



Social & Housing Human Rights

Organizing for Change



Agenda

- Welcome
- Project and conference overview
- Report back on call to action
- Report back on principles & considerations (discussion paper)
- Report back on strategy summary
- Regional breakout rooms
- Next steps



Project and Conference overview

SSHRC funded project: November 2023 - November 2024

Purpose: Establish a nationwide movement focused on social housing expansion and maintenance

3 phases:

- Outreach and knowledge synthesis
- Education and knowledge sharing event
- Mobilization and strategy and implementation



Conference overview

Approximately 100 people (academics, activists, policy advocates and people with lived experience representing all provinces and territories)



Day 1:

Presentation by Steve Pomeroy:

- history and status of the NHS
- Limitations and possibilities - social housing expansion

Keynote Leilani Farha:

- Overview of financialization
- Suggested approach to limit financialization and expand social housing

Discussion paper and call to action:

- Gathered input into the draft discussion paper and call to action

Conference overview

Day 2:

Institute for Change Leaders training - facilitated by Duncan Pike

Preparation for the next phase of our work - national call to action for social housing - mobilization and implementation



Draft Call to Action - Revised

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

- Investing in adding a minimum of 30,000 net new social housing units annually over 10 years where rents are no more than 30% of household income in perpetuity, starting in Budget 2024/25.
- Investing 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.

What do we mean by “social housing” and why is that the focus?

Social housing is housing that has been removed from the market (so it cannot be used for speculation or to generate wealth) and that costs less than 25-30% of household income or equivalent to social assistance rates. It can be owned by public, non-profit or co-operative housing providers. Agreements between governments and the housing provider limit how the property can be used, and provide subsidies to ensure that housing providers offer rents that are geared to income.

Since 1993, very few new units of social housing have been built, and old funding agreements are expiring. The 2017 National Housing Strategy, which was intended to address housing need across the housing spectrum, is producing very little social housing. As a result, there is a large demand for good quality, non-market housing with rents that are geared to income.

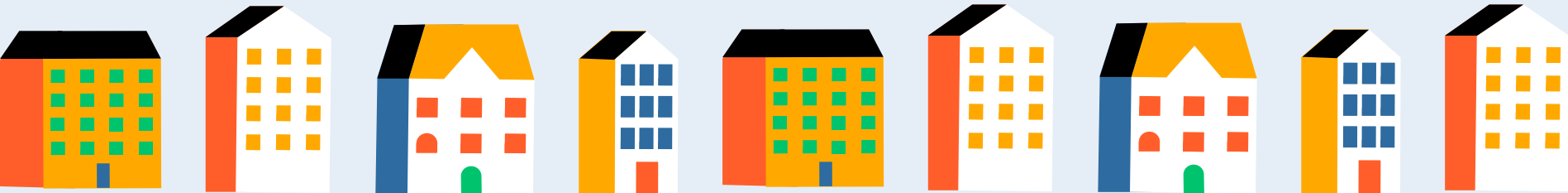
There are many strategies that need to be implemented simultaneously to meet housing need, including demand-side strategies like rental assistance, rent regulations, and investments in wrap-around supports and services for tenants. Expanding social housing supply, while preserving the existing supply, is one critical strategy for which there is currently no focused campaign at the national level.



Why 30,000 annually for 10 years?

The federal government has projected the need to expand overall supply by building 3.5 million homes over the next decade (350,000 per year).

Ideally one third should be rental (115,000 annually). Approximately one quarter of renters are in core housing need so a minimum of 28,875 (round up to 30,000) units should be at rent geared to income rates. This nearly doubles 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.



Why “net new” social housing?

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.



Why are investments needed in “acquisition, construction, operation, and maintenance”?

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.



What is “core housing need”?

A household is in core housing need when their housing does not meet one or more of the following standards: **adequacy** (not in need of major repairs), **suitability** (enough bedrooms for the size of the household) and **affordability** (housing costs are less than 30 percent of before-tax household income). In addition, the household would have to spend 30 percent or more of its before-tax income to access housing that meets all three of the above standards. Some groups, including women-led single parent households, racialized and immigrant families, people with disabilities, and Indigenous, Metis, and Inuit households are all over-represented in core housing need.



