



Advocating for Housing Rights: A Guide and Toolkit

Prepared by the Lived Expert Advisory Council and
CUISR Research Team



Community-University Institute for Social Research

Building healthy, sustainable communities

Since 1999, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)—formally established as a university-wide interdisciplinary research centre in 2000—has remained true to its mission of facilitating "partnerships between the university and the larger community in order to engage in relevant social research that supports a deeper understanding of our communities and that reveals opportunities for improving our quality of life."

Strategic Research Directions

CUISR is committed to collaborative research and to accurate, objective reporting of research results in the public domain, taking into account the needs for confidentiality in gathering, disseminating, and storing information. CUISR has five strategic research priorities:

1. Community Sustainability
2. Social Economy and Social Relations
3. Rural-Urban Community Links
4. Indigenous Community Development
5. Community-university partnerships

These strategic directions build on the research priorities/ modules—quality of life indicators, community health determinants and health policy, and community economic development—that led to the formation of CUISR to build capacity among researchers, CBOs, and citizenry.

CUISR research projects are funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), local CBOs, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

Tools and strategies

Knowledge mobilization: CUISR disseminates research through website, social media, presentations and workshops, community events, fact sheets, posters, blogs, case studies, reports, journal articles, monographs, arts-based methods, and listserv.

Hub bringing university and community together to address social issues: CUISR facilitates partnerships with community agencies.

Public policy: CUISR supports evidence-based practice and policy, engaging over the years in the national and provincial Advisory Tables on Individualized Funding for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC), and Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership.

Student training: CUISR provides training and guidance to undergraduate and graduate students and community researchers and encourages community agencies to provide community orientation in order to promote reciprocal benefits.

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Community-University Institute for Social Research

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We want to acknowledge that we live, work, and play on Treaty Six Territory, traditional gathering place and travelling route for the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene, Nakota and Dakota Sioux who played key roles in what we now call Saskatoon. Where we are is at the heart of who we are, our obligations and opportunities as treaty beneficiaries sharing the land and so much else. We respect our ancestors and cherish our relationship with one another as we work better together on a journey to improve housing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge funding from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (SSHRC-CMHC) Partnership Grant entitled *People, Places, Policies, Prospects: Affordable Rental Housing for Those in Greatest Need*, a three-site national study led in Cape Breton Regional Municipality by PI Dr. Catherine Leviten-Reid (Cape Breton U), in Ottawa by Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly (Carleton U), and in Saskatoon by Dr. Isobel M. Findlay (CUISR).

We also acknowledge the SSHRC-CMHC Partnership grant *A Safe and Affordable Place to Call Home: A multi-disciplinary longitudinal outcomes analysis of the National Housing Strategy* (NHS) to investigate the experiences of Canadians with NHS initiatives within Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Canada's North (PIs Professor Liam O'Brien and Professor Jackie Kennelly, Carleton University).

"Housing is absolutely essential to human flourishing. Without stable shelter, it all falls apart." - Matthew Desmond



Image generated by AI

ANSWERING THE 5Ws OF ADVOCACY

What is Advocacy? Broadly, advocacy is about persuading, about trying to influence decision making (political, social, economic, for example), shaping policy, or supporting a cause. Advocacy is about representing or speaking on behalf of people, about mediating or facilitating communications between people and decision makers, accompanying or speaking with people, empowering people to speak for themselves, or negotiating with decision makers. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. How Do We Advocate?



Advocacy can take several forms:

- Direct action demonstrating in the streets, displaying placards
- Write a letter (or opinion piece) to the newspaper editor
- Email or letter to municipal councillor, provincial MLA, or federal MP

- Share stories of lived experience
- Work with community and tenant associations
- Lodge complaints with the Human Rights Commission or the National Housing Advocate
- Participate in consultation/engagement events (in-person or virtual)
- Engage with social media posts
- Creating artistic outputs to increase visibility on housing and homelessness



Who Can Advocate? Anyone! You don't need to be a registered lobbyist (required for those whose employment duties include at least 20% of their time on government relations). You can act as an individual, in a group, or as part of an organization.

When Can We Advocate? Almost any time, but you might intervene strategically during elections, budget deliberations, when Parliament/legislature is sitting, council meetings, and public consultations. It is important to understand the prevailing issues at the time of your advocacy and to ride on, or acknowledge them to frame your message for impact.

