

Housing For All – An Ontario Housing and Homelessness Plan

The OAEH is a group of key leaders, thinkers, subject matter experts and people with lived experience of housing precarity, poverty and homelessness, with a mission to mobilize a broad-based, grassroots civil society network to fully realize the long-term goal of ending homelessness in Canada. Our most important stakeholders are those who have experienced or are experiencing homelessness. We have an Ontario Provincial scope and our Steering Committee and partners are leaders in the homelessness, housing, and poverty sectors throughout Ontario.

The OAEH recognizes that the housing crisis in Ontario is as much a crisis of access to justice as it is access to housing. The reality is that for many in Ontario, secure, safe, and adequate housing will never be a reality until we collectively address root issues including systemic discrimination, poverty, unnecessary evictions, laws that criminalize homelessness, financialization of housing, violence against women and many others. The effect is that those systemic barriers have become deeply entrenched in our laws, policies and programs in Ontario and the OAEH wishes to address, revision and recommend a reconstruct of systems that have led to ongoing injustices.

Every local advocacy effort of OAEH members has the central goal of realizing the pursuit of ending homelessness and securing adequate, appropriate and affordable housing for all. We acknowledge that our local success is preceded by the work of those who have paved the way for strategies, best practices, and prevention methods on issues of poverty, housing precarity, affordable housing, and homelessness through many years of advocacy, particularly at grassroots levels. The OAEH has leveraged these successes to connect with communities across the province and have develop strategies that are impactful and will end homelessness in Ontario and beyond.

THE OAEH PLAN to END HOMELESSNESS and ADDRESS HOUSING INSECURITY and POVERTY IN ONTARIO

1. Provincial commitment to end homelessness in Ontario

- Restore goal of ending homelessness in Ontario (previously committed to end chronic homelessness by 2025)
- Expand provincial investment in homelessness responses funding to Service Managers through CHPI
- Maintain and expand the additional funding necessary for COVID responses with a focus on emergency responses to ending homelessness
- Focus on supporting dedicated funding for the unique needs of women, children and gender diverse people
- Focus on dedicated support for BIPOC communities
- Resume Homelessness Census for provincially funded communities
- Appropriate funding and supports for the integration of lived experts on homelessness and housing precarity in the creation of policy and program development

- GBA+ analysis must be embedded throughout policy, program and funding development

2. Implementation of best practices that are proven to support communities to end homelessness

- Upscale investment in Housing First in funded programs and services
- Integration of a Medical Model of Health for Housing and Homelessness clients (ACT/FACT)
- Implementation of streamlined data management in all communities through funding the creation, development, and maintenance of community By Name Lists and a Coordinated Access System
- Resume the provincial wide homelessness census
- Upscale, Increase and expand the funding directed to communities for the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit with a direct focus on people experiencing homelessness

3. Alleviation of Poverty through direct financial supports that won't stigmatize or erroneously exclude recipients through rules and conditions and must be implemented comprehensively alongside other efforts to end homelessness

- Guaranteed minimum income (Basic Income)
- Livable wage for OW and ODSP recipients
- Adequate income supports must meet cost of living standards in all communities in Ontario

4. Construction of new permanent affordable provincially owned and community based not for profit social housing and supportive housing units, and an enhancement of rental supports for low income Ontarians to address the housing and homelessness crisis. Extend the life of 260,000 affordable homes, invest in the creation of 30,000 supportive housing units, and 100,000 new affordable social housing units by 2030.

- Ensure the prioritization of housing investment to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Expand the Canada/Ontario Housing Benefit to better support the prevention and elimination of homelessness for over 300,000 rental households through direct funding to recipients and reduce barriers to accessing COHB.
- The creation of the Community Housing and Renewal Association to oversee social housing maintenance and development
- Affordable social housing units should address the need for deep affordable housing, with a focus on RGI units
- Eliminate barriers to access social housing (ie. arrears)

5. Implement measures to curtail the impacts of the financialization of rental housing markets by limiting the ability for large capital funds (Real Estate Income Trusts – REIT's) to purchase distressed rental housing assets. When investors buy up rental housing, they deepen the housing crisis by taking existing rental housing off the market or by increasing rents that make them unaffordable (renovictions). This leaves lower income

Ontarians facing evictions and unable to afford rent or to live in the communities they choose. Following the pandemic there is an added risk that such predatory purchases will accelerate as small asset owners are impacted by rental loss and forced to sell their properties.

