

Permanent National Housing Roundtable: Ideas for Consideration

Mission: A unique, independent, national policy advisory body on housing to engage Canadians in the creation and promotion of sustainable housing development, advice, and solutions.

Purpose: The purpose of the permanent national housing roundtable is to play the role of catalyst in identifying, explaining, and promoting, in all sectors of Canadian society and regions of Canada, principles and practices of housing by:

- a) Undertaking research and gathering information and analysis on critical issues across the housing continuum.

The housing needs of Canadians vary among population groups. For example, Canada's aging population with seniors over the age of 85 are being reported as the fastest-growing age group in the country. According to the latest census data from 2021, the number of people over 85 more than doubled since the 2001, and is expected to triple by 2046. With an aging population, housing needs also change, increasing the demand for affordable, smaller housing with room for live-in or part-time caregivers, especially near essential services and infrastructure (health services, public transit, malls/grocery stores, etc.). Therefore, there is a need to not only increase housing supply but to increase the right type of housing supply.

It is important to understand the scale of the issue. A permanent national housing roundtable could start by tasking Statistics Canada with the responsibility to determine the size and scale of the housing shortage across populations in Canada. By tackling the housing supply problem with targeted goals, we can move to increase housing across the entire spectrum. Understanding and addressing the country's housing affordability crisis should be inherently linked to identified goals.

Members of the roundtable will represent all housing industry stakeholders. Collectively, these industry organizations and professionals can identify the housing type and location where supply is needed the most, allowing the government to make informed policy decisions. CREA and its members can contribute by providing a data informed perspective for solutions across the housing continuum. CREA's significant data on housing markets can help identify where and to what degree there are market challenges and what policies would make an impact.

A permanent national housing roundtable would allow for data and information to be created for use by communities and developers (for planning) to ensure they are providing housing that meets the changing needs of Canadians.

- b) Advising governments on ways of integrating social and economic considerations into their decision-making processes ensuring housing is accessible to all.

The roundtable can also present an opportunity to help identify and solve challenges related to social housing and the availability of accessible housing for more vulnerable Canadians such as persons living with a disability and Indigenous communities.

- c) Advising sectors and regions on ways of incorporating principles and practices that promote a fair housing market.

To establish a fair market, provincial/territorial laws and regulations should be designed to ensure real estate transactions are conducted in a fair manner that strike an appropriate balance between the interests of buyers and sellers. As regulatory regimes vary among provinces and territories, any change in the practice of real estate, including whether additional safeguards and disclosure requirements are warranted to better protect home buyers, should be made at provincial/territorial level. A permanent national housing roundtable can help bring provincial/territorial authorities together to ensure consistency across real estate jurisdictions for the establishment of any consumer protection measures.

Furthermore, the new homes market is increasingly dependent on major home builders to provide supply. A permanent national housing roundtable can help highlight the need to support various parts of the market, including new entrants, to help boost productivity, innovation and ensure small- and medium-sized builders are not at a disadvantage. A more diverse range of builders can lead to a more vibrant market and one that is more responsive to demand.

- d) Promoting the understanding and increasing public awareness of the cultural, social, economic and policy changes required to improve access to housing.

NIMBYism is a key impediment in limiting supply growth. NIMBY (“Not In My Back Yard”) opposition is often based on misperceptions or misguided information based on rumours regarding a project’s impact on its surrounding area. However, all NIMBY opposition is not alike, and the wrong type of outreach response can create more problems than it solves. Therefore, developing a strategy to identify the cause of such opposition is crucial to form an appropriate response. The national housing roundtable could prioritize development of such strategies that can help combat NIMBYism.

- e) Facilitating and assisting innovative efforts in Canada to overcome barriers to the attainment of sustainable housing.

A national housing roundtable can help encourage innovation in homebuilding and processes (zoning restrictions, density limits etc.) as a solution to the housing crisis so more homes can be built quickly, cost-effectively and to modern standards. It could also investigate methods to streamline permitting and approval processes for housing to speed up construction and reduce project financing costs.

Some innovative ideas for the permanent national housing roundtable to work on could include⁵:

- Increase the use of data and data management in the design and planning of homebuilding. For example, the data could be used to identify relevant neighbourhoods and types of efficient house builds to introduce medium-density housing options that are compatible in scale with single-family homes (i.e., missing middle housing options);
- innovate the way the workforce and businesses involved in house building are organized to make the industry efficient;
- utilize offsite construction, for example homes built in factories using robotics and are ready to be assembled, similar to construction of commercial buildings, to help reduce time, maintain quality and lead to increased productivity;
- explore utilization of alternate housing types, such as micro homes, to help reduce carbon print; and
- promote and empower Canadians to help meet the national greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by following through on the commitment to provide grants for homeowners to make energy-efficient improvements to their homes.

Actions:

To fulfil its purpose, the roundtable can:

- a) support and recommend initiatives to incorporate principles and practices of sustainable housing development into all aspects of government and society throughout Canada;
- b) initiate, sponsor and support seminars, workshops, conferences, and other meetings;
- c) undertake and support studies and inquiries;
- d) publish and disseminate studies, reports, and other materials;
- e) organize and assist committees and other groups;
- f) expend any funding provided by government or any other sources, or received by the roundtable through the conduct of its operations, for the activities of the roundtable, subject to any terms on which it is provided or received; and
- g) acquire any funding, securities or other property by gift, bequest or otherwise and hold, expend, invest, administer, or dispose of that property, subject to any terms on which it is given, bequeathed, or otherwise made available to the roundtable.

Reporting:

The permanent national housing roundtable can report to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion.

Membership leads:

⁵ [Tackling the under-supply of housing in England- Jan 2021](#)

Minister of Finance, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion will be key members of the permanent national housing roundtable. The membership will also include representation from all housing industry stakeholders.

Regional representation:

Based on policy issues being discussed, experts from various disciplines and backgrounds could be brought in to provide insight into solving the housing crisis.