

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**OF**

**BACKGROUND REPORTS #1, #2 AND #3**

**CITY OF EDMONTON**

**LOW-INCOME AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING STRATEGY**

**2001-2011**

PREPARED FOR: INTERDEPARTMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON LOW-INCOME  
AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

PREPARED BY: COMMUNITY SERVICES, CITY OF EDMONTON

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND REPORTS #1, #2 AND #3 FOR LOW-INCOME AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING STRATEGY 2001-2011

## INTRODUCTION

On May 30, 2000, City Council received as information the draft City of Edmonton Corporate Business Plan 2001-2003. Under the "Services to People" responsibility area, the Plan identifies several Key Strategies to be developed in the period 2001-2003. One of those Strategic Initiatives states that the Administration will:

*"Review and clearly define by the end of 2001 its view of the responsibilities of the three levels of government and non-government service providers. The first initiative for this review will be to develop for Council's consideration a social housing policy that will define the City's role in low-income and special needs housing over the next decade. This policy will be developed with input from the industry, community and government stakeholders."*

Community Services, as lead department for this Corporate Initiative, has developed three background reports to provide background information leading to the development of a long-term Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Strategy for Edmonton.

- **Report #1 - Report on Current City Involvements in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing** has been prepared assuming an understanding of current City involvements relating to Low-Income and Special Needs Housing is a necessary starting point for defining the City's future role in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing over the next decade;
- **Report #2 – Report on Demographic and Housing Market Conditions and Trends in the City of Edmonton** has been prepared to provide information on changes in Edmonton's overall population and in the populations of households assumed to require Low-Income and Special Needs Housing. Also provided is a section on the relationship between the quality of life and affordable, physically-adequate and suitably-sized housing, with a reasonable security of tenure;
- **Report #3 – Report on Public Policy Conditions and Trends, Low-Income and Special Needs Housing** has been prepared to provide information on conditions and trends in policy, programs, legislation and funding relating to Low-Income and Special Needs Housing of the Federal and Alberta Governments, the Capital Region, the City of Edmonton and community-based agencies. These conditions and trends are expected to influence the City's role in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing over the next decade.

N.B.: The definitions of the four types of Low-Income and Special Needs Housing, namely:

- "Housing [and other services] for the Homeless"
- "Supportive Housing"
- "Social Housing"; and
- "Affordable Housing"

are provided in Appendix 1 on Page 18 of this report (Glossary of Key Terms).

# BACKGROUND REPORT #1 – CURRENT CITY INVOLVEMENTS IN LOW-INCOME AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

Current City involvements in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing, including those mandated through legislation, regulation or approved Council motion, are presented under the following categories:

1. Information, Organization and Advocacy
2. Housing Community Co-ordination
3. Policy and Planning
4. Regulations/Standards Development and Enforcement
5. Funding and Financing
6. Taxation and Fee Reduction
7. Program Delivery and Administration
8. Provision of Land and/or Buildings
9. Ownership of Land and/or Buildings
10. Housing Project Development
11. Housing Property Management
12. Other Involvements

Examples of current City of Edmonton involvements in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing under each category are:

## 1. Information, Organization and Advocacy

- Generating and disseminating information (e.g. *City of Edmonton Housing Agencies Inventory 2000; Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton*);
- Organizing partnerships (e.g. Edmonton Homelessness Task Force; Safe Housing Committee);
- Fostering community leadership (e.g. Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing; Edmonton Housing Trust Fund);
- Ensuring policies and practices within and across City departments are supportive of meeting priority needs (e.g. Community Services' inter-branch Housing Team); and
- Advocating changes to Federal and Provincial policy, programs, legislation and funding to increase the capacity of the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors to meet identified needs (e.g. Federation of Canadian Municipalities [FCM] *National Housing Policy Options Paper*).

## 2. Housing Community Co-ordination

- Organizing the community in an action-oriented process to deal with housing issues through social and community worker staff supports (e.g. support the "Third Stage Housing Project" in partnership with HomeEd to meet transitional housing needs of women with children leaving abusive relationships);
- Supporting greater involvement of low-income tenants in the management of their housing (e.g. support to the "Social Housing Advisory Committee" [SHAC]); and
- Providing public education to change public attitudes and build support for methods to meet priority housing needs (e.g. support to the Edmonton Coalition on Homelessness [ECOH]).

### 3. Policy and Planning

- Assessing priority target group needs (e.g. *Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2000-2003*);
- Supporting short and long-term plans to meet identified priority needs (e.g. Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing; City of Edmonton Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Strategy 2000-2010);
- Assessing the impacts of policy, program, funding and legislative changes on local capacity to meet priority needs (e.g. *A Housing Policy Framework for Alberta, Family and Special Purpose Housing*); and
- Supporting the development of City plans that identify social needs and contain recommendations to alleviate those needs (e.g. Boyle Street/McCauley Area Redevelopment Plan, *Edmonton Social Plan*).

