



Submission on the Right to Adequate Housing SUMMARY

To the Government of Canada,
“Let’s Talk Housing” consultation to develop a National Housing Strategy
Submitted by: Right to Housing Coalition - Ontario

To find out more about the Right to Housing Coalition
or to read the full submission, visit: <http://righttohousing.wordpress.com>

WHO WE ARE

The Right to Housing Coalition (R2H) was formed in 2009 and is coordinated by the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), but includes community activists, Indigenous groups, lawyers, academics, social service providers, and people with lived experience of homelessness and precarious housing. R2H has taken many actions to win a human rights based national housing strategy, including community campaigns and a *Charter* challenge in the courts against the governments of Canada and Ontario.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

This should not be a one-time consultation that wraps up on November 22nd, 2016 with a summary report and an announcement. The government should make a commitment to meaningfully engage and involve those with lived experience of precarious housing, housing inadequacy or homelessness, and those who work with vulnerable tenants and homeless people. This must happen throughout all stages of development, implementation and evaluation of the National Housing Strategy.

The United Nations has raised concerns about Canada’s failure to take positive measures to protect the rights of everyone in Canada. The government has a legal obligation to make sure everyone has the right to housing because Canada signed these international human rights treaties:

- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ✓ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- ✓ Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ✓ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

There are many key elements that must be included in a rights-based National Housing Strategy (*please refer to our full submission for details*).

A National Housing Strategy must also:

- ✓ include a combination of solutions that takes diverse housing needs into account, be flexible, and move away from “one size fits all” solutions

- ✓ uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples
- ✓ integrate National Housing and Poverty Reduction Strategies
- ✓ include measurable goals and timetables so that government is accountable
- ✓ outline clear roles for the federal government and other levels of government

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

1. Promote the federal consultation and opportunities to participate more widely in low-income communities across Canada, and in the non-profit service sector and Indigenous communities.
2. Engage a broader range of experts in the consultation process, including those with lived experience of homelessness.
3. Embed a human rights framework in the National Housing Strategy:
 - a) identify homeless individuals, including those from marginalized groups;
 - b) make explicit reference to human rights;
 - c) provide human rights training to all relevant parties;
 - d) consult homeless individuals in every step of the process;
 - e) commit to the principles of non-discrimination and equality;
 - f) set immediate, short-term and long-term goals;
 - g) set goals for marginalized groups;
 - h) be adequately resourced;
 - i) engage with other levels of government and stakeholders;
 - j) monitor and publicly report on progress;
 - k) establish both internal and external mechanisms of monitoring and review;
 - l) provide a complaints procedure for individuals and groups.
4. Implement recommendations from the United Nations reports, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Concluding Observations of the 6th periodic review of Canada in particular, and integrate income security policy considerations into the National Housing Strategy.
5. Institute a rigorous accountability framework both nationally and regionally with transparency and input of those who are impacted by policies and programs.
6. Ensure coherent alignment with the National Housing Strategy within all levels of government.
7. Review positive and successful practices internationally (using learnings from UN Habitat III Quito and other countries) so that Canada can disseminate information on these approaches and fund or pilot them with provinces/territories.
8. Restore definitions of core housing need to shape policies and programs, including the definition of affordable (i.e. 30% or less of pre-tax household income).
9. The federal, provincial and territorial governments need to eliminate and reform laws and policies that criminalize poverty and homelessness that are occurring at a municipal level, or in rural and Indigenous communities.
10. Federal government to review progress on human rights policies internationally (re: housing and poverty) and appoint advisors to develop and enhance a rights-based National Housing Strategy.
11. Work with stakeholders, and those with lived experiences of homelessness within Indigenous communities to develop their housing and poverty reduction strategies.