

Vestry Social Justice Motion 2024
Protecting and Advancing the Right to Housing

We, the parish of Holy Trinity, Guildwood, call on all levels of government to take the following measures to protect and advance the human right to housing:

- **We call on the Government of Canada to ensure that federal subsidies and incentives are targeted to those developers and projects that demonstrably address housing need and uphold the human right to housing by meeting clear conditions on affordable rents, non-displacement policies and eviction prevention measures.**
- **We call on the Government of Canada to end the favourable tax treatment of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and tax them at the regular corporate rate, with resulting revenues being directed toward the creation and preservation of affordable housing.**
- **We call on the Province of Ontario to enact rent controls and vacancy controls on all rental housing and put restrictions on Above Guideline Rent Increases.**
- **We call on the Province of Ontario to work with municipal governments to enact and enforce restrictions on short-term rentals to protect rental housing stock.**

Canada has ratified the human right to housing in multiple international treaties, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The National Housing Strategy Act (2019) commits the federal government to the progressive realization of the right to housing. This does not mean that the government guarantees everyone a home. What it does mean is that the government must do everything in its power to realize the right to housing for Canadians, including removing obstacles and barriers to the realization of that right.

Three key aspects of the right to housing are **affordability**, **security of tenure** and **habitability**. Affordability is threatened when housing costs exceed 30% of a household's pre-tax income. Security of tenure is threatened when people are subject to eviction for no fault of their own, such as expropriation or arbitrary eviction. Habitability is threatened when units are not kept in an adequate state of repair.

Most recent government policy around affordable housing, at both the federal and provincial levels, has focussed on supply. Considering that both levels of government stopped creating non-market housing in the 1990's, we have a 30-year deficit in that supply. Worse, we are losing existing affordable housing faster than it is being built. For every new affordable rental unit created between 2011 and 2016, 15 units were lost in the private rental sector.¹ We cannot merely build our way out of the affordable housing crisis: we must also take measures to prevent the loss of existing affordable housing stock.

¹ <https://www.focus-consult.com/why-canada-needs-a-non-market-rental-acquisition-strategy/>

In the 1990's, as governments in Canada withdrew from investing in social housing, they also made several regulatory and legislative changes. These changes permitted the securitization of mortgages, removed restrictions on the type and location of assets pension plans could hold, and enabled the creation of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITS), which provide investors with access to real estate income at a preferential tax rate. These changes have accelerated the acquisition of existing rental housing by corporate investors whose primary purpose is to minimize costs and maximize profits for shareholders, rather than to provide housing at a reasonable rate of return. This trend is known as the *financialization of housing*, and “is associated with rising rent levels, displacement pressure, impacts on tenant quality of life, higher rates of eviction, and gentrification.”²

The pressure to minimize costs while maximizing profits for shareholders has adverse impacts on affordability, habitability, and security of tenure for tenants of corporate landlords. Routine maintenance and upkeep of buildings is often neglected or deferred while money is invested in cosmetic improvements that allow landlords to apply successfully for above-guideline rent increases. Tenants suffer from neglect of needed repairs and upkeep, disruptive construction, repeated above-guideline increases, and both legal and extra-legal tactics, including harassment, that pressure them to leave their units. Indeed, financial firms strategically pursue “turnover” of tenants to benefit from vacancy decontrol (the opportunity to raise rents between tenancies.) This puts a strain on the mental and physical health of tenants while putting their security of tenure in jeopardy. These harmful effects are disproportionately experienced by people who are Indigenous, racialized, disabled, and newcomers to Canada, as well as those on low or fixed incomes – the same “vulnerable groups” that the National Housing Strategy is designed to assist.³

Some corporations buy up multiple rental units and divert them to the short-term rental market (e.g. AirBnB). This keeps these units from being accessible to local residents, and drives up rents in the area. It is happening in communities large and small, urban and rural alike.

Carol, a renter in Toronto, lives in a building recently acquired by a REIT. She describes “a real struggle getting any work done”, with pest control, break-ins, and a non-functioning elevator being ongoing problems, while the owner was granted back-to-back above guideline increases. “We are always on edge because they have all the power and money to win things. It’s exhausting for us,” she says.⁴

Whitney is a mother of three who has been renting a house for five years in a small town with a very low rental vacancy rate. While her rent has been increasing each year as her landlord makes upgrades and applies above guideline rent increases, her own income has

² August, Martine. 2022. *The financialization of housing in Canada: A summary report for the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate*. The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate.

