



Co-Creating the Right to Adequate Housing in Canada

Culminating Report

December 2023

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Acknowledgements

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Land Acknowledgement

The report's authors acknowledge the contributions of several Indigenous peoples who participated in this initiative.

While our work took place virtually, the SHS Consulting team acknowledges the land we are working on is the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

The SHIFT Collaborative team acknowledges and respects the *læk'wəŋən* peoples on whose traditional territory the consultants are located and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. Their historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Part 1 • Introduction

This initiative serves as a first step in mobilizing collective action toward co-creating the right to adequate housing in Canada.

Co-Creating the Right to Adequate Housing in Canada is a cross-Canada initiative of the National Housing Council (NHC), led by the NHC in collaboration with SHS Consulting and SHIFT Collaborative.

This initiative supports existing NHC efforts toward realizing the right to adequate housing in Canada over time.

This report represents the culmination of work over eighteen months, involving over 200 co-design participants across 25 engagement events. This initiative would not have been possible without the meaningful contributions of housing and real estate sector experts, people with lived experience, government representatives, and community-based (“civil society”) organizations across Canada.

This introductory section provides a look into our call to action, establishes a common language around the right to adequate housing, and articulates the focus of this initiative.

Reading this Report

This report offers actionable recommendations for the Government of Canada. The findings and recommendations are organized as follows:

Part 1 • Where we are Today

We begin with an overview of current housing challenges and experiences in Canada, highlighting gaps and challenges in today’s system.

Part 2 • A Vision for the Future

Next, we articulate our co-created vision for a future of the right to adequate housing in Canada—what a preferred future could look like for people, including how the system would look fundamentally different from today.

Part 3 • A Proposal for Change

The final section provides a proposed set of solution directions and roadmaps for change, including steps to get started and intended outcomes over time.

A Call to Action for the Government of Canada

A Crisis Unfolds

Realizing the right to adequate housing in Canada is one of today's most critical and demanding challenges. Despite our efforts, homelessness and housing needs persist for millions of families nationwide, and there are grave costs to inaction*.

There is an urgency to fix today's problems. The severity, prevalence, and urgency of today's housing gaps underscore a need to address homelessness and housing gaps for those in greatest need—people's lives are at stake *today*.

While addressing today's housing crisis, we must also halt any backward movement or worsening of the situation. There is a need to keep up with change to avoid loss or deterioration of housing for people who currently have adequate housing.

Efforts to end homelessness and ensure access to adequate housing remain critical priorities for Canada's social and economic well-being.

Hope for the Future

In this time of great need, we have an opportunity to lean on our National Housing Strategy Act (2019) as a tool to address this crisis. The Government of Canada took a bold step with this commitment—the Act recognizes the human right to adequate housing and supports improved housing outcomes for all people in Canada.

The strategic use of the National Housing Strategy Act in Canada holds immense promise for creating positive change and uplifting the lives of countless individuals and communities. There is significant work already underway in this respect through the National Housing Council, governments in Canada, and several civil society organizations.

The time is now to take bold steps to:

- Embrace the **progressive realization of the right to adequate housing**—a critical journey for Canada; and
- Adopt a **human-rights-based approach to housing** as a robust framework to address homelessness, reduce housing inequality, and foster inclusive and sustainable communities.

While we have a legislative tool in the National Housing Strategy Act, **we lack the mechanisms to implement the right to adequate housing across relevant governments and departments to make it a reality in Canada.** It is time to coordinate and mobilize toward this outcome.

This report proposes a focus on creating a foundation for this right to be collectively adopted and advanced in Canada. We refer to this transformative shift as **co-creating a right to adequate housing ecosystem**. Though we must not lose focus on addressing today's urgent issues, we must shape a long-term vision of how this right will be progressively realized – and create innovations to support this transition.

As we embrace these new ways of thinking about housing, land, and real estate, we embark on a path that embraces compassion, equity, and the belief that everyone deserves a place to call home.

*According to Homeless Hub, homelessness alone cost the Canadian economy an estimated \$7 billion per year in 2014 (Gaetz, Gulliver, & Richter, 2014). Given increases in housing needs since then, this cost has likely increased for 2023.

Co-Creating a Right to Adequate Housing Ecosystem

Today's housing system is not designed to produce nor maintain adequate housing for all in Canada.

We envision a shift to a right-to-adequate housing ecosystem in Canada. We want a country where we make collective continuous progress towards adequate housing for all, championed by bold leadership from the Federal Government.



This ecosystem requires four key elements to be successful.

Leadership + Accountability

We anchor the work to realize the right to adequate housing in federal leadership with support from actors across the system and ensure accountability to rights holders in Canada.

Understanding + Awareness

We increase awareness about the right to adequate housing across actor groups and create a shared language to achieve greater alignment.

Relationships + Collaboration

We explore new roles and ways of working across jurisdictions, sectors, and civil society to collectively realize the right to adequate housing. We have a national implementation framework to guide our work.

Cultural Norms + Mindsets

We shift mindsets, norms, and values to fully embrace and adopt the right to adequate housing, moving away from commonly-held wisdom holding us back from change.

Core Recommendations

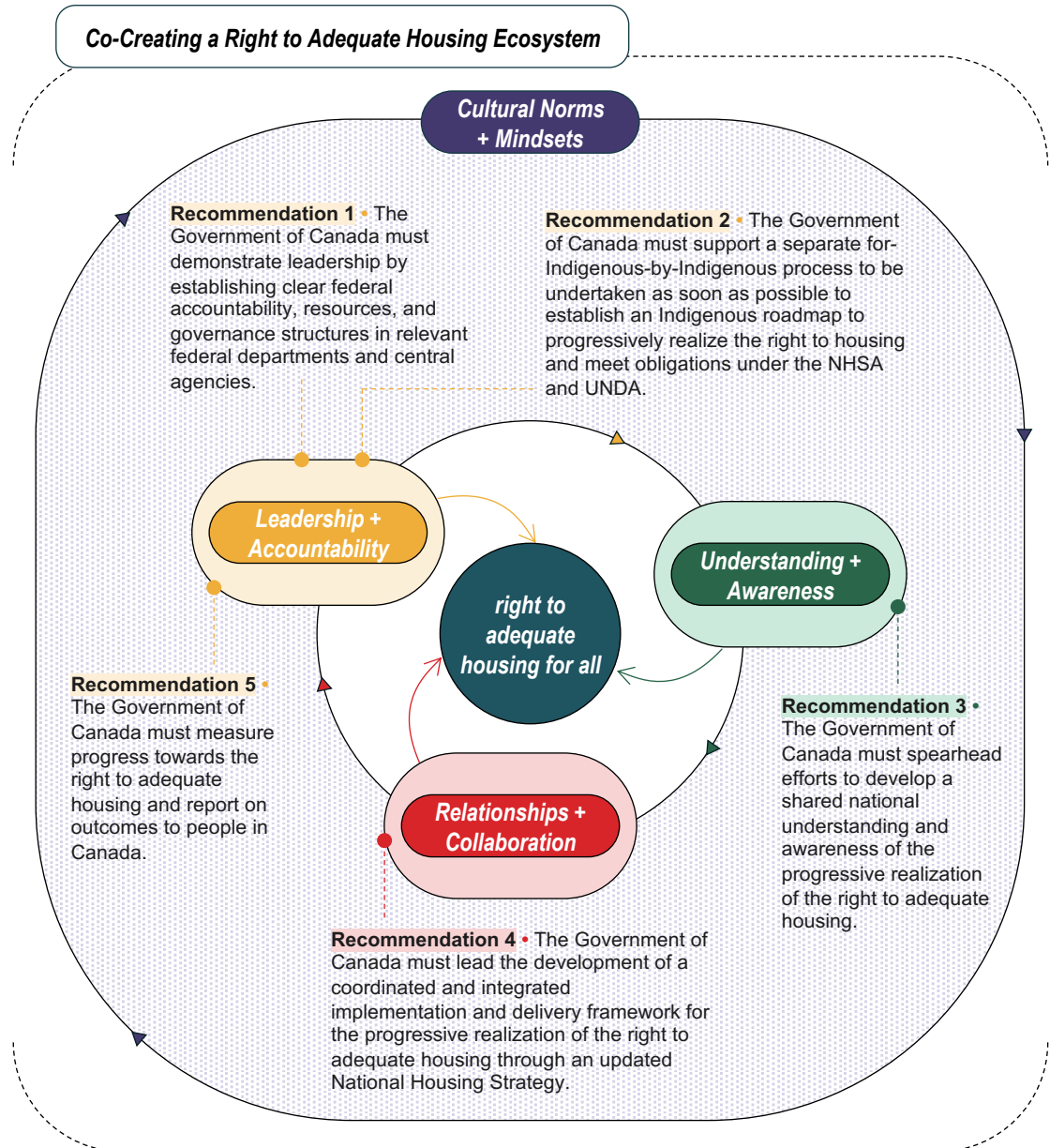
This report proposes five core recommendations for the Government of Canada. These recommendations form the foundation for a system of progressive realization, with the right to adequate housing for all as our north star and ultimate goal.

These five recommendations support a transition to a country where we have leadership and accountability, understanding and awareness, and the relationships and collaboration needed to achieve adequate housing for all*. These recommendations require both additional resources and the strategic and effective use of existing resources. Some can be implemented more quickly, and others require longer-term change.

In addition to these elements and recommendations, this report proposes a roadmap of practical steps to shift mindsets, norms, and values to fully embrace and adopt the right to adequate housing, moving away from our current ways of thinking and working, holding us back from change.



*These ecosystem elements appear throughout this report. Continue reading to learn more about how they were developed and why they are important for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.



The Right to Adequate Housing

Establishing a Shared Understanding

According to the United Nations and international human rights law, the **right to adequate housing** recognizes that all people have the “right to live somewhere in **security, peace and dignity**.” This requires meeting adequacy standards, including legal security of tenure, affordability, habitability, availability of services and materials, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy.

Progressive realization refers to the obligation in article 2(1) of The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), requiring States to:

“take steps... to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.”

Right to Adequate Housing Characteristics*

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights lists the characteristics of the right to housing. Housing must fulfill these characteristics to be considered adequate.

Affordability

Housing is affordable if it is proportional to a household's income, not measured against market prices, and if the costs of housing do not threaten the attainment of other basic needs.

Accessibility

Adequate housing must be fully accessible for those who need it, in particular people who are vulnerable and marginalized.

Cultural Adequacy

Housing, through its construction methods and materials, should enable residents to express their cultural identity.

Habitability

Housing must be kept in good repair providing inhabitants with adequate space and protecting them from the elements, structural hazards, and threats to health.

Location

Housing must be located within reach of vital amenities and sources of livelihoods, including employment opportunities, healthcare facilities and educational establishments. Housing should also only be built in areas that are safe to live, in particular away from sources of pollution.

Security of Tenure

For tenure to be secure States must adopt legal protections against, for example, forced eviction harassment, or other threats; increases in rent causing unaffordability; construction or renovations causing displacement; or a change of ownership resulting in eviction or displacement.

Sustainability**

Low or zero emissions housing, that is built with regenerative and sustainable materials, and that adequately protects against climate-related disasters and weather.

Availability of Services, Materials, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Housing must contain the facilities that are needed to ensure comfort and well-being. This includes access to safe water, sanitation, heating, cooking and washing.

**This image was adapted from Mazzucato & Farha. 2023. *The Right to Housing: A mission-oriented and human-rights-based approach*. In an effort to bring accessible language to the conversation on the right to adequate housing, these definitions do not exactly mirror the wording in the UN CESCR General Comment 4.

*Sustainability has recently been recognized by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing but is not included in the definition under international human rights law.

