

# YOUR HOUSING

Good housing is more than just four walls and a roof. Good housing means having a home that is secure, safe, in good repair and free from infestation and mold. A home that doesn't meet these basic criteria has significant consequences for your health, and unfortunately this is a reality for many Torontonians.

**1 in 5** Toronto residents live in housing that they can't afford, is too small for their needs, or is in serious need of repair.



## WHAT IS GOOD HOUSING?



Housing is one of the most important social determinants of health, yet we still have a long way to go when it comes to ensuring healthy housing for all.

Good housing must be part of a healthy and inclusive neighbourhood where people feel a sense of safety and belonging in their community and physical environment.

Good housing must be affordable, too. Housing is unaffordable when it costs more than **30%** of your income; over **3 million** Canadians pay more than that. With so much being paid for basic housing, there is little money for food, transit, clothing, and other essentials.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Canada is the only G8 country without a national housing plan. Federal housing and homelessness investments – adjusted for inflation and population growth – have been shrinking over the past two decades; and, while the federal government announces short-term initiatives from time to time, Canada still doesn't have a comprehensive, fully-funded and integrated national housing strategy.

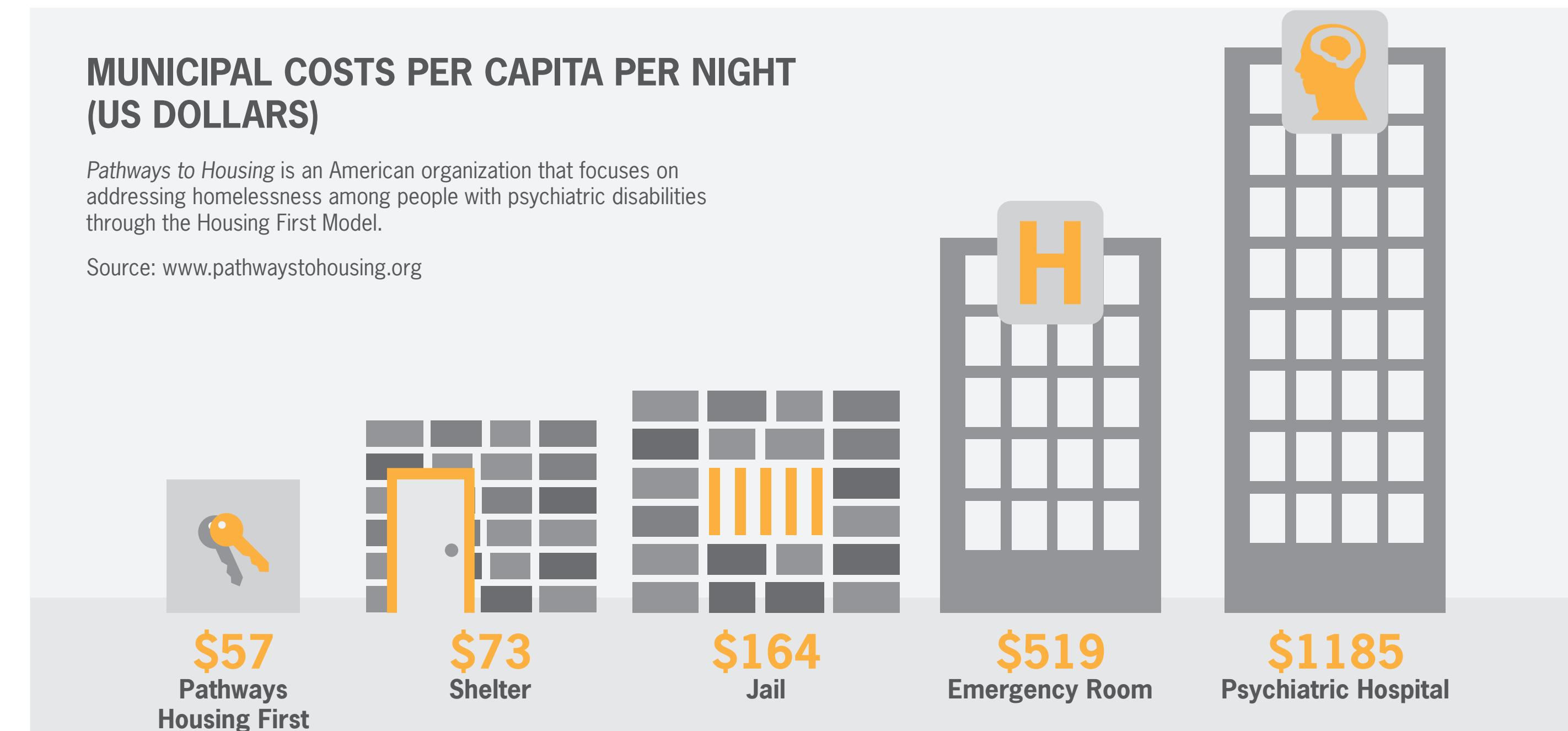
## HOW DOES BAD HOUSING MAKE US SICK?



