



# A Guide to Municipal Elections for Community Housing Providers



Presented by Housing Central



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Housing Central is a strategic alliance between BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) and the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF BC). The Housing Central mission is to strengthen and grow the community housing sector so all British Columbians have a safe, secure home they can afford.



**In communities across BC**, housing is top of mind for residents, candidates, and local governments. This guide supports community housing providers to engage municipal election candidates, local officials, and community members in clear and consistent conversations about the role local governments can play in advancing community housing.

The guide is a supportive resource and is intended to amplify and align the meaningful advocacy already being done by community housing providers across the province.

### This guide includes:

- Key messages, sector goals, and supporting information to inform local and sector advocacy.
- Templates to share impactful stories of community housing.
- Further tools and resources for community housing providers.

### This toolkit can be used to:

- Engage in meaningful conversation with candidates and local officials.
- Amplify key messages from the sector and highlight local impacts.
- Encourage commitments and actions tied to sector goals: Build More, Protect More, and Support More.
- Strengthen relationships with local government during and after elections.



Throughout this toolkit there are helpful insights<sup>1</sup> to demonstrate voter support for community housing, for example:

### What BC voters are saying

**Housing is the leading issue for many voters in BC.**

**69%**

say housing is the most important issue or one of the top issues facing their communities.

1. Voter insights are based on a survey conducted by Research Co. from June 2 to June 4, 2026, among 801 adults in BC, on behalf of Housing Central.

# Key Messaging

You can use this section to inform local conversations and advocacy with shared sector messaging during the municipal election.

Each key message is designed to help community housing providers speak consistently about what is needed, why it matters to local governments, and what municipal candidates and officials can do to support community housing.

## Key Messaging

| Sector Goal         |   | Key Message                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Build More</b>   | → | Local governments have meaningful influence over housing outcomes.                                                                        |
| <b>Protect More</b> | → | Community housing providers are essential partners in protecting existing affordable homes and keeping them affordable for the long term. |
| <b>Support More</b> | → | Affordable and supportive housing options are foundational to healthy communities.                                                        |

## How To Use Each Key Message:



# Key Message #1



## Sector Goal

Build More



## Key Message

Local governments have meaningful influence over housing outcomes.



## Supporting Information

Every year for the next 10 years, BC will need an additional 12,500 affordable homes to meet housing needs, including 3,000 homes for Indigenous peoples every year.

- 154,000 renter households are in core housing need.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 9% of all new housing supply in BC accounts for community housing as of 2025.<sup>3</sup>
- Urban Indigenous people represent only 6% of the population but represent 40% of those experiencing homelessness and as high as 80% in some northern communities.

## Why This Matters to Local Governments

- Municipalities are required to provide housing needs assessments, and some have [provincially mandated housing targets](#).
- Although they may not be primary funders, municipalities have levers to support affordable housing growth, such as land, zoning and fast-tracked approvals.
- Having sufficient community housing helps sustain a stable workforce and local economy.

## Suggested Questions to Candidates

- Local governments have influence over housing outcomes. If elected, what specific actions would you take within municipal authority to improve affordability within your first year?
- How will you ensure your municipality meets housing targets while maintaining affordability outcomes?
- Would you support fast-tracking approvals for non-profit and co-op housing projects?
- What will you do to improve equity in this community when it comes to people being able to access housing they can afford?
- Would you support waiving or reducing development fees for affordable housing?

## Actions Local Governments Can Take

- Actively partner with community housing providers and non-profit Indigenous housing providers throughout funding proposals and approvals.
- Establish or grow an affordable housing fund to help offset pre-development costs or be part of the funding stack.
- Provide or lease public land and reduce or waive development and permit fees for community housing.
- Prioritize and streamline approvals for community housing.
- Advocate to senior levels of government on the need for consistent, reliable investment into affordable housing.

