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National Housing Strategy

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development announced long awaited details associated with the National Housing Strategy. Across Canada, 1.7 million Canadians are in core housing need. Therefore OMSSA sees it as welcome news that the federal government will provide funding as provincial finances and property taxes cannot support the need alone. Federal investment is needed to address the backlog of repairs and build new supply to address long wait lists and growing demand in Ontario and Canada.

A website has been set up specific to the National Housing Strategy at www.placetocallhome.ca. A copy of the full strategy can be found as a PDF and downloaded [here](#).

The plan is advertised as \$40 billion over 10 years, but that figure includes provincial money. \$11.2B over 11 years was included in the 2016 Federal Budget. Additionally \$4.8 billion is money the federal government is already spending on housing providers. The money will not begin to flow until April 2018 and the proposed \$2500 Federal Housing Benefit will not start until 2020. At that time it is expected to assist up to 300,000 people. The cost of the benefit will be \$4 billion shared between the federal and provincial governments. It should be noted that the next provincial election is June 2018 and the next federal election is October 2019. There is a legitimate concern that the long timeframe could derail the strategy should either the provincial or federal government change in the future. It is also not fully clear if the provinces have the financial ability or political will to match the funds assumed in the \$40 billion figure.

OMSSA will work with our members, networks, partners and the Ontario government to further analyze the impact on municipalities and service managers. We expect to comment on the Strategy and also provide feedback through our federal budget submission in early 2018.

Objectives of the Plan:

- reducing chronic homelessness by 50 per cent;
- removing more than 530,000 households from housing need;

- creating four times as many new housing units as built under federal programs from 2005 to 2015;
- repairing three times as many existing housing units as repaired under federal programs from 2005 to 2015; and
- protecting an additional 385,000 households from losing an affordable place to live.

Target groups include: seniors, Indigenous Peoples, survivors of family violence, people with disabilities, refugees, veterans, and those grappling with homelessness (at least 25% of funds go to projects for women, girls and their families).

The strategy will focus on the needs of the most vulnerable through a human-rights-based approach to housing. Within the next year, legislation will be introduced obligating the federal government to maintain a National Housing Strategy and report to Parliament on housing targets and outcomes. The Prime Minister declared housing a “right” but it is not expected to be enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Quick facts (from CMHC Press Release):

- The National Housing Strategy – Canada's first ever – was developed through consultations with Canadians from all walks of life: people who have experienced barriers to good housing, experts, stakeholders, think tanks, as well as provinces and territories and municipalities.
- Over the next 10 years, the Strategy – which will be in part funded jointly by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments – will help reduce homelessness and the number of families living in housing need, and will help strengthen the middle class.
- Investment under the National Housing Strategy includes:
 - \$15.9-billion for a new National Housing Co-Investment Fund
 - \$8.6-billion for a new Canada Community Housing Initiative in partnership with provinces and territories, and \$500 million through a new Federal Community Housing Initiative
 - \$4-billion for a new Canada Housing Benefit to be launched in 2020 in partnership with provinces and territories
 - \$2.2-billion to reduce homelessness
 - \$300-million in additional federal funding to address housing needs in Canada's North.
 - \$241-million for research, data and demonstrations.

- In recognition of the significant amount of new housing units to be built and repaired through the federal Co-Investment Fund, the Strategy also includes ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and ensure accessibility in building design.
- The Government of Canada is also working with Indigenous leaders to co-develop distinctions-based housing strategies with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation that will be founded on the principles of self-determination, reconciliation, respect, and cooperation.