



ALBERTA

SENIORS, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Office of the Minister

Tyler Gandam
President
Alberta Municipalities
300, 8616-15 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T6E 6E6

Dear Tyler Gandam:

Thank you for your letter regarding Alberta Municipalities' resolutions 2023-B1, 2023-B2, 2023-B3, 2023-B6. As Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services (SCSS), I welcome the opportunity to respond and apologize for the delay in getting back to you.

1) ABmunis Resolution 2023-B1: Protection for Vulnerable Residential Tenants

Excerpt from Resolution: "IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to amend existing legislation or pass new legislation to increase protection for vulnerable residential tenants."

Alberta's government is committed to ensuring Albertans in all communities can access safe, secure and stable housing. Rent controls can harm the rental market by discouraging new development and reducing capacity to maintain and upgrade existing properties.

The *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA) establishes rights and obligations for landlords and tenants in Alberta and is intended to provide a light-touch regulatory framework to encourage a balanced marketplace. Regulations limit rent increases to the same tenant to no more than once every 365 days and require landlords to provide adequate notice of any rent increase to ensure tenants can find other accommodations if they are unable or unwilling to pay the increased rent.

Excerpt from Resolution: "FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to create or improve financial supports available to vulnerable residential tenants."

The RTA offers special protections for victims of domestic violence who need to terminate a tenancy, and the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service provides a timelier, and more affordable, alternative to the courts to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants, including for common issues such as return of security deposits and termination of tenancy. The Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction monitors concerns raised by Albertans to ensure that Alberta's legislation encourages a balanced rental marketplace and meets the needs of both landlords and tenants.

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Excerpt from Resolution: "FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to continue its work improving the availability of affordable housing for vulnerable residential tenants."

Alberta's government continues to increase funding for rent supplements to help more Albertans obtain suitable, affordable housing and make the most of existing rental market capacity.

2) ABmunis Resolution 2023-B2: Enhanced Funding for the Rent Assistance and Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit

Excerpt from Resolution: "IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate for the Government of Alberta to:

- Establish predictable, long-term rent assistance funding to meet the needs of all low-income Albertans allowing them to access rent support for appropriate housing.
- Increase awareness of rent assistance programs to provide more Albertans in core housing needs with the support that they need to ensure they have access to appropriate housing; and
- Simplify the application process."

Alberta's government is committed to ensuring Albertans in all communities have access to safe, secure and stable housing. To help more Albertans get into suitable, affordable housing and make the most of existing rental market capacity, we are expanding the use of rent supplements. Budget 2024 increases the rent assistance program by 9.2 per cent, putting us on track to serve about 14,000 total households by 2026/27. This is about 5,400 more households than were in the program when *Stronger Foundations: Alberta's 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing* was launched in November 2021.

We also made it easier for applicants to connect with housing options that meet their needs by launching a centralized portal for Albertans searching for housing supports online at findhousing.alberta.ca. The Find Housing tool is a comprehensive digital service that guides users through the process of finding housing options, evaluating their eligibility and applying for housing supports.

Alberta's government is committed to working with all orders of government to find innovative housing solutions and increase the supply of affordable housing for Albertans in need. Adequate federal funding is essential to ensure Alberta has appropriate resources to tackle our housing challenges. Alberta has aligned with the other provinces and territories to request the federal government take further action to address the housing crisis. We continue to maximize available federal funding through the National Housing Strategy bilateral agreement.

3) ABmunis Resolution 2023-B3: Homelessness and Associated Social Needs in Rural Communities

Excerpt from Resolution: "IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta to:

- Invest in the rural municipalities to aid in the development of affordable housing units and support those most vulnerable to the current economic and health impacts.

- Maximize the funding that can be leveraged from the Government of Canada, and increase research directed towards the prevention of homelessness among marginalized and vulnerable populations, and evidence-based intervention plans for those currently experiencing homelessness.
- Encourage the province to dedicate additional resources towards creating permanent shelter spaces in coordination with smaller communities who request it; ensuring homeless and women emergency shelters have the operating funding support they need; funding bridge housing to help transition people from shelters into supportive housing with additional supports.
- Invest 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; and
- Investigation of interventions to promote resilience in different populations at risk for homelessness, including those within rural, suburban, or urban areas.”

Alberta’s government works closely with the Rural Development Network (RDN), which manages the federal homelessness funding in Alberta, to assist in addressing the challenges faced by rural communities with providing shelter and supporting those in need.