Source: UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), 13 December 1991, E/1992/23, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47a7079a1.html> [accessed 25 August 2023]

Acknowledging Canada's Commitment

The National Housing Strategy (NHS) Act aligns Canada with international standards, committing the Government of Canada to progressively realize the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Act establishes a requirement to develop and maintain a national housing strategy, taking into account key principles of a human rights-based approach to housing.

The Government of Canada's commitment to the **progressive realization** of the right to adequate housing under the NHS Act requires that specific **international standards** be met. The National Housing Strategy Act recognizes that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person, supports improved housing outcomes, and commits to further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

The Government's obligations to realize the right to adequate housing include:*

Implementing appropriate budgeting and resource allocation based on **"the maximum of available resources"**

Acting with urgency to ensure this happens within the shortest possible time while **avoiding retrogressive measures**

Ensuring independent monitoring to assess compliance with progressive realization

Identifying and **prioritizing those in greatest need**

Using **"all appropriate means,"** including the adoption of legislative measures to ensure legal protections for housing rights

“

In practice, this [the National Housing Strategy Act] does not provide an individual right to housing, but it does mean that the Government of Canada has an obligation to put the maximum available resources towards the fulfilment of the right. In doing so, the Council believes that the seven characteristics of the right to housing give Canada a framework in which to move forward.

— National Housing Council, 2023

To implement a meaningful human rights-based approach, [you need] human rights norms... which changes the way everyone's thinking about it.

— Right to housing expert

...the obligation of progressive realization should not be understood as an excuse to put off implementation of necessary measures to the future.

— National Right to Housing Network, 2022*

”

*The [Literature Review](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/ES21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) commissioned by the National Housing Council (NHC), prepared by the National Right to Housing Network (NRHN), and the UN Habitat Fact Sheet No. 21 on the Right to Adequate Housing (available here: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/ES21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) provides further details on the Government of Canada's responsibilities for implementing the right to adequate housing.

Introducing a New Paradigm for Housing and Real Estate

What makes the “right to adequate housing” different from housing policy?

The concept of the right to adequate housing has been present in Canada since the 1960s but has yet to be meaningfully adopted by governments. Meanwhile, issues of securing and maintaining adequate housing have grown. Although inextricably connected, there is a difference between implementing housing strategies to ensure **access to housing for all** and ensuring that **adequate housing is recognized as a human right** in Canada.

A country that adheres to a rights-based approach to housing would prioritize eradicating homelessness and increasing housing quality and availability through policies and programs. A country that realizes the right to adequate housing goes a step further to make housing for all a perpetual imperative rather than an aspiration of the moment.

Using our current frameworks and approaches, we can implement newer and better housing strategies. However, seeing housing as a fundamental human right requires a more profound **shift in mindset and ways of working** to ensure this right is upheld in a meaningful and sustainable way.

“

It's a huge paradigm change when you stop thinking of it as a policy issue ...and think about it as a human right.

— Right to adequate housing expert

Stepping into our New Roles

As we shift from our predominant focus on housing as a financial instrument to that of a basic need and protected human right in Canada, actors in the system step into new roles.



Duty-bearers are government actors who have an obligation to progressively realize international human rights, including the international right to adequate housing.



Responsibility-holders are actors who have or could positively or negatively influence the human rights issue under consideration or have a moral, ethical, or social responsibility for the respect and protection of human rights, including the international right to adequate housing.



Rights-holders are all people living in Canada. In the National Housing Strategy Act context, rights-holders include civil society, stakeholders, vulnerable groups and persons with lived experience of housing needs affected by systemic housing issues.

In addition to new roles and directives, realizing the right to adequate housing in Canada involves adopting key human rights concepts and elements described in the following section.

Tools to Reach the Right to Adequate Housing

Our work on the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing draws on frameworks, standards, and processes informed by human rights approaches and imperatives. We employ these tools (illustrated on this page) to achieve adequate housing for all in Canada.

Framework

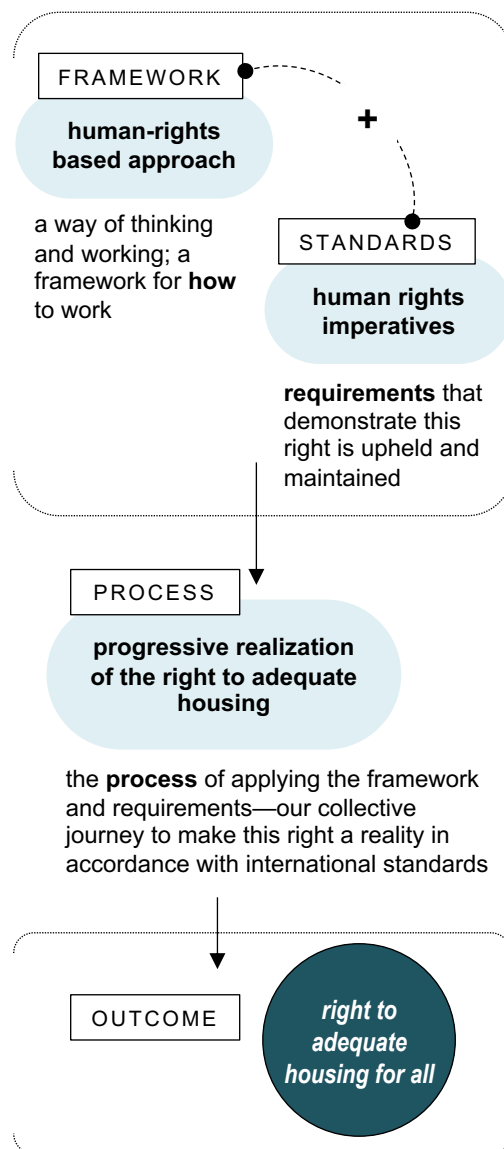
We employ a **human-rights-based approach** to all work that touches on housing, home, and well-being in Canada.

Standards

This approach includes ensuring that **human rights imperatives*** or principles inform the design of any solutions (e.g., policy, program, legislation, etc.).

Process

The human-rights-based framework and standards show up in the **progressive realization of the right to adequate housing**—our journey to making the outcome of the right to adequate housing for all in Canada a reality.



*Human Rights Imperatives

When designing new solutions for our housing challenges, we must employ the following standards to embody the principles of a human-rights-based approach to housing. These imperatives should be infused in policy-making, decision-making, and all work related to housing, home, and well-being in Canada.

The progressive realization of the right to adequate housing should...

- ✓ Adopt a **participatory approach** that meaningfully involves people with lived experience and civil society.
- ✓ Ensure **accountability from duty-bearers** (governments) to meet human rights obligations.
- ✓ Focus on issues of **systemic discrimination** and socioeconomic inequality around housing issues.
- ✓ Uphold **access to legal justice** to ensure that individuals and communities can claim and exercise their rights to adequate housing.

*These imperatives came out of the literature reviewed, including reports from the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing and the National Right to Housing Network.

Laying a Foundation for Systems Change

This Initiative

Our Focus

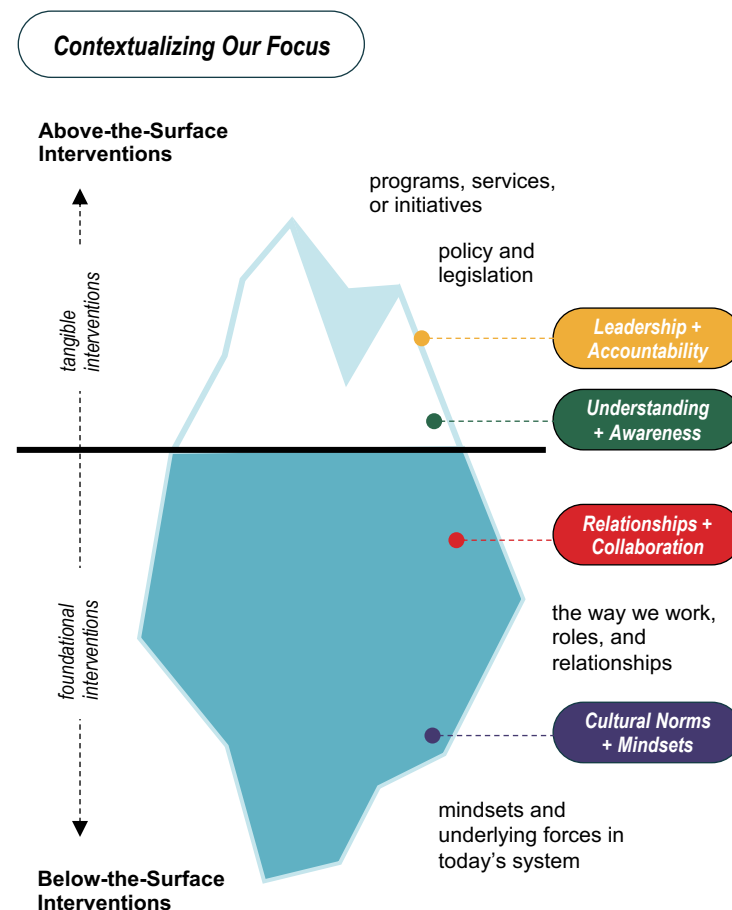
Work is already underway to realize the right to adequate housing in Canada, from programs of the National Housing Strategy to initiatives of the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate and the National Right to Housing Network, among others. These types of interventions are tangible, **above-the-surface** solutions.

This initiative focuses on seeding deep **below-the-surface** change towards co-creating a right to adequate housing ecosystem. The iceberg image on this page highlights where our four key elements show up in the ecosystem. There is more to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing that must be done beyond implementing programs, policies, or initiatives.

This report argues we must also focus on rethinking how we work, our roles and relationships, our mindsets, and underlying cultural norms to achieve transformational change. In doing so, this initiative lays a foundation for right to adequate housing programs, policies, and new initiatives to be successfully implemented and sustained over time in Canada.

Our Process

This initiative took a participatory approach focused on amplifying the voices of people with lived experience while involving a wide range of actors from across the system.



Part 1 ● From Today to our Vision for the Future

This section provides an overview of current housing challenges and experiences in Canada, highlighting gaps and challenges in today's system. From there, we offer a **vision for an alternative future***, moving from today's challenges to an ongoing effort to progressively realize the right to adequate housing in Canada.



Above the Surface ● **Lived Experiences**

We begin by summarizing the **above-the-surface realities**, outcomes, and experiences people with lived experience shared through focus groups and survey submissions. These real-life situations demonstrate that the right to adequate housing has yet to be fully realized in Canada.

The vision for the future describes **what it would look and feel like** to reach a desired future where the right to adequate housing is realized in Canada.



Below the Surface ● **Getting to Deep Systems Change**

Next, the **four ecosystem elements** show up in this section as a lens through which we document the most common underlying issues, challenges, and gaps faced by actors in the system.

Framed by the **four ecosystem elements**, this section illustrates a vision for the shifts that would have brought us to this future.

**The vision for an alternative future lays out what it could look like to step into a future scenario where we progressively realize the right to adequate housing in Canada. This vision was created from extensive engagement and co-design with people with lived experience of housing and homelessness challenges in Canada. The vision provides a hopeful and desirable future we can strive towards. Part 2 of this report describes how we might get to that future vision.*

Co-creating a Vision for the Right to Adequate Housing in Canada

Beyond the technical definitions of the right to adequate housing set out by the United Nations and international human rights law, there is a need for a Canadian-specific shared vision of what it would practically look like to realize this right.

Through our engagements with actors across the system, including representatives from governments, the housing sector (non-profit and for-profit), people with lived experience and human rights experts, we have collected concrete ideas of what a desired vision for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing could entail. These ideas ranged from examples of what it would look and feel like **above the surface** (e.g., housing outcomes for people and communities) to less visible indicators of a healthy ecosystem **below the surface** that acts to ensure this right is upheld.

