

TAEH STUDY TOUR ALBERTA JUNE 2025

Summary
Notes



By Nick Falvo, PhD

June 2025



Table of Contents

Study tour overview	2
Webinar #1: Overview of the provincial homelessness governance landscape.....	3
Q&A session	4
Webinar #2: An overview of Calgary Homeless Foundation.....	6
Some Selected Dialogue from the Q&A session	8
Webinar #3: An overview of Homeward Trust Edmonton	9
Webinar #4: An overview of the municipal response.....	11
City of Edmonton.....	11
City of Calgary.....	12
Day 1: Monday, June 2, 2025.....	14
Community Engagement Walk (Mustard Seed, Edmonton)	14
Edmonton's Navigation and Support Centre	15
Day 2: Tuesday, June 3, 2025	17
NiGiNan Housing Ventures	17
Holyrood.....	20
Day 3: Wednesday, June 4, 2025.....	21
Group travelled from Edmonton to Calgary.....	21
Day 4: Thursday, June 5, 2025.....	22
Calgary Drop-In Centre	22
The SORCe	25
Day 5: Friday, June 6, 2025.....	27
Alpha House.....	27
Neoma (Inn from the Cold)	30
HomeSpace Society.....	33
Appendix 1: Homelessness and supportive housing in Alberta [blog post]	35
Appendix 2: List of Participants.....	37

Study tour overview

The Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH), in partnership with Nick Falvo Consulting, organized a homelessness and supportive housing system study tour of two metropolitan cities in Alberta: Edmonton and Calgary. Consisting of 30 participants, the study tour began with multiple online learning opportunities with system planners, community organizations, and government representatives before embarking on a multi-city tour in June 2025. The present document provides an overview of the study tour—this includes a summary of both the online sessions and the on-site tours.

Webinar #1: Overview of the provincial homelessness governance landscape

Virtual presentation by Jenn Anderson, David Williams, and Coreen Everington

Date: 09 May 2025

Jenn Anderson is Assistant Deputy Minister of Preventive Community Services, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services (now Assisted Living and Social Services)

David Williams is Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing Division, Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services

Coreen Everington is Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction

About 2.5 years ago, housing and homelessness were merged within the same department in the Government of Alberta. So Jenn and David work closely together.

Emergency shelters

In Alberta, we have emergency and transitional shelter spaces. Some of our emergency shelters have transitional shelter spaces built in. There's a slightly different approach with those beds.

Many of our emergency shelters have cultural supports.

Not long ago, 600 new shelter spaces were opened in Edmonton, rather quickly, due to urgent demand.

We have 'women only' emergency shelter spaces (separate from domestic violence sector). This is a recent initiative.

We also now have Indigenous-run shelters: two Edmonton and one in Lethbridge.

We also fund temporary shelters over the winter. Some municipalities have told us they don't want some of those spaces operating during the warmer months.

Provincial funding for housing with supports

Our funding to Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) has been focused on housing with supports (as

opposed to emergency shelters). Examples of CBOs are Homeward Trust Edmonton and Calgary Homeless Foundation.

We see Government of Alberta now as a 'system planner' (whereas, prior to 20 Dec 2024, CBOs played that role). CBOs will continue to focus on data stewardship, training, and Coordinated Access.

Across Alberta, there's \$101M in provincial funding provided to the seven largest municipalities for housing with supports.

Navigation and Support Centres

Edmonton's Police Chief requested support for individuals exiting a large encampment, which resulted in the creation of the Navigation Centre in Edmonton. This assisted with encampment removals.

NSCs help with storage.

We want these to be "welcoming places" that make it easier for individuals to access support (in one building).

The original intent was for NSCs to be temporary.

We now see 50-70 visits per day.

NSCs provide ID on site.

NSCs help people get connected to income supports and get medication.

We feel this filled a big gap.

A second one was opened in Calgary.

Pets are a big focus. Pets can be brought in. We are working with a shelter in Edmonton to be able to take pets as it was a barrier identified from our work at the NSC.

The role of housing

Movement through the housing spectrum is not necessarily linear.

About 12,000 Albertans get rent supplements annually. We have three streams of rent supplements: one for people fleeing gender-based violence; one for persons getting temporary rent supplements (\$200-\$250/month); and one for people with greater needs, namely the Rental Assistance Benefit (about \$750-\$900/month).

Seniors Self-Contained Apartments are essentially RGI apartments for persons over 65.

Lodge program for seniors – 3 meals a day are provided, as well as housekeeping. Costs are lower to Province than long-term care.

Affordable Housing Partnership Program

It's Alberta's housing construction program.

We provide about \$85K per unit in provincial dollars. Total cost is between \$280K-\$300K per apartment.

So we provide roughly 1/3 of project cost.

We encourage income mix.

We're encouraging other entities (i.e. not the Province) to own units. When we sell housing assets, we reinvest the revenue into housing. If there's a transfer to a non-profit entity, we make sure the entity knows about any challenges with the asset(s) in question.

The Provincial Priorities Act and regulations came into force on 1 Apr 2025. It stops Government of Canada from bypassing Province, including with respect to housing. We have found this helpful.

Community housing providers in Alberta, as of Jan 2025, are exempt from property taxes. Previously, only government-owned affordable housing properties were exempt. The City of Calgary and City of Edmonton actually asked for this.

Mental health and addictions

We have recovery staff on site at NSCs. Some are coaches.

We acknowledge that 'the treatment pathway' is challenging for persons who have experienced long-term homelessness. Our recovery coaches (with lived experience) therefore play a very helpful role.

Here are some useful links:

Alberta Recovery Oriented System of Care
<https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-recovery-oriented-system-of-care>

Compassionate Intervention
<https://www.alberta.ca/compassionate-intervention>

Q&A session

Gautam: *How many 'housing with supports' units do you have in Alberta?*

Jenn: *About \$101 M (7 cities). I'm afraid I don't have a unit count for you.*

Gautam: *And what's David's role with respect to funding for housing with supports?*

David: *An application for capital will come to me, and I'll talk to Jenn or Coreen about its viability. A pro forma would cover all costs; we'd assess financial viability of proposal, including for operating costs.*

Ryan: *Can you tell us more re: delivery of encampment responses? What's the role of the City?*

Jenn: *We've made NSCs permanent. They operate M-F during business hours, notwithstanding the fact that some residents can stay there overnight with their pets in for short periods. A referral to another community is only made via a 'very warm transfer' and it's something we generally try to avoid. We do some family reunification as well.*

Savhanna: *Can you tell me more about Alberta's recent approach to 'compassionate intervention' (i.e., forced treatment)?*

Coreen: *This is about people with very complex addictions (e.g., someone who's gone to an Emergency Department 10 times in a year for addictions or more). Key question: is the person a harm to themselves or others, and is the harm imminent (for adults). For youth, threshold is a bit different (to allow for earlier intervention). We consider this a health intervention, not a criminal one. An assessment happens within 72 hours of intervention.*

Savhanna: *Can you tell me a bit about the consent process and what happens if someone refuses treatment?*

Coreen: *There's no link to the criminal justice system at all. Once the Commission makes an order, police do go and apprehend. There's a Mental Health Patient Advocate in Alberta. Some types of intervention cannot be refused by the patient (e.g., an assessment).*

Parvin: *Tell us about how you prevent overdoses in Alberta.*

Coreen: *Supervised consumption services (which are licensed). We have a provincial Naloxone program. We also have a digital overdose response system, designed for people using alone (an alarm system, essentially), keeping in mind that many overdose deaths happen when someone uses alone in a private residence.*

Parvin: *What do you see for the future of supportive housing in Alberta?*

David: *We'd like to have more tenant mix. Less ghettoization.*

Nick [in the chat]: *Is David suggesting that Alberta would like to move away from place-based supportive housing in dedicated buildings?*

Jenn [in the chat]: *No. Those will need to exist still.*

Savhanna: *Does Alberta have rent control?*

David: *No. We have no rent control. The Province will never pursue it. There are, however, restrictions around when rent levels can be hiked.*

Webinar #2: An overview of Calgary Homeless Foundation

*Virtual presentation by
Jason Goertzen and Sam
Elliott*

Date: 12 May 2025

Jason Goertzen is Director, Programs & Evaluation (HSSC), Calgary Homeless Foundation.

Sam Elliott is Director, Data and Analytics, Calgary Homeless Foundation.

We guide the fight against homelessness in Calgary.

We are a trusted source.

We help guide a “unified fight.”

We promote reconciliation.