### 4. Regulations/Standards Development and Enforcement

- Enforcing building and fire safety standards to regulate the maintenance and repair of older, multiple unit rental housing and the demolition of that housing if required (e.g. Derelict Housing);
- Co-ordinating interjurisdictional inspections and minimum health and fire safety standards enforcement for multiple occupancy rental housing (e.g. Development Compliance Branch, Safe Housing Committee);
- Supporting changes to land and building development standards and zoning regulations to permit specific opportunities for low-cost, affordable housing (e.g. a mix of lot sizes and housing types; mixed commercial/residential developments; convertible housing; reduced parking; increased density);
- Enabling affordable housing built-forms (e.g. secondary suites; Limited Group Homes); and
- Providing for co-ordination and standardization of development and building permit applications processing to reduce time for permit review and approvals (e.g. *POSSE* computerization).

### 5. Funding and Financing

- Partnering with other agencies and levels of government to ensure that City funding and other contributions are accompanied by significant resource commitments from non-City sources (e.g. Edmonton Housing Trust Fund; increased emergency shelter spaces during the winter months);
- Funding municipal debt and operating subsidy obligations/agreements for existing Social Housing projects (e.g. Greater Edmonton Foundation; Capital Region Housing Corporation);
- Administering Council's "Low-Income Housing Capital Assistance Program" (LIHCAP) to increase the supply of Low-Income Affordable Housing;
- Providing capital grants to assist with the development of downtown housing; and
- Providing Family and Community Support Service (FCSS) and Community Investment Grant (CIG) funds to community agencies concerned with shelter needs (e.g. Boyle Street Community Services Co-operative; Operation Friendship Housing Society).

### 6. Taxation and Fee Reduction

- Providing property tax exemptions for specific Low-Income and Special Needs Housing (e.g. subsidized seniors Lodge accommodation managed by the GEF; some subsidized seniors apartment housing; "handicapped homes" and "group homes" providing 24-hour supervised care).

## 7. Program Delivery and Administration

- Delivering specific programs (e.g. Federal Government Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program [RRAP]; Safe Housing Program; responses to “Derelict Housing”);
- Providing administrative supports to The City of Edmonton Non-Profit Housing Corporation (HomeEd); and
- Appointing members to community-based housing boards (e.g. Greater Edmonton Foundation; Capital Region Housing Corporation; Edmonton Housing Trust Fund).

## 8. Provision of Land and/or Buildings

- Purchasing/acquiring land or buildings; and
- Providing, through sale or lease, surplus City-owned properties for Low-Income Housing development. (e.g. Habitat for Humanity; WINGS [Women In Need Growing Stronger] of Providence Society).

## 9. Ownership of Land and/or Buildings

- Maintaining existing Social Housing property inventory records, administer leases, administer property management agreements;
- Administering lease agreements for City-owned land to various private, non-profit and continuing housing co-operative projects where sponsors paid 50% of market value for land plus full servicing costs (60 year term, 15 year renewal);
- Owning land and improvements for 1,031 “Community Housing” units;
- Owning land, under long-term lease to the Province, for an estimated 2,635 Provincially-owned “Community Housing” units in Edmonton.

## 10. Housing Project Development

The City was a direct developer of “Public Housing” in the 1970s. However, since 1979 Low-Income and Special Needs Housing in Edmonton has been developed by not-for-profit and for-profit agencies rather than through direct City action. In 1979, the City established its own “Public Non-Profit” Housing Organization, the Edmonton Non-Profit Housing Corporation (HomeEd), to develop and make available housing owned by the Corporation to meet these needs. Since the formation of HomeEd, the City has remained the Corporation’s sole shareholder. Neither HomeEd nor the City is currently directly involved in the development of Low-Income and Special Needs Housing.

## 11. Housing Property Management

The City of Edmonton approaches the property management of its housing stock in two distinct ways: municipally administered and through Social Housing Management Bodies. In the case of HomeEd, and other residential properties which the City owns and rents at market value prior to redevelopment for alternate municipal use (e.g. road widening), property management is the responsibility of the City Administration through both municipal and contracted staff. For the estimated 3,665 Social Housing units for which the City of Edmonton is the owner, in whole or in part, the City has historically delegated the property management of those units to the Greater Edmonton Foundation (for Seniors Housing) and to the Capital Region Housing Corporation (for Family Housing).

## 12. Other City Involvements

There are many current City involvements which have been developed to improve the quality of life of lower-income Edmontonians. Examples include employment initiatives (e.g. Beverly Towne Job Fair), food initiatives (e.g. Community Gardens) and program and funding initiatives (e.g. Out-of-School Care Program, Fee Reduction Program). However, this report references

only those current City involvements that have a direct relationship on meeting housing and homeless needs.

