

# Previous Council Direction & Background

## ***Stronger Foundations Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy and National Housing Strategy***

### Background

The Government of Alberta released [Stronger Foundations](#), the 10-year Strategic Plan (The Strategy) for Affordable Housing and also introduced the Alberta Housing Amendment Act (Bill 78) on 2021 November 1. The Strategy is a result of the work and recommendations of the [Affordable Housing Review Panel](#), appointed by the Government of Alberta in 2020. The panel was tasked with conducting an independent evaluation of Alberta's affordable housing system with the aim to "ensure that Alberta will continue to have a safe, suitable affordable housing system that is financially sustainable".

The panel's recommendations called for the development of the Strategic Plan. Areas addressed at that time included responsibilities related to governance and planning; development incentives; asset transfer; financing; and funding. Along with other stakeholders, The City provided feedback on the panel recommendations and consistent input into the potential adjustments to the role of municipalities that would be addressed through the Strategic Plan.

Our positions emphasized the need to: focus on growing and preserving housing supply for low income Albertans; align responsibilities by order of government to the most appropriate revenue source, recognize the limitations of regressive property tax mechanisms to fund programs which target inequality; and engage with municipalities, Indigenous communities and people in need of affordable housing. Bill 78 is the only binding component of what was released in early November. In contrast to the Strategy, the Bill was created without consultation with housing providers or municipalities.

### **Stronger Foundations Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy Overview**

The Strategy has stated it intent to the following actions items, which fall under under five key areas:

1. **Support Albertans most in need:** Continue to protect the most vulnerable and ensure housing eligibility is fair, clear, and equitable.
2. **Improve access:** Make it simpler for Albertans to access affordable housing supports, and easier for housing providers to deliver those supports.
3. **Increase capacity, planning and governance:** Enable more collaboration and local decision-making and provide more flexibility and capacity to meet local needs.
4. **Enhance sustainability and efficiency:** Make the affordable housing system more sustainable by enabling innovative operating models.
5. **Enable growth and investment:** Use innovative approaches for partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors to grow the supply of affordable housing.

The province's affordable housing strategy aims to:

- Increase the number of households supported from 57,000 to 82,000 by 2032, an increase of 25,000 households (40%) province wide. This would be 13,000 net-new affordable housing units and 12,000 rent supplements by 2032.
- Address the current affordable housing waiting list of 24,000, province wide. Calgary Housing Company's waitlist is currently around 5,000 households.
- Provide 1,800 new and regenerated affordable housing units over the next three years.
- Maintain the 26,700-unit provincially owned portfolio which is, on average, 35 years old and in urgent need of repair.

- Grow the supply of housing for vulnerable people, those in moderate need and affordable market or near-market housing. Expand supportive housing, seniors housing and Indigenous housing based on needs.
- Allow for new operating and funding models including mixed-income developments.
- Reduce the province's role in property ownership (transfer of assets) and move from a prescriptive regulatory format to focus on outcomes.
- Ensure housing management body board appointments are competency based.

### **Bill 78, *Alberta Housing Amendment Act, 2021, Overview***

Bill 78 amends the *Alberta Housing Act* to enable key aspects of the Strategy and includes the following key amendments:

- In addition to the current definition of social housing, a new term of "Affordable Housing" has been added to the Act and is not clearly defined.
- Allows the Minister to unilaterally define what is considered affordable housing, enter into "joint ventures" or private partnerships to provide affordable housing, and empowers the Minister to make decisions regarding real estate i.e. borrowing.
- Enables the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to employ staff.
- Gives the Minister authority to require specific knowledge or skills for housing management body boards
- Does not provide a legislated mechanism where financial proceeds from real estate sales or asset transfers would be directed into affordable housing in the future.

As detailed in Attachment 2, Administration has outlined specific concerns regarding The Strategy and the Bill 78.

## National Housing Strategy

In 2017, the federal government announced the [National Housing Strategy](#) (NHS), a 10-year, \$40B plan, to help reduce homelessness and improve the affordability, availability and quality of housing for Canadians in need<sup>1</sup>. In 2018, the plan increased to \$55B. The NHS aims at creating 150,000 new housing units and securing housing for 530,000 families in housing need, as well as repair and renew of 300,000+ housing units and reduce chronic homelessness by 50 per cent. The NHS is implemented through partnerships between the federal and provincial/territorial governments and is overseen by CMHC. The *National Housing Strategy Act, 2019* recognizes the human right to housing. This aligns with the CMHC Board adopted objective that "by 2030, everyone in Canada has a home that they can afford and that meets their needs".

There are three main programs of the NHS. National Housing Co-investment Fund (NHCF), Rental Construction Finance Initiative (RCFI), and Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI). A new fourth program of the NHS is the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). There is a current opportunity to influence the design of the Housing Accelerator Fund.

