

## HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

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### **ISSUE / QUESTION:**

- What is the Government of Canada doing to address homelessness?
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### **SUGGESTED RESPONSE:**

- **Homelessness is a complex issue and our government is committed to continuing to work with partners and communities to move towards the goal of eliminating chronic homelessness in Canada by 2030.**
- **The Government of Canada has invested nearly \$4 billion over nine years to address homelessness through Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.**
- **Reaching Home is having a significant impact. In its first three years, the program funded over 5,000 projects which helped place more than 46,000 people experiencing homelessness into more stable housing, and more than 87,000 people benefited from prevention and shelter diversion services.**
- **As part of the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, increased Reaching Home funding enabled the creation of over 26,000 temporary accommodation spaces and over 214,000 instances of placements into temporary accommodations, like hotels, were provided.**

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Government of Canada has invested nearly \$4 billion over nine years to address homelessness through Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. This includes an investment of \$562.2 million over two years announced in Budget 2022.

**Budget 2022:** On April 7, 2022, the Budget announced:

- an investment of \$562.2 million over two years through Reaching Home, beginning in 2024-25. This funding, which maintains the funding levels from 2023-24, is aimed at providing longer term certainty for the community organizations doing vitally important work across the country and to ensure they have the support they need to continue to prevent and address homelessness, as well as continue to make progress toward the Government's goal of ending chronic homelessness;
- \$18.1 million over three years, beginning in 2022-23, to conduct research to identify what measures are required to support communities in eliminating chronic homelessness. The aim of action research is to identify and document persistent barriers to preventing and reducing chronic homelessness experienced by communities and to test potential approaches to address persistent barriers and document successes and challenges. Projects will focus on three priority areas of study: collaboration, system alignment and data. Flexibility will remain for each individual community to identify specific priority areas, including placing a focus on specific populations through the co-development process; and,
- a commitment to eliminating chronic homelessness in Canada by 2030.

**Mandate letter priority - Federal Housing Advocate:** Your December 2021 mandate letter included a priority to appoint a Federal Housing Advocate. The role of the Federal Housing Advocate is to promote and protect housing rights in Canada by independently conducting research, consulting with individuals with lived experience of housing need and/or homelessness, working with vulnerable groups and civil society organizations as well as reviewing and assessing submissions on systemic housing issues under federal jurisdiction. Effective February 21, 2022, Marie-Josée Houle was appointed the Federal Housing Advocate, by the Governor in Council on your recommendation as Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, for a three year term.

## **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy**

As part of the National Housing Strategy, the Government launched Reaching Home in 2019. Reaching Home is a community-based program that provides funding directly to specific communities through the Designated Communities, Indigenous Homelessness, Rural and Remote Homelessness and Territorial Homelessness streams. Financial support is provided to 64 Designated Communities (urban centres), the three territorial capitals, 30 Indigenous communities and rural and remote communities across Canada to support their efforts in preventing and reducing homelessness.

It also makes funding available to Indigenous partners to support distinctions-based approaches to homelessness services. The Community Capacity and Innovation stream supports communities with the implementation of Coordinated Access and supports innovation in the sector.

- **Reaching Home in Quebec:** the Designated Communities stream and the Rural and Remote Homelessness stream are governed by a Canada-Quebec Agreement that reflects the jurisdictions and priorities of both governments. The Indigenous Homelessness stream is administered by Service Canada throughout the province. This stream is not under a Canada-Quebec Agreement.

The main objective of Reaching Home is to streamline access to housing and supports for people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, by coordinating local services to achieve community-wide outcomes using real-time data.

Between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2022, Reaching Home committed over \$992 million to support more than 5,000 projects to address the needs of individuals experiencing and at risk of homelessness. These projects focus on program activity areas such as: Basic Needs Services; Housing Placement; Prevention and Shelter Diversion; Economic Integration Services; and COVID-19 Temporary Accommodations.

Through these projects, over 87,000 people benefited from homelessness prevention services such as rental assistance and landlord/family mediation, and over 46,000 people have been placed into more stable housing. As part of the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Reaching Home enabled the creation of more than 26,000 temporary accommodation spaces to ensure physical distancing in shelters. Funding also provided access to income assistance, job training, education programs, and support to find employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of housing for many Canadians, particularly those who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. Access to safe and affordable housing, as well as support services, are prerequisites to participating fully in economic and social life, and to ensuring protection against disease transmission. With the help of emergency funding for the homelessness sector, communities have taken urgent action to try to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among those experiencing homelessness, including efforts to reduce overcrowding in shelters, establish isolation spaces and place individuals in hotels/motels.

During the pandemic, our Government invested a total of \$1.3 billion in additional funding for Reaching Home to support communities in addressing the needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. This includes \$394.2 million through the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, \$299.4 million in additional investments for 2021-22 announced in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement and \$567 million over two years, beginning in 2022-23, announced in Budget 2021. The funding will also support communities in implementing Coordinated Access and associated local data systems (e.g., unique identifier lists) and enhancing the availability of training and technical assistance.

Along with additional funding delivered through the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, Reaching Home introduced temporary flexibilities in its program directives, including:

- enabling communities to use Reaching Home funding for health and medical services; and,
- allowing Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness stream recipients to fund sub-projects located outside of their traditional service boundaries.

With the transition from emergency pandemic response to an ongoing focus on the prevention and reduction of homelessness, including chronic homelessness, these flexibilities were discontinued on March 31, 2023. This ensures that Reaching Home funded activities are optimally aligned with the intent of the program.