³ August, 2022

⁴ ACORN Canada. 2022. *The impact of financialization on tenants: Findings from a national survey of ACORN members*. The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate

not been getting upgraded. Whitney is worried: “If the rent goes up anymore, I don’t think we’ll be able to stay—where will we go?”

Nicole leads an outreach team in a small community, supporting people experiencing homelessness. She recently realized how precarious her own housing is. After over 10 years of renting a house, she and her husband were given sixty days to vacate as the landlord elected to put the property up for sale. Nicole and her husband could not afford to purchase it and so, with limited options, short notice, and high prices, they had to leave the community to find housing. While Nicole continues to lead outreach work in the community she loves, she now commutes to work. It turns out the landlord didn’t sell the house after all - it is being rented again to new tenants at a new (higher) price. Nicole says, “Thankfully we were able to live with my parents for a few months until we could find a place. If it can happen to us, it can happen to anyone.”⁵

Protecting and advancing the right to housing for people like Carol, Whitney, Nicole and their families means removing the barriers to housing that is affordable, habitable, and does not expose renters to arbitrary eviction. To make this happen, governments should ensure that public funds are targeted to the creation and preservation of housing that commits to those principles. Real Estate Investment Trusts, which have been shown to erode the right to housing, should be taxed at the regular corporate rate, which would make hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue available for creating and preserving truly affordable housing⁶ The province must end the vacancy decontrol loophole, which gives landlords an incentive to evict tenants, and work with municipalities to create and enforce restrictions on short-term rental operators so valuable units are not removed from the rental market.

Scripture recognizes the human need for shelter, security and dignity. Isaiah 32:18 reads, “My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” If Canada is a country truly committed to realizing the right to housing, our laws and policies must reflect this commitment.

⁵ These are the stories of real people living in our Diocese. “Whitney” and “Nicole”’s names have been changed.

⁶ <https://www.pbo-dpb.ca/en/publications/RP-2324-001-M--cost-removing-tax-exemptions-real-estate-investment-trusts--estimation-couts-elimination-exemptions-fiscales-accordees-fiducies-placement-immobilier>

Committee explores ways to help parishes build housing

July 05, 2022

By Stuart Mann

The diocese's Property Committee is exploring ways to help parishes that want to redevelop their properties to include both market-level and affordable housing.

"Homelessness is one of the big challenges in Ontario, and the Property Committee and the diocese want to do what we can to combat that and to provide opportunities for people to live in homes," says Peter Patterson, ODT, the committee's co-chair along with Stu Hutcheson, ODT.

Mr. Hutcheson says it can be difficult for parishes to redevelop their properties to include housing. The process requires a lot of time and expertise, especially in legal and property matters. For a parish that sells its property to a developer, the challenges can be even greater. If a developer pulls out of the project or hands it off to another, the parish can have little or no say in the outcome. Buildings are sometimes poorly constructed and managed, and the parish can be treated as just another tenant.

In response to those challenges, the Property Committee is looking at creating a template that parishes could follow so that the redevelopment process is easier, safer and more efficient.

TORONTO

Notice

XXX Storeys
XXXX Metres

XXXXX Residences
XXXX m² Retail

XXX Cars
XXX Bikes

A change is proposed for this site.
The City has received an application to change the Official Plan and Zoning By-Law to allow the construction of a residential building with retail at street level.

Applicant: ABC Holdings Incorporated & XYZ Ontario Limited
Address: 123 Any Street & 456 Busy Boulevard

For more information about this application or to tell us what you think:

COMMUNITY PLANNING
Planner's Name
416-39X-XXXX
email@toronto.ca

APPLICATION INFORMATION CENTRE
www.toronto.ca/aic

3 1 1
toronto at your service

PUBLIC MEETING
Notification of the public meeting will be mailed to all residents within 120 metres of this proposal and posted on this sign.
File # 17 123456 STE 30 OZ

A sample sign used in the City of Toronto to announce new development on a property.

One of the guidelines under consideration is that parishes retain ownership of the property, giving them more control over the project. Another is that work requiring expertise in legal and property matters is done at the diocesan level, not by individual parishes, to avoid duplication of both effort and cost. The committee is also exploring the possibility of working with a non-profit developer that works with faith-based groups on housing projects.

