

2023

ACORN Canada

FEDERAL BUDGET

SUBMISSION



Affordable Housing

Lack of adequate or any form of rent control threatens the security of tenure and accelerates homelessness. Financialized landlords such as Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), like Starlight, CAPREIT, Killam and many others are fuelling the housing crisis by acquiring apartments that were once affordable and turning them into an investment product. Federal money is going into building more luxury rentals, with very little going to building real affordable housing.

Stop Financialization of Housing

Ban financialized landlords from acquiring residential housing and setting limits to how much housing can financialized landlords acquire.

Stop Tax Exemptions to REITs

REITs, unlike other income trusts in Canada, enjoy preferential tax treatment provided by the Federal Income Tax Act. Close the tax loophole.

Create a Non-Profit Acquisition Strategy

CMHC should supplement the National Housing Strategy's Co- investment Fund with an Acquisitions Fund that would enable non-profit, co-op and land trust organizations to purchase at-risk rental buildings when they come on the market.

Build affordable housing

Build a minimum of 1.2 million units of affordable housing in the next decade. The federal housing initiatives must target people in core housing need.

Fair Banking

The failure of the banks is forcing millions of people to rely on predatory lenders such as Money Mart, Easy Financial, Cash Money and many others that charge exorbitant interest rates. ACORN saw a 300% jump in the uptake of installment loans between 2016 and 2020. ACORN won a commitment from the federal government in Budget 2021 to launch a consultation to lower the interest rates but since the end of the consultation in Oct. 2020, no action has been taken.

Lower the interest rate to 30% or lower

Lower the criminal rate of interest from 60 to 20% plus BOC rate or 30%, whichever is lower, include all costs like insurance, fees etc.

Create a Fair Credit Benefit

Create a federally funded Fair Credit Benefit so that all low-income people have access to low-cost credit options loans in case of emergency.

Support Postal Banking

Support fair lending alternatives like postal banking in all cities.

Making enforcing violations accessible

Current requirements present far too great a barrier to identifying and prosecuting a criminal case of interest. Immediate changes are needed to section 347 of the Criminal Code.

Internet for All

ACORN's Internet for All campaign calls for affordable, high-speed internet for all low-income people. ACORN's 2019 national survey showed that a quarter of respondents had to sacrifice food in order to pay for internet services. The federal Connecting Families program is not universal and suffers from many limitations. Telecoms like Rogers and TELUS have some interventions but it still remains a patchwork.

Make the Federal Connecting Families Program universal

The federal government should provide affordable, high speed internet access by making the Connecting Families Program universal to include all low-income people and fixed-income seniors at \$10/month and 50/10 Mbps speed.

Make the Federal Connecting Families Program mandatory for telecoms

Many telecoms have not opted into the program since it is voluntary. Companies like East Link in Nova Scotia have not opted in.

Modernize EI

The federal government is in the process of undertaking EI reforms. Recently, the government introduced a set of temporary changes as the pandemic exposed the inherent gaps in the current EI system. However, those changes have been discontinued starting September 25, 2022. However, the EI reforms are still underway, and the country is seeing job losses and record inflation which call for a slew of changes to the EI system.

Bring back the temporary changes made to EI

Until the reforms are underway, the temporary changes made to EI should be brought back to make it accessible to most workers.

Fund EI

For the last 30 years, the federal government has not been funding EI.

Make EI accessible to all workers

- Lower the hour requirement consistently across the country to 300 hours or 12 weeks of insurable work, whichever is better for the worker.
- Expand the qualifying period to at least 2 years.
- Provide EI access for temporary foreign workers, seasonal agricultural workers, and international students who currently cannot access EI.
- Develop permanent ways for precarious workers to access EI, including the self-employed. Workers are also increasingly misclassified as independent contractors or self-employed.
- Expand EI to include 'quit/fire,' 'refuse work,' or school attendance.

Raise EI benefit rates

Raise the benefit rates for all workers to 75% of earnings; and raise benefits to 100% of earnings for low wage workers.

Educational support

Ensure better support for educational opportunities as many workers might have to transition from their jobs to another sector.





AACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) Canada is a multi-issue, membership-based community union of low- and moderate-income people. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved by building community power for change.

ACORN's detailed submission for the Federal Budget 2023 can be accessed here:
<https://acorncanada.org/resources/acorns-submission-to-federal-budget-2023/>

Contact

ACORN Canada
715B Danforth Avenue, Toronto
M4J 1L2, ON

www.acorncanada.org 