



# REALTORS Care<sup>®</sup> Days Guidebook



REALTORS  
*Care*<sup>®</sup>

# Introducing REALTORS Care® Days

## Welcome to your essential guidebook for REALTORS Care® Days!

REALTORS Care® Days are more than just volunteering events; they are an expression of the passion and commitment REALTORS® have for housing and shelter-related issues across Canada. Every hammer swing, every brush stroke, and every hand extended in service is a testament to the spirit of our REALTOR® community. We come together not just as professionals, but as dedicated community members eager to shape a collective future where everyone thrives.

Whether you're an expert at organizing volunteer projects or taking your first step into community service, we've packed this guide with the tools and tactics you need to successfully bring your members together for a meaningful event. Beyond that, by participating in REALTORS Care® Days, you'll connect your members to the wider REALTOR® community who understand their business success is directly tied to the strength and resilience of their communities.

REALTORS Care® Days allow boards and associations to participate in a national movement by creating your event, your way. Exclusive to your organization, your REALTORS Care® Day is your chance to spotlight the difference REALTORS® are making in your local community—during the time of year that works best for you.

You will also find companion toolkits on [REALTORSCareDays.ca](https://www.realtorcare.org/REALTORSCareDays.ca) that will provide you with more in-depth and tactical resources like templates, online resources and more!

We're eager to walk alongside you on your remarkable journey of giving back.

As the African proverb says,

**“If you want to go fast, go alone;  
if you want to go far, go together.”**

Let's get started.

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# At-a-Glance

## REALTORS Care® Days Checklist

This guidebook will help you accomplish the elements below.

To ensure the best outcome for your REALTORS Care® Day, try to tick all these boxes.

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Identify your resources	
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Find a local housing or shelter-related charity or community group	
Scope your volunteer project	
Register your participation with the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) and make sure to secure your day!	
<b>Phase 3: Implement</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Recruit your membership (and stakeholders)	
Design your volunteer experience and expectations	
Host your REALTORS Care® Day, guiding your volunteers along the way	
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Track participation details and send to CREA's REALTORS Care® team	
Apply for your \$1,000 event reimbursement	
Share stories of impact on social media and with local news organizations	
Thank your participants and community/non-profit partner	

PHASE 1  
**Ideate**



# Define Your Impact Focus

## The Importance of Housing and Shelter-Related Issues for REALTORS®

REALTORS® are experts on all things home. Ensuring your REALTORS Care® Day is focused on the issues of housing and shelter is a natural extension of REALTORS® expertise. Everyone deserves a safe place to call home and, as professionals and community members, REALTORS® are well-positioned to contribute to this critical issue.

But to fully understand where you can make an impact, it's helpful to understand the housing continuum that ranges from homelessness to homeownership, what actually defines homelessness (it may be different than you expect) and who it impacts.

### Defining Homelessness

Homelessness can affect all: youth, women, men, Indigenous people, veterans, elders and families. It is a multifaceted issue that intersects with a variety of structural, societal, and individual challenges including unemployment, discrimination, domestic violence, mental health and addiction.<sup>1</sup>

While the definition of homelessness may seem straightforward, it's more complex and nuanced than you might expect. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness in a variety of ways, including:

- 1. Unsheltered:** People living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation.
- 2. Emergency Sheltered:** People staying in overnight emergency shelters designed for people who are homeless.
- 3. Provisionally Accommodated:** People who are homeless whose accommodation is temporary or lack security of tenure, including interim (or transitional) housing, people living temporarily with others (couch surfing), or living in institutional contexts (hospitals, prisons) without permanent housing arrangements.
- 4. At Risk of Homelessness:** People who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

It's important to note that Indigenous communities define homelessness differently.<sup>2</sup>

At least

**35,000**

Canadians are homeless on a given night.

**1 in 5**

people experiencing homelessness are between the ages of 13 and 24.

Close to

**1/3**

of people experiencing homelessness identify as women.

