

# Alberta's Opportunity

BECAUSE EVERYBODY NEEDS A HOME

## AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY FOR ALBERTA

*Right now, thousands of Albertans  
can't find a safe, affordable place to live.*

There aren't enough affordable homes and rental spaces available to meet rising demand. As more and more people flock to Alberta in search of a better life, as our economy's demand for skilled labour continues to rise, it becomes crucial to address this problem with workable solutions. An economy cannot reach its full potential without homes for its workers, nor can individuals and families take full advantage of Alberta's vast opportunity without an affordable place to live.

The Alberta Liberal Caucus has a plan to meet this crisis head on. And by doing so, we'll help Alberta move forward, toward a sustainable future.



*We want to make it easier for Albertans  
to find a home.*

### Guiding Principles

- Every Albertan needs a home.
- An effective government uses the legislative tools and financial resources at its disposal to make it easier for builders and communities to create affordable housing and for Albertans to find a home.
- Good solutions balance the rights and responsibilities of renters and landlords, encourage home ownership and empower municipalities.

Our policy will:

- Create 10 000 units of affordable housing in Alberta within five years
- Ensure that Albertans who need it have access to safe and affordable housing
- Protect tenants from rent gouging while respecting landlords
- Make home ownership affordable for more Albertans

alberta liberal caucus

# CREATING AFFORDABLE HOUSING



## Secondary Suites

The Alberta Liberal Caucus would change provincial legislation to allow the creation of secondary suites in detached, semi-detached, and duplex dwellings. We would also offer grants of up to \$5000 to homeowners who create new secondary suites.

## Give Cities and Towns the Ability to Plan (Inclusionary Zoning)

By amending the Municipal Government Act, we will give cities and towns the power to include – if they choose – minimum percentages of affordable housing in any new developments or redevelopments in their community.

## Land Transfers

Purchasing land can account for up to 20-40% of the cost of affordable housing construction. To reduce this cost, the Alberta Liberal Caucus plan will swap or donate land to local land trusts to hold in perpetuity for affordable housing. Tax breaks will be used to encourage private landowners to contribute their property to affordable housing projects.

In Calgary and Edmonton, the number of families and individuals at risk of losing their homes thanks to escalating rent and condo conversions outnumbers the current homeless population by a factor of 20 or more. Our college and university residences are full. Albertans on fixed incomes are facing rent increases that they find difficult and sometimes impossible to manage. And home ownership is becoming increasingly challenging for thousands of working and middle class families.

## Incentives for Builders

Our plan would encourage local governments to freeze, reduce or eliminate property taxes on affordable rental units for a set number of years by providing corresponding grants to municipalities to make up for the lost revenue.

We will work with municipalities to use density bonuses to allow builders to create more affordable housing at a lower cost per unit.

The Alberta Liberal plan would also encourage municipalities to eliminate development fee levies, fast-track building permits and waive permit fees.

## Provide Matching Provincial Funding to Federal Initiatives

Our plan would continue the current Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Agreement. We would match funding with the federal government's Affordable Housing Trust and the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Housing Trust.

## Encourage Home Ownership

The Alberta Liberal Caucus would extend financial assistance to moderate income earners who wish to buy their own home, and partner with the private sector and community housing agencies to accomplish this goal. Our policy would not only help up to 5000 families achieve home ownership – it would free up their old addresses for new renters.

# PROTECTING RENTERS

## Portable Housing Allowances and Rent Supplements

The Alberta Liberal plan would connect allowances and supplements to the renter, not the unit. Portable housing allowances and rent supplements give renters more flexibility in tight market conditions, making a wider range of rental spaces affordable to them. Subsidizing the unit only creates waiting lists.

## Microcredit for Low-Income Renters

An Alberta Liberal government would extend low- or no-interest loans to qualifying low-income earners to cover the cost of the security deposit and first month's rent. This initial cash outlay is the biggest impediment to working homeless people in search of affordable homes.

*It is important to note that the portable housing allowances, rent supplements and microcredit offered to Albertans using social assistance will not result in a reduction of their other benefits (AISH, SFI, etc.).*



## Enhance Tenant Protection

When vacancy rates are very low, tenants need additional protection:

- Our plan establishes a vacancy rate trigger. When implemented, this trigger places a two-year moratorium on conversions of rental properties to condominiums—except those developers who agree to replace any rental units lost due to condo conversions with new rental properties.
- Our plan also limits rent increases to once per year.
- We will institute a one-time, one year long, temporary rent regulation measure that limits rent increases within that period to a maximum of 10%. This will lessen the risk of tenants losing their homes, while giving communities and builders time to create additional affordable housing spaces.

## Expand the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service

This pilot project, currently operating in Edmonton, is intended to reduce costs, wait times and the burden on the courts to resolve landlord-tenant disputes. The project comes up for review later this year; if it proves to have achieved its purpose, we will expand the service to other Alberta communities.

# GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

To insure that the housing issue receives the attention it needs, we will appoint a Deputy Minister within Municipal Affairs, responsible for housing.

## From *Alberta Horizons* to *Alberta's Opportunity*

*In the spring of 2006, the Alberta Liberal Caucus introduced Alberta Horizons, a discussion of Alberta's future. Ideas arising from two of the four themes of Alberta Horizons—economic sustainability and social development—have led to “Creating Affordable Housing,” the Alberta Liberal Caucus plan to create affordable housing for Albertans.*

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*“Every Albertan needs and deserves a safe, affordable place to live. A responsible government can give citizens, municipalities, and businesses the tools and incentives they need to create solid, attractive, affordable housing. A consistent supply of affordable housing is essential to sustaining Alberta's prosperity, and that's what this plan delivers.”*

— Kevin Taft, MLA  
Leader of the Alberta Liberal Caucus

*“In October 2006, we made a commitment to develop an affordable housing plan that would serve the needs of Albertans. We've delivered a solution that will create 10,000 affordable dwellings within five years.”*

—Dave Taylor, MLA  
Shadow Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing



## Vision and Values of the Alberta Liberal Caucus

### Our Vision

The Alberta Liberal Caucus looks ahead to an amazing future for Alberta. We see:

- unparalleled opportunity and enduring prosperity,
- citizens flourishing in a healthy environment, and
- fairness, humanity and generosity,
- open, accountable government.

### Our Values

We Value:

- an Alberta that works for all Albertans,
- equity, care and compassion
- individual rights and freedoms,
- the nurturing of every Albertan's talents and aspirations,
- building strong communities,
- the courage and foresight to grasp great possibilities,
- sustaining our natural environment for future generations,
- thrift and stewardship,
- universal, excellent public health care,
- imagination and initiative,
- flexible, exceptional public education,
- sound planning and management, and
- a flourishing economy based on an energetic private sector and an effective public sector,
- democracy with room for dissent.

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