

right to housing

International level

Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1976. Article 11 says that “state parties recognize the right of everyone to an **adequate standard of living** for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and **housing**, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

source:

https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1976/01/19760103%2009-57%20PM/Ch_IV_03.pdf

Federal level

In June 2019, the federal government passed the National Housing Strategy Act” which recognizes for the first time an **explicit right to housing**. This legislation will require that federal housing strategies are developed that are aimed at those in greatest needs and that they have mechanisms of accountability. It does not however create an enforceable individual right to housing and does not apply to any other level of government than the federal level. And, it is not constitutionally protected.

source:

https://chra-achru.ca/blog_article/right-to-housing-is-now-law-in-canada-so-now-what-2/

City of Toronto

Toronto has a **Housing Charter** since August 2009 that says that It is the policy of the City of Toronto that fair access to a full range of housing is fundamental to strengthening Toronto’s economy, its environmental efforts, and the health and social well-being of its residents and communities. Among other listed values, it says that all residents should have **a safe, secure, affordable and well-maintained home from which to realize their full potential and be able to live in their neighbourhood of choice without discrimination.**

source: https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/94a7-housingcharter_may8.pdf

In May 2019, in response to the federal recognition of the right to housing, City Council requested that the Toronto Charter be revised with consideration of our right to adequate housing and that a **human-rights-based** approach be included in the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan.

Source: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.PH5.1>

In December 2019, City Council directed City Manager to establish the role or function of **Housing Commissioner** who would independently “assess the implementation of the Toronto Housing Charter and the HousingTO 2020-2030 and “ensure that the City, within its legislative authorities, and through implementation of various programs and policies, is taking concrete actions to combat systematic housing discrimination and address systemic hurdles in the housing system. When we will get the Commissioner and if they will have the necessary power are open questions still.

source: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.PH11.5>

defined in the National Housing Strategy

Homelessness is described as the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

A household is considered to be in core housing need if:

- its housing is unacceptable (does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards)
- acceptable alternative housing in the community would cost 30% or more of its before-tax income

A household in severe housing need pays 50% or more [of their before-tax gross income] for their current dwelling, and is a subset of core housing need households. A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).

sources:

<https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/nhs/rapid-housing-initiative/nhs-rhi-highlight-sheet-en.pdf?rev=dffbade0-f3f4-48f5-b2b1-c08014d36683>

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/core-housing-need/identifying-core-housing-need>

CMHC	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	National housing agency that manages grants for rental housing projects (ex co-ops, non-profits), loans for home ownerships and does research
AMR	Average Market Rent	values depend on how they are calculated. CMHC's covers all rentals, i.e. includes occupied units; padmapper's covers only units available for rent. For Toronto, one bedroom apartments: CMHC AMR for the City of Toronto= GTA's (2021): \$1,431; padmapper's (March 2021): \$1,830
SSHA	Shelter, Support and Housing Administration	City's department that oversees shelters and out-contracted agencies that function as referral agencies for supports (ex: Street to Homes, WoodGreen Community Services, etc). SSHA is also responsible to compile data for City Council and to respond to Toronto's Auditor General recommendations.
RGI	rent-geared-to-income	tenants pay 30% of their income as rent or the rent dictated by a rent scale if on social assistance. RGI is "social/subsidized housing" that one accesses through the "Centralized Waiting List" and faster if part of a priority group; RGI is mostly attached to units, but it can be given to tenants and called "portable" as in the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program= SCRSP)
OW	Ontario Works	last resort social assistance for those in need of financial support; OW provides a max of \$390 for shelter (reduced to actual shelter cost if less; \$0 for homeless people) and max \$343 for basic needs (max \$733/month); recipients have to sign participation agreements and look for work
ODSP	Ontario Disability Support Program	last resort social assistance following a stringent disability test by professionals and ODSP adjudicators; recipients receive a max of \$497 for shelter (\$0 if homeless or couch surfing) and max \$672 for basic needs (total = max \$1,169/month)
clawback	under OW and ODSP	when social assistance recipients earn money, OW/ODSP claws half of that income back past a threshold of \$200. Ex: if one earns \$800 in one month, \$300 goes back to OW/ODSP
rent scale	for OW and ODSP	recipients of social assistance who earn less than a certain amount pay a rent that is listed on a provincial "rent scale" Ex: a single OW (ODSP) recipient pays \$85 (\$109) rent if their income is less than \$360 (\$440); they pay 30% income if they earn more.
HA TTHAP	Housing Allowance Toronto Transitional Housing Allowance	allowances that one can obtain through referral, possibly only when chronically homeless or forced to relocate. They are intended for tenants in private market housing and are said to be "portable", but the rules are not as easy. TTHAP = \$250 or \$500/month; program ends in 2024. Ontario Housing Priority Initiative (OHPI)-funded stream against homelessness will end in 2022.
COHB	Canada-Ontario- Housing-Benefit	"portable" housing benefit that is still in shaping; provincial guidelines look a bit different from City's for now, but COHB is offered to some people on the Centralized List or in social housing that is lost; COHB does not ring rent down to 30% income and recipients have to accept to be removed from the Centralized List despite the fact that COHB is scheduled to end in 2029.