Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing Team

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

700 Montreal Rd

Ottawa ON K1A 0P7

Dear Minister Duclos, Mr. Vaughan, and the Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing Team,

# RE: FEEDBACK ON HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO HOUSING

Canada is obligated under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure the right to housing for all people in Canada. The right to housing is more than just the right to a house; it is the right to live in security, peace and dignity. It is the right to *adequate* housing, as outlined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Adequate housing is affordable, livable, accessible and culturally appropriate. It provides access to necessary services, such as water, sanitation and energy. It is located near job opportunities, healthcare, school and social services. It ensures that people are not at risk of being forcibly evicted, subject to arbitrary rent increases or a landlord’s attempts to get back the property through eviction.

Under international law, Canada is required to *immediately* guarantee the right to housing in an equal and non-discriminatory way, to develop concrete plans of action, to prevent forced evictions and to ensure security of tenure for all. Canada must use the maximum available resources to realize the right to housing for all by 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1)

I am calling on the Government of Canada to base the National Housing Strategy (NHS) legislation on Canada’s obligations under international covenants and include the following:

1. Explicit recognition of the right to adequate housing as defined in international law and of the obligation of all levels of government to progressively implement the right within a reasonable period of time.
2. A commitment to address systemic inequality on the basis of race, gender, disability and other grounds, the impacts of colonization and the rights of Indigenous communities, including those in urban centres.
3. Prioritization of those in most urgent housing need and a commitment to eliminate homelessness by 2030 as Canada has agreed to under the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
4. An accessible process through which systemic rights claims are subject to public hearings, adjudication and remedies. While ultimate recourse to courts is important, other accessible claiming mechanisms should also be included, such as Ombudsman offices, housing commissioners, human rights institutions, community housing councils or housing advocates.
5. Independent monitoring of progress and accountability based on human rights-based goals and timelines.
6. Individuals and communities affected by homelessness and inadequate housing have opportunities for input, leadership and decision-making – as rights claimants and program beneficiaries, and also in monitoring, evaluation and oversight roles.
7. The NHS enshrines an all-of-government approach where all implicated ministries and all levels of government recognize their obligations with respect to the right to housing.
8. NHS funding is allocated and monitored using rights-based criteria and targets which trigger local, provincial and territorial governments’ obligations to realize the right to housing.

I encourage the Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing Team to continuously evaluate the NHS against these guidelines in order to ensure the strategy fulfills the Government’s international human rights obligations and realizes the right to housing for all.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title

1. In September 2015, Canada and 192 other UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 ambitious goals with targets. Sustainable Development Goal 11 calls on all member states to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)