

Affordable, Safe, Accessible, and Appropriate Housing

Background

The Canadian Government recognizes that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental *human right*; it is essential to a person's inherent dignity and wellbeing, and to building sustainable and inclusive communities (National Housing Act, s 313(4)(a), [Government Bill C-97](#)). The Nova Scotian Government has recognized that there is a crisis in affordable housing, which affects immigrants and many other Nova Scotians alike. To address this crisis, the government has dedicated \$25m to affordable housing: \$20m to support new affordable housing units, \$2.5m to work with community housing organizations to grow their unit base, \$2m for improvements to public housing, and \$500,000 towards municipal housing assessments. The Province also promises to build a new, independent housing entity and to look at modernizing laws and regulations around housing (Pam Berman, CBC News, "[N.S. to spend \\$25M on affordable housing programs](#)").

This commitment is a move in the right direction, as immigration to Nova Scotia has been steadily increasing, and housing is key to immigrants' successful settlement and integration. In 2019 alone, 7,545 immigrants obtained permanent resident status in Nova Scotia; 82% of these immigrants landed in Halifax ([NS Government News Release](#)). Because immigration is vital to the province's economic and social growth and development, federal and provincial governments have increased immigration targets to reflect the need for immigrant contributions.

Why Doing More for Adequate Housing is Important

Despite the government's recent commitment, immigrants, refugee claimants, and migrant individuals and families struggle to find and maintain safe, affordable, accessible, and appropriate housing due to low income, disproportionate discrimination, and systemic barriers. Rent is no longer affordable, public housing has a long waiting list (ranging from 2-3+ years), many temporary housing options are located outside the Halifax Regional Municipality, and immigrants lack access to information about special housing initiatives. Emergency shelters also do not address the housing needs of immigrants, as waiting lists are extensive, and interpretation and other services are not offered by shelters across Nova Scotia.

Unfortunately, the province's existing social policies contribute to the housing problem. Provincial income assistance allowances do not reflect the real costs of living or of housing. Language barriers must also be recognized and challenged in social policies, and immigrants need more opportunities to collaborate and consult on housing initiatives.

To make housing in Nova Scotia affordable, safe, accessible, and appropriate, it is vital that the Nova Scotia Government consider the following:

- Support the growth of housing options that address the spectrum of housing needs, which includes individuals and families who are in core housing, but also immigrants who are in need of affordable market housing. Immigration is vital to our society and economy, and housing is a key issue for integration and retention.

- Continue dismantling discriminatory and systemic barriers that immigrants face (for further details, please see ISANS' and Halifax Refugee Clinic's joint submission to the NS Housing Commission below).
- Establish temporary and transitional housing options to provide immigrant individuals and families the support they need while navigating through temporary and permanent housing issues.
- Develop an inclusive housing strategy that engages immigrants in the consultations of future housing and community developments.
- Address public housing waiting lists, the affordability of rent, and lack of access to information about special housing initiatives.
- Adjust provincial income assistance allowances to reflect the real costs of living and housing.
- Reform emergency shelters to address the housing needs of immigrants by funding proposals to eliminate waitlists and to introduce interpretation and other services.

For further information on recommendations and ideas to address the housing crisis in Nova Scotia, please review the following resources:

- [ISANS' and Halifax Refugee Clinic's Feedback and Recommendation to the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission](#)
- [Charting a New Course for Affordable Housing in Nova Scotia](#)
- [Keys to a Housing Secure Future for All Nova Scotians](#)
- [Build Together: Strengthening the Community Housing Sector in Nova Scotia](#)

As a province, we must work with our partners to address the need for affordable, safe, accessible, and appropriate housing for all Nova Scotians; and as a community, we must work together to address the particular barriers immigrants face so that we can ensure their successful integration and retention, as well as build a sense of belonging in local neighbourhoods.