



Naheed K. Nenshi, Mayor

August 7, 2020

The Honourable Jason Kenney  
Office of the Premier  
307 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

**Re: Ending Homelessness in Calgary**

Dear Premier Kenney,

Thank you for your service in these difficult times. The economic impact of our collective efforts to contain COVID-19 have been compounded by the concurrent precipitous and sustained decline in the value of our energy sector. These two unprecedented events are greatly impacting our most vulnerable Albertans as well as key economic sectors including the residential construction, tourism and development industries. I am writing to introduce a solution to unlock more federal funding for Alberta, help struggling Calgarians get a leg up, and help affected industries to boost our economy. Appended to this letter is Calgary's *COVID-19 Community Affordable Housing Plan*, which we are asking for your leadership and support in advancing. When implemented, it will make considerable strides towards ensuring Calgary emerges with a stronger civil society that will ensure more of our citizens can live with dignity, access opportunities to improve their lives, and contribute to our economic recovery. To access significant federal funds to achieve these goals, we are seeking a Provincial investment of \$298.45 million into Calgary's non-market housing sector. This is a big investment, with massive system-changing returns.

The unique challenges experienced with COVID-19 has demonstrated just how essential it is for all Canadians to have a stable, dignified place they can afford to call home. COVID-19 has highlighted gaps in our system, but also created opportunities to permanently secure non-market housing options for our most vulnerable citizens. As the potential for future waves of COVID-19 remains and the energy sector continues to struggle, Calgary must innovate to address our long-standing non-market housing challenges differently and work with a sense of urgency to invest in the economy, and ensure Calgarians are safely housed.

As a response to the health, social and economic crisis in Calgary, a committee of 65 individuals from 42 organizations from private, non-profit, and government housing sectors, representing more than 45,000 homes in Calgary have created a plan that:

1. **Collectively ends functional homelessness,**
2. **Increases the supply of non-market housing, and**
3. **Invests in vulnerable Calgarians so they have a community to call home.**

The COVID-19 Housing Provider's Committee, which includes the Community Housing Affordability Collective (CHAC), considered the following when creating the enclosed advocacy plan:

1. Generating economic stimulus via construction of new affordable homes;
2. Repurposing vacant hotels due to decreased tourism; and
3. Capitalizing on private rental vacancy.

To bring this plan to fruition, support from both the provincial and federal government is needed.

Calgary has more than 50% of Alberta's homeless population with almost 3,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night. The temporary COVID-19 solutions created to accommodate social distancing and isolation for people experiencing homelessness are coming to end. Without a permanent plan to address the housing needs of Canadians experiencing homelessness in Calgary, there is a risk that these vulnerable citizens will return to the streets or unsafe living arrangements. We must act now.

The *COVID-19 Community Housing Advocacy Plan* for Calgary **will create 5,400 homes** in the non-market housing sector, including adding 1,250 supportive housing spaces over four years. The Calgary COVID-19 Housing Provider's Committee is advocating for a Provincial investment of **\$298.45M** into Calgary's non-market housing sector which will improve the lives, and resiliency, of vulnerable Albertans. Of this, \$118.7M would be immediately invested into shovel-ready capital projects with \$150M used to increase access to housing for 3,000 Canadian families living in Calgary over the next four years. Approximately two-thirds of the 5,400 homes would not require ongoing support after the initial capital outlay. To support organizations in sustaining and operating the increase in supply, \$29.75M is required annually by year 4.

*The COVID-19 Community Affordable Housing Advocacy Plan* will also stimulate Calgary's economy by creating construction jobs and repurposing stranded building assets. Strategic investments in affordable housing can mitigate potential collapse in construction, development and tourism sectors. **An immediate residential construction investment of \$450M across 22 non-profit affordable housing construction projects will create 2,800 jobs. The overall economic activity generated in the region would be \$765M, and the value-added/GDP is \$355M.** In addition to this, ending homelessness saves public systems \$70K to \$135K per person, per year. In Calgary, by housing 600+ individuals that are currently homeless the public system would see savings between \$42M - \$81M per year.

The opportunity exists to enable individuals to build a better life and contribute to the economy from a safe and affordable home, as well as support non-profit housing providers to build an asset base increasing their capacity to be more self-sustaining and less dependent on government support. Calgary is uniquely poised to respond to a community-level investment at this scale – and we will achieve results. We have the aligned commitment, the surplus assets, and the expertise.

Attached with this letter is Calgary's *COVID-19 Community Housing Advocacy Plan* that I implore you to urgently consider. I would be pleased to further discuss this plan in detail and where possible, participate in creating homes, better lives, and economic prosperity for Canadians living in Calgary. Thank you for considering these points in your review.

Sincerely,



Naheed K. Nenshi  
MAYOR

We are in public life to make real change - this is the biggest opportunity for impact I've ever seen. Let's do it!

cc: **The Honourable Josephine Pon, Minister of Seniors and Housing, Government of Alberta**  
**The Honourable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services, Government of Alberta**  
**The Honourable Travis Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, Government of Alberta**  
**Calgary City Council**  
**David Duckworth, City Manager, The City of Calgary**