

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OPEN LETTER URGES PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE GOOD ON
HIS COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHT TO HOUSING**

OTTAWA (August 14, 2018) - At a press conference in Ottawa today advocates released an open letter to Prime Minister Trudeau signed by over 170 organizations and prominent Canadians urging the Prime Minister to make good on his commitment to the right to housing by enshrining that right in upcoming National Housing Strategy legislation.

The letter was penned by Amnesty International Canada, Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada, Canada Without Poverty, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, housing and homelessness researcher Emily Paradis, and the Social Rights Advocacy Centre. Supported by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, the letter outlines key requirements of right to housing legislation consistent with international human rights law.

“We’ve come together to show the Prime Minister that there is broad-based support for legislated recognition of the right to housing and to offer a way forward,” said Tim Richter, President of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. “Canada’s housing and homelessness crisis is the result of a failure to protect human rights. If we’re serious about fixing this crisis, then Canada must live up to our international human rights commitments and have a legislated right to housing as the foundation of our National Housing Strategy.”

Among the letter’s signatories are national organizations including the Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, the Canadian Lived Experience Advisory Council and the United Church of Canada along with prominent Canadians like street nurse and advocate Cathy Crowe, former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page, and former Liberal cabinet ministers Claudette Bradshaw and Irwin Cotler.

Every year over 235,000 people experience homelessness in Canada. Today, over 1.7 million Canadian households are living in unsafe, unsuitable, or unaffordable housing without better options available to them. These households are disproportionately led by women and feature overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, youth and older adults, and members of racialized communities. All these people are experiencing the effects of a systemic crisis - a failure to protect and implement their human rights.

“Canada has an opportunity for international human rights leadership with a clear, decisive and unambiguous commitment in legislation to the right to housing,” says Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing. “The National Housing Strategy made an historic commitment to progressively implement the right to housing; what’s needed now is legislation that ensures meaningful accountability to that right.”

The open letter has been posted to <http://nhs.socialrights.ca/> where Canadians are asked to add their names to the call for a legislated right to housing in Canada.

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Draft legislation prepared by legal scholars and civil society experts is also available. This draft legislation offers suggestions on how the right to housing could be incorporated into the proposed National Housing Strategy legislation, consistent with international human rights law, and including mechanisms through which people affected by homelessness and inadequate housing can bring complaints about systemic violations and require the government to respond.

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OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

August 14, 2018

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On November 22, 2017 your government announced a national housing strategy based on its commitment to “progressively implement the right of every Canadian to access adequate housing.”

Consultations held in recent months regarding the National Housing Strategy demonstrated a strong consensus that implementing legislation must explicitly recognize the right to housing as defined in international human rights law. Widespread homelessness and lack of access to adequate housing, in so affluent a country as Canada is clearly one of the most critical human rights issues facing all levels of government. Rights-based legislation must establish mechanisms for those affected to raise systemic issues regarding the progressive realization of the right to housing and ensure that governments will respond by implementing remedies. These mechanisms need not rely on courts but they must be effective.

In addition, the legislation must require goals and timelines for the reduction and elimination of homelessness that are consistent with international human rights obligations to realize the right to housing within the shortest possible time based on available resources. It should ensure that Canada meets its commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to eliminate homelessness by 2030. It must also include measures to eliminate the deep disparities in access to adequate, affordable, safe, and secure housing for Indigenous peoples, women, members of racialized communities, persons with disabilities, trans and gender-diverse people, older adults, children and young people, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons.

Draft legislation has been developed by civil society and experts, demonstrating how this can be accomplished and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you.

