

December 11, 2020



## To All MPPs and Provincial Party Leaders

Canadians were already in a housing insecurity crisis when COVID exposed and exacerbated the cruelty of homelessness, the dangers of under-housing, and the vulnerability of those without access to affordable housing. Now, we're in a second wave and winter is arriving.

To our shame, it is people on the margins and intersections of society who are most negatively affected by housing insecurity, including racially marginalized and Indigenous residents, newcomers, and women.

Our rental housing crisis is the result of choices by all levels of governments, supported by large private sector landlords and investors. We call on all levels of government to act on behalf of and be publicly accountable to residents, not wealthy special interests.

To solve the housing crisis, we have to move away from for-profit, market-based rental housing, and towards provision of much more social housing through co-ops, government-owned public housing, and non-profit organizations. In the meantime, we need effective rules to protect tenants and require that affordable rental housing be included in new developments. With shelters, our goal must be to get rid of them through progressive housing, support and prevention programs, but until then we must treat homeless people more humanely. These calls reflect the direct experiences of our members and the communities where we live.

Increasing the supply of stable affordable rental housing is key. Given the current regulatory framework, and the need to constantly extract profit, trying to solve the problem through large scale private rentals is a non-starter. Rent control is easy to circumvent, evictions have been sped up, and the concentration of rental ownership is accelerating through REITs buying up huge swaths of apartment buildings, promising big dividends for investors and putting even more pressure on affordability.

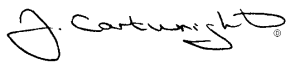
We have seen and learned during COVID that we **can** change. We saw how unhealthy it is for people to be crowded into inadequate housing, so we housed homeless people in hotels. We briefly halted evictions.

To help us “build back better,” we call on the Ontario government to:

- Participate in establishing a fully-funded national housing program (including grants and ongoing housing supports, not just loans) whereby municipal, provincial and federal governments quickly implement a comprehensive plan to fund and build permanent affordable social housing, including co-ops, government and non-profit organizations
- Define “affordability” in collaboration with housing advocacy groups and housing crisis experts
- Repeal Ontario’s Bill 184, reinstate and extend the COVID ban on evictions, ban “renovictions”, place all residential units including vacant ones under rent control to eliminate the two-tier system and reverse “vacancy decontrol” which incentivizes landlords to kick out tenants and hike up rent prices, and implement a rent relief program
- Expand affordable housing by implementing mandatory inclusionary zoning
- Support expansion and humanizing of the existing system of shelters (including more use of hotel rooms to handle the emergency), provision of health and support services to people who are homeless, and investments in streets-to-homes programs

A massive publicly-supported social housing program would not only address issues highlighted by the pandemic, it would create good jobs and help with Ontario’s economic recovery.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Cartwright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small registered trademark symbol (®) at the end.

John Cartwright  
President

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