



'Housing for All' SOLUTION

Right to Home in Canada: A Municipal Call to Action

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Alarmed by the rapid rise in homelessness in communities across Canada, Mayors and city officials from across the country have swiftly formed a remarkable alliance in the wake of COVID-19 to tackle the issue, which they recognize is a human rights crisis requiring an urgent, unified response.

Mayors, elected officials, and city staffers from every part of the country have formed the Right to Home Municipal Working Group. They assert that in light of the life and death consequences of homelessness and inadequate housing, now is the time to put into action the Canadian Government's commitment to secure housing as a human right.

'The Government of Canada has recognized housing as a human right, as has the City of Toronto' says Toronto Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão. 'It's important that in these unprecedented times we continue to work together with this as our mutual commitment moving forward.'

After three months of meetings, and with the situation becoming more dire as the effects of the pandemic drag on, the Right to Home Municipal Working Group has issued an urgent call to action for all levels of government to seize the transformational moment offered by COVID-19 to generate permanent, sustainable solutions under a cohesive national strategy.

Municipalities are at the front lines of the homelessness crisis, which has been [further exacerbated](#) by the economic fallout of the pandemic. Municipalities are attempting creative approaches, such as the acquisition strategy adopted by Toronto and Vancouver, and mini-cabins built in Kitchener. But the Municipal Working Group says cities need federal and provincial leadership to address the growing inequality in their communities, and overcome the jurisdictional issues that have hampered progress.

"Cities feel the pressure to end homelessness and it's our residents who are suffering and dying early deaths, but we don't have the funds to actually make housing a real, experienced human right" says Vancouver city councillor Jean Swanson. "The federal government needs to provide the funds and capacities we need to implement their human rights goals."

Under the [Right to Home Call to Action](#), the group urges all levels of government to work together and:

- end the indignity of homelessness on an urgent basis;
- enhance the protection of renters facing arrears and possible eviction, as well as small landlords disproportionately affected by economic hardship;
- assist people who have incurred household debt as a result of COVID-19 who may have trouble paying rent;
- increase social assistance rates to cover the cost of living;
- examine existing real estate regulations to curtail predatory practices by institutional investors; and
- finally communicate broadly that housing discrimination in any form is illegal

“As cities, we are here to do our part with the federal and provincial governments because we know that preventing and ending homelessness is good for everyone in our communities - from those living in encampments, to those living around them, and to our local businesses” says Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. “The Right to Home Call to Action puts forward an optimistic view of the future where the right to housing is realized and everyone has a safe, secure, and affordable place to call home.”

The Right to Home Call to Action is historic both in Canada and internationally. Cities have come together to affirm their commitment to human rights and the right to housing and they are reminding other levels of government that they too must ensure that their obligations to secure the right to housing are met.

The Canadian Municipal Working Group understands that now is the time for bold action.

The Right to Home Working Group has been convened by [The Shift](#) and the [Canadian Urban Institute](#).