We administer funding for various programs across the city (including rent supplements and encampment outreach).

Our funders: GoC (33% of the operating funding we receive annually), Province (60%), City of Calgary (3%). The Province is our largest funder.

We coordinated triage through Coordinated Access and Assessment.

We partner on research projects.

We provide front-line staff training

We’re the Community Entity for federal Reaching Home funding.

In 2024, we funded 51 programs across 23 community-based agencies in Calgary.

As of 31 March 2024, we had 2,190 funded housing spots (place-based and scattered site combined). 2,406 participants were served in total across fiscal year.

Place-based supportive housing (\$18.3M annually)

We use the term Place Based Recovery-Oriented Supportive Housing

- 24/7 onsite support
- Capacity for 491 participants
- 8 agencies
- 19 programs
- Focus on “high complexity” participants

Scattered Site (\$28.6M annually)

We use the term Scattered Site Recovery-Oriented Supportive Housing

- Mostly small, private landlords (some community housing units)
- These units do not have 24/7 onsite supports.
- 15 agencies
- 21 programs
- Capacity for 1,426 tenants (as of FY25)
- Not ideal for “high-complex participants”

Rent Subsidy Program

For ‘graduates’ of the other programs transitioning to more independent living

- 2 agencies
- 2 programs
- Capacity for 230 tenants (as of FY 25)
- This is time limited (ideally for two years)

Transitional Housing

- Temporary
- Accommodation and support services “for individuals and families who are transitioning from homelessness to permanent housing.”
- 2 agencies
- 3 programs
- 12-18 months ideally
- Capacity for 49 households at any one time (as of FY 25)
- Focus here is “lower complexity” tenants

Prevention/Diversion

Seeks to prevent homelessness by assisting ‘at risk’ households.

Diverts people from entering shelter system

- 8 agencies
- 10 programs
- 1,441 participants served during FY25
- Pays off rental or utility arrears, damage deposits, moving costs, food (i.e., short term funding for people who do not need wraparound supports).
- A highly cost effective approach (compared to cost of providing services to a person after they have become homeless)

Health Services

Medical care, mental health support, substance use treatment, health education

- 2 agencies
- 3 programs
- 185 participants served during FY25

Warming Centres

Temporary shelter and essential services to individuals during extreme weather conditions

These centres offer a safe and warm environment, along with basic necessities such as food, water, and hygiene facilities. Some facilities have snacks.

On-site Housing Strategies can help the person do an intake via the common assessment tool (soon to be known as the Coordinated Entry Tool).

These are only day spaces (they are not overnight shelters). Overnight shelters are provincial jurisdiction.

We also have an agency that does pop up support along transit line.

- Funded by City of Calgary
- 5 agencies
- 6 programs

Outreach – Encampment

- Outreach teams that focus on encampments
- 1 agency operating 1 program

There are other teams of people (often volunteers) visiting encampments across the city. Historically, not much coordinating among those teams.

We've started to develop a data tool providing a real-time map of encampments.

Coordinated Access and Assessment

A centralized approach to screening, assessment, data and referrals to more than 40 programs

System continues to refer even after a person is housed (and as their needs change)

Over 2,000 people are on our triage list at any one time.

Coordinated Entry Tool (CET)

Common assessment tool developed in Calgary recently, replacing the VI-SPDAT. New tool was developed in partnership with Nick Falvo Consulting and community.

We want the new tool to launch later in 2025.

Program Assessment & Quality Improvement

We "[a]ssess funded programs through a standardized method that explicitly outlines the connection between activities, anticipated outcomes, and measures." We have "[o]ngoing dialogue with funded programs, semi-annual reporting, and our own data [in order to] provide a detailed picture of program effectiveness."

Workforce Training & Accreditation (Shared Program Standards)

"CHF...offers annual training at no cost to organizations on multiple topics that address common learning needs and promote a shared language among staff across the system."

Accreditation standards are co-developed with the Canadian Accreditation Council in order to "outline basic standards of care..." Accreditation is a funding requirement.

CHF Data Warehouse

"The Warehouse intakes and integrates data from multiple internal and external sources, cleans data, and creates outputs that include trends and participant journeys."

"CHF supports over 800 users, ensures data can be entered easily and correctly, and provides responsive and

tailored support to individual users, programs, and organizations as required."

This includes Operational Dashboards, enabling front-line staff to identify individuals in need of support. Allows our placement committees to do "deep dives" into individuals for triaging.

We can identify sector-wide approaches to challenges.

We can identify which staff need retraining in data entry.

Allows front-line staff to identify clients in need of support.

Some Selected Dialogue from the Q&A session

Jessica Slaughter: *How do you remain connected with people in (or recently in) encampments and have no phones?*

Jason: *Some community agencies to provide phones. We also have the HELP Team (formerly the DOAP Team). There's the Navigation Centre too. All of these points of contact help as well.*

Gautam: *Tell me more about your Place-Based Recovery-Oriented Supportive Housing, and also about discretion you have with your funding.*

Jason: *Province has been quite clear that their approach to recovery includes harm reduction (it's just not limited to harm reduction). Rental Tenancy Agreement governs landlord-tenant relations. As for funding, City funds are explicitly ear-marked. Provincial funding for supportive housing tends to provide discretion (and we reach out to our Community Advisory Board for direction).*

Kira: *Tell us more re: prevention and diversion (e.g., how much funding each person gets, what kind of staff discretion is available, etc.).*

Jason: *ICE Grants will soon be discontinued (due to changes in provincial funding rules). There was a 'soft cap' on per-person funding (each agency was given a fixed amount for a certain number of people). It may work out to a max of roughly \$2,500 per person (very roughly speaking).*

Peter Martin: *Tell us about the flow of Reaching Home encampment funding to Calgary.*

Jason: *This went directly to the Province, which funded it directly to agencies. Province negotiated that directly with agencies.*

Parvin: *Talk to us about length of stay.*

Jason: *No current time limit in place-based supportive housing or scattered site units. We've even got some tenants who are now in their 80s. Almost no long-term care facilities in Alberta have harm reduction, and those facilities have some of the longer waiting lists.*

Sam: *We've seen some major increases in rent levels in recent years. This has slowed down flow through our system.*

Webinar #3: An overview of Homeward Trust Edmonton

*Virtual presentation by
Susan McGee, Jeff Walker,
and Alicia Schneider*

Date: 21 May 2025

***Susan McGee is Chief Executive Officer, Homeward Trust
Edmonton***

***Jeff Walker is Senior Director of Programs, Homeward Trust
Edmonton***

Alicia Schneider is Senior Executive Associate, CEO Office,

A slide deck with considerable detail was used by the presenters. It includes a great "HTE Timeline." This will be shared.

Community-level planning varies considerably across Alberta.

Homeward Trust Edmonton was created in 2008. We were the merger of a community-based committee and Edmonton Housing Trust Fund.

Homeward Trust Edmonton now has about 200 employees across its related companies.

We have a Board of Directors (a minimum of 4 out of 9 board members must be Indigenous). We also have an Indigenous Advisory Council.

"Not all good well-intended work is what we should be doing." — Susan McGee

We're funded by all orders of government.

We are not a charity.

In 2024/25, we received \$41.3M in provincial funding and \$15.2M in federal funding (Reaching Home). Slide 15 shows where it goes.

In Dec 2024, the Province announced a change in the way it funds homelessness. We're still working with the Province about how contracts will be administered going forward.

Bill 18 (which took effect on 1 Apr 2025) has implications for how federal funding flows into the province, and it may have implications for how Reaching Home funding flows through Communities

Entities (such as Homeward Trust Edmonton and Calgary Homeless Foundation). We don't yet know what that will mean exactly.

City of Edmonton has been very supportive of our work, especially in the past five years.

An ongoing challenge: long-term sustainability for supportive housing. For example, without long-term funding agreements, how do you hire staff into permanent positions?

We have approximately 5,000 people on our ByName List. This is public facing and has resulted in more people 'signing up' for the ByName List. So people in need who wouldn't have previously asked for assistance from our homelessness sector are now reaching out for assistance.

Homeward Trust Edmonton operates Edmonton's Coordinated Access system, which provides a critical matching and referral service.

Homeward Trust Edmonton supports program fidelity, linked to evidence and contractual obligations.

We offer centralized support for training and professional development.

We also recruit new, market landlords (and we work hard to retain existing landlords).

We collect client-level data via a database system called Efforts to Outcomes. All of our funded agencies are required to use this. We try to make it available/accessible to our partners.