The dozens of people with lived experience who participated in this project helped illustrate an above-the-surface vision for the right to adequate housing. Participants shared their hopes and desires for the future, grounded in their experiences of housing challenges in Canada. The below-the-surface vision layers in the perspectives of other system actors to articulate their interests in improving roles and relationships and ways of working towards the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

Co-creating a shared vision should be an ongoing dialogue involving broader perspectives than we could engage in this initiative. As a starting point, the following few pages offer a compelling vision of the right to adequate housing in Canada—one that might inspire us to take action and embrace change.

Imagine a future where the right to adequate housing has been realized in Canada...





Above the Surface • Lived Experiences

Lived Experiences

Focus group and survey participants from across Canada shared their experiences with a system that is currently failing many people in Canada. These stories form the above-the-surface lived experiences.

We heard there is **an urgency to fix today's problems**. The severity and prevalence of today's housing gaps underscore a need to address homelessness and housing gaps for those in greatest need. People's lives are at stake *today*.

While addressing today's housing crisis, we must also halt any backward movement or worsening of the situation. There is a need to keep up with change to maintain deteriorating housing situations for people who have housing today.

Finally, there is a call to shift to a resilient system for the future. There is a **need to hold** the long-term view while addressing today's urgent needs.

Critical Housing Gaps

Over twenty-five (25) engagement events, comprising approximately 200 participants, eight critical housing gaps emerged for people with lived experience of housing needs and homelessness.



Gap 1 • **There is a limited supply of housing geared to those in greatest need.**



Gap 2 • **The lack of housing choice fuels stigma and discrimination.**



Gap 3 • **There is a significant income and support service gap, exacerbating housing challenges.**



Gap 4 • **For those who have housing, situations may be inadequate.**



Gap 5 • **There are few effective mechanisms for claiming one's right to housing.**



Gap 6 • **Inaction against backward movement is increasing the precarity of tenure for many.**



Gap 7 • **Rigid rules and mindsets get in the way of change.**



Gap 8 • **There is a sense of helplessness as housing situations worsen.**

To read more detailed accounts of lived experiences, including quotes from participants and detailed descriptions of the eight critical gaps, refer to the **Interim Report** for this initiative [here](#).

Vision for Housing Outcomes

*What would it look and feel like to have the right to adequate housing realized in Canada?**

On a personal level, rights holders in Canada envision a future that feels like having a sense of...

Security, peace, and dignity

This involves knowing that there's **a place for everyone**, regardless of their income or circumstances, feeling **physically safe** and protected at home, and having a space to **retreat** to and take **pride** in.

Agency, choice, and control

This involves having a **choice over housing location, form, supports, and freedom of movement**, including options to relocate from a dangerous or unhealthy environment.

Belonging to community and place

This involves feeling **accepted and respected** by their community and being able to **contribute** to the place in which they live.

Possibility and hope

This involves having housing security as a foundation for **life improvement** and the pursuit of other **opportunities**.

On a societal level, rights holders in Canada envision a future on the ground that looks like...

Availability of adequate housing options

This involves seeing **diverse housing types** in every community that reflect local needs. There would be affordable options for all income levels, located near services, and with access to necessary support. The housing supply would be more balanced across the continuum with greater inclusion of **non-market, collectively owned, and non-traditional housing** models.

Diverse, healthy communities

This involves seeing inclusive and welcoming communities of people with various identities where adequate housing increases **health and social outcomes**.

Structures to support those in housing need

This involves seeing a variety of accessible **tools, programs, and services** targeting historically underserved groups and those in greatest need. There would be robust protections to **prevent people from losing adequate housing** and mechanisms for people to claim **individual and systemic violations of their housing rights**.

*These desired outcomes align well with the seven characteristics of adequate housing outlined by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Success Criteria for our Approaches and Solutions

Through engagements with lived experts, the following principles were created to outline **“what success looks like”** regarding *how* the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing should be approached.

These principles should both inform the design of actions to advance the right to adequate housing and be used as part of a vision of a future where this right is upheld in Canada through ongoing, collective efforts.

“Our solutions must...”

1. **Consider impacts on all social determinants of health for those in greatest need, including income, social inclusion, food security, gender, race, disability, Indigenous status, employment and job security, and income distribution.**
2. **Apply non-discrimination, gender-based, trauma-informed, human-rights-based, and decolonizing lenses.**
3. **Level the playing field for a diversity of housing options and housing providers to exist in our system, especially non-market options.**
4. **Allow us to act with urgency but proceed with intentionality by building meaningful relationships with rights holders.**
5. **Amplify the voices of rights claimants and people with lived experience through consultation and paid roles, shared governance, and decision-making.**
6. **Give people and communities the power to shape their own destinies and living arrangements to live in peace, dignity, and security.**
7. **Boldly tackle the tension between profit and basic need in instances where profit jeopardizes someone’s right to adequate housing.**
8. **Have strong, enforceable legal implications.**





Below the Surface • Getting to Deep Systems Change

Our current system is not designed to fully embrace and adopt housing as a human right in Canada.

There are evident issues “above the surface” of our housing system in the form of homelessness, lack of adequate housing, and systemic discrimination. However, the dynamics stirring “below the surface” require further investigation to understand how we arrived at today’s state of affairs and what roadblocks remain for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in Canada. While positive steps have been taken, more work needs to be done to **build a strong foundation** for implementing the right to adequate housing across Canadian society.

Addressing systemic inequities is critical to realizing the right to housing in Canada, and as “duty-bearers,” governments are responsible for looking after the most vulnerable. Conversations throughout this process have reinforced that real estate is an area that has most benefitted the privileged and most impacted the marginalized in Canada.

This section reveals some of today’s underlying challenges using the four ecosystem elements framework presented in this report*. We identify:

- **Gaps:** evidence of a disparity between where we are today and where we want to get to through the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.
- **Barriers:** obstacles getting in the way of change.
- **Positive signals:** signs of what’s working well today or progress toward change.

* Return to the Introduction of this report to learn more about our focus on the four ecosystem elements.

Common Misconceptions

Doesn’t recognizing housing as a human right mean the government must provide everyone with housing?

Under international human rights law, the right to housing does not mean that the government must provide everyone with housing. It recognizes that all people have the “right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity” and that governments must implement reasonable policies and programs that will ensure that everyone has access to adequate housing by one means or another as soon as this can be achieved within available resources. The NHS Act affirms that this commitment must guide housing policy and programs, prioritizing those in the greatest need (The National Right to Housing Network).

Is the right to adequate housing the same as the right to property?

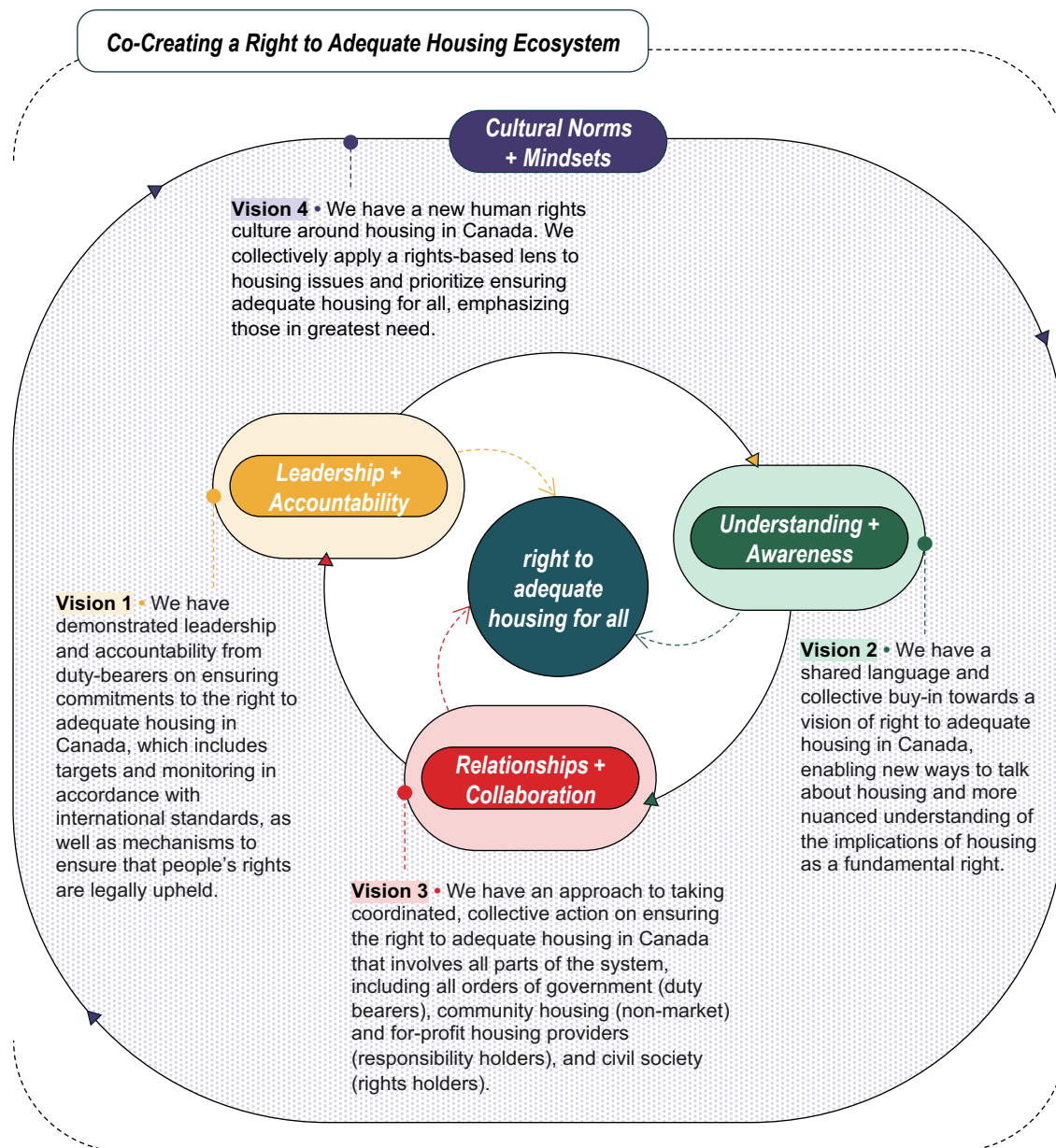
It is sometimes believed that the right to adequate housing equates to a right to property or property rights or that it threatens the right to property. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights treaties enshrined the right to own property. The right to adequate housing is broader than the right to own property as it addresses rights not related to ownership, including rights for non-owners of property. Protection of the right to property might be crucial to ensure that certain groups are able to enjoy their right to adequate housing (e.g., the recognition of spouses’ equal rights to household property) (UN-Habitat, 2014).

Vision for a Right to Adequate Housing Ecosystem

What would a desirable right-to-adequate housing system look like in Canada?

This section provides a vision for the four foundational right to adequate housing ecosystem elements. The overview includes descriptions of how these ecosystem elements would show up in a future where this right is realized in Canada.

Informed by what we heard through this project's engagement events, we discuss the **fundamental shifts** that would have taken place in this future scenario to support adopting housing as a human right. These shifts are further illustrated in the **stories from the future**, which provide speculative snapshots of how new ways of thinking and behaving would be demonstrated across the housing system.



Leadership + Accountability

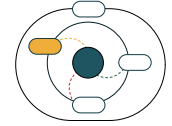
There is a mismatch between the Government of Canada's **bold acknowledgement of the right to adequate housing** (in the National Housing Strategy Act) and the **lack of leadership** in making progress on progressively realizing this right. There is an opportunity to fill this leadership gap.

“

A progressive government that believes in human rights needs to see there is an advantage to being held accountable.

