

**FOR  
RENT**

**NO VACANCY**

In search of ...

# Affordable Housing

# *f*ACTivist

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## fACTivist

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Spring/2015



# In search of affordable housing

**By Susan Morrissey, Executive Director**

Welcome to the latest edition of *the fACTivist*, our quarterly newsletter that addresses timely issues in our community. This issue's topic came together fairly easily because of all that is going on right now pertaining to housing and homelessness.

When considering what a home is, I decided to consult an on-line dictionary. Finding a number of variations, I chose the following: "the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household." Regardless of whether you live alone or with others, the key word here is permanent.

Currently, much of the work going on around housing has to do with helping people find appropriate housing as well as planning for future housing to meet continuing demand.

Did you know that federal funding for social housing has been on the decline since the early 1990s and is set to phase out completely by 2040? This may seem like a long time from now, but the implications of the expiry of operating agreements will effect approximately 11,000 social housing units throughout Edmonton. This could impact the many living on a low income, seniors and Aboriginals. Fortunately, the Mayor's Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group has been studying the issue and has come up with a set of recommendations to address social housing in the future.



Susan Morrissey

In the area of homelessness, a report by the City of Edmonton has recently come out with the year six update on ending homelessness in Edmonton. At the time of printing, a total of 3,525 previously homeless Edmontonians have now been housed, including 843 people in 2014 and almost all (93%) of Housing First clients have retained their housing. So you can see we are making steady progress towards providing housing for folks who would otherwise be "on the streets".

Taking it further, the Calgary Homeless Foundation along with the Client Action Committee and Alberta Human Rights Commission recently released a Homeless Charter of Rights which clearly outlines

basic rights that apply to everyone. (See p. 6) These include the right to be treated fairly in the legal system and having the ability to apply for any housing advertised for lease.

For many folks, the whole area of housing just seems like a given. However, for others both working in the area of housing or those who may be struggling to find a permanent home, the issue is front and center. There continues to be a growing body of research showing that having an adequate supply of safe, affordable and appropriate housing is a prerequisite for ending homelessness.

I think you will see as you make your way through the newsletter that housing in Edmonton continues to be an important topic of discussion.

## In this issue ...

Google the phrase "what is a home?" and you get 4.6 billion hits. Yes, that's *billion*, not *million*. It seems that keeping a roof over our heads these days is a growing concern almost everywhere.

This issue of the *fACTivist* focusses on affordable housing, or more accurately, the lack of

affordable housing, what is happening, how did we get here and what we can do about it?



## A Manufactured Problem

# Unaffordable Housing

by Manuel Escoto

Approaching affordable housing strategies through a multi-disciplinary lens, Right to Housing Conference keynote speaker Michael Shapcott said the current affordable housing crisis is a man-made problem with its roots in changes to federal housing policy more than 20 years ago.

Shapcott wears many hats including director of Affordable Housing and Social Innovations at the Wellesley Institute, founding member of the Housing Network of Ontario, the Multi-Faith Alliance to End Homelessness and the Canadian Homelessness Research Network. He is also a policy analyst, researcher and author.

Shapcott began his June 5 address by acknowledging Treaty 6 territory and Canada's historical Aboriginal struggle and his expectations for a reconciliatory future.

As the City of Edmonton enters the seventh year of its 10-year plan to end homelessness, Shapcott delivered a powerful message: the lack of affordable housing in Canada is a man-made issue. Whereas governments provide emergency assistance in times of natural disasters, the appetite for emergency assistance for vulnerable populations is lacking.

In Edmonton, for example, almost 450 homeless people have died in the last decade. In Toronto, Shapcott said, more than 1,000 homeless people have died in the same period.

Referencing the Homeless Memorial that took place earlier in the day, Shapcott expressed his sorrow when he said that too many people who die on the streets are remembered as "John Doe" or "Jane Doe".

The high number of unidentified homeless deaths, according to Shapcott, makes the issue speculative – the issue is talked about among academics, policymakers and community members but is rarely properly mourned. Within this

framework, Shapcott assured the audience that "homelessness is NOT an abstract issue." Whether directly or indirectly, homelessness is a communal issue and Canadians must be committed to finding solutions.



*Michael Shapcott, keynote speaker at the June 5-6 Right to Housing conference, hosted by the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness.*

Providing a brief history of homeless strategies in Canada, Shapcott noted the positive changes we have made. Back in the 1850s, Shapcott said that homelessness was seen as the result of individual sin and pathology. Today governments recognize that homelessness is the result of deprivation and barriers. Lack of income, inability to pursue education, food insecurity, health issues, low vacancy rates, high rents and violence are a few examples of the root causes of homelessness. Since homelessness must be approached with a collaborative and multi-sectoral approach, Shapcott said it's "time to start thinking in systems" and offered three themes to frame the issue.

1. Familiar: we know what the issues are (i.e. high rent/low income). These are nationwide issues that require nationwide solutions and leadership;
2. Complex: the range of issues and barriers require a range of solutions. Simply providing homes is not sufficient.