- The Ontario government and communities to have first right refusal for government or non-profit housing providers to purchase multi-unit residential properties that are being sold for conversion to permanently affordable or supportive housing.
- Implementation of planning regulations and taxation measures to restrict or offset the loss of purpose-built rental housing.
- Creating a new funding envelope to enable non-profit housing providers to acquire properties that come on to the market before they are purchased by the predatory capital funds, This could include a vendor tax credit to create a financial incentive for the vendor of rental housing assets to sell the non-profit or government purchasers for conversion to permanent affordable or supportive housing.
- Implementation of a Vacancy Taxes provincially where funds are to be reinvested into community social housing maintenance and expansion
- Mechanisms to maintain and expand social housing for local communities must be accessible – Inclusionary Zoning, Vacancy Tax

6. Indigenous peoples are dramatically over-represented among people experiencing homelessness in Ontario. Indigenous People's who do not live on reserve or in-home communities require a distinct housing strategy. We join the call for an adequately resourced, distinction based, Urban and Rural Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Strategy that is developed and implemented by urban, rural, and northern indigenous peoples and housing service providers.

- Ensure adequate funding directed specifically to indigenous communities and for Indigenous housing and homelessness service providers
- Mandate culturally appropriate and traditional approaches within programs and practices in all provincially funded shelters and service providers
- Provide community housing and not for profit housing investment (capital and operations) in Indigenous communities and for Indigenous organizations in rural and urban centres.

7. Implementation of the right to housing legislation and structure, mirrored to the Federal governments Right to Housing legislation implemented through the National Housing Strategy Act. Implementation of Right to Housing legislation will be put in place to resolve inequities and systemic and structural breakdowns that contribute to homelessness and housing needs. Immediate measures to implement the right to housing.

- Legislate the Right to Housing in Ontario
- The creation and appointment of a strong and well-resourced and affective Housing Advocate, and Ontario Housing Council
- Ensuring human rights oversight and accountability in developing and implementing by including the involvement of persons with lived experience of homelessness, and

communities directly affected in the development, implementation and monitoring housing investments and homelessness responses.

- Monitoring the impacts of government initiatives using desegregated housing and homelessness data, using a GBA+ lens, and race and ethnicity-based analysis to ensure housing investments and homelessness initiatives are reaching the intended populations

8. Making renting more affordable and giving renters more security in Ontario

- Eliminate the financial incentive for landlords to squeeze out tenants and raise rent by re-implementing rent control for all rental units and eliminate vacancy decontrol.
- End Renovictions and landlords own-use evictions. Stop landlords using legal loopholes to seek unfair evictions, rent increases for repairs or renovations, or those who evict tenants unfairly.
- Overhaul the Landlord Tenant Board (LTB): Immediately Increase funding for community legal services to ensure access to legal processes. Return to in-person hearings as soon as possible. Hire competent and impartial adjudicators to address the backlog, stop the delays that prevent renters from receiving true justice on critical issues from poor living conditions, renovictions, and human rights atrocities such as racism and discriminations.
- Mandate universal design building codes that address the needs of all renters, including persons with disabilities
- Creation of a oversight body (Housing Ombudsman) to ensure citizens who are renting properties have and receive equity and justice

9. Prevention methods work to ensure people don't experience homelessness. Prevention is addressing the policies and strategies that impact homelessness at the structural and systemic levels as well as early intervention practices that address individual and institutional factors

- Address systemic racism, colonialism, and discrimination within the housing and homelessness system, funding, and programing
- Direct and ongoing funding for municipal housing banks to address rental arrears and housing loss prevention
- Early intervention protocols for discharge planning for people aging out of care, exiting corrections, and discharged from hospitals
- Immediate housing and service supports for people exiting childcare
- Immediate housing and service supports for people exiting corrections
- Immediate housing and service supports for people discharged from hospital and medical care
- Integration of health and mental health supports (including addictions, and hoarding) for housing sector and housing providers for people at risk of homelessness and in precarious housing situations
- Immediate and ongoing financial, housing, and health supports for people experiencing gender-based violence
- Consistent and ongoing availability of housing stability grants and loans provincially

10. Rural Remote Communities need additional funding and supports as the risk of homelessness in rural and remote communities is extremely high due to a greater likelihood of low incomes, higher costs of living and the lack of social housing and supports relative to urban areas. In addition, the limited availability of services means that people are less likely to find pathways out of homelessness.

- One significant challenge in rural and remote communities is homelessness. Unfortunately, amongst emerging provincial priorities and new investments, rural and remote homelessness continues to receive little focus from major policy and funding mechanisms.
- There is clear and growing evidence that homeless and at-risk individuals migrate or are sent to urban centres in search of support services. The result of this migration is greater isolation, detachment from natural supports, exposure to new risk factors, and an overburdening of services in urban centres.
- Failing to invest in solutions to address rural and remote homelessness is a lost opportunity to make investments in prevention. This lack of attention results in a more traumatic path for individuals affected by homelessness and, in the end, creates a need for more expensive interventions later. It also strips rural and remote communities of future employees, business owners, and citizens.