

Local News

City of Edmonton receives federal funding for 130 supportive housing units, Iveson urges province for operating dollars

With this doubling of funds from the Rapid Housing Initiative, the city is on track to build five supportive housing sites totalling 210 units that are planned to be operational by next March.

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Artistic rendering of the planned supportive housing development in Terrace Heights. Funding to construct 46-unit development was announced by the federal government Wednesday. PHOTO BY SUPPLIED

Three city-led supportive housing projects will create 130 units for Edmontonians struggling with homelessness through a \$17.9-million investment from the federal government.

Federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development Ahmed Hussen announced the funding Wednesday morning, adding to the \$17.3 million received back in October for two housing sites.

With this doubling of funds from the Rapid Housing Initiative's projects stream, the city is on track to build its five planned supportive housing developments totalling 210 residences on city-owned land. The buildings are scheduled to be completed by the end of this year and operational by next March.

Mayor Don Iveson said this funding moves the city a big step forward in meeting its goal of 900 supportive housing units by 2024, but called on the provincial government to provide the needed funding to operate the housing developments once constructed.

“There is no time like the present to pivot to prevention strategies like housing that will create jobs, improve dignity and outcomes for vulnerable people and reduce those heavy societal costs that we continue to bear,” Iveson said during the announcement. “The further need for permanent, affordable housing with supports embedded is urgent and we have a great opportunity in front of us now to make meaningful change.”

The funding announced Wednesday will go toward three modular housing projects. A five-storey building in the Terrace Heights neighbourhood will create 46 residences, a five-storey structure in Inglewood will have 30 units and a third site in Westmount will provide 54 units. The Westmount site is also being funded through a \$6.5-million investment from the provincial government’s municipal stimulus program.

This is in addition to developments in King Edward Park and Wellington that have already been funded and approved. All five sites have already received necessary rezoning and approvals and are ready for construction.

‘We are now at risk’

Although pleased with the federal government’s contribution, Iveson said the city’s application to the federal government for another 480 units costing \$68.8 million was “turned down” because of no funding commitment from the province to operate the sites with wraparound health and wellness supports.

“We are now at risk as Albertans and Edmontonians of leaving generous federal support to create jobs and deliver these units and realize better outcomes for vulnerable people and save money and reduce social disorder because of the provincial government’s intransigence on this issue,” Iveson said. “So I once again encourage them to do the right thing, to step up and commit to fund these operating units. I’m sure we’ll be able to get more construction job created, more units secured and online if the provincial government will only do its job in this regard.”

Iveson previously requested \$5.9 million annually in a December letter to the province for the five approved sites, but this money wasn’t earmarked in the recent budget. Non-profit housing provider Homeward Trust has reprioritized its existing budget to find the necessary funds, but the city said this won’t be possible for any additional locations.

Applications for the additional 480 units remain on hold with the federal government and the city will continue to offer land or grants for supportive housing development. City funding that was tied to the five supportive housing sites will now be released to the affordable housing portfolio that can be used toward other projects.

In a statement from the province, Community and Social Services spokesman Rob Williams said the mayor’s letter requesting the \$5.9 million had been received and is being reviewed.

Hussen also announced \$6.9 million for a seniors affordable housing project in Edmonton through GEF Seniors Housing. The project, Lauderdale Terrace, will provide 37 units of affordable housing for low-income seniors with 12 reserved specifically for women.

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