The mandate for governments and

- policymakers should be housing first, not housing only;
3. Dynamic: problems facing low-income Canadians are not static and so, policy should be open to changes without bureaucratic delays.

As an infographic provided by Shapcott illustrates, the increase in homelessness since 1990s is the result of deliberate government policy. Specifically, Shapcott noted that the federal government's withdrawal of investment in affordable housing and overall cuts to social assistance at all levels of government during the 1980s & the 1990s created our present day crisis.

Specific cuts included:

- a \$1.8 billion cut to federal housing programs 1984-1993
- decline of federal funding for new social housing in 1993

**Continued on p. 14**

# News Shorts

## Swann to co-chair mental health review

Premier Rachel Notley and Liberal Leader Dr. David Swann announced in mid-June that Dr Swann will co-chair a review of Alberta's mental health policy, working with Government MLA Danielle Larivee, a registered nurse. This working group will aim to provide recommendations by the end of 2015.



*Dr. David Swann*

## NDP government restores education funding

In one of its first decisions, the newly-elected NDP government restored education funding for the 2015-16 school year to support enrolment growth and support services. The late May announcement was directed towards 12,000 additional students expected this fall, funding previously negotiated teacher contracts and school and classroom resources such as transportation and First Nations, Metis and Inuit programs. The fiscal year cost to restore this funding is \$103 million.

## Government boosts minimum wage by \$1 by Oct. 1

Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour Lori Sigurdson announced in late June that Alberta's minimum wage will increase to \$11.20 from \$10.20 per hour by October 1 and will increase annually to \$15 per hour by 2018. The liquor server minimum wage will rise to \$10.70 from \$9.20 per hour in the first of two steps to eliminate the differential rate altogether in 2016. "We have listened closely to Albertans and have taken their views and suggestions into account," said the minister. "Our plan includes a \$1 increase to the general minimum wage this year, plus a two-year phase out of the liquor server rate. We will continue to consult with stakeholders as we move forward on our goal over the next three years."



*Lori Sigurdson*

## Elder abuse grants announced

The Stop Abuse in Families Society (SAIF) of St Albert and the Seniors Protection Partnership in Edmonton are among 19 Alberta groups and organizations to receive part of a \$3 million grant program to reduce elder abuse.

## Transit passes for homeless youth reduce crime

A University of Alberta study shows that providing transit passes to homeless youth will dramatically reduce

encounters with police. The study found some teens ended up with criminal records because they skipped paying the \$3.20 transit fare and found themselves in court. The study, led by Miriam Stewart in the U of A nursing faculty, involved 40 homeless youth who were given monthly bus passes or books of tickets for three months. The impact of the free transit passes was then recorded in interviews. Youth were able to get out of high crime areas, attended school more regularly and more youth took on job searches, says the report.

## Homeless advocate honoured with YWCA award

Anglican Bishop Jane Alexander was among the winners of the 2015 YWCA Woman of Distinction Award handed out in



*Bishop Jane Alexander*

early June. Bishop Alexander won the Advocate category for her work with marginalized or discriminated-against people. With a particular interest in helping the homeless, Alexander serves as co-chair of

EndPoverty Edmonton. She has also promoted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and has been a strong advocate for indigenous people.

## PIA executive director takes on AB government role

Bill Moore-Kilgannon, the executive director of Public Interest Alberta, has resigned to become the chief of staff to Minister of Health and Seniors Sarah Hoffman. "I have taken on an important and exciting role in the new Alberta government where I hope I will be able to play a part in helping to build a better Alberta for all. We have truly entered a new phase in Alberta's history," he said. Prior to joining PIA, he worked in Ottawa for the Council of Canadians from 2001 to 2004 and he was with the Parkland Institute.



*Bill Moore-Kilgannon*

## Alberta celebrates 2015 Seniors Service Award nominees

Edmonton's Lifestyle Helping Hands Seniors Association and the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton are among 22 groups and 59 individuals nominated to receive the Minister's Seniors Service Award. Recognition of these nominations took place during Seniors' Week in early June. Award recipients will be recognized in a special ceremony in the fall.



## Housing News Shorts

### 843 homeless people housed in 2014

The year six update on Edmonton's 10 year plan to end homelessness suggests that the number of homeless people remains unchanged in the face of significant population growth. While thousands of people have moved to Edmonton looking for work, the numbers of homeless people remains stable, but has not decreased. The annual update, this year found within the *city's Housing and Homelessness 2013-2014 Update*, reported that 843 homeless people were housed in 2014. Other findings included that the use of emergency shelters exceeded capacity in the fall, winter and spring.

### Police record increase in motels used as temporary housing

Edmontonians in financial distress are being housed in substandard conditions at discount motels while Alberta Works is unaware of the poor conditions, a year-long police investigation revealed. Edmonton Police began the investigation after EPS noticed higher crime rates around a cluster of west-end Edmonton motels. But as it unfolded, they found people on social assistance occupying rooms filled with mice, bedbugs, asbestos and mould. Det. Kevin Fald, one of two officers assigned to the project, said he was stunned at the state of rooms. Fald added that Alberta Works, which oversees rooms for people in financial distress, appeared unaware of the situation – the only interactions with clients were by telephone. According to data provided by Human Services in late 2014, the province placed 1,040 people in motel rooms on an emergency basis during the 2011-2012 fiscal year; in 2013-2014, that number jumped to 2,276.



