

Speaking Notes

**For Jennifer McKelvie,
Parliamentary Secretary to the
Minister of Housing and Infrastructure**

**Intentional Community Consortium (ICC)
National Fall Update and Information Webinar**

**Online webinar
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Introduction

Good morning, everyone, and thank you Gary for the kind introduction and to the Intentional Community Consortium for organizing this event.

I'd like to acknowledge that I am joining you from the traditional, unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation. While we meet today on a virtual platform, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Indigenous Peoples of all the lands we each call home.

It's a pleasure to be here with passionate advocates like yourselves who work so hard to help those with diverse abilities and make their lives better.

The Government of Canada recognizes the urgent need for more affordable housing and understands that persons with developmental disabilities may face additional barriers to housing.



I'm proud of the work we've already done to date. Our investments in affordable, inclusive, and transitional housing and our efforts to help those experiencing or are at risk, are making a difference for some of our most vulnerable Canadians, including Indigenous people, veterans, and persons with disabilities.

But we know there's more to do. I'm excited to speak to you today about the Government of Canada's work to build a more inclusive country, beginning with the most fundamental of spaces: the home.

Impacts of the Housing Crisis

Our country is facing a housing crisis, one which has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the increased cost of living, as well as geopolitical shifts and trade networks across the globe.

The housing crisis affects every community across the country. But its impacts have been felt by Canadians in different ways. For some, it means forfeiting the iconic dream of living in a



house of their own. And for too many, it means no longer being able to afford any place to live at all.

Everyone in this country, whether they are a single parent or a multi-generational household or a newly graduated student, should have access to a housing market that meets their needs. One that provides a safe and affordable place to live – somewhere to call home.

But for too many, including Indigenous people, veterans, and persons with disabilities, this isn't a reality.

Federal Re-Entry into the Housing Space and Equity

In 2017, the Government of Canada re-entered the housing space with the launch of the National Housing Strategy, one of the largest federal investments in housing in Canada's history. In 2019, the National Housing Strategy Act recognized housing as a fundamental human right and enshrined it in legislation.



The National Housing Strategy was designed to address the housing needs of priority populations and help the most vulnerable Canadians.

These priority groups include **people with disabilities**, survivors of gender-based violence; seniors; young adults; Indigenous peoples; people dealing with mental health and addiction issues; veterans; 2SLGBTQIA+; racialized groups; recent immigrants with a particular focus on refugees; and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

With the launch of Canada's Housing Plan in 2024, the federal government continued to expand its leadership role in addressing the housing crisis, investing in programs to build more homes, make it easier to rent or own a home, and help Canadians who can't afford a home.

However, we know that there is much more work to do.

Build Canada Homes



That's why, a few days ago, Prime Minister Carney launched **Build Canada Homes**, a new federal agency that will build affordable housing at scale.

Build Canada Homes will focus primarily on non-market housing, supporting a mix of income needs as part of a national effort to double housing construction, restore affordability, and reduce homelessness. Complementing the National Housing Strategy and Canada's Housing Plan, Build Canada Homes adds a more nimble, scalable, and innovative federal approach to building affordable housing.

This new agency will grow the supply of affordable housing in partnership with mission-driven organizations whose core purpose is to advance social, community, or equity-focussed goals. These include, but are not limited to, non-profits, co-operatives, Indigenous housing providers, and organizations supporting women, people with disabilities, newcomers, and those in need of supportive and transitional housing.



Build Canada Homes will work primarily with non-market housing providers to deliver affordable housing options that serve a large segment of the working population. It will also act as a developer, building on land, or working with other partners to develop underutilized public land.

As it conducts these activities, Build Canada Homes will help transform Canada's housing industry by generating demand for new and innovative methods of construction that reduce build time, cost per unit, or the amount of resources needed to get more homes built faster.

Build Canada Homes will be a one-stop shop for affordable for affordable housing proponents —combining financing, land access, and development expertise under one roof, making it simpler and faster to get big projects off the ground.

