



## About the Right to Housing

Home is at the centre of human rights. Without a safe, affordable, secure and accessible home, our other human rights such as equality, liberty, dignity, privacy, freedom of expression, and even life are threatened.

All levels of government have the obligation and ability to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing. In June 2019, the government of Canada passed legislation recognizing housing as a fundamental human right, and in December 2019, the City of Toronto took the historic step of recognizing housing as a human right in its HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan.

### **What is the right to adequate housing?**

UN covenants signed by Canada guarantee the right to adequate housing. This means that everyone has a right to housing that meets basic conditions. Adequate housing must be:

- Affordable – meaning that the cost of housing doesn't interfere with access to other basic needs such as food;
- Secure – meaning that people are protected from arbitrary eviction;
- Accessible – meaning that people of all abilities have housing that accommodates their needs;
- Habitable – meaning that housing provides a safe, secure, and healthy environment in which to thrive;
- Located close to employment, education, and services;
- Serviced by facilities and infrastructure such as including safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, affordable heating, and access to communication technology;
- Culturally adequate – meaning that housing must respect and provide for the expression of cultural identity.
- All people should have equitable access to adequate housing, without discrimination based on gender, race, disability, faith, place of birth, age, sexual orientation, and other grounds.

### **What does the right to housing mean for Toronto?**

A fully funded and implemented human rights approach to housing in Toronto would require the City of Toronto to:

- Ensure there is human rights-based decision making that would have City staff and officials review the impact of any decisions against the principles of a right to housing, and making human rights the primary considerations for action.

- Elevate coordinated governance and action that would refine structures to reduce the fractured housing and homelessness functions that are currently dispersed across multiple City divisions to ensure coordinated action and resources to expand the impact of investments.
- Set clear human rights-based goals, targets, and timelines for the reduction and elimination of homelessness and for ensuring adequate housing for all people in Toronto over time, implementing specific policies and programs to meet those goals.
- Increase their transparency and evidence-based monitoring, using high-quality data disaggregated by race, gender, age, income, disability and other variables, to determine the impact of the City's actions on the housing rights of priority populations and equity-deserving groups.
- Prioritize human rights-based participation and leadership by including diverse people and communities directly affected by inadequate housing and homelessness, civil society groups and other stakeholders in the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs, beyond moment in time consultations.
- Fully implement and fund an Office of the Housing Commissioner, an independent accountability mechanism that would monitor and support the City of Toronto's implementation of a human right to housing, and provide people with a pathway to identify and seek solutions for systemic housing issues.
- Invest the maximum of its available resources to fulfill the human right to adequate housing, and engage other orders of government to fund the solutions that enables people to access this right.

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For more information and detailed solutions for advancing the human right to housing in Toronto, visit [www.right2housingtoronto.ca](http://www.right2housingtoronto.ca)