## What BC voters are saying

**Local governments must take action to support community housing.**

**71%**

expect their local governments to take action to create more affordable housing.

**64%**

support reducing fees for non-profit and co-op housing development.

2. CMHC, Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need by Tenure, 2016-2021.

3. CMHC Completions data, 2025. *Community housing includes both non-market rental housing and co-ops*

# Key Message #2



## Sector Goal

Protect More



## Key Message

Community housing providers are essential partners in protecting existing affordable homes and keeping them affordable for the long term.



## Supporting Information

The most affordable housing is the housing we already have. Investment is needed to keep the existing community housing stock in good condition.

- BC lost 97,000 units in the private market renting below \$1,000 a month between 2016 and 2021. In the same period, only 8,000 non-market units were built.
- An estimated investment of \$557 million annually will be needed to cover the capital needs related to deferred maintenance on existing affordable buildings.
- 13,000 deeply subsidized homes have operating agreements\* ending in the next five years and are at-risk.<sup>4</sup>
- Over 4,000 Indigenous families may be displaced, potentially into homelessness, if the subsidies through the Urban Native Housing program end in 2028.

## Why This Matters to Local Governments

- Preserving existing affordable housing prevents risk of housing loss for vulnerable tenants in your community.
- It also reduces pressure on local emergency responses.
- It is cheaper to protect existing housing than building new to replace it.
- Proactive maintenance helps avoid higher repair costs while maintaining building quality, which in turn supports neighbourhood stability and municipal climate objectives.

## Actions Local Governments Can Take

- Offer property tax exemptions for community housing.
- Invest in energy retrofits in community housing to maintain existing affordable housing stock.
- Advocate for a clear provincial plan as operating agreements expire.

## Suggested Questions to Candidates

- What specific actions will you take to preserve existing affordable and community housing in our municipality?
- How will you work with provincial partners to address the funding gap for deferred maintenance in community housing?

## What BC voters are saying

**The community housing sector is a reliable steward of public investment.**

**3x**

more believe non-profit/co-op housing will use public funding responsibly and ensure long-term affordability compared to private for-profit developers.

4. BC Housing, Unit Count Model, Feb 2025

\*An Operating Agreement is a contractual agreement between BC Housing and a housing provider that establishes the funding, governance, operational, financial, and reporting requirements for the management and delivery of affordable housing

# Key Message #3



## Sector Goal

Support More



## Key Message

Affordable and supportive housing options are foundational to healthy communities.



## Supporting Information

500 of the [affordable homes](#) required each year must be supportive housing, with adequate staffing and access to health and community supports.

- A minimum of [11,352 people are experiencing homelessness](#) in the province at any point in time, an increase of 31% from 2021.<sup>5</sup>
- While some people experiencing homelessness can move directly into independent housing, others will need additional supports to remain housed.

## Why This Matters to Local Governments

- Supportive housing reduces homelessness and demand on municipal services like [policing and bylaw enforcement](#).
- Properly resourced supportive housing improves community safety and resident wellbeing.

## Actions Local Governments Can Take

- Engage neighbours of proposed supportive housing proactively, with clear information about who will be served and why it's needed.
- Champion housing with supports needed in your community by showing local benefits and success stories.

## Suggested Questions to Candidates

- What is your position on supportive housing?
- What role can municipalities play in linking affordable housing with supports?
- When there is opposition to supportive housing in a neighbourhood, how will you balance those concerns with the need to create housing for vulnerable people in your community?
- What barriers in our municipality currently slow down or prevent new supportive housing, and what will you do to remove them?
- How would you communicate the benefits of affordable and supportive housing to neighbourhoods that are resistant to new development?

## What BC voters are saying

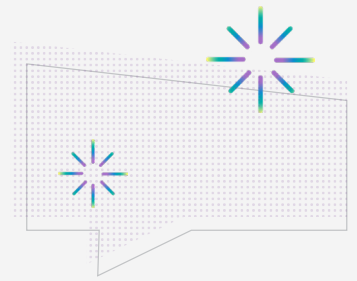
**Supportive housing improves safety in communities.**

**75%**

believe supportive housing leads to improved safety in their communities compared to enforcement measures.