With an initial capitalization of \$13 billion, Build Canada Homes will tackle homelessness and help support vulnerable populations by building transitional and supportive housing. It will build deeply affordable and community housing for low-



income households, and partner with private market developers to provide the financing that builders need to deliver affordable homes for lower and middle-income Canadians at scale.

The agency will also assume the Canada Lands Company under its portfolio to ensure it has access to federal lands, including the 88 federal properties spanning 463 hectares and suitable for housing that are currently listed on the Canada Public Land Bank. By taking land costs out of the equation, private builders can focus on building.

Through unprecedented investment and bold innovation, the agency will help catalyze the housing industry – one that builds faster and more sustainably. By leveraging offsite manufacturing and innovative technologies like modular, factory-built construction, and mass timber, Build Canada Homes will expand Canada's truncated construction season to year-round production. This can reduce building timelines by up to 50%, reduce costs by as much as 20%, and lower carbon emissions by approximately 20% during construction.



Build Canada Homes will also strengthen Canada's economy by prioritizing Canadian lumber and materials.

And it will achieve its mandate by working in close partnership with provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous communities as well as not-for profit organizations, developers, investors, and manufacturers. One focused on Canada, working together for one economy and one strong, united country. United together, we will go so much farther.

Initial BCH Initiatives

Build Canada Homes has a mandate to move quickly. To that end, the agency will begin moving on its first four investments and initiatives.

The agency will deploy \$1 billion to build transitional and supportive housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It will collaborate with key provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous partners to pair these federal



investments with employment and health care supports to help them transition to more stable housing.

Other initiatives include developing six public land sites in Dartmouth, Longueuil, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Edmonton, under Canada Lands Company's portfolio. Adopting a "direct-build" approach, the agency will oversee the construction of 4,000 factory-built homes on federal land – with additional capacity of up to 45,000 units across the portfolio.

To help protect existing affordable rental housing, the \$1.5 billion **Canada Rental Protection Fund** will be launched under Build Canada Homes. This initiative will support the community housing sector in acquiring at-risk rental apartment buildings, ensuring they remain affordable over the long term.

And finally, Build Canada Homes will partner with the Nunavut Housing Corporation to build over 700 public, affordable, and supportive housing units in Northern Canada. Approximately one third of the units are expected to be built off-site, using innovative construction methods to expedite building.



Build Canada Homes has been shaped through extensive engagements with a variety of stakeholders, including organizations and members of the accessibility community. We recently launched a **Market Sounding Guide** on my department's website that outlines a proposed vision and approach for Build Canada Homes. We've asked stakeholders across the housing sector to share their thoughts and help refine objectives, tools, and our implementation strategy to ensure it meets the needs of Canadians. So far, we have received valuable input from advocates who have provided their insights and shared their lived experience, and we will continue to engage with this community as we refine our approach

Building on Past Success

Our government is focused on Canadians' need to access safe and stable housing at prices they can afford. We are continuing to build on the success of programs like the **Affordable Housing Fund**. Through the Fund, the federal government has



committed over \$12 billion to create more than 50,000 new housing units, of which the majority fall below market rent. Another almost 175,000 units will be repaired or renewed through this program, with most of these again falling below market rent.

And the **Federal Community Housing Initiative** is helping to preserve another 48,000 community housing units.

Housing Accelerator Fund

We are also working with communities across Canada to change the way housing is built through the \$4.4 billion Housing Accelerator Fund.

The Government of Canada is working with municipalities who are committed to changing zoning bylaws and allowing for more density. Cities and regions estimate that the changes we're encouraging with the Housing Accelerator Fund will mean an estimated 800,000 new homes can be built in our communities over the next decade across Canada.



We are working hand in hand with municipalities who want to break down barriers to home construction and cut red tape. Our partners are choosing development over delays and helping us cut the red tape to building the new homes that Canada urgently needs. But we know that it's not just about building more. It's about building better.

