

PowerHousing Australia CEO study tour Vancouver 2024



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CEO Study Tour – Vancouver 2024

PowerHousing Australia organised a 3.5 day study tour hosted at KPMG Vancouver prior to the International Housing Partnership annual conference in Vancouver, Canada, for the Australian delegation. The schedule covered a vast array of relevant topics and high-calibre speakers from all levels of government, the local CHP sector, institutional investors, the services sector and private sector. As both Australia and Canada consider how to address the worldwide housing crisis, escalating homelessness and intensive health, cost of living, development and community issues, there is great benefit in sharing our experience. The summary below covers key content shared across the three days.

Topic:	Speaker/site visit
Exploring the investment landscape for social and affordable housing in Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Harpinder Sandu, Director, multiple pension fund boards and Chair of the UNPRI ESG Working Group
Overview of Canadian economy and housing market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Michael Capus, Partner Advisory, KPMG
Canadian Community Housing Sector opportunities and barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Duncan MacLennan, Professor, City Futures Research Centre - Speaker: Derek Ballantyne, Former CMHC Chair and Managing Partner, New Market Funds - Speaker: Rebecka Young, VP and Head of Inclusion and Resilience, Scotiabank - Speaker: Kelly Gillis (ex-officio), Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Communities - Speaker: Thom Armstrong, CEO, Co-operative Housing Federation of BC - Speaker: Katie Maslechko, CEO, Rental Protection Fund - Site visit/case study: 981 Davie Street, Davie Village, Vancouver
Overview of the work of BC Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speakers: Vincent Tong, CEO; Mike Pistrin, VP Development and Asset Strategies; Esther de Vos, Executive Director Research, BC Housing
Investment and capital opportunities – case study of the work undertaken by Fonds immobilier de solidarité FTQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Marianne Dughuay, Senior Vice-President, Social, Community and Affordable Real Estate, Fonds immobilier de solidarité FTQ
Site visits/case studies	<p>Woodward's Redevelopment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Stephen Bennett, CEO, Affordable Housing Societies <p>Stanley Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Duncan Higgon, Director of Housing, PHS Community Services Society
Exploring the investment landscape for social and affordable housing in Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaker: Tamara Herman, Associate Director, Investor Leadership at Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE) - Speaker: Irene Gannitsos, Director, Strategic Investment at Vancity Community Foundation - Site visit/case study: Aboriginal Housing Management Association overview and application of creative solutions to successfully support their Indigenous residents and clients - Speakers: Margaret Pfoh, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Management Association; Kaila Wong, Program Administrator and Laura Arevelo, Wellness Support Team Manager, Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association - Panel discussion: Housing and services landscape – Opportunities and challenges in Canada

Study tour participants



- **Stacey Northover** Executive General Manager Housing, Believe Housing Australia
- **Grant Reubenicht** CEO, AnglicareSA/Believe Housing Australia
- **Rebecca Oelkers** CEO, BHC
- **Charles Northcote** CEO, BlueCHP
- **Chris Smith** CEO, Foundation Housing
- **Sean Carty** Chief Property Officer, Link Wentworth
- **Claudia Certoma** Group Executive Legal Governance and Risk, SGCH
- **Judy Line** CEO, Women's Housing Limited
- **Michelle Gegenhuber** CEO, PowerHousing Australia
- **Haleh Homaei** Chair, PowerHousing Australia
- **Gemma Pinnell** Principal, Right Lane Consulting
- **Caryn Kakas** Head of Housing Strategy, ANZ
- **Peter Rutter** Chief Community and Strategy Officer, Beyond Bank

Pictured with representatives of British Columbia Housing



Optional briefing: 31 September 2024

Topic: Exploring the investment landscape for social and affordable housing in Canada

Speaker: Harpinder Sandu, Director, multiple pension fund boards and Chair of the UNPRI ESG Working Group

Harpinder has been a board trustee for the British Columbia (BC) Public Service Pension Plan since 2015, which has CAD\$40 billion total assets under management. He is the Investment Chair for the BC Municipal Pension Plan, which has CAD\$70 billion total assets under management.