— Right to housing expert

Barriers to Deep Systems Change • What is getting in the way of demonstrated leadership and clear accountability from duty-bearers on ensuring commitments to the right to adequate housing in Canada?



Gaps

The following gaps should be addressed through a right-to-adequate-housing initiative.

- A perceived lack of urgency and priority on making progress causing skepticism that this right and Canada's commitments are being taken seriously
- A general sense of dissatisfaction with the level of federal government leadership on its commitments to the progressive realization, including a need for ownership around the language of the right to adequate housing in Canada and facilitation of a collective approach by engaging, convening, and resourcing other system actors.
- A lack of clarity around who is accountable for our human rights obligations
- A lack of clear federal accountability and governance structures with transparent measures and means of recourse
- Uncertainty about how the right to adequate housing might be legally enforceable
- A lack of resources and mechanisms for people to meaningfully hold duty bearers and responsibility holders to account for systemic issues

Barriers

The following barriers are getting in the way of change.

- Implementing the right to adequate housing is new territory; translating this right into reality can feel overwhelming or ambiguous.
- The realities of political cycles and changing agendas can impact alignment within and across governments, getting in the way of sustained and coordinated focus on progressively realizing the right to adequate housing.
- For-profit housing developers and operators are waiting for a call to action from a strong leader on the issue of the right to adequate housing. Governments must balance the tension between enabling this sector to build more housing faster while holding for-profit housing providers to account.
- There is persistent resistance to being held accountable for this inter-jurisdictional issue—we need a mindset shift at all levels of government toward embracing accountability (including legal recourse) as a tool for achieving the right to adequate housing.

Vision for Demonstrated Leadership and Accountability

In our desired future...

The federal government demonstrates leadership and accountability alongside provincial, territorial, and municipal governments as duty-bearers in ensuring commitments to the right to adequate housing in Canada. This future commitment includes targets and monitoring in accordance with international standards, as well as new mechanisms to ensure that people's rights are legally protected.

Enabled by a deep understanding of housing as a human right and shifting to a rights-based approach, the Government of Canada has taken leadership in amplifying the dialogue and facilitating an "all-hands-on-deck" approach. This is supported through coordinated resources and embracing accountability to maintain credibility as the lead duty-bearer in realizing the right to adequate housing.

Fundamental Shifts

In this desired future, we envision the following fundamental shifts.

From	To
<i>lack of ownership and leadership around a collective approach to the right to adequate housing</i>	a bold declaration of Canada's commitments supported by leadership and engagement of other actors to co-implement a plan to realize our goals
<i>perceived lack of urgency and progress</i>	focus and elevation of the most severe violations of the right to adequate housing, along with clear targets and allocation of appropriate resources to address issues impacting those in greatest need
<i>lack of accountability and access to justice</i>	transparent monitoring of the successes and shortcomings of the right to adequate housing targets and actions, coupled with new mechanisms for access to legal protections to remedy human rights violations that place the onus on duty bearers and responsibility holders rather than on rights holders



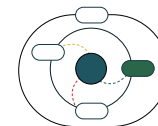
A Story from the Future

The National Right to Adequate Housing Conference of 2027 celebrates the release of this year's progress report on Canada's commitments to ensuring the right to adequate housing for all. The Prime Minister of Canada kicks off the conference with a keynote speech applauding the collaboration between all levels of government in co-designing an actionable framework for the right to adequate housing and applying a consistent approach to monitoring regional investments, policies, and programs against shared goals. Next, a panel of lived experts from across the country discusses the report findings, bringing in testimonies from rights holders on the ground, and highlights areas for improvement.



Why this Vision Matters

Canada's commitments to the right to adequate housing must be taken seriously by the federal government, with demonstrated leadership and accountability. The Government of Canada must act boldly to steer and resource collective action to ensure the right to adequate housing for everyone in Canada.



Understanding + Awareness

There is a conflation between **the lack of affordable housing supply** and the concept of **housing as a fundamental human right**. While it is a step in the right direction to create new policies and initiatives to address housing supply and service gaps, these solutions still need to be linked to a human-rights-based approach to housing.

“

We need a more tangible definition [of the right to adequate housing] that speaks to shared societal responsibilities.

— Focus group participant

Barriers to Deep Systems Change • What is getting in the way of a shared national understanding, awareness, and collective buy-in toward a vision of the right to adequate housing in Canada?

Gaps

The following gaps should be addressed through a right-to-adequate-housing initiative.

- A lack of widespread use of right-to-adequate-housing language within government and across broader society
- A lack of shared vision for the future and national understanding of what this right entails (both what it is and what it is not)
- A lack of understanding across governments and departments on how the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing fits into their work and duties
- Few civil society organizations adequately resourced to work on public outreach and education on this topic to broaden shared understanding

Barriers

The following barriers are getting in the way of change.

- Without meaningful connections and commitments to people with lived experiences of housing issues and homelessness, policymakers fail to understand housing issues from a rights perspective.
- Myths and misinformation* (e.g., that the right to adequate housing means that the government must provide a free house for everyone) can cause defensiveness and fear of the right to adequate housing, even among those who have not yet engaged with the topic.
- There is a fear that a rights-based approach will conflict with the for-profit sector and negatively impact their existing business models.
- There is a sense that the right to adequate housing currently lives in an academic, government-focused realm that may not be accessible to all—there is work to be done to bring more people into the conversation in an accessible way.

* For more on common misconceptions about the right to adequate housing, see the UN Habitat Fact Sheet No. 21 on the Right to Adequate Housing (p. 6), available here: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf

Vision for a Shared National Understanding

In our desired future...

We have a shared language and collective buy-in towards a vision of the right to adequate housing in Canada, enabling new ways to talk about housing and a more nuanced understanding of the implications of housing as a fundamental right.

There is collective understanding and support for housing as a human right in Canada—that everyone is entitled to adequate housing regardless of their background or circumstance. In addition, there is a common understanding of what a “human rights-based approach to housing” means and how this right connects to issues experienced on the ground.

Fundamental Shifts

In this desired future, we envision the following fundamental shifts.

From	To
lack of a common language	the right to adequate housing language used meaningfully and consistently by all levels of government, relevant sectors, and civil society
lack of awareness and understanding of the right to adequate housing	a shared understanding of this right, how it applies to different areas of the housing system, and what it could look like in practice across Canada
lack of leadership around the narrative of the right to adequate housing	powerful thought leadership and a compelling vision of the right to adequate housing, co-created with rights holders and amplified by duty bearers and responsibility holders



A Story from the Future

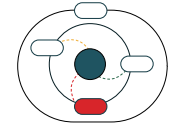
Mira and Yusuf are newcomers to Canada. From a local service agency, they receive a brochure on the right to adequate housing in Canada in their language, which includes information on what it means, how this right is upheld legally, and where they can go locally to get more information or report an issue.

The federal election is coming up in Canada. Neighbours Joe and Xin are having a chat over coffee about the candidates and their platforms. “I like the points on climate change, but their action plan on right to adequate housing is totally unclear to me,” says Xin, regarding one of the parties. Joe nods in agreement.



Why this Vision Matters

Fostering understanding and awareness of the right to adequate housing and how it applies to different aspects of the Canadian housing system helps to shape a broader movement, setting the stage for more profound cultural change and collective action on ensuring adequate housing for all.



Relationships + Collaboration

There is a tension between the need for **alignment and collaboration** across the system involving a whole-of-government approach with the participation of relevant actors and the need to account for **jurisdictional differences in priorities and local contexts**. This tension contributes to the challenge of coordinating action around the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

“

The fight to create direct relationships, channels, and funding streams is a distraction from what could be created if those were in place.

— Focus group participant

Barriers to Deep Systems Change • What is getting in the way of coordinated, integrated, collective action for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in Canada?

Gaps

The following gaps should be addressed through a right-to-adequate-housing initiative.

- A lack of articulation of and commitment to collective roles, responsibilities, and goals to progressively realize the right to adequate housing
- A need for direct channels for communication and collaboration with the federal government as a leader
- A gap in practical ways of convening actors across jurisdictions and sectors to work together
- A lack of structures, practices, and support for meaningful, ongoing engagement of civil society and lived experts in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the right to adequate housing initiatives
- A lack of clarity around potential roles for the for-profit development sector and how they can be involved in co-creating a collective path forward

Barriers

The following barriers are getting in the way of change.

- The siloed structures across levels of government can make it challenging to align and coordinate action.
- There are sensitivities around navigating inter-jurisdictional and inter-governmental lines and the respective constitutional roles and responsibilities.
- There are significant differences in local contexts across regions in Canada, which can add to the challenge of acting together with urgency.
- Many participants in this project noted a perception of division among actors in the system, including experiences of adversarial relationships and lack of trust.
- While the community housing (non-profit) sector has a mission to participate, they need to be resourced sufficiently to realize their full potential for impact.
- Power imbalances and lack of resources make it challenging for rights holders to meaningfully participate at the table as partners beyond being engaged in consultation.

Vision for Coordinated, Integrated, Collective Action

In our desired future...

We have an approach to taking coordinated, collective action on ensuring the right to adequate housing in Canada that involves a wide range of contributors, including governments (duty bearers), non-market housing providers and for-profit developers and landlords (responsibility holders), and civil society (rights holders).

With shared understanding, aligned goals, and a rights-based mentality, we have adopted new ways of working rooted in deep collaboration across the housing system and other relevant sectors. We have carved out unique roles for all actors to foster a sense of collective responsibility where everyone acts cohesively and is accountable to ensure adequate housing for all. We prioritize those in greatest need.

Fundamental Shifts

In this desired future, we envision the following fundamental shifts.

From	To
focus on top-down federal approaches	co-creating solutions with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, housing system actors, and civil society—creating trust in working together
lack of alignment and coordination	shared goals and cohesive strategies across levels of government and relevant sectors, with coordinated resources and enhanced revenue-generating capacity at the local level to efficiently implement the large-scale right-to-adequate housing initiatives that prioritize those in greatest need
jurisdictional divides	effective, trust-based ways of working together—between duty bearers, responsibility holders, and rights holders in the design, delivery and evaluation of right-to-adequate- housing initiatives
lack of clear roles and responsibilities	an "all-hands-on-deck" approach, leveraging each actor's strengths, anchored by strong federal government leadership and grounded by the expertise of civil society organizations and lived experts



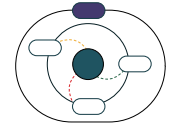
A Story from the Future

A developer is hosting a community information session about a new development proposal. "How are you ensuring that the new housing doesn't exclude vulnerable groups like single mothers receiving social assistance?" asks one of the homeowners in the area. The developer representative explains: "We've been working with the City, a human rights collective led by lived experts, and a non-profit housing provider to include several units for priority groups proportionate to the need in this neighbourhood."



Why this Vision Matters

Moving forward right to adequate housing interventions and taking action to address critical issues in housing requires collaboration and relationships across the system, where actors are aligned on approaches, and there are clear, dedicated roles that leverage each group's resources and expertise.



Cultural Norms + Mindsets

Barriers to Deep Systems Change • What is getting in the way of fully embracing and adopting new norms around housing in Canada, shifting the focus from housing as a financial tool to a human right?

Barriers

The following barriers are getting in the way of change.

- There is widespread stigma against those in housing need and normalization of visible homelessness—we tend to blame the person rather than acknowledge a violation of their right to adequate housing.
- While useful in some circumstances, the structure of government bureaucracy can make adopting new ways of thinking challenging.
- People in positions of power may find themselves in a conflict when it comes to the realization of the right to adequate housing—they are often property owners benefitting from our prevailing system, which can prevent systemic change from the top down. Those with real estate investments may fear losing their investment with the shift to a rights-based approach to housing.
- Supporting a cultural shift involves revisiting existing policies and programs that may not currently align with prioritizing housing as a human right, which can seem overwhelming.
- For the private sector, demands to extract maximum profits can be at odds with a more person-centric, rights-based approach to housing.
- There is a cultural mentality that values private homeownership and single-detached housing over other tenures and housing forms, which is reinforced by government policies and planning.



