

# KEY TALKING POINT: Transparent Capital Planning

March, 2020

## Issue

There is a need for more seniors housing across the province. An estimated 3,300 new units are required each year for a growing seniors' population that need access to affordable housing and support services. Unfortunately, the government's housing data and capital development plans are not accessible to the sector, or to the public. Decisions are being made without publishing a prioritization list or planning methodology. This is leading to overbuilding/vacancies in some communities, and a lack of housing options/wait lists in others.

## Key Considerations

- The majority of provincial capital funding has already been allocated according to a plan that has never been published. The sector is unaware of what projects will be receiving funding, and if there will be any new capital investments beyond these allocations.
- It is not clear how provincial funding will be apportioned between seniors housing projects and other forms of housing, and if municipalities will be required to address provincial funding gaps.
- Capital projects take at least five years from project approval to building occupancy, and that is only if the capital funding is received on time. The time requirements for new construction are grossly underestimated when funding decisions and approvals are made. Government delays in decision making and onerous tendering processes create unnecessary expenditures for housing organizations and municipalities that are responsible for financing portions of these projects and managing contracts.
- The industry responsible for meeting seniors housing needs is unable to access capacity planning information, prioritization matrixes and other data from the Province. This is impeding collaborative community approaches, and does not maximize expertise and resources.
- Albertans are concerned that affordable options will not be available to meet their needs. Due to a lack of desired housing options, many seniors remain underserved, or are dependent on caregivers that cannot adequately offer support. Overall wellness deteriorates, creating more demand for costly interventions and crisis response within the health system.
- Public awareness of provincial housing development plans allows seniors and caregivers to make informed decisions about their current and future needs.
- As much of the government's seniors housing inventory is approaching the end of its lifespan, repairs and maintenance costs are increasing each year. Funding allocations must align to capital maintenance and environmental initiatives, as well as changes to building codes and fire safety modernization.
- When providers in the same location, with limited potential residents/tenants, offer similar services, it increases vacancies and the costly duplication of services.
- Various housing models and options need to be available so that seniors have choice and an opportunity to access the services and supports they require in their community of choice. Approaches need to be flexible and adaptative to changing community needs.

## Our Asks

- **A capital funding plan, based on transparent and publicly accessible data, project budgets and analytics, needs to be developed and published. This plan should clearly show where there is housing need and priority of projects, with clearly articulated timelines for approvals, development, and completion (i.e. 5 year, 8 year and 10 year plans).**
- **The seniors' housing sector has information and research and must be consulted in the development of the seniors' housing portion of the housing capital funding plan. The sector can provide guidance on private - public partnerships, mixed-use properties, and how to leverage existing assets to reinvest in the housing portfolio.**
- **The government must honour its commitment to improve the transparency of infrastructure decisions by releasing a publicly accessible and easy-to-understand prioritization matrix/rationale methodology.**



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