



National Learning Community on  
Youth Homelessness

Communauté nationale d'apprentissage  
sur l'itinérance des jeunes

# YOUTH CONSULTATION NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

## NATIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

The National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness is a pan-Canadian community of practice consisting of leading youth serving organizations across the country who:

- work collaboratively on key issues
- share emerging and promising practices
- develop strategies and tools to strengthen our sector
- work towards preventing, reducing and ending youth homelessness in Canada

Please visit our website: [www.learningcommunity.ca](http://www.learningcommunity.ca) to learn more about us and our work

## NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY BACKGROUND

A strategy is a high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty. The federal government of Canada is currently consulting with Canadians to help share Canada's National Housing Strategy. Canada is the only G8 country without a national strategy.

The consultation process involves completing a survey and a written submission. The Federal Government states on the Let's Talk Housing site that:

Every policy or program starts with a vision. For Canada's National Housing Strategy to work, the vision behind it has to:

- speak to all Canadians
- address a full spectrum of needs, from people who are homeless to those who rent from the private market or own their own home
- improve the lives of people in greatest need
- place housing at the centre of communities
- recognize the importance of housing to achieving other social, economic and environmental goals

## WHY GET INVOLVED

The goal of a national housing strategy needs to include a plan to prevent and end youth homelessness. The National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness is submitting a set of recommendations that highlight what needs to be included in the federal national housing strategy. The Learning Community has developed six recommendations for the National Housing Strategy. We want to consult with youth who have had lived experiences of homelessness to test our recommendations. This is why we have designed this youth consultation process. We need to hear from you.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**“Youth homelessness”** refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence.

**Affordable housing** costs less than 30% of before-tax household income. Shelter costs include the following For renters: rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services.

**Affordable housing credit** is a government tax credit given to housing developers to encourage developers to build affordable housing units in new buildings.

A **best practice** is an intervention, method or technique that has consistently been proven effective through the most rigorous scientific research (especially conducted by independent researchers) and which has been replicated across several cases or examples.

A **Housing Benefit** is a government benefit that is given to people whose declared income on their taxes is below a determined amount. This monthly benefit is given to help offset high rental costs with the goal of Canadians spending a lower percentage of their income on housing.

The **continuum of affordable housing** in Canada includes market (affordable rental housing, affordable home ownership), non-market (affordable rental housing, affordable home ownership), government-subsidized housing (emergency shelters, transitional housing and social housing).

A **Federal/Provincial/Territorial Youth Homelessness Planning Table** is a space where federal politicians and bureaucrats can meet with their provincial and territorial partners. The goal of a youth homelessness planning table would enable governments to align policies and funding.



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## **LEARNING COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Here are the recommendations from the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness

### **1. YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IS A DIFFERENT POPULATION FROM THE ADULT HOMELESSNESS POPULATION AND REQUIRES SOLUTIONS THAT ADDRESS THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS/ISSUES**

It is unrealistic to apply programs, interventions and policies that are designed for adults onto youth experiencing homelessness. The National Housing Strategy must have provisions that are clearly and intentionally designed for youth.

### **2. INVESTMENT IN YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS WITH A FOCUS ON PREVENTION AND HOUSING SUPPORTS**

The best way to end youth homelessness is to prevent it from happening. We need to invest in programs that prevent youth homelessness. These include: school based programs, family first, youth reconnect, and host homes. In addition more funding is required to evaluate these programs to identify best practices.

There also needs to be an investment in housing supports and promotion of promising practices such as: landlord tenant agreements, rent banks, housing benefits.

### **3. A NEW FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT THAT INCLUDES DIRECT INVESTMENTS IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS AND THE CREATION OF AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING TAX CREDIT WITH CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

It is important that a new federal, provincial and territorial affordable housing framework agreement include specific provisions to ensure units are reserved for youth. Tax credits need to be made available to housing developers to ensure new units of affordable housing are built in Canada.

#### **4. A HOUSING BENEFIT TO ASSIST THOSE WHO FACE SEVERE AFFORDABILITY PROBLEMS IN THEIR CURRENT ACCOMMODATION**

A housing benefit is a cash payment that people whose income is below a set amount receive a monthly to offset their rent. Housing benefits would be a great tool for youth to be able to maintain housing.

#### **5. FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PLANNING TABLE THAT FOCUSES ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESSES TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**

Federal leadership, direction and investment on the issue of youth homelessness can yield significant policy and practice changes provincially and territorially. This will create the context for greater alignment of policy and funding, sharing of practices and creating a pan-Canadian strategy. This could be a cost neutral partnership that will continue to inform the Federal agenda and open doors for more provincial, territorial and community action in the area of youth homelessness. To achieve maximum impact, Provincial and Territorial governments should be expected to match the Federal investment in order to access funding.

#### **6. HOUSING AND SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH**

It should be noted that Indigenous youth, who are overrepresented in the youth homelessness population, face additional challenges because of the legacy of colonialism and racism in Canada. A funding stream that provides support for Indigenous-focused and -led programs to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness should be made available, and all communities engaging in broader strategies should be expected to address the needs of this population in their planning.

A range of programs including education based interventions, employment and training programs, housing programs and supports that are culturally inclusive and appropriate to better support indigenous youth.

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