

Summary of the Provincial Health Officer's Special Report:

# The Intersection of Health, Housing, and Homelessness

## The Role of BC's Public Health Sector

The **public health sector** is people and organizations that work to prevent disease and protect and promote health. In BC, it includes public health physicians, nurses, outreach workers, epidemiologists, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and the BC Centre for Disease Control. The public health sector is part of the publicly funded health system in BC.

The public health sector has important roles at the intersection of health and housing. The report describes the sector's work to improve health outcomes in relation to housing in BC.

The report identifies areas that are the roles and responsibilities of BC's public health sector. **There are nine key ways that people working in public health contribute to efforts addressing housing and homelessness issues in BC:**

1. Upholding Indigenous rights and advancing Truth, Rights, and Reconciliation
2. Advocating for healthy public policy and improved access to services
3. Promoting healthy built environments
4. Preventing homelessness
5. Supporting the needs of people experiencing homelessness
6. Responding to climate-related and emergency impacts on housing and homelessness
7. Generating and disseminating data-driven insights on how housing and homelessness affect health
8. Convening and collaborating with intersectoral partners
9. Advising municipalities on public health issues

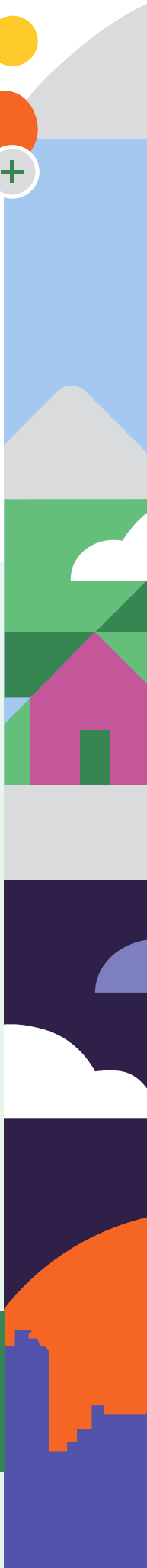
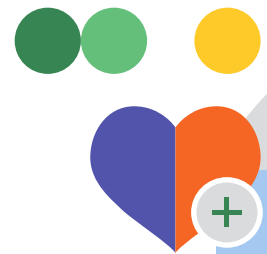
### Sources Informing the Report

This report brings together information from BC legislation, people working in public health, and public health guidance, as well as national and international examples of public health action on housing and homelessness.

BC legislation such as the *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the *Public Health Act*

Engagement with people working in BC's public health sector

Core functions of the public health sector



## Key Messages

**Housing is a building block of health.** Access to affordable, adequate, and suitable housing helps build strong and supportive societies and leads to better health and social outcomes for individuals and communities.

**People in BC are facing significant pressures related to housing.**

A lack of affordable housing has led to increases in homelessness, with encampments prevalent in communities across the province.

The 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count found that 11,352 people experienced homelessness that year in BC.

People whose housing is crowded or needs repairs also experience negative effects on health and well-being.

**One of the most disturbing harms of settler colonialism and land dispossession is that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples disproportionately experience homelessness.**

This reflects the reality that housing need intersects with multiple systems of oppression to create negative cumulative impacts for certain populations.

**In BC, the public health sector is one of many partners involved in housing and homelessness issues.** Greater collaboration should be a priority for all such partners. Bringing together the diverse expertise, capacities, and synergies of all partners involved in housing will lead to improved health outcomes for people in BC.

For more information and data sources, see the full report [\*The Intersection of Health, Housing, and Homelessness\*](#).



**In 2021, 64.7% of renters in BC spent more than 30% of their before-tax income on rent.**



**In 2023, 40% of people experiencing homelessness in BC identified as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or another Indigenous identity, but Indigenous people make up only 6% of the population in BC.**



**In 2023, 47% of people who experienced homelessness in BC had a medical condition.**

