

Minister of
Families, Children and
Social Development



Ministre de
la Famille, des Enfants et
du Développement social

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0J9

APR 10 2019

Special Rapporteur on adequate housing
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

OHCHR REGISTRY

15 APR 2019

Recipients :.....**SPB**.....
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Dear Ms. Farha:

It is my pleasure to write to you to inform you of the tabling of the National Housing Strategy Act, through Bill C-97. This important piece of legislation would not have been possible without your contribution and those of members of civil society.

The proposed legislation would ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable, those who are too often left on the sidelines, are heard. As our government recognizes the importance of housing to the inherent dignity and well-being of Canadians, this proposed legislation will ensure that future governments develop and maintain a national housing strategy to support improved housing outcomes for the most vulnerable.

The proposed legislation will require the Government of Canada to develop, maintain and report on a national housing strategy. Grounded in a human rights-based approach to housing, the proposed Act declares it a policy of the Government of Canada to advance progressively the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The proposed legislation also recognizes the importance of a national housing strategy to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. These two express references are important inclusions in the Bill.

The proposed Act will establish a National Housing Council with diverse representation, including people with lived experience of housing needs or homelessness, to provide advice to the Minister responsible for housing. The Council will also include, as *ex officio* members, certain relevant Deputy Ministers and the Chief Executive Officer of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, who will fund and support it.

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The proposed Act would also create in statute a full-time Federal Housing Advocate, appointed by the Governor-in-Council, with a mandate to do the following with respect to systemic housing issues:

- receive submissions from individuals and civil society organizations;
- consult with individuals, particularly those with lived experience of housing need and homelessness, and civil society organizations;
- analyze and conduct research as the Advocate sees fit on issues pertaining to access to housing;
- serve as an *ex officio* member of the Council; and
- report annually on systemic housing issues faced by individuals and households belonging to vulnerable groups, with recommended measures within the authority of the Government of Canada to address them.

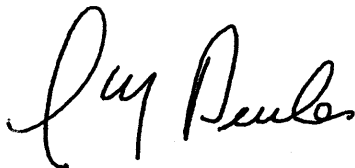
The Canadian Human Rights Commission would support the Federal Housing Advocate independently. This leaves open the possibility of further recourse via federal, provincial or territorial human rights bodies.

As a further accountability mechanism, the Minister would be required to table the Advocate's report, and a response to it, in Parliament. The findings of the Advocate will therefore be made public, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission may consider those findings within the context of its statutory mandate.

Lastly, the Act would require triennial reporting on the effectiveness of the National Housing Strategy in achieving desired outcomes.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is working to finalize the Terms of Reference for the Council, which are being informed by the consultations held in 2018 and the input from people with lived experience. The Corporation would be pleased to hear your views and will be reaching out.

Yours sincerely,



The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