Less than

**5%**

of Canadians identify as Indigenous, but

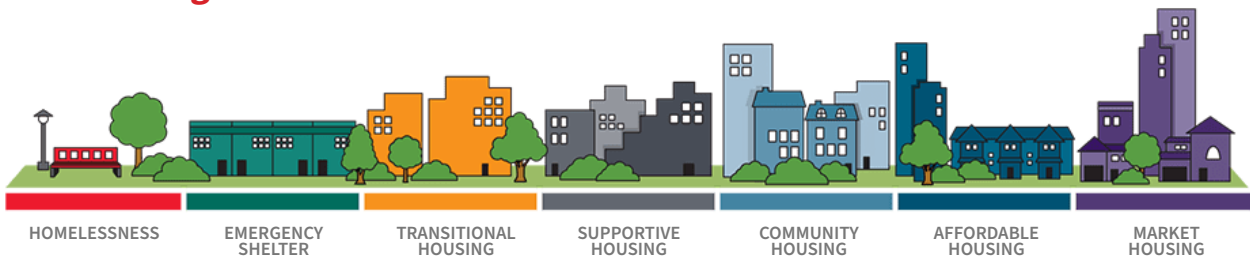
**28%–34%**

of people experiencing homelessness identify as Indigenous.

Source: [www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SQHC16\\_final\\_20Oct2016.pdf](http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/SQHC16_final_20Oct2016.pdf)

# The Housing Continuum

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



In Canada, housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of a household's before-tax income. You may think affordable housing refers only to governmentally subsidized rental housing, but in reality, it's a broad term that can include housing provided by the private, public and non-profit sectors. It also includes all forms of housing tenure: rental, ownership and co-operative ownership, as well as temporary and permanent housing.<sup>3</sup>

## Emergency shelter

Designed to offer short-term crisis support. Emergency shelters play a critical role in a community's homelessness response system. They provide an immediate place to stay while individuals and families reconnect with housing. Shelters work best when people can enter and exit rapidly, with recovery-oriented services for their needs.

## Transitional housing

A temporary solution that aims to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing. Many of the people who live in transitional housing use it for support, structure, or treatment on a short-term basis. Examples include addiction treatment or mental health support.

## Supportive housing

Combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible, and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities, or substance use. Many families who require supportive housing have experienced chronic homelessness, experience greater barriers to maintaining their housing and have higher needs that require extra support.

## Community housing

Community housing is also known as social housing or subsidized housing. This is housing for people living on low incomes who can't afford market-rate apartments. Community housing can include purpose-built low-income housing developments, subsidized units in market-rate buildings, or market-rate apartments paid for in part by provincial rent supplements. There is often a long waiting list (up to 7+ years!) to get into a Community Housing unit.

## Affordable Housing (rentals and homeownership)

A household that spends less than 30% of pre-tax income on shelter is considered to be in affordable housing.

## Market housing (rentals and homeownership)

Housing within the community that has a rent or mortgage payment at a rate at, or near, average market rates and is unsubsidized.



## Project Ideas

As you've probably started to recognize, these definitions expand the ways your REALTOR® members and stakeholders can support your community and the variety of individuals disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

For example:

- ▶ Cooking/serving meals at a family shelter.
- ▶ Rehabbing furniture for a furniture bank that supplies low or no-cost furniture to individuals transitioning into affordable housing for the first time.
- ▶ Building a home alongside its future, first-time homeowner.
- ▶ Participating in a “day in the life” immersive program to spend a day understanding the challenges faced by the homeless, working alongside outreach teams.
- ▶ Assembling backpacks for a local school for children living in precarious housing situations.
- ▶ “Adopting” a room in transitional housing to renovate and decorate, adding personal touches and comfort to make the space more welcoming for a family that has recently immigrated to Canada.
- ▶ Doing basic repairs and safety upgrades for veterans to help ensure they can remain safely in their homes.
- ▶ Assembling hygiene kits for unsheltered people (things like socks, first aid supplies, feminine hygiene items) that REALTORS® would then hand out to people as they experience them during the course of their day (note: this is mostly about creating a one-to-one human connection, not about the kits).
- ▶ Installing energy-efficient upgrades in affordable housing units that might include energy-saving light bulbs, insulating windows, setting up low-flow showerheads, and speaking with residents about ways to reduce their energy consumption—and to save money!
- ▶ Partnering with community housing organizations to beautify or otherwise improve one of their community spaces (for example, painting a community space, beautifying a community park, etc.).
- ▶ Improving accessibility in supportive housing units by installing grab bars in bathrooms, ensuring wheelchair accessibility, adding ramps, or customizing living spaces to cater to the specific needs of residents with disabilities.

