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Housing, Homelessness, & Violence Against Women

Women's Invisible Homelessness

We need a National Housing Strategy that recognizes the link between the lack of affordable and safe housing, homelessness, and violence against women. Women often do not show up in data collected on the homeless and as a result are left out of policy and programming to address homelessness. Additionally, women may not access the same services as homeless men because they fear for their safety in mixed gender shelters; some homeless shelters will not take in women fleeing violence; often homeless shelters do not have the staff or resources to support survivors of domestic violence; and single mothers fleeing violence may be reluctant to seek help from social services and shelters for fear that child welfare authorities may apprehend their children.



Recommendations to the National Housing Strategy

- 1 Incorporate an intersectional human rights gender approach that recognizes the links between the lack of housing, homelessness, poverty, economic insecurity, colonization, racism, ableism, child intervention, and violence against women (VAW). An intersectional analysis of race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, age, immigration status, and disability is necessary to develop solutions that meet the needs of women living at different intersections;
- 2 Require current funding definitions of homelessness to be more inclusive of women, recognizing that their homelessness is invisible and that:
 - women who experience violence in their own homes are homeless
 - women who flee violence are homeless
 - women who stay in women's shelters are homeless
 - women who couch surf with family, friends, and strangers are homeless;
- 3 Create an Indigenous Housing Strategy that responds to the specific needs of Indigenous women and their families both on and off reserve, including co-operative housing and a provision that services are integrated at the beginning (e.g. child care, space for ceremony, collective kitchens, trauma-informed design);
- 4 Significantly increase the supply of social housing units and require that a minimum of 25% of units in all projects funded by the National Housing Strategy be fully accessible for women with disabilities and their families using principles of universal design;
- 5 Incorporate flexibility to make it easier to provide a continuum of housing services specific to meet regional needs. This is especially important in Northern, rural, and isolated communities where housing services are more limited;

National Housing Fund

- 6 Re-establish the shelter enhancement fund and dedicate 10% (\$50 million per year) in the National Housing Fund for shelters and additional funds for a continuum of housing for gender-based violence survivors;
- 7 Ensure that the shelter enhancement fund reflects the specific needs of VAW shelters, is distributed equitably, and accounts for regional differences including the costs associated with repairs, renovations, and builds to bring access to shelters to a national standard;
- 8 Include women survivors who are fleeing violence from non-partner family members, landlords, caregivers, and support workers on whom they depend for resources and housing;

Investment in Affordable Housing

- 9 Ensure there are dedicated funds in the agreements negotiated with the provinces and territories for shelters and a continuum of housing, including second stage/transitional and permanent supportive housing, for gender-based violence survivors;

Homelessness Partnering Strategy

- 10 Address the limitations and inconsistencies across the provinces, territories, and regions of the current community entity funding model and set parameters for operating funding so that women's shelters and organizations can apply directly to the federal government for HPS funding;
- 11 Support a continuum of housing beyond Housing First, including dedicated funding for permanent, temporary, and supportive housing provided by VAW services (including second stage/transitional housing) that serves survivors of violence and women coping with mental health and addictions. Additionally, there is a pressing need to support housing that is trauma-informed, low-barrier, and based on practices of harm reduction.

Infographic created by

Women's Shelters Canada

Hébergement femmes Canada

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