Ending the National Housing Crisis for 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

2SLGBTQ+ Canadians are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness, be at risk of homelessness, or in core housing need. Lack of housing safety and access impact 2SLGBTQ+ people throughout their housing journeys, as they face rampant discrimination in shelters, supportive housing, social housing, and amongst landlords, neighbours and the larger community.

In the context of this deeply eroded sense of safety, adequate 2SLGBTQ+ housing is not merely about a roof over one's head. Equally important is the creation of a culture of active 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, representation and affirmation.

Why Federal Action Matters

- Canada has an international duty to uphold a Right to Housing mandate and address inequity and discrimination for communities most vulnerable to housing instability.

- 2SLGBTQ+ communities experience higher rates of homelessness than the general population, particularly youth, trans people, refugees, seniors, and Indigenous and racialized community members.

- The housing vulnerability that 2SLGBTQ+ people and others face are deeply impacted by stagnant social assistance rates, the loosening or removal of key tenant protections, and market-driven financialization of housing that profoundly undermines the human right to housing.

- Federal investments in housing must demonstrate leadership and compel all levels of government to adopt a meaningful and progressive Right to Housing approach.

Housing is a human right and federal investments must hold all levels of government accountable to the right to safe, adequate and affordable housing for all.

2SLGBTQ+ Housing

While *Housing and Homelessness* is named as a key pillar in the 2022 Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, little action has been initiated to date. Similarly, while the 2017 National Housing Strategy (NHS) identifies 2SLGBTQIA+ people as a priority population, only 159 units had been committed for 2SLGBTQ+ people after eight years of the NHS' 10-year plan – the lowest of any priority group.

The disconnect between these two national strategies and the lack of action taken to date paints a stark picture of neglect on 2SLGBTQ+ housing priorities. With the announcement of the Build Canada Homes program, we see renewed opportunity to address this gap and prioritize culturally safe, supportive and affordable housing for 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Acknowledge 2SLGBTQ+ communities as a priority population in housing and homelessness by setting minimum targets to deliver a proportional number of 2SLGBTQ+-centred units, with a focus on intersectional vulnerabilities, including seniors, refugees, trans, gender diverse, Black and Indigenous housing needs.

2. Create a dedicated stream within the federal Reaching Home program to fund 2SLGBTQ+-led community organizations to provide inclusive, intersectional and affirming housing navigation and homelessness prevention supports, with an emphasis on meeting the specific needs of 2S, Trans and Gender Diverse people at risk of homelessness.

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A Proactive Right to Housing Approach

The affordable housing crisis disproportionately impacts 2SLGBTQ+ communities and others marginalized by systemic discrimination.

Government response has largely been to incentivize market developers to build more housing supply - but targeted action to protect low-income renters are still vague and lacking. Recommendations from the National Housing Council's review panel to address the Financialization of Rental Housing have yet to be implemented with no communicated plan to do so, and the Blueprint for Renters' Rights contains no accountability measures for provincial and territorial compliance.

More housing does not equal housing affordability. Currently, Canada is losing 11 affordable housing units for every new one built. To truly address the housing crisis, we must use policy to protect our current affordable housing stock from being re-developed and prioritize building new housing that is deeply affordable and accessible to the lowest income earners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a targeted action plan to address housing unaffordability for lowest income earners by creating 50,000 net new RGI units annually, consistently defining affordability at 30% of income, and preserving affordable housing stock, to ensure that all available housing funding meets the needs of those most vulnerable to homelessness.

2. Make housing funding for provinces and territories contingent on legislative reform that complies with the federal Blueprint for Renters Rights and a Right to Housing mandate, with specific emphasis on enacting rent control, vacancy control and addressing the financialization of housing.