The committee is hoping the guidelines will result in buildings that are environmentally friendly, well constructed, and professionally managed and maintained after completion, and that provide ample worship and community space, as well as a funding stream that supports ministry. The committee would like to see at least 30 per cent of new units devoted to affordable housing, so that a community is created that comprises a mix of residents.

Mr. Patterson says that coming up with a template that can be repeated will save the parishes and the diocese time and effort. “You can spend a lot of time going through all the municipality’s rules and regulations trying to get approval for your project. But if you use a template approach that is repeatable, then eventually you’ll know the people on the other side of the table and they’ll be familiar with your process. That will speed things up for approval.”

An effective proposal can even result in grants from the municipality or other levels of government, helping to bring down the costs of the project, he adds.

He says each redevelopment process is different, so the templates would vary according to the need.

The committee is already trying out its ideas with two parishes. “We want to see if the template idea and everything that goes with it can be mapped out and put into action, but that’s going to take a little while,” says Mr. Patterson. The group will report on its progress to Synod Council.

Mr. Hutcheson says that even with an effective template, the redevelopment process can take time. “The process isn’t typically fast, as it involves needs assessments, city zoning, site plan approvals, financing arrangements as well as construction. Five years is not an unreasonable timeline from start to occupancy.”

Mr. Patterson says the time is right to come up with a template for property redevelopment. “I think we’re in a bit of a new world with our churches after the pandemic, and there are going to be more opportunities for parishes to reconsider their properties and exactly how they would be best set up. There are going to be opportunities for centres of excellence, amalgamations and mergers, and a lot of these are going to end up with property opportunities. It feels like a good time for this to be underway and the diocese to be looking at it seriously.”

While building affordable housing is important, it’s not the only thing that parishes can do to address issues of poverty and homelessness, he says. He praises churches,

individuals and the diocese for getting involved in outreach ministries such as Out of the Cold and food banks and advocating for a higher minimum wage and other ways to help lift people out of poverty.

The diocese presented a workshop to parishes in June 2021 that provided a theological perspective on land and an overall governance framework for development projects. Over the course of that summer, a series of four webinars were offered on a variety of topics that included looking at other faith-based housing projects, planning for inclusion and diversity, ecologically sustainable development, financial sustainability, and looking at development through the eyes of a non-profit developer. A wrap-up and reflection was held in September.

Parishes indicated that they were looking for greater clarity and guidance around the redevelopment process and more support from the diocese as they consider whether redevelopment is the next step in their faith journey. The Property Committee's work in this area is a response to that.

Diocese of Toronto

Policy Paper on Affordable Housing and Homelessness

Preamble/Background

In 2003-2004 the Social Justice and Advocacy Board, which had developed out of the Community Ministries Board, was asked to develop priorities for advocacy for the Diocesan Bishop and others as they interact with government officials and those who influence social realities in our Diocese. In January 2004, the Board gathered input from many across the Diocese, and, with the approval of Diocesan Council, identified Homelessness and Affordable Housing, as well as Child Poverty, as two priorities for both advocacy and parish outreach work. Over the ensuing decade and a half, we have come to see child poverty as only one aspect within the wider context of poverty and income inequality.

HIV/AIDS was also identified as a priority for outreach and advocacy at Diocesan Synod in 2005 and remained a social justice priority until 2015, when outreach in this area was subsumed under Chaplaincy. Environmental issues were added as another Diocesan social justice priority in 2010.

In January 2008 the Social Justice and Advocacy Board ceased to operate as a Canonical Board and became the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee. Currently the three priority areas for the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee remain:

- Affordable housing and homelessness
- Poverty reduction
- Environmental Issues.

As we embark upon a new chapter in the history of the Diocese of Toronto with the installation of a new Diocesan Bishop, we have been asked to prepare updated policy statements on these three priority areas. The Social Justice and Advocacy Committee and Consultant look forward to working with our new Diocesan Bishop on these priorities and others that the Bishops and Diocesan Council may define.

Social Justice and Advocacy within the context of Scripture and the Church's

Mission As members of Christ's Church, we are called into Christ's mission to the world (Matthew 28:18-20.) This mission, the good news of God in Christ, is described in our baptismal vows as well as in the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion.