We call on the government to ensure that the National Housing Strategy legislation:

- affirms the recognition of the right to housing as a fundamental human right;
- implements accountability mechanisms through which those affected by homelessness or inadequate housing can hold governments accountable for the progressive realization of the right to housing;
- ensures that the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate and National Housing Council are independent, adequately resourced and given authority to make recommendations and require remedial action for compliance with the right to housing;
- provides for an adjudication body which includes both experts in human rights and persons with lived experience of homelessness or inadequate housing, to hold accessible hearings into systemic issues affecting the progressive realization of the right to housing and to recommend effective remedies;
- requires goals and timelines for the elimination of homelessness and access to adequate housing, in accordance with Canada's obligations under international human rights law and commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals;
- mandates rights-based participation by, and accountability to, diverse individuals and communities affected by homelessness and inadequate housing, in all NHS mechanisms including the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, National Housing Council, adjudication body, and community initiatives;
- provides resources and support for local lived-experience-led monitoring of NHS programmes and for community initiatives to promote the right to adequate housing engaging all levels of government;
- provides for initiatives to identify and address the distinctive barriers, needs and rights of Indigenous peoples, co-developed with Indigenous peoples' organizations, as well as housing strategies for First Nations, Inuit, Métis Nation, and urban and rural Indigenous partners, negotiated on the basis of Inuit-to-Crown, government-to-government, nation-to-nation relationships, to ensure the right to housing of Indigenous peoples both on and off reserve, in rural and urban settings, consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The legislation implementing a rights-based national housing strategy provides an historic opportunity for the federal government to address, as a priority, a critical human rights issue at home and at the same time to provide leadership in human rights internationally. It is the first time that legislation implementing the right to housing has been contemplated in Canada, and it is critical that this be done right.

We look forward to ongoing dialogue with the government in the coming weeks and months, as this important legislation is brought forward.

Sincerely,

Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing
Anita Khanna, Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada
Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada
Emily Paradis, Independent Researcher
Bruce Porter, Social Rights Advocacy Centre
Tim Richter, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness

CC The Honourable Andrew Scheer, P.C., M.P., Leader of the Official Opposition
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

SIGNATORIES

Individuals

1. Alex Himelfarb, Former Clerk of the Privy Council
2. Senator Art Eggleton, PC
3. Irwin Cotler, PC, OC
4. Claudette Bradshaw, PC, ONB
5. Kevin Page, Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy; Former Parliamentary Budget Officer
6. Mathieu Fleury, Ottawa City Councillor; Chair, Ottawa Community Housing
7. Matthew Green, Hamilton City Councillor, Ward 3
8. Naomi Klein, Author
9. Craig Kielburger, Social Entrepreneur
10. David Hulchanski, Professor, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Dr Chow Yei Ching Chair in Housing, University of Toronto
11. Mitchell Cohen, Daniels Corporation
12. Alexis L. Wood, Director/Producer
13. Andrew J. Bond, MD, MHA(c), CCFP, Inner City Health Associates
14. Anne Latendresse, Directrice des programmes de premier cycle, Département de géographie, UQAM
15. Antoinette Wertman Hon BSc., MD, Inner City Health Associates, St. Michaels Hospital, Toronto
16. Rabbi Emeritus Arthur Bielfeld, C.M., Temple Emanu-El
17. Cathy Crowe, C.M., Street Nurse, Distinguished Visiting Practitioner, Ryerson University
18. David Wiseman, Associate Professor, University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section
19. Deborah Pink, MD, FRCPC, Psychiatrist, Inner City Health Associates
20. Deborah Sinclair, MSW, PhD(c), RSW, University of Toronto
21. Elvin Wyly, Professor, The University of British Columbia
22. Gary Bloch MD CCFP, University of Toronto
23. Janet Mosher, Professor, Faculty of Law, York University
24. Laila Jamal, MD, FRCP (C), Inner City Health Associates
25. Leigh Chapman, RN, BScN, BA(Hons), MSc, PhD Candidate
26. Margot Young, Professor, UBC Law
27. Marie-Eve Desroches, PhD Candidate, Urban studies, Institut national de la recherche scientifique
28. Marie-Neige Laperrière, Professeure de droit, Sciences administratives, Université du Québec en Outaouais
29. Martha Jackman, University of Ottawa
30. The Rev. Michael Shapcott, Deacon, Church of the Holy Trinity - Trinity Square
31. Monia Mazigh, Author and Human Rights advocate
32. Patricia Cavanagh, MD, FRCPC
33. Penelope Simons, Professeure agrégée, Université d'Ottawa, Faculty of Law
34. Peter Rosenthal, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, Adjunct Professor of Law, University of Toronto
35. Pieter de Vos, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta
36. Richard J. Doan, MD, FRCPC, Inner City Health Associates; Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto
37. Roxie Danielson, RN, BScN, Innercity Family Health Team
38. Samer Muscati, International Human Rights Program, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto
39. Susan Woolhouse, MD, MCISc, CCFP, FCFP, Family Physician, Inner City Health Associates
40. Vince Calderhead, Pink Larkin Lawyers