Where Can We Advocate? In virtual or real places! At the legislature, at constituency offices, council chambers, constituency offices, on social media platforms, or on the street.

Why Advocate? To share your views and ideas, to amplify marginalized views, to shape future outcomes, to demand accountability from those in positions of authority, to create positive social change, to further socio-economic, legal, and political justice.

ADVOCATING FOR HOUSING RIGHTS

Do your homework! You are persuasive when you are in command of **the evidence**, know your **facts**, the **policy and legal framework**, and share **compelling stories**. The following resources will help build the evidence.

Canada's Commitments to Housing Rights: International and National

Canada is signatory to the *1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights* ([Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)) listing fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over [500 languages](#). Article 25 declares these rights:

- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Canada is also signatory to *the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights* (United Nations Human Rights Office, 1966 at [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | OHCHR](#)). Article 11.1 reads:

- The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will

take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

Although it did not sign on in 2007, Canada became signatory in 2016 to the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* at [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples | OHCHR](#). The Declaration “establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples.” Article 21 specifies these rights:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

Since Indigenous peoples are unduly impacted by housing insecurity and homelessness, the Reports of the UN Special Rapporteur (at [Annual thematic reports | OHCHR](#)) are especially important in developing remedies as are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) Calls to Action (at [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada : calls to action.: IR4-8/2015E-PDF - Government of Canada Publications - Canada.ca](#)) and the Calls for Justice of National

Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG, 2019) at [Call for Justice 1.7 Final Report](#).

Indigenous Peoples' Right to Housing: Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE)

Land entitlements form a key component of existing treaty rights. These rights are constitutionally recognized and affirmed under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. [Treaty Land Entitlement](#) (TLE) process requires that First Nations that did not receive the full land promised under historic treaties can file a claim with the Government of Canada. These claims are resolved through negotiated settlement agreements between the First Nation, the federal government, and often the provincial or territorial government. A TLE agreement typically outlines how much land a First Nation can acquire—either by purchasing private land on a willing buyer–willing seller basis, selecting unoccupied Crown land, or a combination of both within a designated area. Once land is acquired or selected, the First Nation can request that it be added to its reserve through the Additions to Reserve (ATR) process. As of August 2016, about 90% of TLE transactions occurred in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Treaty Land Entitlement in Saskatchewan

First Nations in Saskatchewan signed a series of numbered treaties (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10) with the Crown between 1871 and 1907. Protected by these treaties are the allocation of reserve lands based on population, rights to hunt, fish, and traps on traditional territories and the provisions for education, farming tools, and annuities. Though these treaties promised reserve lands based on population, not all First Nations received their full land allocations. [Treaty Land Entitlement in](#)

Saskatchewan agreements were created to fulfill these outstanding obligations under the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act (S.C. 1993, c. 11) at <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/S-4.3.pdf>. In 1930, the Natural Resources Transfer Acts (NRTA) transferred control of lands and resources from the federal government to the Prairie Provinces, including Saskatchewan, without consultation with Indigenous peoples or respect for geographic or traditional boundaries (Findlay et al., 2014). The NRTA also required provinces to provide unoccupied Crown land to help Canada meet its treaty commitments. This ensured Saskatchewan's role in fulfilling TLE obligations. See Findlay, I.M., Ray, C., & Basualdo, M. (2014). Learning with an Aboriginal cooperative in Saskatchewan. In B. Jeffery, I.M. Findlay, D. Martz, & L. Clarke (Eds). *Journeys in community-based research* (pp. 29-49). U of Regina Press.

On September 22, 1992, 25 First Nations signed the TLE Framework Agreement, securing \$440 million over 12 years from federal and provincial governments to purchase land, mineral rights, and improvements. The federal government covered 70% of the cost, while the province of Saskatchewan contributed 30%, with partial reimbursement from northern community transfers. Entitlement First Nations can purchase federal, provincial, or private land anywhere in Saskatchewan on a willing-seller/willing-buyer basis. As of August 2016, 23 of the 25 First Nations had met their minimum land requirements, known as “shortfall,” as defined in the agreement.