Examples of City involvements under this category are:

- Providing 'Donate-a-Ride' fundraising Program to enable purchase of bus tickets for disadvantaged Edmontonians';
- Administering Edmonton Transit Boarding Policy requiring the collection of fares except in cases where an 'emergent need' is demonstrated;
- Providing Seniors' Bus Pass price reduction;
- Providing cultural (including Aboriginal) awareness/sensitivity training;
- Providing Edmonton Police Service responses to issues related to homeless and housing issues, including:
  - Supporting the work of the Safe Housing Committee;
  - Assisting with inspector access to substandard housing;
  - Organizing information workshops for residential property owners and managers to not allow rental properties to become hazards to the communities in which they are located leading to certification of properties as "Crime Free Buildings";
  - Supporting methods, such as the "Our Voice The Spare Change Magazine" initiative, to reduce citizen complaints to panhandlers in the downtown core; and;
  - Working together with community groups in conducting community safety audits using Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

## **BACKGROUND REPORT #2 – DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSING MARKET CONDITIONS AND TRENDS IN THE CITY OF EDMONTON**

### **SOCIO/DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

#### Growing City and Regional Population

- Overall City population to grow an average of 1.5% (9,000 persons) per year to 2005;
- Net in-migration to range from 5,000 to 6,000 people per year for the City and between 7,000 and 8,400 per year for the Edmonton region. Net migration is expected to have a direct and immediate effect on rental housing demand.

#### Aging City Population

- A significant aspect of the City's population to 2005 will be the increased number of persons aged 75 years and older.

#### Rapidly Growing Aboriginal Population

- By 2016, Edmonton's Aboriginal population to increase to 41,000, a 62% increase over the 1996 population of 25,280 (an expected annual growth rate [3.1%] more than double the anticipated growth rate of the overall City population [1.5%]).

#### Special Needs Populations

- Growing Special Needs Population including mentally-ill persons, individuals with addictions, women with or without children fleeing violence, homeless/street youth, prostitutes and transgender persons, seniors and persons with disabilities.

### More Households with Incomes Below the Poverty Line

- In 1995, 26% of Edmonton's population had an income below the "Low-Income Cut-Off". The comparable figure for 1991 was 23%.
- 62% of Aboriginal people and 61% of lone-parent families have incomes below this poverty line for their household size.

## **HOUSING MARKET CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

### Continued Economic Growth

- Growing local economy expected to increase demand for a wide range of goods and services from both the private and public sectors (including housing);
- Net in-migration expected to cause the City unemployment rate to remain above 5.6%.

### Shrinking Market and Low-Income Affordable Rental Housing Supply

- Conversion of former rental units to condominium tenure and rental demolitions with considerably less replacement of that stock at any rent level is resulting in a declining overall rental housing supply;
- Low interest rates and increasing market rental rates likely result in continued trend to homeownership among those who can afford it.

### Significant Number of Rental Units in Need of Repair

- Estimated 5,770 multiple rental units (i.e. in high-rise or low-rise apartments, semi-detached dwellings and row housing) and 530 rooming house structures (containing an estimated 2,650 suites) in older neighbourhoods in need of major repair.

### Declining/Low Apartment Vacancies

- Edmonton's apartment vacancy rate has declined significantly over the past 5 years (from over 10% in 1995 to 1.4% in October 2000) and is expected to be less than 2% for the next few years, as positive net-migration to the region remains relatively strong;
- A vacancy rate of less than 3% is associated with upward pressure on apartment rental rates.

### Increasing Market Rental Rates

- From 1997 and 1999, average market rents for apartment units in Edmonton increased by more than 11%. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation forecasts a 5% increase in 2000 and a further 5% in 2001, with average apartment vacancies expected to be below 2% (1.4% to 1.8%) in those years.

### Growing Number and Proportion of Households Paying a Substantial Portion of their Income on Shelter

- A major indicator of growth of Low-Income and Special Needs Housing demand is the number of renter households paying more than 30% of income on rent. In Edmonton, this number increased by over 2,600 from 1991 to 1995 – from 42,740 (34.7% of all renter households) in 1991 to 45,385 (40.2% of all renter households) in 1995;
- The number of those households paying more than 50% of income on rent grew by nearly 2,000 from 1991 to 1995. This increase was from 18,845 (15.3% of all renter households) in 1991 to 20,870 (18.5% of all renter households) in 1995
- While Shelter Allowances were increased in 1999, "Assured Assistance" and "Transitional Assistance" rates are still below median rents in the Edmonton for all unit types.

### Adverse Economics for Production of New Low-Income Affordable Rental Housing

- The economic cost of producing new rental housing stock in Edmonton exceeds the average market rental rates for such housing;
- New construction requires rents of \$1.00 to \$1.20 per square foot, depending on product amenities. This “economic rent” (e.g. approximately \$990 for a new 2-bedroom apartment unit) is well above the current median monthly market rent for a comparable unit (\$612) in Edmonton. With an economic/market rent “gap” across all rental unit types, providers are unable to recover their costs from median monthly rents, let alone provide rents affordable to Low-Income households. Contributing factors include the lack of equity to enable private mortgage financing, taxation policies (e.g. GST) not conducive to the creation of this type of housing, high utility and other rates.
- The only new rental housing being produced requires rents of over \$1,200 per month, well beyond the reach of households with poverty line incomes or less.

### Rapidly Growing Demand for Low-Income Housing

- Demand for “Rent-Geared-to-Income” family housing managed by the Metis Urban Housing Corporation, Amisk Housing Association and Capital Region Housing Corporation has quadrupled in the past three years;
- In this time, minimum wait times for that housing have increased from six months to one year to between 1 to 3 years.

