

Housing Supports Health

Key Messages - 2023



The Issues: A Brief Overview

Improving the healthcare system, including healthcare delivery, response times, and access, is a **top priority for Albertans**. Healthcare, like housing, occupies a foundational role in the lives of all Albertans and intersects in many areas. We must strengthen the **housing and care continuum by addressing gaps** and leveraging their critical role in every Albertan's life.

Health spending represents the provincial government's largest expenditure. Healthcare spending **will continue to grow as our population grows and ages**. The economic cost of mental illness and addictions are in the billions due to health system demands, lost productivity, and impacts on community and quality of life.

We are mindful that there is only one taxpayer in Alberta. Individuals, the government, and communities bear the cost of providing appropriate housing for Albertans.

Housing advocacy matters - Albertans need housing affordability and access to housing that supports their needs to be the top priority in the next provincial election.

How housing supports health

Housing and housing providers play a **vital role** in communities, and with the uniqueness of each community, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Living in housing that supports your needs has a positive impact on your health and well-being.

Congregate seniors living is included in the housing continuum providing a **wellness model of living as we age, focused on person-directed choice**.

How Albertans can support housing

All levels of government need to **prioritize housing** as a **core need** and a **fundamental right** and **adequately fund the entire life cycle of housing**.

Average cost of standard hospital inpatient stay (2020-21)

Alberta

\$ 9, 149

Canadian
Average

\$ 7, 619

Alberta is third highest, behind the Yukon & Northwest Territories. Data for Nunavut was not available.

Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information

HOW HOUSING SUPPORTS HEALTH

For every \$10 invested in supportive housing, \$22 was saved in government spending
Canadian Mental Health Association



13.3%

Alternate Level of Care (ALC) Days
2021- 22

ALC Days are the number of hospital days a hospital bed is occupied by a patient who no longer needs acute care but is awaiting discharge to another more appropriate level of care.
Alberta Health Services

ASCHA has identified ways to deliver housing and supports from a person-directed approach that allows aging in the community that honour choice while improving Albertans' health outcomes. ASCHA's recommendations below are based on the fundamental understanding that for Albertans to live healthy, fulfilled lives within their communities, they must have a home that supports their needs. For many, it also includes supports to help them to stay housed.

- **Prioritization of housing & supports** would be seen through creating a **Cabinet Committee**, which would focus on building capacity within the sector by addressing operational challenges and broader strategies to build more housing.
- **24/7 homecare in all congregate living settings.** Our recommendation is even more critical with the increase in homecare funding in Budget 2023. **In a coordinated approach housed within congregate living settings, more funding is directly delivered to the hours of care Albertans receive.** Our recommendation also has the benefit of alleviating strain on EMS services and higher levels of care as more Albertans will receive care at the right time.
- **Funding tenant support workers** provide residents/tenants access to staff with mental health training and an understanding of how to navigate the system.
- **Replace designated supportive living (DSL) legacy funding models** between Alberta Health Services and housing providers that no longer adequately fund the appropriate level of care.
- **Increase DSL accommodation fees**, including the supplementary accommodation benefit and continue to index to inflation to align with the cost to deliver services.

Additionally, we have recommendations that address how we can maintain and expand seniors and affordable housing in Alberta. Our full policy recommendations are in *Housing Supports Alberta, Albertans Support Housing*.

ASCHA looks forward to working collaboratively on the proposed solutions and preventative measures, including all public, non-profit and private housing providers to support a stronger housing and support system for Albertans.

These recommendations are a starting point from a perspective informed by front-line subject matter experts and constituencies across Alberta that believe that every Albertan deserves to live well in their chosen community in safe, appropriate, and stable housing.

Alberta's 7 Cities on Housing & Homelessness (comprised of organizations leading the way to align resources and increase progress on homelessness) showed significant impact on the use of emergency services & interactions with enforcement services, including:

46% decrease in EMS interactions

47% reduction in days hospitalized

39% decrease in Emergency & Urgent Care visits

(2008 - 2018)

OUR ASK

1. Prioritize housing as central to the health & well-being of all Albertans
2. Increase capacity in the housing sector
3. Strengthen the supports to keep Albertans appropriately housed



www.ascha.com

The Alberta Seniors & Community Housing Association (ASCHA) is the provincial association representing seniors and community housing in the Province. ASCHA currently represents over 100 public, non-profit, and private housing providers, employing over 22,000 workers and serving over 60,000 Albertans. We work closely with members, municipalities, and the Government of Alberta to ensure the growth and sustainability of our housing sector and to truly benefit the lives of the individuals our member organizations serve.