What about other levels of government?

The expansion and preservation of social housing across Canada will require a significant funding commitment from the federal government. This call to action is focused on achieving that commitment. It provides a concrete goal targeting one level of government that individuals and groups from across the country can mobilize around through a coordinated national campaign. Provincial, territorial, and municipal levels of government all have important roles to play in the expansion and preservation of social housing. Individuals and organizations at the local level will need to come together to implement strategies/campaigns targeting local levels of government that complement the work happening at the national level.



The background features a light blue sky with a large orange sun at the top center, partially obscured by white clouds. A stylized orange and red building with a black roof and a grid of green windows is positioned on the right side. The bottom of the image shows a green ground line above a blue water area with white wavy lines representing ripples.

Principles and considerations for social housing programs

Social housing programs must be implemented in a way that addresses the many factors that shape people's experiences of, and access to, housing.

- 5 principles
- Several considerations for specific groups

Principles

1. Nothing about us without us
2. For Indigenous, by Indigenous
3. Good quality housing that meets the needs of the household
4. Resources, supports, and community planning
5. Transparency and accountability



The background features a light blue sky with a large orange sun at the top center, partially obscured by white clouds. On the right side, there is a stylized house with a white body, a blue chimney on the left, and a yellow roof. The house has several red rectangular windows and a green arched doorway. Below the house is a green grassy area, and at the bottom, there is a blue body of water with white wavy lines representing ripples.

Considerations

- Indigenous peoples
- Poverty
- Women and 2SLGBTQ* people
- Racialized people and communities
- People with disabilities
- Newcomers

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Considerations (Part 2)

- Seniors
- Children and youth
- People experiencing mental illness and addictions
- People needing medical care
- People experiencing homelessness
- People leaving institutions
- Regional housing need



Strategy summary

Primary Target:

Federal Government; PM, Min. Finance, Min. Housing, Justice, Health

Secondary Targets:

Fed. opposition; other parties; lower levels of government; CMHC

Short-term Goals:

\$ for existing programs; new narratives;

Intermediate Goals:

redirect \$ to social housing; build movement; election issue; specifics re: goal

Constituents: people in housing need, community orgs, workers

Allies: unions, tenant orgs, community orgs, business, tribal councils, HR orgs, veterans, faith community, youth, seniors, etc

Opponents: developers, landlords, NIMBYs, city planning depts, etc

The background features a light blue sky with a large orange sun on the left and white clouds. At the bottom, there is a green horizontal band above a dark blue area with white wavy lines representing water.

Strategy summary

Tactics:

Research; educational campaigns; story-telling; rallies; media; Canada-wide actions; symposia/talks; monthly events/actions; letter to MPs campaign; social media campaign; petition

Resources we have:

Community connections; member lists; people, expertise & passion!

What we need:

Key messaging; toolkit; Fundraising; network development; comms skills; support for PWLE; trainings; education on gov't, advocacy, etc

Structure going forward

How do we make decisions and how do we implement them?

Partnership structure? (a campaign of several organizations, ex. Vote Housing)
or Campaign-Coalition structure? (a campaign led by a committee, ex. Red Tent)

Representative Steering Committee?

- Demographically; communities (or orgs that represent them) which experience housing need
- Regionally/population; specific regions (provinces, territories, etc)

Organizational Steering Committee?

- National or 'large' organizations; chosen for org capacity, resources, skills
- Any org that agrees with demand, commits to implement campaign



Structure going forward

How do we implement the campaign?

May be influenced by the structure we choose:

- Partnership Leads develop campaign & implements major activities, solicits endorsements, public support (***Partnership approach***)
- Steering Committee leads campaign, solicits allies to implement major activities together with Committee members (***Coalition-Campaign approach***)



Breakout groups



- a. What's one action you can start to work on now within your community/region with the goal to implement within one month after the launch of this campaign?
- b. Who else do you want to pull into this work?

Next Steps

- a. Complete the survey
- b. Outreach
- c. Come to the next meeting (week of May 22)



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