

Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

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Alberta budget fails vulnerable people in need of housing

At a time when money is gushing into the Alberta treasury, the 2022-2023 budget ignores the people with little economic capacity, and the challenges they face.

“This should be the time to make a substantial investment to begin recovery from many years of neglect in public funding for the right to adequate housing,” says Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) president Laura Murphy.

“Instead the budget talks vaguely about yet another 10-year strategy for housing. with ominous hints of turning over units in the current portfolio to private business. But when it comes to actual dollars, large cuts are planned, including nearly 50 percent in assistance to the Alberta Social Housing Corporation,” Murphy notes.

Alberta currently faces a shortfall of tens of thousands of units of non-market affordable housing, resulting in long waiting lists and growing homelessness. Tens of thousands of Albertans live in core housing need, meaning they are paying more than they can afford for their housing, and the housing they have may be inadequate and inappropriate. Currently in Edmonton over 6200 households¹ are on wait lists for affordable community housing and over 4400 households are on wait lists for the rent assistance benefit.

Without adequate housing, temporary shelter is the only way to prevent the grave dangers of homelessness. The budget also proposes major cuts to funding in this area, with a reduction of one-third from the 2021-2022 year.

“Not only does the budget utterly fail to ensure housing or shelter is funded, it continues a tight-fisted approach to income support programs that include funds so recipients can afford to rent.” says Murphy. “The tiny increases proposed for these programs do not begin to keep up with population increases and inflation.”

While the federal government has enacted legislation to provide for the progressive right to adequate housing, Alberta has taken no action to deliver similar commitments. Legislation passed in the last session of the Legislature (Bill 78- Housing Amendment Act) opened the door for the transfer of housing currently owned by the province to private businesses. The Alberta fiscal plan released with the budget declares support to deliver housing to an additional 25 000 households over the next decade, but the small funding announced in the budget for 2022-2023 would not allow such a result.

“If Alberta committed money to the National Housing Strategy’s bilateral agreement at the same level as other provinces, there would be hundreds of millions of dollars more flowing to us from the federal government for housing, but the miserly Alberta commitment also denies the province this federal money,” Murphy notes.

“Premier Jason Kenney talks about good times being back in Alberta, but for those people who have inadequate- or no- housing, these cheery words ring hollow. The many threats to a safe, healthy, secure life created by inadequate housing continue to threaten them,” concludes Murphy.

¹ As of December 2021, Cividia (one of our non-market housing providers) had 6,235 households on their wait list for [community housing](#):

“Cividia provides approximately 4,500 homes in the Community Housing program. In this subsidized housing program, tenants pay an affordable rent amount, either 30 per cent of their adjusted gross monthly household income or the core shelter rates if they are receiving Income Support.”

Background

Estimates, p. 48

AB Child & Family Benefit- \$345 million (21-22), \$335 million (22-23)

Estimates, p.52

2.2 Income support for people working- \$335 million (20-21), \$332.6 million (21-22), \$369.7 million (22-23)

2.3 Income support for people with barriers- \$248.8 million (20-21), \$232.2 million (21-22), \$237.4 million (22-23)

3.2 AISH- 12880.6 million (20-21), 1293.3 million (21-22), 1337.1 million (22-23)

5.2 Homeless shelters- \$94 million (20-21), \$73.4 million (21-22), \$48.7 million (22-23)

5.4 Homeless support outreach services- \$100.8 million (20-21), \$89.8 million (21-22), \$89.6 million (22-23)

Estimates, p. 187:

3.3 Assistance to AB Social Housing Corp.- \$112.4 million (20-21), \$119.9 million (21-22), \$102.3 million (22-23)

4.2 Capital payments to AB Social Housing Corp.- \$91/6 million (21-22), \$45.9 million (22-23)

About ECOHH

The Edmonton Coalition Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) was created in 1986. Membership consists of social profit organizations and businesses, as well as individuals. Its mandate includes education and advocacy on housing security, including homelessness and affordable housing.

ECOHH led the development of the public art sculpture honouring the importance of housing, located in Homeless Memorial Plaza, north of City Hall on 103A Avenue and has presented an annual memorial service for people who have died because of housing challenges in their lives, since 2006.

ECOHH's key messages are:

- Decent affordable housing is essential for all people.
- Good homes for all create strong healthy communities.
- Housing is more than four walls and a roof-- it's homes, support, and community.
- Lack of decent affordable housing has negative consequences for everyone.
- In Alberta we have the resources, knowledge, and skills to make sure everyone has a decent place to call home in a strong healthy community.