

THE RIGHT TO HOUSING 101

WHAT IS THE RIGHT TO HOUSING?

According to the UN, the right to housing means all people have the “right to live somewhere in **security, peace and dignity.**” While this doesn’t mean that governments have to provide a home to everyone, it does require them to **implement reasonable policies and programs, within available resources,** to ensure the right to housing for all **within the shortest possible time.** It also means that priority must be given to vulnerable groups and those in greatest need of housing. What is considered "reasonable" varies depending on the context. What does the right to housing look like for Canada?

THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

- Although not all components of the right to housing can be achieved immediately, in a rich country like Canada, the government must ensure that everyone has access to adequate housing within a reasonable period of time. In fact, the government of Canada has committed internationally to ensuring adequate housing for all by 2030 under the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Canadian governments must recognize that widespread homelessness and inadequate housing in an affluent country such as Canada constitutes a serious human rights violation demanding urgent action.
- The UN has said that Canada must put in place a housing strategy with legislated goals; timelines; a process for hearing complaints; and independent monitoring and accountability.
- Governments must ensure the right to housing is enjoyed equally without discrimination of any form.
- Homelessness amongst Indigenous Peoples should be considered as a consequence resulting from Canada’s history of colonization and exploitation of Indigenous land and populations.
- Governments must ensure security of tenure, protection from forced evictions and displacement, and preservation of affordable housing and communities.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED "ADEQUATE" HOUSING IN CANADA?

Adequate housing means more than four walls and a roof. Overall, the right to housing entitles everyone to live in peace, security, and dignity. The UN has also stated that a number of conditions must be met before housing can be considered adequate.

- **AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES, MATERIALS, FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE**, including safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, and affordable heating.
- **SECURITY OF TENURE**, including legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.
- **AFFORDABILITY** such that the cost of adequate housing does not threaten or compromise your enjoyment of other human rights.
- **HABITABILITY**, such that housing must provide a safe, healthy, and secure environment in which to thrive.
- **ACCESSIBILITY**, so that housing meets the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups including persons with any form of disability.
- **LOCATION** of housing must provide access to employment opportunities, education, health-care, and social services.
- **CULTURAL ADEQUACY**, meaning housing must respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.