In our baptismal vows, we promise to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving [our] neighbour as [ourselves]", to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being," and to "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and respect, renew, and sustain the life of the earth."¹ These vows echo the third, fourth and fifth Marks of Mission: "to respond to human need with loving service", "to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every

¹General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, *Book of Alternative Services*, "Holy Baptism", including the additional text added by resolution CO01 of Joint Assembly 2013, p. 159. (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1995) kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation", and "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth."

Similarly, our Mission as a Diocese is to "build healthy, missional Anglican communities that engage faithfully with the world and share the gospel of Jesus Christ."

A *missional* Anglican community does not occupy itself solely with its own internal well-being but focuses outward on behalf of those beyond its doors.

To *engage faithfully with the world* has a number of aspects. Firstly, it involves understanding the world as created and loved by God, for the redemption of which Jesus died and rose again (Genesis 1:1, John 3:16-17, Colossians 1:15-20.)

Faithful engagement with the world also includes upholding the central confession of the Church since apostolic times – that Jesus is Lord. No earthly authority – whether a form of

government, political party, or leader - can claim our ultimate allegiance or embody our ultimate hope. Our first loyalty is to Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of God which he embodied and proclaimed. While we acknowledge that earthly authorities have a God-given role to preserve order for the public good (Romans 13:1-7), we also understand that these structures and institutions are ultimately subject to being disarmed, reconciled, and transformed in Christ (Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 6:12, 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, Revelation 21:5.)

Accordingly, faithful engagement seeks the welfare of the place in which we find ourselves (Jeremiah 29:7), doing justly and loving mercy (Micah 6:8.) It is to uphold, in our public witness as well as our private charity, the Gospel values of loving one's neighbour as oneself, honouring the dignity of each person as made in the image of God, and welcoming and serving "the least" in our society as brothers and sisters of Christ (Matthew 22:39, Genesis 1:26-27, James 3:9, Matthew 25:31-45.)

Homelessness and Affordable Housing: The Reality in our Diocese

Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing have emerged as major social problems in Canada over the last three decades. Over this period, there has been a sharp decrease in public investment in affordable housing, with fewer units being built, and existing units falling into disrepair. Together with rising housing costs, reduced spending on social programs, stagnating incomes, and the rise of precarious work, more and more people in our province find themselves forced into degrading and insecure housing conditions, or unable to afford shelter at all. This results in poor health, marginalization, and social isolation for many of our most vulnerable citizens, including singles, couples and families. The housing crisis affects communities large and small, urban, suburban, rural, and Indigenous. Those who spend the most on housing are at the greatest risk of becoming homeless. Across our Diocese, nearly half of renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs, and one in five pay more than 50% of their income on housing³.

At the end of 2015, 171,360 households in Ontario were on active waiting lists for affordable housing, with average wait times of four years overall, and over twice as long in the GTA⁴. An estimated 12,000

²<https://www.anglican.ca/marks/about/>

³<http://rentalhousingindex.ca/>

⁴Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association 2016 Waiting Lists Survey Report, <http://qc.onpha.on.ca/flipbooks/WaitingListReport/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html>

Ontarians are homeless each night, creating demands on shelter services that often exceed supply.⁵ In the city of Toronto, homeless shelters operate at over 95% capacity, and even Out of the Cold programs have started to turn people away. Smaller communities in our Diocese report even higher shelter occupancy, while in rural areas there may be no shelters at all.

Public policy and funding measures are needed to make significant inroads on this issue.

Housing people appropriately makes economic sense. Homelessness and inadequate housing costs Canadian taxpayers over \$7 billion annually, due to the increased expenses imposed upon the health care, social service, and justice systems⁶. In Peterborough, for example, the cost of renting a bachelor apartment is 57% cheaper than that of supplying emergency shelter for one person⁷.

More importantly, homelessness and inadequate housing are associated with social and human costs including personal risk, increased stress, poor health, increased emergency hospitalization, increased rates of addiction and incarceration, higher rates of recidivism among former inmates, lower academic performance of students, and social isolation. Lack of housing kills: the Toronto Homeless Memorial next to the Church of the Holy Trinity records the names of over 900 people who have died on the streets of Toronto between 1985 and the end of August 2018. Providing safe, adequate and affordable housing is the right thing to do.

