



ALBERTA
SENIORS AND HOUSING

Office of the Minister
MLA, Calgary-Beddington



AR50393

December 1, 2020

His Worship Barry Morishita
Mayor, City of Brooks
President, Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
300, 8616 – 51 Avenue NW
Edmonton AB T6E 6E6

Dear Mayor Morishita:

Thank you for your November 3, 2020 letter regarding the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association's (AUMA's) 2020 resolution on provincial support for affordable housing and homelessness. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

The Government of Alberta (GOA) values its partnership with municipalities across the province, to ensure all Albertans have access to a safe, suitable and affordable place to call home. I appreciate the work AUMA does to amplify the voices of its members, and I acknowledge your concerns about the need for more affordable housing in Alberta. *Capital Plan 2020* allocates \$417 million over three years to provide 2,000 new and regenerated affordable housing units, more than 3,000 jobs, and to maintain the 26,700-unit provincially-owned portfolio. The Government of Alberta is also working closely with the federal government to access funding under the bilateral agreement to increase the supply of affordable housing across the province. At the same time, our government is mindful we cannot afford to continue spending as we have in the past, while we get our financial house in order. That is why we are taking action now to get spending under control and achieve better results for Albertans now and into the future.

Seniors and Housing collaborates with other ministries to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness have much needed housing and supports. For example, *Capital Plan 2020* continues my ministry's \$8 million capital commitment to redesign and redevelop the Herb Jamieson Centre emergency shelter in Edmonton. This is a joint project with Community and Social Services (CSS) and Infrastructure, and will provide up to 500 spaces to help vulnerable Albertans have a safe and secure place to stay. In addition, \$11 million has been invested into 42 permanent supportive housing (PSH) units in Lethbridge. Seniors and Housing continues to partner with CSS on PSH, which remains an essential element of the GOA's efforts to end homelessness. We will continue to explore PSH projects that will lift Albertans out of homelessness, and guide them into safe, stable, and sustainable housing.

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In July 2020, I appointed the Affordable Housing Review (AHR) Panel to review Alberta's affordable housing system. The Panel explored ways to better serve Albertans in need of housing, while also making the best use of taxpayer dollars. As it prepared recommendations for Alberta's government, the Panel considered the public's input, the supports required for Albertans in critical housing need, market trends and projections, and approaches to housing in other jurisdictions. I am confident the combined expertise of Panel members and the valuable insights from Albertans helped identify more efficient, effective, and sustainable approaches to affordable housing. I commend AUMA members for contributing to the AHR engagement sessions and providing important input to the Panel regarding the clarity of government's role in affordable housing, reducing red tape and engaging the nonprofit and private sectors. I am now in receipt of the Panel's final report, which I am carefully reviewing and sharing with my government colleagues for their consideration. Once this is complete, we will release the report to Albertans.

While the Alberta government does not provide operating funding to the Cities of Edmonton and Calgary, you may be interested to know that both cities have been approved to receive capital funding under the federal government's new Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), which is a plan to create jobs and support economic recovery, while eliminating chronic homelessness in Canada. RHI should help Edmonton and Calgary meet their demands for more PSH.

With regard to your recommendation regarding mandatory operation guidelines in emergency shelters, I consulted with my colleague, Honourable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of CSS, as homelessness supports falls under the mandate of that ministry. I am advised that in 2020-21 CSS will provide over \$139 million to agencies in Alberta to support individuals experiencing homelessness. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$73 million has been approved to support shelter facilities, to meet physical distancing guidelines, and to provide 24/7 shelter, including day supports and access to isolation and care spaces. Future responses to homelessness will be informed, in part, by recommendations put forward in *COVID-19 Sheltering/Isolation Response to Sustainable Model*, a CSS-commissioned report. They will ensure:

- Shelter services address the basic health and safety needs of Albertans, and include trauma-informed care, and culturally-informed services and supports to those who are intoxicated;
- Outreach services are available for those sleeping outside;
- There are targeted rural responses to homelessness challenges; and
- Connections to housing and supports are prioritized.

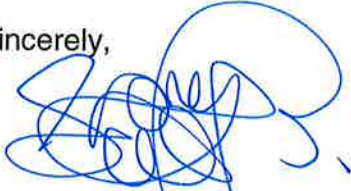
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We will continue to work closely with our municipal, federal, nonprofit, and private partners on innovative and effective housing solutions for Albertans who need it most.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Josephine Pon', written over a circular blue scribble.

Josephine Pon
Minister of Seniors and Housing

cc: Honourable Tracy Allard, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Honourable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services
Honourable Tyler Shandro, Minister of Health