National Housing Strategy Act

The 2019 National Housing Strategy Act (S.C. 2019, c.29, s. 313) supports “the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to which Canada is a party.” In particular, the Act preamble makes clear its rationale:

Whereas housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities as well as a strong national economy in which the people of Canada can prosper and thrive;

Whereas access to affordable housing contributes to achieving beneficial social, economic, health and environmental outcomes;

Whereas improved housing outcomes are best achieved through cooperation between governments and civil society as well as the meaningful involvement of local communities;

Whereas national goals, timelines and initiatives relating to housing and homelessness are essential to improving the quality of life of the people of Canada, particularly persons in greatest need;

Whereas a national housing strategy would support a common vision, key principles and a coordinated approach to achieving improved housing outcomes;

Whereas a national housing strategy would contribute to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations;

And whereas a national housing strategy would support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Canada is a party.

The Housing Policy Declaration within the Act makes clear the following regarding housing policy of the Government of Canada:

- **(a)** recognize that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law;
- **(b)** recognize that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities;
- **(c)** support improved housing outcomes for the people of Canada; and
- **(d)** further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Act establishes both the **National Housing Council** and the **Office of the Federal Housing Advocate** to advance the right to housing and address systemic issues. The National Housing Council **review panel report** on The Financialization of Purpose-built Rental Housing associated with evictions, renovictions, rent hikes, and poor repairs (based on a rights-based approach and public participation in open hearings) had these recommendations:

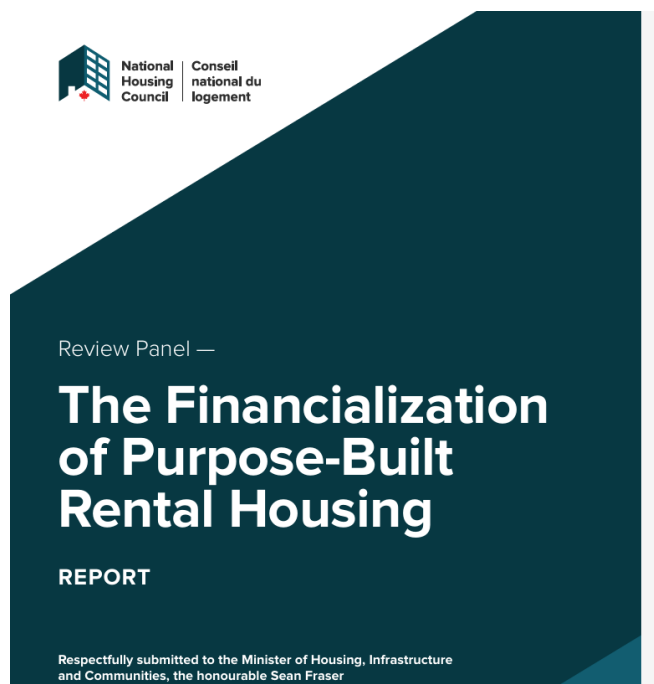
Supply: Advance the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in Canada by increasing, diversifying, and protecting affordable rental housing.

- Incentivize the development of new affordable rental housing supply, especially within the non-market sector.

- Actively protect existing affordable rental supply through a rental acquisitions program for non-market rental housing providers.
- Establish a comprehensive non-market rental housing plan to manage and distribute federal funding and lending to increase the supply of affordable non-market rental housing to match commitments made by other developed OECD countries.

Support: Advance the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing in Canada by taking immediate and long-term actions to enhance tenant supports and protections.

- Implement housing support for tenants facing housing precarity⁴.
- Serve as a convenor to bring all actors to the table to identify national consensus standards for tenant protections.

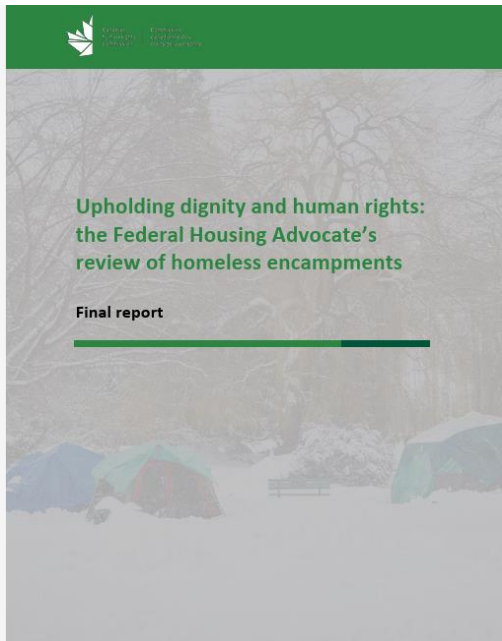


A member of the National Housing Council, the Federal Housing Advocate has these functions:

- **(a)** monitor the implementation of the housing policy and assess its impact on persons who are members of vulnerable groups, persons with lived experience of housing need and persons with lived experience of homelessness;
- **(b)** monitor progress in meeting the goals and timelines — and in achieving the desired outcomes — set out in the National Housing Strategy;
- **(c)** analyze and conduct research, as the Advocate sees fit, on systemic housing issues, including barriers faced by persons referred to in paragraph (a);
- **(d)** initiate studies, as the Advocate sees fit, into economic, institutional or industry conditions — respecting matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction — that affect the housing system;
- **(e)** consult with persons referred to in paragraph (a) and civil society organizations with respect to systemic housing issues;
- **(f)** receive submissions with respect to systemic housing issues;
- **(g)** provide advice to the Minister;
- **(h)** submit a report to the Minister on the Advocate's findings and any recommendations to take measures respecting matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction, to further the housing policy, including the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, and the National Housing Strategy; and
- **(i)** participate in the work of the National Housing Council as an *ex officio* member.

The current **National Housing Advocate, Marie-Josée Houle**, receives submissions and initiates studies to further housing rights, making recommendations to the federal government who have 120 days to respond. The following report found that Métis communities suffered disproportionate rates compared to non-Indigenous communities of homelessness, housing precarity, and addictions and mental health issues related to historic barriers and government policies and actions.





On the subject of encampments, the National Housing Advocate released her February 13, 2024, report with these recommendations:

- Act immediately to save lives
- End forced evictions of encampments
- Work with all governments and provide support to municipalities
- Respect the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Respect and uphold human rights
- Offer people permanent housing options as rapidly as possible
- Address the root causes of encampments

See also this UN Special Rapporteur report on eight principles to guide rights-based approaches at [A-National-Protocol-for-Homeless-Encampments-in-Canada.pdf](#)

A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH



A National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada

Leilani Farha

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing

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 **UN Special Rapporteur** on the Right to Housing

APRIL 30, 2020

Housing Adequacy: Seven Standards

The Canadian Human Rights Commission (n.d.) at [Housing as a human right | Canadian Human Rights Commission](#) underlines **the seven standards of housing adequacy** under international human rights law:

- **secure** — security of tenure provides protection from forced eviction, forced relocation or harassment
- **affordable** — housing costs should not be a barrier to meeting other basic needs such as food, and costs should be protected against unreasonable increases
- **habitable** — dwellings should have adequate space for the inhabitants, be properly maintained, and provide protection from the elements and other threats to health and well-being
- **provide basic services** — including safe drinking water, sanitation, heating, lighting, and emergency services
- **in a location** — that is close to employment and basic social services such as childcare, education and healthcare, and is not located in a polluted or dangerous area
- **accessible** — for people of all abilities, particularly those experiencing discrimination or living in vulnerable circumstances
- **culturally appropriate** — respects and is appropriate for the expression of the inhabitants' cultural identity and ways of life

