



NEWS RELEASE

Coalition of Poverty and Housing Advocates Call for a Rights-Based Approach to Addressing Poverty

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OTTAWA - A group of leading anti-poverty, housing, and homelessness advocates today held a press conference to call on the federal government to adopt a rights-based approach in its forthcoming National Housing Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategies. The call comes from the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the *Dignity for All* campaign co-led by Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Leilani Farha.

At the press conference, the coalition stated its support for designing the National Poverty Reduction and the National Housing Strategies (NHS) using a human rights framework. Regarding housing, the organizations are calling for complementary legislative and programmatic initiatives that would respect, protect, promote and fulfil the right to adequate housing as guaranteed in international human rights treaties committed to by Canada. This legislative amendment could be in the form of amending current housing-related legislation such as the National Housing Act, or creating new legislation.

The coalition is also calling for the forthcoming Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS) to be comprehensive, based in international human rights standards, adequately funded in Budget 2018, and to be developed with ongoing meaningful inclusion of people with lived experience of poverty. In 2015, the *Dignity for All* campaign created a model national anti-poverty plan that addresses six key policy areas, including income security, housing, health, food security, jobs and employment, and early childhood education and care.

“At a minimum, a legislative process should enshrine the need for the federal government to implement, properly fund, and continually update a National and Indigenous Housing Strategy, and to create and publicly report on indicators to measure the progress towards the right to housing for all people living in Canada,” said Stéphan Corriveau, Board President of CHRA. “A legislative guarantee of a National Housing Strategy and an Indigenous Housing Strategy referencing Canada’s human rights obligations would be one tool to ensure ongoing, continuous funding for housing for Canada’s most vulnerable populations”.

“It is essential for Canada to develop and implement a rights-based anti-poverty plan without delay for the 4.8 million people across the country who are living in poverty,” said Joe Gunn, Executive Director of Citizens for Public Justice. “We have heard from people from coast-to-coast-to-coast and have heard a broad call for national leadership to eradicate poverty.”

“A human rights approach to the CPRS and NHS is the most effective framework if Canada expects to actually address the socio-economic disadvantage suffered by millions who are homeless, inadequately housed, and living in poverty. It would also ensure people could exercise their rights through new accountability mechanisms for all levels of government – a feature missing from current policies on poverty and housing,” said Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing and Executive Director of Canada Without Poverty.

“The right to housing is a cornerstone of a free society,” says Tim Richter, President & CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. “Homeless people in Canada are not free, they’re trapped in largely dysfunctional systems that breed dependence on others for food, shelter, safety - and there can certainly be no right to ‘life, liberty and security of the person’ if your health is compromised by the lack of adequate housing, your medical needs go untreated or you’re subjected to abnormally high levels of violence. Adequate housing is a basic precondition upon which our other rights are built and must be embedded in our National Housing Strategy and the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy.”

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