

# SOCIAL POLICY

## COLLABORATIVE

## A PATH TO RECOVERY: GROWING ALBERTA'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK AND RECOVERY-ORIENTED SUPPORT SYSTEMS

### OVERVIEW

As of April 2021, more than 110,000 low-income Albertans live in affordable housing and more than 24,000 are on a waitlist. The last figure has doubled in the past decade. The rising costs of housing means waitlists for affordable housing continue to grow. Vulnerable people who require access to affordable housing often have complex health, mental health, and addictions issues greatly reducing their quality of life while also causing significant strain on public systems.

All levels of government have a responsibility to ensure that Alberta is adding to and maintaining its affordable housing supply while providing recovery-oriented supports to the people that need them most. Since the approval of the Government of Alberta's affordable housing strategy, Stronger Foundations, the demand for affordable housing has increased and initial capital funding allocations do not cover the costs to deliver on the commitment to add 13,000 new affordable housing units in the next 10 years, let alone maintain units within the existing inventory. A lack of affordable housing also means that shelters and housing programs are running at full capacity which contributes to further strain on front-line workers.

As a result, we are seeing growing impacts on the front-line workers that dedicated their lives to ensuring Albertans have a pathway to recovery. Higher acuity of vulnerable population demands increased support but is also contributing to higher levels of staff burnout and lacking access to staff to provide required supports. Further coordination and investments are required to ensure that affordable housing is aligned with appropriate supports that are required by thousands of Albertans.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Capital Investment** – Commit \$90 million each year to deliver on the province's affordable housing goals.
- 2 Resiliency** – Review operating agreements with service providers to better understand appropriate funding levels to address growing challenges facing vulnerable Albertans.
- 3 Resiliency** – Provide an immediate 10% increase and fully index existing operating agreements to inflation.

### ABOUT THE SOCIAL POLICY COLLABORATIVE

The Social Policy Collaborative (SPC) is a group of community organizations committed to working together to inform the development and implementation of public policy that improves the economic and social wellbeing of Albertans. This brief was supported by 17 organizations including: The Calgary Counselling Centre, The Calgary Food Bank, Carya Society of Calgary, Kindred, CUPS, Momentum, United Way of Calgary and area, Vibrant Communities Calgary, Women's Centre of Calgary, YW Calgary, The Alex Community Health Centre, Inn From The Cold, Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre Society, Trellis, McMan Youth Family & Community Services, Prospect Human Services, and Katrina Milaney with the Social and Structural Vulnerabilities Program of Research.

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#### RECOMMENDATION 1:



**CAPITAL INVESTMENT – COMMIT \$90 MILLION EACH YEAR TO DELIVER ON PROVINCE'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING GOALS.**

At a rate of \$280,000 - \$320,000 per unit, \$90 million per year would cover 25% of the current cost for new builds and could be leveraged for additional private sector investments. This 25% contribution would be an absolute minimum that would allow housing providers to access funding from other levels of government and may also be leveraged to attract private sector investments.

**RESULT:** This investment will increase the number of households that can be supported by Alberta's affordable housing system and aligns with Alberta's 2021 affordable housing strategy (Stronger Foundations).

#### RECOMMENDATION 2:



**RESILIENCY – REVIEW OPERATING AGREEMENTS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SECTOR TO BETTER UNDERSTAND APPROPRIATE FUNDING LEVELS TO ADDRESS GROWING CHALLENGES FACING VULNERABLE ALBERTANS.**

For some organizations it has been more than a decade since service agreements with the Government of Alberta have been adjusted. During this time, the maintenance backlog has not been fully addressed compounding the challenges of running these buildings on limited funding. A full review of the active operating agreements with service providers will provide insights on how funding should be increased for the sector that is facing growing demands and challenges.

**RESULT:** Operating funding that meets the needs of services and allows providers to identify and deliver the supports most needed by their client base, as opposed to continuous one-off funding.

#### RECOMMENDATION 3:



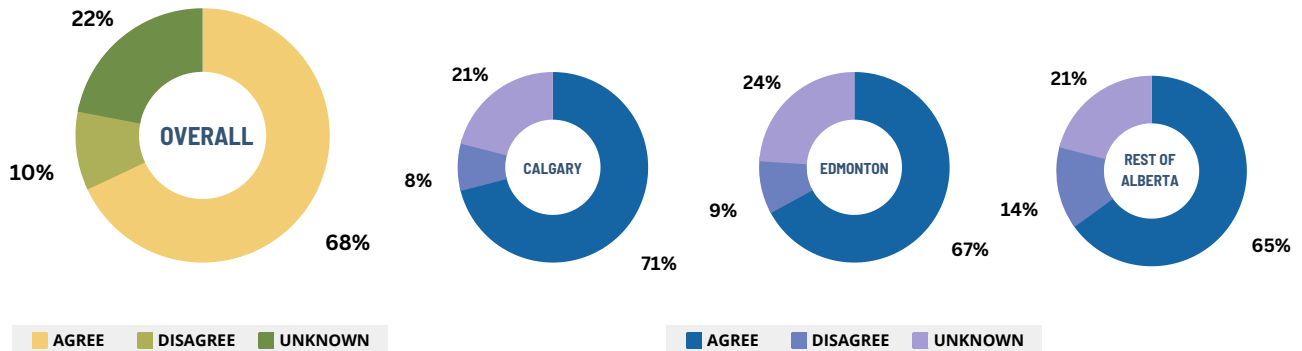
**RESILIENCY – PROVIDE AN IMMEDIATE 10% INCREASE AND FULLY INDEX EXISTING OPERATING AGREEMENTS TO INFLATION.**

Pending government's review of all current operating agreements, this immediate review and indexation will hold service providers over until the full review is completed. This increase will temporarily address rising inflation until a more accurate increase can be determined through the review.

