

# NEW CHALLENGES DEMAND A NEW DIRECTION

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

### Housing matters: a home is essential to good health and a productive way of life.



In British Columbia, most people are housed successfully in the private housing market and even with the rising cost of owning or renting a home, the private market is meeting their housing needs. For this majority, government's role is to help ensure that the housing market functions effectively.

For those in housing need, the Province works with other levels of government, as well as non-profit and private housing providers, making various types of housing programs possible. The Province is committed to building the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, those with special needs, children at risk and seniors.

Today the Province spends more than \$200 million a year on shelters and affordable housing – 70 per cent more than we spent just five years ago. In that time, nearly 5,500 new subsidized housing units were built, and another 3,500 are under construction or in development. That's 9,000 new units of subsidized housing for those in greatest need.

In addition, we've increased funding for the Emergency Shelter Program by 40 per cent and nearly doubled the budget for the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters program to assist low-income seniors.

Despite these efforts, some British Columbians continue to have difficulty in meeting their housing needs, with almost 16 per cent of households in core housing need. People representing more than 14,000 households have filled out applications for subsidized housing.

Studies tell us that the number of people who are homeless has increased and their overall health is declining. Our population is aging and this increases demand for affordable housing with support services. The number of Aboriginal people who are homeless or in core housing need is unacceptably high.

B.C.'s current housing environment also adds to the challenges of housing need. Few rental housing units are being built and in our urban centres, rents are unaffordable for many people. Adding to this challenge, construction costs have risen 40 per cent over the last four years.

It's clear that the challenges of addressing housing need in B.C. are much different than they were a decade ago. It's equally clear that we need to take a new direction.

To take this new direction, we put all provincial government housing programs and services under one ministry. This made it possible to review housing need – from homelessness to homeownership – more strategically and comprehensively. Out of this review has come an innovative new Provincial Housing Strategy.

This Strategy builds on a solid foundation of successful programs, focuses government's housing resources on the most vulnerable, and is an innovative, practical and achievable plan for improving the safety, stability and range of housing choices.

As Minister responsible for Housing, I look forward to working with our housing partners to make this Strategy a reality for the benefit of all British Columbians.

Sincerely yours,

**Rich Coleman**  
Minister Responsible for Housing