

SUBJECT

HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO HOUSING

ISSUE

What is the Government doing to recognize housing as a human right?

KEY FACTS

- The National Housing Strategy Act will require the Government of Canada to develop and maintain a national housing strategy to support improved housing outcomes for Canadians.
- National Housing Strategy Act recognize the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

RESPONSE

- **Our Government strongly believes that all Canadians should have access to safe and affordable housing. That is why we introduced Canada's first ever National Housing Strategy and introduced legislation making sure future governments do the same.**
- **The National Housing Strategy Act, now passed into law, represents a historic milestone for housing in Canada. The NHS Act recognizes the right to adequate housing as a fundamental human right.**
- **The National Housing Strategy Act requires the federal government, and future governments, to develop, maintain and report on a National Housing Strategy that prioritizes the housing needs of the most vulnerable and taking into account key principles of a human rights-based approach to housing.**
 - **The first report will be tabled in 2021.**
- **The Act creates a Federal Housing Advocate and also establishes a National Housing Council. Together, they will help identify systemic barriers to accessing affordable housing and advise the Government on housing policy in Canada.**
- **As a matter of fact, the applications for the National Housing Council launched over the summer and closed on October 14.**

If pressed on the Federal Housing Advocate:

- **The Federal Housing Advocate monitors the progress of the National Housing Strategy initiatives and housing policy, assess outcomes with respect to vulnerable populations.**

- **The Federal Housing Advocate can analyze and conduct research, initiate studies, and receive submissions on systemic housing issues.**
- **In addition, the Advocate will provide advice to the Minister, submit a report on their findings, and provide recommendations to further the housing policy, including the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, and the National Housing Strategy.**

If pressed on the National Housing Council:

- **The legislation establishes a National Housing Council with diverse representation, including persons with lived experience of housing need and homelessness.**
- **The Council will provide advice to the Minister on the National Housing Strategy and its effectiveness or furthering the housing policies with the aim of improving housing outcomes.**

BACKGROUND

Since 1976, Canada has been part of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognizes that everyone should have the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing. Through the National Housing Strategy, the Government will support the gradual realization of this right.

The National Housing Strategy Act

The National Housing Strategy Act provides for, among other things, the development and maintenance of a national housing strategy and imposes requirements related to the mandatory content of the strategy:

- (a) set out a long-term vision for housing in Canada that recognizes the importance of housing in achieving social, economic, health and environmental goals;
- (b) establish national goals relating to housing and homelessness and identify related priorities, initiatives, timelines and desired outcomes;
- (c) focus on improving housing outcomes for persons in greatest need; and
- (d) provide for participatory processes to ensure the ongoing inclusion and engagement of civil society, stakeholders, vulnerable groups and persons with lived experience of housing need, as well as those with lived experience of homelessness.

It also establishes a National Housing Council and requires the appointment of a Federal Housing Advocate. It requires the submission of an annual report by the Advocate on systemic housing issues and the submission of periodic reports by the designated Minister on the implementation of the strategy and the achievement of desired housing outcomes.

Finally, the Minister must, before March 31, 2021 and within every three years after that date, cause a report to be made on the effectiveness of the National Housing Strategy, with respect to the achievement of the desired outcomes, and the initiatives related to its implementation.

Federal Housing Advocate

The Federal Housing Advocate has the mandate to receive submissions and consult with persons and civil society organizations with respect to systemic housing issues faced by persons who are members of vulnerable groups and persons with lived experience of housing need, as well as persons with lived experience of homelessness. The Federal Housing Advocate is to analyze and conduct research on such issues, including barriers faced by those persons, as it sees fit.

The Federal Housing Advocate will participate in the work of the National Housing Council as an ex officio member.

National Housing Council

The purpose of the Council is to furthering the housing policy and the National Housing Strategy by providing advice to the Minister, on its own initiative or at the request of the Minister, including, among other things, on the effectiveness of the National Housing Strategy; and undertaking any other activity that the Minister specifies.

The Council will be composed of two co-chairpersons and not fewer than 9, but not more than 15, other members.

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