Harpinder gave an overview of some of the barriers to investment for large pension funds, as well as some of the innovative government advocacy he has been involved with to make it easier to increase the supply of affordable housing. He explained that large Canadian pension funds are hesitant to invest in affordable housing due to issues of scale, returns and reputational risk. He shared two advocacy papers focused on policy approaches for state and local governments to increase the supply of affordable housing. These papers were shared with the delegation.

Day one: 1 October 2024

Topic: Overview of the Canadian economy and housing market

Speaker: Michael Capus, Partner Advisory, KPMG

Michael opened with a summary of housing in Canada. Like Australia, home ownership is deeply ingrained, and it is predominantly privately owned with less than 5% of housing in Canada being non-market housing.

Canada's community housing sector developed in the 1970s with government supporting the growth of not-for-profit housing providers. However, it is a fragmented system with over 2,000 providers today and a high level of old stock facing maintenance challenges. The discussion raises the same debate we have in Australia around what is the minimum efficient scale for a housing provider to be effective.

The Canadian market is at its most unaffordable in over 30 years, with over 235,000 people experiencing homelessness over the course of an entire year. Vancouver is the most negatively impacted region when it comes to increases in home ownership costs, with a 366% increase in the average price of a home since 2000 and the share of household income required to own a home at 103%.

Challenges in Canada's housing market are very similar to those in Australia. Demand is outstripping supply, construction costs are high, and there have been decades of underinvestment by the federal government.

Responses to the housing crisis have been highly fragmented, exacerbating the problem. Fragmentation is caused by the three factors:

1. Challenges distributing significant federal funding, with the funding not distributed between provinces equally
2. Housing is still considered a provincial and local government responsibility
3. There is a small and decentralised community housing provider ecosystem, and no appetite for consolidation.

However, there are some reasons for optimism including:

- A level of aligned government response with all levels of government recognising this problem needs addressing
- Rezoning initiatives to encourage development
- A record CAD\$105.3 billion in funding and financing via the National Housing Strategy and Canada's housing plan.

Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC) was created in 1946 and delivers federal government housing programs; CMHC is like Housing Australia. CMHC is responsible for delivering the ambitious National Housing Strategy. The strategy sets out a commitment of over CAD\$82 billion, with targets of building up to 160,000 new homes, cutting chronic homelessness by 50%, removing 530,000 families from housing need, and renovating and modernising 300,000 homes.

The National Housing Strategy initiatives are to:

1. Create new housing supply
2. Modernise existing housing
3. [Increase] resources for community housing providers
4. [Promote] innovation and research.

These initiatives will:

- Build and renew affordable housing
- Provide resources and funding to support community housing organisations
- Foster research and innovation in housing
- Promote partnerships to achieve ambitious housing goals.

Source: [Canada's National Housing Strategy | CMHC \(cmhc-schl.gc.ca\)](#), [Guide Page-Strategy | CMHC \(cmhc-schl.gc.ca\)](#), [About the initiatives | CMHC \(cmhc-schl.gc.ca\)](#)

Topic: Canadian community housing sector - Opportunities and barriers**Speaker: Duncan MacLennan, Professor, City Futures Research Centre**

Duncan introduced the panel discussion by posing some key questions for our housing delegation to consider during our trip and to situate our conversations including ‘Why would we look at Canada and Australia?’ The drivers are similar. Historically, there has been a failure from successive governments in both countries to recognise the impact of bad housing policy on productivity.

Today, the combination of rising rental prices, rising homelessness and the pressure this places on housing presents a similar picture. Additionally, inequality has grown in both countries with wage rates growing slower than house prices. In this context, communities require a shift to subsidised housing, which has not occurred in either Canada or Australia.

Duncan’s insights on the differences between the two countries include:

- Australia has a developed sense of what the housing sector should look like; in Australia, we have attracted more private capital.
- Bigger Community Housing Providers (CHPs) in Australia are generally more innovative – hence, they got HAFF funding and can influence. In Canada, the community housing sector is not as advanced.

Website: <https://cityfutures.ada.unsw.edu.au/>

Speaker: Derek Ballantyne, Former CMHC Chair and Managing Partner, New Market Funds

Derek was the previous chair of the CMHC and now works to raise capital to finance affordable housing via New Market Funds, a capital partner who undertakes community lending and development.