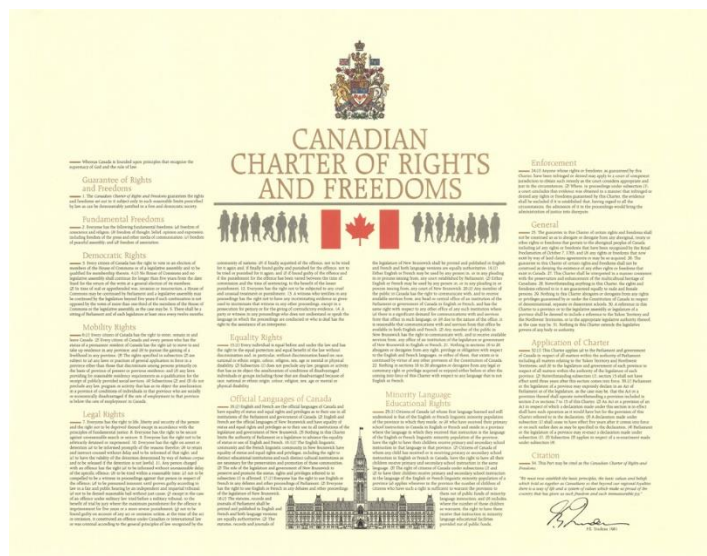
Government Responsibilities

The Canadian Human Rights Commission underlines “a shared responsibility between all governments” for advancing housing rights, although the federal government has a “leadership role.” Advancing housing rights “requires collaboration and a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples. This shared responsibility is also enshrined in international law — all governments in Canada are required to respect, protect, and fulfill the human right to adequate housing, since international human rights treaties and obligations apply equally at a federal, provincial, territorial and municipal level.” This obligation means that governments ensure that the housing system enables people to live in “security, peace, and dignity” and that there are mechanisms in place to address homelessness, prevent “forced evictions,” and address discrimination, while prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable.



Gaps in Canadian Housing Legal Framework

In Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is enshrined in the Constitution, the country's supreme law. This means any law inconsistent with the Charter can be challenged and overruled. While the Charter protects many fundamental freedoms and legal rights, it does not explicitly recognize housing as a constitutional right. This omission contrasts with Canada's international obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which recognizes housing as a fundamental human right at [The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in PDF](#).

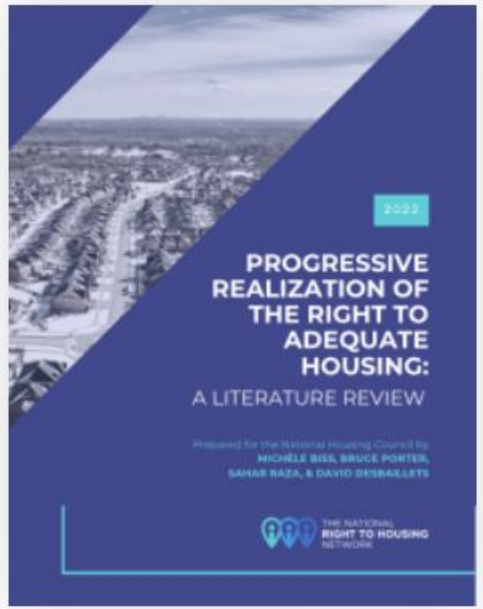


Canada ratified the ICESCR in 1976, thereby committing to implement its provisions domestically. The Covenant requires state parties to take steps—especially legislative ones—to ensure the right to adequate housing. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized that incorporating this right into national law is essential for fulfilling treaty obligations. However, Canada has yet to encode this right in its Constitution or Charter, despite acknowledging its duty to do so.

This gap has legal consequences. In **Tanudjaja v. Canada (AG)** (2013), the federal government argued that courts cannot use the ICESCR to expand constitutional rights not explicitly stated in the Charter. The court agreed, stating that it could not “rewrite the text of the constitution to add new rights.” As a result, despite international commitments, housing remains unprotected as a constitutional right in Canada, limiting legal paths for those seeking to enforce it.

Government “Policy Choices”/ Human Rights Failures

Biss et al. (2022) denounce “Canada’s failure to address **widespread homelessness**” **not as a program failure but “as an urgent violation of the right to life and health as well as the human right to adequate housing”** (p. 5; bolding added). They also argue this is not “a result of scarce resources but rather of policy choices and a failure to allocate available resources to realize a fundamental human right” (p. 20). It is also a result of “inadequate regulation of private landlords and investors in Canada” leading to homelessness when administrative tribunals fail to respect legal norms against illegal evictions (Biss et al., p. 42).



See Biss, M., Porter, B., Raza, S., & Desbaillets, D. (2022). *Progressive realization of the right to adequate housing: A literature review*. Prepared for the National Housing Council. The National Right to Housing Network. https://housingrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/NHC-Progressive-Realization-Paper_EN.pdf

WHAT RESOURCES WILL HELP ADVOCACY EFFORTS?

Now that we have clarified Canada's commitments to housing rights and the offices established to advance those rights, what other resources can help strengthen our arguments?

