

## Assessing Canada's National Housing Strategy

The BCASW Health Advocacy Committee has taken a look at the federal government's new [National Housing Strategy](#) to see how it measures up to recommendations made by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) last year. The COH is a non-partisan research and policy partnership between academics, policy and decision makers, service providers and people with lived experience of homelessness. The COH developed its recommendations in partnership with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH). Below are some of the key commitments in the National Housing Strategy, matched up against the COH/CAEH recommendations. As the federal government website does not provide an accounting of exactly how they reached the \$40 billion figure, we focused more on assessing specific commitments rather than the entire amount.

<b>Federal Commitment</b>	<b>COH/CAEH Recommendation -all figures are for 10-year period</b>
\$40 billion for national strategy	\$43.78 billion for all recommendations
\$2.2 billion to renew the Homelessness Partnering Strategy	\$3.8 billion to restore the Homelessness Partnering Strategy to 1999 funding levels
Prioritize 7 vulnerable populations: youth, veterans, indigenous people, seniors, people with disabilities, people dealing with mental and health and addiction issues, women and children fleeing violence.	Prioritize three populations: youth, veterans, and indigenous people
\$4 million for a Veterans Emergency fund	\$32.8 million to prevent and end veterans' homelessness
Work on a nation-to-nation basis to create strategies that meet unique housing needs of indigenous people. \$300 million to help 3000 Northern families find affordable homes.	Engage with indigenous communities to develop and implement indigenous led strategies to prevent and end homelessness. Audit on-reserve housing to develop evidence-based plan. \$5.5 billion projected minimum
\$4 billion for Canada Housing Benefit, assisting 300,000 annually	\$12.7 billion to introduce a national low income housing benefit, assisting 836,000 households annually
\$200 million in surplus federal lands and buildings available to non-profits and other affordable housing providers at little or no cost.	\$1.6 billion to create an affordable housing tax credit for developers
\$15.9 billion in a new National Housing Co-Investment Fund to build new affordable units	\$12 billion to retain and expand existing affordable housing stock
\$4.3 billion to preserve existing social housing stock	\$7.9 billion to extend expiring CMHC social housing agreements

\$500 million for a new Federal Community Housing Initiative to protect low-income tenants as old operating agreements expire	
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Some of the variances noted above may be accounted for by an additional \$12.8 billion delivered through existing federal-provincial/territorial agreements and programs. However, it seems unlikely that these programs will cover needs that are considered federal responsibilities such as housing for veterans and indigenous people.

The strategy website provides limited details about the timing for the roll-out of the various components of the strategy. Given the urgency of the housing crisis in communities like BC's Lower Mainland, the lack of specific information about timing is concerning. The housing crisis here is dominating the health and social service sectors, affecting treatment plans, recovery, rehabilitation, child and youth care, employment, etc. It is critical that the federal and BC provincial government work quickly to translate the strategy into an action plan that can show measurable benefits within months, not years.

A key recommendation of the COH/CAEH report on the State of Homelessness in Canada 2016, is that, "The Government of Canada should adopt a national goal of ending homelessness with clear and measurable outcomes, milestones and criteria." The National Housing Strategy does not include a goal of ending homelessness nor does it provide the resources to do so. However, it does provide clear measurable outcomes (ex. Cut chronic homelessness in half) and provides milestones and targets related to specific program areas. It is a good start after years of federal neglect of housing. It is up to concerned Canadians to keep pushing this issue with our elected representatives and to adopt the COH/CAEH commitment to ending homelessness in Canada. Believing we can do it is the first step.

For another view on the federal strategy, check out the [policy note](#) from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives



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