### Subsidized housing wait more than doubled since fall

The waiting list for subsidized housing in Edmonton has more than doubled since September as unemployment rates rise and oil prices fall. The list has grown to 2,700 families at the Capital Region Housing Corp., which manages rent subsidies and assigns the most heavily subsidized social housing units. Housing officials started to see an increase in demand last November as the price of oil dropped. About 300 people a day visit the Oliver

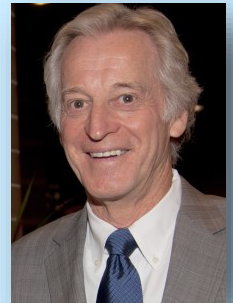


Capital Region  
Housing Corporation

neighbourhood office to submit new applications and check for updates as they wait in the queue. Edmonton's May unemployment rate was 6.8 per cent. The rate has increased every month since Dec. 2014 when it was 4.3 per cent.

### Impact of dismantling Homeless Commission: neutral

The former chair of the Edmonton Homeless Commission said the disbanding of the Edmonton Homeless Commission last year was neither "good, bad or indifferent." Jim Taylor the executive director of the Downtown Business Association, told the *Edmonton Journal* that the commission's main role was to keep the city focused on eliminating



Jim Taylor

poverty. Jim Gurnett, spokesman for the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, agreed saying it was largely an administrative change. City officials said last year the move was intended to better integrate the homelessness plan with other city programs.

### More Albertans gain better access to landlord/tenant dispute resolutions

Landlord and tenant dispute services will be available to an additional 80,000 Albertans. In March, the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS) expanded into southern Alberta, allowing landlords and tenants to settle residential tenancy disputes. RTDRS was created in 2006 as a system to help tenants and landlords resolve disputes over issues such as security deposits, rent debts, tenancy terminations and damages. RTDRS operates similar to a court and uses the *Residential Tenancies Act* and its various regulations as a reference. RTDRS provides dispute resolution services to the majority of the province from offices in Edmonton and Calgary via teleconference.

### New plan to end homelessness in Calgary launched

Calgary's updated plan to end homelessness identifies three key targets to achieve by 2018, house 100 per cent of those experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness (3,200 people), stabilize 35 per cent of households at risk or experiencing transitional homelessness (9,400 households), and reduce the average length of stay in singles emergency shelters to 10 days and 14 days for family shelters (60 per cent reductions). When achieved, these targets will reduce the total number enumerated in the Homeless Point-in-Time Count by 70 per cent.



# Mayor's Task Force Releases Advisory Group Report on Social Housing

An Advisory Group formed by Mayor Don Iveson has released a series of recommendations on how to address Edmontonians' need for social housing.

In 2014, the mayor formed the Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group to discuss emerging housing issues, including low rental vacancies, lack of affordable housing units, and the upcoming expiry of the federal-provincial social housing funding agreements. (see p. 8) Federal funding for social housing initiatives across the country is set to end in 2040, leaving questions about how provinces and municipalities will address the costs of providing affordable rental housing while addressing projects in need of maintenance, repairs and upgrades.

The advisory group was formed to continue the work done by the City's Roundtable on Housing in April 2014. The group met from September 2014 to March

2015 and outlined its recommendations in a report.

“Safe and affordable housing is a key ingredient in the health, well-being and economic prosperity of any community,” said Mayor Iveson. “Edmonton is not alone in facing social housing challenges. We can take some comfort in the fact that many of our citizens, including the members of the Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group, recognize the seriousness of the housing crunch in our city, and their work shows how we’re taking the lead in addressing this serious problem.”

The report provides an important snapshot of the social housing landscape along with key recommendations for social housing redevelopment and regeneration. The summary report is available at [edmonton.ca/socialhousing](http://edmonton.ca/socialhousing)

# Calgary's Homeless Charter of Rights unveiled

In mid-June the Calgary Homeless Foundation unveiled a Homeless Charter of Rights.

In 2013, the CHF received funding through the Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund. CHF initiated a two year research project to identify areas of concern within the homeless community related to issues of discrimination and human rights – particularly related to service access .

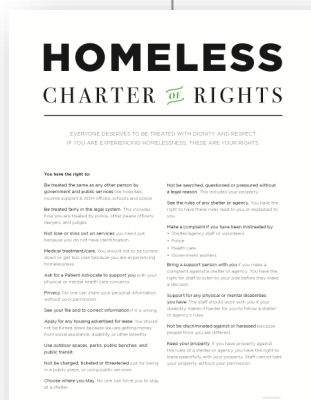
Many sectors were consulted as part of the project, including police services, bylaw services, health services, shelter providers, outreach teams, lawyers and law students and Aboriginal service providers. Most importantly, the Client Action Committee (CAC), a group of clients who have experienced homelessness facilitated by CHF for the last three years, was integral to the project.