While there will always be crises which cause people to lose their homes temporarily, chronic homelessness, which is a relatively recent phenomenon, can be ended. Several Canadian cities, including Medicine Hat and Hamilton, have seen significant progress toward

this goal by using the “Housing First” approach, which seeks to move people out of homelessness quickly and prevent people from losing their homes in the first place. For Housing First to work, however, there must be an adequate supply of affordable housing units, repairs to maintain existing units, and ongoing health, social and income supports to keep people in their homes. In the short term, and for certain high-need populations, emergency shelters continue to be needed.

What Anglicans are already doing

Anglicans in the Diocese of Toronto have long been involved in efforts to secure decent and affordable housing and emergency shelter for those most in need. Our work has encompassed everything from helping to create affordable housing, to providing emergency shelter and supportive services, to advocacy campaigns at all levels of government. In these efforts we have worked together with ecumenical partners as well as the broader non-profit sector.

Some examples include:

Creating Affordable and Supportive Housing

- LOFT Community Services, which was originally launched in 1953 as Anglican Houses, offers over 1000 supportive housing units at more than 70 sites in Toronto and York Region, community support teams serving more than 1800 people, a wide range of mental health and addiction services and a large street outreach program.

⁵<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/homeless-shelter-ontario-closures-1.4299243>

⁶<http://homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/homelessness-101/cost-analysis-homelessness>

⁷[http://www.peterborough.ca/Assets/City+Assets/Housing/Documents/Reports/Housing+is+Fundamental\\$!2c+AHAC/2017+Housing+is+Fundamental\\$!2c+AHAC.pdf](http://www.peterborough.ca/Assets/City+Assets/Housing/Documents/Reports/Housing+is+Fundamental$!2c+AHAC/2017+Housing+is+Fundamental$!2c+AHAC.pdf)

- In 1984, Anglicans joined forces with six other church bodies to create the not-for-profit Ecuhome corporation. Today, Ecuhome provides affordable, permanent housing for over 700 men, women and children in 65 properties, including shared homes, rooming houses, and apartment buildings, throughout Toronto, as well as Housing Support Workers to assist residents with needed support, and Anglicans continue to be represented on the Ecuhome Board of Directors.
- Bellwoods House is a transitional housing shelter for older women operated by the City of Toronto within the former rectory of St. Matthias, Bellwoods, in Parkdale. The City leases the property from St. Matthias and provides 24-hour support, private rooms and meals for up to 10 women, many of whom suffer from mental illness. Bellwoods House was slated to be closed in the City of Toronto’s proposed budget for 2012, but St. Matthias parishioners helped lead a successful campaign to keep it in operation.
- Homegrown Homes in Peterborough received a significant donation from the Diocese of Toronto in 2013 for its George Street North project, which provided a safe, affordable home for two low-income families.
- In 2015, a tithe from the Diocesan Ministry Allocation Fund gave \$100,000 to Habitat for Humanity to support the building of a two-story, three-bedroom home for a low-income family in Scarborough. Parishes and Diocesan staff contributed manual labour on build days during the spring and summer to bring the project to completion.

Providing emergency shelter and services

- A recent Parish Outreach Survey indicated that one in five parishes in our Diocese are directly involved in helping the homeless through Out of the Cold Programs. Some parishes, including St. Matthew, Islington and St. Aidan, Toronto, provide shelter to homeless people in their church buildings on a weekly basis, while other parishes, such as St. Margaret’s, Barrie, contribute hot meals to Out of the Cold programs in other locations.
- Several of our FaithWorks ministry partners are involved in providing emergency shelter and transitional housing to those in need. Couchiching Jubilee House in Orillia and Samaritan House in Barrie both offer transitional housing and supportive services for

women and children recovering from domestic violence. The David Busby Street Centre in Barrie runs central intake for all emergency shelter referrals in Barrie during the winter months between mid-November and the end of April, and provides Housing First case management to assist homeless individuals and families in securing and maintaining permanent housing. North House provides a range of housing support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in North Durham, including stability funds for rent and utility arrears or rent deposits, monthly rent subsidies, support in landlord-tenant disputes and help finding emergency and longer-term affordable housing. The Warming Room in Peterborough provides a year-round shelter facility as well as a supportive housing program for people who have experienced chronic homelessness.

