



Government of Alberta Budget 2022 Consultation  
Open Submission

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Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) is a community-based organization (CBO) guiding the fight against homelessness in our city. We serve as the system planner for Calgary's Homeless-Serving System of Care (HSSC). CHF operates within a network of organizations, including all levels of government, the private sector, faith-based communities, and non-profits in Calgary's HSSC. Our unique positioning enables a broad line of sight, giving us a deep understanding of the cause-and-effect dynamics of homelessness. As an effective steward of provincial and federal funding, CHF organizes and aligns resources in a cost-effective and meaningful way to ensure the highest impact and outcome for the homeless population we serve.

### Calgary Homeless Foundation's Budget 2022 Priorities

Priority 1: Introduce a High Support Housing Facility to better serve individuals living with complex health needs and experiencing homelessness in Calgary.

Opportunity: Fill a significant gap in the recovery-oriented system of care by introducing a high support housing facility that would provide appropriate health and social supports for high-complexity individuals not currently served by existing housing programs; empower individuals with complex health needs to attain long-term housing stability and help them achieve their recovery goals; enable the reallocation of funds saved by reducing public system usage, address the silos in care by integrating the services of multiple sectors; increase community safety; leverage federal capital funding through national homelessness programming; and provide direct support to Alberta's economy through the creation of construction jobs.

Priority 2: Increase the capacity of the Recovery-oriented System of Care by filling approximately 100 unutilized program spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness

Opportunity: Address the need for supportive housing in Calgary, reduce costs to public systems by ensuring people are stably housed, create capacity to help address the combined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the opioid crisis.

## Body of Submission

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### Priority 1: Introduce a High Support Housing Facility to better serve individuals living with complex health needs and experiencing homelessness in Calgary

#### Background

Through community consultations, CHF identified that a segment of the current and former homeless population is falling within a gap that exists in both CHF and Alberta Health Services (AHS) funded housing models. Specifically, individuals between the age of 35 and 55 with severe and complex health care needs, who are also experiencing homelessness, are currently underserved within our existing supportive housing programs due to lack of adequate support.

**High Support Housing facilities** that provide intensive wrap-around services such as health supports, medical care, case work management, and social services, are in demand in Calgary. There are only a few facilities that can provide these services and assist high-complexity individuals (e.g., those suffering from substance abuse, mental illness, physical mobility issues, high rates of trauma, with co- or tri-morbidities) in overcoming homelessness. A serious gap exists within the high support housing market. An estimated 585 high-complexity individuals are not receiving the level of services they need to overcome homelessness. The cost of “doing nothing” is significant, and would have economic impacts on our healthcare system, social system, judicial system, and overall societal systems.

Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) has identified that a High Support Housing Facility intended for high-complexity clients from all intakes within the homeless system will fill a significant gap in the recovery-oriented system of care. This facility will be aligned with the goals of **recovery communities** which are a proven, cohesive approach to addiction treatment that focuses on the whole person and overall lifestyle changes, providing supports to enhance life skills and social competencies to help clients return to full community living.

#### Recommendations

In 2021, the GoA introduced the Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force, alongside efforts to support mental health and addictions and the recovery-oriented system of care. The introduction of a high support housing facility represents an opportunity to bridge the work of several ministries, Alberta Health Services, and the provincial homelessness task force by providing integrated and comprehensive housing and health supports for high-complexity individuals.

There are two options for the development of the proposed high support housing facility:

**Option 1:** Concrete 3 or 4 storey new build on a greenfield or brownfield site

**Option 2:** Concrete, low-rise hotel conversion.

These could be in any number of locations, but the optimal location will require easy access for clients, community acceptance, and appropriate zoning for supportive housing, food, and medical services. The introduction of this facility, in any location, should be prefaced with a strong community engagement strategy to address and mitigate any community concerns.

The High Support Housing Facility would be considered a Special Care Facility, operating under Assisted Living land use definition. It will house 60 high-complexity individuals experiencing homelessness. It will provide in-house medical and social support for persons living with physical disability, mental health diagnosis and/or addiction. The proposed facility could serve but is not limited to individuals with the following physical and mental health challenges:

- Severe and persistent mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia or personality disorders)
- Dual diagnoses of mental illness and addictions
- Dual diagnoses of mental illness and developmental disability
- Cognitive impairment unrelated to developmental disability (e.g., acquired brain injuries)
- Neurodegenerative conditions associated with ageing and/or addiction, including dementia; and Palliative (End of Life) care

Funding for the facility will require support and cooperation from all three levels of government. The commitment from the Government of Alberta to provide operational funding for this facility would unlock opportunities to leverage federal capital funding through Reaching Home and the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI). Building permits and construction will require support from the City of Calgary.