“

We have to change the attitudes of people in general, not just a handful or a group.

— Focus group participant

Vision for New Human Rights Norms and Culture

In our desired future...

We have a new human rights culture around housing in Canada. We collectively apply a human rights-based lens to housing issues and prioritize ensuring adequate housing for all, emphasizing those in greatest need.

Beyond knowing about the right to adequate housing, we genuinely believe in it. We are thinking differently about the purpose of housing, prioritizing it as a basic need for all people and treating people in housing need with dignity. As a country, we take pride in having the right to adequate housing affirmed and upheld. We are open and curious about examining issues using a human rights lens and constantly learn to adapt our approaches.

Fundamental Shifts

In this desired future, we envision the following fundamental shifts.

From	To
<i>stigma against those experiencing housing challenges</i>	building greater empathy and respect for all people, through infusing lived experience in policy-making, including those with diverse housing needs and desires
<i>reinforcing financial gain as a primary driver for the housing sector</i>	rewarding non-profit housing developers who create housing for those in greatest need; supporting housing initiatives that protect real estate from market forces
<i>fear and uncertainty around a rights-based approach to housing within governments and civil society</i>	embracing difficult conversations, adopting a solution-oriented mindset, and sharing responsibility



A Story from the Future

Laurence is a policy analyst working for a provincial government. They are working on a new housing program to support the growth of non-market housing in their jurisdiction. To ensure this program is designed with a human rights-based approach, they apply a right-to-adequate housing framework that involves co-designing their new initiative with lived experts and ensuring the program prioritizes allocating resources to projects that serve those in greatest need, as determined by their regional collaborative table on the right to adequate housing.



Why this Vision Matters

Building on understanding and awareness, the shift towards adopting new cultural norms and mindsets that support rights-based practices ensures long-term resiliency of the right to adequate housing movement and that fundamental rights are protected and upheld. It inspires leadership and accountability at the government level, along with a sense of collective responsibility throughout Canada.

Signs of Hope for the Future

While this section identified several gaps that should be addressed and barriers getting in the way of change, there is hope for the future. These signals indicate progress already underway or early signs of change toward the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

Leadership + Accountability

- The creation of the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate (housed at the Canadian Human Rights Commission), the National Housing Council, and review panels are a good start in demonstrating leadership and setting up mechanisms for accountability.
- The response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated effective leadership around an emergency, including regular communication from the Prime Minister's Office and rapid allocation of resources. There is much to learn from this mobilization.
- Some local governments are adopting right-to-housing frameworks, structures, and language (e.g., the City of Toronto recognizes the right to adequate housing in its Housing Charter), indicating an opportunity for shared accountability across levels of government.

Understanding + Awareness

- Housing is an issue that is gaining more attention and visibility in Canada (evidenced by the number of participants in this project)—this is the time to act.
- Some government groups are working on internal capacity-building around the right to adequate housing knowledge. Influential bodies (e.g., the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association) are starting to adopt the language of the right to adequate housing.

Relationships + Collaboration

- Collaborative initiatives between government, for-profit, and non-profit sector partners are becoming more commonplace (e.g., around local housing developments). Collaboration is seen as critical to solving our housing issues.
- Inter- and intra-governmental forums and partnership frameworks are being developed, as well as new opportunities for the engagement of lived experts at the federal government level.
- The response to the COVID-19 pandemic, while an extraordinary event, demonstrated how coordinated action across levels of government and sectors can take place around an urgent issue—it can be used as an example of what is possible.

Cultural Norms + Mindsets

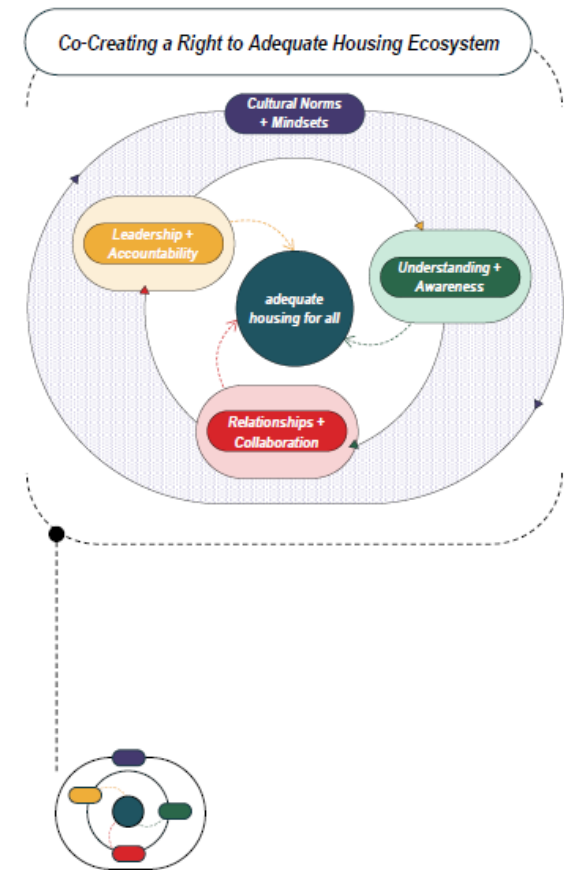
- There seems to be general acceptance of many right-to-adequate housing mandates, for instance, that homelessness should not be present in a country with resources like Canada.
- For-profit housing providers and developers are embracing corporate social responsibility, which can be an entry point for achieving alignment on the right to adequate housing.
- Rights-based thinking is starting to be applied to new initiatives and programs, even if not explicitly linked to the language (e.g., the Rapid Housing Initiative deploying coordinated resources to house those in greatest need).
- There are other successful examples of equity-seeking frameworks and approaches being adopted by levels of government (e.g., Gender-based Analysis Plus, anti-racism, and Reconciliation in policy-making). There is much to learn from these efforts.

Part 3 ● A Proposal for Change

This section offers a roadmap for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. We propose a suite of practical solution directions with actionable initiatives, steps to get started, and activities to increase impact.

Our proposal for change is grounded in the co-creating a right to adequate housing ecosystem visual. This image illustrates how the five key recommendations for the Government of Canada help shift our current ways of working, relationships, and mindsets toward the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

Note that across all recommendations in this section, solutions may be designed and implemented differently to address current contexts for Indigenous peoples. An additional Indigenous-led process is required.



*This icon is used throughout this report to refer to the above **Co-Creating a Right to Adequate Housing Ecosystem** framework.*

A Suite of Foundational Solutions

The Solution Directions

This section proposes **a suite of complementary solutions to build a foundation for work on progressively realizing the right to adequate housing in Canada.**

Anchored in our **five key recommendations**, the solution directions emerged from our engagement participants. While there are overlaps with other work being done in the right to adequate housing space, we focused on addressing challenges and barriers below the surface that are getting in the way of profound change. Our solutions were crafted to complement and amplify existing interventions while **cultivating an ecosystem where a human rights-based approach to housing becomes the norm.**

These solutions may not necessarily be implemented perfectly linearly. However, there is a logic where levels build upon one another. Starting with entrenching leadership and commitments from the federal government sets off a cascade that supports building alignment and collaboration with other actors in the system and taking collective action over time.

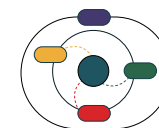
Roadmaps for Implementation

We present eight solution directions with detailed descriptions, accompanied by roadmaps identifying the **actions that the federal government should take** to move these interventions forward, framed by first steps to get started, followed by more ambitious efforts to increase impact over time to reach the desired outcomes fully.

Each solution includes a **core initiative**—a clear project or activity that the federal government should consider.

While the roadmaps focus on the Government of Canada's role as lead duty bearer in moving forward the right to adequate housing, these solutions emphasize a collective approach that requires participation from all actors in the system.

The roadmaps offer solutions of **varying levels of ambition, cost, and speed of implementation. Beyond this report, additional work will be needed to develop a more detailed implementation plan, including determining lead roles for each activity. The National Housing Council recommends working with the community and the Council to finalize these plans.**



Snapshot of Core Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Government of Canada must demonstrate leadership by establishing clear federal accountability and governance structures in relevant federal departments and central agencies.

Recommendation 2

The Government of Canada must support a separate for-Indigenous-by-Indigenous process to be undertaken as soon as possible to establish an Indigenous roadmap to progressively realize the right to housing and meet obligations under the NHSA and UNDA.

Recommendation 5

The Government of Canada must measure progress towards the right to adequate housing and report on outcomes to people in Canada.

Solution Direction 1

A firm demonstration of leadership and entrenched accountability for the right to adequate housing by the Federal Government

Solution Direction 2

A coordinated implementation and delivery framework for collectively enacting and monitoring a human rights-based approach to housing in federal government policy- and decision-making

Recommendation 3

The Government of Canada must spearhead efforts to develop a shared national understanding and awareness of the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

Solution Direction 3

A right to adequate housing learning initiative to build shared understanding across relevant federal government departments and agencies

Solution Direction 4

National awareness raising, education, and collaborative dialogue on the right to adequate housing in Canada

Solution Direction 5

Financial and human capital investments to elevate the role of civil society organizations and lived experts as leaders in the right to adequate housing

Recommendation 4

The Government of Canada must lead the development of a coordinated and integrated implementation and delivery framework for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing through an updated National Housing Strategy.

Solution Direction 6

A multi-lateral initiative to achieve alignment, take collective action, and establish government-wide accountability

Solution Direction 7

Partnerships and investment to elevate non-profit housing to a greater share of our housing stock

Solution Direction 8

Place-based, multi-sectoral convening, mandated to co-create, implement and steward collective action on the right to adequate housing

Recommendation 1

The Government of Canada must demonstrate leadership by establishing clear federal accountability and governance structures in relevant federal departments and central agencies.

Recommendation 2

The Government of Canada must support a separate for-Indigenous-by-Indigenous process to be undertaken as soon as possible to establish an Indigenous roadmap to progressively realize the right to housing and meet obligations under the NHSA and UNDA.

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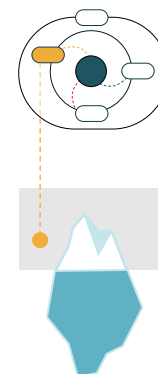
These solutions directions focus on creating the foundation for the federal government to commit to working cohesively and taking leadership as duty-bearers to move forward the right to adequate housing in Canada.

Solution Direction 1

A firm demonstration of leadership and entrenched accountability for the right to adequate housing by the Federal Government

Solution Direction 2

A coordinated implementation and delivery framework for collectively enacting and monitoring a human rights-based approach to housing in federal government policy- and decision-making



Note that across all recommendations in this section, solutions may be designed and implemented differently to address current contexts for Indigenous peoples. An additional Indigenous-led process is required.

A firm demonstration of leadership and entrenched accountability for the right to adequate housing by the Federal Government

Overview

This solution direction proposes **entrenching accountability through government-wide directives for coordinated leadership on the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing across the federal government and relevant departments**. By setting government-wide directives and taking a bold step to declare this as an urgent priority that requires ongoing commitment and a 'whole-of-government' approach, this solution enables the other suite of ideas presented in this report.

Rationale

This solution is needed to pave the way for a transformative rights-based approach to housing and action on Canada's commitments to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing and to foster a **whole-of-government approach through which responsibilities can be clearly allocated, coordinated and monitored on an ongoing basis**.

Advancement of the right to adequate housing requires the participation of the entire system to address housing challenges for those in greatest need. This approach calls for proactive leadership that embraces accountability to demonstrate progress and learning toward the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing while supporting the efforts of all governments and their agencies in their roles as duty bearers.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is to **initiate a government-wide directive and accompanying structures at the highest level of government, to elevate the issue of the right to adequate housing as an urgent priority**.

