



**Notes pour le discours d'ouverture du 50<sup>e</sup> congrès de l'ACHRU, 25 avril 2018 par M. Stéphan Corriveau, président**

M. le ministre Duclos,  
M. le secrétaire parlementaire Vaughan,  
Mme Benson, critique du NPD en habitation,  
Mme Vecchio, critique du PC en habitation,  
M. Watson, maire d'Ottawa,  
M. Ballantyne, président du conseil de la SCHL,  
Mme Abbott, membre du conseil de la SCHL  
M. Siddall, président et premier dirigeant de la SCHL

Membres, amis et partenaires de l'ACHRU

I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin nation.	Je voudrais débiter en reconnaissant que nous nous réunissons sur le territoire traditionnel et non cédé de la nation algonquine.
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It's been my pleasure over the past 2 years to serve as your Board President. As Jeff said, it's certainly not been a slow time for CHRA. For the past 3 years, pre-dating the last federal election, CHRA has fought to convince the federal government to develop and invest in a National Housing Strategy that puts the interests of the most vulnerable at its core. The results of those efforts have been plain to see. The 2017 Budget announced investments of over \$11 billion in social and affordable housing and homelessness programs. This was followed in November 2017 by the announcement by Minister Duclos and Prime Minister Trudeau of a National Housing Strategy, a \$40-billion plan to shore up social and

community housing throughout Canada. This Strategy also included the government’s commitment to tackle the right to housing in law, a step never seriously taken by Canadian governments before.

For that I want to thank CMHC, Adam Vaughan, all supportive MPs, and particularly Minister Duclos and his staff for turning many of our ideas into concrete actions, and for always taking the time to listen, even when we didn’t agree. And once more I want to tell them that CHRA is totally committed to collaborate and support the implementation of what has been announced.

Ladies and gentlemen, let’s give them a solid round of applause for what they’ve done.

But this work is far from completed. We’ll talk more about that latter.

<p>For now, let’s first celebrate the fact that this is CHRA’s 50th year.</p>	<p>Pour l’instant, célébrons le 50e anniversaire de l’ACHRU.</p>
<p>One cannot help but be amazed by the evolution of this organization from a mere committee of individuals to the largest, most representative all-encompassing structure in Canada’s community and social housing sector.</p>	<p>On ne peut s’empêcher d’être surpris par l’évolution de cette organisation qui est partie d’un simple comité rassemblant quelques individus pour devenir la structure la plus vaste et la plus représentative du secteur du logement social et communautaire au Canada.</p>
<p>From the smallest non-profit housing provider to the 13 provincial and territorial Housing authorities, from cities to co-ops, you’ll find them all at home in CHRA.</p>	<p>Du plus petit fournisseur de logements sans but lucratif aux 13 autorités provinciales et territoriales, des villes aux coopératives, ils sont tous chez eux à l’ACHRU.</p>

From Coast to Coast to Coast, in French or in English, dedicated to Indigenous individuals or newly established families, to women escaping violence or kids in search of a place in this world, to seniors with modest means or people challenged by mental and physical limitations, for those hit by poverty or thrown on the street looking for a shelter, you find the people trying to resolve those situations here. You are here, and that is, by itself an achievement worthy of note.

Reaching this point was not an easy task, and if I can stand here before you today, it's only because, for five decades, dedicated people have made it possible by generously offering their time, skills, knowledge and competence to the movement. And they deserve our recognition for that.

But, the ultimate accomplishment of these 50 years is not so much the technical expertise we've mustered. It is the heart, the collective heart of the people and communities that have decided that every person living on this land deserves the right to a proper, safe, adequate and affordable place to call home.

For half a century, CHRA has fought for the idea that Canadian society cannot thrive if the people within it are not able to properly shelter themselves from the hardships of this land; if families cannot find safe harbour in a place where they can nurture the love for their child, their elders, their partners; a base from which they can develop their skills through education, enhance their contribution to the economy via their work, contribute to society by engaging in public debate ... This is what the Right to housing entails. This is, ultimately, the mission of non-profit, public and co-op housing.

<p>Enough nostalgia, let's focus on the challenges ahead and, frankly, use the opportunity that we have in this room: a Minister, a Parliamentary Secretary and the CMHC Chair and the CEO. All of whom are open to dialogue, have exceptional abilities to analyze and a huge legitimacy because of their impeccable track records.</p>	<p>Assez de nostalgie, concentrons-nous sur les défis à venir et, franchement, profitons de l'occasion d'avoir avec nous un ministre, un secrétaire parlementaire et les deux présidents de la SCHL. Des gens ouverts au dialogue, qui ont des capacités d'analyse exceptionnelles et une légitimité énorme grâce à leurs antécédents impeccables.</p>
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With all due respect, It pains me to say that the National Housing Strategy unveiled last fall can only be considered as such insofar as we see it as a starting point that should be rely on to attain much greater objectives.

Yes, we have some money to spend, we have some goals in terms of number of housing units we want to build or rehabilitate, we even have objectives for how many people we want to shelter. So, one can be highly positive that the situation will be far better in 10 years than it would have been without the commitments of the last 2 years. But one has to take into consideration the fact that we are 25 years behind schedule. What has been announced in the last 24 months it is not enough.