Nine clients helped to organize focus groups and interviews of people experiencing homelessness to share their stories and bring to light what rights were most often being violated. Through this process, over 100 clients were consulted.

A part of the process of developing the charter was the creation of the documentary, *Do You See Me?*

This powerful short film increases awareness of the discrimination faced by people experiencing homelessness – often while accessing services needed to end their homelessness.

The charter is located at: [http://www.ihearthomeyy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CHF\\_Charter.pdf](http://www.ihearthomeyy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CHF_Charter.pdf)





# Types of Affordable Housing



## Additional Resources

**Canada-Alberta Agreement for Investment in Affordable Housing 2014-19**, [http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/housing/canada\\_alberta\\_agreement\\_affordable\\_housing.html](http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/housing/canada_alberta_agreement_affordable_housing.html)

**RBC Housing Affordability Report**, <http://www.rbc.com/newsroom/reports/rbc-housing-affordability.html>

**Canada's Social and Affordable Housing Landscape**, [http://www.hscorp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Canada-Social-Housing-Landscape\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.hscorp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Canada-Social-Housing-Landscape_FINAL.pdf)

**Housing affordability declines in Toronto and Vancouver, improves in Alberta:** report, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/housing/housing-affordability-declines-in-toronto-and-vancouver-improves-in-alberta-report/article25052449/>

### Supportive housing

is permanent housing for people who need assistance (personal support services, medical assistance, counselling) to live independently. Supportive housing may house people who are elderly or who have disabilities, addictions, or mental illness.

### Emergency housing

provides shelter and accommodation for short periods of time and serves people who are homeless, displaced, or who are fleeing violence or abuse.

### Private market purpose-built rental housing

Housing that's been built for the purpose of renting to tenants is called 'purpose-built rental.' Apartment buildings are a common type of purpose-built rental. This housing is owned by an individual or a private company and may be managed by the owner or by a hired property manager. Units vary widely based on location, age and condition of building. The owner of the property sets the amount to be paid for rent based on the local housing market.

### Homeownership

Owning a home is an attractive option for many households. Options include single and multi-family homes and prices vary by location and quality. Affordable homeownership options may be available.

### Non-profit housing

Rental housing for low and moderate income individuals and families, built by the province, a municipality, or by a community group. Most tenants pay rent that's geared to their income, others pay rent that's at the low end of private market rent.

### Secondary suites

are emerging as a private-market option for affordable housing. These units are created on the same land as a private home, perhaps in a basement, on an upper floor, above a garage, or detached from the home. The homeowner acts as the landlord and charges rent to the tenant based on the local housing market.

### Cooperative housing

provides housing for people with low and moderate incomes. Residents contribute their time towards the upkeep of the building(s) and the governance of the co-op. Some tenants pay rent that's geared to income; the rest pay market rent. Some units may be modified for seniors or for people with disabilities.

### Transitional housing

offers a bridge between emergency and permanent housing, often for a specified time period. Transitional housing may serve people leaving homelessness, people leaving the corrections system, or families receiving specialized supports.

### Private market condo rentals

In major cities, there has been a decline in the building of new, purpose-built rental housing. Rental condos, owned by investors and rented to tenants, are the fastest growing segment of Ontario's rental housing sector. These units tend to be priced above purpose-built rental housing and serve middle- and high-income households.

### Rooming houses or congregate living

Residents rent out single rooms and share common kitchens, bathrooms, and living space. Depending on a resident's needs, this kind of housing may be permanent or transitional.



# Expiring co-op housing subsidy agreements threaten hundreds of Edmontonians

**By Terry Jorden**

In the face of rising rents and property values, continuing low vacancy rates and a decades-long decline in the construction of affordable housing, expiring federal co-op housing subsidies is emerging as another threat to the supply of affordable housing.

Under the federal rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance program, co-ops provide some housing units, at a subsidized monthly rate, to low income families based upon their household income. The co-ops fund these subsidies with federal funding.

Nationally, 20,759 federally-funded co-op households fall under all federal programs, representing 51,898 low-income Canadians.

In Alberta, there are 34 federal subsidy agreements, impacting 1,695 homes, one third of which receive rent subsidies.

## Background

Between 1973 and 1991, the federal government helped to create three co-op housing programs under *the National Housing Act*: the Section 61 Program; the Section 95 Program; and the Indexed-Linked-Mortgage (ILM) or Federal Co-operative Housing Program (FCHP).

### Section 61

A federal housing program for non-profits and co-ops (1973-1978). Today, there are about 7,700 co-op units under this program. Funding assistance for these co-ops will end by 2031.

### Section 95

This program was the largest federal co-op housing program, delivering 39,000 homes between 1979 and 1985. A majority of these homes are under federal administration in five provinces, including Alberta. The program, which was the largest of the three federal programs, developed mixed-income communities of affordable co-operative housing, organized and operated by the members on a not-for-profit, non-equity basis.

