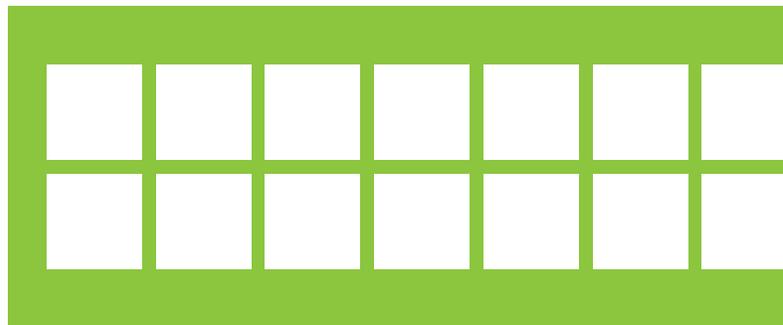


# MAKING LIFE BETTER:

Alberta's Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy



*Alberta*  
Government

June 2017

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING

## defined

For the purposes of this strategy, affordable housing is government-supported housing available for Albertans, who because of financial, social or other circumstances, cannot afford private market rental rates.

Government-supported affordable housing is managed by the public, non-profit and private sectors at rental rates that are below market rates, based on income.

Housing is considered “affordable” when a household spends no more than 30 per cent of its gross income on shelter.

This document provides a snapshot of the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy and some of the actions the Government of Alberta is taking to make life better for Albertans in affordable housing.



# A MESSAGE FROM the Minister



All Albertans deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. As a social worker for more than 25 years, I saw first-hand the fundamental importance of housing – and the hardships families face when this basic human right is neglected.

Years of underfunding have resulted in significant waitlists for people and families who need help finding a home. That’s why our government is taking action to make life better for Albertans on low-income. Our new Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy goes beyond the bricks and mortar of a house - it puts people first, ends backward measures, and helps Albertans achieve their dreams.

The purpose of this strategy is to give Albertans in government-supported affordable housing the tools they need to build better lives for themselves and the people they love. Tenants shouldn’t be kicked out of their home because they get a better job and their income increases slightly above the low-income limit. This is still happening in Alberta and we want to put an end to it.

For this reason, we are exploring mixed-income models in affordable housing and creating options for tenants to stay in their existing home if they choose to pay an adjusted rent. We are also increasing the asset limit for tenants in affordable housing from \$7,000 to \$25,000. This will support people and families saving for goals like education, a down-payment for a house, or even just having more of a safety net.

Individuals need support over time to achieve greater financial stability and these measures will provide greater stability for people as they work to improve their finances.

We are also making it easier for Albertans to transition into stable, affordable housing. Graduates of the Housing First program, a program that helps Albertans facing homelessness, will have more opportunities to get back on their feet with good housing.

On top of these measures, we are making a capital investment of \$1.2 billion over five years to build, renovate and modernize affordable housing across Alberta.

Thank you to the more than 1,800 Albertans who took part in surveys and public engagement sessions that helped to develop the Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy. Your feedback was instrumental.

Affordable housing makes life better for people. Our new strategy will lead to many more Albertans having safe, stable places to call home.

Lori Sigurdson

Minister of Seniors and Housing

# A SAFE AND AFFORDABLE place to call home

Having a stable home contributes to better health, financial, education and social outcomes, and reduces pressures on the health-care, social-support and justice systems.

The Alberta government developed a Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy that goes beyond bricks and mortar, focusing on making life better for tenants by giving them the tools to become more successful in life.

## The Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy focuses on:

- 1. Investing Now and for the Future** – The Alberta government is investing \$1.2 billion over five years to build more affordable housing for those who need it.
- 2. Integrated Housing and Supports** – Tenants are given the tools they need to have every chance to be successful in life.
- 3. Successful Transitions and Aging in Community** – Whether a senior is moving into a lodge or a family needs housing, the strategy helps them progress into affordable housing with the support they need.
- 4. Fair and Flexible** – Applicants and tenants will no longer be penalized for improving their financial circumstances. Housing providers have the flexibility required to respond to community needs.
- 5. A Sustainable System** – Housing providers can better support Albertans if the housing system is financially sustainable. New funding and program models put affordable housing on sound financial and environmental footing.