## Outcomes

The introduction of this facility represents an innovative plan to respond to a critical system gap in the recovery-oriented system of care for high-complexity Calgarians who are experiencing homelessness. The needs of the homeless population, prioritized by this project, will support many of the goals and strategies outlined in **Alberta Health Services 2020-2024 Health and Business Plan; Stronger Foundations: Alberta's 10-year Plan to Improve and Expand Affordable Housing; the Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force; and Calgary Mental Health and Addiction Community Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023.**

Below are the estimated differences in social costs between introducing the High Support Housing Facility using option 2 (hotel conversion), when compared to the status quo ("doing nothing") cost of services for 60 clients projected for 5, 10 and 15-years. In each five-year period, implementing the High Support Housing Facility will result in the following projected savings.

- **5-year differential:** \$36.8 million
- **10-year differential:** \$116.0 million
- **15-year differential:** \$205.3 million

These values are based on an analysis of the social impacts which include measurable impacts that can be monetized, and non-measurable impacts that still contribute to an individual's overall wellbeing. Examples of positive socio-economic impacts for clients that would be served by the High Support Housing facility, as well as the Government of Alberta include the following:

- 1. Improved Quality-of-life for individuals with complex health needs**
  - Decreased incidences of violence from other clients or from the streets
  - Improved ability of individuals to achieve and maintain long-term housing stability

**2. Reduced public system usage enabling re-allocation of funds to other needs**

- Reduction in public system usage including healthcare, social services, and the judicial system (e.g., emergency medical services, Calgary Police Services, emergency rooms, hospital, jails, and courts)

**3. Long-term social impacts**

- Potential for clients to transfer back to medium- or low-complexity facilities and handle their own finances
- Reduction in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking, sex trade and sexual exploitation offenses

## Priority 2: Increase the capacity of the Recovery-oriented System of Care by filling approximately 100 unutilized program spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness

### Background

The combined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis, and the economic downturn have created a greater need for housing options with support in Calgary. As Calgary's Community-based Organization (CBO) addressing homelessness, CHF funds program spaces that provide critical supports and permanent housing for people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness.

At present, there are approximately 100 unutilized program spaces within three buildings that are available to be filled by programs. These will expand existing services within the recovery-oriented system of care and support individuals experiencing homelessness.

### Recommendation

Calgary Homeless Foundation recommends that the Government of Alberta provide funding to support the utilization of the vacant program spaces. Costs to fill the proposed program spaces will be dependent on the program type. The estimated operating cost is \$17,500 per person for scattered-site programs and \$42,500 per person for place-based programs, which would support a recovery model.

### Outcomes

The funding provided by the Government of Alberta to support the use of vacant program spaces will add to the limited housing stock for vulnerable populations; facilitate a recovery model; broaden the continuum of programming available to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness; and expand Indigenous programming. These outcomes will advance the strategies and goals outlined in **Stronger Foundations: Alberta's 10-year Plan to Improve and Expand Affordable Housing; Alberta Health Services 2020-2024 Health and Business Plan; the Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force; and Calgary Mental Health and Addiction Community Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023.**

The three buildings with vacant program spaces would offer **45** units for family housing, **50** units for single adults, and in April 2023 an additional **51** spaces will be available. These spaces could support the following program types:

- **Addiction transitional housing:** Short/mid-term (typically <2 years), specifically for individuals recovering from substance use
- **Sober living environment:** with supports available
- **Mental health housing:** Mid/long term housing for individuals experiencing mental health issues, with supports and services provided

The funding provided would increase the capacity of the recovery-oriented system of care, improve access to and choice of housing, and expand access to the services provided by Alberta's recovery coaches. This would ensure connections and supports, which span across a continuum from a clinical to community-

based delivery, are available for individuals in recovery; individuals seeking detox support; those in need of compassionate end of life care; individuals with moderate to complex health needs; and those seeking culturally appropriate or Indigenous-specific programming.