

## Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

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### **Provincial budget raises danger of growth of homelessness**

Deep cuts to rent supplements, much reduced capital spending on affordable housing, and less funds for welfare in the 2013/14 Alberta budget concern organizations working to assure housing security for all.

“Six and a half million dollars has been cut from the funding for rent supplements. These small supports to people who have housing, but would be in danger of becoming homeless because of unaffordable rents otherwise, are already in short supply. Now, with a strong economy and people moving to Alberta, demands on the inadequate supply of rental units is increasing,” says Jim Gurnett, communications representative of Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH).

“The budget reduces by over \$36 million the program that delivers income support to those not working. Much of that is for housing allowances. This 16% cut will have frightening consequences for people needing welfare.”

ECOHH is concerned that in addition to severe cuts to programs to help people from becoming homeless, there is almost no change in the funds being provided for the Plan to End Homelessness. “Funding has never been adequate for this initiative, but it was increasing over the past years. Now it has plateaued, despite every municipality in Alberta still having thousands of homeless people.”

The Edmonton Community Plan on Housing identifies a need for 22 000 more units of non-market affordable housing in Edmonton alone. In the current budget year funding was only adequate to approve 200 units for all of Alberta. The new budget says another 200 will be approved for all of Alberta, but instead of the \$40 million in last year's budget for this there is only \$15 million in the new budget.

“Affordable and adequate housing is essential if families are to avoid a wide range of health and social challenges in their lives, but there is no commitment to see such housing being built,” notes Gurnett.

“It is also disappointing to see no funds set aside in the new budget to move forward with the promised poverty reduction strategy. Vital major initiatives like this cannot be funded with scraps here and there in the Human Services ministry. This work will not happen without adequate funding,” he charges.

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For comment contact Jim Gurnett (780-218-6989 or [jimgurnett@yahoo.ca](mailto:jimgurnett@yahoo.ca)). ECOHH is a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to decent affordable housing being available for all people.