<sup>5</sup>. BC Housing, Homeless Count Reports 2023 and 2020/2021

# Amplifying Indigenous-led Housing



Indigenous-led housing is essential to achieving the sector goals of Build More, Protect More, and Support More. Local governments can play an important role by supporting for-Indigenous, by-Indigenous housing solutions.

## Build More

Support new Indigenous-led community housing through land, approvals, fee reductions, and partnerships.

## Protect More

Preserve existing Indigenous housing and ensure Indigenous housing providers have the resources needed to maintain homes long-term.

## Support More

Advance culturally appropriate housing with wraparound supports, especially for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

## Actions Local Governments Can Take

- Ensure engagement with Indigenous partners happens early, respectfully, and continuously.
- Include Indigenous housing needs in housing needs reports, OCPs, housing strategies, and homelessness plans.
- Establish formal partnerships with local First Nations, urban Indigenous housing providers, Friendship Centres, and Indigenous community organizations.
- Provide public land or long-term leases for Indigenous-led housing.
- Reduce or waive development fees and property taxes for Indigenous-led non-profit housing.
- Fast-track Indigenous-led community housing applications.
- Support culturally appropriate wraparound services through partnerships and advocacy.
- Streamline zoning, permitting, and occupancy approval processes to reduce regulatory barriers and enable Friendship Centres to expand facilities and deliver critical community services.

## Suggested Questions to Candidates

- How will you work with Indigenous-led housing providers and local First Nations to support for-Indigenous, by-Indigenous housing in the community?
- How will you ensure Indigenous housing needs are reflected in housing needs reports, Official Community Plans, zoning decisions, and municipal housing strategies?
- Would you support municipal actions such as land contributions, fee waivers, tax exemptions, and fast-tracked approvals for Indigenous-led housing?
- How will your municipality support culturally appropriate housing and wraparound supports for urban Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity?

Recent research shows that Indigenous renters in BC face discrimination and increased rates of eviction and eviction into homelessness compared to non-Indigenous renters.<sup>6</sup>



# 40%

of people experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous, rising to 80% in some Northern communities, despite making up 6% of the BC population.<sup>6</sup>

By 2034, more Indigenous households will be living off-reserve in BC, with 1 in 4 likely to face challenges finding housing that is safe and affordable due to systemic barriers.<sup>6</sup>



To learn more about Indigenous housing need see [AHMA's data resource library](#) and to further support Indigenous-led housing in your community, see [AHMA's UBCM Resolution](#).



6. Indigenous Housing Needs Data Resource Library – Aboriginal Housing Management Association

# Community Housing Impact Template



Use this template to share local stories and data to strengthen advocacy with local government candidates. Impact stories help translate housing policy into real, local experiences that resonate with candidates and communities.

## Prompts

- Are there stories of how your organization, a building, or tenants make a difference in the community?
- Are there specific stories of how individual tenants or tenant groups have benefited from their housing?
- Are there examples of how community members or local government support your organization and/or tenants?
- Are there examples of how community members or local government make operating community housing difficult?