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- **Government-wide directives** elevating the right to adequate housing as an urgent priority
- **A shift in language and narrative** related to Canada's housing and homelessness challenges to include a recognition of Canada's human rights commitments and accountabilities related to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing
- **A central body** to support coordination and accountability of a cohesive "whole of government" approach to the right to adequate housing
- **Right to adequate housing language, actions, and approaches** showing up in mandate letters across all relevant Federal ministries departments (acknowledging this requires action from the Prime Minister's Office)
- As a longer-term, higher-ambition goal, the right to adequate housing recognized in the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**
- **Robust implementation and resourcing** of right to adequate housing accountability mechanisms independent of government (e.g., National Housing Council, Office of the Federal Advocate, and Review Panels)

Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. **Declare Canada's worsening housing and homelessness crisis as an urgent violation of the right to life and health as well as the human right to adequate housing. Swiftly resource today's chronic homelessness challenge.**

At the highest level of government (Prime Minister's Office; Privy Council Office), initiate a government-wide directive to elevate the issue of the right to adequate housing as an urgent priority (e.g., via a First Ministers' meeting) and embed accountability for the right to adequate housing in mandate letters across all relevant federal ministries, departments and agencies, going beyond the "usual" departments.

2. **Create the required leadership structures to take action:**

Designate a federal Ministry responsible for serving as the convener of other relevant departments, agencies, and levels of government and overseeing the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing (likely through the new Minister of Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities); and

Designate a relevant central agency to support accountability for the right to adequate housing across government (e.g., the Privy Council Office)."

Steps to Increase Impact

- Create mechanisms to ensure future governments cannot divest from housing rights commitments over the course of political cycles (e.g., making the right to adequate housing a Charter right).
- Increase capacity, realign and redistribute resources allocated to current independent right to adequate housing accountability mechanisms, including the National Housing Council, Office of the Federal Advocate and Review Panels (for instance, increase the number of Review Panels undertaken each year).

“

Huge changes require coming together of public will and pressure and someone who decides that it's an opportunity and is in a position to do it. This needs to come from the federal government.

— Municipal affairs expert

Urgency and maximum resources should be paired with creativity—look at what happened during the pandemic... Immediate actions were done; not all were perfect, but we were able to use dollars to deal with things on a short-term basis.

— Housing development expert

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *The federal government consistently demonstrates coordinated leadership, vision, accountability and commitment on this issue. People in Canada are widely aware of the Government of Canada's commitments to this human right and understand who is accountable at the highest level.*
- *Right to adequate housing language is colloquial and prevalent across conversations in all relevant departments in the federal government—the language shows up in training and onboarding materials, strategic directions, meeting agendas, communications materials, etc.*
- *Accountability for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing is embedded within all relevant federal government departments and agencies, and steps toward the right to adequate housing are defined, measurable, and enforceable.*
- *Housing rights commitments are further enshrined and protected so that future governments cannot divest accountability over the course of political cycles.*

A coordinated implementation and delivery framework for collectively enacting and monitoring a human rights-based approach to housing in federal government policy- and decision-making

Overview

This solution direction proposes the development of **national frameworks for implementing a human rights-based approach to housing**, which can guide policy and program development, as well as the resourcing and monitoring of Canada's commitments to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

Rationale

While Canada has taken the critical step of enshrining the right to adequate housing in the National Housing Strategy Act as affirmed in international law, these commitments and the implications for policy and program development still need to be better understood and fully implemented. In addition, there are currently insufficient mechanisms and resources being allocated to support the implementation and monitoring of Canada's commitments.

To translate these commitments into action within the shortest possible time frame, national frameworks will support policymakers to engage with right-to-adequate-housing imperatives and the implementation of a human rights-based approach across relevant ministries, departments, and agencies. Given the urgency of housing issues in Canada, supportive tools are needed to increase efficiency, alignment and monitoring of collective accountability across the federal government.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is a **federal inter-departmental framework to support a new way of working together to implement and monitor progress toward the right to adequate housing.**

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- A coordinated monitoring and evaluation system to align data collection, define and report on measurement targets related to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing across all relevant federal ministries.
- A federal government inter-departmental collaboration framework to support alignment, coordination, and efficiency across government departments to remove bottlenecks and clearly identify and enable action on collective responsibilities and right to adequate housing outcomes and targets. This could ensure alignment across related strategies (e.g., Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy).

“

We have to be introducing people to the practice of human rights thinking. Rather than telling them what the right to housing means and to take what you know and figure out how to implement it, the right to housing as a practice works the opposite—you would take your program areas (and explore) “what does R2H mean in that (particular) context?”

— Right to housing expert

Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. **Initiate a federal government inter-departmental co-design process to develop, test and refine a new way of working to support alignment, coordination, and efficiency across relevant government departments, ministries, and agencies.**

The co-design process should be an open, engaging, and trust-building space to work together toward a new way forward. The process should be informed by people with lived experience and other key system actors (consider employing them as advisors).

The framework should enable improvements such as clearly identifying collective responsibilities and accountabilities, and articulating departments' contributions to right to adequate housing outcomes and targets.

Draw best practices and precedence established through other government-wide education initiatives (e.g., the Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training).

2. **Once the collaboration framework has been established, co-design and implement an internal monitoring process with all participating federal government groups. The process should follow the goals set out by the inter-departmental co-design process.**

Steps to Increase Impact

- Initiate a government directive to apply the framework in developing and implementing government policies and programs. Use the framework as a requirement to guide relevant submissions for policy and budget approvals (such as those to the Treasury Board).
- Expand the use of the monitoring process to undertake a review of all other existing government initiatives and legislation to identify gaps and barriers in realizing the right to adequate housing. Publicly report on the results and measurement targets across all relevant federal ministries.
- Use learnings from this initiative to develop an analytical process (similar to GBA+) that provides a rigorous method for assessing policies, programs, and initiatives against a human-rights-based approach-to-housing lens.

“

We would like to see a strategic framework for a rights-based approach to guide government and policy makers towards a more systemic approach to right to adequate housing.

— Office of the Federal Housing Advocate

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *Policymakers are equipped to review, develop and monitor government policies and programs against human rights commitments and implications.*
- *There is greater alignment, collaboration and efficiency across government programs and policies to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, including appropriate budgeting and effective allocation of maximum available resources.*
- *The federal government allocates the maximum available resources, which are being used in the most effective and timely way possible to address our most urgent housing needs--we see the right to adequate housing reflected as an ongoing budgetary priority. This could include better use of existing resources or introducing new resources.*
- *There is increased transparency, monitoring, and reporting on Canada's progress towards realizing the right to adequate housing.*
- *Mechanisms to monitor the federal government's progress on the right to adequate housing are adequately resourced--Canadian society receives ongoing updates and reports on the state of affairs.*

Recommendation 3

The Government of Canada must spearhead efforts to develop a shared national understanding and awareness of the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

These solution directions focus on raising awareness and fostering engagement outside of the federal government to create a broader movement and cultural shift to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in Canada.

Solution Direction 3

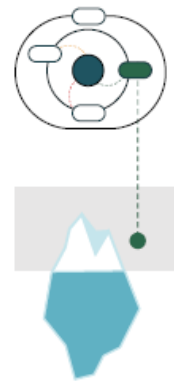
A right to adequate housing learning initiative to build shared understanding across relevant federal government departments and agencies

Solution Direction 5

Financial and human capital investments to elevate the role of civil society organizations and lived experts as leaders in the right to adequate housing

Solution Direction 4

National awareness raising, education, and collaborative dialogue on the right to adequate housing in Canada



Note that across all recommendations in this section, solutions may be designed and implemented differently to address current contexts for Indigenous peoples. An additional Indigenous-led process is required.

A right to adequate housing learning initiative to build shared understanding across relevant federal government departments and agencies

Overview

This solution direction proposes a **right to adequate housing learning initiative** to establish a common language and shared understanding while building the capacity of relevant federal departments and agencies to incorporate a human rights-based approach to housing into their work.

Rationale

To take steps towards collective action on realizing the right to adequate housing, we must first establish and socialize a shared language and understanding of what it means for the federal government as the lead “duty bearer.” To effectively realize the right to adequate housing over time, the federal government needs to build its internal capacity and understanding of what this approach means **in practice**.

Through the work of *Co-Creating the Right to Adequate Housing*, it became clear there is a significant gap in the understanding of key terms, definitions, roles, and human rights practices surrounding this right being enshrined in Canadian legislation (the National Housing Strategy Act). With a common language and understanding, government actors can situate themselves and see their role in realizing the right to adequate housing, speaking confidently about the issues, and bringing a rights-based approach into system-wide practice. This gap currently impedes the federal government from taking bold action and establishing a clear vision for an applied human rights practice to move forward with the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in Canada.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is a **learning lab for the federal government focused on defining a human-rights-based analytical framework and approach to infusing housing in all of its work.**

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- A series of practical applied learning initiatives across relevant departments and agencies of the federal government that broadens understanding and enables collaborative dialogue and action.
- Dialogue and learning with and from people with lived experience, community-based organizations, and human rights experts infused in all work on exploring a practical human-rights-based approach to housing in the federal government.

Key topics for the practical integration of a rights-based approach to housing include:

- What is the difference between having a National Housing Strategy [the policy], realizing the right to adequate housing [the process], and adopting a human-rights-based approach [the framework]?
- How do we define our roles in the right to adequate housing (i.e., duty bearers, responsibility holders, rights claimants), and what does it mean to take on these roles?
- What does recognizing and addressing “systemic issues” regarding the right to adequate housing mean?
- Why should government actors outside of housing be part of this conversation and effort?
- What are the opportunities to integrate a human rights-based approach to housing into existing work and roles?

Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. **Launch a learning lab within relevant government departments* to develop a collective understanding of the role of a human-rights-based approach to housing in existing priorities and work.**

The learning lab should:

Review the human rights-based implementation framework and approach to housing decision-making, through which all relevant decisions around housing, infrastructure, and other intersecting issues are reviewed against human rights implications.

Work with people with lived experience and civil society organizations to identify scenarios and practical opportunities to ground the right to adequate housing education in human experiences. This could include new mechanisms for infusing the knowledge of lived experts in program and policy development.

Help make clear to civil servants and elected officials where the right to adequate housing shows up in their work and what it means for existing and future policies.

*Relevant government departments and agencies could include Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Infrastructure Canada, Department of Justice Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Department of Canadian Heritage, Department of Finance Canada, Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, Bank of Canada, Women and Gender Equality, Indigenous Services Canada, and Correctional Service of Canada, among others.

Steps to Increase Impact

- Scale and replicate applied learning initiatives about a human-rights-based approach to housing across all relevant departments and agencies of the federal government.
- Document the approach and process so it can be shared with other levels of government and organizations.
- Make using the implementation framework and analytical process a requirement of federal government procurement processes (similar to the GBA+ training). Initiate a government directive to apply the process of developing and implementing government policies and programs.

“

The standard of “maximum available resources” sounds scary but it’s just a standard that gives government every opportunity to defend itself under the charter. We’re not going to be able to solve this problem until we ask, are we allocating enough resources and allocating them in the most effective way?

