

## Provincial Support for Addressing Affordable Housing and Homelessness

**Title of Resolution:** Provincial Support for Addressing Affordable Housing and Homelessness

**Moved by:** City of Edmonton

**Seconded by:** City of Grande Prairie

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**WHEREAS** the provision of affordable housing and addressing homelessness falls within Federal and Provincial spheres of jurisdiction;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Canada recognized that adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law, and that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Canada renewed their support for affordable housing, and reducing chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027 to 2028, through the *National Housing Strategy* and a commitment to invest \$40 billion in capital over 10 years;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Alberta signalled its commitment to build more affordable housing in *Alberta's Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy*, and the *2020-23 Strategic Plan* further states that the province will ensure the availability of more affordable housing, and will support affordable and accessible housing for those Albertans most in need;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Alberta, through the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, signed in April 2018 a bilateral agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation that will provide Alberta with almost \$340 million in federal funding for affordable housing from 2019 to 2028.

**WHEREAS** according to the Government of Alberta's Economic Multiplier Analysis, every \$1 invested in building affordable housing creates \$1.74 in total economic output;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Alberta's capital investments in affordable housing are projected to significantly decline between 2020 to 2023, while the need for supporting Alberta's most vulnerable populations is expected to increase throughout the COVID-19 public health crisis;

**WHEREAS** the purpose of municipalities are to develop and maintain safe and viable communities, and provide services and facilities that are necessary as established through Alberta's *Municipal Government Act*; and local residents, businesses, and communities are expressing concerns to their municipalities about the negative impact that homelessness is having on both individuals experiencing homelessness and the broader community;

**WHEREAS** growing demands for affordable housing cannot be achieved by any single order of government, but municipalities continue to work in partnership with a wide range of private and non-profit providers to help develop, manage and maintain the supply of affordable housing;

**IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association advocate to the Government of Alberta to:

- Invest immediately in the development of new affordable housing units as a means to create jobs, stimulate the economy, maximize the funding that can be leveraged from the Government of Canada, and support those most vulnerable to the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Invest immediately in the cost effective health and support services needed to help those with complex needs get housed and stay housed, resulting in a visible reduction in homelessness and a drastic savings in health, justice, and law enforcement costs.
- Introduce mandatory operation guidelines for all emergency shelters in order to maximize utilization rates through consideration of design and safety best practices and reduce social disorder related to shelter practices and people sleeping outside. These guidelines should address the challenges and barriers that people sleeping outside face when trying to access shelter services, such as the lack of continuous stay options, storage space for personal belongings, accommodation for pets and couples, inappropriate or insensitive cultural practices, fear of violence and for personal safety, and inconsistent barring practices.

**BACKGROUND**

The federal, provincial and municipal governments have had traditional roles in the provision of services in their jurisdictions. However in recent decades, there has been increasing overlap and greater complexity through the transfer or assumption of responsibilities to municipalities without the resources to support them. An example is affordable housing programs that have traditionally been provided and funded by

higher-order governments (provincial and federal), but are now seeing greater required involvement by municipalities.

Municipalities are committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing for vulnerable populations and supporting homeless populations with complex needs (which may include shelter options, bridge housing, modular housing and permanent supportive housing), while recognizing that this requires the strategic and coordinated actions of a number of active partners including the federal and provincial governments, municipalities, non-profit developers, contracted social service agencies, and private sector builders.

Municipalities further recognize that increasing the supply of affordable housing and providing all the necessary homelessness supports cannot be sustained by any single order of government or organization, as this requires dedicated, and increased sources of funding, which must be provided by all orders of government.

The Government of Alberta's *2020-23 Capital Plan Details by Ministry* unfortunately shows a declining investment planned across a number of Ministry of Seniors and Housing capital affordable housing portfolios (Planning for Affordable Housing; Family and Community Housing Development and Renewal; Indigenous Housing Capital Program; New Housing Supply; Preservation; and Seniors Housing Development and Renewal). From a total of \$215.7M in 2020-21, down to \$123.1M in 2021-22, and down further to \$77.9M in 2022-23.

On February 28, 2020, AUMA released its [Preliminary Analysis of the Government of Alberta's 2020 Budget](#) which included the following comments regarding Affordable Housing:

***“AUMA is very concerned to see significant cuts to capital investment in affordable housing for both the development of new units, as well as the maintenance and repair of existing units. Addressing Alberta's lack of affordable housing is a priority for municipalities. In addition to stimulating employment and economic growth, capital investment in affordable housing yields long-term savings for all levels of government due to decreased use of health services, police and justice services, child welfare, and other services such as homeless shelters, income supports, and addictions and mental health supports.”***

On June 29, 2016, AUMA advanced the following [submission](#) to inform the provincial affordable housing strategy, which stated the following which is as relevant today as it was four years ago:

***“Action is needed to address the critical shortage in the provincial supply of affordable housing. In addition to direct investment, the province can use its financial and policy levers to develop strategies and incentives that will increase***

***the availability of affordable housing options through renovation, repair, and new construction of market housing, affordable housing, social housing, and permanent supportive housing units”.***