**RESULT:** Service providers will be able to better attract, retain, and support staff to commensurate with increasing complexity of the population they work with. Housing providers will have minimum resources to provide programming most in demand by clients.

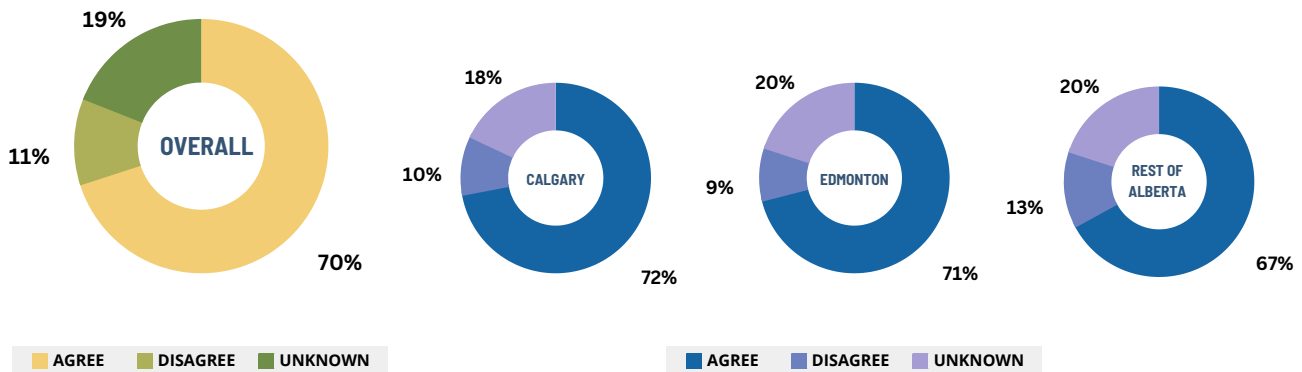
## Q1.

Research suggests that providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness enables individuals to then pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life once their necessities, in this case housing, have been addressed. **Knowing this, how much do you agree or disagree that providing housing should be foundational to government approach to addressing homelessness?**



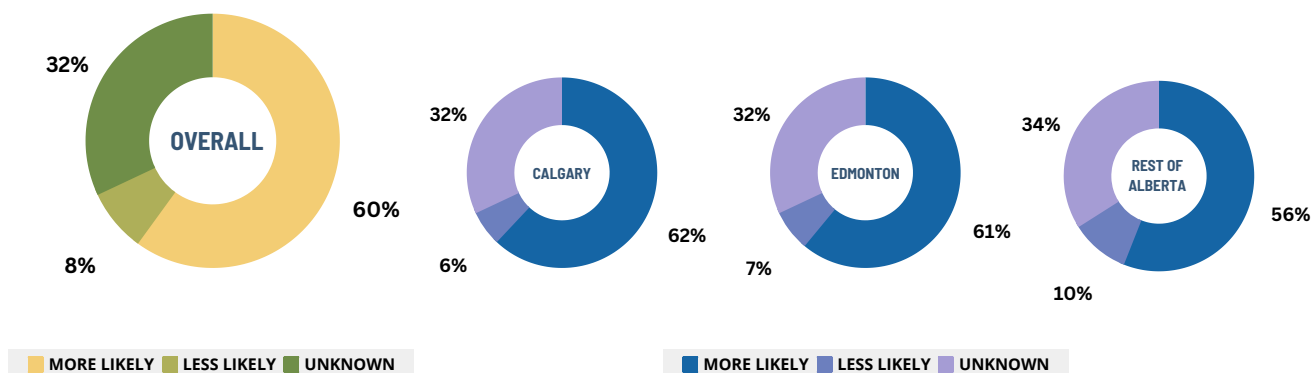
## Q2.

As you may know, as of April 2021, more than 110,000 low-income Albertans live in affordable housing and more than 24,000 are on a waitlist. The number of Albertans on the waitlist has doubled in the past decade. **How much do you agree or disagree that the Government of Alberta has an obligation to invest in building new affordable housing units to help end homelessness and ensure all households have a safe and affordable home in Canada?**



## Q3.

If a political party proposed concrete action to end homelessness, support those struggling with mental health and addictions, and build safe and affordable housing in Alberta, **how much more or less likely would you be to vote for that party over party who did not?**



A web survey was conducted among n1001 Albertans, 18 years of age or older, via Leger's online panel, LEO.

The data was collected from September 9 to 17, 2022.

Using data from the 2016 census, the results were weighted according to age, gender and region in order to ensure a representative sample of the population.