This assistance was guaranteed for the duration of the co-op's operating agreement with the federal government, typically 35 years.

### FCHP/ILM

The last of the three co-op housing programs, which ran from 1986 to 1991, provided insured financing and operating subsidies for 30 to 35 years to non-profit housing co-ops funded with index-linked mortgages.

Operating agreements for these co-ops will also end when mortgage payments end by 2028. This program created more than 15,000 co-op homes.

In reaction to the situation, the Co-op Housing Federation (CHF) of Canada, is attempting to mobilize housing co-ops to speak up about the growing crisis.

Nicholas Gazzard, CHR's executive director, said that for at least five years, co-operative housing organizations have been warning all levels of government about the issue.

"The federal and provincial funding agreements that assist these households with their rent are coming to an end in large numbers," he said. "We are talking about Canadians on fixed incomes; Canadians who are elderly; Canadians with chronic disabilities; and new Canadians we have welcomed into our country so they can build a bright future and contribute to our economy."

The solution he said is simple.

"We do not propose that the federal government renew these expiring funding agreements with housing co-ops. Instead, we propose that Ottawa transfer savings from the expiring funding streams to the provinces, to share in the cost of rent supplement programs that the provinces will manage. In this way, the cost of continuing to support low income co-op households will be shared between the federal government and the level of government with jurisdiction over housing.



(Above) Sundance Place  
(right) Davidson Creek  
Sherwood Park.



## In Edmonton

During a public meeting on this issue at Edmonton City Hall his spring, Deryl Thompson, the president of Edmonton's Keegano Housing Co-op, said if nothing is

Thompson.

Ben Henderson, city councillor for Ward 1, called the situation "worrisome" and said pulling \$2 billion out of affordable housing



## Additional Resources

**Northern Alberta Cooperative Housing Association,** <http://www.nacha.ca/>

**Southern Alberta Cooperative Housing Association,** <http://www.sacha-coop.ca/>

**Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada)** [www.chfcanada.coop](http://www.chfcanada.coop)

**Alberta Fact Sheet on Cooperative Housing,** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/buho/gucoho/fash/fash\\_001.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/buho/gucoho/fash/fash_001.cfm)

**Alberta Community and Cooperative Association,** <http://acca.coop/>

**Edmonton Families fear loss of federal housing subsidy,** Edmonton Sun, <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2015/04/20/edmonton-families-fear-loss-of-federal-housing-subsidy>

**Housing Co-ops in Edmonton,** [http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/about\\_3a.asp?Prov=AB&Region=AB2](http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/about_3a.asp?Prov=AB&Region=AB2)



*Co-op in Riverdale, and Housing Co-op in*



done, homelessness will increase.

"I think we need to be in the business of ending homelessness, not be in the business of creating homelessness, and that's exactly what is going to happen when this federal support for low income families comes to an end," said Thompson.

"These vulnerable individuals, as you might expect, include the elderly, people on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, people without much option," said

at a time when Edmonton, and other municipalities, are in the midst of an affordable housing crisis could force low income households into homelessness.

"You cannot pull \$2 billion out of a system already underfunded and expect it not to have an effect," Henderson said. "We need to find ways to reinvest to make sure that we do not lose housing, and continue to build and grow the affordability of the housing that we have."



*by Cody Spencer and Jessie Singer*

The City of Edmonton believes that access to safe, adequate and affordable housing is fundamental to the physical, economic and social well-being of Edmontonians. Here is a snapshot of current city initiatives in affordable housing.

### **Affordable Housing Strategy**

The City of Edmonton is completing a new Affordable Housing Strategy to guide future involvement in housing. This project was started in January and will be completed in the fall of 2015. The Affordable Housing Strategy project is an opportunity to have an open discussion about the City's role in affordable housing. Between March and May 2015, the project team held a series of stakeholder engagement events for the projects, ranging from interviews, focus groups, workshops and online surveys.

These events were very productive, with more than 300 people providing their input. A report summarizing the stakeholder input is available at <http://www.edmonton.ca/affordablehousing>. The final Affordable Housing Strategy will be submitted to Edmonton City Council in fall 2015.

### **Surplus school sites and Blatchford**

The City is also working to develop affordable housing on 17 surplus school sites located throughout the city. Current work for this program includes engaging with residents in three neighbourhoods—Sakaw, Ogilvie Ridge and Keheewin—to explore housing options in the context of community needs. Another important project is developing a plan to achieve the 20 per cent affordable housing target in the Blatchford neighbourhood.

### **Social housing in Edmonton**

Social housing provides safe and adequate housing for thousands of low-income households. The majority of these tenants rent on a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) basis, which means tenants pay no more than 30 per cent of their household income on shelter costs.

One of the most important issues facing municipalities across Canada is the expiry of long-term federal operating agreements for social housing projects. (see p. 8) These subsidies, established by the federal government from the 1950s to the 1990s, were scheduled to be in place for periods between 25 and 50 years. The subsidies were designed to pay debt on social housing mortgages and to assist with operating deficits resulting from the difference between revenue (rents paid by low-income households) and operating costs.