### Significant Demand for Special Needs Housing

- Factors relating to the increasing demand for Special Needs Housing include:
  - Changes to health care policy, resulting in moving care to where people live rather than moving people to institutions-based care;
  - The shift away from institutions-based care occurring before the community, residential-based care system has been sufficiently developed to meet the needs of persons requiring this care;
  - The shift away from institutions-based care resulting in persons with Special Housing Needs facing care expenses previously included in the “institutional care” budget (resulting in many having less money available to meet their housing needs).
- The December 1999 *Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Colloquium* was the first all-sector stakeholder consultation sponsored by the City to lead to the development of the long-term City Strategy on Low-Income and Special Needs Housing. The final report on the *Colloquium* observed housing stability to be an important factor in the well being of many Special Needs populations. It stated that in addition to needing physically-adequate, affordable and suitably-sized housing, these persons may require wheelchairs and other “equipment” and as such face unusual expenses related to their care requirements which previously would have been part of the “institutional care” budget. The *Colloquium* observed that under the restructured health care system, many such persons have less money available to meet their housing needs.

### Significant Homeless Population

- Homelessness affects many Edmontonians (over 1,100 observed homeless persons, with most reporting to be “Absolute Homeless” – with no residence at all and living on the streets);
- Edmonton has a diverse homeless population;
- Homelessness affects different people for different lengths of time;
- Most homeless conditions stem from a profound and sustained lack of positive choice options;
- Homeless solutions can reach far beyond the inner-city;

- Emergency shelters are important but not the sole response to the diversity of Edmonton's homeless needs; and
- Homeless needs in Edmonton are significantly linked to the lack of low-income affordable housing.

#### Neighbourhood and Community Concerns with Accepting Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Projects and Tenants

- The location of new Low-Income and Special Needs Housing is frequently subject to discrimination and "Not-In-My-Back-Yard" (NIMBY) attitudes.

#### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILING TO ACT**

In December 1999, the City sponsored the *Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Colloquium*, the first all-sector stakeholder consultation toward the development of a long-term City Housing Strategy. More than 60 persons from governments, the private sector, non-profit organizations, housing providers, aboriginal groups and tenants spent December 3, 1999 discussing and prioritizing issues the City should consider in developing its Strategy. The Report on the Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Colloquium December 1999 observed that "...without overstatement, failure to address these issues will have enormous consequences for the Edmonton community, such as:

- "A noticeable number of people left un-housed or housed inadequately leading to family conflict and despair";
- "The quantity and quality of accommodation available for rent will decrease and landlords increasingly reluctant to deal with the requirements of housing programs (e.g. Rent Supplement), either in terms of the paperwork or in terms of the income qualifications for tenants";
- "Costs to society far higher than any envisaged Social Housing programs. The stresses associated with overcrowding, living on the street, instability of housing arrangements, and struggling to allocate increased portions of income to housing needs will increase crime, health and social assistance costs, increase pressure on food banks and public and private services, and will decrease the general quality of life in the City";
- "Increasing frustration among people and organizations attempting to provide Low-Income and Special Needs Housing and existing organizations may eventually cease operations"; and
- "Opportunity lost to discover creative new approaches, which could provide leadership for Alberta and for Canada."

#### **THE RELATIONSHIP OF ADEQUATE, AFFORDABLE AND SUITABLE HOUSING TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE**

Housing that is affordable, suitably-sized, in a reasonable state of repair/operation, with a reasonable security of tenure, and which meets the special needs of its lower-income residents is much more than a "cost to government" and is much more than shelter. Such housing positively affects health and social well-being, alleviates child poverty and homelessness, meets the needs of particular population groups, stimulates the economy, and is a major aspect of personal and community development.

# BACKGROUND REPORT #3 – PUBLIC POLICY CONDITIONS AND TRENDS, LOW-INCOME AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

## FEDERAL POLICY CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

### Federal Social Housing Programs Devolution

For the past 30 years, the Government of Canada through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has been active in providing a range of “Market Housing” and “Social Housing” programs to meet housing needs in Edmonton. CMHC “Market Housing” Programs have included “National Housing Act [NHA] Mortgage Insurance” and the “Multiple Unit Residential Building [MURB]” Programs. CMHC “Social Housing” Programs have included the “Non-Profit”, “Urban Native” and “Residential Rehabilitation Assistance [RRAP]” Programs.

In 1993, the Federal Government (and many Provinces) announced the termination of funding for additional unit/subsidy commitments under existing “Social Housing” Programs, excluding the CMHC “On Reserve” Program. Funding extensions have since been granted for the RRAP Program. In March 1996, the Federal Government announced CMHC was phasing out its remaining role in Social Housing, except on Indian Reserves, and the existing CMHC-administered portfolio would be transferred to the Provinces and Territories.

While prior Social Housing unit commitments continue to be supported in operations and administration, the supply of additional Social Housing essentially ground to a standstill by 1995/96. A new Social Housing Agreement between the Governments of Canada and Alberta is under negotiation.

### Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ National Housing Policy Options Paper

In November 1998, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) *Big City Mayors Caucus* declared homelessness a “national disaster”. The Caucus called on the Federal Government to take immediate action, asked the FCM to put the critical issue of housing and homelessness on the agenda of the 1999 FCM Convention. At the June 1999 FCM Convention in Halifax, the draft *National Housing Policy Options Paper – A Call for Federal Action* was released. A motion for the Convention to adopt the Paper was unanimously approved.

*A Call for Federal Action* sets out the rationale for a renewed federal role as part of a national strategy involving all three orders of government, community agencies and the private sector to address growing homelessness and housing issues. The Paper was developed to provide a range of workable federal responses to address homeless and affordable housing needs under five categories:

1. *Investing Capital to Help Create New Affordable Housing;*
2. *Repairing and Preserving Existing Affordable Housing;*
3. *Housing as Part of Multi-Prong Strategies for Higher-Need Communities;*
4. *Encouraging Private Responses through Tax, Lending, and Philanthropy Policies; and*
5. *Continuing to Share the Cost of Ongoing Subsidies.*

### Federal Homelessness Funding Initiative

In December 1999, Minister Bradshaw announced the provision of \$753 million nationally over the next three years to address homelessness in communities across Canada, including \$305 million under the “Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI)”. The balance of the \$753 million was enhancements to existing programs, including RRAP. In June 2000, following

the Federal Government's identification of Edmonton as one of the cities most affected by homelessness, the Federal Government announced \$17 million as Edmonton's allocation over the next three years under SCPI, subject to:

- A matching \$17 million (in funds or in-kind resources) from "non-federal sources"; and
- Development and approval by the local community and the Government of Canada of a "community plan" to indicate the priority needs to which this funding should be directed.

#### Federal Infrastructure Program

In February 2000, the Government of Canada announced a 6-year, \$2.65 billion program to improve provincial highways and municipal infrastructure in cities and rural areas across Canada. "Affordable housing" was identified as an eligible expense for Program funding.

#### Federation of Canadian Municipalities' National Affordable Housing Strategy

The December 1999 Federal Homelessness Funding Initiative was the first new major funding announcement relating to homelessness and housing since Federal Social Housing Devolution began in 1993. Despite this, many municipalities responded that it fell significantly short of enabling the implementation of the FCM *National Housing Policy Options Paper*. Following the announcement, the FCM committed itself to develop a strategy to present to the Government of Canada to facilitate implementation of the most important parts of the *National Housing Policy Options Paper*.

*A National Affordable Housing Strategy*, released by the FCM in October 2000 sets out the need for immediate action on the part of government and the private sector to address the current crisis in affordable housing and homelessness. Specific actions call for:

1. Creation of 20,000 new or acquired affordable housing units and the rehabilitation of 10,000 additional affordable housing units per year over the next 10 years, through a "flexible capital grants program";
2. Changes to Federal tax and other regulations currently impeding private and non-profit provider development to attract new investment in affordable rental housing unit production; and
3. Provision, by Provincial and Territorial Governments, of income or shelter funding assistance (e.g. Shelter Allowances or Stacked Rent Supplements to Complement Capital Grants) for 40,000 additional households per year, for 10 years.

### **PROVINCIAL POLICY CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

#### Provincial Housing Supports – Family and Special Purpose Housing

Since the late 1960s, the Government of Alberta has played an active role in providing funding and related assistance for the construction and on-going management of housing to meet Low-Income and Special Housing Needs in Alberta communities, and in providing on-going operating subsidy assistance for that supply. At one point, the Province provided direct mortgage financing to deliver that supply. In addition to its extensive historic Federal/Provincial cost-shared Social Housing Program involvements, since the late 1970s a significant number of Social Housing units in Alberta (e.g. Seniors Self-Contained) were provided through unilateral Provincial funding.

Specific Provincial involvements in providing assistance for Low-Income and Special Needs Housing initially focused on "Public Housing" for families with dependent children. In Edmonton, these involvements occurred in three independent stages, preceded by the passage of the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act in 1968:

- Stage 1: "The Partnership Method" – 414 units owned by the Government of Canada;
- Stage 2: "City-Owned Units" – 1,030 units for which land and improvements are currently wholly owned by the City;
- Stage 3: "Provincially-Owned Units" – 2,350 units for which land is currently owned by the City and leased over 60 years to the Province and the improvements owned by the Province until land lease expiry, at which time, the land and improvements will revert to City ownership.

All of these "Community Housing" units continue to be available for occupancy today to low-income families through the Capital Region Housing Corporation (formerly the "Edmonton Housing Authority").

Additional major Provincial programs to increase the affordable housing supply were the Provincial Non-Profit Housing Program (Private and Public Non-Profit) and the Core Housing Incentive Program (CHIP).

Concurrent with the start of Federal Social Housing Devolution in 1993, the Government of Alberta substantially reduced its funding for additional Social Housing unit commitments. Since then, the only Provincial funding for additional Social Housing units has been provided for Private Landlord Rent Supplement units and the "Seniors Supportive Housing Incentive Program" announced in 2000.