Safe and affordable housing is essential to good health. Poor housing can lead to increased rates of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, infestations such as lice and bed bugs, and infections such as fungus related to damp conditions. Poor living conditions can lead to serious respiratory conditions like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Research shows that the risk of severe health issues or disability can increase by **25%** in childhood or early adulthood.

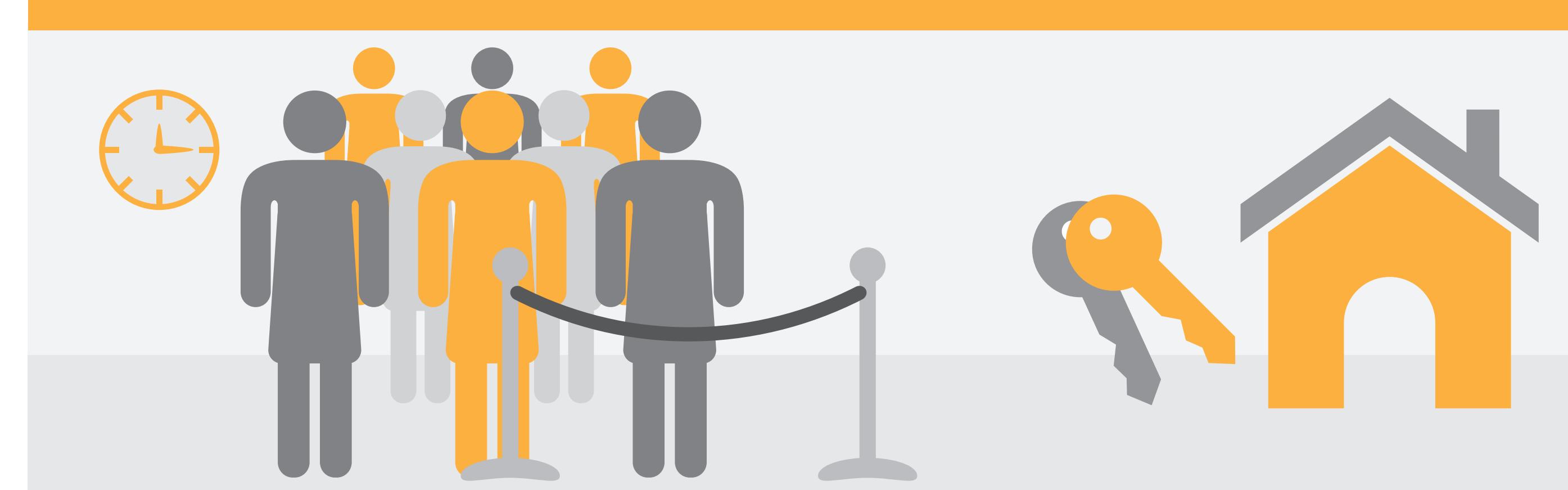
Those who are homeless experience a broader range of health issues than the rest of the population and are 8-10 times more likely to suffer an early death.