We currently fund over 90 programs at nearly 30 funded agencies. More than 2,900 clients are currently being supported through our funded programs.

We have three main funded program streams: 1) Prevention & Diversion (20 funded agencies); 2) Housing and Support Programs (this is most of our funding); and 3) Clinical & High Intensity.

Bridge Housing got its start during the pandemic. It's a 30- to 90-day intervention. It essentially keeps the person in a stable location as they work on a more sustainable housing plan. For Bridge Housing, we currently have 93 funded spaces across 2 sites.

We support 13 place-based supportive housing locations, with 8 agency operators. That covers more

than 440 units (with another 195 currently in development). More than 50% of tenants remain housed for at least 18 months. Holyrood is one such example (we'll see this on our study tour).

We operate "PDD homes" for specialized populations (often in the corrections sector).

King Edward Park supports people with FASD.

We operate a lot of our funded projects.

We feel it's important to separate the landlord and operator/support functions. But a challenge we face is that lots of community agencies want to own buildings.

Webinar #4: An overview of the municipal response

*Virtual presentation by
Caitlin Beaton, Scott Ashe,
Doug Borch, Rob Wiles*

Date: 27 May 2025

Caitlin Beaton is Program Manager, Homelessness Prevention, Affordable Housing & Homelessness/Social Development, Community Services, City of Edmonton

Scott Ashe is Program Supervisor, Capital Programs and Asset Management, Affordable Housing & Homelessness, Social Development Branch, Community Services, City of Edmonton

Doug Borch is Team Lead, Homelessness & Downtown Initiatives, Community Strategies, City of Calgary

Rob Wiles is Business Continuity and Emergency Planner, City of Calgary

City of Edmonton

Emergency shelters in Alberta are mainly the purview of the Province, though the Province doesn't typically provide capital funding, and the Province typically doesn't provide sufficient operating funding. Most organizations operating emergency funders in Alberta's major cities have to fundraise in order to make up the difference.

On the homelessness front, Homeward Trust Edmonton focuses on housing supports (e.g., coordinated access, the stewarding of client-level data, and funding housing supports teams). The City, by contrast, focuses on homeless prevention, resolution and response.

Homelessness Resolution

On supportive housing, the City of Edmonton tends to focus on the capital side (land and construction). We frame it as *"we're building City infrastructure."* We feel we can do this quite quickly (likely faster than small non-profits). Once finished, we sell new builds to Homeward Trust Edmonton for \$1, who then become the landlord and issue an RFP for a social service agency to run the services in the building.

The City has recently changed its zoning bylaw to allow more supportive housing into more parts of the city.

On community relations/resistance with respect to newly-built supportive housing, the City handles early communication with neighbours. The City does the initial public engagement and communications prior to site development. Homeward Trust will issue an RFP for an operator, often 3-4 months before occupancy. Once development is handed over to the Homeward Trust, they and the operator tend to lead communication and neighbour relations (with support from the City).

Homelessness Prevention

The City provides tenant support and education.

The City of Edmonton also provides homelessness prevention grants to local non-profits. We fund Bissell Centre's Community Bridge Program (which is eviction prevention). We work with Homeward Trust Edmonton on "problem properties." We fund a 'rent ready' tenant education course in partnership with other organizations.

Homelessness Response

We fund encampment outreach as well. The City funds outreach services (two of the teams are Indigenous led).

For Transit system support, we have COTT (7 FTEs - \$700K/yr) at a local non-profit to work with Transit

Peace Officers on transit. Such support is offered 7 days a week.

We fund water stations (we convert fire hydrants to water stations during hot weather) and a wound care 'pop up' program that facilitates referrals. We have a winter transit shuttle that transports people from transit stations to emergency shelters. We add an additional bus during cold weather.

City of Calgary

We're structured a bit differently than the City of Edmonton.

At the City of Calgary, our homelessness staff are in a different unit than our housing staff.

The City of Calgary has provided discounted land for the development of supportive housing (and for affordable housing more broadly).

We have a Homeless and Downtown Initiative team with 5 City of Calgary staff.

The City has a 'joint encampment team' involving Bylaw, Fire, Roads, Water Services, Calgary Police, Community Strategies, and multiple other operational City units.

Neither municipal government is directly involved in emergency shelters (in Alberta, this is the responsibility of the Province). Calgary has 5 main shelters with a total of approximately 1,800 spaces.

- Mustard Seed operates a 350-person shelter, located in a City building.
- Alpha House is an intake shelter for ~120 per night. About 50%+ of Alpha House shelter residents are identified as Indigenous
- Calgary Drop-In Centre is a low-barrier shelter for up to 1,100 people, with ~25% of clients/residents identifying as Indigenous
- Salvation Army Centre of Hope, men's shelter for ~300 persons
- Inn From the Cold is a family shelter that operates both emergency shelter and affordable housing in their Neoma building.

For higher-barrier shelters, the percentage of Indigenous folks tends to be lower.

City of Calgary provides just over \$7M annually to outreach teams (various agencies provide this, with Alpha House being the largest). The Ambassadors program, operated by Alpha House, has a dual role (engaging in vulnerable persons and members of community and business). The City is the main funder of homelessness outreach in Calgary.

We have 211 and 911 working together, allowing for appropriate referrals when distress-related calls come in.

We have an Extreme Weather Response (we open just over 400 additional daytime shelter spots from December 1 until March 31). We work in partnership with the Calgary Homeless Foundation on this. More info here: <https://www.calgaryhomeless.com/ewr/>

We also fund an emergency shelter shuttle during the winter (10PM until 4AM) that provides transportation to shelters from transit stations (for people who are sleeping rough in transit stations). This runs 7 days a week through the winter.

We fund Alpha House to provide Vulnerable Persons Training (including to local businesses, to security guards in the downtown core, and to some City staff).

In 2023-24, the City provided one-time funding for mental health navigation programming as a pilot at the Calgary Drop-In—this was outside municipal jurisdiction, but provided an opportunity to experiment and build the case for ongoing provincial funding (which was eventually committed).

We fund a Bylaw Vulnerable Persons team to provide outreach to encampments (this includes a Bylaw officer and an outreach worker). Encampment responses in Calgary are very much based on complaints from the general public.

Bylaw follows a rather detailed process before undertaking enforcement/eviction. This process can be viewed here: <https://www.calgary.ca/bylaws/illegal-encampments.html>

Through Municipal Prosecutions, the City is piloting a community court diversion program for bylaw infractions that provides resources and alternative measures to fines for people experiencing homelessness.

In Calgary, the development of supportive housing is led by HomeSpace Society, not by the City. This is a key difference between Edmonton and Calgary (though some non-profits in Edmonton do develop new units).

Day 1: Monday, June 2, 2025

Community Engagement Walk (Mustard Seed, Edmonton)

Site Leaders:

Jacqueline Kanini

Community Engagement Coordinator

Email: JacquelineKanini@theseed.ca

Michael Cabiltes

Community Engagement Coordinator

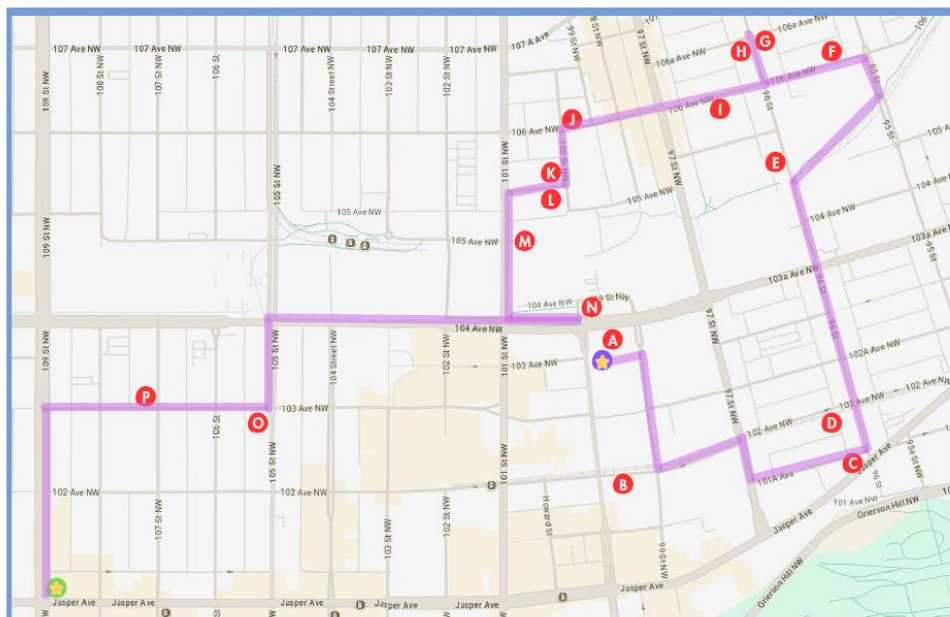
Email: MichaelCabiltes@theseed.ca

Staff from the Mustard Seed took us into the centre of Edmonton's homeless-serving sector. Beginning at Edmonton City Hall, the tour went through the McCauley, Boyle and Downtown areas. We stopped at key areas of interest, including:

- The Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (a 50-bed shelter)
- Grierson Institution (a low-security prison)
- iHuman (a youth-serving agency)
- The Bissell Centre (an Indigenous-led multi-service agency)
- Mustard Seed's Central Shelter
- Neighbourhood Empowerment Team (an initiative of the Edmonton Police Service)

- Ambrose Place (operated by Niginan Housing Ventures)
- The Herb Jamieson Centre (a 24/7 emergency shelter with capacity for over 400 people)
- Hope Mission (the city's largest provider of shelter and hot meals for persons experiencing homelessness)
- The Human-centred Engagement and Liaison Partnership Unit (operated by Edmonton Police Service)
- George Spady's supervised consumption services
- The Homelessness Memorial

Community Awareness Walk The Mustard Seed



- ★ Walk Start (Churchill Square)
- A City Hall
- B Stanley A. Milner Library
- C WEAC
- D iHuman
- E Bissell Centre
- F Central Shelter (TMS)
- G Mint Pharmacy
- H Radius Community Health
- I Ambrose Place (NiGiNan)
- J Bruce Reith Centre (HM)
- K Herb Jamieson Centre (HM)
- L George Spady Society
- M "Great Divide"
- N Homelessness Memorial
- O Alberta Supports Centre
- P Navigation Centre
- ★ Walk End (Jasper Ave, 109 St.)

Edmonton's Navigation and Support Centre

Address:

10302 107 St. N.W.
Edmonton, AB

Site leaders:

Christa Gilroy

Director – Housing Supports
Homeless Supports and Housing Stability Branch
Government of Alberta
Email: Christa.Gilroy@gov.ab.ca

Temitope Iyiola

Navigation and Support Centre Lead
Homeless Supports and Housing Stability Branch
Assisted Living and Social Services
Government of Alberta
Email: Temitope.Iyiola@gov.ab.ca

The Navigation and Support Centre (the 'Nav Centre') opened in January 2024 in response to the Edmonton Police request to assist with Edmonton Police led encampment closures in Edmonton.

The Nav Centre in Edmonton brings together supports to connect people to:

- Employment and Financial Services: access to Income Support and AISH including emergency financial benefits,
- Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: onsite/same day Alberta Identification provided,
- Hope Mission: Shelter Navigation, Housing supports, shelter beds onsite, food services, building maintenance and operations including janitorial services, transportation within the city of Edmonton,
- Radius Health: connections to medical support and referrals to Radius Health clinic,
- Alberta Health Services (AHS): Virtual Opioid Dependency Program and connections to other AHS mental health and addictions supports, and,
- Recovery Coaches funded through Mental Health and Addictions,
- Animal rescue services to put pets into temporary foster care (people can stay there with their pet until a suitable home is found for the pet),
- Indigenous Supports: connections to cultural supports.

The Nav Centre also has 9 shelter beds, which are staffed by the Hope Mission 24 hours a day (though the rest of the Nav Centre is open Monday to Friday during business hours). A person might sleep here if they are waiting for a detox bed or if they are newly-homeless and waiting a short period for housing.

Hope Mission also staffs the door at the Nav Centre.

Police officers are on site Monday to Friday, during business hours, to ensure safety on site.

Probation staff are also on site 3 days a week (making it easier for people to check in with probation officers).

Showers, some hot meals, and clean clothes are also provided.

Karis Shelter (Hope Mission)

We also had a tour of Karis Shelter, a 'women only' emergency shelter, with 84 spaces, operated by Hope Mission. It's located in the same building as the Nav Centre.

Karis Shelter includes a nursing station staffed by two nurses and one health care aid (the station is open Monday to Friday, from 8:30AM until 4:30PM). Services include wound care, referrals, overdose responses, and medication administration. Physicians keep hours as well.

Three housing options for shelter residents:

1. Diversion (includes financial assistance for first month's rent)
2. Rapid Rehousing (includes financial assistance for first month's rent as well as some follow up case management)

3. Intensive Case Management (one year of case management, in addition to financial assistance)

Due largely to insufficient community housing, most residents who receive housing assistance are assisted with private market housing (in Edmonton, people can wait 3 years for supportive housing or 10 years for community housing).

Day 2: Tuesday, June 3, 2025

NiGiNan Housing Ventures

Two Sites:

Pimatisiwin

12350 Fort Road

Omamoo Wango Gamik

12905 64 ST NW

Site Leaders:

Christine Davies

Housing Program Manager

NiGiNan Housing Ventures

Email: christine.davies@niginan.ca

Melissa Keith

Housing Lead

NiGiNan Housing Ventures

Email: melissa.keith@niginan.ca

Sarah Radley

Site Supervisor

Pimatisiwin

Email: sarah.radley@niginan.ca

NiGiNan Housing Ventures was created by seven Indigenous women just over 10 years ago.

Website: <https://www.niginan.ca/>

From website: NiGiNan Housing Ventures is an Indigenous-led organization "serving individuals with complex medical and social needs who are often described as the 'hardest to house'." NiGiNan Housing Ventures also ensures residents have access to Indigenous Ceremonies and cultural supports.

The organization provides Indigenous-led supportive housing with a strong harm reduction focus. NiGiNan also works to reconnect people back to their culture and spirits.

In terms of residents/clients, preference is given to Indigenous people, but being Indigenous is not a condition of entry.

Sites developed (in chronological order):

1. Ambrose Place
URL: <https://www.niginan.ca/welcome-to-ambrose-place>
2. Omamoo Wango Gamik - a family building (goal is to remove child protection authority from the picture and rely on extended family for assistance, where needed)

URL: <https://www.niginan.ca/omamoo-wango-gamik>

3. McArthur Place (partnership with Homeward Trust Edmonton)

URL: <https://www.niginan.ca/mcarthur-place>

4. Pimatisiwin (converted hotel into both supportive housing and emergency spaces)

URL: <https://www.niginan.ca/pimatisiwin>

Every site has a cultural team, including a knowledge keeper and cultural support (oskâpêwis) embedded in each site.

There are lots of cultural supports offered to residents (e.g., sweats every Friday for staff and residents, pipe ceremonies, Bannock making, feasts, fast, beading, drum making, drumming, sharing ceremonies).

There are also cultural support workers available on call, evenings and weekends.

All sites have a managed alcohol program and a managed cannabis program. Under Alberta's current UCP government, the organization uses the term "Indigenous-led recovery based" programming.

Pimatsiwin

The building's a former hotel, initially converted into 'bridge housing.'¹

The City of Edmonton purchased the building and gave it to NiGiNan. Pimatsiwin now has both 60 units of supportive housing, as well as 55 emergency spaces (with cubicles).

Residents are asked to leave substances and paraphernalia outside the building, staff complete bag checks upon entry in a relational and non-institutionalized way to ensure safety of the space and residents.

Every day, at 9:30AM, there's a "morning smudge/circle." It takes place in the ceremony room intended for ceremonies and smudging with its own intentional exhaust system built in. It's for both residents and staff.

NiGiNan Housing hires and values Indigenous staff, as well as staff who have lived experience in order to build relationships and understanding with the population served.

Emergency shelter at Pimatsiwin

Primarily funded by the Government of Alberta.

There 55 emergency spaces.

Bags are checked on entry, but there's no 'pat down.'

Couples and youth are welcome. Co-ed.

A bed/cubicle is assigned to a specific person and it stays attached to the person until they leave – the person can miss a few nights, and they don't lose their specific spot. Staff encourage residents to share if they will be away, staff has AWOL protocol should a resident be offsite for an extended period of time.

There are 'safety checks' every 30 minutes to engage and ensure safety (to see if people are still breathing, for example).

The building's a former hotel, initially converted into 'bridge housing.'

Residents can stay until they find appropriate long-term housing.

There's a housing outreach team that helps residents secure permanent housing (often private units) and provides weekly visits for up to one year after placement into housing. This program is a contract extending until the fall. It provides support with first month's rent and damage deposit for market housing.