#### Provincial Housing Supports – Seniors Housing

Since the 1960s, Provincial assistance for seniors housing focused on the Senior Citizen Self-Contained Housing Program, the Unique Homes Program, the Home Adaptation Program, the Senior Citizen Lodge Program and the Lodge Assistance Program.

A major Provincial policy change occurred following approval of the Alberta Housing Act in 1994. Prior to the new Act, the Province was responsible for paying debt retirement payments and a share of operating subsidies for seniors Lodge units based on annual Foundation operating deficits. Following the new Act, Provincial Lodge Assistance Program funding was reduced to a per diem of \$3.60 per occupied Lodge unit for Foundations with larger unit portfolios (e.g. the Greater Edmonton Foundation) and \$4.80 per occupied Lodge unit for Foundations with smaller Lodge portfolios. Under the new Act, the GEF is empowered to requisition the City for both the operating deficit and capital costs associated with Lodge accommodation.

#### Other Provincial Housing Supports

The Province, under Alberta Municipal Affairs (AMA) and since 1994, Alberta Community Development, has also provided assistance for the Rent Supplement Program, the Housing Registry Program, and the Home Adaptation Program (HAP).

#### Alberta Municipal Affairs' Management Agency Project

On July 1, 1994, the Alberta Housing Act came into effect. The new Act transformed the role of the Province from being a "service provider" and provider of "bricks and mortar" to a "service facilitator". The new Act enabled the establishment of "Management Bodies" and the concurrent consolidation of former "Management Agencies" and re-focused the Province's assistance away from direct program delivery and the development and ownership of housing to empowering Management Bodies to carry out those responsibilities. At this time, the Province also began selling its extensive land holdings purchased previously for housing development.

### Amended Alberta Urban Municipalities Association Housing Policy

The *Amended AUMA Housing Policy* was adopted at the AUMA 1998 Annual Convention following endorsement of the draft Policy by many Alberta municipalities, including Edmonton. The Policy recognized the:

- Importance of adequate and affordable housing to well-being, healthy communities and economic prosperity;
- Social, economic and environmental complexity of today's housing needs;
- Need for broad, preventive policies, including non-housing supports, promoting both long-term independence, conservation of the existing stock and use of non-residential buildings;
- Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments each having a role in ensuring the availability of accessible, adequate and affordable housing, and that each should act in consultation and co-operation with the others; and
- Need to consider the ongoing potential for private and not-for-profit sector agencies to contribute to the achievement of housing objectives.

A major AUMA Housing Policy observation was that the Federal and Provincial governments ought to be the major provider of funding to meet Low-Income and Special Housing needs (including funding for the provision of required non-housing support services).

### Alberta Urban Municipalities Association Report: An Agenda to Create Solutions

With a non-committal Provincial Government response to the approved *AUMA Amended Housing Policy*, in February 1999 the AUMA Housing Task Force prepared a short-term strategy to address housing issues documented in the approved AUMA Housing Policy. Major recommendations of that document, titled *An Agenda to Create Solutions*, included that the Government of Alberta establish a "Premier's Task Force on Housing" to develop a comprehensive provincial strategy to address affordable housing and that the Government work with municipalities to develop workable, affordable solutions to provincial housing problems.

### Recent Provincial Funding and Policy Changes

In 2000, the Honourable Stan Woloshyn, Minister of Community Development announced the "Seniors Supportive Housing Incentive Program" (SSHIP) to provide \$12 million in grants intended as capital funding for proposals from seniors housing foundations and Management Bodies able to raise the capital for new project development. To February 2001, the Province approved four projects in Edmonton involving the provision or conversion of 261 units to meet a range of seniors supportive housing and long-term care needs. In 2000, Minister Woloshyn also obtained a marginal increase in Alberta Rent Supplement funding.

In the fall of 2000, Alberta Community Development also released two policy documents relating to the future Provincial role in homelessness and "Housing for the Homeless", "Supportive Housing", "Social Housing" and "Affordable Housing":

- *Moving Forward...Homelessness Policy Framework: Implementation Strategy, July 2000;*  
and
- *A Housing Policy Framework for Alberta, Family and Special Purpose Housing, August 2000.*

### Moving Forward...Homelessness Policy Framework: Implementation Strategy

This Strategy outlines a three-year process to move forward the Provincial commitment to address the needs of Alberta's homeless people and the underlying factors contributing to homelessness. It coincides with the Federal requirement that "Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative" (SCPI) funds be matched with funds from non-Federal sources. As well

as committing the Province to provide \$3 million per year over the next three years (\$1 million per year to Edmonton), the Strategy provides guiding principles and objectives to support community-based decision-making and solutions through local partnerships among stakeholders.

#### *A Housing Policy Framework for Alberta, Family and Special Purpose Housing*

In September 2000, the Honourable Stan Woloshyn released this document to the Mayors of Alberta's seven largest municipalities. Its stated rationale is:

- Improved efficiencies and effectiveness in Social Housing program delivery;
- Improved flexibility to administer the existing Social Housing portfolio to meet locally-identified housing needs; and
- Allowing more local decision making while ensuring adequate financial and human resources to manage these programs.

