



Building a Common Understanding of Housing Rights

Bahar Shadpour

Member of the Housing Rights Advisory Committee

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The Right to Adequate Housing

“The right of everyone to an adequate standard of living...including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

- INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR)

Right to Housing in Canada

- Internationally: Canada ratified the ICESCR in 1976 – a commitment to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing.
- Domestically: Canada incorporated the principles and standards of the right to housing through the adoption of the National Housing Strategy Act (NHSA) in 2019
- NHSA provides all levels of government with a set of principles to follow when implementing rights-based policies.
- City of Toronto: “Housing Charter – Opportunity for All” (2020)– a policy statement to recognize that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities.

Seven Standards

1. **Security of Tenure:** people should have legal protections against forced evictions, harassment, and other threats to their tenancies
2. **Affordability:** Housing cost should not threaten or compromise people's enjoyment of other basic needs and human rights.
3. **Habitability:** People should have access to structurally sound and well-maintained homes.
4. **Location:** Housing should not be cut off from employment, health care, transit, schools, etc.
5. **Accessibility:** People should have access to housing that is adapted to their needs and should not face discrimination in accessing the housing they need.
6. **Cultural Adequacy:** People should have access to housing that is culturally appropriate and enables the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing forms.
7. **Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure:** People should have access to proper infrastructure (e.g. heat or transit) and essential services (e.g. markets/grocery stores, health services)

Principles

- **Efficient allocation of resources**
 - The maximum available resources are allocated to housing programs and implementation of policies.
- **Prioritizing those most impacted**
 - Developing measures to identify those in greatest housing needs and creating equitable responses.
- **Meaningful engagement**
 - Consult with and prioritize the voices and participation of communities most impacted by inadequate housing.
- **Realization over time**
 - Ensure long-term planning and solutions are adopted over time through policies, bylaws and procedures.

Rights-Based Housing Approach

For governments to align their policies and implementation plans with human rights standards and principles:

- Assess **systemic housing challenges** – what are the causes and unmet housing needs?
- Develop a **framework for action** – focusing on process, outcomes and who needs to be consulted
- Develop **roadmaps with practical steps** – if taken over time, the right to housing can be realized across communities.
- Develop **processes and entities to monitor progress** - what are effective ways to monitor the progress of framework, strategies and steps? Do they advance accountability towards goals/objectives?

Thank you