

December 2, 2022

**To: The Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada**

Indigenous housing providers and leaders attended the National Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Stakeholder Gathering on November 25, 2022, in Vancouver, BC and online, resulting in the official formation of the **National Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Coalition**. This marks a significant advancement toward self-determination and the creation of a national urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing strategy, created and delivered by Indigenous peoples.

A copy of the Coalition's signed declaration is attached.

The coalition expects a re-orientation of the federal government's Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy so it reflects the strategic needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples living off reserve.

A study of progress made to-date on *National Housing Strategy* initiatives has found that federal investments are not making a substantive difference in fighting the homelessness and housing crisis.¹ Recommendations of Parliament² and the National Housing Council³ on the implementation of an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy provide solutions and a way forward.

¹ National Housing Council Report. (2022). 'Analysis of Affordable Housing Supply Created by Unilateral National Housing Strategy Programs.' (2022). Retrieved from: <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/place-to-call-home/pdfs/analysis-affordable-housing-supply-created-unilateral-nhs-programs-en.pdf>

² Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. (May 2021). 'Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home – Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.' House of Commons. Government of Canada. 43rd Parliament, 2nd Session. Retrieved from: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/HUMA/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=10983040>

³ National Housing Council. (2022). 'Report and Recommendations to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion on Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing.' Retrieved from: <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/place-to-call-home/pdfs/report-recommendations-minister-housing-diversity-inclusion-urban-rural-nih-en.pdf>

For us, by us, where we live, work, and build our communities

The majority of Indigenous people across Canada live in urban, rural, and northern communities where a network of experienced Indigenous-led housing providers and organizations already operate. Our community housing infrastructure is established, yet under threat of the encroaching private housing market and the unrelenting housing crisis.

The 2017 *National Housing Strategy* did not leverage the substantial expertise of urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing providers across Canada. The federal government has not adequately responded to the MMIWG2S+ National Inquiry Report which named housing 299 times, citing it as critical to safety and wellbeing. Our collective calls for action,⁴ our parliamentary evidence,⁵ and our consistent meetings with federal Ministers responsible for housing and Indigenous affairs have been sidelined until a promise in federal Budget 2022.⁶

Mismanagement and unmet promises

The development of a National Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy must have the power to immediately address housing needs in our communities. We are ready to work toward implementation, but the process has been co-opted and mismanaged by the government.

Budget 2022 directs the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to co-develop the strategy. After months of inaction, Indigenous Services Canada has now intervened, dictating terms of the process.

⁴ 'Statement on National Urban Indigenous Housing Strategy.' (2019).

<https://www.ontarioaboriginalhousing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Statement-on-National-Urban-Indigenous-Housing-Strategy-11-12-19.pdf>

⁵ Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. (May 2021). 'Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home – Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.' House of Commons. Government of Canada. 43rd Parliament, 2nd Session. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/HUMA/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=10983040>
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/HUMA/Brief/BR11000896/br-external/CanadianHousingAndRenewalAssociation-e.pdf>

⁶ Government of Canada. 'Budget 2022-23: A Plan to Grow Our Economy and Make Life More Affordable.' Ottawa. 174. Retrieved from: <https://budget.gc.ca/2022/home-accueil-en.html>

Self-determination is a decolonial process

We are entirely dissatisfied with the colonial approach of the federal government. We are demanding a pathway to self-determination in housing that has been called for by our communities, by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing,⁷ the HUMA Parliamentary Committee,⁸ and countless housing experts.⁹

Most critically, we are exercising our responsibility to maintain and strengthen housing within our communities as articulated within the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) Articles 21 and 23.

On November 14, 2022 the Indigenous Caucus working group met with CMHC regarding the initial allocation set out in Budget 2022 to develop an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Strategy allocation. Our group collectively determined and verbally agreed with full understanding that we would be in the position to hold and distribute these funds. During that meeting, the CMHC explained that their office was not in the position to speak on upcoming announcements, which we deem as a lack of transparency in a discussion that requires a fiduciary duty on the part of the federal government. Later the same day on November 14, 2022, the Indigenous Caucus received a letter indicating that Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) would be administering the said funds. It is our understanding that CMHC and ISC's bureaucratic decision may have been swayed by our announcement that we would collectively come together to manage the funds.

Our collective is unified by our goal. We can achieve a National Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy that is fully Indigenous-led, implemented over the short term, and which meets the housing needs of current and future generations, one that we are willing and able to facilitate effectively with the initial allocation that has been set aside by your government. We invite you to work productively on implementation with our collective to make this vision a reality in the spirit of reconciliation to amplify the voices of those who are in housing need.

⁷ On April 28, 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Mr. Balakrishnan Rajagopal, in his opening address to the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association's (CHRA) 2021 Congress, urged the Canadian government to establish and fund an Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. CHRA. (April 2021). 'CHRA 53rd National Congress on Housing and Homelessness.' Accessible at: <https://chracongress.vfairs.com/>

⁸ Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. (May 2021). 'Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home – Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.' House of Commons. Government of Canada. 43rd Parliament, 2nd Session. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/HUMA/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=10983040>

⁹ <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/HUMA/Brief/BR11000896/br-external/CanadianHousingAndRenewalAssociation-e.pdf>

We would welcome a meeting with the Prime Minister, Minister Hajdu and Minister Hussen to advance this discussion.

Signatories:

Robert Byers, President & CEO, Namerind Housing Corporation

Katlia Lafferty, Co-Chair of the National Indigenous Housing Network, and Co-Chair of the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network (Keepers of the Circle)

Justin Marchand, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

Margaret Pfoh, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Management Association

David Seymour, VP External Affairs, M'akola Housing Society

Marcel LAWSON Swain, Chief Executive Officer, Lu'ma Native Housing Society

On behalf of the National URN Indigenous Housing Coalition

cc. **Marie-Josée Houle, Federal Housing Advocate**
Romy Bowers, President and CEO, CMHC
David Peckham, Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Services Canada
Derek Ballantyne, Chair, CMHC
Jenny Kwan, NDP Housing Critic
Scott Aitchison, Shadow Minister for Housing and Diversity and Inclusion
Coalition Members and their Memberships