# Questions to Consider When Planning Your REALTORS Care® Day



## People resources and support

To maximize the potential of your REALTORS Care® Day, you'll want to leverage all the resources at your disposal. These resources can be diverse, ranging from human capital to financial assets, and will play a critical role in shaping your event. Take a moment to ask:

- 1. What people resources are available?** Who from within your board or association and its wider network can support you in creating a top-notch REALTORS Care® Day activation? This could include board members, staff, and your members.
- 2. What financial resources exist?** CREA is offering a \$1,000 bursary for your REALTORS Care® Day activation so be sure to register your event to unlock these funds. Additionally, determine if your board or association has additional budget to contribute to your project and get the requisite authorizations before getting started.
- 3. Are there others in the community who might want to join this effort?** Extend your resource search beyond your organization. What local businesses, brokerages, non-profit organizations, clubs, or community groups could you turn to for partnership or support?
- 4. Which communications channels will work best for this message?** Cutting through the clutter will be essential to your REALTORS Care® Day success. Do an inventory of the communications channels available to you like member newsletters, email lists, and scheduled meetings. Remember that word of mouth, REALTOR® to REALTOR®, will likely be your most valuable channel.
- 5. Are there other material or logistical resources available?** Assess your logistical capabilities, such as physical space and existing event materials. Utilize in-house resources or seek external help through partnerships.





## Impact Focus

When it comes to designing your REALTORS Care® Day volunteer opportunity, you'll want to consider the kind of impact you'd like to make within the area of safe and affordable housing. Ask your planning team:

- ▶ **What are some of the housing and shelter-focused issues in our community** we've heard about or noticed lately?
- ▶ **Are there specific groups we'd like to work with** (for example, at-risk youth, Indigenous groups, families, veterans or women impacted by domestic violence)?
- ▶ **Where along the housing continuum do we want to support?** (Emergency shelters? Community housing?)

## Foundational Logistics

- ▶ **How big do we want our volunteer team to be?** Do we want it to be a larger-scale project or keep it to a tight-knit group?
- ▶ **When is the best time for us to hold our REALTORS Care® Day?** If you have a specific day or timeframe in mind, remember to book your date through the [calendar tool](#) sooner rather than later to designate your specific day.
- ▶ **Are we looking for a 'done in a day' activity**, or are we looking for a longer or ongoing opportunity? (Reminder: Your board or association can only reserve one "official" REALTORS Care® Day but that shouldn't stop you from creating an ongoing activity.)

PHASE 2

# Initiate



# Connect With Your Community Partner

## Finding a Community Partner

Once you have a picture in mind of your impact focus area and general parameters for your volunteer project, you're ready to find a partner. Here are some search options:

- ▶ **Ask colleagues and friends to share organizations** they're familiar with that you may not be aware of.
- ▶ **Search for non-profits in your community** that serve the specific cause or group you'd like to support (e.g. search for "Community housing in [your geographic area]"). Reach out to set up exploratory conversations. You may need to reach out to several organizations before you find one that's a good fit.

## Outreach Tips

Once you have a short list of non-profit organizations, the next step is to make sure there's a good fit. This includes:

- ▶ **considering the needs and capabilities** of your non-profit partner, your REALTOR® members, and other volunteers;
- ▶ **understanding the primary project goals** before any deeper project planning takes place; and
- ▶ **scheduling an in-depth meeting** to discuss next steps, if it seems likely the project is a good fit. Keep in mind, you may need more than one planning meeting.

These initial steps are not about finalizing the project details but rather, ensuring there's a potential match in expectations and capabilities. This process can save considerable time and other resources down the line.

