

TO: UBCM Members
FROM: UBCM Executive
DATE: September 24, 2008
RE: **AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

POLICY PAPER

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2008 CONVENTION

1. DECISION REQUEST

To consider recommendations for UBCM to pursue with the federal and provincial government in relation to the development of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy.

2. INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges in the discussion around affordable housing and homelessness is to identify the role of local government in this process: What is the local government role and/or interest in affordable housing and homelessness?

Local governments have traditionally been responsible for a number of core activities – police, fire protection, roads, water supply, sewage and solid waste, public transit, and land use planning and regulation. The provision of affordable housing, homeless shelters and other similar social policy initiatives fall outside of local governments core responsibilities. As a number of local governments pointed out when surveyed on this issue “the primary responsibility for the provision of social housing rests with the federal and provincial orders of government”.

The reality is that local governments will bear the brunt of the economic and social problems if these issues are ignored. There is growing public concern that action is needed to address affordable housing and homelessness. As one local government noted:

Affordable housing impacts all residents of a community, regardless of income. Residents need to be able to live and work in the same community. Without affordable housing, people may be forced into longer commute times, thus impacting transportation costs, personal stress, the health of the environment (e.g. rise in carbon emissions) and the health of the community (e.g. takes away from family time, ability to volunteer etc).

What is required is strong leadership and a vision at all levels of government to ensure that our citizens are safely, adequately and appropriately housed, combined with a powerful and effective communications strategy. We need to move from crisis-based reactive management and short term solutions to a national strategy that fully addresses the challenges of housing and homelessness in Canada with long-term solutions and strategic investments. Housing must be addressed in a holistic context of the social constructs and the well-being of a community. We must include not only the political arena but also the private sector developers and non-profit agencies to create sustained funding and strategic plans (with accountability, measurable targets and timelines) to ensure long term solutions to affordable housing.

A report by Smart Growth BC entitled “Creating Market and Non-Market Affordable Housing” highlights some of the economic factors that are driving the issue:

- *the real estate markets of Kelowna, Vancouver and Victoria made the list of the top 50 most expensive cities, compared with median income, to purchase real estate in the world;*
- *the amount of pre-tax household income needed to service the cost of owning a home stood at 65% for a standard two-storey home, 46.5% for a townhouse, and 33% for a condo. The Vancouver housing market . . . 70% of income is needed to service housing costs for a home;*
- *past two years alone housing prices in BC have increased by 30%;*
- *30% of residents are renters in BC, during the 1990s only 12.5% of new housing units built were for rental housing. Low-rise apartments house 41% of renters.*
- *The real estate industry alone can no longer provide the amount and range of affordable housing required by low and middle income earners – including teachers, trades people, nurses, bus drivers, daycare providers, artists, grocery store staff, and the others who are the backbone of BC communities.*

Low-income renters are feeling the affordability squeeze the hardest. The availability of rental accommodation in many communities is at its lowest level in years, for example, the vacancy rate in Metro Vancouver is reported to be less than 1%.

The general concept of affordable housing covers a broad range housing needs faced by local communities:

- rental housing;
- housing for young families/working poor;
- availability of housing for local work force;
- seniors housing;
- housing for the disabled;
- housing for the homeless.

There are linkages between all of these issues, the latter requiring greater coordination with the provincial government as they require the provision of social services and health care services if they are to be implemented.

In the case of the homelessness issue a recent report prepared by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the United States entitled “Annual Homeless Assessment Report” estimated that the number of chronically homeless people living in the streets in the United States dropped by about 30% between 2005 and 2007. Federal officials in the United States have attributed much of the decline to the “housing first” strategy that has been adopted across the country. While there is still some discussion around this strategy, over the past few years there appears to be a consensus emerging that an integrated approach is needed to effectively address the homelessness problem:

- ‘Home first’ approach – need to establish low-cost housing as first step to deal with homeless individuals;
- wrap around social services to deal with income and food needs;
- wrap around health services to address mental health and/or addiction problems;

There appears to be some recognition to a limited degree by the province and the federal government that they have a role to play in providing social housing, social assistance and health care to the homeless.

The federal government, in the past, played a major role in setting national housing policy and the goals of an affordable housing strategy. In addition, the federal government provided direct financial assistance in the development of social housing. What is not clear today is the role of the federal government in dealing with affordable housing and homelessness issues, it raises the questions: Do we need a national policy on affordable housing?

Currently the federal government appears to be taking the position that housing is a provincial responsibility, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the division of powers under the Canadian Constitution, it has been deemed to fall under the provincial jurisdiction for civil and property rights. The federal government is in the process of transferring the administration for social housing to the provinces through federal-provincial agreements.

The federal government appears to be moving to limit its general role in affordable housing to:

- funding subsidies for housing projects until the existing subsidy agreement for each of them expires – in British Columbia these agreements are expected to expire over the next couple of years;
- responsibility for housing programs in aboriginal reserves.

The provincial governments are seen as taking on a larger role in the development of housing policy:

- overseeing social housing delivery and management;
- providing programme and legislative responses on provincial needs and resources.

Given this apparent shift in policy between the federal and provincial government it is not clear what the implications are to local government. There appears in British Columbia the expectation at the provincial level that local governments should take on greater responsibility for affordable housing and homelessness, although there have been no discussions with local government on the nature of these new responsibilities or the tacit meaning of this shift in duties in the future.

It raises the question as to whether or not there is a need at the federal and provincial level to explore what the future role, if any, local government should play in the development and implementation of affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.

3. BACKGROUND

The federal and provincial government and local government have a number of different tools that they can use to address the affordable housing and homeless issues. All of the different levels of government have taken action related to this matter.

Federal Action

Federal government has provided some policy direction, funding and tax breaks to encourage measures to deal with the affordable housing and homelessness issue. The federal government announced a total of \$2 billion dollars over two years (2007-2009) for a number of housing initiatives – Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), Affordable Housing Initiative, Affordable Housing Trust and the Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS) – all of which are set to expire in 2009.

Under the Homeless Partnering Strategy, the federal government is providing \$269.6 million in funding over two years to prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada. The strategy includes the Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) which is a community-based program - there are 60 designated communities in Canada that receive funding under the program. To receive funding under this program a local government is required to develop a community plan and create a social planning committee. There are 7 local governments which have been designated in British Columbia – Kelowna, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Nelson, Prince George, Vancouver and Victoria.

The federal government has indicated that it is undertaking a review of the funding it is currently providing for affordable housing and no decision will be made about further funding until after the review is complete.

Provincial Action

The Provincial Homelessness Initiative is funded in part through the second phase of the **Canada-BC Affordable Housing Agreement**. The federal and provincial governments have contributed \$41.7 million each, for a total of almost \$84 million.

The Provincial government has provided policy direction, regulations, funding and tax breaks to encourage measures to address the homeless issue. There are a number of different provincial government ministries involved in dealing with this issue:

- Ministry of Housing and Social Development (BC Housing) – housing, emergency shelters, outreach programs, rent supplements;
- Ministry of Health – mental health and drug addiction, physical health, licensing of community care facilities;
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance – social assistance, employment programs;
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General – police and corrections;
- Ministry of Attorney General – courts, drug court, community court;

The Premier, announced the establishment of the Premier’s Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions at the UBCM conference in September 2004. The Task Force members include the Premier, Ministers responsible for Community Development, Employment and Income Assistance, Health, and Housing, and mayors from the Cities of Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Prince George, New Westminster and Surrey.

In October of 2007 the province announced a new housing strategy entitled “Housing Matters BC” with the following objectives:

1. The homeless have access to stable housing with integrated support services;
2. B.C.'s most vulnerable citizens receive priority for assistance;
3. Aboriginal housing is addressed;
4. Low-income households have improved access to affordable rental housing;
5. Homeownership is supported as an avenue to self-sufficiency;
6. B.C.'s housing and building regulatory system is safe, stable and efficient.