There's lots of flow from Pimatsiwin's emergency shelter to its permanent supportive housing (see below).

Permanent units at Pimatsiwin

Several funders, including Red Road Healing Society (Indigenous Community Entity for Edmonton) and Recovery Alberta.

All 54 units are bachelor units.

There are also "Enhanced Care Suites" for persons who are in acute care and have been living in hospital for years. This is a level 5 R2 compliant suite.

Health care is provided on site. This includes:

- Recreational Therapists, Monday to Friday
- Occupational Therapists
- LPNs 24-7
- Health Care Aides, 24-7

Permanent residents pay \$424/month for: three meals a day, snacks, coffee, toilet paper and laundry soap.

Residents also pay rent, which is 30% of income.

Omamoo Wango Gamik

Supported independent living. It's a 42-unit apartment building.

Building includes a reception area and smudge room on the main floor.

Fifth floor is a community space with a kitchen and mural. Good for potlucks and resident meetings.

¹ In the Edmonton context, 'bridge housing' refers to temporary accommodation for people leaving encampments who are very focused on searches for permanent housing with assistance from a support team. You can read more here: <https://homewardtrust.ca/bridge-housing/>

Staffed Monday to Friday by three staff during business hours.

Building is legally owned by both Right at Home Housing and NiGiNan. Right at Home operates as the landlord and NiGiNan does the programming.

Goal is to remove Child and Family Services (CFS) involvement.

Some people come to us while they're pregnant or already after they've lost their children to CFS.

If a parent/guardian needs to go into treatment or is arrested, instead of re-involving CFS, we can support the child. Supported is provided by other residents in the building, including by:

- Aunties and Uncles – these are broad terms (not literal).
- Kokums – Grandmas (not literal – lots of elders)

- Mushums – Grandpas (not literal – lots of elders)

We've worked are to build trust with CFS. When we're involved, they're less likely to apprehend a child (and when they do apprehend a child, they're quicker to return the child than in other contexts).

We have very low tolerance for violence. We evict in those cases.

We do criminal record checks upon move in.

Our first lease is for just 90 days (after which point we assess readiness and may extend the lease).

Households sometimes leave us in order to move into larger 3- or 4-bedroom apartments (many of which are private market units). We consider this a gap. Unfortunately, when residents move on, they often lose their community which is highly important in this space and in Indigenous culture.

Holyrood

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Site Leaders:

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Built with funding support from the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI 3).

Completed in late 2024. Construction took 18 months.

All three orders of government provided funding for its development. Operating funding is from the Province.

Building is made of concrete and steel (it's not modular). A plywood shortage made modular more challenging.

Homeward Trust Edmonton partnered with the City of Edmonton to design it.

Four residential properties were 'reclaimed' in order to make the site possible. There was rezoning.

63 studio units, 12 of which are barrier free

Expansive main floor space for Indigenous cultural space (an enclosed ceremony room).

Homeward Trust Edmonton will take over ownership of the building from the City. Homeward Trust Edmonton will serve as landlord.

Tenants pay 30% of income for rent.

George Spady to operate this building

Wraparound support

Provided by George Spady (they bid on it).

Moderate intensity support

24-7 support

Recovery Alberta has a role (in reach clinical support to bolster supports).

Each floor is intended for a group of tenants at different stages of their recovery.

Day 3: Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Group travelled from Edmonton to Calgary

No formal agenda items.

Day 4: Thursday, June 5, 2025

Calgary Drop-In Centre

Address:

1 Dermot Baldwin Way SE
Calgary, Alberta T2G 0P8

Site Leaders:

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Calgary Drop-In
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Emily Gunn
Project Coordinator
Calgary Drop-In
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Historically Canada's largest emergency facility for people experiencing homelessness, the Calgary Drop-In is known as "the DI."

We now call ourselves a 'housing focused' shelter.

We have occupancy for up to 900 people per night. We do not think this is an ideal number for an emergency shelter (we feel that shelter should not have more than 100 residents, ideally).

We see between 100 and 150 new people per month.

Here in this building, we have detox beds and pre-treatment beds.

We do own three mixed market residential buildings too.

Housing-Focused Approach

This began in 2017.

"It was a complete redesign of everything that we do."

It used to be that, the longer you were here, the more priority access you got to 'top floors.' We eventually gave priority to those floors to residents who were working on a housing search (as opposed to people who'd been here longer).

We learned that some people who had their own permanent housing outside of Calgary were using the shelter as short-term accommodation as they did short work stints in Calgary.

Now, everything that happens in our shelter is intended to be focused on getting people housed (e.g., health care referrals outside of the shelter).

Most of the placements we offer into permanent housing happen outside of Calgary's Coordinated Access system. We rely a lot on private landlords with whom we have good working relationships. Admittedly, these placements directly into private units tend to work better with 'lower acuity' residents. Many of these placements happen without rent supplements and without ongoing case management. Very few of these people return to our shelter (we track this).

Our 'higher acuity' residents would be more likely to go the Coordinated Access route.

Health care

The COVID-19 pandemic presented Alberta's homelessness systems of care with important learning opportunities. During and subsequent to the pandemic, additional provincial funding was provided to the DI for additional nurses and paramedics.

Nurses and paramedics have provided wound care, medication administration, overdose responses and other health-related assessments. Prior to these enhancements, such nursing services were typically provided 'off site' by both community healthcare providers and hospital emergency departments.

Staffing

The DI has been very intentional about staff wellness and retention in recent years. Initiatives in this respect have included:

- A very intentional communications strategy, including a weekly staff newsletter and an anonymous feedback loop called “Ask Sandra Anything.”
- More direct visibility of senior leadership on the front line.
- Enhanced supervision of the front line (including debriefs after critical incidents).
- More psychological supports (e.g., mental health counselling to staff)
- The hiring of more relief staff
- The introduction of Wellness Days, allowing staff 5.0 days per year for wellness purposes (i.e., self-care).
- The introduction of unpaid leaves for compassion and bereavement—the DI began to offer these as 3-5 days of paid leave.
- The introduction of one full week of training/onboarding program for all staff.

Kiosks

Self-serve anonymous kiosks are now placed strategically throughout several of the DI's buildings. Both clients and staff can answer multiple choice questions about the quality of services available at the DI.

Example questions:

- Do you get enough food?
- If no, what meal do you not get a lot of? [We learned that it was breakfast.]

We ask how clean people find the building.

We learned that our second floor (i.e., the drop in area) and the outside of the building were areas of concern for the residents.

Updated live dashboards showing survey results are available every day.

The data is downloadable.

Each kiosk can translate survey questions into up to 200 languages.

The up-front cost for equipment: \$1,000 per kiosk + a subscription fee based on # of kiosks.

Kiosks are obtained from an organization called Pulse for Good, which has a focus on working with non-profit organizations. The company has a large US presence. The DI has found their customer service to be excellent.

Encampment challenge

In the months leading up to February 2022, an encampment had built up outside of the DI. It had been removed and there was backlash. It was then built up again. Extra security staff were hired just to accompany staff to and from their vehicles. The DI was on the verge of losing control of their building.

The encampment was linked with organized crime—specifically to a group known as “The Family.” Their leader was not homeless. Many members of The Family had “F” or “FF” marked on their face.

Persons experiencing homelessness were being used to do ‘heavy lifting’ (e.g., drug dealing).

Underage children were being sexually assaulted in tents.

The tents were in fact a cover for organized crime.

Some encampment residents were being prevented by gang members from entering the emergency shelter.

(Yet, an online video taken by an activist made it look as though police were bullying encampment residents.)

Outreach staff came in first and gave ‘soft intel’ to some residents. Also, due to police investigation, most staff did not know that the clearing was about to happen. A ‘closed door’ media conference was given two days before a police intervention.

People were housed directly from the encampment the day of the removal. Some encampment residents were relocated to safe places in other provinces.

A February 2022 City of Calgary media release providing an overview of the police work is available here: <https://newsroom.calgary.ca/operation-east-side-restores-access-to-services-for-vulnerable-calgarians/>

A February 2022 web article at the DI's website on the encampment clearing can be found here:
<https://calgarydropin.ca/outcomes-of-the-dis-housing-and-resource-day/>

Some takeaways from this experience:

- Not all encampments are the same.
- One must be careful about word getting out that going to an encampment gets priority treatment for housing.
- Media can get played.
- Not all staff will be 'on board' with clearing an encampment. This is OK. It is OK to allow staff with opposing views to express their opposition during staff meetings.