— Right to housing expert

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *There is widespread understanding across the federal government about what the right to adequate housing is (and is not) and what this means for government program and policy development*.*
- *The federal government has regular, informed, and critical conversations about progressively realizing the right to adequate housing and putting a human-rights-based approach to housing into practice—going beyond market indicators to include conversations of ways to work together differently towards this goal.*
- *The federal government regularly dialogues with people with lived experience, civil society organizations, and others as experts to learn about how right to adequate housing issues are showing up in Canada.*
- *There is a growing culture of embracing change, action, and continuous movement towards realizing the right to adequate housing, with a focus on addressing the most significant housing challenges for those in greatest need today.*

* For more on common misconceptions about the right to adequate housing, see the UN Habitat Fact Sheet No. 21 on the Right to Adequate Housing (p. 6), available here: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf

National awareness-raising, education, and collaborative dialogue on the right to adequate housing in Canada

Overview

This solution direction proposes a **national awareness raising and educational campaign**, along with a series of dialogues to engage the Canadian public in understanding the language, ideas, implications, and opportunities surrounding the right to adequate housing.

Rationale

There is currently a lack of shared language, definition, or understanding of what the right to adequate housing means and could look like in Canada. Additionally, the social and economic consequences and costs of the failure to ensure the right to adequate housing must be better understood. These gaps go beyond governments to the housing and real estate sectors and civil society.

The right to adequate housing discourse can be difficult to understand as much of the language comes from human rights and legal literature—domains drawing on technical language not typically used in everyday conversation. Plain language, stories and examples will be key to this solution.

There are also tensions around what the right to adequate housing means practically for lived experts, the private sector, and local governments. It is important to support spaces for learning and dialogue around these concerns and to be able to dispel misconceptions surrounding what this cultural shift means for Canada. These dialogues have the potential to strengthen relationships and understanding across diverse interests and encourage collective vision and action.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is a **national awareness-raising and collaborative dialogue campaign**.

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- A glossary of clear, plain language definitions of terms related to the right to adequate housing, written for different audiences, including the general public in Canada (“rights holders”), governments (“duty bearers”), and housing system actors (“responsibility holders”)
- A communications strategy to educate civil society on their rights and responsibilities—communications should feel realistic and grounded in real-life situations so the right to adequate housing does not feel like a “fantasy” but a concrete possibility
- Civil society, lived experts, and other actors are involved as partners in the co-development and delivery of the awareness campaign
- Drawing on lessons and approaches from other rights-based movements, such as the national disability rights movement
- Opportunities for community-wide conversations and targeted dialogues to deeply understand stigma and concerns while building a shared understanding around the implications of the right to adequate housing (e.g., with homeowners and landowners)



Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. Take the lead to resource the development and implementation of a national awareness-raising, education, and collaborative dialogue campaign.

The campaign should:

- Be led by a cross-sector group of organizations who share an interest in the right to adequate housing education and awareness-raising, hired through a human-rights-based procurement process
- Include resources for the development of skills for lived experience storytelling and enhanced community dialogue
- Ensure provincial, territorial, and local government support and participation in the awareness campaign and dialogue
- Expand the conversation across different sectors and domains in Canada
- Be tailored to local geographical contexts

2. Employ lived experts and civil society organizations to create a glossary to support shared, plain language on the right to adequate housing.

Steps to Increase Impact

- Determine future avenues for ongoing civil society education and dialogue around the right to adequate housing. Connect this initiative with work already underway through “Yes-in-my-Backyard” (YIMBY) campaigns. Include conversations about individual and collective responsibility toward the right to adequate housing and opportunities to work together to support it.
- Work with other federal, provincial, territorial, and local governments to align communications and educational materials around the right to adequate housing for greater shared impacts. For instance, this could involve using the right to adequate housing language in public health, economic development, immigration, and other related materials.

“

We need to find ways to keep pushing beyond just having mechanisms in place ...building change from within with champions, people who are really invested in making that change happen.

— Office of the Federal Housing Advocate

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *There is a provocative, compelling narrative and vision of the right to adequate housing in Canada that inspires people to buy into a cultural shift towards a human rights-based approach to housing.*
- *Right to adequate housing language and conversation is common in everyday discourse in Canada. We talk about having the right to adequate housing as something to be proud of in Canada.*
- *There is a shared understanding and a common language of the right to adequate housing across all levels of government, relevant sectors, and civil society.*
- *New relationships and partnerships for collective action around the right to adequate housing are forming and thriving.*
- *The federal government is stewarding a culture shift around how Canadian society views home, home ownership and the collective responsibility for “housing for everyone.”*

Financial and human capital investments to elevate the role of civil society organizations and lived experts as leaders in the right to adequate housing

Overview

This solution direction proposes increased efforts to **support and strengthen the leadership and participation of civil society organizations and lived experts**, engaging them as genuine partners and elevating their voices in advancing the right to adequate housing in Canada.

Rationale

The National Housing Council's literature review and engagement with community organizations and lived experts highlight the concept of a **participatory approach** as a core element of a rights-based approach to housing. This approach **requires governments to centre the voices of affected populations in the design, delivery and evaluation of right to adequate housing policy and programs**. This way of working will ensure that top-down policy leadership is informed by ground-up experience.

Many civil society organizations and networks already provide leadership on the right to adequate housing and have strong ties to people with lived experience. This solution is focused on strengthening their organizing, capacity and resources to continue and expand their work and ensuring the structures are in place for them to meaningfully engage with governments in designing and evaluating policies and programs.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is a **requirement and structure for ongoing involvement of civil society and lived experts in the right to adequate housing journey**.

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- Structures and supports to ensure lived experts' experiences and insights contribute to the design, delivery and evaluation of right to adequate housing programs and policy in meaningful and respectful ways of their time and expertise
- Requiring federal housing programs to include lived experts in the planning and evaluation of their funded initiative
- Resources supporting local and regional training, engagement, and organizing around community-based housing interests, including training lived experts to support the national awareness campaign
- Training and employment programs to strengthen the inclusion of lived experts in paid roles that support the right to adequate housing, such as researchers, peer support workers, navigators, educators and advocates

“

Stories are so powerful; facts aren't going to work, rhetoric isn't going to work. To change our collective understanding, resources and funding, we have to foreground these experiences.

— Former Canadian mayor



Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. **As part of the federal government's implementation and delivery framework, develop a requirement and structure for the ongoing involvement of civil society and lived experts as partners in policy and program design and evaluation. The standard should:**

- Ensure there are structures and commitment across all levels of Government to support civil society and lived experts to participate in advancing the right to housing; and
- Direct governments to move beyond "engagement" and "feedback" and to adopt more collaborative methods for policy-making (such as co-design).

2. **As part of the government's learning initiative, employ lived experts in ongoing training and education roles to strengthen government knowledge of real human stories of housing needs, ensure conversations about people are at the core of our right to adequate housing solutions, and increase the capacity of governments to work with lived experts effectively.**

3. **Create a fund dedicated to resourcing community-based and civil society organizations already working on amplifying the voices and stories of lived expertise in policy-making.**

Steps to Increase Impact

- As part of the federal government's right to adequate housing monitoring process, ensure that lived experts and civil society are engaged and employed in evaluating and learning about the process, programs, and impacts of participatory approaches.

“

I do agree that broad education is important but the way that you go about that is not by talking about housing by itself and the right to adequate housing but who is most affected by lack of adequate housing—what does that contribute to in terms of their future trajectory in life?

— Women and gender equality expert

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *Civil society organizations have the resources and capacity to be active partners working with lived experts, governments, and others to co-create our policies, approaches, and solutions toward the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.*
- *The experiences and stories of lived experts, including Indigenous peoples (on- and off-reserve), are integrated as a key input that shapes policies and programs.*
- *There is diverse expertise participating in the design, delivery and evaluation of right to adequate housing initiatives.*
- *Lived experts are viewed by society, governments, and the housing sector as key contributors to advancing the right to adequate housing in Canada.*

Recommendation 4

The Government of Canada must lead the development of a coordinated and integrated implementation and delivery framework for the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing through an updated National Housing Strategy.

These solution directions focus on providing a blueprint and resources for new ways of working that involve all actors to take collective action on moving forward the right to adequate housing in Canada.

Solution Direction 6

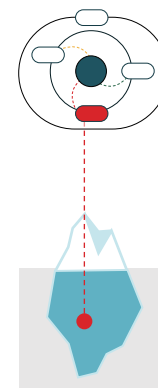
A multi-lateral initiative to achieve alignment, take collective action, and establish government-wide accountability

Solution Direction 8

Place-based, multi-sectoral convening, mandated to co-create, implement and steward collective action on the right to adequate housing

Solution Direction 7

Partnerships and investment to elevate non-profit housing to a greater share of our housing stock



Note that across all recommendations in this section, solutions may be designed and implemented differently to address current contexts for Indigenous peoples. An additional Indigenous-led process is required.

A multi-lateral initiative to achieve alignment, take collective action, and establish government-wide accountability

Overview

This solution direction proposes **collaboration across all levels of government**, outlining clear roles and establishing new processes for inter-jurisdictional actors to collectively advance the right to adequate housing together. The initiative may take on several forms. As a starting point, we propose a tri-lateral table.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is **the multi-lateral (federal, provincial, territorial, and local government) table on right to adequate housing alignment and coordination**.

Rationale

The National Right to Housing Network literature review notes one of the most significant barriers to implementing the right to adequate housing in Canada is its jurisdictional divide. Based on international human rights law, **it is a requirement that our governments do not use inter-jurisdictional restrictions to justify a lack of progress on the right to adequate housing**.

While the federal government has a critical leadership and accountability role concerning Canada's human rights commitments, other levels of government influence many of the issues and levers that affect people's right to adequate housing. The diversity of housing needs and contexts across Canada means that human rights responses must be tailored to these contexts while maintaining consistency with human rights imperatives. Many provincial, territorial and local governments are actively responding to housing issues. These levels of government are often well-positioned to understand and support housing human rights priorities that take into account their unique contexts.

Taking collective action requires trust, strong relationships, and a shared approach to collaboration. Taking steps towards the right to adequate housing requires leveraging and adequately resourcing the unique capabilities and jurisdictional powers of every level of government. There is currently a lack of mechanisms that facilitate the co-development of coordinated and aligned responses across levels of government, and many responses remain siloed or even adversarial. By building a strong culture of collaboration, different levels of government can work together to support the necessary alignment of resources and efforts to advance the right to adequate housing.

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- A trust-based approach to inter-governmental collaboration, creating space for flexible, streamlined, localized solutions and human rights-based housing priorities relevant to the environments and experiences in different contexts and jurisdictions
- A definition and economic rationale for and allocation of a "maximum of available resources" in the Canadian context for provincial, territorial, and local governments to facilitate accountability for right to adequate housing goals, while ensuring flexibility for responding to priorities at the local community level
- An inter-governmental right to adequate housing charter to outline shared success criteria and commitments
- Alignment and integration of a human-rights-based approach to housing in policies and strategies at the local, provincial, and territorial levels

Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. Initiate and facilitate a multi-lateral table (federal, provincial, territorial, and local governments, including National Indigenous Organizations and distinction-based groups) to coordinate and align their right to adequate housing efforts*.

- Identify and understand barriers and opportunities together, including learning how a human-rights-based approach to housing can be applied to housing strategies, legislation, policy, and programs at all levels of government;
- Review existing multilateral housing partnership agreements to incorporate further and articulate right to adequate housing goals;
- Co-design shared right to adequate housing goals, indicators, and opportunities for ongoing monitoring and development;
- Establish trust-building leadership by engaging and supporting other levels of government; and
- Coordinate and disseminate best practices for advancing the right to adequate housing among Provincial, Territorial, and local governments.

Steps to Increase Impact

- Out of the work of the multi-lateral table, establish an ongoing housing transfer program to commit Canada to invest the "maximum of available resources" to the right to adequate housing. This increase in impact should enhance existing transfers already provided (e.g., funding for the Canada Housing Benefit and the Canada Community Housing Initiative). This block funding could be similar to the Canada Health Transfers (CHT), which support the principles of the Canada Health Act and are made on an equal per capita basis to provide comparable healthcare for all Canadians, regardless of where they live. The CHT grows in line with a three-year moving average of nominal GDP, with total funding guaranteed to increase by at least three percent per year.
- Out of the work of the tri-lateral table, design and implement a fund for more flexible resourcing of new local innovative ideas, the scaling, and replication of right to adequate housing initiatives that are working well at the provincial, territorial, and local levels.
- Scale and replicate learning initiatives about a human-rights-based approach to housing across other levels of government and organizations so more groups can participate in the conversation.