The provincial government has established a \$250 million Endowment Fund for Housing, which is intended to generate \$10 million a year or more in funding. It is not clear however, what this money is for – purchase of SRO housing, seniors housing etc. It is not clear whether or not the province has adopted a housing first strategy to address homelessness or is adopting some other policy.

The provincial government has taken a number of legislative measures to facilitate its housing and homeless strategy:

- amended the Assessment Act to exempt supportive housing from property tax;
- introduced a new Public Health Act with authority to override local government authority in regard to health issues.

The province has undertaken these measures to address obstacles that it feels some local governments have put in place which limit its ability to effectively address affordable housing and homelessness issues. The province also indicated in the 2008 Throne Speech that municipalities with populations over 25,000 identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities for persons with mental illness and addictions.

Local Government Actions

A number of local governments have recognized that the development of affordable housing and homelessness are issues of concern to their local community and have undertaken measures to address them: Langford, Whistler, Victoria, Vancouver, Kamloops, Kelowna, Ucluelet, Revelstoke, Vernon, Langley City, North Vancouver City, Nanaimo to name a few (see Appendix 1 for more information).

Local governments have undertaken a variety of measures to deal with affordable housing and homelessness issues. Outlined below are some of the actions that have been taken:

- provided municipal land for treatment and supportive housing;
- waived fees for non-profit organizations to assist in the development of affordable housing and supportive housing;
- developed housing action plans;
- identified areas in Official Community Plan to locate facilities;
- implemented fast-tracking policy decision-making to assist the construction;
- changed zoning regulations to facilitate construction;
- changed development permit policy to require a certain number of low cost units in new developments.
- provided for secondary suites and/or carriage housing in local neighbourhoods.

- established housing corporations to help promote development of affordable housing and supportive housing (land banks etc.);
- established housing funds for future development of non-profit housing.

However, there are limits as to what local government is able to do to address the problems given its capacity, limited financial resources and legislative authority. In some cases these actions come as trade-offs to other community needs – parks, recreation facilities, increased fire halls etc.

4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

UBCM has undertaken two surveys related to the issue of affordable housing and homelessness.

UBCM undertook a survey of local government actions in response to an announcement in the 2007 Throne Speech that municipalities with populations over 25,000 should identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities for persons with mental illness and addictions. The key issues identified were (see Appendix 2 for details):

- Lack of local capacity – to develop and manage suitable policies and measures to effectively address the issue;
- Absence of Suitable Land/Development Pressures – limited availability of land for development in the community and lack of interest in the development community to build supportive housing;
- Pre-Zoning/Lack of Zoned Sites – avoids public review of land use and discussion of measures to address neighbourhood concerns. Zoning may not always be the appropriate tool to deal with the problem as in some cases the local government may be able to negotiate with a developer as part of a re-zoning/development permit process to obtain some affordable housing units which would not be possible if the land was already zoned;
- Philosophical Opposition – not responsible for health care/affordable housing will address requests when they are brought forward by non-government agencies, with provincial support - there is a general reluctance by some local governments to provide municipal land to “address provincial responsibilities for affordable housing and health care” as it limits future community options;
- NIMBY Syndrome – local residents support general need for facilities, but are not willing to have them located near their properties.

UBCM undertook a second survey that was sent out to all local governments in August 2008. The survey had two major goals. The first goal was to identify the barriers that local governments face in dealing with these issues and potential actions that might be taken by the federal, provincial or local government to address the problems. The second goal was to establish a broad framework that local government might use in dealing with the federal and provincial government in developing a partnership and tools that are needed to make this work more effectively (see Appendix 3 for details).

Over 60 local governments responded to the survey (see Appendix 4 for details). The majority of the responses were from the larger communities. This is not because the

problems do not exist in smaller communities or rural areas, but is largely do to the fact that they lack the resources to deal with it, as was pointed out by a number of the small and rural local governments that responded:

- *the local government does not have the resources (be they personnel or monetary) to deal effectively with the issues of affordable housing and homelessness;*
- *the base line information, local recognition of the problem, and the dialogue and discussion of the issue and solutions has not taken place – this issue is one of those invisible issues if you aren't aware of it you wouldn't think it was an issue;*
- *small northern communities need help (resources, funding, assistance) in looking into what homelessness is in our communities before we can address development/ implementation – we are not there yet.*

Outlined in the following pages is a summary of the survey findings and a sample of the comments provided by local governments (see Appendix 5 for further local government comments). There is also an analysis of the survey findings in regard to the barriers identified and the measures needed to address the problems.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS SURVEY: RESULTS

Question 1: *What are the barriers (3 key barriers) that need to be overcome in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?*

Barrier	Times Mentioned	Comments:
Funding	43	<i>Most municipalities in BC don't have the financing or resources to be effective with homelessness and affordability. Generous land grants from the province and substantial federal funding are really what are needed.</i>
Lack of Local Government Capacity (Support, Staff, Services)	24	
Need for vision, plan, and consistent policies	19	<i>Our strategies have been developed and actions have been identified. We have the partnerships and the cooperation of the stakeholders, but need to find the financing for construction of affordable housing units. In addition, we need to prepare the neighborhoods for these developments and prove that they are an asset to their neighborhood and community.</i>
Availability of Land	13	
By-Law / Re-Zoning	5	
Construction Costs	8	<i>This is not a traditional activity of local government at least for small/mid-sized communities, and there is little in-house expertise as a result.</i>
Stigma & Community Perception	11	
NIMBYism	3	<i>The community at large believes affordable housing attracts undesirable residents. This is a myth, as eligible affordable housing applicants are often young families, entry-level professionals, and/or seniors.</i>
Finance and Development Incentives	9	
Lack of Reliable Data	8	
Addressing Community to Community Needs	2	
Lack of Public Educational Awareness	5	<i>There is a lack of coordination between agencies, nonprofit organizations, and all three levels of government. There is clarity of turf (legislated responsibility) by the various levels of government, which currently simply serves as an illumination of 'gaps' – between the three levels of government is where and why affordable housing and homelessness...has morphed into a current crisis. There is <u>not</u> any mutual understanding of responsibilities and agreement to collectively address the issue, amongst the three levels of government.</i>
Increase expediency (get rid of red tape)	1	
Rent subsidies	3	
Agreement on the roles and responsibilities of all 3 levels of government	5	
Availability of "entry level" & non-market purchase options	6	

Question 2: What actions (3 key measures) might the **federal government** take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

Measures	Times Mentioned
Funding (long-term, sustainable)	48
Commitment to national housing strategy	25
Provision of leadership and direction	13
Tax Incentives	26
Expediency/Quick Response to Needs	4
Homeowner grants, access to low interest loans, rent subsidies	8
Establish regional housing consultant specialists	3
Address the maintenance of existing affordable housing	2
Extend funding for existing programs due to expire this fiscal year	7
Commit human resources and land	6
Raise priority for guaranteed annual income	2
Reestablish the role of the CMHC	8
Elevate housing as a key federal ministry	2

Comments:

Less Talk. More Action.

A strategy will only be useful if it is matched with funding and action. Otherwise – we already have our hands full.

We are one of the few developed countries without a national housing strategy. The federal government needs to take a leadership role in the housing crisis and provide ongoing sustained funding to build subsidized units.

Nothing will work without financial support. If THEY pay for it – we will build.

The feds are too distant from the actual issue to be directly responsible, but can do much to assist junior levels of government with the issue.

A safe, healthy infrastructure is critical to the development of sustainable communities across the country – the federal government agenda must reflect and value the inter-relationship between economic and social development.

The most effective and urgent move is to develop a Canadian Housing Strategy. This will lay the cornerstone to working out a strategy with the other levels of government. Significant taxation changes are required to reengage the private sector in the development of rental or affordable homeownership units. Canada's 3.1 million private rental housing stock units are now being lost at a rate of tens of thousands of units annually due largely to demolition and conversion.