Canadian Centre for Housing Rights at [Homepage - Canadian Centre for Housing Rights](https://www.housingrights.ca/)

The Centre has a variety of reports and other resources. See, for example, these resources:



The Tenant Leaders' Toolbox: Resources for Housing Rights Advocacy

This toolbox provides a list of practical resources to support your leadership and advocacy work, with tools to increase your understanding of the right to housing in Canada.



[CCHR-ImplementingTheR2H-Toolkit-for-Tenant-Leaders-UpdatedSept2023.pdf](#)

This toolkit includes “an overview of the main principles of the right to housing, Canada’s obligations to implement this right, and policies at different levels of government that can help advance it.” In addition to clarifying “a human rights-based approach to housing,” including “participation and inclusion, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment and legality,” it identifies “systemic housing issues” (homelessness, discrimination, undue evictions, maintenance and repair issues) along with “practical tools that can help tenants mobilize their communities and effectively participate in decision-making processes.” Provincial Residential Tenancies Acts, Human Rights Codes, Accessibility Acts, building codes, housing subsidies, rent controls, and housing action plans and municipal zoning bylaws and maintenance standards, eviction prevention programs, land banks, and housing needs assessments can be used to uphold some of the principles and standards of housing rights. The rights-based approach “frames

poverty as the nonrealization of human rights, resulting from marginalization, discrimination, and inequality” and supports those marginalized to assert their rights.

National Right to Housing Network (NHRN) at [NRHN - Home](#)

The Network of leaders representing 350 organizations and lived experts, is focused on lobbying, engagement and relationship building with stakeholders, including government, to advance the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. You will find these invaluable resources on their site.



Right to Housing

Find out what Canada’s right to housing legislation means for ending homelessness and housing inequities.

[MORE](#)



Take Action

Support the right to housing and its meaningful implementation in Canada.

[More](#)



Resources

Learn about the application of the right to housing through research, videos and toolkits.

[More](#)

The Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network (CLELN) at <https://cleln.ca/>

centre lived experience in their efforts to end homelessness in Canada.



Who We Are

Find out about the lived voices steering this network and its scope.

[Learn More](#)



Resources

Explore our growing library of documents and related resources.

[Learn More](#)



Join Us

Interested in joining the network? Find out how you can become a member.

[Learn More](#)

Their **Seven Guiding Principles** are as follows:

1. **Nothing about us without us and for us.**

We believe and are guided by and advance seven principles for leadership and inclusion of people with lived experience of homelessness. That begins with the principle of Nothing About Us Without Us and For Us.

2. **We believe that ending homelessness is possible.**

We believe homelessness should, and can become rare, brief, and non-recurring.

3. **We work for those who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness.**

We work with humility and without judgement and take a rights-based approach to ending homelessness.

4. **We believe in the Right to Housing.**

We believe in the fulfilment of all peoples' rights to a safe, permanent, and affordable home of their choosing, with the support necessary to sustain it.

5. **We are committed to equity and inclusivity.**

We strive for equity and inclusion within our network. By being sensitive to the compounding impact and complexity of intersectional realizations of stigma, prejudice, and oppression, we aim to support all homeless-identifying people, including those who experience multi-marginalization, in addressing homelessness and housing need.

6. We are committed to being curious and honouring a space of learning and understanding.

We welcome people of colour, marginalized groups and individuals, and those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. We are committed to ensuring that the Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network is a safe and respectful space for all members.

CLELN members will treat fellow members respectfully and will work collectively to ensure CLELN is a space where everyone is heard and strive for a space where conflict can be a source for learning for all. We will not accept or allow any form of discrimination, violence, bullying or abusive behaviour.

7. We commit to advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We are guided in our work by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the principle of self-determination.