The SORCe

Location:

316 7 Ave SE
Calgary, AB

Site Leaders:

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Demi Sintihakis

Program Manager, Operations & Integration
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The SORCe (Safe Communities Opportunity & Resource Centre) is a multi-agency collaborative that connects people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to programs and services that can help to address the barriers to stable housing. It's a frequent location of the administration of Calgary's common assessment tool for Housing First and other supports.

The Distress Centre is the backbone organization supporting The SORCe (though many staff at The SORCe are not employees of the Distress Centre). Distress Centre operates the space. United Way funds the SORCe's operations.

Many other organizations have staff here as well, several of which are funded by the Calgary Homeless Foundation. In most cases, the organizations with a staff presence here are headquartered elsewhere in the city.

SORCe has been operating since June 2013. Our focus is housing and homelessness, and navigating services throughout the city.

We're open to clients from 9AM until 4PM (we have a second location in Tuscany).

We see about 200 people a day (some of who are known to us, some of whom are new).

We recognize that there's far more involved in homelessness than a lack of housing. We try to help clients with all types of needs, including housing.

We have four Housing Strategists who administer Calgary's common assessment tool (the assessment tool is also administered elsewhere in the city).

Common assessment tools are administered here (that means they're filled out, with staff assistance, if it's appropriate for them to have one completed). This is always accompanied by a housing plan for the person or household.

There's a financial empowerment coach here (to deal with things such as income assistance). The coach will help a client create a realistic budget. We also have a tax & benefits specialist who provides free taxation services to complete tax filings as far back as 10 years.

We have Justice Navigators as well, who help clients navigate through our justice system. This includes referrals and advocacy.

We do prevention and diversion here, which helps clients obtain housing in the private market (i.e., no case management/wraparound support). It also helps broker discussions between tenants and landlords. Referrals get made to non-market and affordable housing as well (including to Calgary Housing and to Onward).

The Alpha House Encampment Team (formerly DOAP Team) has an on-site presence here. They go to encampments and check in on clients. They can do housing assessments and referrals (including to detox and treatment).

The Alex Street Team has an on-site presence here (a mix between peer workers and Registered Social Workers). This is focused on health care, peer support, and a lot of referrals. The Alex has a dental bus as well as a health bus (e.g., wound care, referrals, etc.). The Alex can provide harm reduction education and supplies to clients (as do some other organizations in the city).

Recovery Alberta has an on-site presence here with the Street Mental Health Team and Adult Addiction Counselling. The focus is on short-term interventions to assess, diagnose and stabilize people experiencing mental health challenges.

Trellis has a prevention and diversion service here for families (includes light touch case management and referrals).

The SORCe has a new partnership with Gateway, which provides support to newcomers (including some coming directly from other Canadian cities). They're at the airport and they make referrals to us. They create a settlement plan for each new arrival (3 goals usually, often including housing). Gateway staff speak several dozen languages collectively.

There are gender neutral washrooms here.

We have clothing here. Project Warmth donates jackets in the winter. MC College donates hair and manicure coupons (for job interviews). The work gets done by students.

We have computers for people to use and staff who can help them use them (e.g., including with family reconnection, job searches, resume preparation, housing searches, etc.).

We also provide light touch case management and system navigation.

We have two food programs, and we have a lot of food stored on site. Staff from partner agencies pick up food hampers here and distribute them locally (and this helps 'invite' clients into The SORCe).

We'll create hampers for specific individuals too.

This is 'pet friendly' space. Clients can bring their animals here; some of our staff also bring their animals.

We do outreach to clients in hospital or who are incarcerated.

Key differences between The SORCe and Calgary's Nav Centre

The SORCe works closely with Calgary's Provincial Navigation Centre, but there are key differences between the two entities. Some examples of differences:

- There are different organizations/services at the SORCe than at Calgary's Nav Centre.
- The Nav Centre has about 10 beds for short-term stays as people await housing, detox or treatment (keeping in mind that it is located within a shelter), while the SORCe has no beds and focuses on daytime services.
- The Nav Centre has laundry services and showers, while the SORCe does not.
- The SORCe tends to have more community agencies represented on site than does Calgary's Nav Centre (which tends to be heavier on government resources).
- The SORCe tends to do more ongoing case management to clients than does Calgary's Nav Centre, which focuses on navigating people to community resources across the city.
- The SORCe has a Housing Strategist integrated at Calgary's Nav Centre. This supports housing assessments and plans; it also supports communication between the Calgary Nav Centre and The SORCe.

Day 5: Friday, June 6, 2025

Alpha House

Two Sites:

Aurora

832 10 Street NW

Providence

426 2 AV NE

Site Leaders:

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Program Manager

Alpha House

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Alpha opened in Calgary in 1981, first as a shelter, and eventually with a detox. For about 25 years, we were just a shelter and detox (in detox, we'll often keep a person until a residential treatment program is ready to receive them).

We then developed the DOAP Team, which diverted people from law enforcement. This started in 2005 (that program now has 40 vans and goes 24-7). It's quite integrated into Calgary's 211/911 system, so we now get direct calls (instead of police getting calls for which we're better suited).

We've since become known as Calgary's "original PSH people." We have lots of place-based supportive housing buildings, all with 24-7 support.

One of our PSH buildings is for homeless veterans—that building is similar to a lot of our harm reduction buildings, but with a bit more emphasis on peer support. In many cases, trauma experienced by the veterans who live there predates their work in the armed forces (often times it was trauma they experience as children).

We now have 8 place-based supportive housing buildings, only one of which we actually own.

We also support lots of vulnerable tenants in private market housing. We have one team of staff that works with private landlords, and another with clients. Rent supplements help a lot with those placements.

We're good at working with complex people with substance use challenges. Historically, they've had a strong harm reduction focus; but more recently, we've incorporated/adopted a recovery model. This need was identified organically (by our direct work with vulnerable people).

We work with a lot of the clients that other organizations wouldn't work with.

We do a lot of cultural programming, keeping in mind that a lot of our tenants are Indigenous. We have an Indigenous version of the 12-step program (it involves cultural support), which is also popular with non-Indigenous people.

Aurora on the Park

Known as 'Aurora,' this is probably Alpha House's 'highest needs' building. Aurora was Alpha House's fourth place-based supportive housing building, but the first one that was purpose built. It opened in 2016.

This is permanent housing. When tenants leave here, they're typically moving on to either long-term care or they've passed away. There are some evictions (but they're infrequent).

There are 24 units here (all bachelors).

This building is owned by HomeSpace Society. We pay our rent to HomeSpace.

Tenant referrals come from Calgary's Coordinated Access and Assessment system (central triage system supported by Calgary Homeless Foundation).

There's 24-7 staffing here (at least two staff on site at all times).

Most tenants here have physical accessibility challenges and the building is built accordingly (hallways, doors, etc.). All our units are 'barrier free.' Many of our tenants have cognitive challenges as well. All showers here are wheelchair accessible and have grab bars. Kitchens have 'cook stops' (meaning the stove tops turn off if it's ignored over a 5-minute period).

Some of our tenants have early onset dementia.

Most of our tenants have been men thus far.

All residents must be aged 18 or over.

Home care comes to Aurora and provides home care. Alpha House also has their own home care staff (in addition to Alberta Health Services staff). This helps with bathing, wound care.

Many of our tenants have walkers.

There is an LPN here 4 days a week, a health care aide here three days a week, and a physician here once a week.

Aurora has a communal kitchen, as well as a kitchen in each unit (but without an oven). Meals on Wheels provides one meal a day, Monday to Friday (dinner only). Staff cook one daily meal on weekends.

We also work with people who are palliative. Strictly speaking, we have one palliative unit at Aurora.

With harm reduction, we try to have very open communication with tenants (including about when they're going to use). We have harm reduction supplies on site. However, tenants cannot 'openly use' illicit substances in common areas.

We help tenants budget for their expenses with respect to cigarettes, cannabis and alcohol (if they wish). We also offer to keep those products for tenants (if they wish). This helps avoid bingeing.

Guests are allowed, including one overnight guest per week. With overnight guests, the guest must leave by 12 Noon the next day (this helps prevent unit takeovers). On Thursdays, we do not allow guests (as it's a very busy day for staff).

In exceptional cases, we have the ability to evict a tenant within 24 hours. That would be a HomeSpace matter, strictly speaking.

Providence

This is a recovery-oriented, 23-unit place-based supportive housing building. We found that many of our tenants/clients wanted options. We wanted to be able to support people who wanted that approach. People can still relapse and we may not discharge them.

