



# CHRA Congress Session Series 2023

## Moving Forward: Exploring National Housing Strategy 2.0

### SUMMARY AUTHOR

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### MODERATOR

**Ray Sullivan**, Executive Director, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association

### SESSION PANELISTS

**Jacques Beaudoin**, Director of Public and Legal Affairs, Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation

**Marie-Josée Houle**, Federal Housing Advocate

**Margaret Pfoh**, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Management Association

**Steve Pomeroy**, Industry Professor of Canadian Housing Policy, McMaster University and Principal Consultant, Focus Consulting

**Tim Richter**, Founder, President & CEO, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH)



**Canadian Housing and  
Renewal Association**  
A Home for the Housing Sector



**BC HOUSING**



## A place to call home

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### THIS SUMMARY

This is a summary of the Congress session 'Moving Forward: Exploring National Housing Strategy 2.0' which took place on April 19, 2023 during the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association's 55th National Congress on Housing and Homelessness in Winnipeg, MB.

The session explored what a renewed version of the National Housing Strategy (NHS) might look like in the wake of higher interest rates, increasing construction and labour costs, and diminishing federal dollars for the creation and renewal of affordable housing.

**In this session, panelists were asked the following questions around how to improve the National Housing Strategy so that we can realize our goal of ensuring that everyone has a home that they can afford and that meets their needs:**

**What are the successes of the National Housing Strategy?**

**What is the appropriate scope of a new National Housing Strategy?**

**If you were designing the National Housing Strategy today, what are two things that would be different?**

**What do you think should be the one top priority over the next year when it comes to housing affordability in Canada?**

**The 2023 Federal Budget did not have a lot of extra money for affordable housing, and we are possibly heading into another election in 2024. If we need to refresh the National Housing Strategy, what is the process? How do we get there?**

These questions generated a multi-faceted discussion in which several key themes emerged, including:

The Right to Housing  
For Indigenous, By Indigenous  
A Multi-Jurisdictional Approach

Systems Approach  
Reallocation of Funds  
Engagement with the  
Community Housing Sector

## The Right to Housing

Tim Richter of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness called for a re-writing of the National Housing Strategy around the right to housing, prioritizing those in core housing need. Seeing as a lot of the housing that is being created through the NHS is not affordable to those in core housing need, he suggested starting a redesign from the people we're trying to serve, ultimately giving them more power over their housing.



## For Indigenous, By Indigenous<sup>3</sup>

Margaret Pfoh of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association pointed out that the 2017 National Housing Strategy was missing an Indigenous focus. She emphasized the need for 'For Indigenous, By Indigenous' housing solutions to ensure a sense of belonging within communities. Pfoh also suggested scaling up and deploying the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy before 2024, and that NICH be the organization to implement it. Richter spoke to the monumental shift that the Government of Canada is now beginning the process of co-designing and funding Indigenous leadership.

2. The National Right to Housing Network, no title, image, Housing Rights, n.d., <https://housingrights.ca/>

3. NICH, no title, image, NICH, n.d., <https://nichi.ca/>



## A Multi-Jurisdictional Approach

Jacques Beaudoin of Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation pointed out the long-standing coordination challenges between the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, saying that it's "the complexity of Canada".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Steve Pomeroy of McMaster University and Focus Consulting put forward that the programs of the NHS belittled the provincial role by limiting its involvement in their design and delivery. Richter argued that each level of government is waiting for the others to make the first move, and emphasized the need for the government to take collective action.

### THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



## Systems Approach

*"We can't address homelessness or core housing need if we don't understand the whole system."*<sup>6</sup>

*- Tim Richter, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness*

Pomeroy stated that the NHS failed to be both comprehensive and cohesive, pointing out that if we direct all our resources only to the most vulnerable, this puts pressure on the rental market from middle-income folks who can't afford to buy a home. Richter stated that he doesn't think there will ever be enough government funding to fix the housing crisis, and so we need to leverage the private sector. Adding on to Richter's point, Pfoh advocated that we also should focus on market unit housing, which would allow people to move through the housing continuum.

4. Jacques Beaudoin, "Moving Forward: Exploring National Housing Strategy 2.0" (Panel discussion, 55<sup>th</sup> National Congress on Housing and Homelessness, Winnipeg, MB, April 19, 2023).

5. Housing Help Northumberland, *The Housing Continuum*, image, Northumberland.ca, n.d., <https://www.northumberland.ca/en/housing-help/housing-continuum.aspx>

6. Tim Richter, "Moving Forward: Exploring National Housing Strategy 2.0" (Panel discussion, 55<sup>th</sup> National Congress on Housing and Homelessness, Winnipeg, MB, April 19, 2023).

## Reallocation of Funds

*“Twelve [affordable] units are lost for every one unit that we build.”*

*- Steve Pomeroy, McMaster University and Focus Consulting*

Both Federal Housing Advocate Marie-Josée Houle and Pomeroy suggested that the NHS implement an acquisition fund, which would allow us to increase the stock of non-market housing faster. This initiative, paired with housing allowances given directly to tenants, would allow tenants to stay in their current homes instead of building new units, which is much more cost-effective and avoids further financialization of the housing market. <sup>7</sup>

Beaudoin called for more renovation funding. He referenced the Plancher project of the Community Housing Transformation Centre in Quebec which “aims to unite the actors of the social and community housing field around a common objective: setting up a high impact project to strengthen the sector’s capacity to tackle the housing crisis.”<sup>8</sup>

Pomeroy indicated that there is \$12 billion of unspent RCFI funds and suggested that these funds might be reallocated to non-profits to provide moderate rate housing, something that could quickly be done this year.



## Engagement with the Community Housing Sector

Beaudoin stated that if we engage with the community housing sector, we will have greater success in achieving the goals of the NHS.

Pfoh proposed that programs and solutions be led by folks with lived experience, creating a feeling of belonging.

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7. Steve Pomeroy, “Moving Forward: Exploring National Housing Strategy 2.0” (Panel discussion, 55<sup>th</sup> National Congress on Housing and Homelessness, Winnipeg, MB, April 19, 2023).

8. Community Housing Transformation Centre, “Plancher,” Community Housing Transformation Centre website, n.d., <https://centre.support/services/special-projects/plancher/>

9. Wellesley Institute, no title, image, Wellesleyinstitute.com, n.d., <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publications/equity-centered-community-engagement-strategy/>

## In summary...

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Framing the National Housing Strategy around the **Right to Housing** will ensure those in core housing need are prioritized.

Taking a **For Indigenous, By Indigenous** approach in the renewal of the National Housing Strategy will foster a sense of belonging within Indigenous communities.

Implementing a **multi-jurisdictional approach** to the National Housing Strategy will allow for better coordination in the design and deliver of its programs.

If we can understand the housing **system as a whole**, we can design the National Housing Strategy to be comprehensive and cohesive, such that folks will be able to more easily move along the housing continuum.

**Reallocating National Housing Strategy funds** to where they are most needed will increase the stock of non-market housing while also allowing tenants to stay in their current homes.

**Engaging the community housing** sector and involving folks with lived experience in the design and delivery of National Housing Strategy programs will grant us greater success in reaching its goals, while also creating a sense of belonging.



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## Bibliography

Beaudoin, Jacques, Margaret Pfoh, Marie-Josée Houle, Steve Pomeroy, Tim Richter, "Moving Forward: Exploring National Housing Strategy 2.0" (Panel discussion, 55th National Congress on Housing and Homelessness, Winnipeg, MB, April 19, 2023).

Community Housing Transformation Centre. "Plancher." Community Housing Transformation Centre website. n.d.  
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