## Community-centric Principles

We always operate with the intention of "doing with" our community partners, not "doing for" or "doing to". As you engage in more detailed conversations with your potential non-profit partner, be sure to keep the principles of trust-based philanthropy<sup>4</sup> in mind, to ensure you're centering the needs of the community.



## Scoping Your Project

Below are the categories of questions you'll want to dig into once you've identified a community partner. Check the companion toolkit: [\*Working with Community Partners\*](#) for a scoping guide you can customize.

### Immediate volunteer needs

- ▶ Primary point of contact
- ▶ Activity details
- ▶ Volunteer requirements
- ▶ Cautions and concerns

### The impact (why it matters)

- ▶ Task significance
- ▶ Proximity to beneficiary and stories of impact

### Reporting and communication

- ▶ Measuring impact
- ▶ Social sharing



PHASE 3

**Implement**



# Recruit Volunteers and Stakeholders

## Reaching Your Members

As you're inviting your members to participate in the project, you should have a sense of what might motivate them to say "yes" (and it's not always easy). There are three critical dimensions to recruiting for volunteering projects:



### Clearly define roles and opportunities

- ▶ The expectations, skills, or opportunities associated with your project should be laid out openly. Clarity will help your members understand what will be asked of them, so they don't prematurely dismiss or accept the opportunity. Rather, they can make an informed decision about whether they'd like to participate and to what degree.



### Articulate project value

- ▶ Share a project's potential outcomes. Talk about what you hope to achieve.
- ▶ Why does this project matter? Most importantly, why do these outcomes matter? Try to think beyond just numbers — think about how this work contributes to the mission of the non-profit, and the people and communities they support.



### Appeal to existing values and motivations

- ▶ What do REALTORS® value personally and professionally? Is it: being an active member of the community; understanding more about the complete housing continuum; networking with fellow REALTORS®, or other community members? How can you connect volunteering to intrinsic motivators for your members?
- ▶ How might volunteering fit into their lifestyle in an appealing way? While "time" is most often cited as the top reason people say they don't volunteer, people actively make time for what's important.



## TIP

**“Super-volunteers” may be more interested in guiding others than in completing basic volunteer tasks.**

See the companion toolkit:  
[\*Transformative Volunteering.\*](#)

When you start asking your members to take part in your volunteering project, be as specific as possible and set clear expectations. Remember to:

**Be inclusive! Don’t just turn to your few “go-to” individuals.** How are you connecting with members you don’t know, or engaging new members?

**Provide opportunities for different levels of engagement.** Some volunteers will be ready to commit more time, or take on more responsibility, than others. Talk to them about what their highest level of contribution looks like, and how you’ll work with them to maintain it.

## Reaching Other Stakeholders

### Local media

Attracting media attention during your REALTORS Care® Day event is a great way to elevate your project and send a strong signal to your membership and stakeholders. You’ll have a good chance of attracting media attention by **creating a press release and media kit.**

- ▶ Prepare a comprehensive press release outlining the objectives, significance and details of your volunteer project.
- ▶ Create a media kit including high-resolution images, background information about the project, quotes from key participants and any relevant statistics or data.
- ▶ Distribute these items two to three weeks in advance of your event, to a curated list of local media outlets, including blogs, newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, and online news platforms.

### Brokerages

Although many real estate brokerages have their own specific community activations, it can’t hurt to ask them to participate in your REALTORS Care® Day event. Here are some ideas to help in your outreach to this important group:

#### **Collaborative planning and inclusion in decision-making:**

- ▶ Invite leaders from brokerages to participate in your REALTORS Care® Day planning conversation. Ask for their insights and expertise. Use these discussions to decide on specific projects or activities for the day.

#### **Leverage existing community ties and initiatives:**

- ▶ Research and acknowledge the existing community service efforts of these brokerages. Show appreciation for their initiatives and explore ways to integrate or complement these efforts with your REALTORS Care® Day event.

#### **Share other involved stakeholders:**

- ▶ If you’ve secured participation (or even interest) from local elected officials or media outlets, be sure to share this with the independent brokerages. The involvement of high-profile stakeholders may help secure their participation.