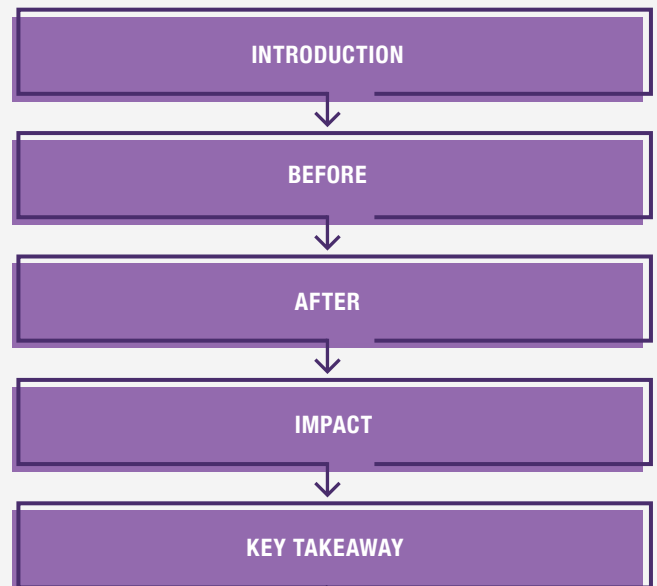
## Potential Uses

- At candidate meetings
- By email to local government candidates
- Op-eds or media interviews
- Through social media posts (ensure compliance with [Elections BC](#) third-party advertising rules)
- Share with other community organizations
- As attachments to welcome letters to newly elected officials

