

Housing is a 2021 Federal Election Issue: The CPBH Perspective

Let's go straight to the bottom line:

- The next elected federal government needs to assume a leadership role to address the serious quality and consumer protection issues surrounding newly built homes. Buying a newly built home is the largest purchase most people make. There are good builders in Canada, but there are also poor and marginal builders. Consumers have no reliable means of knowing who the good builders are.
- The National Building Code process is outdated and far too slow to adequately protect Canadians.
- The patchwork quilt system across the country for building codes, consumer protection and new home warranties is highly ineffective.
- CMHC needs to focus its efforts on helping to ensure new home quality and affordability beyond the initial purchase price.
- As a first step, a consumer protection advocate with adequate authority needs to be established at the federal level. An e-petition supporting this gathered more than the required 500 signatures and was submitted to MP Karen McCrimmon June 9, 2021ⁱ.

Here's what none of the federal parties talk about during the election campaign when it comes to housing:

The construction industry is one of the largest donors to politicians. It's powerful and typically fights legislation to improve quality, for instance, citing the impact on affordability, even when changes are inexpensive. Consumer protection across the country is weak and no match for the powerful, well-funded construction lobby.

Affordable homes are properly built homes. Affordability includes the short-, medium- and long-term costs of operating and maintenance which is connected to how well the dwelling is built. CMHC's new President acknowledged in a recent letter to CPBH that "housing quality is an important consideration" in affordable housing. **CMHC should contribute further to affordable housing, e.g., by conducting research into Building Code violations, opening the door to higher quality.**

The federal government is using taxpayers' money to provide Canada Greener Homes Grants, to fix newly built homes still under warranty. This is a needless waste of taxpayer dollars. Properly built homes don't need to be fixed after six months, which is the timeframe to qualify for these grants. We applaud grants to upgrade older homes, but not brand-new ones. How many times does the construction industry need to be paid to build one new home?

Modern construction methods have created the unintended consequence of **trapping radon gas inside homes, but Codes are not addressing this serious health threat.** Radon is the #1 cause of lung cancer in non-smokers in Canadaⁱⁱ.

Building Codes do not adequately address climate risks like tornadoes. This leaves impacted homeowners facing preventable crises, like torn off roofs, and drives up insurance costs. This too impacts affordability. Note: Premier Ford told homeowners who faced a recent Barrie, ON tornado that his government would use taxpayers' dollars to help them. The cost of hurricane clips, which prevent roofs from being torn off, is estimated at \$300-\$400 per home. Clips should be mandatory: They are inexpensive, reduce damage and risk to lives.

"Firefighters and the National Research Council say modern homes burn down faster." Changes to the Building Code must be made and implemented swiftly to save livesⁱⁱⁱ.

Newly built homes with used/damaged furnaces are secretly being sold across the country, but no province/territory has been willing to address this. Furnaces are often damaged by builders using them to heat the house during construction rather than using their own means of temporary heat. The furnaces become clogged with construction dust and debris. This practice by builders must stop.

There is an ongoing critical shortage of qualified home inspectors. This industry is in turmoil. That means your newly built home may not have been properly inspected during construction. Municipal inspectors are supposed to focus on ensuring the home meets the minimum requirements of the Building Code so you will be safe. New home buyers should also be able to hire inspectors privately to ensure the house is built right. They face the same shortage of qualified home inspectors. **Result: Home buyers are in the dark when it comes to quality, and the impact on their health and safety, e.g., mould exposure. Further, homes that don't meet the minimum Code affect affordability in the short, medium and long term.**

New home warranties across the country are very limited and inadequate. Homeowners get "stuck" with Code violations if their builder/warranty provider won't fix them:

- Many have to pay out of their own pocket to get their newly built home properly fixed
- Some are driven into poverty trying to win legal battles over a house they can neither fix nor sell
- Some "patch and run", that is, cover up the problems and do not disclose the Code violations to the next unsuspecting buyer
- Many feel that they have been victims of white-collar crime.

Ask your federal election candidates to also focus on housing quality and consumer protection, not just housing supply and affordability based on the initial purchase price.

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Founded in 2004, Canadians for Properly Built Homes (CPBH) is a national, not for profit corporation dedicated to healthy, safe, durable, energy efficient residential housing for Canadians, and is the only organization of its kind in Canada. Working for consumer awareness and protection, CPBH is run by a volunteer Board of Directors and is supported by a volunteer Advisory Council of industry experts and other key stakeholders. CPBH earned "partner" status with the Canadian Consumer Information Gateway (Industry Canada).

Twitter: @cpbh01 Instagram: cpbh01 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cpbh01>

www.canadiansforproperlybulthomes.com

ⁱ <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-3150>

ⁱⁱ May 2, 2021 Toronto Star How some Canadian communities are taking their own steps to address the risks of radon gas

May 2, 2021 Toronto Star The invisible threat inside your home – Dangerous levels of radon

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/house-fires-firefighters-national-building-code-1.4482786>