

Terms of Reference – CHRA Indigenous Caucus

Adopted 2013, Revised 2019

As the national association representing the social, non-profit and affordable housing sector in Canada, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association is deeply committed to improving the state of Indigenous housing in Canada. CHRA's mission is to strengthen the community housing sector for the benefit of all, including Indigenous housing. CHRA affirms that all Indigenous people have the right to safe, quality, adequate and affordable housing, regardless of where they live in Canada, and that housing is a core component of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Housing forms the foundation for vibrant Indigenous communities and remains a positive determinant of health and mental wellbeing, education, early child development, protection of women and children from violence, and employment, and reduces the instances of criminal recidivism, substance abuse, and homelessness.

Vision

CHRA's Indigenous Caucus vision is to serve as the authoritative voice and representative body for urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing providers and organizations in Canada.

Membership

The CHRA Indigenous Caucus represents those CHRA members in good standing who self-identify as Indigenous, AND/OR those CHRA members who have an understanding of Indigenous housing and homelessness issues, including Indigenous tenant support, building operations, and cultural issues, and who declare they wish to be members of the Caucus. The primary focus of the Caucus will be Indigenous housing related issues in urban, rural, and northern settings.

The Caucus shall have a majority of members who self-identify as Indigenous.

A list of the Caucus membership will be updated annually following the annual CHRA membership renewal period.

Caucus Chairperson

The Director, Indigenous Communities representative on the CHRA Board of Directors shall act as the Caucus Chair. The term is limited to two (2) consecutive three-year terms, as governed by CHRA's By-Laws. The Caucus may also select a Vice-Chair.

Meetings

The Indigenous Caucus will meet in person at least once per year. This meeting will typically coincide with the CHRA Annual Congress. Non-Caucus members are invited to attend meetings, but only Caucus members have voting privileges.

Where decisions need to be made by the full Caucus, the Caucus will use a consensus-based process to reach decisions. If no consensus is possible, a secret vote will take place, with decisions made by a majority vote approach. In the event of a tie, the Caucus Chair will cast the deciding vote.

Responsibilities:

Recognizing the diversity in cultural and traditional perspectives, and in order to support improvement in all Indigenous housing conditions in Canada, particularly in urban, rural and northern settings, as a primary focus the Caucus shall:

1. Advise the CHRA Board on Indigenous perspectives on housing policy, program and advocacy issues.
2. Advise the CHRA Board on strategies and policies for safe, affordable and adequate housing for Indigenous people.
3. Inform the CHRA Board and assist in educating the federal government about specific Indigenous issues and cultural distinctness and identify opportunities for developing cultural awareness in a housing context.
4. Identify and share best practices in relation to new construction, traditional and non-traditional financing mechanisms, surplus retention, operating agreements (including expiry of) etc. with a view to highlighting them as appropriate at CHRA Congress and other educational programs.
5. Develop consistent messages for the CHRA Board regarding Indigenous housing needs, including Indigenous homelessness, while recognizing the uniqueness and diversity of each community.
6. Provide advice in CHRA conference planning to develop forums, workshops or networking events for the whole of CHRA membership to learn about Indigenous issues, challenges and success.
7. Respond to requests for information, program and policy advice as requested by the CHRA Board.
8. Recommend capacity building initiatives consistent with the needs of Indigenous housing providers.
9. Recommend data collection and research projects that explore Indigenous housing best practice, housing needs, links to related outcomes such health and education within Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Caucus Working Group

The operational affairs of the Indigenous Caucus will be overseen by an Indigenous Caucus Working Group. The Caucus Working Group will be comprised of representatives from the Indigenous Caucus. The Director, Indigenous Communities on the CHRA Board of Directors will serve as the Working Group Chair.

The President of CHRA and the Director, Indigenous Communities are ex officio members of the Working Group.

Composition and Selection

The Working Group shall be comprised of no fewer than 8 members, and no greater than 13 members, which do not include the Indigenous Caucus Chair and CHRA President (who are ex officio).

The members of the Working Group shall be selected from members of the Indigenous Caucus.

Members of the Indigenous Caucus Working Group will be elected by secret ballot by members of the Caucus. There will be an open period of nominations where members of the Caucus are invited to submit nominations. Members of the Working Group are selected for a 3-year term.

Amongst the members of the Working Group, there will be at least 1 member from the following regions: BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic, and the North.

Responsibilities

It will be the responsibility of the Indigenous Caucus Working Group to provide ongoing oversight to the activities of the Caucus. They will meet on a regular basis to provide regular oversight into Caucus activities. These oversight functions may include:

- Development of Caucus policies and positions
- Identification of tactics to pursue Caucus objectives and goals.
- Consideration of requests from the CHRA Board of Directors
- Oversight of Caucus initiatives and projects
- Development of annual Caucus workplan, including identification of resource requirements

Quorum

Quorum shall be a majority of the members of the Caucus Working Group.

Reporting

A report will be delivered by the Director, Indigenous Communities on the activities of the Caucus and the Caucus Working Group at each CHRA Board of Directors meeting.

The Caucus Working Group will provide a report on its activities at least once per year to the Indigenous Caucus, and will keep the Caucus updated on developments throughout the year.

Communication

The Caucus Chair shall serve as the primary spokesperson for the Caucus for the purposes of public communications. The Caucus Chair may delegate that responsibility to the CHRA President, CHRA Executive Director, or other member of the Caucus Working Group.

Caucus communications shall reflect positions taken by the Caucus.

Resource Support

CHRA will provide staff support to the Indigenous Caucus and the Indigenous Caucus Working Group in the form of:

- Administrative support to meetings, i.e., logistics, preparation of agenda, background materials, and minutes.
- Organization of the annual Caucus Day.
- Ongoing staff and financial support related to the advocacy, research, communication, and other functions identified by the Caucus and Working Group.

The Caucus Working Group will be asked on an annual basis to develop an Annual Workplan that coincides with the development of the CHRA budgetary cycle. It will be the responsibility of the CHRA Executive Director to ensure that the resources are available to implement the workplan and to include an appropriate budgetary allocation in the CHRA Budget to fund Caucus activities.

As approved by the CHRA Board of Directors on September 11, 2019.