

June 19, 2025

The Honourable Gregor Robertson
Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic
Development Canada
180 Kent Street, Suite 1100
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0B6
minister-ministre@infc.gc.ca

Dear Minister Robertson,

Congratulations on your election as MP for Vancouver Fraserview—South Burnaby and
appointment as the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.

We are writing to suggest how best you can take swift action to help solve Canada's housing
crisis.

We all agree that Canada needs more homes. But we need to build the right type of homes —
housing in affordable, safe communities where Canadian families and individuals can thrive.
Building the wrong type of housing at the wrong prices in the wrong places is as damaging as
doing nothing. In fact, it may worsen our housing problem by tying up scarce material, labour
and capital in the wrong projects.

As you will likely know from your briefings and experience, the housing affordability crisis
doesn't affect all Canadians equally. Canadians in the lower income brackets are having the
most challenging time. They need help most urgently.

The federal government had some of its greatest success on the housing issue when it was
heavily involved in helping finance and build non-market housing, from the 1960s to 1980s. In
the 1970s, federal programs helped finance 20,000 social housing units and 16,000 non-profit
housing units annually. The St. Lawrence neighbourhood in downtown Toronto is perhaps the
best example of the positive impact this had. It is a thriving, centrally located community.

Then, in the early 1990s, the federal government effectively stopped helping create housing. It
was assumed the private sector would pick up the slack. This didn't happen.

For decades, Canadians who can't afford to pay market rents have been waiting for the private
market to deliver affordable homes. Instead, few affordable homes have been built, and rents
have kept rising as the private market has understandably focused on maximizing returns.

It's clear the private market cannot provide the housing a significant percentage of middle and
lower income Canadians can afford in the numbers needed. We need to stop pretending this will

happen. It is not just a question of creating more supply. There is a market dysfunction. It's time for the federal government to step in.

We were happy to hear the announcement that the new government will create Build Canada Homes (BCH).

Minister, the most impactful and important action you can take is to ensure the new Build Canada Homes makes the construction of non-market affordable housing its priority.

There are many non-profit housing providers and private sector builders ready to put shovels in the ground to get non-market, affordable homes built. What they're missing is access to capital, land and the right regulatory conditions. That's where we believe Build Canada Homes can help.

We see Build Canada Homes providing the following services:

- Finding qualified non-profit housing providers and private sector builders
- Bringing them together and developing partnerships on impactful projects
- Providing the financial, regulatory and management support they need to get shovels in the ground as soon as possible.
- Assisting non-profit housing providers to operate the new non-market homes prudently and responsibly

To be clear, we do not see Build Canada Homes as a new "builder" creating its own development and construction company. Rather, BCH should become a facilitator with special government powers and resources that brings together existing stakeholders who understand how to build and manage non-market housing.

We also urge you to use your federal powers to help create the right regulatory environment for the market to build more diverse and affordable homes. Here in Ontario, there is an oversupply of small condo units and expensive single family homes. And there aren't nearly enough "missing middle" (mid-priced) and mid-rise units available for young people, families and seniors. Unfortunately, the Ontario government has created a regulatory environment that will only exacerbate this mismatch between supply and demand.

With its recent introductions of Bill 5 and Bill 17, the Ontario government has unfortunately created mechanisms and a new land use planning regime that prioritizes the wrong type of housing in the wrong places at the wrong prices. These new laws would also lead to costly and environmentally damaging sprawl.

We urge the federal government to use all of its powers to help correct this.

Finally, we want to make it clear that we are advocating a balanced approach to creating new housing supply. With the actions suggested above, Canada can once again support both market housing, including rental and condos, and non-market housing (such as co-ops and non-profits). We need to address the spectrum of need and affordability. This balanced approach led to so much success in the 1960s and 1970s. And it is this balanced approach that will once again lead us out of the current housing crisis.

We hope you take our suggestions into consideration as you move quickly to address Canada's housing crisis successfully.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Aikins, Executive media advisor

Rowan Burdge, Provincial Director, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition

Jodie Chinnery, Policy Researcher

David Crombie

NP Lhamo Dolkar, RN(EC), CCN, MSc, NP-PHC, President, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)

Anne Golden

Ken Greenberg, Principal Greenberg Consultants

Dr. Doris Grinspun, RN, BScN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), DHC, DHC, FAAN, FCAN, O.ONT., CEO, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)

David Miller, Toronto

Tony Morris, Conservation Policy and Campaigns Director, Ontario Nature