



October 16, 2024

The Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C, M.P.  
Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities  
180 Kent Street  
Suite 1100  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0B6

VIA EMAIL

**Subject: We Need to Build More Community Housing in Canada**

Dear Minister Fraser,

The return of Parliament comes at a time when people across the country are struggling through a national housing and affordability crisis. I am writing to you on behalf of the members of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) to reiterate the need for the Government of Canada to continue supporting the development of more community housing across Canada.

As you know, CHRA is the national voice of the community housing sector in Canada. Collectively, our members house, shelter, and support hundreds of thousands of people across Canada; they are seeing the impacts of the ongoing crisis firsthand. CHRA draws heavily on the enormous, practical on-the-ground affordable housing experience of our members and we work hard to represent their perspectives in Ottawa.

That is why I am writing this letter to you today. As we face a continuously uncertain political environment, it's critical that we keep up the hard work of tackling the housing crisis through building more truly affordable, safe, and appropriate community housing. The federal government's investments into programs like the Affordable Housing Fund, urban, rural, and northern (URN) Indigenous Housing, the Public Lands for Homes Plan, and the Rental Protection Fund have great potential to create an important housing affordability legacy – we must build on them and ensure their success.

According to research done by the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project, over 1.5 million households are living in inadequate or unaffordable housing, and 20% of households in Canada cannot afford market rates for housing. Less than 4% of housing in Canada is community housing, which is why a recent report published by Scotiabank has called for a doubling the number of community housing units and why RBC has called for quadrupling the rate at which we build community housing.

These investments can also provide a much-needed boost to productivity in Canada. A study released last year by Deloitte found that doubling the share of community housing would boost our GDP between \$67 to \$136 billion annually and improve productivity by 5.7% to 9.3%.

By working together and building on the success we have achieved so far, we believe that we can work towards doubling the amount of community housing in Canada over the next decade, and within that target, quadrupling the supply of urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing. Doing so would help realize the national right to housing and allow people to invest in themselves and their communities. To that end, we at CHRA want to highlight some key priorities for this Parliamentary sitting that will help us achieve this.

- 1. Immediately release \$280 million from the Urban, Rural and Northern (URN) Indigenous Housing Strategy to the National Indigenous Housing Collaborative Inc. (NICH):** The Indigenous Caucus at CHRA has long advocated for a national Indigenous-led and Indigenous-delivered URN housing strategy, a need that your government has acknowledged. However, only a fraction of the total amounts committed in Budgets 2023 and 2024 have begun to roll out. Indigenous people continue to experience homelessness and housing precarity at disproportionate levels. The delay in establishing the National Indigenous Housing Centre and releasing this urgently needed funding is unacceptable. NICH was specifically created as an Indigenous-led entity to deliver these funds and has already identified \$2 billion in shovel-ready housing projects and allocated an initial \$280 million for urgent, unmet need. That is why you must release additional funding to NICH now so they can proceed with the next tier of urgent projects and not lose yet another construction season.
- 2. Prioritize Community Housing in the Public Lands for Homes Plan:** Public lands must be leveraged to achieve the greatest impact and so must be used to invest in non-market community housing options. By requiring that all proposals for the public lands include a community housing provider within the partnership, the *Public Lands for Homes Plan* will ensure as much long-term affordability as is possible and ensure that public lands are being used for the public interest. It will also help community housing providers to scale up; in some cases benefit from the greater capacity of their private-sector partners; and create a larger, stronger, and more resilient community housing supply.
- 3. Accelerate the Roll out of the Rental Protection Fund:** Preserving existing affordable housing by placing them in the hands of community housing providers is an efficient and impactful way to tackle the housing crisis. Acquisitions by non-profits and co-ops protect tenancies and stabilize rents. To that end the Canada Rental Protection Fund, announced in Budget 2024, is a promising new vehicle, but the slow rollout of funding over five years will directly compromise its success. For this model to succeed, the federal government must accelerate the funding timelines. Without up-front investments, it will be difficult for community housing providers to provide the security required to attract investment from private capital. Therefore, the federal government must move forward the full \$1.5 billion commitment into fiscal year 2025-2026.
- 4. Invest in a Canada Community Housing Sector Growth Fund:** Doubling the share of non-market community housing will require a strong and robust sector of community housing providers. Our proposed Canada Community Housing Growth Fund (CCHGF) is a sector-led model that strengthens and grows the community housing sector by investing in training, capacity-building, knowledge transfer, and professionalization to get greater number of non-profits development-

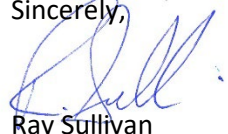


ready and prepared for growth. The CCHGF model provides funding directly to community-based organizations, with priority to Indigenous-led and Black-led organizations, through a collaborative co-development process that leverages the organizational capacity of community-based fund managers to develop adaptable and culturally sensitive programming.

5. **Provide Stabilized Pre-development Funding:** To reach the target of doubling the share of community housing we need to ensure that there is a strong development pipeline of new projects that are shovel ready. The pre-development funding currently available through CMHC's Seed Funding is oversubscribed and inconsistently available, cutting off many otherwise promising projects from the funding they need to progress. The Federal Government must provide a stable annual contribution to a trusted third-party contribution provider, such as the Community Housing Transformation Center (CHTC), to ensure that more housing can be built across the country.
  
6. **Extend the Timelines of National Housing Strategy Programs:** Funding for most National Housing Strategy programs ends in 2028 – less than three-and-a-half years from now. Housing development projects operate on multi-year timelines. To ensure a healthy pipeline of projects the federal government must provide certainty to community housing providers and developers that the funding and financing will be available beyond the current 2028 timeline set by the National Housing Strategy. That is why it is critically important that you extend programs like the Affordable Housing Fund and the Federal Community Housing Initiative (FCHI). By doing so, you can provide housing providers the predictability they need to build more affordable housing and better serve their communities.

CHRA and our members know that these investments are critically important to building more affordable community housing for people and communities from coast to coast to coast. If you have any questions about these recommendations or would like to know more about what is needed to build more community housing, please contact me at [ray@chra-achru.ca](mailto:ray@chra-achru.ca).

Sincerely,



Ray Sullivan  
Executive Director

cc. Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Public Services and Procurement