

RE: Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI)

In 2019, Canada committed to supporting the most vulnerable communities in accessing affordable and quality housing through the National Housing Strategy. The strategy identified women and children fleeing intimate partner violence as a priority community.

Over the last six months, and in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of safe and affordable housing for women and children fleeing violence has become a front-facing issue. The “stay home” protocol implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19, meant that victims of intimate partner violence were confined with their abusers and had dwindled access to resources and supports for safety. Women and children fleeing violence continue to face unique barriers in accessing safe, affordable and quality housing and the current global pandemic has exacerbated the urgency for action.

On September 21, 2020, the Honourable Ahmed Hussen announced new Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) to help address the urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians by rapidly creating new affordable housing. This strategy is described as a step forward in stimulating the economy, and supporting vulnerable communities. WomanACT applauds the minister on this announcement, and on the development of this new initiative.

To remain in alignment with Canada’s National Housing Strategy, WomanACT recommends that the Rapid Housing Initiative recognizes the disproportional barriers that women and their children fleeing intimate partner violence face in accessing housing and adopts a gender equity perspective. To adopt a gender equity perspective would mean that:

- 30% of the proposed 3,000 affordable housing units be reserved specifically for women and children
- 10% of the units reserved for women and children be allocated to Indigenous and racialized women and children

WomanACT encourages the Honourable Ahmed Hussen to work directly with the Violence against Women (VAW) sector to ensure the needs of this priority community is addressed.

The current global pandemic has emphasized the need for urgent action in addressing the lack of and barriers to accessing affordable, quality and safe housing for victims of intimate partner violence. The Rapid Housing Initiative is an opportunity for the Government of Canada to address the needs and reaffirm its commitment to supporting women and children fleeing intimate partner violence.

Sincerely,



Harmy Mendoza, Executive Director  
September 22, 2020