The current inventory of ‘non-market funds’ across Canada is 650-700,000 units, with 60% in the hands of the NFP sector. The lack of capacity of the CHP sector in Canada is a key issue, and there are questions around how to rebuild in a creative way. The CHP sector has an active fear of aggregation, which is a problem for attracting capital. A model that is scalable for investors needs exploring, with a more sophisticated approach to working with capital markets.

Derek was asked what the goal for the affordable ‘non-market’ sector should be in terms of growth. He suggested that 20% as a goal would be excellent to meet demand but to do this, we need policy alignment and new capital approaches.

Website: <https://newmarketfunds.ca/>

Speaker: Rebecka Young, VP and Head of Inclusion and Resilience, Scotiabank

Rebecca outlined three initial challenges:

1. Housing shortages are likely to continue to exist as there is significant demand
2. The *Growth for Growth model* (government scheme) is problematic, which is an issue as 60% of government expenditure on housing is going into this program
3. While Canada has more construction workers than ever before, construction demand remains an issue. Canada needs to bring more construction workers into the country.

Rebecca suggested we need a cultural shift to address these issues. The cultural narrative in Canada that we all need to own homes is still very strong; owning your own home is still key to security, like in Australia. She also believes we need to scale up of community housing stating: ‘*We just need to be big and bold.*’ The sector has made great progress in successfully embedding wrap-around supports into housing. However, there are large expenditure considerations to do this well and provide the level of healthcare needed, which is an ongoing challenge.

Website: <https://www.scotiabank.com/ca/en/personal.html>

Speaker: Kelly Gillis (ex-officio), Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Communities

Kelly explained that the federal government has provided billions of dollars in low interest loans to the sector. Like others in the panel, she suggested we need to look at ways to make the growth of the not-for-profit sector and its projects scalable, and to encourage consolidation between providers, stating: *'We need to develop a market of projects, a pipeline of developments, and certainty of projects to fund.'*

There was a broad discussion around how to leverage private capital to support our ability to grow, both in Canada and in Australia: *'How do we get people with the woolly hats to work with the people in suits? How do we get past that?'*

Website: <https://housing-infrastructure.Canada.ca/index-eng.html>

Speaker: Thom Armstrong, CEO, Co-operative Housing Federation of BC

The Co-operative Housing Federation of BC was founded in 1992. Their mission is to Unite, represent and serve. Their vision is to grow an inclusive community of sustainable, permanently affordable housing cooperatives.

The co-operative movement has been around for a long time in Canada but is disaggregated. Co-operatives were developed between 1973-1992 in Canada and are now an ageing capital asset. There are two kinds of housing co-operatives; rental/non-profit co-ops and equity co-operatives (here residents in the building have shares and part-value and vote at the company). The value of co-operative housing is that it is affordable housing, which incorporates member control and involvement in the local community. The value of this is well understood in Canada.

The co-operative movement is developed in Canada as a form of housing, with the peak supporting almost 15,000 co-op homes in thriving, successful communities. The Federation is a group of social enterprises, with the Federation owning and operating a property management service, undertaking advocacy and peak body services for the co-ops, supporting them by giving them scale. It is focused working together and having mission-based partnerships.

They work with directors of the member organisations. Directors are comprised of residents who live in the communities and represent their interests on the boards, which requires education in terms of this important governance role. Undertaking this training and education is a key role of the Federation.

Co-operatives have not been able to emerge as a player in terms of attracting investment in recent years. A key challenge for them is how to attract private financing to develop new homes and maintenance, and they are considering what this looks like. The 'legacy co-ops' were originally developed under government programs and now require investment for maintenance and upgrades. This leads to concerns around long-term asset management, which can make investors nervous.

Website: <https://www.chf.bc.ca/>

Speaker: Katie Maslechko, CEO, Rental Protection Fund

The Rental Protection Fund provides capital contributions to non-profit housing organisations to help them purchase existing, occupied, rental buildings and retain that affordability and housing stability for tenants over time across BC. It functions with a board of the three 'housing central' partners and administers the CAD\$500 million that was allocated to the Fund when it was established in 2022. The Fund was created with a one-off surplus from the BC province; importantly it is not ongoing funding.

The Fund enables non-profits to leverage financing from additional sources to purchase rental buildings and, as that financing is paid down, draw on the equity to develop additional affordable housing and expand services. The organisations it funds through a loan or funding contribution include housing co-ops, Indigenous-led housing providers, charitable organisations, First Nations organisations and land trusts.