*“Tenants tell me they want to get a better job and be able to save up for their children’s education. But the existing housing system isn’t designed for that and tenants risk losing their home if they do. These changes mean we can begin to break the cycle of poverty.”*

– Tracey McLean-Schultz, Tenant Liaison, Calgary Housing Company

# 1 INVESTING NOW and for the future

The Alberta government is investing and building more affordable housing so Albertans have a safe place to call home.

## Building more affordable housing:

### FOR TENANTS

- › The Alberta government is investing \$1.2 billion over five years to build more affordable housing. By 2021, more than 4,000 Alberta families will have a new place to call home.
- › Indigenous peoples will have more options for housing that are culturally sensitive to their needs.

## Fixing affordable housing units that are in disrepair:

### FOR TENANTS

- › Many affordable housing buildings are more than 40 years old and are in disrepair due to years of underfunding. Some units are so worn out they need to be knocked down and rebuilt. By 2021, about 2,000 new homes will have been rebuilt.
- › The Alberta government is fixing affordable housing units, like replacing hot water tanks and furnaces, so tenants can live comfortably and with dignity.
- › Seniors in lodges will be safer as modern fire and safety systems are installed in all lodges. More than half of all lodges have been retrofitted to-date, with completion of this project expected by late 2018.

TARGET

**4,100**

new and regenerated  
**affordable housing  
units** completed  
by 2021.

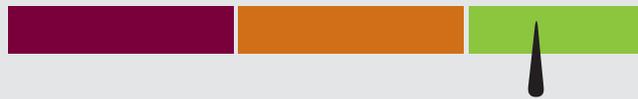


## FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

- › An asset management strategy will help paint a better picture about which affordable housing buildings need repair and which need to be redeveloped.
- › Regeneration of units will help housing providers with revenue streams and vacancies caused by units closing because they need major renovations.

### TARGET

Maintain a Facility Condition Index rating of “**Good**” or “**Fair**” for more than **95%** of government-owned and -supported housing stock.



*“We need to build more affordable housing – there’s no question about it. But we also need to make sure we maintain existing affordable housing units to ensure operational and economic sustainability”*

– Greg Dewling, Chief Executive Officer, Capital Region Housing

## 2 INTEGRATED HOUSING and supports

Tenants will be given the tools they need to reach their full potential and plan for the future.

### Tenant support beyond the bricks and mortar:

#### FOR TENANTS

- › Tenants, including seniors, will have better access to a tenant support worker. The worker will connect them to community support services that will help improve the tenant's well-being. For example, giving them advice to upgrade their education or helping them to find the right medical services.

#### FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

- › The tenant support program helps tenants progress through the housing continuum to get the support they need to be more successful.
- › Strengthening relationships with Alberta Health, Alberta Community and Social Services, Alberta Labour and community partners allows housing providers to better support tenant needs.

TARGET

100%

of seniors and tenants in affordable housing will **have access to a tenant support worker** by 2020-21.



# 3 SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

## and aging in the community

### Making transitions through affordable housing easier:

#### FOR TENANTS

- › Tenants will no longer be restricted to having just \$7,000 in assets. The new asset limit of \$25,000 will allow families to save for their future—like saving for a down payment for a house. This improves the tenant’s opportunity to transition to market housing or home ownership.
- › Graduates of Housing First, a program that helps Albertans facing homelessness, will have more opportunities to progress into stable housing, supporting them in their journey to get back on their feet.

#### TARGET

**Increase the number of Albertans** who say the affordable housing system meets their needs and helps them **achieve their goals** as measured through improved data collection.



### Support seniors to age in their community:

#### FOR TENANTS

- › Investments in renovations to seniors’ lodges will support seniors to live comfortably and retire in dignity. Some of the renovations being done to seniors’ lodges include widening doorways for walkers and built-in life-alert systems.
- › Regenerating seniors’ lodges will mean more seniors can age in the community they call home, close to their family and friends.

# 4 FAIR AND FLEXIBLE

The needs of tenants change and so should the housing system to better serve them.

## Keeping up with changing tenant needs:

### FOR TENANTS

- › Albertans need help over time to achieve financial stability. Tenants shouldn't be kicked out of their stable housing because they got a better job and their income increased slightly above the low-income limit. Mixed-income models in affordable housing give tenants the option of staying in their existing home if they choose to pay an adjusted rent.
- › Tenants will have more opportunities to raise issues and have them resolved more quickly with a new best-practice tenant dispute resolution process.

### FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

- › Housing providers will have increased flexibility to respond to individual and community needs.

## Improve system access and navigation:

### FOR TENANTS

- › Albertans should be able to apply to affordable housing programs with one application. Calgary and the Alberta government are jointly-funding a pilot program to create a "one-stop shop" for people applying for affordable housing in Calgary. If this pilot-project is successful, it could be expanded provincewide.

## TARGET

**Increase in percentage of Albertans** in mixed income buildings who believe the model is **responsive to their housing requirements** as measured through improved data collection.



# 5 A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Housing providers can better support Albertans if the housing system is financially sustainable. New funding and program models will put affordable housing on a sound financial footing.

## Supporting housing providers:

### FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

- › The financial sustainability of the housing system will improve because mixed-income models will result in decreased operating costs. Decreased operating costs means more financial flexibility to meet the needs of tenants.
- › The Alberta government will focus on capital investments that help make the operations of the housing system more sustainable.

## Positioning Alberta as a leader in housing:

### FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

- › The Alberta government will work closely with the Government of Canada as it develops a national housing strategy, positioning our province as a leader in affordable housing.

## Environmental sustainability of affordable housing:

### FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

- › Energy-efficient building standards in construction projects will reduce environmental impacts and improve energy efficiency of affordable housing units. This will reduce costs for housing providers.

TARGET

# 100%

of new government-owned and -supported units in 2020-21 meet industry standards for **environmentally friendly and energy efficient design.**

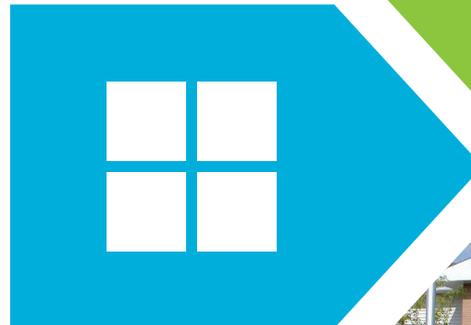
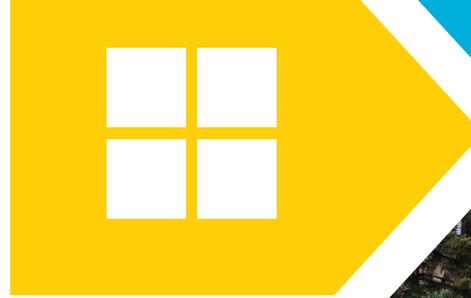
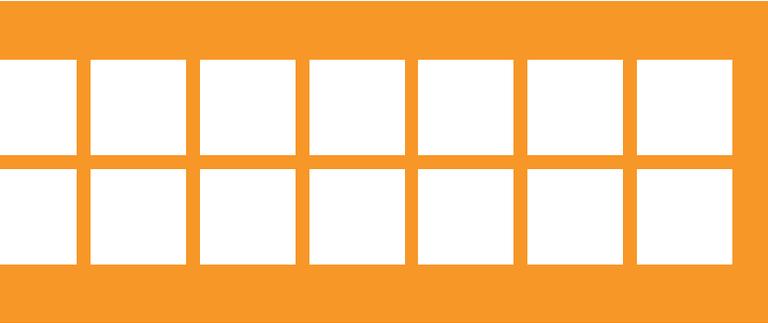


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*“Having a safe and affordable place to live is important. My home is more than just a room in an apartment. My home is like a launch pad for the next chapters in my life. I can’t wait to see what’s next.”*

– Helen Nolan, resident of a seniors’ lodge

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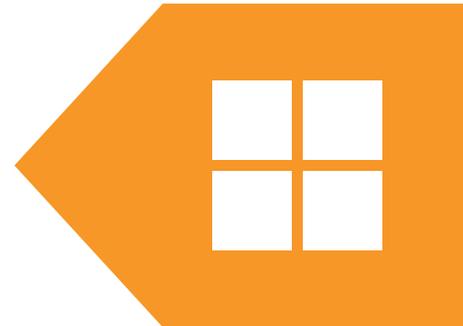


To learn more about affordable housing or about Alberta's Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy, visit:

## Alberta Seniors and Housing

[www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca](http://www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca)

Call 310-0000 toll free



Making Life Better:  
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ISBN 978-1-4601-3415-3 (Print)  
ISBN 978-1-4601-3416-0 (PDF)

Published June 2017  
Printed in Canada

