

ECOHH has submitted this letter to the editor to the Edmonton Journal to comment on the March 6 provincial budget.

Information related to housing will be found in the estimates for the ministries of Human Services and Municipal Affairs, which are available on line at the Government of Alberta website. Human Services: pp. 111-118; Municipal Affairs: pp. 171-187. Also of interest are the business plan documents of both ministries (pp. 53-58 & 83-87).

To the editor:

The Alberta budget is disappointing for tens of thousands of Edmontonians worrying about housing. Despite record numbers of people moving here, there is no new money for rent supplements to assist families to find or keep affordable housing in a market with rising rents and few vacancies. The budget also fails to provide sufficient funds to build new affordable housing to address rising demand.

Increased funds for capital investment in seniors housing and more money to support the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness are welcome. However, this will do little to improve the situation of the much larger number of people living in unsafe, unaffordable, or overcrowded housing. Even the new money for seniors housing will not address identified needs to improve unsafe conditions such as facilities without sprinkler systems.

The budget trumpets a priority on increasing family and community safety by addressing root causes, but fails to back this with dollars to tackle the shortfall of thousands of units of low-income housing needed in Alberta, despite the evidence not having a home is a major reason for unsafe lives and communities.

The only significant new money in the budget for housing is to upgrade existing social housing. With over 60 percent of the current stock rated in fair to poor condition, this one-year injection of funds is only going to ensure there is no further deterioration. It will do little to increase the number of available units or improve the quality of what exists.

Talk of a commitment to quality of life for struggling Albertans is not supported by the inadequate investments the new budget makes in affordable housing.

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