Two of its major aspects are a proposal:

- To transfer the responsibility for the administration of Social Housing to the local level, subject to local level agreement to accept those additional responsibilities; and
- To transfer the ownership of Social Housing units/projects from the Province to the municipalities wherein those units/projects are located, provided those municipalities are willing to accept those additional responsibilities.

Implementation of the *Housing Policy Framework for Alberta Family and Special Purpose Housing* is currently under review by the City of Edmonton. Recent discussions between the City and the Province have confirmed that "Seniors Housing" will be included in that review.

#### Provincial Policy Regarding Income/Employment Supports

Under Alberta Human Resources & Employment, the Province provides Supports for Independence (SFI), Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Alberta Job Corps (Student Finance Board training, skills development), and operating per diem subsidies for emergency shelter spaces. Despite a major recommendation from the May 1999 Edmonton Homelessness Task Force *Call to Action* report calling for a review the Province's SFI Policy to ensure it provides sufficient support to meet recipients' housing needs, there has been no substantive change to Provincial policy in this regard.

#### Provincial Policy Regarding Health and Mental Health Supports

In the past decade, the Provincial approach to health and mental health service delivery has changed. The new approach includes more emphasis on co-ordination of programs and services across social support and health sectors and levels of government, movement to community-based care and the changed role of the Province from direct service provider to setter of legislation, policy and future direction.

In May 1997, the Province released the report *The Safety of Adults Living in Residential Care Options*. That report recommended developing broad-based standards for residential care options with the Province taking the lead, establishing a steering committee to develop the broad-based standards, and developing a voluntary registry of providers (to ensure individuals are not at further risk while the broad-based standards are being developed).

In August 1997, the Province committed to implement those recommendations. In May 1999, the Province reported that progress to date included an initial focus on facilities with three or fewer residents not licensed or funded and for which there are no standards. At that time, the Province

confirmed its commitment to develop the voluntary registry, enhance consumer knowledge and access to information and work with providers and the community to develop industry standards and strengthen licensing standards for facilities with four or more residents.

In June 1999, a Provincial reorganization resulted in the transfer of responsibility for group homes to the new Children's Services Department. Since then, the implementation of Provincial recommendations for a broad-based standards/requirements for residential care options and a voluntary registry have been suspended. Discussions with Children's Services Department representatives indicate the current Children's Services Minister, the Honourable Iris Evans, is committed to developing some standards for group homes.

### **EDMONTON REGION POLICY CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

The City of Edmonton and local governments in the Capital Region are currently engaged in a discussion regarding regional co-operation. The outcome of this may have an impact on any Strategy relating to the City's role in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing. The two primary Regional Authorities concerned with Low-Income and Special Needs Housing in the City of Edmonton are:

- The Capital Health Authority (CHA); and
- The Ma'Mowe Capital Region Child and Family Services Authority.

### **CITY POLICY CONDITIONS AND TRENDS**

For much of the past 30 years, the City of Edmonton has supported interjurisdictional efforts to meet low-income and special housing needs. These have included:

- Direct development by the City of Public Housing under the "Edmonton Community Housing Organization" (ECHO) in the late 1960s;
- Development of the Mill Woods Land Bank to increase housing affordability in the 1970s; and
- Establishment of The City of Edmonton Non-Profit Housing Corporation (HomeEd) in 1979.

More recent City partnerships to address these needs have involved the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, the Safe Housing Committee, the Edmonton Homelessness Task Force, and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund.

#### Plan Edmonton

*Plan Edmonton*, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan to guide Edmonton's growth and development into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, identifies three Key Strategies, which relate directly to the City's role in shelter/housing over the next decade:

- *"Work with those levels of government and agencies whose primary role is to contribute to individuals', families', and children's basic needs for shelter, food, clothing and safety."* (Strategy 3.5.8);
- *"Work with those levels of government and agencies whose primary role is to provide citizen access to adequate, safe and affordable housing."* (Strategy 3.5.9); and
- *"Promote safe living and working conditions through the enforcement of standards for health and safety in co-operation with the Capital Health Authority."* (Strategy 3.5.10).

#### Community Services' Integrated Service Strategy 2000-2010

The primary purpose of the *Integrated Service Strategy* (ISS) is to provide a comprehensive strategic vision to integrate the former Parks and Recreation Department, Community and Family

Services Department, and Office of the Commissioner of Housing into a new “Community Services Department” over the next decade. Specific actions that related directly to the Department’s intended future roles in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing are:

- Under the “Community Building” Theme:
  - *“Continue to link to federal and provincial housing, infrastructure and other people services, programs and initiatives.”*
- Under the “Focused Efforts” Theme:
  - *“Support the social housing policy review currently being undertaken for Council consideration.”*
  - *“With input from industry, community and government stakeholders, define the City of Edmonton’s role in low-income and special needs housing over the next decade to increase the supply of adequate and affordable housing.”*
  - *“Develop and maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date database of housing concerns in the City, and the available, local, regional and provincial resources to address housing needs.*
  - *“Initiate regular discussions with community organizations, the development industry, government, social service agencies and networks, city residents, and various housing committees and coalitions to review the state of housing in Edmonton.”*

#### Key City Council Resolutions and Motions Relating to Low-Income and Special Needs Housing

Major Council decisions relating to *the AUMA Housing Policy*, the Edmonton Homelessness Task Force *Call to Action* final report and recommendations and the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund are presented in Appendix 2 of Background Report #3 – Report on Public Policy Conditions and Trends.