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *There is a culture of collaboration across different levels of government on the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, supported by structures to facilitate inter-governmental conversation, trust-building, and idea exchange.*
- *There is a shared understanding of Canada's human rights commitments and obligations and what it means to implement a human-rights-based approach to housing across all levels of government.*
- *While policy and program approaches may look different, all levels of government have aligned their priorities to reflect our collective commitment to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.*
- *Resources are utilized effectively by harnessing each level of government's unique capabilities and geographically-based expertise—supporting a movement toward the right to adequate housing.*
- *All levels of government are adequately resourced to be part of the co-design and co-implementation of a human-rights-based approach to housing.*

* Where appropriate, this multi-lateral right-to-housing-focused table could link to existing structures. For instance, the existing Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Forum on Housing encourages intergovernmental collaboration in respect of the differing priorities, needs and perspectives of individual provincial and territorial governments. Governments use the Forum as their principal multilateral platform to advance shared priorities and achieve better housing outcomes.

Partnerships and investment to elevate non-profit housing to a greater share of our housing stock

Overview

This solution direction proposes a new approach to **partnerships and investment in strengthening the role of non-profit housing** to create a more balanced supply of housing in Canada and demonstrate a commitment to a shift towards housing as a human right.

Rationale

Currently, the majority of our housing stock (across all tenures) in Canada is market-based, for-profit housing. Several workshop and focus group participants emphasized that a housing system rooted in human rights requires a **dedication of more real estate assets to serve a social purpose and expand the non-profit side of the housing continuum**.

There are many small community (non-profit) housing providers in Canada. Many need more resources or capacity to maintain their aging housing stock and undertake new large-scale development projects. This solution is focused on strengthening capacity and resources in the community housing sector, including through proactive support for partnerships between local government, the private sector, and community housing organizations. Ensuring rights to adequate housing will require more collaborative approaches across all types of organizations involved in creating and maintaining housing. These approaches would build on existing programs, such as the Canada Community Housing Initiative, focused on protecting and growing a sustainable non-profit community housing sector.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is the **national proportional target (e.g., set as a percentage of total housing stock) for non-profit housing**.

Key Components

This solution direction includes:

- Establishing a bold, attainable and near-term target for non-profit housing development in Canada as a proportion of total housing stock (for example, double the proportion by 2030)
- A single point of access to an integrated suite of federal, provincial, territorial, and local housing programs with aligned criteria, timelines, and reporting to reduce the time and complexity of multiple funding applications with different requirements
- Increased investment in community land trusts, collective ownership models, and other forms of non-market housing (whether offered by non-profit organizations or governments)
- Expansion of targeted investments in Indigenous and Northern housing initiatives (on- and off-reserve)
- Partnerships between governments, non-profit, and for-profit housing providers that can leverage the unique expertise and assets of each group (e.g., joint ventures, pooled acquisition funds, and land trusts to protect land for non-market housing)
- Community conversations and education to build an understanding of what non-profit housing is and why it is essential to the quality of life for all people in Canada

Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. **Introduce a new national target for non-profit housing as a proportion of total housing stock in Canada in alignment with the NHC's "Renewing Canada's National Housing Strategy."**

Integrate this target into tri-lateral agreements and conversations.

2. **Work with the community housing sector to scale what is working and develop partnerships and networks that bring stability, resources and expertise to their work.** Initiatives should be focused on mitigating risk for non-market housing providers by:

- Better aligning federal, provincial, territorial, and local funding programs (evaluation criteria and requirements; availability of capital and operating funds)
- Leveraging the unique assets and capabilities of the for-profit development community in mutually beneficial ways
- Reducing risk for community housing providers by having duty bearers with the greatest means assume the greatest risk in non-profit housing creation

3. **Implement the recommendations in the NHC report entitled "Renewing Canada's National Housing Strategy."**

Steps to Increase Impact

- Create a central access point for federal, provincial, territorial and local housing funding programs. This portal should support aligning and coordinating program timelines, requirements, and application processes.
- As part of the education and awareness campaign and dialogues, resource civil society to host community conversations to build awareness and support for non-profit housing.

“

Federal programs often do not cover the full capital costs and rarely offer ongoing operating funding. The criteria and application processes to access federal funding are difficult to understand and the suite of federal initiatives create a complicated web of programs and gaps.

— Provincial/Territorial representative

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *All levels of government are aligned and committed to increasing the proportion of non-profit housing in Canada with actionable targets and timelines reported publicly annually.*
- *All federal, provincial, territorial, and local housing funding programs are consistent, coordinated and tracked through a central access point.*
- *Evidence shows that a maximum of available resources have been invested in expanding non-profit housing (e.g., community housing, social housing) versus for-profit housing.*
- *There is reduced stigma around non-profit housing—it is not just "for low-income families" but a vital public benefit for many.*



Place-based, multi-sectoral convening with a mandate to co-create, implement and steward collective action on the right to adequate housing

Overview

This solution direction proposes a **structure that supports inter-jurisdictional, cross-sectoral, and civil society actors to co-create, implement and steward an “all-in” approach** to advancing the right to adequate housing within the unique context of their region—going beyond government actors.

Rationale

While participants in this *Co-Creating the Right to Adequate Housing in Canada* initiative expressed a desire for greater federal leadership and resourcing, they were also consistent in calling for an “all-in” approach. Realizing the right to adequate housing requires everyone to do their part and to work together around common goals.

Participants also described silos, disconnects, and inefficiencies resulting from a lack of collaboration among levels of government, those working in the housing sector, and civil society. Many competing interests, motivations, and priorities must be reconciled through this convening.

Relationships and trust must be cultivated to move us from silos to the “all-in” approach. There are also distinct contexts and needs across Canada, often requiring regional and local adaptations and strategies. Right to adequate housing solutions must be tailored to each region’s unique gaps, capabilities, and assets. This customization requires regional knowledge and experience.

Core Initiative

The core initiative is **the place-based multi-sectoral convening tables**.

Key Components

Place-based multi-sector tables:

- Are created around relevant geographies where there are shared housing interests to develop, adapt and steward specific solutions pertinent to the local urban, rural, and Indigenous context
- Are mandated to work in partnership with all relevant housing actors in their region, prioritizing the voices of those in greatest need

- Proactively facilitate partnerships and networks across actors to support aligned resources and efforts to strengthen non-market housing and the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing
- Cultivate a learning mindset, the cross-pollination of ideas, and collective problem-solving to advance the realization of the right to adequate housing
- Act as a conduit to and liaison with federal departments to support policy and programs that are informed by needs on the ground, in communities

“

There’s a giant vacuum in terms of a right to housing narrative. [...we could be] embedding the right to adequate housing in what it means to be Canadian. The more local governments can see this language modelled in other levels of government, the more a right to adequate housing approach will be embraced and acted on.

— Former Canadian mayor

Roadmap for Implementation

First Steps

1. Establish and resource a pilot of place-based multi-sectoral right-to-adequate-housing tables across Canada.

The place-based tables should:

- Be geographically focused—a new table should be created for each geography where there are shared housing interests in order to develop, adapt and steward specific solutions relevant to the local urban, rural, and/or Indigenous context;
- Include training on co-design approaches to strengthen skills for collaboration and aligned ways of working—those approaches should be employed in each multi-sectoral table;
- Include willing and mission-aligned for-profit housing developers and landlords;
- Be assigned with a federal government liaison, with knowledge of the region, to each place-based multi-sector table that is established; and
- Be aligned with the frameworks and approaches proposed in the other solution directions in this report.

Steps to Increase Impact

- Resource the place-based, multi-sectoral right to adequate housing tables to evaluate their own action plans and processes, after one year of implementation.
- With the evaluation in hand, compare results between geographies with multi-sectoral tables and those without, to further examine the impact of this mechanism for collaboration.

“

The place I'd love to put emphasis and energy is a shared solutions table—we've committed... we know we all have a responsibility, so let's roll up our sleeves together and figure out what we're not doing well...

— Housing development expert

Intended Outcomes

The activities in this roadmap should result in the following outcomes:

- *Key actors across sectors who are leading right to adequate housing work in each region report stronger relationships, trust, and collaboration around right to adequate housing implementation.*
- *Participants of the place-based tables can identify common goals and new approaches or strategies that are supporting cross-sectoral progress toward right to adequate housing and non-market housing targets.*
- *Federal, provincial, territorial, and local governments, and multi-sectoral participants (including National Indigenous Organizations and distinction-based groups) report stronger communication and co-ordination as a result of the place-based tables.*
- *There is evidence of efficiencies and partnerships that have been seeded or supported through the place-based tables.*



Part 4 ● Conclusion and Next Steps

Moving Forward

Collectively Taking a Bold Step Forward

Realizing the right to adequate housing is an ambitious undertaking that requires an **all-of-Canada approach**, anchored in **leadership from the Government of Canada** as duty bearer, in collaboration with all levels of government. We need to be aligned in understanding, embrace progressive thinking, act with urgency, and co-own responsibility to uphold and sustain this human right.

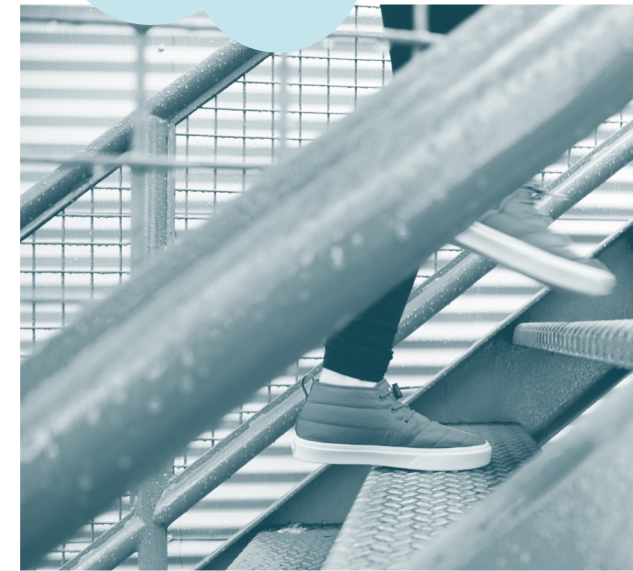
The focus on creating a strong foundation for a new human rights culture in Canada doesn't mean waiting to take other actions needed to address the urgency of today's housing and homelessness crisis. However, it's important to acknowledge that achieving truly transformative and systemic change involves interventions that go below the surface so that we can treat pervasive problems from the root up.

The solutions put forth by this report are aimed at strengthening the foundation to support new strategies, policies, and initiatives above the surface to ensure everyone in Canada has access to adequate housing where they may live in peace, security, and dignity.

While adopting a rights-based approach to housing, along with the technical elements that protect housing as a human right, may seem complex and daunting, this process has revealed positive signals from all levels of actors. These include alignment with the core principles of housing as a human right (e.g., focus on those in greatest need) and a willingness to join the collective action. More profound societal change will take time, but there are signs that the formation of a right-to-adequate housing ecosystem is already underway, with small and large shifts taking place on multiple fronts.

Overwhelmingly, we have heard that having housing as a fundamental right is important to people in Canada, and there is hope that this new lens will lead to better housing outcomes for all.

How might we elevate the importance of the right to adequate housing in Canada so that it becomes a *non-negotiable* – something that we are committed to advancing no matter what?





This report was prepared for the National Housing Council by SHS Consulting and SHIFT Collaborative.