



## Scaling up affordable housing: Inspiration from Canada and abroad CHEC-CCRL Newsletter, June 2023

It's easy to get discouraged about the lack of affordable housing in Canada when we're losing more units than we're building, but there are ways to improve the situation, says University of Ottawa housing expert Carolyn Whitzman.

Dr. Whitzman was the guest speaker at a virtual presentation organized by the First Unitarian Church in Hamilton on June 6, entitled Housing Affordability: Moving from Promises to Reality.

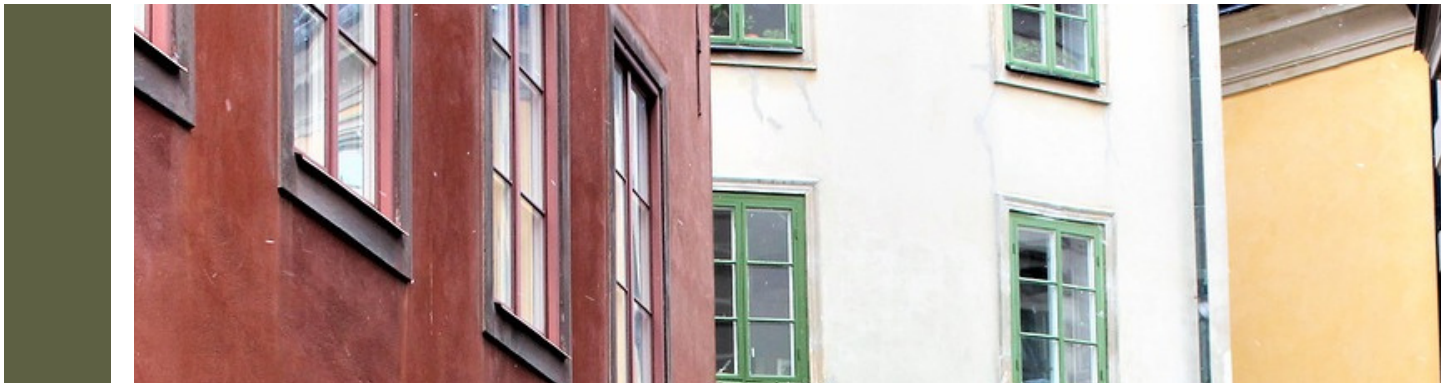
Citing examples from her research on Europe and beyond, Whitzman said there are three potential "game changer" strategies to end homelessness and housing precarity.

- **Setting ambitious targets**
- **Scaling up well-located affordable housing**
- **A purpose-built non-market housing fund**

Whitzman noted that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) set a target last year of building 5.8 million new homes by 2030 to bring prices down to affordable levels. That would mean more than doubling our current rate of house construction. But, despite that lofty goal and the urgency of the situation, housing starts have declined steadily since November 2022.

Don't give up, Whitzman said. Canada built the equivalent of 6 million homes for returning service men after World War II, as has Sweden and Singapore at various times in their histories.

"People look at that 6 million, 5.8 million, goal and they go "well that's impossible," but it's very much not impossible. It's just a matter of political will."



The housing expert said that goal should include about 2 million more non-market housing units, defined as housing for low and moderate-income singles and families, often subsidized through government support. Currently, there are 650,000 homes in Canada that are non-market and 600,000 of those 650,000 homes were built before the year 2000 -- more than 23 years ago.

“So new non-market housing construction has pretty much halted and the National Housing Strategy hasn't made enough of a difference,”Whitzman said.

“We also need to scale up private sector affordable housing. And we need to look at finance in terms of, particularly, non-market housing. And we need to look at acquisitions of existing affordable housing in order not to lose that affordability.”

The final key proponent of an effective strategy for increasing housing affordability is to use government land for affordable housing projects.

To view the presentation video, go to: <https://uuhamilton.ca/affordable-housing/>