Current federal tax policy discriminates against residential properties by prohibiting the rollover of capital gains and recapture, should an owner wish to sell a rental building, and either buy or build a new one. As well, partial rebate of the GST (as opposed to 100% as is the case with other multi-unit buildings) and longer amortization periods acts as a disincentive to building rental housing.

Question 3: What actions (3 key measures) might the **provincial government** take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

Measures	Times Mentioned	Comments:
Funding (long-term, sustainable)	40	<i>The provincial government should continue to develop more supportive housing, while at the same time developing more non-market housing for families and single adults.</i>
Make Crown land available	11	
Enabling legislation	16	<i>There is a basic lack of real understanding of the magnitude of the problem. A cursory wave of the \$ brush now and again...</i>
Tax Incentives	14	
Partner with the federal government	9	<i>Recent BC Provincial government initiatives on homelessness require significant contributions from municipalities (i.e. – land, tax exemptions, DCC exemptions). The government needs to undertake programs that are not contingent on municipalities for success.</i>
Create regional housing specialists	2	
Increase income assistance rates	4	<i>The development of a structure to ensure coordinated programs of capital and operating dollars between ministries would ensure the success of many housing initiatives.</i>
Expand the provincial housing program – mandate and scope	13	
Attention to needs of small-rural communities	4	
Expedient response	1	<i>Small rural municipalities have a limited tax base through which they gain income for overall operations. This is inadequate to meet housing needs, particularly with rising construction costs. It is only through the construction of new, non-market units that housing problems will be addressed in the long-term. Local governments in other jurisdictions have the ability to raise funds for affordable housing projects.</i>
Work to decrease stigma of those less fortunate	1	
Provincial policy on secondary suites	2	
Awareness and education of associated professionals	1	<i>Coordinate the actions of provincial ministries involved in the provision of housing, income, and health supports, as well as the actions of ministries serving at-risk population groups (settlement, justice system, and child protection services). Also, ensure that provincial legislation supports a consistent approach to the accommodation of social housing in communities across the province.</i>
Focus on income assistance rates & minimum wage	4	
Increased focus on wrap-around services and coordination of provincial services	14	<i>Make land and funding available for affordable housing programs. Provide funding and resources to support people who are homeless or at risk through coordinated housing and service programs. Create a consistent funding stream by way of a directly funded budget for BC Housing rather than having the operation based on programs that fluctuate depending on the priorities which leave other sectors of the social housing sector under funded.</i>
Continue current program commitment	4	
Rent subsidies	7	

Question 4: What actions (3 key measures) might **local government** take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

Measures	Times Mentioned	Comments:
Facilitate Community Partnerships	22	<i>Local government should use their land use powers to create an environment that supports the development of supportive, non-market and affordable housing.</i>
Housing Policy for Local Priorities	27	
OCP/By-law/ Zoning Amendments	31	<i>No staff expertise in this area in small communities.</i>
Incentives for developers	10	<i>The question should instead be 'what have local governments done'... we are already doing everything we can!</i>
Identify community properties suitable for affordable housing development	5	<i>Absent any access to new revenue streams, local government can only provide limited facilitation activities in regards to affordable housing, homelessness, or any other social programming.</i>
Legalize secondary suites	5	
Conversion and demolition controls for existing affordable housing	3	<i>Many local governments have taken the step of creating a strategy (but have not moved any further toward action!) We have taken the steps to make affordable housing a reality... and are learning as we go.</i>
Educate, identify gaps & needs	10	<i>With land getting scarce – perhaps we can put the squeeze on.</i>
Assist non-profits who are providing housing	2	
Provision of land	14	<i>Without a serious source of funding, local government can only partner in a minor capacity. Any reduction in costs of use of City-owned land results in costs to the local taxpayer.</i>
Require new development to have % of affordable housing	5	
Administrative expediency (fast track applications)	10	<i>Municipalities could consider making land available, DCC forgiveness and/or tax incentives for affordable housing. It is important to remember that municipal decisions are influenced or impacted by regional policies and decisions.</i>

Question 5: *What measures are required to develop a partnership between the three orders of government?*

Measures	Times Mentioned
Funding	16
Communication & Consultation	11
Federal and Provincial Leadership	18
Comprehensive Solutions	4
Development of national strategy	10
Administrative support – housing experts etc.	5
Recognition as to need	4
Consensus	2
Low level of bureaucratization	1
Clarity of roles & responsibilities	4

Comments:

A national strategy needs to be created that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each level of government. In addition, any funding that is transferred for affordable housing needs to have accountability (i.e. not diverted into general revenue).

Senior levels of government need to provide the financial support for the development of affordable housing, as local governments do not have the resources. Some municipalities do not have land to bring to the table, and the provincial and federal government may need to carry the full costs of developing social housing in some communities of need. The federal and provincial governments need to each contribute equally; the provincial government is responsible for ongoing operating costs and support services for multi-barrier clients, and federal transfer payments need to be adequate to cover these costs.

Agreement on the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and commitments from the three levels of government is needed in order to form a cooperative relationship. Discourse on this is required. Analysis is needed as to what made the affordable housing program of the 1970s – 1980s successful, and how to recreate that success in the present given current fiscal realities and government downloading.

Municipalities do not have the mandate or resources to effectively respond to the issues of homelessness and housing affordability. An effective partnership requires a long-term commitment of resources by senior governments and a willingness to work with municipalities to ensure that federal and provincial policies and programs are consistent with municipal policies and regulations and are sustained over the long term.

Local and Provincial government partners have established an approach to affordable housing (and homelessness with recent initiative). Capital funding is still limited. Would be helpful to see Federal governments join in similar partnership approach to that used for infrastructure projects, which seems a reasonable model.

Question 6: What is the role of local government in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy? (If there is a role – what additional tools/resources/legislative changes may be required to perform this role?)

Measures	Times Mentioned
Organizational Capacity	4
Seek community partnerships	7
Facilitation & Coordination	21
Enabling policy framework (OCP, regulation, & Zoning) changes	16
Address the issues of smaller communities/ local needs	5
Address gaps in regional housing supplies	3
Protect the existing affordable housing stock	4
Address province providing outreach and support services for those in housing transition	5
Better integration and funding for existing programs	4
Leadership & education regarding NIMBYism	4

Comments:

Local government is most in touch with what is happening on the ground – we know the best locations for housing, neighborhood dynamics, etc.

Local government is on the front line of trying to address affordability and homelessness. Local government also has the least legislative ability to raise funds. The Provincial and Federal downloading without adequate resourcing is taking a hard and inhumane toll, especially in small towns. Local governments need funding, land, and specialized support.

Enable member municipalities a united voice in speaking with senior government.

Local government is best placed to determine local need, and which strategies will be the most effective in any given community. Local government can play a strong leadership role in development of policies that support affordable housing, including the provision of new housing and maintaining the existing stock. Municipal staff can assist non-profit housing organizations to find appropriate locations for affordable housing, and support developers through the development process.

The role of local government is to; assess its own affordable housing needs; then establish the best strategy to complement the available resources and housing strategies of the federal and provincial governments; undertake leadership and direct delivery of affordable housing initiatives to create healthy, inclusive and sustainable communities.

The primary role of local government is two fold. First and foremost, the local government must provide information to senior levels of government regarding the housing stock, current shortcomings and possible points of priority. Secondly, its role is to guide those wishing to construct housing through the development process. It is important to note that the role of the municipality is NOT to construct or manage housing, but to ensure that it is provided in a manner that is sensitive to the adjacent community.

5. BARRIERS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

The survey identified some key barriers that need to be overcome in the development of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy, some are obvious and others not so obvious. The seven issues that were identified most frequently were:

- Funding – need for financial assistance from the federal and provincial government if local government is to assistance;
- Lack of Local Government capacity – the fact that local governments do not have the staffing resources and expertise to address the problem;
- Need for a vision, plan, and consistent policies – local governments in dealing with the public on this issue need federal and provincial direction to make major changes in the local community;
- Availability of Land – a number local governments identified the need for federal or provincial crown land to address the issue;
- Stigma and Community Perception – low cost housing is seen as having a negative impact on property values and is major issue that local governments need to overcome in dealing the community – linked to the need for a vision;
- Finance and development incentives – this is linked to tax changes needed at the federal and provincial level and the need for additional tools at the local level to address the problem;
- Lack of reliable data – the information required to identify the nature of the problem in the community is difficult to find and reliable information is needed in order to identify how the community might address the issue and to gain its support in moving forward – this is linked in part to the need for a vision.

