



For Immediate Release

## **A Hard Won Victory for Housing**

Toronto, ON – June 21, 2019 – An important milestone has been achieved in Canada as Parliament formally recognizes that housing is a fundamental human right. [Bill C-97](#), which includes the National Housing Strategy Act, received Royal Assent today. For over a decade, the right to housing movement across the country demanded the creation of a National Housing Strategy and the recognition of the right to housing in law. The [Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario \(ACTO\)](#) and the [Right to Housing \(R2H\) Coalition](#) celebrate that millions of people can now hold their government accountable for addressing their housing needs.

The R2H Coalition and ACTO's historic Charter challenge inspired public awareness of what a right to safe, secure and adequate housing could mean for those living in Canada. Five applicants bravely shared their life experience of struggling with inadequate housing and homelessness, while [many social justice organizations](#) intervened to echo the call for the right to housing. "Taking the government to court for failing to address growing homelessness and the affordable housing crisis was a colossal task," explains Kenneth Hale, the Director of Advocacy and Legal Services at ACTO. "As a specialty legal clinic committed to representing the needs of low-income Ontarians, we had to show Canadians and the world that too many vulnerable lives were being harmed."

Across Canada, 1.7 million people are living in unaffordable and inadequate homes. Mass homelessness is disproportionately impacting Indigenous people, people living with disabilities, women, lone-parent households, racialized and immigrant communities. "It's been proven that safe and secure housing is a step further to socioeconomic well-being," says Lubna Khalid a member of the R2H Coalition. "It builds people's self-esteem and confidence while improving mental and physical health."

After the R2H Coalition and ACTO highlighted Canada's failure to adequately house its vulnerable residents before a United Nations committee in Geneva, Canada was told that it must adopt a human-rights based national housing strategy and collaborate with affected communities. With the right to housing now legislated, people will have a new Federal Housing Advocate and the National Housing Council to hold the government accountable for systemic violations of their right to adequate housing. "We see the terrible consequences to people who experience homelessness every day," says Mike Creek, a member of the R2H Coalition who attended the UN meeting. "The right to housing will change lives and how we view housing. Canadians should celebrate that housing is recognized as a human right. This is something to be proud of."

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### **About Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario**

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO) is a specialty community legal clinic, funded by Legal Aid Ontario, with a province-wide mandate. ACTO works for the advancement of human rights in housing for low-income Ontarians through legal advice and representation, law reform, community organizing, and education and training. The clinic also coordinates the Tenant Duty Counsel Program (TDCP) across Ontario, which provides legal information and assistance to self-represented tenants appearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

### **About the Right to Housing Coalition**

The Right to Housing (R2H) Coalition includes people from a variety of backgrounds and expertise, including people with lived experience of homelessness or of being inadequately housed, community organizations, advocacy groups and academics.

**For more information including interviews with ACTO and Right to Housing Coalition representatives:**

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