National and International Organizations

41. A Way Home Canada, Melanie Redman, President and CEO
42. Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, Ranjith Kulatilake
43. ACORN Canada, Judy Duncan
44. Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Sandeep Prasad
45. Amnesty International, Alex Neve
46. Amnistie internationale, Genevieve Paul
47. Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada, Anita Khanna
48. Canada Without Poverty, Harriett McLachlan, Deputy Director

SIGNATORIES

49. Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Tim Richter
50. Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD), Jeremy Dias
51. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Gauri Sreenivasan
52. Canadian Coalition Against LGBTQ2S+ Poverty, Lori Ross
53. Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, Kathy Vandergrift
54. Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, Jeff Morrison
55. Canadian Lived Experience Advisory Council, Debbie McGraw
56. Canadian Medical Association, Dr. Laurent Marcoux, President
57. Canadian Mental Health Association Interlake Eastern, Tristan Dreilich
58. Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex, Susan Macphail
59. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Stephen Gaetz
60. Canadian Poverty Institute, Ambrose University, Derek Cook
61. Canadian Women's Foundation, Paulette Senior, President and CEO
62. Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Valerie Lemieux
63. Citizens for Public Justice, Joe Gunn
64. Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Jewelles Smith, Chair
65. Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Steven Estey
66. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Elizabeth Dandy
67. Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada
68. Families Canada (formerly Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs), Kelly Stone
69. Habitat for Humanity Canada, Mark Rodgers, President and CEO
70. Habitat International Coalition
71. Lived Experience Advisory Council, Lived Experience of Homelessness Network, Kym Hines
72. Maytree Foundation, Elizabeth Mclsaac
73. National Association of Women and the Law
74. Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), Lynne Groulx, Executive Director
75. Oxfam, Julie Delahanty
76. Raising the Roof, Michael Brathwaite
77. Right to Housing Coalition
78. Social Rights Advocacy Centre, Bruce Porter
79. The Leap, Bianca Mugenyi, Co-Executive Director
80. UNICEF Canada, Lisa Wolff
81. United Church of Canada
82. United Way / Centraide Canada, Dan Clement, President and CEO
83. Women's Shelters Canada, Lise Martin
84. YMCA Canada, Peter Dinsdale, O.Ont., President and CEO
85. YWCA Canada, Maya Roy, CEO; Anjum Sultana, MPH

Provincial and Territorial Organizations

86. Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), Kenneth Hale
87. Alberta Network of Public Housing Agencies, Harvey Voogd, Interim Executive Director
88. Alberta Rural Development Network, Jonn Kmech
89. BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Jill Atkey
90. BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, Trish Garner
91. BC Society of Transition Houses, Joanne Baker
92. CERA - Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, Katie Plaizier
93. Colour of Poverty Colour of Change
94. First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, Adrienne Montani
95. Income Security Advocacy Centre, Jennefer Laidley
96. Justice for Children and Youth, Mary Birdsell
97. M'akola Housing Society, David Seymour, VP
98. MacKillop Centre for Social Justice and The PEI Coalition for a Poverty Eradication Strategy, Mary Boyd
99. Metis Urban Housing Association of Saskatchewan Inc
100. The Mustard Seed, John Rook
101. Network of Non-Profit Housing Providers of Saskatchewan
102. Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Marlene Ham
103. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Debbie Douglas
104. Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH)
105. Public Interest Alberta, Joel French