What we have today is essentially an emergency plan to stop destroying the assets we've built collectively from 1960 till 1995 and, I will say it again, we are grateful for that. Minister Duclos, Parliamentary Secretary Vaughan, Mr. Siddall, I've told you so several times in private and in public. Your actions and commitments are of high value. We were on the Titanic and the previous skipper was aiming straight for the iceberg. In a very few years we would have lost several hundred thousands affordable houses, putting as many people in desperate straits, provoking havoc, pain, misery and increasing poverty for the

tenants in Non-Profit, Public and Co-op housing. Minister Duclos, you and your government made the right call and are about to save the day.

But if seeing the iceberg and mobilizing the crew (that is us!) are essential first steps, it does not mean the job is done yet. At this point a real concern must be raised before you.

This plan must have a central and primary goal: preserving the affordability and the adequacy of the existing social and community housing stock, and as much as possible, expand its capacity.

As I speak to you now, I am really worried that the affordability preoccupation is being sidelined to achieve other worthy goals such as reducing our environmental footprint.

<p>It seems odd to us that of all federal housing action, only the social housing and community sector has to meet extremely high environmental requirements.</p>	<p>Il nous semble étrange que de toute l'action fédérale en habitation, seul le secteur de l'habitation sociale et communautaire soit tenu de respecter des exigences environnementales extrêmement élevées.</p>
<p>Meanwhile with its mortgage insurance, CMHC is facilitating urban sprawl to the tune of tens of billions of dollars a year. At the same time, the government is providing billions of Capital gain tax exemptions without any ecological requirement. While the National Building Code continues to authorize the construction of inefficient building. While there is no</p>	<p>Alors qu'année après année, la SCHL facilite avec ses assurances hypothécaires l'étalement urbain à coup de dizaines de milliards de dollars et que le gouvernement accorde des milliards de \$ d'exemption fiscale en gain de capital pour les résidences principales, et ce sans aucune considération écologique. Alors que le Code national du bâtiment continue d'autoriser la construction d'immeubles peu efficaces. Alors que rien ne laisse</p>

<p>reason to believe that the housing allowance announced in the Strategy will require tenants to rent only "green" apartments, all housing interventions for the poor done by us must be framed by exemplary environmental projects, even if that mean giving up on the financial affordability of these dwellings. This approach undermines the overall objectives of the Strategy, which is precisely to house the most vulnerable people, particularly in economic terms.</p>	<p>présager que l'allocation logement prévue dans la stratégie exigera des locataires de louer uniquement des logements « verts », on impose en préalable à toute intervention en logement pour les pauvres des projets exemplaires au plan environnemental, quitte à sacrifier l'abordabilité financière de ces logements. Cette approche met à mal l'ensemble des objectifs de la Stratégie qui est précisément de loger les personnes les plus vulnérables, en particulier au plan économique.</p>
<p>If the government wants to act on climate change, it can count on us as allies, but it cannot seriously believe that the \$ 1.5 billion a year it spends on the strategy will both meet the needs in terms of affordability and meet the Paris objectives, while at the same time devoting tens of billions to private housing without any environmental or affordability requirements.</p>	<p>Si le gouvernement veut agir sur les changements climatiques, il peut compter sur nous comme des alliés, mais il ne peut pas sérieusement croire que la somme de 1,5 milliards par année qu'il consacre à la stratégie pourra à la fois répondre aux besoins en termes d'abordabilité et aux objectifs de Paris, surtout si, parallèlement, il consacre des dizaines de milliards pour l'habitation privée sans aucune exigence environnementale ou d'abordabilité.</p>

The resources committed for the next 10 years by your government in our sector are significant and well appreciated, but they are not sufficient to fix Canada's environmental challenges, nor to fulfill the need for affordable housing of

Canadians in need that don't already have the chance to benefit from the community and social-housing sector action.

Back to the Titanic analogy. We need all hands on deck to avoid the iceberg and crashing our 550 000 housing units. We can't, at this stage of the process, with the means we have, commit seriously to anything else than saving the boat.

But I guess we will agree, avoiding the iceberg, as essential as it is, is not a satisfying objective by itself. What we want is to reach safe harbour. So we must also turn our attention toward that.

Ultimately, to reach safe harbour means one thing: making sure every single individual in this land has a safe, adequate and affordable place to call home. The announced Bill on the right to housing that should be tabled in the coming months must create the condition to reach that harbour. This Bill is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape the future of housing in Canada. Let's make sure it includes all the components Canada committed to implement on the international stage by ratifying several documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or, more recently, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In practical terms, it means we've got to give ourselves the legal and financial resources we need to reverse the ever-growing gap between housing costs and income for most Canadians.

We need to do that because tens of thousands of Canadians with mental illness – including large number of veterans – still end up homeless, thousands of women fleeing violence can't find a safe place, huge number of kids still grow up in unsuitable apartments, and urban working poor and seniors are constantly being kicked out of their neighborhoods by gentrification.