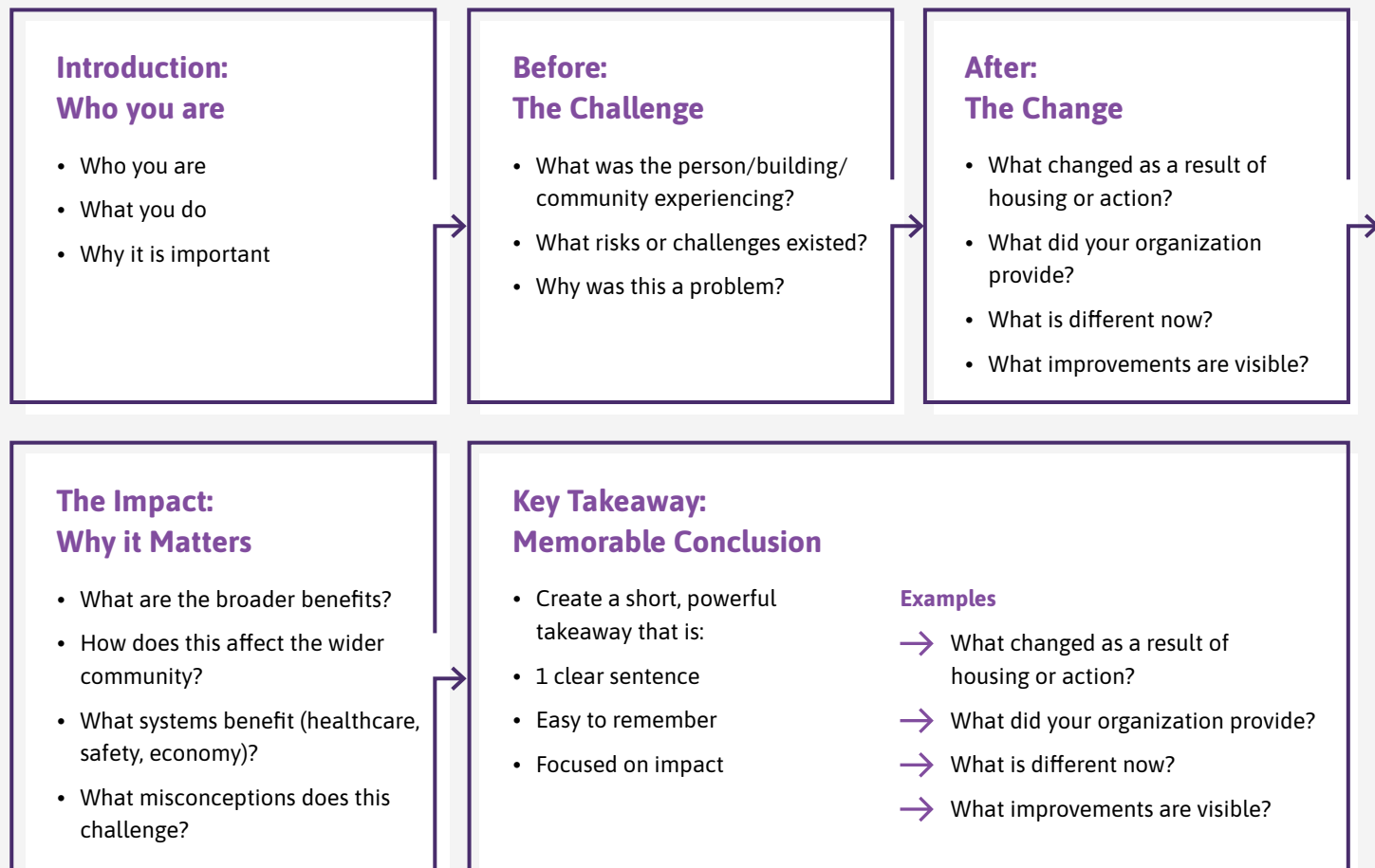
## Structure

Once you have decided on the story you would like to tell, you can use the guide below to help tell it based on the following structure:

- Introduction: Who you are
- Before: Describe the challenge
- After: Describe what changed
- Impact: Explain why it matters
- Key Takeaway: Memorable conclusion



## Template



## Sample

*One of our tenants was previously living in unsafe and unsupported housing that he could not afford. He had five hospital visits in the year before accessing stable housing.*

*After moving into our building, he has been stably housed for two years, and he has only had one hospital visit since.*

*Access to stable housing has improved health outcomes and reduced reliance on emergency services. Stable housing improves health and reduces pressure on emergency services.*



## Tips

- Keep stories brief: **5-8 sentences** or **under 1 minute** to read out loud.
- Each story should focus on **one main idea**.
- Focus on stories with **local relevance**.
- Sharing tenant stories can be impactful, but this needs to be done **without including any identifying information** about the tenants.
- In some cases, data will be important to demonstrate scale or need—but pairing it with real stories helps make that data more meaningful and relatable.

# Letter Template: Welcome Newly Elected Local Officials

Use this template after election day to introduce or re-introduce your organization to newly elected mayors and councillors and keep community housing visible as councils set their early agendas.

## When to Use This Template

- Within the first few weeks after elected officials are sworn in.
- Before council begins budget, strategic planning, or housing strategy discussions.
- When requesting an introductory meeting with newly elected officials or municipal staff.

## Before You Send

- Personalize the letter with your organization's local housing priorities, and one or two examples of the housing you provide in the community.
- Keep the tone collaborative, non-partisan, and solutions-focused.
- Include a clear ask, such as a meeting request or an invitation to tour a community housing site.
- Attach or reference your local impact story, if available.

## Sample Subject Line

*Congratulations and an invitation to work together on community housing priorities*



Check out the letter template on the next page!



# Template Letter

[Date]

Dear [Mayor/Councillor/Director] [Last Name],

On behalf of [organization name], congratulations on your election to [municipality/regional district]. We appreciate your willingness to serve the community and look forward to working with you and council over the coming term.

As a community housing provider serving [community/region], our organization provides [briefly describe housing, supports, tenants served, or number of homes]. We see every day how safe, secure, and affordable housing helps people stay connected to their communities, supports local wellbeing, and reduces pressure on other public systems.

Housing was a major issue throughout the election, and we encourage council to keep community housing top of mind as you set priorities for the term ahead. Local governments have important tools that can help build more, protect more, and support more community housing, including land, zoning, fee reductions, streamlined approvals, partnerships, and advocacy to other levels of government.

In the coming months, we hope council will consider the following actions (examples):

- [Prioritize community housing in municipal planning, housing strategies, and budget decisions.
- Identify public land or long-term lease opportunities for non-profit, co-op, and Indigenous-led housing.
- Reduce or waive municipal fees and property taxes where appropriate for community housing.
- Streamline approvals for non-profit, co-op, Indigenous-led, and supportive housing projects.
- Work directly with community housing providers to understand local needs, barriers, and opportunities.
- Advocate for a clear provincial plan as operating agreements expire].