SIGNATORIES

106. Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, Doris Grinspun, RN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), O.ONT., Chief Executive Officer
107. Regroupement des comités logement et associations de locataires du Québec (RCLALQ), Maxime Roy-Allard
108. Réseau québécois des organismes sans but lucratif d'habitation (RQOH), Stéphan Corriveau
109. Right to Housing (Manitoba), Tristan Dreilich
110. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO), Shalini Konanur
111. Yukon Anti Poverty Coalition, Kristina Craig, Executive Director
112. Yukon Status of Women Council, Charlotte Hrenchuk

Community Organizations

113. Adsum for Women and Children, Sheri Ecker, Executive Director
114. Anova, Shelley Yeo
115. Association of Local Public Health Agencies, Loretta Ryan, CAE, RPP
116. Atlohsa Native Family Healing services, Raymond Deleary
117. Centerpoint Facilitation, Tammy Ouellette
118. Centre de counselling de Sudbury Counselling Centre, Carole Lamoureux
119. Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Western University, Barb MacQuarrie, O.Ont.
120. Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Ann Fitzpatrick
121. Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Avvy Go
122. The City Institute, York University, Linda Peake
123. Comox Valley Transition Society, Heather Ney
124. The Dream Team, Joanna Pawelkiewicz
125. Emily Murphy Centre, Lisa Wilde
126. End Homelessness Winnipeg, Lucille Bruce
127. Federation of Metro Tenant Associations, Maryanna Lewyckyj, Acting Chair
128. Four Counties Addiction Services Team, City of Kawartha Lakes, County of Haliburton, Northumberland County and Peterborough, Kerri Kightley
129. Fred Victor, Mark Aston
130. Gillian's Place: Empowering Abused Women of Niagara, Tanja Loeb, Executive Director
131. Haven Toronto, Lauro Monteiro
132. Healthy Transportation Coalition, Trevor Haché
133. Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG), Waterloo Region, Lynn Macaulay
134. Homeward Trust, Susan McGee, Chief Executive Officer
135. Human Development Council, Saint John, New Brunswick, Randy Hatfield
136. Innerscity Family Health Team, Jo Connelly, Executive Director
137. Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness, Rafi Aaron, Spokesperson
138. Ishtar Society, Laurie Parsons
139. Kelowna Women's Shelter, Karen Mason
140. Lived Experience Circle of Winnipeg, Al Wiebe
141. Lloydminster Metis Housing Group Inc.
142. London Homeless Coalition, Charlotte Dingwall, Chair
143. North Coast Transition Society, Christine White, Executive Director
144. Parkdale Community Legal Services, Johanna Macdonald, Clinic Director
145. Peel Alliance to End Homelessness, Ian Hanney
146. Pivot Legal, Anna Cooper
147. Quint Development Corporation, Len Usiskin
148. Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope, Donna Kroocmo, Executive Director
149. Sistering, Patricia O'Connell
150. Social Planning Toronto, Peter Clutterbuck
151. South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society, Linda Sankey
152. South Okanagan Women in Need Society, Veronica Mora
153. Southwest Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee, Margaret MacPherson
154. Springtide Resources, Leila Sarangi
155. Street Health, Kapri Rabin, Executive Director and Joyce Rankin RN MN MBA, Clinical Manager
156. Street Nurses Network, Roxie Danielson, RN, BScN
157. Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group, Ann Batisse, Executive Director
158. Together Against Poverty Society, Stephen Portman
159. Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, Kira Heineck

SIGNATORIES

160. Toronto Disability Pride March, Melissa Graham
161. Toronto Drop In Network, Susan Bender
162. United Way Central and South Okanagan Similkameen, Reanne Amadio
163. Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, Victoria McLaughlin
164. Voices from the Street and Women Speak Out, Dawnmarie Harriot and Lubna Khalid
165. Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, Harmy Mendoza, Executive Director
166. Women's Housing Planning Collaborative, Hamilton, Deirdre Pike and Katherine Kalinowski
167. Women's Resources of Kawartha Lakes, Lori Watson
168. Woolwich Community Services, Kelly Christie
169. Working for Change, Mike Creek
170. YMCA Northern Alberta, Nick Parkinson
171. YWCA Hamilton, Medora Uppal
172. YWCA Toronto, Heather McGregor, CEO