Federal Issues:

The survey identified the following actions that the federal government might take to address the issue:

- Funding (long-term, sustainable) - current funding ends in 2009. The federal government is presently reviewing the success of its existing funding and whether or not it will continue to provide funding in the future.
- Commitment to a National Housing Strategy
- Tax Incentives – need for changes to the tax code to encourage private sector investment in rental housing and other affordable housing measures;
- Provision of leadership and direction – lack of recognition by the federal government that affordable housing and homelessness is an issue makes it difficult at the local level to attempt to address it.

A number of local governments, while highlighting the need to develop a national housing strategy, pointed out the need to encourage private sector involvement in the process. As one local government pointed out:

Current federal tax policy discriminates against residential rental properties by prohibiting the rollover of capital gains and recapture, should an owner wish to sell a rental building, and either buy or build a new one. As well, partial rebate of the GST (as opposed to 100% as is the case with other multi-unit buildings) and longer amortization periods act as a disincentive to building rental housing.

Provincial Issues:

The survey identified the following actions that the provincial government might take to address the issue:

- Funding (long-term, sustainable) - sustainability of homeless actions at the provincial level is uncertain. A number of provincial government ministries have adopted measures to address homelessness but these are based on annual budgetary commitments;
- Enabling legislation – additional tools to assist local government in dealing with the issue, such as inclusionary zoning authority and creation of a fund from the Property Purchase Tax to address the issue;
- Tax Incentives – need for provincial tax policy to encourage the development of affordable housing, such measures as exemption from Provincial Sales Tax and other write-offs for the construction of rental housing;
- Increased focus on wrap-around services and coordination of provincial services – the provision of housing for the homeless, a majority of whom suffer from mental illness and addictions, is not workable in the long term if the wrap around services required from the other ministries is not provided;
- Make crown land available – need for a provincial land bank to assist in the affordable housing and homelessness issue, particularly in some communities where there is a shortage of land. Provincial policy appears to be contradictory on one hand the province is requesting that school boards and other provincial agencies sell surplus land owned by the province, while at the same time it is requesting the local communities provide land for social housing.

There appears to be an underlying concern in the responses from a number of the local governments that the province is attempting to download responsibility for affordable housing and homelessness issues on it. This lack of trust is further increased by the lack of a long term vision and future policy direction on affordable housing and homelessness by either the federal or provincial government.

A number of local governments indicated that they have been working positively with the province on housing initiatives. However, some frustration was expressed on the lack of coordination between provincial ministries in addressing affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, as just as one agreement was reached and solution agreed to, it only led to a further series of discussions/agreements with other provincial ministries to ensure that the full package of services required to meet the overall objective was in place.

The problem with the lack of coordination and cooperation between the province and local government is best illustrated in the area of community care facilities (i.e. alcohol & drug centres etc.). The comments from two local governments outlined below highlight some of the issues:

[Our community] has an estimated 50+ unregulated alcohol and drug recovery houses some of which provide safe and secure housing and others which are problematic both in terms of the poor living conditions in the houses and their negative impact on the adjacent neighbourhoods. The recovery houses represent a local response to the lack of affordable housing and addictions recovery beds in [the

community]. To date, no Provincial ministry is regulating or accrediting these facilities as they do not fit specifically within either a health, housing or income assistance mandate. None of these houses comply with the City's zoning bylaws which only permit alcohol and drug recovery houses that are licensed or regulated by the Ministry of Health. If the alcohol and drug recovery houses were regulated, they could represent a cost-effective solution to addressing our lack of housing and addictions services, however the lack of provincial action means that the vulnerable population residing in these houses in [the community] is at high risk of homelessness.

The second local government noted that:

Currently social assistance cheques are being mailed to recovery house operators who are providing no services and insufficient or no food, and substandard accommodation, do not have municipal business license and are operating out of a dwelling without the correct zoning. These flop houses are everywhere in small communities that do not have the resources to find them and remove them. The occupants are not local people and when they leave the house or are asked to leave, they have no place to go and no money, which adds to the homeless numbers and crime.

The lack cooperation of between the province and local government illustrated above creates two major problems in dealing with affordable housing and homelessness issues. One it re-enforces public perception that low cost housing and drug/alcohol recovery centres brings with it undesirable elements. Two it makes it much more difficult for local government to work with local neighbourhoods and get their support for low cost housing projects and recovery centres, which is needed to deal with the affordable housing and homelessness problem.

Local Issues:

The survey undertaken by UBCM in August 2008 identified the following actions that local government might take, or many cases has undertaken, to address the issue of affordable housing and homelessness:

- Facilitate Community Partnerships – work with federal and provincial agencies, non-profits and the private sector to facilitate the development of affordable housing homeless issues;
- OCP/By-Law/Zoning Amendments – change community plans, local regulations to facilitate development in this area;
- Housing Policy for Local Priorities – develop a vision and general housing policy for the community that identifies the need for affordable housing;
- Provision of Land – provide land through a grant or lease to non-profit agencies to build and/or operate housing/recovery homes to address affordable housing and homelessness issues;
- Educate, identify gaps & needs – need to provide the information required to assist the community in understanding the affordable housing and homelessness issue at the local level and work with local neighbourhoods in gaining support for affordable housing and other projects needed to deal with the problems.

As one local government pointed out:

Without a serious source of funding, local government can only partner in a minor capacity. Any reduction in costs of use of City-owned land results in costs to the local taxpayer.

The response of local government is focused on the following actions:

Develop and implement Housing Action Plans that identify current and future needs for affordable housing, and identify strategies for maintaining and increasing the supply of affordable market and non-market housing. Ensure that land use policies and regulations (zoning) can accommodate the variety of models of social housing needed to address the range of housing needs of the local government jurisdiction. Partner with the provincial and federal governments to identify local solutions to homelessness and housing affordability issues.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF A PARTNERSHIP

Local government responses to the survey highlighted on a number of occasions the need to develop a partnership between the three orders of government to deal with the complex issues associated with affordable housing and homelessness. It was generally perceived that each order of government had a role to play in the process.

The survey identified the following measures needed to develop a partnership:

- Federal and provincial leadership – need for recognition by the federal and provincial level that the affordable housing and homelessness issues need to be dealt with;
- Funding – provision of the necessary financial resources and incentives at the federal and provincial level to promote major action on the issue;
- Communication and Consultation – willingness to work with local government and provide the financial resources to implement local solutions to the problem;
- Development of a national strategy – development of strategy and identification of roles and responsibilities, similar to what took place under the federal infrastructure program.

The need for these measures was further highlighted in comments provided by local government, outlined below are a few of the responses:

A national strategy needs to be created that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each level of government. In addition, any funding that is transferred for affordable housing needs to have accountability (i.e. not diverted into general revenue).

Senior levels of government need to provide the financial support for the development of affordable housing, as local governments do not have the resources. Some municipalities do not have land to bring to the table, and the provincial and federal government may need to carry the full costs of developing social housing in some communities of need. The federal and provincial governments need to each contribute equally; the provincial government is responsible for ongoing operating costs and support services for multi-barrier clients, and federal transfer payments need to be adequate to cover these costs.

The survey identified the role of local government in the development of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy as follows:

- Facilitation and Coordination
- Enabling Policy framework (OCP, regulation & zoning) changes
- Seek community partnerships

Several local governments outlined the overall role of local government as follows:

Local government is best placed to determine local need, and which strategies will be the most effective in any given community. Local government can play a strong leadership role in development of policies that support affordable housing, including the provision of new housing and maintaining the existing stock. Municipal staff can assist non-profit housing organizations to find appropriate locations for affordable housing, and support developers through the development process.

The role of local government is to; assess its own affordable housing needs; then establish the best strategy to complement the available resources and housing strategies of the federal and provincial governments; undertake leadership and direct delivery of affordable housing initiatives to create healthy, inclusive and sustainable communities.

While outlining the role that local government might play, they were also very careful to outline the limitations of local government's role in this process:

Local governments are an important partner/asset to achieving a cohesive and comprehensive strategy. However, an awareness of local government's abilities, resources, and limits is equally important. Local governments can play a role in the strategy (mainly through land use policies) but the lead should be taken by the federal government. Senior levels of government are the only ones with the resources required to effectively and comprehensively address affordable housing and homelessness.

Outlined below are some basic principles, based on UBCM general policies, that could be used for the development of a partnership between local government and the federal and provincial government to better address affordable housing and homelessness:

- *Senior government ministries and agencies must comply with local government authority in areas of local responsibility and they should not undermine local government by-laws or programs.*
- *Senior government policies and regulations that affect local government should respect the varying needs and conditions of different areas of the province.*
- *Governments at all levels should be committed to consultation and coordination of their actions to serve the public.*
- *Local government should be involved in the development and delivery of the programs of other levels of government which are designed to meet local needs.*
- *Governments should be committed to consultation and joint decision-making whenever they have responsibilities within the same area of jurisdiction.*
- *Programs that are exclusively determined by senior government should be financed by senior government from their revenue sources.*
- *Financial assistance should be provided to local governments when their policies over-ride local priorities or impose an additional financial burden on local government and that assistance should equate to the added cost burden.*
- *Conflicts on matters of public policy between local government and senior government should be settled by negotiation.*

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

That UBCM request that the federal and provincial government implement the following measures related to homelessness and affordable housing:

Federal Government:

- Implement a National Housing Strategy in consultation and cooperation with provincial and local government;
- Implement changes in Federal Tax Policy – to allow rental investors to qualify for small business deductions; allow capital gains tax to be deferred by restoring Capital Cost Allowance roll over; reduce GST payments on rental housing; create an Equity Investment Fund for rental housing; and other measures to encourage private investment in affordable housing.
- Provide Long Term Sustainable Funding commitment to affordable housing – 10 to 15 years, similar to the infrastructure fund.

Provincial Government:

- Develop and Implement a Provincial Affordable Housing and Homeless Plan in Cooperation with Local Government – comprehensive plan outlining the roles and responsibilities of each provincial ministry, local government, non-governmental agencies and the private sector in implementing a homeless plan – addressing housing, addiction treatment, mental illness and crime related issues – 10 to 15 year vision and funding;
- Partnership Model – to promote cooperation and collaboration of local government, non-profit organizations and the business community with the provincial government;
- Provincial land bank and endowment fund to address affordable housing and homelessness;
- Sustainable Long-term Financial Assistance to expand the capacity of local government – transfer a portion of the Property Purchase Tax to a pool fund to be administered by local government and the province to address homelessness and affordable housing;
- Coordinate Provincial ministry actions to ensure that the funding and resources are in place to fully address affordable housing and homelessness issues;
- Coordinate Provincial ministry policy to ensure that it supports local government initiatives to address affordable housing and homelessness – legislative and regulatory measures to ensure facilities are properly maintained and operated and measures to address neighbourhood issues that may arise.

Partnership:

The Federal and Provincial government develop a partnership with local government, similar to the infrastructure program, to implement an affordable housing and homelessness strategy.

Appendix 1

**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WHO HAVE
UNDERTAKEN MEASURES ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING
AND/OR HOMELESSNESS**

(based on survey)

Abbotsford
Burnaby
Capital RD
Colwood
Coquitlam
Courtenay
Cranbrook
Fraser Valley RD
Kamloops
Kelowna
Langford
Langley City
Maple Ridge
Metro Vancouver
Mission
Nanaimo
New Westminster
North Vancouver City
North Vancouver District
Port Coquitlam
Port Moody
Powell River
Prince George
Revelstoke
Richmond
Saanich
Sicamous
Squamish
Surrey
Ucluelet
Vancouver
Vernon
Victoria
West Vancouver
Whistler
Williams Lake

Appendix 2**UBCM SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SURVEY****I) Background**

In the 2007 Speech from the Throne, the Province acknowledged its belief that municipalities with populations over 25,000 should identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities for persons with mental illness and addictions.

In November of 2007, the Honourable Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services, sent a letter to all municipalities over 25,000 encouraging official community plan (OCP) policies to recognize the need for supportive housing, and zoning bylaws to identify land for supportive housing and facilities. The Minister acknowledged that the lack of suitably zoned sites is the main barrier to creating more supportive housing.

Supportive housing, as defined by the Province, refers to accommodation that provides ongoing support and services to homeless, mentally ill or addicted residents, but where tenants are able to live in their own unit. This may often involve a relatively short stay or may be of a more permanent nature.

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) conducted follow-up surveys to assess whether local governments had taken measures to adopt OCP policies and zone for supportive housing and treatment facilities, and if not, to identify barriers and impediments towards zoning for such facilities.

II) Methodology

UBCM attempted to conduct telephone surveys with the twenty-seven (27) local governments with populations over 25,000 to assess what measures, if any, had been taken towards supportive housing and treatment facilities. The surveys targeted chief administrative officers, given their positional ability to assess the full range of political, financial, regulatory, and organizational barriers to creating more supportive housing. However, survey respondents included chief administrative officers, directors of planning, and senior staff with social planning councils.

Response Rate:

UBCM received a response rate of thirty-eight (38) percent, in which ten (10) of the twenty-seven (27) local governments participated in the telephone survey.

III) Survey Responses**A) Current Situation**

When asked, “Is your community doing anything in regards to supportive housing and treatment facilities for the homeless, mentally ill, and addicted?” **90%** of respondents

acknowledged that their communities had taken measures to address the homeless, mentally ill, and addicted populations within their communities. The most prevalent actions taken by local governments included:

Donating City Land & Buildings

The majority of respondents acknowledged that their local governments had donated city land, donated city buildings, and/or purchased residential properties to accommodate supportive housing and treatment facilities.

Partnering with NGOs & BC Housing

The development of partnerships with local NGOs and BC Housing to establish supportive housing units was identified as another measure taken by the majority of respondents.

Providing Incentives

Several respondents noted that their local governments had provided incentives, such as waiving development application fees and/or municipal taxes, as a means of facilitating the creation of recovery and transition homes.

Adopting Housing Strategies

Several local governments had adopted housing strategies, which contained components on supportive housing and homelessness, as well as the measures that could be taken to increase the number of units within their communities.

B) Zoning

When asked, “Does your community currently identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities?” **10%** of respondents acknowledged that they had zoned for supportive housing and treatment facilities, while **90%** noted that they did not currently identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities.

However, of the respondents that did not specifically zone for supportive housing, **55%** noted that they had either: adopted general housing policies that permitted treatment facilities within their communities; had general provisions within their zoning bylaws for residential uses that could cater to populations requiring supportive housing; and/or had zones for specific occupancies for groups such as for the mentally ill and addicted.

C) Barriers:

When asked, “If your community neither accommodates supportive housing/treatment facilities, nor zones for such housing/facilities, what are the reasons?” respondents cited the following reasons:

1. Lack of Provincial Resources

Several respondents noted that the absence of provincial resources for capital and operating costs was a significant deterrent in creating additional supportive housing. In

particular, respondents cited the need for provincial funding for support and outreach services to provide ongoing care once facilities had been established.

2. Not-In-My-Backyard

The majority of respondents cited NIMBYISM as a key barrier to creating more supportive housing within their communities. While constituents largely acknowledge the need for such facilities within their communities, none of the constituents are willing to have them located near their properties.

3. Pre-Zoning Politically Problematic

Local governments noted that official community plan policies are commitments to public engagement, and that pre-zoning land for supportive housing and treatment facilities may be perceived as a way of avoiding public review of contentious land use issues.

4. Absence of a Strong Provincial Licensing Role

The absence of a provincial role in licensing recovery homes and treatment centres was noted as another barrier. Some respondents acknowledged that if the Province played a stronger role in licensing the smaller recovery homes and treatment facilities, local governments would be able to ease public opposition to such facilities and bypass the zoning process. Specifically, local governments would be able to assure their constituents that a senior agency would rescind a license should that facility, and/or its residents, fail to comply with the licensing conditions.

5. Absence of Suitable Land

Some respondents cited that absence of suitable land within their communities as an issue, in which they either lacked the tracts of land required for zoning or were already having to re-zone for all new developments within their communities.

6. Philosophical Opposition

Several local governments cited a philosophical opposition to assuming responsibility for what is perceived as a provincially generated problem, and hence, a provincial responsibility. While these local governments are willing to have general housing policies that would facilitate the establishment of supportive housing, they believe that it is the responsibility of NGOs and the Province to bring forward and fund proposals for such facilities. In addition, some local governments felt that they had already shouldered a disproportionate share of the burden in addressing their region's homeless and addicted populations, and feared that zoning would further entrench their regional role as a supportive housing provider.

7. Development Pressures

Respondents noted that in communities undergoing significant development, local governments faced challenges in stimulating developer interest in building supportive housing and treatment facilities. Existing local government incentives, such as waiving the development application fees, were deemed to be insufficient to garner developer interest.

8. Lack of Suitably Zoned Sites

Some local government respondents noted the absence of suitably zone sites as a barrier to creating more supportive housing.

9. Lack of a National Housing Strategy

The absence of a national housing strategy, coupled with sustainable funding, was cited as a major deterrent towards adding supportive housing and treatment facilities within communities. Respondents felt that the federal government should be the senior agency tasked with developing and funding a strategy for accommodating and treating the at risk homeless and addicted populations.

D) Potential for Supportive Housing & Treatment Facilities

When asked, “Does your community plan on adopting OCP policies or zoning bylaws that will identify land for supportive housing and facilities in the near future?” **70%** of respondents acknowledged that they were planning on adopting OCP policies or zoning bylaws that will identify land for supportive housing and facilities in the near future. More specifically, these respondents all cited current or forthcoming official community plan reviews (Summer 2008), which would either: incorporate regional affordable housing strategies that would address homelessness; contain general housing provisions permitting treatment facilities and supportive housing; and/or include incentives to remove barriers for creating more supportive housing.

Of the respondents, **30%** stated that they were not planning on adopting OCP policies or zoning bylaws that would identify land for supportive housing and facilities in the near future. Respondents cited philosophical opposition to pre-zoning for supportive housing and treatment facilities within their communities, acknowledging that proposals for such facilities should come from non-governmental organizations and the Province and be reviewed on an individual basis.

E) Comments on the Province’s Position on Supportive Housing & Treatment Facilities

When asked, “Do you have any other comments regarding the Province’s position that municipalities over 25,000 should identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities?” **90%** of the respondents voiced criticism of the Province’s position, citing the Province’s stance as a downloading of provincial responsibilities.

In particular, respondents acknowledged the need for the Province to take a more active leadership role in facilitating the development of supportive housing and treatment facilities through:

- the provision of capital and operating funding;
- assistance in location decisions for facilities;
- provincial licensing of recovery and treatment centres;
- a partnership approach with local governments;

- provision of tax incentives to deal with the at risk populations; and
- collaboration with the federal government on the development of a national housing strategy.

IV) Survey Summary

Overall, the survey responses indicate that the majority of responding communities have taken measures to foster the development of supportive housing and treatment facilities within their jurisdictions. Given the social and economic impacts of homelessness and addiction on their communities, many local governments have either donated city land and buildings, facilitated partnerships between NGOs and BC Housing, provided incentives, or adopted housing strategies designed to assist in the development of supportive housing. However, the overwhelming majority of respondents noted that their communities *did not* currently identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities.

Local governments identified several key barriers related to the creation of supportive housing and treatment facilities, and zoning for such sites, including the absence of provincial resources, NIMBYISM, the political contention associated with pre-zoning, and philosophical opposition to assuming a perceived provincial responsibility. However, despite these barriers, the majority of respondents acknowledged that their local government was planning on adopting OCP policies or zoning bylaws that will identify land for supportive housing and facilities in the near future.

While respondents outlined the actions their communities have, or plan on taking to address the homeless and addicted populations, respondents voiced strong criticism of the Province's position that that municipalities over 25,000 should identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities. In order to support the development of such facilities, respondents cited the need for the Province to take a more active leadership role through the provision of capital and operating funds, the licensing of recovery homes, and collaboration on the development of a national housing strategy.

Appendix 3

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

PART A. ISSUES

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

1. What are the barriers (3 key barriers) that need to be overcome in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Comments:

2. What actions (3 key measures) might the federal government take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Comments:

(continued on Page 2)

- Page 2 -

3. What actions (3 key measures) might the provincial government take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Comments:

4. What actions (3 key measures) might local government take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Comments:

5. What measures are required to develop a partnership between the three orders of government?

Comments:

(continued on Page 3)

- Page 3 -

6. What is the role of local government in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

(If there is a role – What additional tools/resources/legislative changes may be required to perform this role?)

Comments:

PART B. CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Name of municipality/regional district:

2. Name of person completing this form:

3. Telephone number and e-mail address of person named above:

(Note: If your local government has developed measures to address affordable housing or a homeless strategy please forward a copy to the UBCM at email: kvance@civicnet.bc.ca)

Appendix 4

**LIST OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WHO
RESPONDED TO UBCM SURVEY**

100 Mile House
Abbotsford
Ashcroft
Burnaby
Burns Lake
Capital RD
Castlegar
Central Kootenay RD
Chilliwack
Coldstream
Colwood
Coquitlam
Courtenay
Cranbrook
Dawson Creek
Delta
East Kootenay RD
Fraser Valley
Grand Forks
Hudson's Hope
Invermere
Kamloops
Kelowna
Ladysmith
Lake Country
Langford
Langley City
Langley Township
Lumby
Maple Ridge
Metro Vancouver
Mission
Nanaimo
New Westminster
North Cowichan
North Vancouver City
North Vancouver District
Port Coquitlam
Port Moody
Powell River
Prince George
Qualicum Beach
Quesnel

Revelstoke
Richmond
Saanich
Sayward
Sechelt
Sicamous
Sparwood
Squamish
Sunshine Coast RD
Surrey
Terrace
Ucluelet
Vancouver
Vernon
Victoria
West Vancouver
Westside
Whistler
Williams Lake

Appendix 5

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS SURVEY: RESULTS

Question 1: What are the barriers (3 key barriers) that need to be overcome in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

Comments:

Most municipalities in BC don't have the financing or resources to be effective with homelessness and affordability. Generous land grants from the province and substantial federal funding are really what are needed.

Our strategies have been developed and actions have been identified. We have the partnerships and the cooperation of the stakeholders, but need to find the financing for construction of affordable housing units. In addition, we need to prepare the neighborhoods for these developments and prove that they are an asset to their neighborhood and community.

This is not a traditional activity of local government at least for small/mid-sized communities, and there is little in-house expertise as a result.

The community at large believes affordable housing attracts undesirable residents. This is a myth, as eligible affordable housing applicants are often young families, entry-level professionals, and/or seniors.

*There is a lack of coordination between agencies, nonprofit organizations, and all three levels of government. There is clarity of turf (legislated responsibility) by the various levels of government, which currently simply serves as an illumination of 'gaps' – **between** the three levels of government is where and why affordable housing and homelessness...has morphed into a current crisis. There is not any mutual understanding of responsibilities and agreement to collectively address the issue, amongst the three levels of government.*

Although many efforts to reduce homelessness have been very successful, sustaining these programs and services that rely on grant funding is not feasible. This is especially true in situations where grant dollars are on short renewal cycles with the commitment to future funding often unknown.

Municipalities are facing the social impacts (i.e. homelessness and a dramatic increase in people at risk of homelessness) of a lack of affordable housing with minimal capacity to implement affordable housing strategies. It is not the planning or development of strategies that are costly, but the creation of new, much-needed, units.

All municipalities should be addressing this issue. Some are more responsible than others.

The cornerstone of building healthy sustainable municipal communities can only be achieved within the framework of Canada adopting a Housing Strategy. Once Canada has adopted a Housing Strategy a more formalized partnership and funding agreement can be achieved between federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments. Without a housing strategy it is difficult for different levels of government to achieve independently a funding strategy or partnership.

'Affordable housing' and 'homelessness' are two very different problems that require totally different approaches.

The lack of a long-term, comprehensive social housing programs that respond to the full range of housing needs, including supportive/transition housing and low-cost housing for singles and families, is a significant barrier.

The tax system is a key barrier to the provision of market rental housing as it currently does not provide any incentive for private investment in the development of new purpose-built rental housing.

The lack of coordinated action by provincial ministries on the provision of affordable housing and related support services, and coordination between the provincial and municipal levels of government creates barriers.

Funding consistency from year to year, data management to assess needs and progress of implemented programs, services to support people in affordable housing – address other social issues to promote success of affordable housing strategy.

Question 2: *What actions (3 key measures) might the **federal government** take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?*

Comments:

Less Talk. More Action.

A strategy will only be useful if it is matched with funding and action. Otherwise – we already have our hands full.

We are one of the few developed countries without a national housing strategy. The federal government needs to take a leadership role in the housing crisis and provide ongoing sustained funding to build subsidized units.

Nothing will work without financial support. If THEY pay for it – we will build.

The feds are too distant from the actual issue to be directly responsible, but can do much to assist junior levels of government with the issue.

A safe, healthy infrastructure is critical to the development of sustainable communities across the country – the federal government agenda must reflect and value the inter-relationship between economic and social development.

The most effective and urgent move is to develop a Canadian Housing Strategy. This will lay the cornerstone to working out a strategy with the other levels of government. Significant taxation changes are required to reengage the private sector in the development of rental or affordable homeownership units. Canada's 3.1 million private rental housing stock units are now being lost at a rate of tens of thousands of units annually due largely to demolition and conversion.

Current federal tax policy discriminates against residential properties by prohibiting the rollover of capital gains and recapture, should an owner wish to sell a rental building, and either buy or build a new one. As well, partial rebate of the GST (as opposed to 100% as is the case with other multi-unit buildings) and longer amortization periods acts as a disincentive to building rental housing.

Legislation provides authority and funding commitments on a long-term basis to address affordable housing and homelessness regardless of the changes in government.

Municipalities would benefit from direct access to a one-stop funding portal for affordable housing projects.

Provide funding and or land to increase supply of affordable housing. Improve/increase access to Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). Continue to provide funding for regional homelessness initiatives.

Best management program for emergency and homelessness shelters that provide a guide for location, scale, proximity to services, measures to mitigate real and perceived issues within the perimeter of impact, multi-purpose facilities (what should be located together and what should not be combined), and other expertise such as management models, funding opportunities and recourses. Small municipalities with little or no expertise need the tools to explore what would work best for them.

Develop and implement a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness that provides a long-term sustainable funding framework together with a comprehensive national strategy focusing on eliminating homelessness and significantly reducing the housing need problem (as per the 2008 FCM recommendation). Introduce changes to the tax system that will provide a financial incentive for private investment in market rental housing. Reform the income tax system to reduce poverty, especially child poverty.

Question 3: What actions (3 key measures) might the **provincial government** take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

Comments:

The provincial government should continue to develop more supportive housing, while at the same time developing more non-market housing for families and single adults.

There is a basic lack of real understanding of the magnitude of the problem. A cursory wave of the \$ brush now and again...

*Recent BC Provincial government initiatives on homelessness require significant contributions from municipalities (i.e. – land, tax exemptions, DCC exemptions). The government needs to undertake programs that are **not** contingent on municipalities for success.*

The development of a structure to ensure coordinated programs of capital and operating dollars between ministries would ensure the success of many housing initiatives.

Small rural municipalities have a limited tax base through which they gain income for overall operations. This is inadequate to meet housing needs, particularly with rising construction costs. It is only through the construction of new, non-market units that housing problems will be addressed in the long-term. Local governments in other jurisdictions have the ability to raise funds for affordable housing projects.

Coordinate the actions of provincial ministries involved in the provision of housing, income, and health supports, as well as the actions of ministries serving at-risk population groups (settlement, justice system, and child protection services). Also, ensure that provincial legislation supports a consistent approach to the accommodation of social housing in communities across the province.

Make land and funding available for affordable housing programs. Provide funding and resources to support people who are homeless or at risk through coordinated housing and service programs. Create a consistent funding stream by way of a directly funded budget for BC Housing rather than having the operation based on programs that fluctuate depending on the priorities which leave other sectors of the social housing sector under funded.

The key initiative of the provincial government is to encourage and support the federal government in creating a Canadian Housing Strategy with subsequent development of the individual Provincial Housing Strategies. (It is noted that BC is one of the few provinces having a housing strategy however it has limited partnership and funding support from the federal government thereby greatly limiting the effectiveness of its own strategy). The strategy of the BC Provincial government to provide direct shelter subsidies to those in need should also be supported and complemented with aggressively funded direct development housing programs.

Introduce new programs and funding to address the need for non-market affordable housing for families and singles. Expand the Provincial/Homelessness Initiative such that the commitment to the provision of transition/supportive housing is sustained over the long term and that funding is sufficient to address current and future needs so that homelessness is eliminated in communities across BC.

Question 4: What actions (3 key measures) might **local government** take to assist in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy?

Comments:

Local government should use their land use powers to create an environment that supports the development of supportive, non-market and affordable housing.

No staff expertise in this area in small communities.

The question should instead be 'what have local governments done'... we are already doing everything we can!

Absent any access to new revenue streams, local government can only provide limited facilitation activities in regards to affordable housing, homelessness, or any other social programming.

Many local governments have taken the step of creating a strategy (but have not moved any further toward action!) We have taken the steps to make affordable housing a reality... and are learning as we go.

With land getting scarce – perhaps we can put the squeeze on.

Much depends on the capacity of the local government in question.

Municipalities could consider making land available, DCC forgiveness and/or tax incentives for affordable housing. It is important to remember that municipal decisions are influenced or impacted by regional policies and decisions.

Local government needs to take a leadership role, but requires additional capacity and expertise to do so.

Municipal governments can look to their own municipally owned buildings and the possibility of using land and/or existing structures for projects aimed at addressing critical needs for the homeless and those requiring both supportive and affordable housing.

Without a serious source of funding, local government can only partner in a minor capacity. Any reduction in costs of use of City-owned land results in costs to the local taxpayer.

Develop and implement Housing Action Plans that identify current and future needs for affordable housing, and identify strategies for maintaining and increasing the supply of affordable market and non-market housing. Ensure that land use policies and regulations (zoning) can accommodate the variety of models of social housing needed to address the range of housing needs of the local government jurisdiction. Partner with the provincial and federal governments to identify local solutions to homelessness and housing affordability issues.

Municipalities have a role to play in creating conditions that stimulate or enable new housing supply and in working to build community awareness and support for the need for affordable housing. At the same time, it is important to recognize that municipalities are limited in the actions that they can take to address the full extent of the need without on-going funding from other levels of government.

Question 5: What measures are required to develop a partnership between the three orders of government?

Comments:

A national strategy needs to be created that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of each level of government. In addition, any funding that is transferred for affordable housing needs to have accountability (i.e. not diverted into general revenue).

Senior levels of government need to provide the financial support for the development of affordable housing, as local governments do not have the resources. Some municipalities do not have land to bring to the table, and the provincial and federal government may need to carry the full costs of developing social housing in some communities of need. The federal and provincial governments need to each contribute equally; the provincial government is responsible for ongoing operating costs and support services for multi-barrier clients, and federal transfer payments need to be adequate to cover these costs.

Agreement on the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and commitments from the three levels of government is needed in order to form a cooperative relationship. Discourse on this is required. Analysis is needed as to what made the affordable housing program of the 1970s – 1980s successful, and how to recreate that success in the present given current fiscal realities and government downloading.

Municipalities do not have the mandate or resources to effectively respond to the issues of homelessness and housing affordability. An effective partnership requires a long-term commitment of resources by senior governments and a willingness to work with municipalities to ensure that federal and provincial policies and programs are consistent with municipal policies and regulations and are sustained over the long term.

Local and Provincial government partners have established an approach to affordable housing (and homelessness with recent initiative). Capital funding is still limited. Would be helpful to see Federal governments join in similar partnership approach to that used for infrastructure projects, which seems a reasonable model.

Not just talk, but MOU's and cheques!

There must be an acknowledged and active commitment to the mutually shared responsibility across all levels of government to ensure residents' comprehensive needs resulting from a lack of housing and homelessness across Canada are adequately met, it is critical to the future of the nation.

Political will, and resources.

Right now there are signed funding agreements with the federal and BC governments. For local government to seriously take part, the funding agreement should be 3-way, making local government a serious player with a voice in prioritizing funding based on local need. I just learned Ontario is doing exactly this already.

A mechanism needs to be in place to facilitate communication and cooperation between the three orders of government (perhaps a representative task force).

First Canada needs an affordable Housing Strategy. Secondly, significant federal and provincial tax regime changes are required to reengage the community and private sector in affordable housing creation. Thirdly, all three levels of government need to provide a dramatically increased level of direct funding to increase the supply of affordable housing.

More communication and support from higher levels of government is needed. Stop downloading responsibility to local government without provision of adequate funds to address housing issues.

Clear framework outlining in detail senior governments' commitment to provide sufficient funding to ensure the development of new non-market housing, affordable rental housing and income subsidies to provide a stable source of housing.

Recognition by all three orders of government of appropriate role according to jurisdictional responsibility, financial resources, and expertise.

Political will is required. I think that local government have to make a strong case to the provincial and federal governments that affordable housing is very much a local issue, and should be addressed at the local government level. The federal and provincial governments need to provide the resources and legislative measures to allow local governments to address the issue. As part of this process, it would be helpful if all funding for affordable housing initiatives in BC were channeled through one agency (UBCM?). In addition to funding, it would be helpful if affordable housing "experts" were available to assist local government staff and Council members to develop and Implement affordable housing projects.

Recognition that there is a deficit in the supply of affordable housing at key points along the housing continuum – need for an expanded program that responds to the full diversity of needs across communities. There is the need for increased funding as well as stable and predictable funding to enable municipalities to effectively meet local needs and priorities. Recognition that each community is different in terms of the local needs and priorities as well as the assets that are in place to respond. Therefore, there is the need for flexibility.

Question 6: *What is the role of local government in the development and/or implementation of an affordable housing and homelessness strategy? (If there is a role – what additional tools/resources/legislative changes may be required to perform this role?)*

Comments:

Local government is most in touch with what is happening on the ground – we know the best locations for housing, neighborhood dynamics, etc.

Local government is on the front line of trying to address affordability and homelessness. Local government also has the least legislative ability to raise funds. The Provincial and Federal downloading without adequate resourcing is taking a hard and inhumane toll, especially in small towns. Local governments need funding, land, and specialized support.

Enable member municipalities a united voice in speaking with senior government.

Local government is best placed to determine local need, and which strategies will be the most effective in any given community. Local government can play a strong leadership role in development of policies that support affordable housing, including the provision of new housing and maintaining the existing stock. Municipal staff can assist non-profit housing organizations to find appropriate locations for affordable housing, and support developers through the development process.

The role of local government is to; assess its own affordable housing needs; then establish the best strategy to complement the available resources and housing strategies of the federal and provincial governments; undertake leadership and direct delivery of affordable housing initiatives to create healthy, inclusive and sustainable communities.

The primary role of local government is two fold. First and foremost, the local government must provide information to senior levels of government regarding the housing stock, current shortcomings and possible points of priority. Secondly, its role is to guide those wishing to construct housing through the development process. It is important to note that the role of the municipality is NOT to construct or manage housing, but to ensure that it is provided in a manner that is sensitive to the adjacent community.

Understanding local needs; incorporating affordability into market projects; working with community groups to deliver housing projects that respond to local needs.

Local governments are an important partner/asset to achieving a cohesive and comprehensive strategy. However, an awareness of local government's abilities, resources, and limits is equally important. Local governments can play a role in the strategy (mainly through land use policies) but the lead should be taken by the federal government. Senior levels of government are the only ones with the resources required to effectively and comprehensively address affordable housing and homelessness.

If there was a national housing policy that would support our efforts then we could get the provincial government to start shoveling in the cash.

For implementation, municipalities can do their part but are junior partners (because of funding and jurisdiction) to senior levels of government.

Canadians across the country are facing these problems. There has to be a universal change in thinking about poverty because that is what we are talking about.

As the government closest to the issue, local government should be instrumental in setting a community vision for sustainable housing, inventorying those community assets that contribute to the achievement of this vision and identifying outstanding needs that must be met. As policy developers – particularly in relation to land use – local government can contribute to the building of affordable housing developments. Align local government grant processes to assist non-profits to build their capacity to manage housing development from concept through on-site management.

Local government is not financially equipped nor has the statutory authority to develop a successful long-term, multi-faceted approval. It can only ensure supportive policies and processes are in place to help other levels of government, non-profits and the private sector can build supportive housing. With UBCM and FCM involvement, the Federal and Provincial Governments should develop a national housing strategy.

The development of affordable housing stock (for those in core need and at risk of homelessness and low income households); and homelessness facilities (shelters, transitional and supportive housing, mental health beds, detox facilities, services etc.) is not a municipal responsibility, but a senior government responsibility. If municipalities are to take a role in the provision of what has traditionally been the preserve(s) of senior government, a fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the way taxes are collected and municipalities provide and pay for services and programs is required.

To assist providers of non-market and affordable housing through the establishment of supportive policies and procedures at the local level.

To work as a partner in addressing the issue. Provincial and federal governments must take the lead and make capital and operating funds available. Local government can play a number of different roles.

Local governments can facilitate the development of the approval process. Any financial commitment would require changes to the Local Government Act to allow local governments to assign a portion of DCCs for the development of non-market housing in order to create an ongoing source of funding.

Role of local government seems best focused on housing strategy preparation, coordination of local housing providers, liaison with government agencies and private sector partners, provision of land, project planning, development approval processes.

Local governments need to respond based on capacity, for example, some will not have the land base and will instead need to be creative by choosing under-utilized recreation spaces. It is helpful if both levels of senior government recognize the uniqueness of each community, and provide programs and services that are tailored to the community.

Like it or not municipal/regional governments have been downloaded these responsibilities. Equip a Homeless commissioner to implement the process and save a bundle of money.

Partner with and contribute to the development of a regional strategy and to help implement it – dedicating provincial/federal funds to assist local government to develop strategies.

Local government should involve the community in discussion to identify gaps and shortfalls in housing needs and to develop local solutions. Local government must have a say in what types, forms and location of housing is required in the community as they are best suited to make these local decisions. Funding is required to achieve these goals.

Local government is best placed to identify local needs and shortages. However, they are very limited in their financial capacity to act – local government needs access to additional resources (including long-term, low interest financing) and to be allowed other ways and means to generate funding to finance affordable housing.

Municipalities best know and understand the needs in their communities. Therefore, municipalities have an important role to play in identifying needs and in working to put into place effective strategies to respond to these needs.

The local government role is to work with developers and service clubs, educate the community on the benefits of affordable housing, and lobby senior levels of government for changes to better provide affordable housing.