

Alberta's Opportunity

BEYOND THE SHELTER

POLICIES TO END HOMELESSNESS IN ALBERTA

The Alberta Liberal Caucus

is committed to ending homelessness.

Why Homelessness is Rising

Lack of affordable housing. Alberta's tight rental market has significantly increased homelessness in Alberta. Those on fixed or low incomes simply cannot find or afford suitable living accommodation.

Poverty. Too many Albertans, including families, have no income at all. Many Albertans simply do not have wages adequate to afford housing in Alberta's increasingly expensive housing market.

Lack of mental health and addictions treatment services. There are not enough mental health facilities, beds or programs to successfully deal with the demand.

Shortage of transitional housing. Alberta needs transitional housing models that will provide people with the necessary support services and employment opportunities to help them attain true independence.

Aboriginal Homelessness. There is no specific program with adequate funding to address the overrepresentation of aboriginal people who are homeless.

Our robust economy has created a population boom that has put enormous pressure on housing and overwhelmed human services. The response has been to open more emergency shelters every year — but warehousing people is not the answer.

Everybody needs a home. It's time to move beyond the shelter.

The Alberta Liberal Caucus plan will increase the supply of affordable housing, provide direct support to the hard to house, and support community plans to end homelessness.



alberta**liberal**caucus

SIX STEPS TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

Implement the Alberta Liberal Caucus Affordable Housing Policy

Implementing our plan for affordable housing, “Everybody Needs a Home,” is the first and most important step to take to end homelessness.

While affordable housing alone will not end homelessness, we cannot end homelessness without affordable housing. Alberta’s affordable housing crisis can be solved through a well-developed strategy that attacks the problem on several fronts simultaneously: tenant protection, development of secondary suites, incentives for builders, provision of land, social housing and other initiatives. Read the full policy at www.albertaliberalcaucus.com or call (780) 427-2292 for a copy.

Create the Director of Housing and Human Services

An Alberta Liberal government would create a new Director of Housing and Human Services to co-ordinate and assist municipalities in implementing community plans to end homelessness, starting with the cities where the housing shortage is most acute: Calgary, Edmonton, Fort MacMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

Moving Beyond the Shelter

The cities of Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge and Edmonton already have or are working on ten year plans to end homelessness. An Alberta Liberal government will support those plans and share best practices with Alberta communities that have yet to develop ten year plans of their own.

Guiding Principles

- All homeless or near-homeless Albertans require adequate, affordable housing;
- All people need enough money to live on (employment income, adequate social assistance or pension);
- Some people need support services (for mental and physical health, addictions, or simply to recover from a long period of homelessness).



The Director will be given the authority to lead all provincial initiatives and cross-ministry working groups on ending homelessness, and will provide municipalities with provincial resources to put plans into action. The Director will develop an archive of best practices to shorten the planning process for individual communities.

The Director will also track the progress of plans initiated by cities and towns, enabling the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to assess the specific impact of ongoing initiatives.

Plan for Action with Stakeholders

The Director of Housing and Human Services will call together municipalities, homeless service providers, local affordable housing developers, interested corporate partners and NGOs such as the Alberta Housing Coalition for a planning session with these objectives:

- Analyze the resources and systems changes needed in order to achieve the objectives of municipal plans;
- Identify and overcome barriers to successfully achieving those objectives;
- Develop a best practices toolkit for municipalities;
- Coordinate and streamline access to funding, support the development of new initiatives and overcome barriers to implementation.

We will establish a permanent committee of stakeholders to drive the plan forward. Timelines for the completion of objectives will be firm.

Housing First: Implement Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing provides stable housing plus comprehensive support services for people who are chronically homeless because of disabilities or other substantial barriers to housing stability.

The province will work with municipalities to make permanent supporting housing a reality. Those municipalities that decide they want to incorporate permanent supportive housing into their ten year plans will apply to the province for matching funding.

An Alberta Liberal government would support the rapid implementation of permanent supportive housing in Calgary and Edmonton. Smaller centres would follow.

Improve Outreach Services to Homeless People

In 2006, Alberta committed \$16 million for innovative pilot projects to provide direct outreach support to individuals who are chronically homeless. We will determine their effectiveness and fund programs that work. Programs that work will receive the funding they need.

Municipalities will be encouraged to create 24-hour, 7-day-a-week outreach support teams.

Finally, in order to achieve optimal delivery of outreach services, wages must be raised to help recruit and retain qualified professionals.

Prevent Today's At-Risk Children and Youth from Becoming Homeless

We need services that not only get people off the streets now, but also prevent young people from becoming homeless. The Director of Housing and Human Services will have the authority to ensure that vital government ministries work together to get the job done: Education, Health, Justice, Solicitor General, Children's Services and Municipal Affairs and Housing. These ministries can help address homelessness via:

- **Early Intervention.** Through programs like Head Start and junior kindergarten, trained educators will work in cooperation with other professionals to give children the early resources they require.

- **Community Schools.** Bring agencies on-site to assist with services such as literacy, counselling, community health and after-school activities to help vulnerable young people.
- **Feeding Children.** Establish hot lunch programs in schools where required, as outlined in our "Ending Student Hunger" plan, available at www.albertaliberalcaucus.com or by calling (780) 427-2292.
- **Helping At-Risk Parents.** Establish programs to teach parenting skills and deliver services to meet parents' needs.
- **Asset Building.** This crime prevention model is recognized as the best way to give young people the tools they need to make positive choices early on. This method has been proven to reduce both crime and homelessness.
- Immediately Adopt *Recommendations 1 and 25* of the *Safe Communities Task Force*: Significantly increase the number of treatment beds for alcoholism, drug addiction and a dual diagnosis of both mental illness and drug addiction; and Expand access to mental health services and treatment.

Investing in Albertans

A 2007 Chumir Foundation study estimated that homelessness costs Canada between \$4.5 and \$6 billion per year, due to increased use of hospitals and emergency services. A much smaller investment in people can save most of this money — but more importantly, it's the right thing to do. In a province with as much potential as Alberta, we have an obligation to ensure that everybody has a home.