- Many parishes also host or support drop-in programs where homeless or precariously housed people can find a safe space, a nutritious meal, health care and harm reduction services, and social activities from board games to art and music programs. Two examples include All Saints Church and Community Centre in downtown Toronto, which offers an open drop-in Mondays through Thursdays as well as a Friday morning breakfast drop-in for street-involved women, and St. Barnabas and St. John, Peterborough, whose One Roof Community Centre provides weekday lunches and daily dinners as well as life skills, harm reduction, health care and community building.

Advocacy

While emergency shelter and drop-in support programs are vital for providing relief to those in immediate need, we recognize that any effort to address the long-term needs underlying the housing crisis requires more resources than churches and community agencies can provide alone. Anglicans in our Diocese, from the Diocesan Bishop to the laypeople of numerous parish vestries, have been active in advocating with all levels of government for a systematic, long-term solution to the problems of homelessness and affordable housing.

- Archbishop Colin Johnson has used his influence and position to speak out on housing issues at public events and with provincial Cabinet Ministers. He met with provincial Housing Minister, the Hon. John Gerretsen, in March 2005 to urge him to commit to funding for affordable and supportive housing units and housing allowances for low-income families. In November 2012, Archbishop Johnson spoke at a National Housing Day of Action rally, while in August 2013, he and members of the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee met with the new Housing Minister, the Hon. Linda Jeffries, to ask the provincial government to commit to funding a renewed federal-provincial affordable housing initiative, to bring in a housing benefit to make rents more affordable, and to introduce inclusionary zoning legislation. In January 2018, Archbishop Johnson appeared before the provincial Finance Minister, the Hon. Charles Sousa, at a pre Budget town hall meeting, reminding him that investment in housing and income stability had been shown by research to have even greater return on investment than direct investment in health care.
- The Diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy Committee has called on Anglicans throughout the Diocese to sign petitions, write to, and meet their elected representatives in support of affordable housing, inclusionary zoning, and homelessness prevention initiatives. A major Diocesan housing advocacy campaign was launched in November 2012.
 - In addition, the Diocese has urged its parishes to pass vestry motions calling for government action to support affordable housing in 2007 and in 2018. Over 80 parishes in the Diocese passed the 2018 Social Justice Vestry Motion calling on the provincial government to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to increase available affordable housing, develop strategies to support groups at higher risk of homelessness, to partner with the federal government and to ensure municipal emergency shelter services are adequately funded.

- Our Diocese has contributed to the development of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario's policy statement on affordable housing and homelessness, as well as on election resources produced by the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario and the Anglican Church of Canada.
- Anglicans in the Diocese have joined with the housing advocacy efforts of ecumenical and interfaith justice partners, including the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Faith in the City, and Citizens for Public Justice.

Our advocacy efforts have met with a measure of success, including the release of the federal government's national housing strategy in November 2017 and the coming into force of provincial legislation for inclusionary zoning and greater tenant protection in April 2018. In Peterborough and

Toronto, Anglicans have been effective in advocating for the expansion of city emergency shelter and respite centre services. However, there remains much work to be done.

Priorities for housing/homelessness advocacy

The Social Justice and Advocacy Committee, together with the Housing Advocacy Subcommittee of the Diocese of Toronto, has identified the following priorities for affordable housing and homelessness advocacy.

We call for a systematic approach to preventing homelessness, which should engage all levels of government, include the full range of options from emergency shelter to market rent and home ownership, and involve the following elements:

- **The recognition of housing as a human right as the foundation of a systematic approach to ending homelessness and the progressive realization of adequate housing for all.** Canada is a party to international agreements, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognize "adequate housing" as a human right. The National Housing Strategy of 2017 has spoken of a "rights-based approach" to housing, but domestic legislation has yet to be passed which would recognize and implement the right to housing within Canadian law. The Canadian Association to End Homelessness and other advocates have urged the federal government to enshrine the right to housing in legislation, to ensure that progress toward ending homelessness continues to be made by governments of all stripes at all levels.
- **Adoption of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) definition of affordable housing as within 30% of a household's income before tax.**⁸ When households spend more than 30% of their before-tax income on housing costs, they are increasingly at risk of homelessness should they suffer any economic hardship.
- **The adoption of measures to address the disparity between income levels and housing costs.** As long as income levels are stagnant and housing costs continue to rise, there will continue to be a crisis in affordability. A comprehensive housing strategy must recognize the fact that housing costs usually represent the greatest single expenditure for families and individuals, and find ways to address the widening gap between real incomes and housing costs. This could involve rent controls, housing benefits, income supports, or some combination of these measures.
 - **Support for the creation of new affordable housing.** This could involve a number of different means depending on whether the housing is to be built by the public, private, or non-profit sector or some combination thereof. Inclusionary zoning, which would require developers to make a certain percentage of all new housing built truly affordable, is one such measure. The contribution of public property at low cost, or other financial incentives, might also be applied.
 - **Ongoing support for the maintenance of social housing.** It is not enough to build affordable housing units – they must be physically maintained, and their affordability secured, over the long term. Much of the social housing that was built

decades ago is showing signs of deferred maintenance and in need of significant repair. TCHC estimates that it needs \$2.6 Billion to

⁸<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/develop-new-affordable-housing/programs-and-information/about-affordable-housing-in-canada>

maintain its current stock of housing, much of it 50 years old, in the next decade⁹. The construction of new units does not represent an overall gain when existing affordable units must be demolished due to lack of repair. Keeping social housing units in a state of disrepair is dangerous and degrading to the dignity of their residents.

- **Supportive housing for individuals with particular needs.** Some people are “hard to house” due to physical or developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, addictions, criminal records and other needs. These especially vulnerable people need extra supports if they are to be able to keep a place to call home. A systematic approach to preventing homelessness would recognize and provide for these necessary supports. Including vulnerable groups in developing housing strategies (youth, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities) would help address the needs of that particular group in a way that maintains their dignity and agency.
- **Adequate emergency shelter to assist people in crisis, coupled with transitional housing and a Housing First approach to help people out of homelessness as quickly as possible.** When 12,000 people are homeless in Ontario on any given night, and shelters are operating at over 95% capacity even in the summer months, shelters become overcrowded, and the risk of disease and violence escalates. Emergency shelter is not and should not be a long-term solution to chronic homelessness, but should provide a safe roof over the heads of those who have just lost their homes. It is equally important to provide transitional housing options so that people can move out of homelessness as soon as possible, thus freeing up emergency shelter for those in immediate need.

These elements of a systematic and long-term housing solution represent our commitment as Anglican Christians to the dignity, health, and security of our most vulnerable members of our communities. How we treat those in need of shelter is how we treat Christ himself.

Strategies for Advocacy and Action

Over the past decade, the Diocese of Toronto has built a reputation for advocacy and action on housing issues. Building on past success, and the priorities identified above, we propose that Diocesan Council, through the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee, should do the following:

1. Continue advocacy at the federal, provincial and municipal levels.

We will continue to support our Diocesan and Area Bishops, clergy and laypeople to make our voices heard in the public square, as we:

- Urge the federal government to introduce legislation to implement the National Housing Strategy.
- Make the implementation of the National Housing Strategy a key issue in the lead-up to the 2019 federal election.
- Urge the provincial government to work with the federal government to maximize the impact of the National Housing Strategy.
- Advocate at the provincial level for the reintroduction of rent controls and the maintenance of homelessness prevention initiatives.
- Advocate for municipalities across the Diocese to identify sites for the building of affordable housing, including transitional and supportive housing.

⁹<https://www.torontohousing.ca/capital-initiatives/capital-repairs>

- Urge municipal governments to provide incentives for non-profit and co-operative housing providers to build and deliver affordable housing options.

Measures of progress:

- By June 2019, engage Anglicans in the Diocese in a campaign to implement the National Housing Strategy through federal legislation
 - Contribute to the production and delivery of an election resource for Anglicans on social justice issues, including housing, in the lead-up to the 2019 federal election.
- By June 2020, convene a meeting with church leaders and the provincial or federal ministers responsible for housing to promote action on specific housing policy measures.

2. **Develop a “Housing Network” in all regions of the Diocese** to study local housing needs and initiatives, and to help engage local Anglicans in advocacy and action. Ultimately, this would include Anglicans in Toronto, Peel Region, York Region, Simcoe County, Durham Region, Northumberland, Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough, and Haliburton.

