The Hon. Ahmed Hussen, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion

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Dear Minister:

I am a member of [NAME] Presbyterian Church in [PLACE]. Housing is a primary source of stability, security and well-being that must be adequate, appropriate, safe and affordable, and give access to services such as clean water, sanitation, healthcare and schools. My church believes that housing is a human right and supports the principles of a just recovery from the pandemic that include putting people’s health and well-being as the first priority.

In my community… [Outline some of the barriers to accessing affordable housing in your community.]

I am encouraged that the Canadian government is committed to taking a rights-based approach to housing, as well as taking into account the systemic barriers faced by Indigenous and racialized people who are at greater risk of housing insecurity.[[1]](#footnote-1) As you know, people with disabilities, people experiencing domestic violence or human trafficking, and women-led single-parent families also face systemic barriers to housing security. A human rights approach to affordable housing must be combined with appropriate benefits and services that are trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and reflecting the diverse lived experiences of those most vulnerable to housing insecurity to adequately address systemic barriers.

The development of the National Housing Strategy was a key step toward coordinating long-term planning to address housing insecurity. The range of investments since 2015, outlined in the government’s 2022 budget in new and repaired housing stock, housing affordability supports and the Rapid Housing Initiative are needed and necessary.

The Rental Construction Financing Initiative (RCFI) aims to address the critical lack of propose-built rentals and the 2022 federal budget outlines requirements and incentives that a portion of new rentals will be “more affordable.”[[2]](#footnote-2) There doesn’t seem to be clarity, however, about how the government will ensure that projects receiving funding will target core housing needs for vulnerable groups while keeping rents affordable. The RCFI’s definition of affordability (30% of median household income) is typically much higher than the median rent in local markets. This seems incongruitous with the goal of providing affordable housing for those facing housing insecurity. Is this gap being addressed, and what is the government’s long-term strategy to ensure that affordable units reflect the local context of people facing housing insecurity—and that these units remain “affordable” once the RCFI’s mandate ends?

For a rights-based approach to housing to be implemented, housing in Canada needs to be framed as a basic need and right, and not a commodity. New supports for cooperative housing are both needed and welcome.

In my community… [outline a local initiative that you support which addresses housing insecurity.]

There is a role for everyone to address the affordable housing crisis, and your leadership is essential. I look forward hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

1. Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion Mandate Letter, December 16, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Government of Canada, “2022 Budget,” p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)