

# TEN things you should know about housing and homelessness in Canada

The Wellesley Institute has released a new policy primer on housing and homelessness in Canada as Miloon Kothari, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, commences his fact-finding mission to Canada. Among the observations:

- A record number of new homes are being built in Canada, but less than one out of every 100 new homes is truly affordable. Canada has a long history of housing success, with 20,000 or more new affordable homes funded annually in the early 1980s. Federal funding cuts and downloading in the 1980s and 1990s has meant that only about 1,000 new affordable homes annually have been built across Canada in recent years.
- Renter household incomes are falling, even as rents are rising faster than inflation. One-in-every-four tenant households in Canada are officially classed as in "core housing need".
- Canada's economy is booming, and the richest 5% of Canadians take 25% of total income – more than the total income of the bottom 60% (low, moderate and middle-income households). About 2.8 million families – one-in-every-five – are living in poverty. Poverty is acute among women, racialized communities and Aboriginal people.
- Multi-billion federal surpluses since 1998 – including a growing surplus at Canada's national housing agency – have not been reinvested in new affordable homes. Finally, in 2005, Parliament authorized \$1.6 billion over two years for new affordable homes, but that is short-term, and doesn't even replace the years of funding cuts.
- Federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers promised in September of 2005 that they were "accelerating work" on a Canadian housing framework, but they have not met since then, and haven't even issued a draft framework.
- Housing and homelessness in Canada has been called a "national emergency" in the most recent review by the United Nations, which has noted that this country falls short of meeting its obligations in international law. Canadian social spending is less than almost all our partners in the Organization for Economic Co-operative and Development.

For a full copy of the Wellesley Institute policy primer, visit [www.wellesleyinstitute.com](http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com)