The City has historically participated on interjurisdictional and intermunicipal committees and in direct discussions with elected and appointed officials at all three levels of government, to positively influence Federal and Provincial policy, programs, legislation and funding to meet Edmonton’s priority Low-Income and Special Housing Needs. In addition in recent years, Council has also supported many FCM and AUMA Resolutions prepared by the City Administration and other municipalities calling for changes to senior government policy in many areas relating to Low-Income and Special Needs Housing, including:

- Federal Social Housing devolution;
- Increased funding for the RRAP Program;
- Retention of Federal Social Housing Programs savings for Social Housing;
- Provincial leadership in addressing Low-Income Housing demand;
- Community-based residential care; and
- Calculation of Shelter Allowances.

#### Group Homes

The City supports “Limited Group Homes” as a permitted land use in both the existing and proposed Land Use Bylaw. The City regulates Provincial Safety Code (building and fire safety) requirements for such settings. The City view is that the development and enforcement of licensing standards for group homes and their monitoring through registries are a Provincial responsibility. The Provincial view is that the location and distribution of group homes are a municipal responsibility and that Provincial licensing standards are not about the location or distribution of group homes. The gap that exists between these two views has resulted in continuing pressure to respond to group home issues.

## **POLICY CONDITIONS AND TRENDS IN THE EDMONTON “COMMUNITY”**

Five major initiatives have occurred in the past decade at the “community level”, which are expected to influence the City’s role in Low-Income and Special Needs Housing in the period 2001 to 2011. These are:

1. The formation of the *Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing* in 1990;
2. The preparation of the *Call to Action* final report and recommendations of the *Edmonton Homelessness Task Force*, May 1999;
3. The development and approval of the *Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2000-2003*, November 2000;
4. The development and approval of the *Mandate and Membership Review* of the *Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing* in 2000; and
5. The establishment of the *Edmonton Housing Trust Fund* in 1999, and its recognition by the Federal and Alberta Governments and the City as the “community entity” to receive funding under the:
  - Federal Homelessness Funding Initiative;
  - Provincial “Homelessness Policy Framework – Implementation Strategy”; and
  - City’s approved 2000 budget allocation for “Homelessness”.

### **Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing**

The Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing (EJPCOH) is an interjurisdictional coalition of representatives from the three levels of government and non-government agencies to assess and prioritize housing needs and to develop short and long-term action plans to meet the highest priority needs.

### **Edmonton Homelessness Task Force**

In September 1998, the Ministers of Alberta Family and Social Services and Municipal Affairs and Mayor Bill Smith agreed to review the issue of homelessness in Edmonton through a jointly-chaired Task Force. Its May 1999 final *Call to Action* Report contained eight major recommendations under the categories of Additional Emergency Spaces, Housing Supply, Support Services, Leadership and Community Development, Policy Development and Funding.

### **Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2000-2003**

A prerequisite to receiving funding under the Federal Homelessness Funding Initiative and the Provincial *Homelessness Policy Framework – Implementation Strategy* was the preparation of a “community plan” to prioritize local strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness. In November 2000, the EJPCOH endorsed the \$49.3 million *Edmonton Community Plan on Homelessness 2000-2003*. The Plan has since been endorsed by the Federal and Provincial Governments and by City Council.

### **EJPCOH Mandate and Membership Review**

In September 2000, the EJPCOH endorsed the report: *Recommendations for Change: Mandate Review of the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing*. The report supported changes for the EJPCOH in the areas of mandate, governance, membership and roles.

### **Edmonton Housing Trust Fund**

The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF) was established in 1999 as an independent, non-profit organization to generate predictable, sustainable and dedicated funding to meet affordable housing needs in Edmonton.

## **GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS**

### **SOCIAL HOUSING**

- Housing provided to very low-income households capable of independent living, without a need for support services; and
- Which receives on-going government subsidies to enable rents to be provided on a “Geared-to-Income” basis.
- Typically the housing is publicly owned or owned by a non-profit housing corporation. However, funding may be provided by government to permit a household to reside affordably in a privately owned unit (Rent Supplement Program).

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

- Rental or ownership housing provided to households who have an affordability problem (pay in excess of 30% of their income on housing) and earn less than the median income, but are capable of independent living, without a need for support services; and
- That requires no on-going government subsidies.
- Includes housing built by the private, co-operative, non-profit and public sectors.

### **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

- A range of staged-transitional and permanent housing options for persons who, in addition to needing affordable, physically-adequate and accessible housing, also need “non-housing” support services (e.g. meals, housekeeping) to enable them to maintain occupancy in that housing. In these cases, providers may receive funding for support services from other sources.

### **HOUSING (AND OTHER SERVICES) FOR THE HOMELESS**

- Emergency and temporary shelters for persons who have no suitable, permanent residence.