



Submission to the Government of Canada regarding Budget 2024

Social Housing and Human Rights: Call to Action

Submitted by: Shauna MacKinnon on behalf of the Social Housing and Human Rights Coalition

Social Housing and Human Rights (SHHR) is a consortium of organizations and individuals concerned about housing for low-income individuals and families. In November 2023, we officially launched the Social Housing and Human Rights (SHHR) Campaign focused on public and non-profit owned rent-geared-to-income housing. Information about our campaign is available at www.moresocialhousing.ca.

The SHHR campaign began in the fall of 2022 with a small group of organizations and researchers concerned about the lack of deeply affordable rental housing and supports accessible to those in greatest need. Participation in the SHHR project expanded in April 2023, when over 100 researchers and advocates representing all provinces and territories across Canada attended The Social Housing and Human Rights Conference at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. There was overwhelming agreement on the need for government action on social housing. Those in attendance agreed to collaborate on the development of a national call to action that could be used to mobilize social housing advocates across Canada to call on the government of Canada to invest in social housing.

Since launching our campaign on November 21, support for our call to action continues to grow from coast to coast to coast. Experts, advocates, and people with lived experience from across the country agree that the federal government, in collaboration with governments across the country, **must** prioritize the expansion and maintenance of social housing.

Throughout 2023, we synthesized the vast amount of research on housing precarity and found consensus that the decades long and current approach of relying on the private sector to solve all housing issues has not worked. Non-market, rent-geared-to-income housing owned by the public and non-profit sectors is an essential component of Canada's response to the housing crisis, yet it continues to be largely ignored.

The 2017 National Housing Strategy, which was intended to address housing need across the housing spectrum, is producing very little housing accessible to the lowest-income households and to people experiencing homelessness. As a result, there is a large demand for good quality, non-market housing with rents that are geared to income. There are many strategies that need to be implemented simultaneously to meet housing need, including demand-side strategies like rental assistance, rent regulations, and investments in wrap-around supports and services for tenants. Expanding social housing supply, while preserving the existing supply, is one critical strategy for which there is currently no focused campaign at the national level. Canada's National Housing Strategy will not achieve the important goals to end chronic homelessness by 2030 and remove 530,000 families from core housing need, if we do not invest in social housing.

In May 2023, SHHR participants reached consensus on the following call to action:

We call on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Housing **to fulfill their legal obligation to realize the human right to housing and:**

- 1.** Create a minimum of 50,000 net new rent-geared-to-income social housing units each year for 10 years, starting now. These units should be targeted for those experiencing core housing need and homelessness and have rents permanently set at no more than 30% of household income.
- 2.** Invest in the acquisition, construction, operation, and maintenance of new and existing public, non-profit, and cooperative-owned housing that meets the unique and varied requirements of people experiencing core housing need and homelessness.

Canada's housing crisis will not be solved until those in greatest need have access to safe housing with rents less than 30% of household income. This will require the expansion and maintenance of social housing and we look to the Government of Canada to take leadership in reaching the reasonable targets that we propose.

Why we are calling for a minimum of 50,000 units annually over 10 years

The federal government has projected the need to expand overall supply by building 5.8 million homes over the next decade (580,000 per year). Because 33.5% of households are renters, 194,300 of this supply should be rental. Approximately one quarter of renters are in core housing need so a minimum of 48,575 (round up to 50,000) should be at rent geared to income rates affordable to low-income renters. This more than triples the target in the National Housing Strategy (NHS) to build 160,000 affordable homes and redirects the NHS focus from modest affordability to deeply affordable at 30% of household income. This amount is relatively consistent with calls to double the number of social housing units to more closely align with the OECD average.

“Net new” social housing units

Canada is losing social housing units as a result of expiring operating agreements and inadequate investments in the maintenance of existing properties, among other factors. We must maintain what we already have if new units are going to increase the overall stock of social housing. By calling for “net new social housing units” we are also calling for measures to protect the existing stock.

Investments in the “acquisition, construction, operation, and maintenance” of units

New social housing supply requires capital investments for construction so that new housing can be built, and for acquisition so existing properties can be purchased and re-purposed/ renovated as needed. New (and existing) social housing supply also requires investments in ongoing subsidies to support the costs of operating the housing while charging rent geared to income (RGI) rents. Operating costs may include services and programs that support tenants who live within the property. Finally social housing requires ongoing capital investments for the purpose of maintaining the quality of housing and preserving the stock.

Federal leadership – multi government collaboration

The expansion and preservation of social housing across Canada will require leadership and a significant funding commitment from the federal government. Although provincial and municipal governments are known to push for funding without strings attached, SHHR strongly recommends the federal government do the opposite to ensure the expansion of rent-geared-to-income housing owned by public and non-profit sectors.

Provincial, territorial, and municipal levels of government all have important roles to play in the expansion and preservation of social housing. They must be held accountable for every dollar they receive from the federal government to ensure that social housing is expanded from coast to coast to coast.

This submission was prepared by Shauna MacKinnon, on behalf of The Social Housing and Human Rights Coalition

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Social Housing and Human Rights campaign supporters: Accessible Housing Network, Action-Habitation de Québec, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), APMCQ / ACTION location Drummond, Association de promotion et d'éducation en logement, Association of United Ukrainian Canadians - Winnipeg Branch, Autism Alliance of Canada, BC Human Rights Organization, Better Manitoba, Brockville Streetfriends, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, Canadian Housing Evidence Collaborative, Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network, Carnegie Community Centre Association, Citizens for Public Justice, Comité logement Rosemont, Community Housing Canada, Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness, CUPE, ACEF de l'est de Montréal, Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH), Elle Community Strategies, End Homelessness Winnipeg, False Creek Co-op Housing Association, Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec, Fédération régionale des OSBL d'habitation de la Montérégie et de l'Estrie, FRAPRU, Harvest Manitoba, Heritage Housing Cooperative, Hogan's Alley Society, HOME-RL at UNB, Homelessness Services Association of BC, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, Ivan Franko Manor, Jaycees Brantford Non-Profit Homes Corp, Just Recovery Kingston, Kingston Encampment Support Network, Maison populaire d'Argenteuil, Make Poverty History Manitoba, Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO), Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union, Manitoba Research Alliance, Marguerite's Place, Mount Pearl Streetfriends, Mouvement d'éducation populaire autonome de Lanaudière, National Indigenous Housing Network, National Right to Housing Network, New Journey Housing, No Clearcuts Kingston, North End Women's Centre, Nova Scotia Acorn, Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre, PEI Fight For Affordable Housing, POPIR comité logement, Poverty Awareness & Community Action, Poverty Free Thunder Bay, Providence Centre for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation, Right to Housing Coalition, Seniors Action Committee Portage Commons, Simon Fraser University, Sixteenth Letter Collaborative, Social Planning Council Kingston & District, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Solidarité logement Rivière-du-Loup, Tenants at Risk of Displacement on North Shore of MetroVancouver, The Housing Justice Project, University of Winnipeg Faculty Association, University of Winnipeg Urban and Inner-City Studies, West Central Women's Resource Centre, Westminster Housing Society, Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network