It funds the purchase of buildings, not units, which are self-contained and, importantly, at risk of significant rent increase or redevelopment. To undertake this work with its partners, it has developed a strong innovation approach, based on platform-based information sharing:

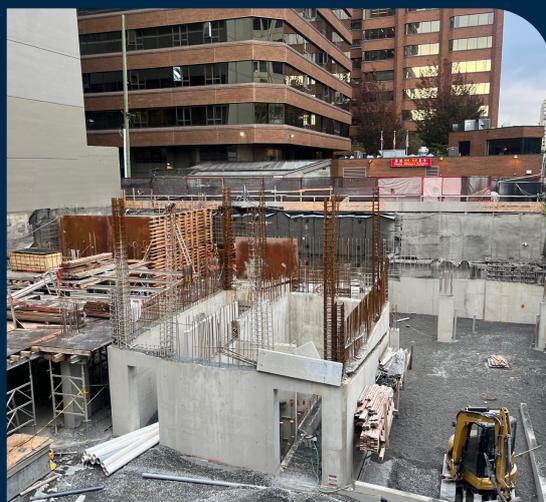
1. Strategic Housing Acquisition Resource Platform (SHARP): demonstrates where there is government land for sale, equipping them with the information to look to purchase.
2. Property submission portal: creates a process for collective matchmaking, with properties plugged into the portal.

Website: <https://rentalprotectionfund.ca/about>

Site visit/case study

981 Davie Street, Davie Village, Vancouver

The group visited one of the newest Community Land Trust construction projects in downtown Vancouver at 981 Davie Street. When completed, it will comprise 154 new dwellings across 17 floors. The mass concrete construction is being built to Passivhaus standards, one of the stipulations for funding from the City of Vancouver. It's funded via a partnership between a new co-op, a non-profit housing society providing homes for people living with HIV/AIDS, and a community centre for Vancouver's LGBTQ+ community. It's a great example of layered funding and collaboration.



'Stable housing is fundamental to health and hope. McLaren Housing Society, in strong partnership with the Community Land Trust, and with the unwavering support of local, provincial and federal governments, is thrilled to embrace the opportunity to create new subsidised homes for people living with HIV. This initiative stands as a powerful testament to our steadfast commitment to supporting and empowering individuals living with HIV.'

IIm Kassam, Executive Director, McLaren Housing Society

Website: <https://mclarenhousing.com/>

Day two: 2 October 2024

Topic: Overview of the work of BC Housing

Speaker: Vincent Tong, CEO; Mike Pistrin, VP Development and Asset Strategies; Esther de Vos, Executive Director Research, BC Housing

The presentation outlined BC Housing's innovative approach to their work. It focused on how they relate to other housing providers, the sector more widely and the market.

Make Housing Central is the title of their strategic plan and they have a goal of building 125,000 affordable homes in 10 years. BC needs 12,500 new affordable homes per year until 2034. The strategy has the dual objectives of building more new homes and protecting the affordability of current homes.

The target includes 12,000 new homes for very low to moderate-income housing plus 500 supportive housing units. Additionally, 3,000 of the 12,000 homes are required to be homes for Indigenous peoples.

The investment is CAD\$6.7 billion per year, including CAD\$2.29 billion from the provincial government, CAD\$2.34 billion from the federal government and CAD\$2.09 billion from community partners. Upfront capital grants are provided. There is also an Indigenous housing fund that develops and manages culturally

appropriate housing, both on reserves and in urban areas. The reserve land is federal land; the province can register a loan on this land. Much of the housing on reserve land is dilapidated homes that are in poor condition.

Another type of housing being funded is complex care housing – clinical rooms within the facilities and a high level of service and support. BC Housing works with health providers who drive these projects; Canada has more health-led programs than in Australia. Using a partnership approach, municipalities provide the land and BC Housing partners with health authorities, providing upfront grants and working in collaboration.

They are working with 800 non-profit partners across BC to deliver this strategy. All the ownership is with the non-profit provider rather than the government, with BC Housing providing the development support. BC Housing's role is to directly manage stock as well as help the not-for-profits build their portfolio.

