

A NEW DIRECTION

What worked 10 years ago, or even five years ago, is insufficient for the complexities of today's housing needs.

To meet today's challenges, the Province is taking a new direction. Two primary policy changes are part of this new direction.

The first part of this new direction gives priority access for subsidized housing to low-income households with special housing needs.

- B.C.'s most vulnerable citizens — people who need housing with supports and can't find housing in the private market — will receive priority for subsidized housing. This will alleviate wait times for those most in need.
- Other households, whose housing problems stem solely from low income, will be helped through a new rental assistance program in the private rental housing market, where most already live.
- Income Assistance recipients will continue to receive their shelter benefit through the Income Assistance program to help them access private market rental housing.
- Income Assistance recipients with special housing needs will also receive priority access for subsidized housing with support services such as assistance getting to medical appointments, life skills training or modified units for the physically disabled.

The second part of the new direction is the renovation or redevelopment of existing provincially-owned subsidized housing to better meet the needs of low-income households with special needs.

Many of the buildings that make up the approximately 7,800 units in the public housing portfolio are aging and their mortgages are beginning to expire. These buildings may be renovated to better meet the needs of tenants or to accommodate support services. Other buildings that occupy under-utilized land may be redeveloped.

Redevelopment provides a number of significant opportunities. Working in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors, these lands can become mixed-income communities with subsidized housing more fully integrated into larger communities.

Any proceeds from redevelopment of public housing will be reinvested back into affordable housing assistance. These changes will take place over a number of years and in a small percentage of the overall housing stock. The majority of subsidized housing is currently owned by non-profit agencies.

These two changes offer the potential to provide housing assistance for many more people in need and improve the Province's ability to provide housing with additional support where necessary.