

HART Government Partner Meeting – February 22, 2022

Summary of Small Group Discussions

There were 15 local or regional governments and one territorial government represented.

1. Do you use a rights-based approach in your government's work? If so, how?

- Range of familiarity with the rights-based approach, including at least one participant to whom it was a new concept
- Use of some housing rights language in housing plans and prioritization of those most at-risk in investments
 - Toronto – 2010-20 Housing Plan, 2020-30 Housing Plan
- No formalization of a rights-based approach, but language and principles are starting to be used in program and policy development
 - Durham, Vancouver, Victoria, York, Yukon
 - Edmonton – equity-based approach used in zoning bylaw review; assembling an advisory committee of members with lived expertise
- For certain municipalities:
 - There is a need to understand what a rights-based approach means across programs
 - There is no municipal right to housing and governments anticipate pushback for following federal protocols
- Indigenous communities are talking about this, but the Indian Act does not include a right to housing
- There is a feeling that some municipalities can't use this approach because they are taking direction from their provinces
 - Vancouver takes position that federal government needs to increase funding before they can adopt a rights-based approach
- There is a “jurisdictional mess” created by the levels of government in delivering housing that needs to be addressed

2. What's the relevance of the housing need and land assessment tools we are developing?

- It will be helpful to have clear data – this can be used to tell an evidence-based story that could be fed into a rights-based housing approach
- HART tools will be really useful to advance the discussion about the rights-based approach
- Tools will help to communicate housing needs upwards to the federal government
- Housing initiatives are often-bottom up, but a needs assessment can help justify top-down choices
- Needs assessments across provinces such as BC would be more efficient to do through one central authority
- Can be used to benchmark municipalities alongside each other
- Assessments provide an obvious starting point for setting goals
- Municipalities have done some of this work, but many have limited resources
- Those who have good data are looking for a more granular understanding of different types of households that are most in need



- Municipalities can move away from measuring need/demand based on the social housing waitlist, which doesn't give a good picture of where the need is
- Useful to have a targeted approach to addressing the problem and a good starting point to move towards holistic approach to housing

3. How can you advocate for better NHS programs as part of the review that is going on? If you had one message for the Housing Advocate and National Housing Council in their review of the NHS, what would it be?

- Municipalities want to see the right to housing prioritized in NHS investment
- Municipalities need more money and resources
- Focus the NHS on outcomes you want (alignment with needs) rather than just on housing supply – the context has shifted since 2017
- There needs to be more clarity of roles and responsibilities of the various jurisdictions
- Municipalities need to be at the table as key partners with the provinces and federal government
- The federal government isn't taking the lead on public education and professional training about the right to housing and NIMBYism
- Non-profits need to be supported to provide housing – they are not currently trusted or resourced to scale up housing
- The CMHC needs to do more work with financial lenders to support non-profit scaling
- Funding for housing can be confusing, uncertain, and fractured
- AHMA's Indigenous Housing Strategy contains many recommendations to this end
- Recognize the unique situation in Ontario with the service manager system: regions as well as municipalities need funding e.g. for RHI
- The first step is to provide a home but the supports for wellness have to be provided for or there could be an adverse impact: supportive housing but also other affordable housing
- Housing strategy and legislation needs to be coupled with overall wellness strategies such as mental health and addiction support, income redistribution training, youth programs. It's important to provide housing but if you are also not supporting people in other ways all the deficiencies of other systems flows to housing.