Website: <https://www.bchousing.org/>

INSIGHT

'We have stopped calling it a continuum, but a system, because people don't move through it in a linear way any longer.'

CHALLENGES

The high level of homelessness has led to the specific response set out in the [Heart and Hearth program](#), which focuses on shelter as a gateway to housing.

In Vancouver, there are two court-protected encampments where activists established shelters that are not an adequate form of housing. There is an urgent need to deal with this difficult issue. Due to extreme weather, the city sets up temporary shelters, established when staying outside is too dangerous due to cold weather.

Other challenges identified by the BC Housing team include increased construction costs, increased complex needs of residents, the need to increase wages to retain workers in the sector, and the impact of vicarious trauma.

There is a specific challenge in supportive housing in Vancouver, with providers giving back the keys and being unable to run these premises in some cases.

Topic: Social and affordable real estate investment innovation in Quebec

Speaker: Marianne Duguay, Senior Vice-President, Social, Community and Affordable Real Estate, Fonds immobilier de solidarité FTQ

Established in 1983, the Fonds immobilier de solidarité FTQ is the largest development capital investment network in Québec, leveraging workers' savings to support businesses across all regions and sectors while encouraging retirement savings.

Since 1997, the Fonds immobilier has been involved in social and affordable housing projects aimed at providing modest-income households and non-profit organisations (NPOs) with decent, permanently affordable shelter. Together with partners such as governments, NPOs and foundations, they do this through:

- Direct investments that take the form of financing for NPO-led projects
- Indirect investments, through funds that offer NPOs bridge financing to acquire properties before they receive the subsidies for their projects
- Managing the Fonds de solidarité FTQ – a Government of Québec partnership established in 2022 with the aim of creating 2,250 social and affordable housing units by 2027, with projects carried out by sponsoring organisations.

Website: <https://www.fondsftq.com/en>

Site visit/case study

Woodward's Redevelopment

Speaker: Stephen Bennett, CEO, Affordable Housing Societies

Site visit context: A model for cultural sustainability and ethical urban renewal. The Woodward's Redevelopment is a large-scale, mixed-use project encompassing almost an entire city block in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The project is unique in the history of Vancouver due to its inclusivity, social aspirations, scale and the partnerships required to successfully revitalise a previously abandoned department store.

A 1903 department store remained a store until it closed in 1993. After its close, it became shelter for many people who were homeless in Vancouver. Construction on a re-envisioned Woodward began in 2006 and was completed in 2009. It is a mixed-use site with a university, commercial stores, a plaza, 536 units of high-end market housing, 124 units of affordable supportive housing owned by PHS Community Services Society, 75 units of affordable independent rental owned and managed by the Affordable Housing Societies.

It's a CAD\$375 million dollar build via layered funding:



- CAD\$50 million in federal and provincial government grants
- CAD\$200 million from sales of the high-end market housing
- CAD\$30 million private fundraising
- CAD\$85 million by CMHC direct funding.

The project is a flagship mixed-use development. It included meaningfully designed shared spaces. The artwork installation depicts the Gastown riots of 1972 in response to heavy-handed police activity. It is an incredible example of adaptive reuse design on a historic sight.

Website: <https://affordablehousingsocieties.ca/>

Site visit/case study



Stanley Street

Speaker: Duncan Higgon, Director of Housing, PHS Community Services Society

Also in the Lower East Side, we toured the Stanley Street project – a supported housing project based around the idea of ‘housing as healthcare’ owned and managed by PHS Community Services Society.

We learnt that it costs CAD\$30,000 a year in operating costs to house someone in Stanley. If they are homeless and living on the streets, St Paul’s Hospital estimates it costs CAD\$60,000 a year to the health system. Being able to make pragmatic economic arguments around funding this model of housing to governments is essential.

Duncan spoke to the group about intentional housing design and stated: *‘In our design, we need to think about our approach changing from “hard to house” to “hard on housing” and design accordingly’*. His approach was trauma-informed and based on housing first approaches, which are at the heart of the establishment of the PHS Community Services Society and see housing as healthcare. The below link provides more detail on the program.