## The Role of Elected Officials at REALTORS Care® Days

Canada is facing a supply shortage across the entire housing continuum. Housing is a long-term asset that helps provide safety and sustainability for families. It improves social, psychological, and cultural well-being. It also helps create communities. REALTORS Care® Day initiatives are an excellent opportunity to volunteer your time with local housing and shelter-related charities and advocate in support of housing for all Canadians.

Connecting with your elected officials and inviting them to your event not only positions your board or association as trusted and caring members of the community, but it also brings light to housing challenges that are important to REALTORS® and Canadians alike. This helps strengthen our collective advocacy efforts and highlights the need to create meaningful actions and lasting impacts for those who need it most in your community.

### Outreach and communication tips

If you don't have an already-established relationship with your elected official, here are some helpful tips to reach out and invite them to join your REALTORS Care® Day.

- ▶ Research your Member of Parliament (MP), Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP), or locally elected officials (Mayor, city councilors, etc.). Do a quick online search to learn about the work your elected officials have done and decide who you'd like to invite.
- ▶ Reach out. Call the elected officials' office and introduce yourself, present your invitation, and explain why it's meaningful for your elected official to attend the REALTORS Care® Day.
- ▶ Be professional, organized, and direct. Elected officials' offices receive many event requests; make sure you get straight to the point and be prepared to answer any questions.
- ▶ Express thanks and be mindful. Although you may not speak directly to your elected official; their staff are equally important. Professionalism and gratitude go a long way. MP and MPP staff work very closely with their parliamentarians; they're commonly known as the gatekeepers. If the elected officials aren't available to attend your event, extend the invitation to the staff. This little gesture goes a long way in fostering and maintaining relationships with members of elected office. The same goes for city council.
- ▶ Follow up. If you don't hear back within a reasonable time frame, send a follow-up email summarizing your invitation. Your elected official might not attend your first REALTORS Care® Day, and that's okay. Consider inviting their staff! They are usually happy to attend events on behalf of parliamentarians and always report back to the office about community events.
- ▶ Send a thank you. Always thank your MP and their staff for their time; acknowledge the effort and send a thoughtful email or note.

Housing and shelter-related volunteer efforts and initiatives go hand in hand with REALTOR® advocacy. By volunteering your time in a meaningful way, you're not only helping to give back to those in need, but also building meaningful and lasting relationships with many diverse members of the community, including policy makers. It's an opportunity for you to present an added layer of value that REALTORS® provide — a collective voice that cares deeply about their community, and advocates for Canadians across the entire housing continuum.



# Design Your Volunteer Experience

## Project Planning Fundamentals

**Plan your project.** Start with the end in mind. What does success look like? Work backwards from your end goal and map out a detailed project plan to track tasks, logistics and important dates. You can use any project planning technology you'd prefer, but it's important that it "lives" in a central location so it's easy for everyone to use.

**Select a project leader.** In addition to determining a project leader, you'll want to appoint someone to be the group leader on the day of your event to guide your participants through their experience.

**Build a team.** Identify people who can support you with task management, communication, and project guidance.

**Communicate clearly and regularly.** Set a clear communication cadence with your partner and volunteer team. Establish preferred communication channels and set expectations around communication frequency and transparency with your volunteer team.

## Important Logistics

Once you've settled on a date, go to [REALTORSCareDays.ca](https://www.realtorscaredays.ca) to officially request it. Remember: each REALTORS Care® Day is exclusive, so reference the calendar tool while planning to ensure

you're targeting an available date. Please try to book your REALTORS Care® Day at least four weeks in advance so we can properly support and highlight your efforts.

Shortly after you submit your date request, a member of CREA's REALTORS Care® team will reach out to confirm your date. You will also receive additional information about what they'll need from you to share your story as well as a link to the REALTORS Care® Day Impact Tracking form (more on these topics later).

Be sure to leverage the resources available to you on [REALTORSCareDays.ca](https://www.realtorscaredays.ca), including:

- ▶ The REALTORS Care® Day Bursary Form, which can be used to claim up to \$1,000 in REALTORS Care® Day-related expenses. This must be submitted with receipts no later than three weeks after your REALTORS Care® Day.
- ▶ Social media templates, which can be used to promote your REALTORS Care® Day.
- ▶ Companion toolkits that will support you in planning and executing your REALTORS Care® Day activities.

