

Date: November 2, 2021

To: Members of Calgary City Council and Executive Leadership Team

From: Sarah Woodgate, Director, Calgary Housing

Re: **Government of Alberta Strategic Plan for Housing – City of Calgary Response Plan**

Purpose:

This memo highlights potential impacts of the Government of Alberta's (GOA) [Stronger Foundations Affordable Housing Strategy](#) on the City of Calgary and Calgarians in need of affordable housing. This housing strategy was released on 1 November 2021.

Summary:

- Key elements of the strategy with implications for the City of Calgary include calls for:
 - Transition of existing provincially-owned housing to private or non-profit housing providers and partnerships, to enable real estate assets to be renewed and repurposed.
 - Better coordination between housing providers, municipalities, and the province to better support local needs.
 - Encouraging the development of regional and local needs assessments to maximize investment and ensure coordinated supports for Albertans.
- We will continue to work with sector partners to understand the implementation plan and its impact on Calgarians who rely on affordable housing. Recent provincial budgets have seen investment in affordable housing decreased for repair and new supply. These on-going budget reductions by the Province are putting existing provincially-funded housing stock in need of urgent repair at risk of further degradation and closure. The limited funding for new development restricts potential for new supply to meet growth demands.
- The plan does not identify investment for Affordable Housing. Appropriate investment in the new strategy through provincial Budget 2022 and beyond will be essential to enable its goals.
- Next steps will include a detailed briefing on the impact of changes and recommendations for next steps at the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee (9 December 2021).

Key messages:

- The Government of Alberta has launched a 10-year strategy and we look forward to better understanding the implications of this plan and continuing to work closely with the province to ensure lower income Albertans can live with dignity.
- Ensuring Albertans have access to affordable and appropriate housing is a responsibility which, similar to the case in other provinces, has historically rested with the Government of Alberta. All orders of government, non-profits and the private sector have important roles to play in the provision of affordable housing.
- Recent provincial budgets have seen investment in affordable housing decreased. We are hopeful this new plan will be followed by appropriate investment through Budget 2022 and beyond, to enable its goals.
- Ensuring all Albertans have access to affordable and safe housing where they can have the opportunity to reach their full potential is a key priority for The City of Calgary. Affordable housing matters to Calgarians: 95

percent of Calgarians want investment in affordable housing to stay the same or increase (Spring 2021 Citizen Satisfaction Survey).

Spokespeople on the Strategic Plan are proposed as follows:

- City of Calgary:
 - Political response: Mayor Jyoti Gondek
 - Technical and subject matter expertise: Sarah Woodgate, Director, Calgary Housing
- Calgary Housing Company
 - Strategic response: Board Chair for Calgary Housing Company, William Bridge
 - Technical and subject matter expertise: Sarah Woodgate, President, Calgary Housing Company

Questions & Answers:

What is driving the need for this Strategic Plan?

The provincial Strategic Plan for Affordable Housing is a result of the work and recommendations of the [Affordable Housing Review Panel](#)¹, appointed by the Government of Alberta in 2020. The panel was tasked with conducting an independent evaluation of Alberta's affordable housing system with the goal to "ensure that Alberta will continue to have a safe, suitable affordable housing system that is financially sustainable". The panel's recommendations called for the development of the Strategic Plan.

How did The City contribute to the development of this Strategic Plan?

The City provided feedback on the panel recommendations and consistent input into the potential adjustments to the role of municipalities that would be addressed through the Strategic Plan. Our positions emphasized the need to: focus on growing and preserving housing supply for low income Albertans; align responsibilities by order of government to the most appropriate revenue source, recognize the limitations of regressive property tax mechanisms to fund programs which target inequality; and engage with municipalities, Indigenous communities and people in need of affordable housing.

Next Steps:

1. Government relations and advocacy actions consistent with approved Affordable Housing Advocacy Goals
2. Comprehensive review of the new strategic plan including stakeholder engagement to assess impacts on big cities and alignment on emerging issues or opportunities with affordable housing stakeholders
3. Detailed briefing to Council representatives to Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)
4. Detailed feedback on the impact of changes at the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, scheduled for 9 December 2021.

Attachments:

Summary of Stronger Foundations Affordable Housing Strategy

This memo was emailed to:

Calgary City Council:

- Mayor - Jyoti Gondek
- Ward 1 - Sonya Sharp
- Ward 2 - Jennifer Wyness
- Ward 3 – Jasmine Mian
- Ward 4 – Sean Chu
- Ward 5 – Raj Dhaliwal

¹ <https://www.alberta.ca/affordable-housing-review-panel.aspx>



Memo

- Ward 6 – Richard Pootmans
- Ward 7 – Terry Wong
- Ward 8 – Courtney Walcott
- Ward 9 – Gian-Carlo Carra
- Ward 10 – Andre Chabot
- Ward 11 – Kourtney Penner
- Ward 12 – Evan Spencer
- Ward 13 – Dan McLean
- Ward 14 - Peter Demong

City of Calgary Executive Leadership Team

Contact:

Sarah Woodgate

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Stronger Foundations: Alberta's 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing

Summary

Over the next 10 years, Alberta's government will take bold action to provide more affordable housing options that meet the needs of Albertans with low income. This summary provides key details from the strategy.

Vision for affordable housing

- Albertans have access to safe, affordable housing that meets their needs and promotes quality of life.
- The housing system delivers innovative and sustainable affordable housing options to Albertans in need through partnerships with other orders of government, non-profit and private housing providers, and communities.
- The housing system will serve Albertans now and into the future.

What we'll do



Support Albertans most in need

Continue to protect the most vulnerable and ensure housing eligibility is fair, clear and equitable.



