

Speaking Notes

for

**The Honourable Ahmed Hussen
Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion**

to the

**Committee-of-the-Whole
House of Commons**

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Mr. Chair, I am thankful for being invited to rise in the committee of the whole to speak to the main estimates for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

I'm pleased to be here to discuss the Government of Canada's priorities for housing – our ongoing activities and our plans for the future to give more people a place to call home.

It's clear that housing, especially housing affordability, is one of the top concerns facing Canada.

Everyone deserves the dignity of a home. A place of sanctuary. A place where they can raise their family, plan for the future, and belong to a community.

Unfortunately, these are difficult times for Canadians. Families across the country are struggling with the rising cost of living. An important part of that is the rising cost of housing – for both homeowners and renters.

Housing is a basic human need. But it's also an economic imperative. Our economy is built by people, and people need homes in which to live.

In other words, investing in housing is good social and economic policy.

And that's just what the Government of Canada has been doing since 2016. With each successive budget we've made major housing commitments. This includes launching Canada's first National Housing Strategy, which is now a \$82 billion plan.

This comprehensive 10-year plan is ensuring hundreds of thousands of Canadians have a place to call home. And it's succeeding by addressing housing affordability from every possible angle.

The greatest part of the strategy – and the greatest driver of affordability – is creating more housing supply.

Building more homes at all price points will make housing more affordable, whether you're a renter or a homeowner.

Unfortunately, in many parts of the country, we're seeing a huge housing shortage. We simply need more homes for our growing population.

According to CMHC research, Canada needs to build 3.5-million homes, above and beyond the current rate of construction to achieve affordability by 2030.

That's why, Budget 2022 made housing supply a top priority. It introduced initiatives that will put our country on the path to double our construction of new housing -- and meet Canada's housing needs over the next decade. And it's why we included measures to build on that momentum in Budget 2023.

One bold new initiative that I'm especially excited about is the **Housing Accelerator Fund**. We recently announced more details on this \$4 billion fund and we'll start to receive proposals

from local governments over the summer.

This multi-year initiative will break down the barriers to building housing that are found at the municipal level. It will help our cities and towns to free up the backlog and get more shovels in the ground faster – and will create an estimated 100,000 new housing units.

Our government worked closely with our municipal, provincial and territorial peers to develop this initiative and I'm confident that it will bring about systemic change that will make a real and long-lasting difference.

In addition to this new fund, we're also reinvesting in proven programs that are already benefiting those vulnerable populations who need affordable housing most.

One such program is the **Rapid Housing Initiative**.

This program was created in the early stages of the pandemic to respond to urgent housing needs of our most vulnerable populations. It has exceeded all expectations. It is quickly creating

more than 10,000 new permanent units of affordable housing.

Now, we're investing another \$1.5 billion over two years to extend the Initiative. The new funding is expected to create at least 4,500 new affordable housing units, with 25 per cent of funding going towards women-focused housing projects.

The National Housing Co-Investment Fund is another program that has built or renovated more than 300,000 rental units for Canada's most vulnerable people.

Our government has advanced \$2.9 billion in funding under this fund. We also aim for the Fund to become more flexible and easier to access.

This will allow us to accelerate the creation and renovation of some 21,000 rental units for Canadians who need them most.

We've also reallocated \$500 million from the Co-Investment Fund to launch a new **Co-operative Housing Development Program**. Co-operative housing projects will also receive support through

\$1-billion in loans reallocated from the Rental Construction Financing initiative.

We're working closely on this program with the cooperative sector – a sector that for decades has played an important role in providing affordable housing across the country.

While building new supply is key to housing affordability, so is updating Canada's aging rental housing stock. Some of the programs I've already mentioned address this. Now, we're about to launch a new one that will make older rental units more climate compatible, called the **Canada Greener Affordable Housing** program.

This \$4.4 billion program will help finance much needed energy retrofits in rental properties, including housing co-operatives and not-for-profit-owned housing serving low-income renters.

Earlier I said that the Government of Canada is addressing housing affordability from every angle. So let me mention a few programs that go beyond creating more housing supply.

First of all, we've introduced measures to protect homeowners from unfair practices, like blind bidding or being forced to waive inspections.

For example, we'll be working with the provinces and territories to jointly develop a **Home Buyers' Bill of Rights**, backed by federal investments of \$5 million over two years.

We're also supporting housing affordability with the provinces and territories through direct benefits to low-income Canadians through the Canada Housing Benefit. Recently, to give low-renters even more help in these challenging times, we provided a \$500 payment via a **One-Time Top-Up to the Canada Housing Benefit**.

One last initiative I'd like to mention is **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy**.

The Government of Canada is investing nearly \$4 billion over nine years through this program, which provides funding to urban, Indigenous, rural and remote communities to help them to address local homelessness needs. The program supports communities in establishing Coordinated Access. This is an integrated systems-based approach that prioritizes people most in need of assistance and matches individuals to appropriate housing and services in a streamlined and coordinated way.

Reaching Home is having a significant impact. In its first three years, it funded over 5,000 projects which helped place over 46,000 people experiencing homelessness into more stable housing, while over 87,000 people benefited from prevention and shelter diversion services.

As part of the Government of Canada's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, increased additional Reaching Home funding enabled the creation of over 26,000 temporary accommodation spaces. These temporary spaces were put in place when shelters had to reduce their capacity to ensure physical distancing. In fact, over 214,000 temporary accommodation placements were made to support individuals in need.

Reaching Home is playing an important role in supporting the National Housing Strategy's target of reducing chronic homelessness by half by 2027-28. It also contributes to the federal government's commitment to end chronic homelessness by 2030.

Mr. Chair, I've just had time to touch on a few of our housing initiatives. However, this should give the members an overview of the breadth and depth of our commitment to housing.

We are leaving no stone unturned in our work to ensure everyone in Canada has the dignity of a place to call home. A place where they and their communities can thrive and prosper.

I thank you again for your attention today, and I'm happy to answer any questions regarding CMHC'S main estimates you may have.