

# Countering Anti-Feminist Ideology in Federal Housing Policy

A brief for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)

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Women and women-led families experience some of the most severe housing need, due to a lack of affordable housing options that meet gender-specific housing needs (e.g. family-sized units).<sup>1</sup> Achieving housing equity in Canada amidst a supply crisis requires an intentional examination of how anti-feminist ideology is embedded across historically male-dominated institutions. It must be understood how such rhetoric has historically disadvantaged women especially when they are navigating the housing sector.

Housing design and affordability frameworks in Canada have traditionally catered to a nuclear family model in which the male partner is the primary wage-earner, while the female partner takes on unpaid household responsibilities, childcare, and part-time employment.<sup>2</sup> As the cost of living has risen alongside housing demand, households without dual incomes (e.g. single mothers) have struggled to access affordable, adequately-sized housing.<sup>3</sup>

In November 2025, the Neha Review Panel, appointed by the Federal Housing Advocate, released its final report on the right to safe, adequate, and affordable housing for women, Two Spirit, Trans, and gender-diverse people – and the government's duty to uphold this right after gathering testimony from over 500 women and gender-diverse people across Canada about their housing experiences. The Panel identified six key conclusions that outline the main barriers to accessing housing. It found that “gendered and racialized income inequities shut women, Two Spirit, Trans and gender-diverse people out of safe, adequate housing...[with] income inequality also remain[ing] to be a major barrier to housing affordability.”<sup>4</sup>

Women-led families, especially those fleeing abuse, are often harmed by the lack of affordable, safe, family-sized housing.<sup>5</sup> Many are pushed into overcrowded, temporary, or unstable accommodations, which can increase the risk of returning to an abuser – further deepening their instability. A lack of secure housing can also compound experiences of discrimination and contribute to the disproportionate marginalization facing Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQA people.<sup>6</sup> Facing trade-offs between rent, food, childcare, and employment, women-led families are further impacted as gendered gaps perpetuate cycles of child welfare involvement when childcare becomes unaffordable at the intersection of wage inequality.<sup>7</sup>

Amidst rapidly shifting media ecosystems, these historical norms tied to the nuclear family model are reinforced by modern narratives that shape perceptions of gendered struggles – particularly across alternative

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<sup>1</sup> WNHHN. (2023). *An Intersectional Feminist Housing Agenda for Canada: A Briefing Guide for Canada's Housing Minister*. <https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/An-Intersectional-Feminist-Housing-Agenda.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Policy Horizons Canada. (2024). “Future Lives: Uncertainty.” *Government of Canada*. <https://horizons.service.canada.ca/en/2024/future-lives-uncertainty/index.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> Policy Horizons Canada. (2024).

<sup>4</sup> Neha Review Panel. (2025). “We are human. We deserve a place to live. It's that simple”: The final report and recommendations of the Neha review panel. Ottawa: National Housing Council. [https://cms.nhc-cn1.ca/media/Neha/Reports/final-report-and-recommendations-ENGLISH%20\(web\).pdf](https://cms.nhc-cn1.ca/media/Neha/Reports/final-report-and-recommendations-ENGLISH%20(web).pdf)

<sup>5</sup> WNHHN. (2023).

<sup>6</sup> WNHHN. (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Schwan, K., Versteegh, A., Perri, M., Caplan, R., Baig, K., Dej, E., Jenkinson, J., Brais, H., Eiboff, F., & Pahlevan Chaleshtari, T. (2020). *The State of Women's Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review*. Hache, A., Nelson, A., Kratochvil, E., & Malenfant, J. (Eds). Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

content (e.g. podcasts, social media). Recently, the rise of anti-feminist rhetoric – the ‘*manosphere*’ – has advocated for the return of rigid gender-roles and the use of reductive lenses to frame women’s struggles (e.g. lone parenthood) as personal shortcomings rather than systemic failures.<sup>8</sup> Seemingly harmless media is often found covertly normalizing harmful stereotypes and contributing to the mistreatment of women.<sup>9</sup>

Such messaging may frame a single mother fleeing from abuse as undeserving of support, portraying their struggles as self-inflicted. The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reports that lone-parent women already experience the worst degree of tenancy discrimination (e.g. application denial) because of their gender, compounded by their family situations and often low-incomes, with landlords considering single mothers as ‘bad-risk renters’ or ‘unreliable’.<sup>10</sup> This is in addition to gendered evictions being a key pathway into homelessness for women.<sup>11</sup> The rise of anti-feminist ideology exacerbates these challenges, as landlords may ignore principles of gendered safety in buildings. In extreme cases, this has included demands for sexual favours, creating conditions that discourage women from fleeing abusive or unsafe relationships and restrict their access to secure housing.<sup>12</sup>

WNHHN urges FEWO to acknowledge that anti-feminist ideology is not merely cultural rhetoric, but a material barrier to women’s housing security. Addressing its impacts requires embedding gendered safety and affordability considerations within existing and proposed federal housing policy (e.g. Build Canada Homes). By confronting these systemic drivers, FEWO ensures that women and women-led families have equitable access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing.

### ***WNHHN calls on the Government of Canada to:***

- Develop an enhanced **Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework for Build Canada Homes**, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and principles and tailored to housing development, in collaboration with community partners and people with lived experience of housing insecurity. This framework must inform all federal housing investments and decision-making to ensure equitable outcomes.
- Allocate at least **40% of affordable and deeply affordable housing units for women, Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse people** that are developed through federal investments by Build Canada Homes or CMHC – ensuring that the housing budget does not rely on a one-size-fits-all approach.

***WNHHN is a national collective focused on research and advocacy to drive critical policy change that eliminates systemic, gendered homelessness in Canada.***

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<sup>8</sup> UN Women. (2025). “*The manosphere is no joke. UN Women explains why.*” <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/media-advisory/2025/05/the-manosphere-is-no-joke-un-women-explains-why>

<sup>9</sup> McCullough, S. (2023). “Online misogyny: the “*manosphere*.” *Canadian Museum for Human Rights*. <https://humanrights.ca/story/online-misogyny-manosphere>

<sup>10</sup> McCullough, S., Sylvestre, G., Dudley, M., & Vachon, M. (2023). *SHUT OUT – Discrimination in the rental housing market: Barriers to tenancy access and maintenance, its impacts, and possible interventions*. Institute of Urban Studies, The University of Winnipeg. [https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/archive/research\\_6/shut-out--discrimination-in-the-rental-market-ius-2023.pdf](https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/archive/research_6/shut-out--discrimination-in-the-rental-market-ius-2023.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> WNHHN, NRHN. (2023) *Gendered Evictions in Financialized Housing Markets Across Canada: The Case for Human Rights Interventions and Oversight*. <https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/Submission-to-the-NHC-Review-Panel-NRHN-WNHHN-31-March-2023-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Schwan, K, et al. (2023).