



BY EMAIL

October 23, 2017

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Duclos:

Re: National Housing Strategy and housing benefits

This is to urge you to **include a Canada-wide housing benefit in the National Housing Strategy (NHS)**. That is the best and most cost-effective approach to helping more low-income Canadians afford decent housing.

We understand that a broad program of new housing benefits cannot be rolled out immediately because of the budget envelope for housing needs and the competing demands for that money within the current affordable housing system. However, **moving toward an expanded and integrated system of housing benefits to be paid directly to the tenants in the most need, is crucial for making a significant improvement in affordability within a reasonable time.**

Many provinces use housing benefits, and many are expanding their systems of housing benefits, but many people in deep core need or core need are left out of the current systems, which are fragmented and inconsistent. Federal leadership and funding are essential, along with provincial funding and co-ordination with provincial social assistance.

Overall suggestions

The Let's Talk Housing consultations undertaken by CMHC were extensive and conclusive. Overwhelmingly, housing experts, civil society, people with lived experience and other Let's Talk Housing respondents identified affordability as the most pressing challenge facing Canadians - ranking it as the top issue more than twice as much as any other.

With work on the National Housing Strategy nearing its culmination, we urge the federal and provincial governments to adopt a balanced mix of policies and programs designed to deliver real improvements in housing affordability, particularly for those in greatest need, with measurable and time-bound outcomes. Specifically, we call on all governments to ensure the Strategy will:

- **Tackle housing poverty and homelessness** - a national, portable housing benefit should become a cornerstone of both the National Housing Strategy and Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy. Aligned with other investments, a properly designed portable housing benefit, cost-shared with the provinces and of sufficient scale, will set Canada on track to significantly reduce homelessness and deep core housing need and lift tens of thousands of households out of poverty – without inflating rents.
- **Create more affordable housing** – it's time we dealt with housing as a system. To address the wide variety of housing needs in different housing markets across

Canada, the Strategy should include tools and incentives that make housing affordability the role of everyone, not just any one part of the housing system. Affordability is a goal to which all housing sectors can contribute, across all tenure forms.

The Co-Investment Fund announced in the last budget is a start. So is the Rental Construction Financing initiative. But a larger toolkit – including tax mechanisms in addition to financing, grants, and land – will leverage much more funding, which can build more and better projects, renew existing assets, and create a more entrepreneurial, sustainable and flexible system. An assertive, system-based approach will shift the balance of investments from grants to equity and financing, allowing government to share both the risks and the rewards. And, incenting any developer – non-profit or market - who meets underwriting criteria to build housing that is affordable will more effectively drive the outcomes the government seeks.

- **Fix and retrofit our existing affordable housing stock** – in addition to investing in new affordable housing, we must revitalize the existing stock and ensure its sustainability. Enhancing the capacity of social housing providers and enabling them to become more entrepreneurial will help their economic viability. Ensuring mechanisms to facilitate the repair and retrofit of market rental that is affordable is also essential to preserve the existing supply of housing that meets the needs of low- and moderate-income households. Investing in energy retrofits and conservation will, over time, help the bottom-line, while reducing carbon emissions. But supply-side measures alone will not be enough. Continuation of assistance to low income tenants is essential for maintaining the stability and viability of housing providers.

As Canadians in communities all across this country – not just the big city markets – clearly indicated, the high cost of housing is strangling other important family needs. For many, the high cost of housing is pushing them into poverty.

We mustn't lose this opportunity to improve the lives of the 1.5-million households who struggle with housing affordability each year.

CFAA supports the advice of the National Housing Collaborative (NHC), which stands ready to support CMHC and the government in working out the details of the various programs with the provinces and territories. **We urge you to include a Canada-wide housing benefit among the programs to be adopted in the NHS.**

Thank you for the time, energy and dedication that you have brought to this critical issue. We are counting on you and your government to deliver on a National Housing Strategy that provides both a roadmap for the future and real results for Canadians.

Yours truly,



John Dickie
CFAA President

cc. Tyler Meredith, Dylan Marando, Debbie Stewart (CMHC)

cc. National Housing Collaborative and
CFAA's member associations, namely

LandlordBC

Manufactured Home Park Owners Alliance of BC (MHPOABC)

Saskatchewan Landlord Association Inc. (SKLA)

Professional Property Manager's Association of Manitoba (PPMA)

London Property Management Association (LPMA)

Waterloo Regional Apartment Management Association (WRAMA)

Hamilton & District Apartment Association (HDAA)

Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario (FRPO)

Greater Toronto Apartment Association (GTAA)

Eastern Ontario Landlord Association (EOLO) and

the Investment Property Owners Association of Nova Scotia (IPOANS)