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) at [Housing and Public Assistance](#)

[Advocacy - Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission](#)

- Resources for Tenants Facing Eviction – [HTML](#), [PDF](#)
- Housing Discrimination Information Sheet – [HTML](#), [PDF](#)
- RENT-ED: A Renter’s Education Course – [HTML](#)
- Rights and Responsibilities for Landlords – [HTML](#)

- Rights and Responsibilities for Tenants – [HTML](#)
- City of Saskatoon Housing Handbook, resources for landlords and tenants – [HTML](#)
- Saskatchewan legislation governing landlords and tenants: *The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* – [HTML](#)
- Office of Residential Tenancies (“Rentalsman”) complaint process – [HTML](#)
- Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission complaint process – [HTML](#)

See also SHRC (2018), Access and Equality for Renters in Receipt of Public Assistance: A Report to Stakeholders at [SHRC_RIRPA_web.pdf](#)

See also resources on the CLASSIC (*Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.*) website at [Classic Law Inc. - Home](#). Since 2007 CLASSIC has been providing free legal programming, services, and supports for people who experience poverty and injustice. CLASSIC has good relationships with other community-based organizations, which allows for mutual referrals and working together. See their Frequently Asked Questions for Clients at [Classic Law Inc. - FAQ for Clients](#) for advice on their services, eligibility criteria, and more.

At the February Community Conversation on Advocating for Housing Rights, CLASSIC gave some excellent advice on what are often illegal evictions that landlords often get away with because people focus on finding another place rather than fighting the order. They find that people are coming to them too late, making it difficult to help persons served with unlawful evictions. Their community support worker can also help with non-legal needs and help avoid

eviction. Also, CLASSIC stressed the inadequacy of income assistance leading to houselessness and the Office of Residential Tenancies (ORT) failure to adequately assess how “just and equitable” an eviction is or provide sound reasons for evictions, while publishing names online risking black-listing people while making confidential information potentially searchable.

Check out also our CUISR report *Community Conversation: Advocating for Housing Rights* by the Lived Expert Advisory Council and the CUISR Team (at [cuisr-report_advocating-for-housing-rights_14042025.pdf](#)). It documents what the community had to say on the topic, the commitments they made, and the actions/recommendations they favoured. There are useful stories and examples that put a human face on some of the facts and figures.

PREPARING FOR ADVOCACY

- Survey the landscape
- Know your enemies and your friends
- Get your facts right!
- Frame your message for impact
- Form formidable alliances



Pitching Your Case

Now that you have resources and have some command of facts and figures, policy and legal frameworks, you can focus on getting your message across as succinctly and persuasively as possible. You might consider the virtues of an **elevator pitch** to explain who you are and what your goals are in 30 seconds! Aim for no more than 2-3 points and practise to make perfect!

Submissions to the National Housing Advocate

You can make a submission targeting a systemic barrier, an eviction crisis, or policy reform in a request for a formal review. Your elevator pitch is useful here in clearly articulating who you are, what the systemic issue is, why it is important, and where and how the National Housing Advocate can help. The Advocate may complete her own review and recommend to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities for response within 120 days. Alternatively, the Advocate can ask the National Housing Council to set up a review panel and hold a hearing and present recommendations to the Minister. Complete the online form with pdf attachment detailing the systemic issue you are facing (see the template provided) explaining the following:

1. The systemic housing issue

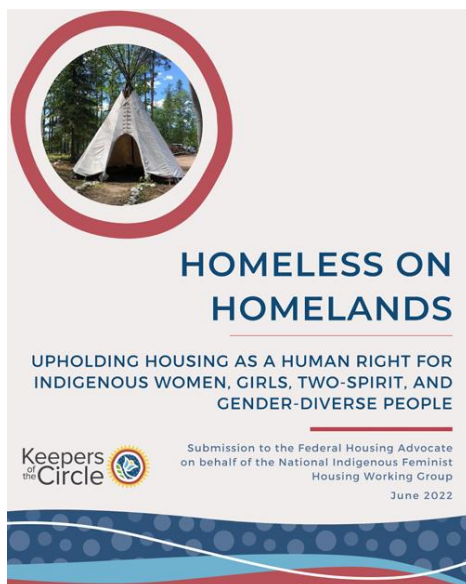
2. What government can do, what you have already done/where you have received help, and whether you have lodged a formal complaint to an authority (legal, administrative, etc.)
3. Your history of housing and homelessness
4. Your personal information

Or an organization may modify this order:

1. Give examples of lived experience of the systemic housing issue
2. Describe related human rights obligations
3. Explain how the issue violates human rights norms, link root causes to government policy/failure to respect right to adequate housing using relevant and rigorous data
4. Recommend how to address the violations of the right to adequate housing

The CCHR cites an example of a long, formal organizational submission that could be useful:

The National Indigenous Feminist Housing Working Group's submission (at [Indigenous-Housing-Claim-June-15-2022.pdf](#)) on the systemic issues experienced by Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people.



