



Submission to Law Amendments Committee – Bill 222

Date submitted: November 1, 2022

Who We Are

The Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW) exists to serve and protect Nova Scotians by effectively regulating the profession of social work. We work in solidarity with Nova Scotians to advocate for policies that improve social conditions, challenge injustice and value diversity.

Learn more about the College at nscsw.org/about.

Housing is a Right

Social workers across Nova Scotia are committed to **ensuring housing is a right and recognizing that housing is health**. Stress from housing insecurity has a significant impact on our physical, mental and social health, leading to premature death, chronic illness and social exclusion. Ensuring that everyone has a housing-secure future is critical for our clients' health and our collective community's well-being.

Proposed Amendments to the Housing Supply and Services Act

Section 2

(2) The purpose of this Act is to improve and increase the **(add) affordable** housing stock of the province and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes

Add to this

- (a) ensuring everyone has the right to access adequate housing;**
- (b) increasing and preserving the supply of affordable housing (add) to end and further prevent homelessness;**

Strike

- (b) promoting more adequate and affordable housing for vulnerable persons and groups;**

Replace with

- (c) ensuring that everyone's housing is adequate, affordable, safe, accessible including proximity to necessary services, and responsive to cultural needs for building community;**

Add

- (d) developing, delivering, and supporting programs related to housing (add) for the purposes of prohibiting forced evictions, addressing discrimination, focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and ensuring security of tenure for all;**



Section 3

Add

"Housing for All Council" means an accountability body that reports directly to the Legislative Assembly;

Section 10

Strike

- (1) The Minister may establish any committee or council the Minister considers necessary or advisable to act in an advisory capacity with respect to any of the policies, programs, services or other matters under the administration of the Minister.

Replace with

- (1) The Minister will establish a Provincial Housing for All Council, independent of the Minister, which must ~~include~~ community-based provider representatives and tenant representatives and ~~no more than one~~ for-profit developer or business interest.
- (2) The Housing for All Council will serve as the key accountability body that reports directly to the Legislative Assembly annually about progress on non-market affordable housing and measures to implement the right to housing.

Poverty is A Political Choice

Poverty is a political choice, and eliminating it requires that social justice and human rights are central to the ways in which we implement and measure human development. **Housing is crucial to the elimination of poverty.** Current political choices have allowed for the financialization of the affordable housing market, a lack of protection for tenants and low wages and social assistance rates which deny a meaningful quality of life for too many Nova Scotians.

Reducing Inequality

To be successful ensuring that housing is human a right there must be a clear focus on rising inequality. In 2018 the top 10% of incomes in Nova Scotia grew to 16.3 times the income share of the bottom 10%, growing from 11.1 in 1988 (see figure 1). Rising inequality and the continued class divide between the rich and the poor has allowed the voices of the most vulnerable to go unnoticed, has eroded trust, and has increased anxiety and illness for all. This lack of trust appears to be growing. Engage Nova Scotia recently produced data demonstrating **only 27.1% of Nova Scotians trust the provincial government.** This erodes the social solidarity required to tackle large issues such as housing and pits Nova Scotians against one another, fighting for resources perceived to be scarce rather than working together in solidarity towards the common good.



NSCSW

NOVA SCOTIA
COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL WORKERS

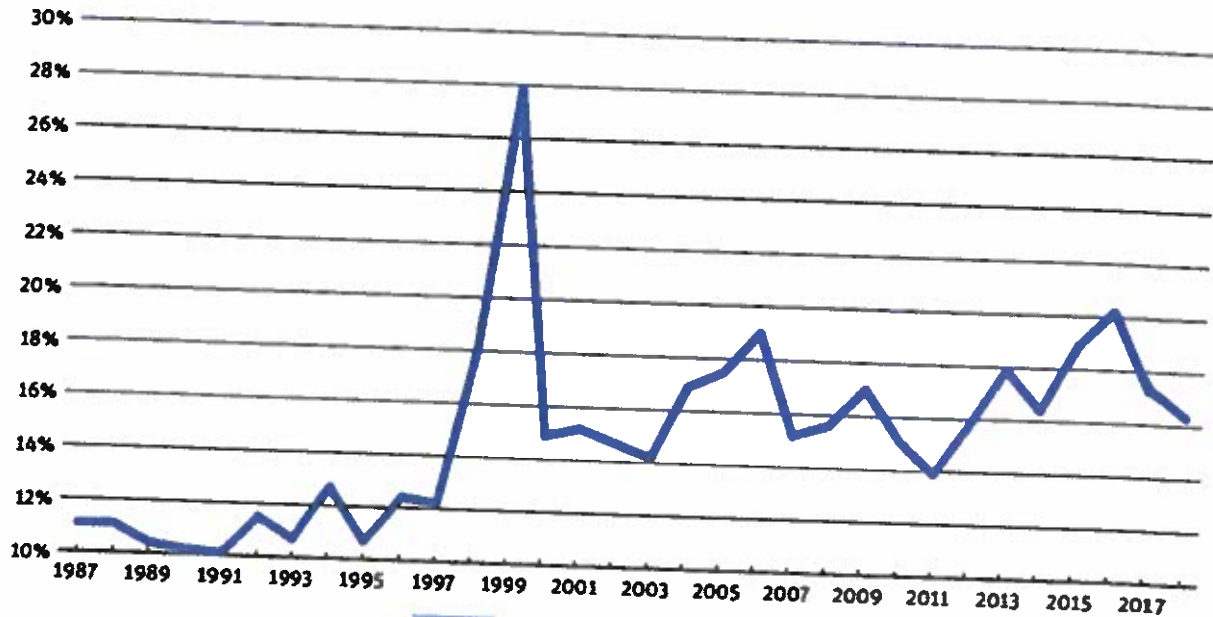


Figure 1- From *Creating the future we all deserve; A social policy framework for Nova Scotia*

Call to Action

Social workers are calling for the democratization of housing in order to ensure that it is treated as a right.

Our democracy is struggling. We've witnessed the rising influence of corporations and business organizations in politics, alongside the declining power of labour unions and the weakening of equality-seeking civil society organizations and progressive think tanks and research institutes. We've seen cuts in social programs and community spaces that provide much of the glue for social cohesion, and the growing time crunch that leaves little time for community engagement. **Citizens are increasingly disillusioned with their governments.**

The form our political system takes makes a difference for social policy. Governments need to consider the potential social impact of each policy they introduce — particularly, the impact on the most vulnerable members of society. Policy decisions might make sound fiscal sense and help the government achieve its economic policy goals but may also have disastrous effects on social well-being in the longer-term. **Providing the Minister of Housing all the power to make policy without considering whether they are maintaining or deepening systemic oppression will lead to greater inequality.**

The **Housing Supply and Services Act** must ensure that housing is a right, and must ensure that a *Housing for All Council* can operate as a human rights oversight institution and follows the UN Paris Principles for Human Rights Institution to ensure functional and formal independence.



Suite 700 1888 Brunswick St
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3J8

Phone: (902) 429 – 7799
Fax: (902) 429 -7650
www.nscsw.org