This building receives operating funding from the Calgary Homeless Foundation via provincial and federal money that they steward.

This building is owned by HomeSpace Society (and they do the maintenance). It's a non-smoking building (but there's a communal smoking area in the backyard).

Rent levels are in line with the shelter portion of tenants' income assistance. Meals on Wheels is

included in their rent (but it's just supper and it only comes Monday to Friday). Each unit has a kitchen (but no oven). There's also a communal kitchen.

Units are fully furnished. Utilities are included in the rent, but Internet is not.

Providence tenants are referred here via Coordinated Access and Assessment (the triage system in Calgary's homeless-serving sector). There's then an interview process to ensure that this building is indeed what the client/tenant wants.

The Providence approach to recovery was not imposed by the Province. We wanted to try a recovery model. *"Our residents told us they wanted this option."* But we also wanted something not quite as strict as traditional treatment.

There's a daily meeting here that residents are expected to attend. There's also a weekly AA meeting here that tenants are encouraged to attend.

There are weekly unit inspections.

There's a recover coach on staff (Monday to Friday, here at the building), and we also bring in external

recovery support workers. We have just one staff person in the evening.

There are very few police calls made for or by our tenants.

We administer medication here, coordinate medical appointments, and work on tenants with goals in general (this may include family reunification). We help them access various forms of social benefits. We often transport tenants to appointments.

We don't automatically evict if someone relapses here (unlike many other 'sober living' options in Alberta).

A tenant can stay here for 'up to 2 years' in principle (an expectation driven by the funder). But we can be flexible. After the 12-month mark, we start to look for other housing options for the tenant.

This is a co-ed building (with floors designated for each gender).

Residents can have guests, but no sleepovers.

In exceptional cases, we have the ability to evict within 24 hours. That would be a HomeSpace matter, strictly speaking.

Neoma (Inn from the Cold)

Location:

706 7 Ave S.W.
Calgary, AB

Three-minute video on Neoma:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pcs-wd7Sjzo>

Site Leader:

Heather Morley

CEO

Inn from the Cold

Email: heather@innfromthecold.org

In 2021 HomeSpace and Inn from the Cold (IFTC) partnered on an innovative capital project - a \$30M office conversion project which re-purposed vacant office space into a hub of housing and services for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

We did a 'joint fundraising campaign' with HomeSpace Society to raise \$6M in private fundraising.

"Neoma," opened in September 2022, represents the new moon and new possibilities for the families and individuals who call Neoma home. Neoma, owned and operated by HomeSpace Society, is a purpose-designed facility that brings together shelter, affordable housing and services all under one roof. IFTC, an organization that provides shelter, housing and supports to families experiencing homelessness is Neoma's main tenant.

Some of Neoma's highlights:

- Calgary's first office to affordable housing conversion
- Funded by Government of Canada, Government of Alberta, The City of Calgary, private donors, corporate donors and foundations
- 60 units of deeply subsidized affordable housing operated by HomeSpace Society
- 32 units of family shelter operated by IFTC
- IFTC office and programming space
- Award winning art and design elements
- The Calgary Food Bank opened its first satellite location in Neoma in June 2025

HomeSpace owns the building. IFTC has a 40-year lease with HomeSpace for this building. If HomeSpace wants to sell the building, IFTC gets 'right of first refusal.'

HomeSpace is very good at construction and managing building operations, while IFTC is very good at supporting vulnerable families.

Neoma was an office conversion. After the pandemic, much office space wasn't being used all of a sudden.

When we designed the building, we sought to use 'trauma informed designed,' informed by the hospital sector. This is relevant to sightlines (glass, wide always, the use of natural light, art and other issues. We put a lot of emphasis on art, in part so that families staying at Neoma see themselves reflected in the art.

This is a steel frame building with concrete floors.

Building layout

10 floors in total

1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors: IFTC

1st floor: IFTC reception and volunteer resources team offices (also, bike room + mail room). Commercial space as well (which will soon to be Calgary Food Bank space)

2nd floor: Mostly admin space for IFTC staff (there are 90 staff at IFTC)

3rd floor: Emergency spaces for families (funded by Province of Alberta)

4th floor: 10 units of transitional space for families, with wraparound support – households make their own meals, but IFTC provides the groceries (families can stay up to 6 months)

5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th floors: affordable units for families (partnership with DI and one other organization)

There are bachelors, 2-bedrooms and 3-bedrooms.

All units are rented at 37% below market.

Food is prepared one-and-a-half blocks away in a commercial kitchen, owned by IFTC (it would have cost us over \$1M to build a commercial kitchen in this building). IFTC's commercial kitchen has red seal chef. Food is transported from the commercial kitchen in AHS-approved containers. There is then a 'serving kitchen' at Neoma where food is taken out of those containers and served.

We intentionally designed eating areas with small tables and booths so that families could eat together.

IFTC is the only family shelter in Alberta (not including the domestic violence sector). We have space for 32 families in this building (average length of stay here is 84 days). More than half of the families who come here are Indigenous. Newcomers are also a large group.

Cultural activities

More than half of our families are Indigenous, so we've had private donors and municipal support to help cultural connection.

Sage burning every morning in the multi-purpose room.

We do a lot of programming for kids and parents.

Emergency Shelter (3rd floor of Neoma)

10 spots on 3rd floor of Neoma.

You need to have a child under the age of 18 with you in order to be admitted to the family shelter.

Community referral or self-referral. It starts with a phone call (and a screening over the phone). Each admitted household is connected to a case manager within three days.

Average length of stay in shelter has increased considerably in past several years.

IFTC has also recently acquired 10 emergency spots from Brenda's House (through an acquisition).

Transitional Housing (4th floor of Neoma)

It's a two-year program.

Referral through CAA (so often households get NSQ assessments at The SORCe).

Once in the program, there's intensive case management (weekly, if needed).

Focus includes accessing financial assistance and other supports.

Sometimes we support longer than two years.

It's for families and pregnant mothers. Priority is given to households who've faced chronic or episodic homelessness.

Household composition

Admission into services – there must be a child under the age of 18 attached.

50% of families served by IFTC are single moms.

Some are two-parent families.

We do about 10% single dads.

We have multi-generational as well. We once had a newcomer family with 19 people (they took three units). There were aunts, cousins, etc.

Prevention and diversion

IFTC does a lot of prevention and diversion as well, but they lack a consistent funder for this work.

Goal is to prevent household from coming to shelter. This is something we offer especially for households at risk of losing their housing. There are community referrals and people can self refer as well.

Household calls IFTC's main telephone #. There's a screening process.

Program provides light touch short-term case management for household to remain housed.

There's one-time financial assistance (for such things as rental arrears) and landlord mediation.

We can also help person access new housing.

We can connect them to counselling and legal guidance.

Support is for up to 3 months.

In some cases, Alberta Works may help keep someone in a hotel.

We provide light touch case management and some financial supports when a family contacts us when they're on the verge of a possible eviction. We find that \$1,400 per family can have a big impact in terms of keeping a family housed.

HomeSpace Society

Site Leader:

Bernadette Majdell

CEO

HomeSpace Society

Email: bmajdell@homespace.org

HomeSpace is a non-profit developer, owner and operator. HomeSpace operates under a governance Board designed to understand real estate and appropriate levels of risk.

HomeSpace now has about 1,000 units (Neoma is HomeSpace's largest building).

HomeSpace does not work directly with the tenants (in terms of wraparound support).

HomeSpace has no market units at all.

Rent levels are typically tied to the capital funding agreements for the properties in question.

HomeSpace has approximately \$180M in assets, but just \$20M in mortgage debt.

Across the entire portfolio, about 20% of HomeSpace's units are accessible.

Every unit in our portfolio is attached to an organization with a social mandate.

Some of our tenants come to HomeSpace buildings via Coordinated Access and Assessment, but in other cases, social agencies providing the wraparound supports simply bring in their own clients (bypassing Coordinated Access and Assessment).

The staffing structure includes 10 maintenance technicians on staff. We also have tenant liaison workers (each such worker has a portfolio of units). That worker is like HomeSpace's contact with each tenant.

We have unit inspections at least every three months that often result in some follow up coaching/meetings with the tenant (each unit is given a score of 1 to 4).

Some agencies (e.g., Alpha House) have much more frequent unit inspections of their own, in which case we would time our own unit inspection to occur alongside one of theirs.

We have a pretty sophisticated portfolio management software. We use Yardi. AI helps us with the analytics.