Initially, it was assumed that once mortgages matured, housing projects would be able to continue offering affordable rent levels without subsidies. However, this is not the case as RGI rents are not sufficient for providers to break even and many buildings require expensive capital repair or replacements. Despite continued need, federal funding for social housing nationally has been in decline since the early 1990s.

In Edmonton, social housing makes up a significant portion of the affordable housing stock—approximately 11,600 units. With federal funding for social housing coming to an end in Edmonton, thousands of low-income households will be at risk of losing their homes.

In response to this issue, Mayor Don Iveson formed the Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group (SHRAG) last summer. The group, made up of a mix of housing providers and funders, non-profit agencies and developers, was asked to develop recommendations for actions the City of Edmonton and its partners can take to facilitate the regeneration of Edmonton's aging social housing stock. (see p. 6) The group submitted its summary report to the mayor in June

2015 with 11 recommendations.

The report is available at [www.edmonton.ca/socialhousing](http://www.edmonton.ca/socialhousing).

*Cody Spencer and Jessie Singer are planners in Housing and Homelessness at the City of Edmonton.*



*Under construction, Boyle Renaissance tower before it was opened in the spring of 2014. The city-led redevelopment is located at 9505 105 Ave.*

## **City of Edmonton's current affordable housing initiatives**



## Jay Freeman's Top Ten List How to Address the Affordable Housing Issue

10. Create national and provincial housing strategies
9. All three orders of government must work together
8. Provide adequate support services
7. Deal with NIMBYism. (Not In My Back-yard attitudes)
6. Bust the myth that "homeless people choose to be homeless."
5. Engage the private sector
4. Build community capacity
3. Involve the Aboriginal community in a real and meaningful way
2. Build inclusive communities
1. Establish dedicated sustainable funding for the creation of more affordable housing.

*Jay Freeman is the Executive Director of Housing & Homelessness at the City of Edmonton.*



### Additional Resources

**Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, affordable housing,** <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/affordablehousing/>

**Realtors Association of Edmonton, latest market statistics,** <http://www.ereb.com/News&Events/LatestMarketStatistics.html>

**Built to Last: Strengthening the Foundation of Housing in Canada,** Steve Pomeroy, Federal of Canadian Municipalities, [http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/FCM/Built to Last Strengthening the foundations of housing in Canada EN.pdf](http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/FCM/Built%20to%20Last%20Strengthening%20the%20foundations%20of%20housing%20in%20Canada%20EN.pdf)

**Safe Accommodations for Queer Edmonton Youth,** facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Safe-Accommodations-For-Queer-Edmonton-Youth/322347157955366>

**CMHC, Rental Market Report, Alberta Highlights,** [http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64483/64483\\_2014\\_B02.pdf](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64483/64483_2014_B02.pdf)



*When we talk about affordable housing, it often takes the shape of a dry public policy discussion. But the reality is, housing is both personal and public. As Ryan Dexter remarks below: “The place we call home structures our relationship with our public life.” We asked a group of Edmontonians to tell us about where they live and what affordable housing means to them.*

**Ryan Dexter**

After completing his bachelor’s studies, and landing an entry level job, he decided to move out of his mother’s condo and live with a friend who owns a house in south Edmonton. “After my friend moved to Texas, I found different housing, where I lived with two other people, who were unemployed and living on the bare minimum. Now, I will be living with a friend in downtown Edmonton, or in the West End. I believe that affordable housing is essential, as the place we call home structures our relationship with our public life.”

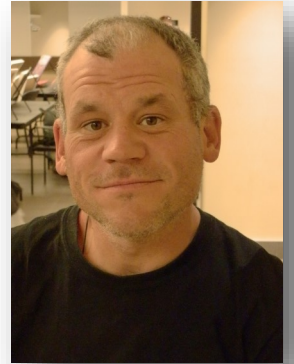


**Linda Dumont**

Linda lives in a 100-year-old house with two daughters and a grandson near 106A Ave. and 114<sup>th</sup> St. She found the house through the Central Edmonton Community Land Trust that had acquired more than a dozen older homes in the inner city. Working as a newspaper editor, freelance writer and yoga instructor, Linda says that “Edmonton definitely needs more affordable housing.” She benefitted from a rent-to-own arrangement with the land trust between 2002 and 2012 before the trust was disbanded in 2013. Now a home owner, Linda says she is thankful for the stable housing it has provided. One of the challenges, she said however, is finding the money to cover the inevitable costs of repairing and maintaining an old house.

**Bruce Mitchell**

Bruce has been homeless for the past three years, living in a shelter in winter and outside in the summer months. Up until being laid off last November, Bruce worked as a labourer but still could not find or afford a home of his own. He recently went into a De Tox program and is now working to regain his health and sobriety. The problem he now faces is

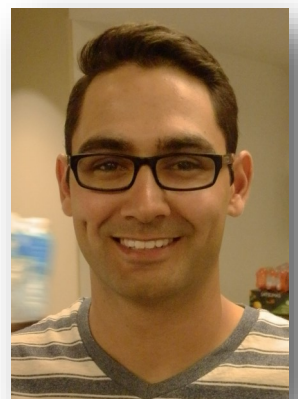


# So, where do you live?

that with the little he receives in Alberta Works support payments, the only places he can find to live are occupied by people who are heavy drinkers. “We don’t have enough safe housing that most people can afford,” he said.

