Pan Canadian Voice for Women’s Housing 2017 Symposium

September 14th & 15th, 2017
What is the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women’s Housing?

Women from across Canada, from community agencies, universities, national, regional, provincial and municipal organizations, met in Toronto on September 14th and 15th to begin a conversation focussed solely on women and housing.

It was agreed at the gathering that women want to keep the conversation going; that a woman led, women-centred dialogue is critical to advancing women’s housing rights.

“Meeting annually will allow us to collectively hold meaningful, concrete discussions followed with commitments for the next year.”
Who Was There?
A diverse group of more than 50 women from every province and territory and representing:
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and women’s organizations
- immigrant and refugee women and women’s organizations
- the black and women of colour communities
- the women’s disAbility community
- the lived-experience community
- the academic community
- shelters, transition houses, women’s centres and advocacy organizations
- (on day two) government representatives including politicians, senior leadership, policy makers and program staff.
Key Issues
Systematic Barriers to Housing for Women
The greatest barriers to safe, sustainable, inclusive and affordable housing lie within the political system women must navigate in order to obtain such housing.
Lack of Resources
Lack of Flexibility
Lack of Inclusivity and Intersectionality
Non Inclusive Housing
Safety and Location
Lack of Empowerment/Lack of Support for Mothering

Mothers who lose housing, lose their children, creating a cycle where women cannot get their children back without housing, but cannot get housing without their children.
Housing is not a privilege or commodity – it is a basic human right. The federal government must adhere to the United Nations Conventions is signed on to, in particular The Right to Adequate Housing and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.
A flexible, women-centred approach to housing is necessary... ensuring the national housing strategy includes women living in precarious, insecure, and violent living conditions. Government needs to trust service providers and allow them to develop and deliver the programs they now work and meet women’s needs.
As a group of women, we are inclusive and know the solutions – we simply need systems to be behind us and policy makers to work with us in order to provide safe, affordable, and accessible housing for women in Canada.
Together this community of women recognized the need to keep the conversation going and to repeat the symposium in 2018.

We supported an independent, Pan-Canadian voice for women’s housing that has power, is funded, coordinated, and protected.
We supported deepening the conversation we’ve started as opposed to making specific recommendations.

We supported the need to work together to push policy while simultaneously building women’s collective power and addressing root causes of barriers to women’s housing.
1. To fund a second annual gathering of women, under the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women’s Housing banner, with a goal to fund annual gatherings.
2. To make the dialogue ongoing, perhaps through an online platform.
3. To include and support shelters and victims of family violence in the National Housing Strategy.
4. To work with and promote an intersectional lens to Indigenous housing and to work with INAC on the Indigenous housing strategy.
5. To subject CMHC’s own policies and practices to a gender-based review, to be conducted internally and through an intersectional lens.
Discussion

• Does what you heard about issues and solutions resonate with you? Is there anything you would add?
• What does a Pan-Canadian voice for women’s housing look like to you? Would you like to be involved and if so, how?
• How can government better incorporate the experience of women service providers as well as women’s lived experience in policy making? What are your thoughts or suggestions?
• What are some of the most important next steps?