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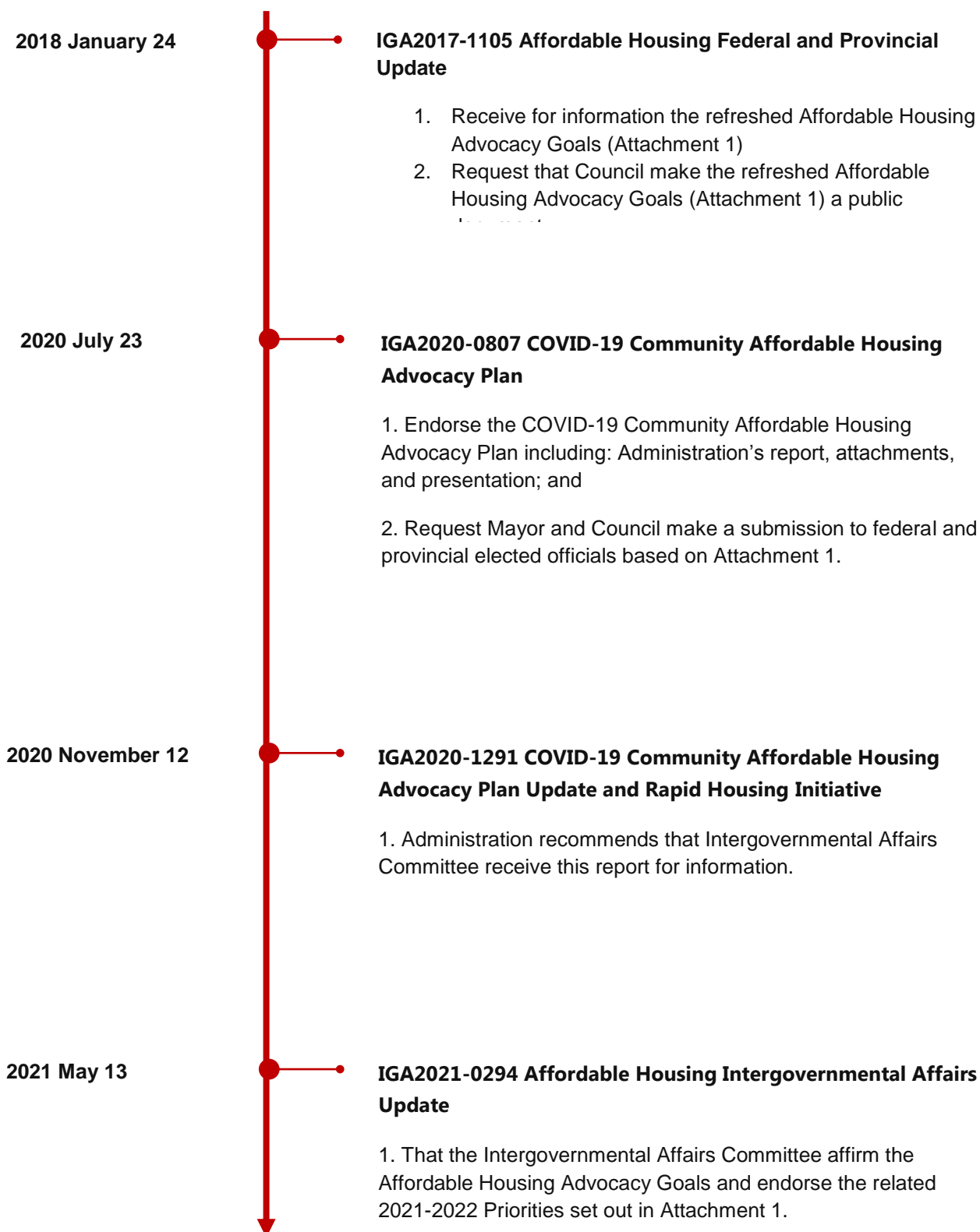
Council received for information, on 2018 January 24, the Affordable Housing Federal and Provincial Update, and 2018 Affordable Housing Advocacy Goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada: There is someone waiting on a list for [affordable housing](#) in more than 283,000 households across the country. There are ~ 1.7M households who live in core housing need ([Global News, Nov. 2019](#))

On 2021 May 13, Council affirmed the established 2018 Affordable Housing Advocacy Goals and Updated 2021-2022 Priorities.

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## Bylaws, Regulations, Council Policies

A City goal, as per the Corporate Affordable Housing Strategy (CAHS), is to increase the supply of affordable housing to ensure people at all income levels can live and work in every neighbourhood of our city. Administration continues to support and remove barriers for the non-market housing providers, market developers, and other stakeholders to build new affordable housing units through expedited approvals, leveraging city land, and advocating for new funding programs from the other orders of government.