**Daymond Khan**

Daymond is a 24-year-old recent graduate of MacEwan University with an arts degree in Political Science and Economics. He currently lives with his mother and sister in a three bedroom condo in Bannerman in the city’s northeast. With a student loan, he is living at home to save money until he can afford to move out and live with some friends.



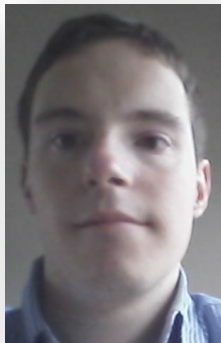
### **Ted Howes**

65-year-old Ted says he has been homeless for most of his life because of drug and alcohol abuse and three failed marriages. Since 2003, however, he has lived in a three bedroom condo in Castledowns where he pays about \$1,150 per month. Ted works at the Bissell Centre's Mobile Assistance Program and sees firsthand the reality of poverty and homelessness. One of the problems, Ted says, is that people have difficulty coming up with the damage deposit. Also, housing is often not available when people need it. "It's a complex issue," he said. "We need to put more money into families."

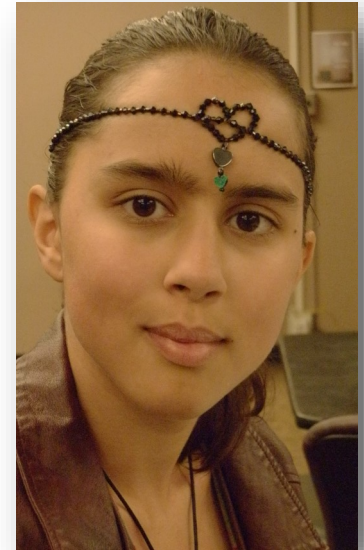


### **Vincent Puhakka**

Vincent moved from Toronto to take a job at the University of Alberta. "I will be the first to acknowledge that in comparison to many others arriving in the city, my situation is enviable in that I have a decent, steady entry level position. However, as I had only four days to search for an apartment after moving here, I was at the mercy of landlords and leasing agents," he said. As a recent graduate, with student loans to pay off, he found a good one bedroom apartment in an area he describes as "far from safe." But he says: "I consider myself lucky to have found somewhere to live in these tight rental conditions."



He said he feels Edmonton desperately needs an increased supply of rental properties. With increasing condo construction in the city, he said, perhaps the municipality can require that long term vacant units (which are common in such developments) be offered up on the rental market, perhaps with a subsidy to ensure affordability.



### **Daysha-Rea Ceron**

Daysha-Rea lives in a three-bedroom home with her mother, three sisters and a brother in Jackson Heights. The 17-year-old grade 11 student and her family, have lived in the Métis Capital Housing Corporation home for six years. She said it's much better than when she was 11 years old and her family had to live in a shelter for six weeks.

### **Ben Lemphers**

Ben Lemphers is a housing worker with the Bissell Centre. He and his wife rent a 1970s walk-up apartment. He thinks the most important affordable housing issue in Edmonton is supply. "Low-income families and individuals lack the money to entice developers to build the low-cost housing they need. The result of this market failure is a deficit of low cost housing units in Edmonton. The public sector should encourage private sector construction of affordable housing through incentives and regulations. Unregulated or unassisted, private developers will build structures with higher rates of return, such as condominiums and detached homes."

### **Isabelle Dena**

Isabelle and her husband immigrated to Canada six years ago and shortly afterwards they set out to find a home. "We were picky about where we wanted to live," she said. "We wanted a home that was in a safe neighbourhood, with good schools and daycares, close to our church and ethnic stores, recreational centres as well as near our friends who are our support system." She said they did research on different neighbourhoods and asked friends and realtors for suggestions. After six months they found the "perfect affordable home." The couple and their three children now live in a three-bedroom single family home in the north-east.



## Cont. from page 3 Affordable Housing

- the 1996 policy to “step out” of housing obligations placing responsibility on provincial and territorial governments, and
- amendment of the *National Housing Act* in 1998 which, in part, commercialized the CMHC.

The results? According to the latest 2014 national data:

- 35,000 are homeless on a given night
- 13,000-33,000 are chronically or episodically homeless
- over 235,000 experience homelessness in a year
- 5,000 live unsheltered
- 180,000 stay in emergency shelters and
- over 50,000 sleep in provincial accommodations such as motels (Gaetz, 2014).

The decline of social assistance and investment in affordable housing was the result of paradoxical policy, said Shapcott. During the 1970s and 1980s, poverty in Canada declined on average below other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states. With poverty on the decline, policymakers did not see a need for continued investment. In fact, the rational provided during funding cuts

was that social assistance inhibited personal growth.

