

A Housing Strategy for British Columbia

A housing strategy for British Columbia, launched in October 2006, provides the framework for the evolution of the affordable housing sector. Two primary policy changes and six strategies form the basis of the Housing Strategy. The two policy changes are:

- Individuals or households with special housing needs will be given priority access to subsidized housing; and
- Provincially-owned subsidized housing will be renovated or redeveloped to better meet the needs of low-income households with special housing needs.

The goals outlined in *Housing Matters BC* are client focused. BC Housing is the lead government agency ensuring that the first four of the six provincial goals (see box at right) are met through a variety of programs and partnerships. The programs and services associated with each of our goals address the needs of a variety of groups at the same time.

We are ensuring that we develop new units at the supportive end of the housing continuum in order to promote individuals' stability, self-reliance and independence. In building the next generation of social housing with our non-profit, government and private partners, we employ smart and efficient designs that encourage healthy communities. Our partnership programs include:

- Independent Living BC, a housing-for-health partnership program designed to meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities who require some personal assistance, but do not need 24-hour care. An additional 550 units were allocated this year, bringing the total to more than 4,000 units that will be created by 2008;
- The Provincial Homelessness Initiative, which provides a comprehensive approach to homelessness, mental illness and addictions by integrating housing with the appropriate support services. Because of the significant partnerships created, BC Housing allocated additional units to the program, bringing the total to 2,287 new units through a number of innovative partnerships;
- A new Aboriginal housing program launched this year that will create homes specifically for Aboriginals using the funding from the federal Aboriginal Affordable Housing Trust; and
- A new Housing Endowment Fund announced this year that will provide funding for innovative affordable, social or supportive housing, and for innovative housing development and management.

Affordable housing options are also being created in the private market through the use of rent assistance. Many low-income families and seniors do not have special housing needs. These households simply do not have enough income to pay rent in the private market – there is a gap between their rent and what they can afford to pay. Portable housing allowances that can be used in the private rental market are an effective way to assist these low-income households. An existing housing allowance program, the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program, has successfully assisted many low-income seniors for over 25 years. This year, the Province created a new housing allowance program for families, the Rental Assistance Program. These programs allow us to provide greater housing choice and assistance to bridge the affordability gap in the private rental market.

All British Columbians – tenants, Aboriginal, our housing partners, other levels of government and our employees – will play a role in shaping affordable housing in the future. Working together, we will continue to create housing solutions for healthier futures.



Housing Matters BC sets out six goals for better meeting the housing needs of British Columbians. The information below provides an overview of how BC Housing is involved in goals one through four:

1

The homeless have access to stable housing with integrated support services

- Additional units are being created under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative by building new units and protecting the existing rental stock through the purchase of single room occupancy buildings and existing rental buildings
- More shelter beds are available as seasonal beds are converted to year-round shelter beds
- 20 outreach programs are in place in 18 communities across the province

2

B.C.'s most vulnerable citizens receive priority for assistance

- New supported and assisted living units are being created through the Independent Living BC program
- Social housing units will be converted to supportive and assisted living for seniors
- Redevelopment of aging social housing sites
- Existing social housing provides homes for frail seniors, people at risk of homelessness, people with mental illnesses and physical disabilities, those with drug and alcohol addictions, Aboriginals and youth and families, including women with their children fleeing abusive relationships

3

Aboriginal housing need is addressed

- New homes will be built under a new Aboriginal Housing Program
- The administration of Aboriginal housing will be transferred to the Aboriginal Housing Management Association

4

Low-income households have improved access to affordable rental housing

- Low-income seniors living in the private rental market are receiving cash assistance through the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters program
- Low-income family households are receiving rent assistance in the private market through the new Rental Assistance Program

5

Homeownership is supported as an avenue to self-sufficiency

6

B.C.'s housing and building regulatory system is safe, stable and efficient