And most of all, serious action need to be taken on the front of Indigenous peoples housing conditions. That single issue would be enough to make the

whole thing go belly up. There is no group in Canada that is more in need and deserving of a clear, unfettered, large and consistent commitment from the federal government.

Last year, I made it clear that there can be no National Housing Strategy without an Indigenous Housing Strategy. That statement remains as true today.

<p>Although we were pleased to see funds set aside in the 2018 Budget for Metis, Inuit, and First Nations housing, as well as by the reference to urban Indigenous people in the recent communiqué on the multilateral Federal- provincial framework, we have yet to see a government-wide urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing strategy.</p>	<p>Bien que nous ayons été heureux de voir dans le budget 2018 des fonds pour le logement à l'intention des Métis, des Inuits et des Premières Nations, ainsi que par la référence aux Autochtones vivant en milieu urbain dans le récent communiqué sur le cadre multilatéral fédéral-provincial, nous attendons toujours une stratégie gouvernementale en logement pour les Autochtones des régions urbaines, rurales et du Nord.</p>
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With over 70% of Indigenous peoples in Canada living in urban and rural centres, and who face hugely disproportionate problems of access to safe and affordable housing, it is clear why an urban and rural strategy is so vital.

Whether they live on reserves or anywhere else, Indigenous people have been unfairly treated on a large number of issues, and housing is certainly one of the most spectacular. There is no way Canadian society can seriously claim to be on a journey to reconciliation with Indigenous people and nations without a major shift of policies and resources allocation. Currently and for the last 2 decades, the Federal government made no bones and felt no urge for long and extensive consultation before putting more Indigenous people in prison every year than the number of houses it has help build for them. It doesn't flinch either when



indigenous kids are being removed from their families because their housing condition are deemed unsuitable by social services.

Of course, when one happens to fit simultaneously into 2, 3 or more unlucky categories in Canada's "housing lottery," one might be in for an even tougher ride. For example, if you are both a woman and Indigenous, you could find yourself among the case studies of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women Commission, since a very high proportion of the reported victims had a history of homelessness.

But, quite incredibly, everything in this picture is not dark and depressing.

Despite blatant racism and systemic disadvantages, Indigenous individuals and groups in urban, rural and northern areas have been developing a number of resources to help themselves and the most fragile members of their communities.

<p>Raised from the community for the community, these housing providers have gathered within CHRA's Indigenous Caucus to coordinate, improve actions and push for a better defined and more comprehensive program from the state.</p>	<p>Nés de la communauté pour la communauté, ces fournisseurs de logement sont rassemblés au sein du Caucus autochtone de l'ACHRU pour se coordonner, améliorer leurs actions et faire pression pour une action gouvernementale mieux définie et plus cohérente.</p>
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I am now publicly calling on the Canadian government to come forward and engage with the Caucus at a scale and a speed that respects the rights, the needs, and the will of Indigenous people. They've organized themselves into genuine Indigenous housing providers and want to work, hand-in-hand with you, to set up and implement a plan that would end the shameful situation we are

facing today. The National Housing Strategy cannot be acknowledged as such without that condition being properly met.

Not to answer this call would be tragic socially, economically and politically both for the individuals who need and deserve this attention, but also for Canadian society as a whole, because a society is only as good and as prosperous as the most disenfranchised group within it. And it is not rocket science to figure out who's currently in this position in Canada.

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I've largely overrun the time allocated, so I will now summarize.

A house is where you plan your journey into the world as a kid (and even when you're grown up), it is where you go to heal your wounds, gather your strength to go forward and build your life, your family and your community.

You, the people in this room, play a key role in making this possible for hundreds of thousands of Canadians. But hundreds of thousands more are still homeless or living in slums, exposed to abuse, left alone, feeling abandoned, dangerously at risk of giving up on hope and on their own dignity. And each time one more person gives up on those, it's all of us and the Canadian society as a whole that needs to work harder, to pull stronger. In the last two years we've stop retreating, but victory is not yet at hand.

Our battle is one of joy, love and light against depression, indifference and darkness. "Leaving no one behind" is not just a slogan for the Marines, it is how civilizations advance. And you, the community and social-housing sector with our allies and partners, are on the front line of this battle. We shall fight, and we shall win!

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On a personal note, I'm pleased to announce that the CHRA Board of Directors has agreed to allow me to serve one additional year as Board Chair. And so to

our elected officials here today, I'm afraid to say that I'll be around for another year, so you'll continue to hear me echo these same messages for some time still.

CHRA, for 50 years, have been home to the sector. A sector that has never given up on its responsibility toward these individuals and communities that are left behind. Historically, we have made a difference, you have made a difference, but most importantly, I am confident that we will make a difference in the next 50 years, because our collective will to build a better future for the people of this land cannot be defeated as long as we stand together. And I am sure we will do just that.

I want to thank all of you for attending Congress this year, members, sponsors, government officials, CHRA board and staff. I hope you enjoy your time at Congress.

Learn, network, inspire and be inspired, engage, and most importantly, laugh. That's what home is, and we want you to feel at home here this week.

Thank you all and have a great Congress!	Merci à tous et bon congrès!
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Stéphan Corriveau, président