Today, Canada’s income inequality gap is above OECD averages with inequality and poverty rates significantly increasing since the late 1990s. Shapcott states that funding cuts has resulted in:

- Severe shortages of affordable and social housing, which the private rental and ownership markets have been unable to fill;
- Low-income as a result of a sluggish labour market and insufficient social assistance;
- Lack of special needs, transitional and supportive housing;
- Substandard and old housing stock.

In closing, Shapcott outlined what a comprehensive national housing plan must look like. It must be:

- Rights based;
- Collaborative among all levels of government, indigenous communities and community members;
- Contain prevention strategies;
- Affordable;
- Create housing trust funds.



### Want to volunteer for the ESPC?

Get involved with some of our existing and new volunteer opportunities!

We are looking for people who can:

- research and / or write reviews
- help in the community
- serve on the board
- plan events / fundraise

For more information, visit [edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca) and click on Donate

## Looking for research advice?

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides **FREE** research advice to social advocacy organizations in Edmonton! Are you seeking publications or statistics in social policy areas such as:

<b><i>Housing</i></b>	<b><i>Transportation</i></b>	<b><i>Health</i></b>
<b><i>Education</i></b>	<b><i>Food Security</i></b>	<b><i>Income Security Programs</i></b>
<b><i>Urban Issues</i></b>	<b><i>Social Services</i></b>	<b><i>Women</i></b>
<b><i>Disabilities</i></b>	<b><i>Poverty</i></b>	<b><i>Immigration</i></b>
<b><i>Families</i></b>	<b><i>Children and Child Care</i></b>	<b><i>... and more!</i></b>
<b><i>Seniors</i></b>	<b><i>Indigenous Peoples</i></b>	
<b><i>Labour Force</i></b>	<b><i>Crime and Safety</i></b>	

If you need a hand finding information about local social issues or related topics, contact Research Assistant Manuel Escoto at 780-423-2031 ext. 351 or by email at [manuele@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:manuele@edmontonsocialplanning.ca)



## Veteran video producer and digital media consultant joins ESPC board

Dave Trautman, a veteran of more than 36 years of video production in a variety of working environments, is one of the newest members of the board.

In 1988 he formed a media production consulting firm called EncycloMEDIA Ltd, to provide project management to organizations who undertake interactive training and instructional projects.

He developed a project management course for the Digital Media and Information Technology (DMIT) program at Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. He spent three years providing expertise on video conferencing and collaborative technologies for Alberta Human Services.

Dave has been dedicated to the continuing development of other video producers by serving on advisory boards at NAIT and Grant MacEwan from time to time. Dave was the Faculty of Education's TV producer for ten years where he was responsible for the production of computer-aided instruction and courseware.

Dave went on to serve in the Faculty of Extension's Academic Technologies for Learning Centre for three years offering guidance and mentorship to professors who wanted to enhance their classroom instruction with digital media.

Dave's expertise in digital and interactive media allowed him to become a consultant to ACCESS Network, SuperChannel, Lateral Communications, The Becker Group, The Provincial Archives Audio-Visual Services, the Canadian Armed Forces, Bombardier, General Dynamics, and Alberta Human Services. He has, more recently, taught at both NAIT's digital media program and the Faculty of Extension's Local Authority Administration online course.

He is currently president of his community league, was the first chairman of the Edmonton Professional Arts

Council and was vice-president of the Film and Video Arts Society.



*Dave Trautman*

He is also a lifetime member of Uncles at Large, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, the Society of Television Lighting Directors and has earned awards for innovative programming, production design and interactive simulations.

Dave was also an award-winning community program coordinator for seven years while producing public access television for Shaw Communications.

Dave is currently working to help Edmonton City Council improve their public consultation and engagement process. For the past four years, he has been concerned with the development of a new public engagement policy for the city.



# About the Edmonton Social Planning Council

## 2014-2015

### Board of Directors

Anne Stevenson (President)  
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Bridget Stirling  
David Trautman  
Candas Jane Dorsey  
Erin LaRocque  
Madeleine Baldwin  
Gwen Feeny  
Cody Spencer  
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John Kolkman  
**Research Coordinator**  
Terry Jorden  
**Communications Officer**  
Manuel Escoto  
**Research Assistant**  
Stephanie Haar  
**Executive Assistant**

The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research – particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

### Our Vision

A healthy, just and inclusive community.

### Our Mission

The Edmonton Social Planning Council provides leadership within the community by addressing and researching social issues, informing public discussion and influencing social policy.

### As a Member

- support our efforts to remain on the forefront in dealing with social issues
- make it possible for us to distribute our materials freely and widely to all
- receive our newsletters, fact sheets, and other publications
- be eligible to vote at ESPC AGMs and have a say in the direction of the organization
- be eligible to serve on the board of directors
- advertise your non-profit events in the *fACTivist*

For more information on becoming a member visit  
[edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://edmontonsocialplanning.ca)

## Connect With Us



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