Measures of progress:

- By June 2019, identify key housing advocates in each of these regions.
- By May 2020, host or co-host a housing advocacy event in each episcopal area of the Diocese.

3. **Create opportunities for the Diocese to express a tangible commitment to affordable housing.** The Diocese controls extensive real estate throughout its boundaries. The use of the proceeds from the sale or other disposition of Diocesan real estate is governed by the Capital Redeployment Policy through the Ministry Allocation Fund. The greater part of the Ministry Allocation Fund is used to maintain Diocesan property, support congregational development and encourage new forms of ministry. However, Diocesan Council has also instituted the practice of making a tithe of the annual income of the Ministry Allocation Fund as a significant contribution to a cause which does not normally receive regular Diocesan funds.

Measures of progress:

- As an expression of our own commitment as a Diocese to affordable housing, we would like to encourage Diocesan Council to direct its next Ministry Allocation Fund Tithe to a non-profit housing provider for the construction of new affordable housing within the Diocese.
- We would also like Diocesan Council to explore how the Diocese could make an ongoing tangible commitment to affordable housing initiatives.

We look forward to working together with Anglicans across the Diocese, with ecumenical and interfaith partners, non-profit organizations, all levels of government, and the private sector, so that everyone in our communities has a place to call home.

“My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”

– Isaiah 32:18

HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan

The [HousingTO 2020 -2030 Action Plan](#) provides a blueprint for action across the full housing spectrum – from homelessness to rental and ownership housing to long-term care for seniors. This new plan was created following a comprehensive public and stakeholder consultation in 2019 and sets an aggressive housing agenda focused on supporting people over the next 10 years. As outlined in the the revised [Toronto](#)

[Housing Charter – Opportunity for All](#), City of Toronto recognizes that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities.

The HousingTO Plan updates and builds upon the City’s first housing plan, [Housing](#)

[Opportunities Toronto Action Plan 2010-2020](#). It aligns with other City policies such as the [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#), [Resilience Strategy](#), [TransformTO](#), the [Seniors Strategy](#). It also sets targets to be achieved over the next 10 years with estimates of the financial investments necessary to achieve success. Additionally, the Plan provides for increased accountability and oversight over a range of government resources necessary for improving housing outcomes for residents. Read the full [staff report](#) and other [complementary materials](#).

The Vision

Toronto is a city with a diverse range of housing opportunities. It is a place where families and individuals live in safe, well-maintained and affordable housing with respect and dignity and where people have equal opportunities to succeed.

Ontario and the National Housing Strategy

Learn about Ontario's programs, action plans and funding allotment under the National Housing Strategy.

Overview

In 2017, the federal government announced [Canada's 10-year National Housing Strategy](#). The goal of this strategy is to make sure Canadians across the country can access housing that meets their needs and that they can afford.

In 2018, the federal and Ontario government signed a [bilateral agreement under the National Housing Strategy](#) to set out the terms of the partnership.

Under the NHS, there are three initiatives that are cost-matched and delivered by Ontario:

1. [Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative \(COCHI\)](#)
2. [Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative \(OPHI\)](#)
3. [Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit \(COHB\)](#)

Action plans under the NHS

As part of the National Housing Strategy (NHS) bilateral agreement, Ontario is required to develop an action plan every three years.

The action plans outline how Ontario will use NHS funding and provincial and municipal cost-matched funding to achieve targets and outcomes. The targets and outcomes are mutually agreed upon by the federal and provincial governments.

[Community housing renewal: Ontario's action plan under the National Housing Strategy](#)

Read our 2019–2021 plan to address community housing and homelessness in Ontario. [Ontario's second Action Plan under the National Housing Strategy](#)

Read our 2022–2023 plan to address community housing and homelessness in Ontario

Ontario's challenges and needs

Of all Canadian households in [core housing need](#) (a measure of housing affordability, suitability and adequacy), **44.1% are located in Ontario**, the highest in the country. But Ontario only receives about 39% of funding from the federal government, creating a **shortfall of about \$480 million** for homelessness and community housing programs.

Filling this federal funding gap would ensure service managers and Indigenous program administrators have certainty and funding stability for their housing and homelessness services.

The Province continues to advocate for municipalities and Ontarians to receive their fair share of funding from the federal government. These additional revenues would flow to municipal service providers to ensure Ontarians can get the housing they need.

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