

Policy Options for an Indigenous Housing Strategy

Indigenous Caucus Day

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Policy Options for an Indigenous Housing

The purpose of the paper was to identify and build on existing research to develop policy and program options for a distinct Indigenous housing strategy



Methodology

The process of developing the paper involved:

- A review of literature
- Development of policy options
- Evaluation of policy options
- Development of proposed policy directions
- Refinement of proposed policy directions based on feedback from Oversight Committee



Existing Indigenous Housing Portfolio

Key Issues

- The majority of the housing stock created under the Urban Native housing program will be at risk as the long term funding agreements expire
- Many Indigenous housing providers lack the scale address transitional issues in a meaningful way



Existing Indigenous Housing Portfolio

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Provide rental assistance to support no net loss of RGI units that can be stacked on project rents set at either breakeven or some other more realistic level
2. Provide capital funding to address capital repair requirements and support regeneration of Indigenous housing
3. Provide resources to strengthen the Indigenous housing provider network, including supporting the establishment of a broad group affiliation structure that would provide centralized support services



Existing Indigenous Housing Portfolio

Proposed Policy Directions (continued)

4. Provide resources to strengthen expertise and capacity in strategic asset management
5. Review and reform current rent and RGI subsidy structure



New Indigenous Affordable Rental Housing

Key Issues

- Affordable, adequate and suitable housing is a persistent issue among Indigenous populations in Canada
- Unmet housing needs among Indigenous Canadians has significant individual and societal impacts
- There is a need for assistance with capacity building in some under serviced, high need areas of the country to develop new affordable rental housing



New Indigenous Affordable Rental Housing

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Provide capital funding to support the development of self-sustaining new Indigenous rental housing at moderate rents as well as additional up front capital funding and/or ongoing rental assistance to allow for higher targeting of low income Indigenous households



Tenant Supports

Key Issues

- Some tenants in Indigenous housing do not have experience with housing maintenance or budgeting or face other barriers to housing, and require additional supports to maintain their tenancies



Tenant Supports

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Provide funding for partnerships between Indigenous service organizations and Indigenous housing providers to deliver culturally based support services in Indigenous housing provider units as well as other housing units



Affordable Homeownership

Key Issues

- Homeownership rates among Indigenous peoples are lower than non-Indigenous households, and even among households with financial stability, homeownership often remains elusive



Affordable Homeownership

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Develop an Indigenous specific homeownership intermediary approach



Homelessness

Key Issues

- Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented in the homeless population
- Significant gaps remain in services for Indigenous people, and culturally-appropriate responses to Indigenous homelessness, in particular, are underdeveloped in many communities
- Funding for homelessness services has been primarily directed to larger communities, and existing funding levels and short term commitments to funding create some challenges in sustaining homelessness services



Homelessness

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Expand the Indigenous component of HPS
2. Mandate specific targets within the other HPS funding streams prevent and reduce Indigenous homelessness
3. Promote the importance of cultural safety and competency among mainstream organizations and agencies
4. Place stronger emphasis on community planning and service collaboration
5. Establish and fund concrete strategies for preventing Indigenous homelessness



Funding Distribution

Key Issues

- Finding suitable housing is an existing challenge for many urban and rural Indigenous individuals and families and housing needs of Indigenous peoples will continue to grow
- Funding targeted for Indigenous housing has been short term and unpredictable
- In some cases, Indigenous organizations have been unable to successfully compete in mainstream funding competitions to secure funding for Indigenous housing, although there are recent contrasting examples
- Inconsistent involvement of Indigenous people has resulted in policies that have not always reflected the concerns of Indigenous people



Funding Distribution

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Establish a permanent urban and rural Indigenous Housing Trust
2. All investments through the National Housing Strategy should include explicit Indigenous targets



Additional Issues and Considerations

Key Issues

- Discriminatory attitudes of a variety of actors in the housing market create barriers to Indigenous persons accessing housing
- There is a lack of coordination is at many levels leading to gaps and inefficiencies in the provision of services



Additional Issues and Considerations

Proposed Policy Directions

1. Support public education of Aboriginal housing issues and anti-racism
2. Fill data and knowledge gaps that undermine our ability to understand and act upon Indigenous housing need and help communities and service providers implement best practice strategies to address Indigenous homelessness
3. Ensure a coordinated approach to Indigenous programs within the federal government, and integration of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada policy with housing policy



Thank you!

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