[Pure joy: how it feels like to move into PHS housing after sheltering and homelessness | PHS Community Services Society](#)

Website: <https://www.phs.ca/>

Day three: 3 October 2024

Topic: Exploring the investment landscape for social and affordable housing in Canada

Speaker: Tamara Herman, Associate Director, Investor Leadership at Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE)

SHARE helps institutional investors steward their assets to contribute to positive social and environmental outcomes using shareholder engagement, advisory services and research. It has a network of institutional investors managing over CAD\$90 billion in assets. SHARE works to unite investors to address the reputational and operational risks of housing investments linked to evictions, tenant displacement or increasing rents.

In 2021, SHARE launched its *Investors for Affordable Cities* initiative, aiming to bring together institutional investors to address the financialisation of housing. The ‘financialisation of housing’ is controversial and the role of institutional investors is still being explored in Canada. Rents are being raised beyond levels that are affordable by capital players, including pension funds. There is tension with pension funds in their role as landlords, raising rent as the market allows but negatively impacting residents.

Between 2011 and 2021, the market lost 500,000 units from the affordable housing category, and there is a challenge to replace this stock.

SHARE believes that the government has not done enough. Their research work considers what responsibility investors have to consider how to invest responsibly in housing as part of their corporate strategy. SHARE has developed a set of investment principles for investing in housing.

Website: <https://share.ca/>

Speaker: Irene Gannitsos, Director, Strategic Investment at Vancity Community Foundation

Vancity is a credit union where members are also owners. Their vision of the organisation is a transformed economy that protects the earth and guarantees equity for all. As a financial co-operative, Vancity prioritises the benefit of its members and communities, often taking risks and developing products that create positive societal change.

One of its companies is the Community Foundation, set up in 1997, with 30% of net profits from the Vancity bank going to the foundation. It also receives philanthropic funding. One of its programs is the affordable community housing program, which aims to increase the supply of affordable housing across Canada, working with landowners, faith-based organisations and others.

The program is based on a theory of change of increasing the community housing stock from 5% to 30%. Approaches to achieve this include unlocking land, securing municipal approvals and advocacy.

Vancity offer a pooled fund with great rates for not-for-profits to assist them with their acquisitions; grants (e.g. feasibility study grants) with a total value of CAD\$2 million dollars each year; and a loan program providing loans on a flexible low-rate basis.

Website: www.vancitycommunityfoundation.ca/

INSIGHT

‘There is great value in working with the larger community housing providers; they are more nimble. Look at how they are adding affordable supply, do they have land, how can they be supported with acquisition opportunities?’

Site visit

Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) application of creative solutions to successfully support Indigenous residents and clients

Speakers: Margaret Pfoh, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Housing Management Association; Kaila Wong, Program Administrator and Laura Arevelo, Wellness Support Team Manager, Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association

Topic: Discussion at FRAFCA – Indigenous Complex Care Housing project

The development we visited is being retrofitted to support 10 First Nations women with complex needs. It will have a safe inhalation room on site, and 24-hour support. The project is supported by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Housing. There are five sites across the province that have been funded based on this model. It's a multidisciplinary approach providing housing, medical and psychological support based on harm reduction. *'We have created our own health system'* – Margaret Pfoh. FRAFCA have secured CAD\$1.9 million annually for the project's initial site.

Based on the approach of 'For Indigenous, By Indigenous' approach, the program is centred on being culturally appropriate and trauma-informed.

The team provided an overview of the drug crisis in Vancouver. More than 12,000 people have died since the health crisis was declared. Overdose is the leading cause of unnatural deaths, which is placing a heavy burden on emergency services staff and a level of vicarious trauma for workers.

Downtown Eastside, Vancouver has the highest level of services, and the harm minimisation laws mean people are not charged for using drugs on the street.

The approach to supporting First Nations people is informed by the damning report 'In Plain Sight', which set out the systemic racism in the health care system.

<https://baseline.bchumanrights.ca/report/in-plain-sight-addressing-indigenous-specific-racism-and-discrimination-in-b-c-health-care/>



'Through funding and operating agreements with Indigenous housing providers, AHMA provides 'For Indigenous, By Indigenous' support for housing societies dedicated to serving Indigenous people in BC. AHMA members provide homes and services for nearly 10,000 Indigenous individuals and families living off reserve across the province.'

