

Life in BC Snapshot: 2017

Housing and homelessness



THE FEDERATION
of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

Altogether better.

Things aren't getting better for the people of BC

Two years ago, The Federation of Community Social Services of BC scoured the news, research, and literature to take a snapshot of what life in BC was like. We wanted to understand how good things were for the people of our province. We also wanted to investigate important aspects of day-to-day life that get overlooked by a government focused on economic prosperity.

Things didn't look that great. And two years later, they are no better. We have updated these snapshots to prove that point and to help you talk about the state of our province and the things that need to change in order for the people of British Columbia to actually prosper and thrive.

News headlines about housing and homelessness in BC

- ⇒ Vancouver Island struggles with homelessness - *BC Local News*, 10/20/2016
- ⇒ BC housing incentives widely panned by experts - *Global News*, 12/15/2016
- ⇒ Housing crisis to be major issue at meeting of BC municipalities - *Globe & Mail*, 9/21/2016 (1)
- ⇒ BC government to subsidize rental units in response to housing crisis - *Globe & Mail*, 9/21/2016 (2)
- ⇒ Shut down of Victoria homeless camp puts spotlight on poverty - *CBC News*, 9/7/2016 (3)
- ⇒ Evicted East Vancouver families call for restrictions on 'renovictions' - *CBC News*, 10/23/2016
- ⇒ Vancouver renters: Pushed out and unable to find a new home - *Metro News*, 9/12/2016
- ⇒ Report calls for more spending on affordable housing to end homelessness - *CTV News*, 10/21/2016

Case study: Renovictions mean Sam may end up homeless

“ Sam has MS and shares a small two-bedroom with a roommate. Sam's disability payments don't even cover his half of the rent; his sister has been paying the rest. Sam's been on BC Housing's wait list for a subsidized apartment for 3 years, but time is running out. Last month, Sam's landlord sent notice that their building has been sold and the suites will all be renovated. If he and his roommate want to stay, their rent will jump from \$1200 per month to \$1800 per month. There's no way Sam can afford that. His sister doesn't have space for him either. New low-income rentals are being built in his community, but they won't be completed for two years. By then, it will be too late for Sam.

23%
Percentage of renters in BC who spend more than half of their income on housing and utilities.⁴

4000
The number of applicants on wait lists for social housing in Metro Vancouver alone.⁵



Why these issues matter

According to the BC Non-Profit Housing association, dealing with the housing crisis in BC would require a doubling of BC Housing's current operating budget.⁷ And only recently has government investment in social housing come close to the amounts that were being invested in the late 1990s. There is a lot of catching up to do and it's not happening fast enough. BC needs to add 5000 subsidized housing units a year for 5 years just to meet the growing need.⁶ It's time to make living in our province much more affordable. Things need to start getting better for all the people of BC.

Raising awareness about these issues

- As of the last count (which took place in 2014), Metro Vancouver's homeless population was over 2,750.⁵
- While BC Housing is targeting more people, its operating budget remains flat, leaving it underfunded and unable to fix BC's housing crisis.⁷
- Government income assistance and disability payments are not increasing at a rate that reflects the rising cost of living in many cities.³

Talking points about housing and homelessness in BC

"BC Budget 2016 failed to provide any initiatives aimed at stimulating rental housing in BC."⁶
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association

"We are taking meaningful steps to address housing affordability challenges in BC."⁸
- Rich Coleman, Minister Responsible for Housing

"Rents and incomes have become disconnected from each other."²
- Thom Armstrong, Cooperative Housing Federation of BC

About The Federation

The Federation of Community Social Services of BC is a social justice umbrella organization. We work tirelessly to improve the social conditions in BC on behalf of our members: community social service organizations across the province. We believe that:

- ⇒ Healthy, happy, and supported communities make good economic sense.
- ⇒ For your family to succeed, all families must succeed.
- ⇒ Job creation alone is not the solution to our province's social problems.

Learn more at www.fcssbc.ca or email us at info@fcssbc.ca

2900

The number of new rental units announced by the BC government in September, 2016.⁸

5000

BC needs to be adding 5,000 subsidized units per year over the next five year just to meet growing need.⁶



\$988

The average cost of rent and utilities per month in BC.⁴

\$375

The amount allotted for rent among single people on social assistance in BC.¹

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

- (4) *Canadian Rental Housing Index, BC Profile*. August, 2016. www.rentalhousingindex.ca
- (5) *Housing budget? Not so much*. Policy Note, February, 2016. www.policynote.ca/housing-budget-not-so-much
- (6) *Provincial Budget Member Update 2016*. BC Non-Profit Housing Association. February, 2016.
- (7) *Most vulnerable left out of new affordable housing fund*. BC Non-Profit Housing Association. April 20, 2016.
- (8) *B.C. makes largest housing investment ever in province's history*. BC Government News Release. Sept, 2016.