 2015. Rent Assist increased the housing allowance up to 75% of median market rent. This provided increases of hundreds of dollars of new benefits for low income renters in the private market. Although Rent Assist was supported by all parties in the last election, there have been cuts to the program over the past three years, and advocates are concerned.

The Province's Role

The provincial government determines EIA benefits - who gets what and how much assistance.

The Basic Needs budget for all EIA recipients should be doubled immediately to reflect the rising cost of food and other basic necessities. Longer term, a transparent process with community participation should be established to ensure that EIA budgets continue to reflect the actual costs of basic necessities in Manitoba and that these budgets are updated annually.

Questions to Ask

- Do you believe that households on EIA should receive a livable basic needs benefit that will lift them above the poverty line?
- How will your government ensure that Rent Assist gives adequate support for all renters to meet their housing needs?