Reaching Home

And it's about supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities. Homelessness affects individuals, families, women and children fleeing violence, youth, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples. Funding through **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy** allows communities to support equity-deserving populations, including people with disabilities, with services including shelter provision, homelessness prevention and housing attainment.



Since the launch of the program in 2019, Reaching Home has supported 1,896 community-selected projects that include people with disabilities as a target population.

We recognize the need to develop and assess long-term solutions to address homelessness in Canada, and the federal government is committed to advancing this work.

The Government of Canada is taking action to end chronic homelessness and has invested \$5 billion over nine years through the Reaching Home program.

To date, over 197,000 people across Canada have received homelessness prevention supports, such as emergency short-term rental assistance or landlord or family mediation since Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy launched in 2019. And during the same period, over 110,000 people have been assisted in attaining more stable housing.

Reaching Home keeps decision-making at the community level by flowing funds directly to not-for-profits and community



entities, like many of you here today, who best understand local challenges and what's needed to prioritize vulnerable populations like persons with diverse abilities.

By supporting integrative services, Reaching Home is making a difference in communities across Canada. Having a range of supportive services at the ready, including access to supportive housing and other spaces that can meet people's unique needs, and helping them navigate that transition, is essential.

These are real, tangible outcomes that show these programs work. But none of it can happen without you – and our partners across Canada.

Success Stories

In total, the **National Housing Strategy** has committed funding to build or repair nearly 26,200 homes specifically for people with disabilities.



We can see some results of that focus in the work we've done together.

We can see it at Martha Place, which is making a difference for local seniors, families, and persons with disabilities in Charlottetown. Martha Place leases 50 units on a rent-geared-to-income basis.

We see the tangible outcomes of our partnership in the Lou Fruitman Reena Residence in Thornhill, that's now home to more than 130 people with a range of diverse abilities and needs.

Both of these projects were supported by the **National Housing Strategy's Affordable Housing Fund** – or the National Housing Co-investment Fund, as it was known then.

Our work together is also taking shape today in the Frankfort Family Reena Residence in Toronto, which will be welcoming residents in 2026. And the WoodGreen Assisted Living site at 1080 Queen Street East facility. We are proud to have helped



support both of these facilities through the federal **Rapid Housing Initiative**.

The principle “Nothing about us without us” continues to guide our approach to inclusive housing for people with disabilities. Partnering with local community organizations allows us to work with the people on the ground – the experts who understand their communities best.

We will continue to look towards people with lived experience and community leaders to guide our efforts in responding to the needs of vulnerable Canadians.

Team Canada

We will also continue to work closely with all our partners across Canada.

Addressing the housing affordability crisis requires a Team Canada effort—all levels of government – provinces, territories as well as municipal and regional administrations, Indigenous



partners, and the non-profit and private sectors pulling together in the same direction. From policy makers to investors and financial institutions, private developers and builders to community leaders, like yourselves, each of us has an important role to play.

It is critical that provinces and territories match our ambition, and the federal government appreciates the great commitment that provinces and territories have demonstrated, working together on our shared objectives.

Municipalities and regional administrations are also an essential part of the solution. We need municipalities to take a critical look at potential barriers to housing in their jurisdictions. They play an important role in making the process of getting shovels in the ground as seamless as possible to get more homes built faster for Canadians.

We need the housing industry leaders—the real estate developers and the home builders—to bring innovation and speed to the table, and to boost housing starts.



And we need the non-profit organizations and communities at the ground level to help us understand the needs of vulnerable populations like people with developmental disabilities, so we can deliver inclusive housing.

Closing

Just last week, federal and provincial and territorial housing ministers met in Vancouver where they reaffirmed their shared commitment to tackle the housing crisis with ambition, including collaboration on shovel-ready affordable housing projects.

Working with all of you to identify priority projects will be essential in the months ahead.

Local organizations give voice to communities and offer unique perspectives on our shared priorities to help ensure all Canadians have access to affordable housing. That's why you're



an important partner in Team Canada, and I can't wait to hear from you.

Thank you.