Throughout the year, you'll be invited to participate in REALTORS Care® Day roundtable discussions, where board and association staff will be invited to share the latest on their planning efforts, ask questions and support each other's success.

## Making Your Project Meaningful

It's important to remember that beyond providing a service to a non-profit or completing a series of tasks, your REALTORS Care® Day will be most meaningful when it's focused on people.

“Transformative volunteering” is an approach to volunteering that can be used in almost any type of project and helps participants find meaning beyond project tasks and logistics by focusing on people and human connection — it helps root *action* in our shared humanity. This approach is achieved by having a **leader** apply three key practices:



### The brief

This sets the stage for our volunteers by creating an “alert” moment and explains who the tasks are for and why the project matters. The brief invites volunteers to consider shifting their focus **from tasks and logistics to people and purpose** — the real meaning behind the work they're about to complete. The brief gently adjusts focus from how well and quickly we can get tasks done to **the people and communities we're supporting**.



### Guiding volunteers

Recognizing where people are in their volunteer journey is key to helping participants contribute in an impactful way. Meeting volunteers where they are creates an environment where they have their needs met, have a great experience, and where they can choose to keep developing as a volunteer.



### The debrief

This helps volunteers reflect after the event to make sense of their experience, critically reflect on their experience and their feelings, and how the project may have changed them. This is the point where some people begin to make sense of what they've learned about themselves through volunteerism.

*Note: to learn more about how to make your volunteering project meaningful, check out the companion toolkit: [Transformative Volunteering](#).*

PHASE 4  
**Inform**



# Celebrate, Track and Share

## Data to Collect

Part of the value of a REALTORS Care® Day is the power and strength of numbers. To ensure your participation and contribution is aggregated with the actions of other boards and associations across Canada, please remember to use the tracking form you'll receive from the REALTORS Care® team to track:

- ▶ the number of participants in your volunteer project;
- ▶ total hours served;
- ▶ other output data (e.g. number of backpacks or hygiene kits assembled, meals served, etc.); and
- ▶ impact-specific information (number/type of individuals benefitting, any additional impact of your community work)





## Celebrating and Storytelling

Be sure to celebrate your work and reflect on the experience with your team members and non-profit or community partner. Recognize and thank everyone involved for their efforts. Expressions of gratitude and recognition of everyone's efforts go a long way towards relationship-building and future opportunities.

**Document.** Take photos and videos at the event. Be sure to get permission from your non-profit partner and volunteers so you can celebrate them online.

**Give thanks.** Take the time to send thank you notes (handwritten, if possible) to your non-profit/community partner and participating volunteers.

**Celebrate and share.** With your non-profit/community partner, participating volunteers, membership, and local media, share stories, pictures, reflections, or impact statements. To ensure CREA can amplify your REALTORS Care® Day, remember to:

- ▶ Tag @REALTORSCare on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)
- ▶ Send the following information via email immediately upon conclusion of your event to the [REALTORS Care® team](#):
  - The results of your REALTORS Care® Day, including:
    - » how many REALTOR® members participated;
    - » brief description of the activity/project;
    - » dollars or in-kind donations raised and/or donated (if applicable); and
    - » impact metrics (How did it contribute to a specific outcome for your community or non-profit partner?).
  - High-resolution photos of your smiling members volunteering (bonus points if they're wearing REALTORS Care® branded clothing or accessories!).
  - Quotes from one or more of your REALTOR® volunteers about their experience.
  - A quote from your charity partner about the impact your REALTORS Care® Day had on their organization/beneficiaries.
  - A brief description of your board or association's other charitable efforts throughout the year



# Endnotes

- 1 [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2023004-eng.pdf?st=rC-iid06](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2023004-eng.pdf?st=rC-iid06)
- 2 [www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness](http://www.homelesshub.ca/IndigenousHomelessness)
- 3 [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing-in-canada](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing-in-canada)
- 4 [Trust-based philanthropy project](#)





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REALTOR<sup>®</sup>. Member of the Canadian Real Estate Association and more.