Making a Presentation

- ☐ Say what you will do, do it, and reinforce in conclusion
- ☐ Clear purpose, logical organization, sufficient evidence
- ☐ Engaging opener & compelling conclusion
- ☐ Signposts, transitions, reinforcements
- ☐ Creativity, coherence, responsiveness, professionalism

- ☐ Limit your talk to one idea, three main points
- ☐ Link information to audience knowledge
- ☐ Anticipate or answer questions and objections.
- ☐ Present strongest point first; second strongest last
- ☐ Use conventional organization
 1. Chronological – past, present, and future
 2. Problem-causes-solution
 3. Pro-Con
 4. 1-2-3 – discuss three aspects of topic

Effective PowerPoint Slides

- ☐ Slides are a springboard, not a script.

- ☐ Keep it simple.
- ☐ Use fonts that are clear and legible from a distance.
- ☐ Use dark text on light background (with few exceptions)
- ☐ Include questions (trivia, feedback, FAQs)

Managing Technical Risks

- ☐ Check equipment in advance
 - ☐ Ensure links are active
- ☐ Have alternative means of delivery
 - ☐ Your notes
 - ☐ Audience handouts (**handouts are recommended to engage your audience and give them something to take away—and remember your presentation!**)
- ☐ Ensure visuals readable throughout room
 - ☐ Check sight lines, text size, colors

Handling Questions

- ☐ **Anticipate questions (identify challenges)**
- ☐ Rephrase/restate questions for audience benefit
- ☐ Share responsibilities for questions (in a group presentation)
- ☐ View questions as opportunities
- ☐ Answer to extent that you can

- ☐ Acknowledge when you don't have the answer. Invite others to contribute, or offer to respond at a later date
- ☐ Compliment interesting/useful questions

Presenting Powerfully

- ☐ **Plan** carefully
- ☐ **Prepare** thoroughly
- ☐ **Practice** repeatedly
- ☐ **Perform** professionally

Letter/Email Template for Correspondences with Elected Officials on Housing Advocacy

Dear Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities The Honourable Gregor Roberston:

I write as a [member/researcher/advocate, lived expert] of [name of your riding] to ask that you use your position as minister to promote housing rights and address the record levels of homelessness in our community. Despite the National Housing Strategy (NHS) Act commitments to the progressive realization of housing rights in Canada, over 2.5 million people still live in core housing need, those in greatest need are most impacted, chronic homelessness continues to rise in Saskatoon—to 64% in 2024 up from 59% in 2022—and homelessness has tripled since 2022 to 1,499 individuals.

We call on you as the Minister of Housing to ensure investments in the construction and maintenance of social housing and co-operative housing that meets the acceptable housing standards and is truly affordable at less than 30% of before-tax income.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[your name]

Op-ed Template

Saskatoon Community Members Come Together to Advocate for Housing Rights

In the context of a housing crisis and record homelessness in Saskatoon, a community conversation on February 26 (10:00 am-2:00 pm) at Station 20 West designed by the Lived Expert Advisory Council at Community-University Institute for Social Research and funded by two SSHRC-CMHC Partnership grants discussed how community members can collectively work towards ensuring housing rights for all.

Although housing rights are recognized by international instruments ratified by Canada and by Canada's own National Housing Strategy Act (2019), it remains unclear how effectively different levels of government fulfill their obligations to uphold those rights. Whereas the federal government must show leadership, all levels of government have a responsibility to ensure "measures to prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination, ensure security of tenure for all, and help guarantee that everyone's housing is adequate," according to

the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Housing adequacy means meeting seven basic conditions: secure, affordable, habitable, provide basic services, in a location close to employment and services, accessible, and culturally appropriate.

We challenge all levels of government to live up to their obligations:

- To ensure “measures to prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination, ensure security of tenure for all, and help guarantee that everyone’s housing is adequate.”
- To address the homelessness crisis as a violation of the human right to adequate housing and commit to a rights-based approach to programs and policies as well as better coordination and collaboration and ongoing monitoring and assessment.



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