In addition to the federal funding provided through the RDN, the Government of Alberta allocates funding to support both permanent and temporary emergency shelter spaces in rural communities in Alberta. Notable initiatives include support for the town of Slave Lake and the cities of Wetaskiwin and Lloydminster to operate emergency shelter spaces year-round. Peace River’s Sagitawa Friendship Society has received funding to facilitate 20 homeless emergency shelter spaces during winter 2023/24. Organizations in Cold Lake, Drayton Valley, Lac La Biche, Canmore and Spruce Grove also received support for temporary winter shelter spaces in 2023/24, contributing to their communities’ emergency shelter capacity. In total, funding has been provided to operate 90 year-round shelter spaces and up to 130 temporary winter spaces in rural communities in 2023/24. Budget 2024 continues to make funding available to address homelessness outside of the seven major urban cities in Alberta.

The provincial Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Program is the only program in Canada that addresses prevention from early childhood to those in their senior years. FCSS funding can be used to address the root cause of social problems such as homelessness, mental health and addiction, poverty, and family and sexual violence. There are 198 local FCSS programs, serving more than 1.2 million vulnerable Albertans annually. More than 98 percent of Albertans live in communities with FCSS programs. Budget 2024 continues the provincial government’s commitment to this important program.

Alberta’s government is also committed to ensuring Albertans can access safe, secure and stable housing, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the affordable housing system. We continue to implement *Stronger Foundations: Alberta’s 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing*. As part of the strategy, we are working to develop partnerships and build capacity within the housing system to support 82,000 households – an increase of more than 40 per cent. Budget 2024 will allow us to support about 7,000 more households by funding rent assistance and the construction of more housing units over the next three years. Together with our partners, the Government of Alberta is supporting \$9 billion in housing investments to build 25,000 new units by 2031.

The Premier has directed SCSS to develop and implement an affordable and attainable home ownership and rental strategy, focused on low and middle-income households, including seniors. We will work closely with the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities as we strive to keep Alberta's housing affordable now, while building a stronger future.

4) ABmunis Resolution 2023-B6: Capital Funding Support for Housing Management Bodies

Excerpt from the Resolution: "THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Alberta Municipalities lobby the Government of Alberta to increase funding to Housing Management Bodies to alleviate the affordability crisis and provide funding for capital upkeep or replacement needed to sustain supportive living at senior lodges."

Alberta's government is committed to improving and expanding the affordable housing system. Housing providers told us they need more funding and we heard them. Budget 2024 provides a substantial increase in funding for housing providers to operate affordable and seniors housing. In addition, Budget 2024 provides \$120.9 million over three years for capital maintenance and renewal funding to help maintain existing units.

Currently, we are reviewing the Seniors Lodge Program to consider how to better use existing spaces, make those spaces more sustainable and meet the needs of seniors today and into the future, while focusing on partnerships that will support them aging in place.

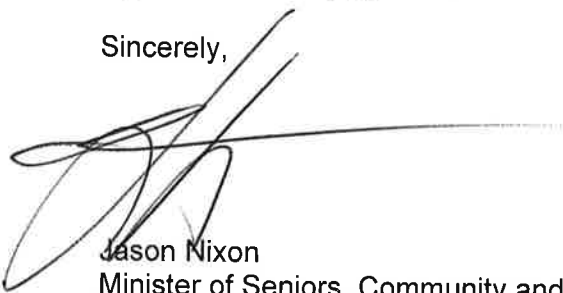
Alberta's government is committed to working with all orders of government to find innovative housing solutions and increase the supply of affordable housing for Albertans in need. Adequate federal funding is essential to ensure Alberta has appropriate resources to tackle our housing challenges. Alberta has aligned with the other provinces and territories to request the federal government take further action to address the housing crisis. We are currently pursuing a deal with the federal government similar to the \$2 billion deal British Columbia recently announced.

We continue to maximize available federal funding through the National Housing Strategy bilateral agreement.

We will continue to work with our housing partners, including municipalities, to monitor the impact of the affordability crisis on housing providers and the need for capital maintenance and renewal funding.

Thank you for sharing your concerns. I appreciate your ongoing commitment to working together to serve Albertans.

Sincerely,



Jason Nixon
Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services

cc: Honourable Dale Nally
Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction