

Statement on Rent Support through the Canada-Alberta Housing Benefit program

July 7, 2021

The Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) is encouraged to hear about the announcement of \$444 million investment in rent support through a joint federal and provincial Canada-Alberta Housing Benefit program, which will see equal cost-matching between the two orders of government. It is expected to provide rent support to more than 35,000 low-income Alberta households.

In our research and advocacy work in the area of housing, we have identified years-long waiting lists to receive rental assistance as an intractable problem faced by low-income Edmonton renters. This was identified in our 2020 report, *The High Cost of Waiting: Tenant-Focused Solutions to Enhance Housing Affordability*, and most recently in our *Bridging the Affordability Gap: Report and Recommendations*, which was published last month. Alberta's participation in the Canada Housing Benefit was a key ask in *The High Cost of Waiting* report and we are pleased to see the provincial government taking part in this program.

"This announcement also underscores how crucially important it is for different orders of government to work together collaboratively towards solutions that benefit the common good. We encourage all levels of government to continue good work in this vein and apply it to other programs and pressure points that impact individuals and families living in low income, such as affordable child care, basic income, and pharmacare," said Susan Morrissey, Executive Director of ESPC.

Going forward, ESPC is hopeful that this new funding will go to renters most in need in a just, fair, equitable, and efficient manner. In addition, we are hopeful that backlog in the years-long waiting lists can finally be addressed in a meaningful manner.

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