



The Honourable Rechie Valdez

Minister of Women and Gender Equality
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0A6

May 16, 2025

Subject: Strategic Priorities for Gender Equity, Housing Justice, and a More Inclusive Canada

Dear Minister Valdez,

On behalf of the **National Indigenous Women's Housing Network** and the **Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network**, we extend our heartfelt congratulations on becoming the Minister of Women and Gender Equality. Your leadership represents an opportunity to renew Canada's commitment to gender equity, social and economic justice for all.

We write to you as national networks composed of lived experts, advocates, Indigenous leaders, frontline service providers, researchers, and policy professionals working across Canada to end homelessness and housing insecurity for women, Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse people. These communities are disproportionately impacted by poverty, violence, and systemic exclusion from housing and social support systems.

Alongside many feminist organizations across Canada, we strongly advocated for the reinstatement of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), recognizing its vital role in advancing gender justice. We are excited to work with you in this renewed mandate and believe there is a critical opportunity to build a strong bridge between your Ministry and the Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure. Housing is a gendered issue—women, particularly Indigenous, racialized, and gender-diverse people, face unique and systemic barriers to safe, affordable, and accessible housing. Without intentional coordination between gender equality and housing policy, these barriers will persist. A collaborative approach between your Ministries would help ensure that housing strategies are rooted in gender-based analysis and that equity is embedded in every aspect of housing planning and investment.

In this important role, we urge you to take bold and immediate action across five key priority areas to build a future where all people in Canada can live in dignity and safety:

1. Advocate to uphold the right to housing for women, Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse people by committing to adopt and implement the forthcoming recommendations of the **Neha Review Panel** on gender equity and housing. In light of your government's target to develop 500,000 housing units per year, we are calling for the government to allocate 40% of affordable and deeply affordable housing units developed through various initiatives to women and gender-diverse households.

2. Align policy with the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Report Recommendations.

3. Advocate to develop gender-responsive capacity in the housing and homelessness serving sector. Prioritize interventions that are tailored to the specific needs of women, Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse communities, including trauma-informed, culturally safe, and low-barrier housing models. Develop an enhanced Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework specifically focused on housing development, in collaboration with community partners and voices with lived experience. Advocate to revise the definition of chronic homelessness used to set targets in federal programs to better reflect gendered experiences of housing need and homelessness, including hidden homelessness and homelessness amongst Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people.

4. Address systemic siloes between the violence against women (VAW) and homelessness sector. The siloing of homeless women from transitional housing services perpetuates discrimination against homeless women and gender-diverse people in many ways. The impact of the siloes between homeless shelters and those serving women and gender-diverse people fleeing violence gravely impacts Indigenous women.

5. Advocate to raise the Canada Disability Benefit to a livable amount that reflects the real cost of living with a disability and lifts all people with disabilities out of poverty. Ensure the benefit is accessible, inclusive, and designed in consultation with disability rights advocates and organizations led by disabled people.

We look forward to working with your government to advance gender equity and housing justice in Canada. We are ready to collaborate, share lived expertise and support the implementation of effective and equitable policies that leave no one behind.

Sincerely,

Khulud Baig, Trinity Fletcher, Arlene Hache, Marie McGregor Pitawanakwat, Alina Perault, Stefania Seccia, and Aymen Sherwani

National Indigenous Women's Housing Network &
Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network