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss local housing needs and practical ways the municipality can partner with community housing providers. We would also be pleased to host you for a tour of [building/program/community housing site] so you can see the impact of community housing first-hand.

Thank you again for your service to the community. We look forward to working together to advance housing solutions that are affordable, inclusive, and responsive to local needs.

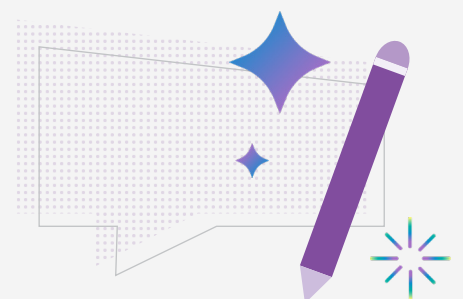
Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Phone/email]



# Tips to Host an All Candidates Meeting

Hosting an all candidates meeting allows housing organizations to elevate key housing issues in your community and engage community members during elections, while remaining strictly nonpartisan.

This guide provides a basic framework to support your planning. As there are many ways to organize a candidates' debate, use the suggestions outlined here to tailor an approach that best fits your community and objectives.

## 1. PLAN EARLY

### Invite candidates:

- Invite all candidates running for the same office to ensure fairness and neutrality.
- Request confirmation and assign a campaign contact person for coordination.

### Select key roles:

- Moderator: Choose a neutral, impartial individual.
- Volunteers: Recruit for timekeeping, logistics, and audience coordination.

## 2. DESIGN THE DEBATE FORMAT

Create a clear, fair structure, such as:

- Opening statements
- Moderated questions
- Audience Q&A
- Closing statements

### Best practices:

- Provide equal speaking time for all candidates.
- Use pre-set rules and timing communicated in advance.

## 3. GUIDING THE DISCUSSION ON COMMUNITY HOUSING PRIORITIES

- Ensure questions reflect local housing priorities, realities of the community housing sector, including the needs of providers, tenants, and the communities you serve.
- You can use the [key message section](#) in this guide to help guide the discussion and maintain a focus on housing issues.
- Share questions or themes with candidates in advance.

## 4. MAINTAIN NON-PARTISANSHIP

- Do not endorse or oppose candidates.
- Treat all candidates equally in invitations, speaking time, and moderation.
- The moderator should explicitly state that views expressed are those of candidates, not the host organization.
- Avoid biased audiences by publicizing widely to the whole community

### Additional Information

For more information on general rules, planning and communication refer to these resources:



[A Brief Guide to Organizing a Candidates Debate](#)

# Tools for Community Housing Providers



The following documents are available in the [Tools & Resources](#) guide

## **FAQ: The Role of Community Housing**

- Quickly explain the role, value, and impact of community housing.

## **Community Housing Reality Check**

- Prepare clear responses to common misconceptions about community housing and its local benefits.

## **Talking Points for Voter Conversations**

- Support conversations with community members by using plain-language messages grounded in provider experience.

## **What BC voters are saying**

- Use province-wide voter insights to reinforce local advocacy and show support for community housing solutions.

## KEY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR ADVOCACY

1. [BC Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy](#)
2. [Build More. Protect More. A New Affordable Housing Plan for BC](#)
3. [Community Acceptance of Non-Market Housing Toolkit](#)
4. [Community Benefits of Supportive Housing](#)
5. [Local Government Levers for Housing Affordability](#)
6. [Permitting the Problem: How planning undermines affordable and sustainable housing in BC](#)
7. [Tools for Overcoming Institutional Barriers to Non-Profit Housing Production](#)
8. [HART Housing Need Assessment Tool](#)
9. [Indigenous Housing Need](#)