## THE HOUSING FIRST MODEL



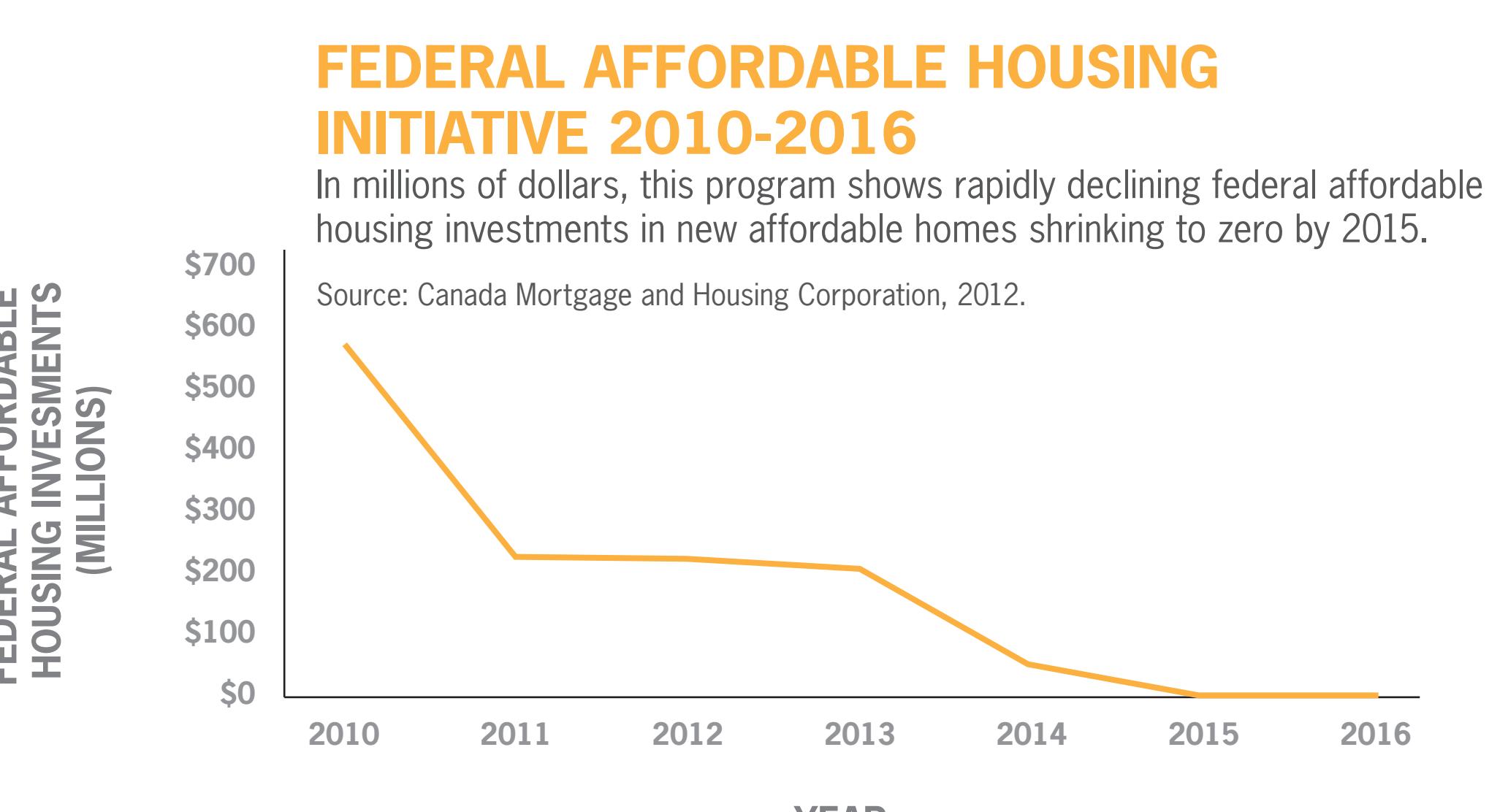
A good and healthy home with proper supports is better and cheaper than a homeless shelter. In Toronto, the average monthly cost of a shelter bed is over **\$1,900** – TEN TIMES the average monthly cost of social housing, which is only **\$199/month**.

## WAITING FOR HOUSING



Toronto's affordable housing wait list reached an all-time high in May 2012 of **85,088** households, or **157,216** people - a new record. The previous record was set in April 2012. And the record before that was set in March 2012. In fact, every month since 2008 had set a new record for the number of people waiting for a safe and affordable place to live in our city.

Although the need for affordable housing keeps expanding, why is it that government funding has continued to decline?



## WHAT CAN WE DO?



**Canada needs a national housing plan.**

By 2016 the number of households assisted under federal housing programs will be cut by almost **100,000** to fall from **623,700** households in 2008 to **525,000** households.

The federal affordable housing initiative will be cut to zero and combined federal housing investments will have been cut to **\$1.8 billion** – a cut of **52%** in just six years. A bigger investment needs to be made.



Build more affordable housing in Toronto. A housing first strategy that ensures people have access to clean, safe, and healthy homes takes pressure off the city's overcrowded shelter system.

## HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

This housing and homelessness iceberg illustrates the number of Canadians that are dealing with some kind of housing insecurity, sometimes a few kinds at once. Not all housing insecurity leaves people sleeping outside; it can include perpetual couch surfing, housing that is in really bad repair (broken windows, leaking roofs, infested), or housing that simply has way too many people living in it. These are all factors that contribute to inadequate housing in Canada.

There are approximately **12.5** million households in Canada. This means that around **12%** of households are in core housing need and **25%** are living in unaffordable housing.

Source: Wellesley Institute, 2010

Visible homeless: 150,000 - 300,000 people

This is the estimated number of people in Canada who are sleeping on the streets, park benches, over heating grates and in shelters.

Hidden homeless: 450,000 - 900,000 people

This includes people that are couch surfing, have short term insecure housing arrangements, or other circumstances where they're not on the street, but don't have their own housing.

Core housing need: 1.5 million households

This includes those who are at risk of being homeless due to the condition of their home, the high cost of their home in relation to their income, or the unsuitability of their housing.

Unaffordable housing: 3.1 million households

Housing being unaffordable may be one of the biggest housing issues in Canada. When households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, there is little left over for healthy food, transportation, child care and other basic needs.

## MAKING THE CONNECTIONS



There is a strong association between good housing conditions and a stronger sense of belonging to your community.

Affordable rent means having enough money to go towards other necessities, like healthy food.

Mold, lead, poor heating, bugs and vermin, overcrowding and poor ventilation all have negative impacts on your health. Good housing helps prevent these factors from making you sick.

Income insecurity is closely linked to affordable housing. Rent in Canada is increasing faster than renters' incomes are.