Enhance sustainability and efficiency

Make the affordable housing system more sustainable by enabling innovative operating models.



Improve access

Make it simpler for Albertans to access affordable housing supports, and easier for housing providers to deliver those supports.



Enable growth and investment

Use innovative approaches for partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors to grow the supply of affordable housing.



Increase capacity, planning and governance

Enable more collaboration and local decision-making and provide more flexibility and capacity to meet local needs.

What we aim to achieve

Serve more Albertans

- Support up to 82,000 households – an increase of more than 40 per cent, or up to 25,000 more households

Increase housing supply

- Add 13,000 affordable housing units
- Available units address a range of needs – from vulnerable households to ones with more moderate need

Improve choice and options

- Provide rent assistance to 12,000 more households
- Increase housing developments with mixed-income options



1. Support Albertans most in need

Objectives

- Continue to protect the most vulnerable
- Ensure eligibility is fair, clear and equitable
- Reduce red tape and increase flexibility for housing providers

Actions

- 1.1: Continue to maintain income thresholds for eligibility, as informed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Housing Income Limits.
- 1.2: Clarify and standardize the income verification process so eligibility, priority and rent setting are more equitable and simplified.
- 1.3: Enable housing providers to prioritize target populations into affordable housing based on the local need.
- 1.4: Ensure a required number of target income groups (very low, low, and moderate) and target populations based on community need are prioritized.
- 1.5: Expand access for Indigenous communities through the GOA's Indigenous Housing Capital Program.
- 1.6: In collaboration with partner ministries across government, expand supportive housing for populations transitioning out of homelessness and requiring mental health and addiction support.
- 1.7: Increase seniors housing in line with population growth.



2. Improve access

Objectives

- Make it easier for people who need affordable housing to access and navigate the affordable housing system
- Provide access to a continuum of supports, and a range of programs that meet individuals' different needs
- Provide housing that serves as a pathway to connect Albertans with health and social supports
- Reduce red tape for Albertans in affordable housing, or who are trying to access housing supports

Actions

- 2.1: Invest in a public online system, the Find Housing online tool, to enable Albertans to access a range of affordable housing options.
- 2.2: Establish regional housing system navigator roles in collaboration with partner ministries and community partners.
- 2.3: Work with partners to support housing literacy programs and access to housing information.
- 2.4: Collaborate with partner ministries to co-ordinate supports and transitions for Albertans as they move through the housing continuum. This includes people receiving income support, youth exiting government care, women and children fleeing violence and seniors moving to higher levels of care.
- 2.5: Work with housing operators to enhance support services or co-located services onsite, such as tenant support workers and services informed by awareness and sensitivity of Indigenous and other cultures.



3. Increase capacity, planning and governance

Objectives

- Enable more operational decision-making at the local level
- Increase operator flexibility by focusing on outcomes
- Increase sector capacity to deliver programs and meet outcomes
- Shift the GOA's role away from prescriptive regulatory structures to providing oversight and funding
- Reduce red tape for housing providers

Actions

- 3.1: Co-ordinate planning with municipalities, regions, First Nation governments, Métis organizations and local housing providers.
- 3.2: Encourage regional/municipal needs assessments to inform GOA and community planning.
- 3.3: Establish three-year targets for programs and new housing developments based on current and projected community need.
- 3.4: Continue to work with housing management bodies and operators to improve efficiency, increase capacity, and expand local decision-making.
- 3.5: Develop an operator performance-assessment framework and support capacity building.
- 3.6: Ensure all operators follow best practices and housing management body board appointments are competency based.
- 3.7: Increase the number of operating agreements with HMBs, non-profit and private sector housing providers.



4. Enhance sustainability and efficiency

Objectives

- Achieve greater sustainability in the affordable housing sector
- Enable multiple development and operating models that can be tailored to local need
- Target the deepest subsidies to those most in need
- Reduce the GOA's role in property ownership
- Maximize federal funding
- Enable operating revenues and asset monetization so operators can fund more capital costs

Actions

- 4.1: Allow new and innovative operating and funding models.
- 4.2: Gradually transition existing units to new operating models, while being sure to minimize disruption to tenants and prevent loss of deep subsidy units, and ensure those most in need have access to appropriate housing.
- 4.3: Use real estate asset transfer and redevelopment opportunities to move from the prescriptive regulatory format to focus on outcomes and move to operating agreements that allow for innovative housing models such as mixed-income developments.
- 4.4: For regulated, mixed-income developments that provide community housing, set rents based on operating costs and below-market target ranges.



5. Enable growth and investment

Objectives

- Leverage existing housing supply to meet growing demand for affordable housing
- Increase capital investment by partners and the GOA

Actions

- 5.1: Create a partnership framework and program tailored to affordable housing.
- 5.2: Develop and implement an affordable housing asset management framework, which will optimize the Alberta Social Housing Corporation (ASHC) real estate asset portfolio by identifying properties for sale, transfer, retention or redevelopment.
- 5.3: Develop a five-year maintenance and redevelopment plan for all government-owned assets and improve capital maintenance and renewal processes.
- 5.4: Introduce new programs and incentives to grow the supply of affordable housing.
- 5.5: Provide redevelopment grants to revitalize, densify, or repurpose existing housing with below market rents.
- 5.6: Work with partners to enable seniors' lodges to serve as community hubs in rural areas, and expand the Lodge Partnership Program to increase designated supportive living spaces in seniors' lodges where stand-alone continuing care facilities are not feasible.
- 5.7: Reinvest proceeds from ASHC real estate asset sales into the affordable housing system.
- 5.8: Expand the use of rent supplements to better use existing rental market capacity.