



WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2025
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint letter to federal, provincial Housing Ministers on enforcing human rights-based approach to homelessness through conditions on funding

Vancouver B.C. – In response to the City of Vancouver pausing efforts to build new supportive housing, B.C.'s Human Rights Commissioner, Kasari Govender, and the Federal Housing Advocate, Marie-Josée Houle, issued a letter to Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, then Canada's Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, and Ravi Kahlon, B.C.'s Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs.

The letter calls on the Province to ensure local governments, including the City of Vancouver, take a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to addressing homelessness, including through specific and actionable plans, in order to be eligible to receive newly announced homelessness related funds.

As the Commissioner and Advocate state, "Acting in compliance with human rights protections is a legal obligation for every municipality in Canada. It is not a choice. In a time of economic uncertainty, this becomes all the more pressing. A human rights-based approach is the best way to resolve complex issues related to housing precarity, as is reflected in many of your policies and funding programs."

The full text of the Commissioner and Advocate's letter is available here:

https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/13.03.2025_Letter-to-Ministers-of-Housing_BCOHRC_FHA_FINAL-3.pdf

A response from B.C.'s Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs is available here:

<https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/185576-Letters-to-Ministers-of-Housing-Response.pdf>

Resources

To learn more about the Commissioner's work on housing as a human right, please refer to the resources below:

- [Beyond the headlines: Housing and human rights](#) - A candid conversation between Commissioner Govender and Advocate Houle about navigating the housing crisis while keeping human rights in focus (2024)
- [Responding to homeless encampments](#) – Encampment brief (2024)
- [Kasari Govender: We need to talk about encampments](#) - Vancouver Sun Op-ed (2023)
- [Human rights of the unhoused must be respected when removing tent city encampment](#) - Media release (2022)

Media contact

To request an interview with Commissioner Kasari Govender, please contact media@bchumanrights.ca or 604-306-7369.

Media kit

[Visit our media kit](#) for images of Commissioner Kasari Govender, pronunciation guidance, bios and more.

About BCOHRC

BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner exists to address the root causes of inequality, discrimination and injustice in B.C. by shifting laws, policies, practices and cultures. We do this work through education, research, advocacy, inquiry and monitoring. Learn more at: bchumanrights.ca

About the Commissioner

Kasari Govender began her work as B.C.'s first independent human rights commissioner in September 2019. As an independent officer of the Legislature, Commissioner Govender is uniquely positioned to ensure human rights in B.C. are protected, respected and advanced on a systemic level. In her first five-year term, her work through BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner included a public inquiry into experiences of hate in the pandemic, a report on systemic discrimination in policing, community embedded research about a range of human rights issues experienced by British Columbians, public awareness campaigns about ableism and racism and guidance to government that, among other things, informed the creation of both the *Anti-Racism Data Act* and the *Anti-Racism Act*. Commissioner Govender was reappointed for a second term beginning in September 2024.

Follow us

Get the latest human rights news from us on Twitter/X ([@humanrights4BC](https://twitter.com/humanrights4BC)), Instagram ([@humanrights4BC](https://www.instagram.com/humanrights4BC)), Facebook (facebook.com/HumanRights4BC) and LinkedIn (linkedin.com/company/HumanRights4BC)

