



# Homelessness and Affordable Housing

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## Policies, Programs and Challenges

### Our Churches' Commitment

The 2013 Joint Assembly of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada approved a resolution committing the churches to an approach of learning, action, advocacy and prayer concerning homelessness and affordable housing. In concrete ways, many Anglicans and Lutherans across Canada regularly volunteer and millions of dollars are raised by Canadians to support housing needs. Many congregations undertake some form of outreach, consistent with their size and location.

### Scope of the Problem

**Homelessness is national in scope.** The research report, *The State of Homelessness in Canada, 2013*, estimated that 200,000 people access emergency services or sleep outdoors in a given year. The actual number is potentially higher because many who may become homeless live with friends or relatives and don't use emergency shelters. Almost a third of the homeless are youths aged 16-24. Aboriginals and seniors are among the most vulnerable. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) estimates that 13.2 per cent of Canadians live in core housing need, defined as a household that spends more than 30 per cent of before-tax income on housing.

### Funding Challenges and Changes

**Housing is a shared responsibility among the federal, provincial and municipal governments.**

A combination of federal deficit reduction programs and a shift in spending priorities has led to **reduced funding** in all jurisdictions.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government entered into long-term funding agreements for **non-profit and co-op housing**. As the agreements expire, federal funding is terminated. The current annual funding of \$1.7 billion will shrink to nothing over time. Without the funding to their housing providers low-income families face rent increases or eviction.

**The federal government continues to commit \$253 million annually for its Investment in the Affordable Housing (IAH) program** (assistance to the provinces and territories for renovation, rent supplements, shelter allowances) and \$119 million annually for its Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), both for five years. The Homelessness Partnering Strategy is being revamped using a Housing First approach. Housing First, championed by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, focuses on moving people who are chronically homeless from the street or emergency shelters into permanent housing with supports that vary according to client need. In major cities the



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government is requiring 65 per cent of the available funding to be directed to Housing First facilities by April 1, 2015. Municipal housing officials caution that flexibility will continue to be required to meet differing needs for long-term shelter. The new policy could impact church-supported shelters that count on federal funding for their operation.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy has designated 61 communities to receive funding to address a “significant problem with homelessness.” Each community has a **Community Advisory Board (CAB)** that is responsible for developing a local plan that qualifies for federal HPS funding. A local project must contribute to its CAB plan to be eligible for funding. [http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing\\_first/approach/key\\_considerations.shtml](http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/communities/homelessness/housing_first/approach/key_considerations.shtml)

### Front-line Advocacy and Monitoring

- Several organizations closely follow developments in both affordable housing and homelessness.
- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) [www.fcm.ca](http://www.fcm.ca) is calling on the federal government to help fix “Canada’s housing crunch.”
- The Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA) [www.chra.ca](http://www.chra.ca) calls itself Canada’s national voice for affordable housing and homelessness issues and solutions.

- The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), [www.caeh.ca](http://www.caeh.ca), is a Calgary-based national movement to end homelessness from the community up by providing secure housing with all the support services needed to help homeless persons.
- The Wellesley Institute [www.wellesleyinstitute.com](http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com) is a Toronto-based, non-profit, non-partisan policy research institute that specializes in developing practical solutions for housing need.
- Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) [www.cpj.ca](http://www.cpj.ca) is a national ecumenical organization devoted to promoting public justice by shaping policy debate through research and analysis, encouraging governments to support policies and practices that reflect God’s call for love, justice, and stewardship.
- C-400 Google group ([c400group@googlegroups.com](mailto:c400group@googlegroups.com)) is an online network of housing advocates whose members promote the right to housing and who engage in national policy advocacy.

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*This backgrounder will be updated as needed.*