Website: <https://ahma-bc.org/>

Panel discussion: Housing and services landscape – Opportunities and challenges in Canada

Keir Macdonald CEO, Coast Mental Health (housing provider)

This organisation has 1,000 units over 50 sites. There has been a stronger government response since 2017 to the housing crisis, but for every building we build we are looking 14 others that become unaffordable.

Website:

<https://www.coastmentalhealth.com/>

Brenda Knights President and CEO, BC Indigenous Housing Society

This organisation focuses on the housing needs for First Nations people in BC. They do this through a variety of strategies, including land banking, with land going to not-for-profits, as well as looking to operate housing in urban areas. There is a high level of intergenerational trauma due to the recent practices of children being placed into residential schools. Over 30% of the unhoused individuals in the Downtown Eastside are First Nations.

Website: <https://www.bcihs.ca/>

Alison Dantas CEO, Elizabeth Fry Society

This provider focuses on supporting women at risk of intersection with the legal system and of incarceration. Currently, they manage 210 units but are planning to grow. They support women to ‘start to take steps to make the choices they want to, to change their lives.’

Two growing cohorts they are supporting are senior women and children. Old hotels are part of the stock that they manage. Like other providers, they experience a negative impact on staff overtime who support their clients, with 77% of women who use the services having experienced family violence and presenting with complex needs.

Website: <https://efryottawa.com/>

Lee-Anne Michayluk CEO, More Than a Roof

This organisation houses 1,225 residents and has another 1,100 in the pipeline. They have a strong focus on community engagement and operate a foundation that provides scholarships and bursaries for students to support them to stay in education.

Website: <https://morethanarroof.foundation/>

Jill Aikey CEO, BC Not-for-profit Housing Association (BCNPHA)

There are 75,000 dwellings across the providers in BC – some as big as 3,000 dwellings, many very small. BCNPHA has served over 500 members. ([Member Programs | Non-Profit Housing Programs | BC Non-Profit Housing Association | BCNPHA](#))

The focus of their work as a peak body is around advocacy and education, asset management services, and capacity building for the sector. There is a very disaggregated CHP sector in Canada, with many small providers with under 50 dwellings.

A concern for the peak is protecting the affordability of existing supply. There is a new stronger relationship with government, and innovation in BC, like the new rental protection fund.

Jill spoke to the challenges of housing and healthcare, which occur due to the toxic drug crisis in Vancouver, and the innovative work being undertaken by supported housing providers considering housing as healthcare. *‘Holding in balance residents’ safety and care and workers’ safety and care.’*

Website: <https://bcnpha.ca/>

Stephen D'Souza Executive Director, Homelessness Services Association of BC

This organisation was founded around training frontline workers to support unhoused people. They consider issues such as reconciliation, ensuring safe spaces for women, and supporting refugees and seniors who are a growing cohorts facing homelessness. They are focusing on resilience and support for workers facing growing demand.

The organisation is thinking deeply around how to bring lived experience into the program design. They have over 330 shelters, supportive housing and churches as members.

Website: <https://hsa-bc.ca/>



Study tour conclusion – Reflections from the group

Insights and reflections session

- A broad feeling that what we had witnessed and learned about around the toxic drug and homelessness crisis in Vancouver was very confronting. The concept of housing as healthcare resonated with the group.

‘How do we demonstrate the cost of doing nothing?’

‘Toxic drug crisis as a personal problem – framing.’

- Observations that the inequality is so normalised.

‘It’s about people – the Indigenous definition of homelessness.’

- We are more advanced when it comes to the sophistication of our sector providers.

‘We came here because we don’t have the policy settings, but we have strong CHPs.’

- Different relations between the state agency here and at home. In Australia, there is a sense that the state housing bodies see CHP's as competition and in need of control. In Canada they both see each other as equals around the table with shared objectives.

‘Understanding of the role of community housing can play.’

‘We need a consistent approach with bi-partisan support in Australia.’

- Desire to focus more on the issues around how we deploy capital.

‘The insights from both Fonds and Vancity Foundation were very interesting as new models of finance.’

- The rental protection fund is a great innovation. Would it work in Australia?

‘Need for good data to inform the impact of our programs through social measurement; set this up from the start.’





Report compiled by
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for PowerHousing Australia,
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Right Lane Consulting



rightlane.com.au



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