We don't use private security guards, but we have good relationships with Calgary Police Service. We find private security to be very expensive and not terribly helpful. There are security cameras in every building.

We have our own key-making machine, as keys get misplaced frequently.

Most of our units involve a one-year lease (with Neoma being an important exception).

With tenants, we use short-term leases. With a non-lease renewal, we don't have to give reason. This does not require going through a legal tribunal. Evictions (which can take place in 24 hours) may happen with violence or major risk to the building.

Insurance providers consider our tenants to be 'high risk.' For example, our tenants sometimes set fires. A master lease with a social agency helps us share that risk with that social agency.

No garbage chutes in any of our buildings (tenants have to bring their garbage down).

We have very few balconies.

We do allow some pets.

Most of our buildings have very little parking. Most of our tenants don't have cars. We have some spaces for

staff parking. We typically get parking exemptions on our buildings.

No smoking is allowed inside any of our apartments. But all of our permanent supportive housing buildings have designated smoking areas on site. We would never evict based on smoking.

In some cases, the agency is our tenant (i.e., master lease). In other cases, it's the tenant who is our tenant.

Legacy on 5th

Location: 933 5th AV SW T2P 0N8

Legacy on 5th was developed by HomeSpace Society, thanks in part to a non-market land transfer from the City of Calgary. It was also Calgary's first housing development funded by the National Housing Co-Investment Fund (we got a \$5M grant and a \$5M loan).

A private donor provide us with \$10M. The building opened in 2020.

Various non-profits support tenants in this building. The main floor is commercial (the main motivation for some commercial space is that the zoning rules favoured some commercial space). We generate revenue from the commercial space.

Autism Calgary has apartments here. We have seniors here as well.

We have a dedicated outdoor space here where smoking is allowed (smoking is not allowed inside the building).

74 units – bachelors and one bedrooms.

Rent levels are roughly 40% below market.

Appendix 1: Homelessness and supportive housing in Alberta [blog post]

By Nick Falvo, PhD

I recently helped organize a study tour on homelessness and supportive housing in Alberta, with a focus on Edmonton and Calgary. A partnership with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, our group consisted of 30 participants, all from Toronto's non-profit sector.

Here are 10 things to know:

1. **The Government of Alberta now sees itself as a homelessness 'system planner.'** Until very recently, other entities—known as Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)—played this role in the province's largest cities. Having said that, CBOs will continue to focus on data stewardship, training, and Coordinated Access (more information about this recent shift is available [here](#)).
2. **The Province provides important sources of funding to both create and operate supportive housing.** The Affordable Housing Partnership Program is Alberta's housing construction program through which approximately \$85,000 per unit in provincial capital funding is available—this typically translates into one-third of a project's capital costs. Community housing providers in Alberta, as of January 2025, are also exempt from property taxes (previously, only government-owned affordable housing properties were exempt).
3. **The Government of Alberta provides important demand-side assistance.** About 12,000 Albertans get rent supplements annually.² There are three streams of rent supplements in the province: one for people fleeing gender-based violence; one for persons getting temporary rent supplements (\$200-\$250/month); and one for people with greater needs, namely the Rental Assistance Benefit (about \$750-\$900/month).
4. **Navigation and Support Centres, operated by the Province in both Edmonton and Calgary, are a relatively new phenomenon.** The first one opened in Edmonton when the Chief of Police requested support for individuals exiting a large encampment. NSCs have staff at a single site who can provide referrals and identification (pets are also a large focus). There is now a second NSC in Calgary.
5. **Similar one-stop services were being offered at a Calgary site well before the Province began operating NSCs.** The SORCe (Safe Communities Opportunity & Resource Centre) is a multi-agency Calgary collaborative that connects people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to programs and services that can address barriers to stable housing. It's also a frequent location of the administration of Calgary's common assessment tool for Housing First and other supports. The SORCe has been operating in downtown Calgary since June 2013; its focus is housing and homelessness, and navigating services throughout the city. The SORCe works closely with Calgary's NSCs but there are key differences between the two entities.

² For context, according to the 2021 Census, nearly 10% of Alberta households—representing more than 154,000 households and 295,090 persons—are in core housing need. That generally means they're either paying more than 30% of their income on housing, are living in housing in need of major repairs, or are living in housing with too few bedrooms.

6. **NiGiNan Housing Ventures has an initiative that seeks to limit involvement from Child and Family Services.** The organization was created by seven Indigenous women just over 10 years ago. NiGiNan provides Indigenous-led supportive housing with a strong harm reduction focus. Its Omamoo Wango Gamik site is a family building where extended family can provide assistance to children when a parent is incarcerated or enters treatment.
7. **The Calgary Drop-In Centre is a large facility that has gone through transformational change in recent years.** It used to be that, the longer a resident stayed there, the more priority access they got to preferred floors. Now, priority for those floors goes to residents who are working on a housing search. Lower acuity residents often move on to private rental units (many without rent supplements and without ongoing case management). Higher acuity clients, by contrast, tend to require both financial subsidy and ongoing case management upon placement into housing.
8. **Kiosks at facilities can give residents and staff the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback.** Self-serve anonymous kiosks are now placed strategically throughout several buildings operated by the Calgary Drop-In Centre. Respondents can answer multiple choice questions about the quality of services available on site (e.g., food, cleanliness). Updated live dashboards showing survey results are available every day. Each kiosk can provide survey questions in up to 200 languages.
9. **The Alpha House Encampment Team (formerly the DOAP Team) diverts people from law enforcement.** This initiative, which started in 2005, now has 40 vans and runs 24-7. It's quite integrated into Calgary's 211/911 system—the team now get direct calls (instead of police getting calls for which Alpha House is better suited). This team also goes to encampments to check on clients. Staff with this team can also do housing assessments and referrals (including to detox and treatment).
10. **HomeSpace Society offers an interesting model for other parts of Canada.** HomeSpace is a Calgary-based non-profit developer, owner and operator. It operates under a governance board designed to understand real estate and appropriate levels of risk. HomeSpace now has about 1,000 units (none of which are market units). It does not work directly with the tenants (in terms of wraparound support). Every unit in HomeSpace's portfolio is attached to an organization with a social mandate.

In sum. This blog post provides an overview of a study tour organized in partnership with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness.

I wish to thank Jenny Morrow and Annick Torfs for assistance with this blog post.

Appendix 2: List of Participants

Agency	Participant Name	Job title	Participant Email
Houselink & Mainstay	Parvin Marchant	Director, Support Services	pmarchant@hlms.ca
Houselink & Mainstay	Jessica Slaughter	Housing Support Worker	jslaughter@hlms.ca
Houselink & Mainstay	Gautam Mukherjee	Executive Director	gmukherjee@hlms.ca
The Shelter Network	Leslie Gash	Executive Director	leslie@toshelternetwork.ca
Madison Community Services	Chama Chongo	Executive Director	chama@madisoncs.org
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Homes First Society	Kereen Wells	Assistant Director of Client Services	kereen.wells@homesfirst.on.ca
Homes First Society	Jamie Facciolo	Director of Development and Homelessness Initiatives	jamie.facciolo@homesfirst.on.ca
Homes First Society	Michael Potvin	Director of Client Services	michael.potvin@homesfirst.on.ca
Homes First Society	Necole Small	Assistant Director of Properties	necole.small@homesfirst.on.ca
Covenant House Toronto	Lesley McMillan	Director, Community Services	lmcmillan@covenanthouse.ca
Covenant House Toronto	Jacque Ferguson	Director, Resident Services	jferguson@covenanthouse.ca
PARC	Victor Willis	Executive Director	vwillis@parc.on.ca
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Fred Victor	Andrew Legatto	Associate Director, 24-Hour services	alegatto@fredvictor.org
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Fred Victor	Eiman Ahmed Elwidaa	Director for Housing Development and Investment	eelwidaa@fredvictor.org
Fred Victor	Maureen Squibb	Director of Community Services	msquibb@fredvictor.org
Community Living Toronto	Kit Leung	Senior Manager, Real Estate and Insurance	kit.leung@cltoronto.ca
Fred Victor	Maureen Squibb	Director of Community Services	msquibb@fredvictor.org
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LOFT	Ryan White	Manager, Mental Health & Homelessness Services	rwhite@loftcs.org
TOUR LEAD	Nick Falvo		falvo.nicholas@gmail.com
TAEH	Savhanna Wilson	Director, TAEH	savhanna@taeh.ca
TAEH	Chirysh Dupie	Coordinator, TAEH	chirysh@taeh.ca
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