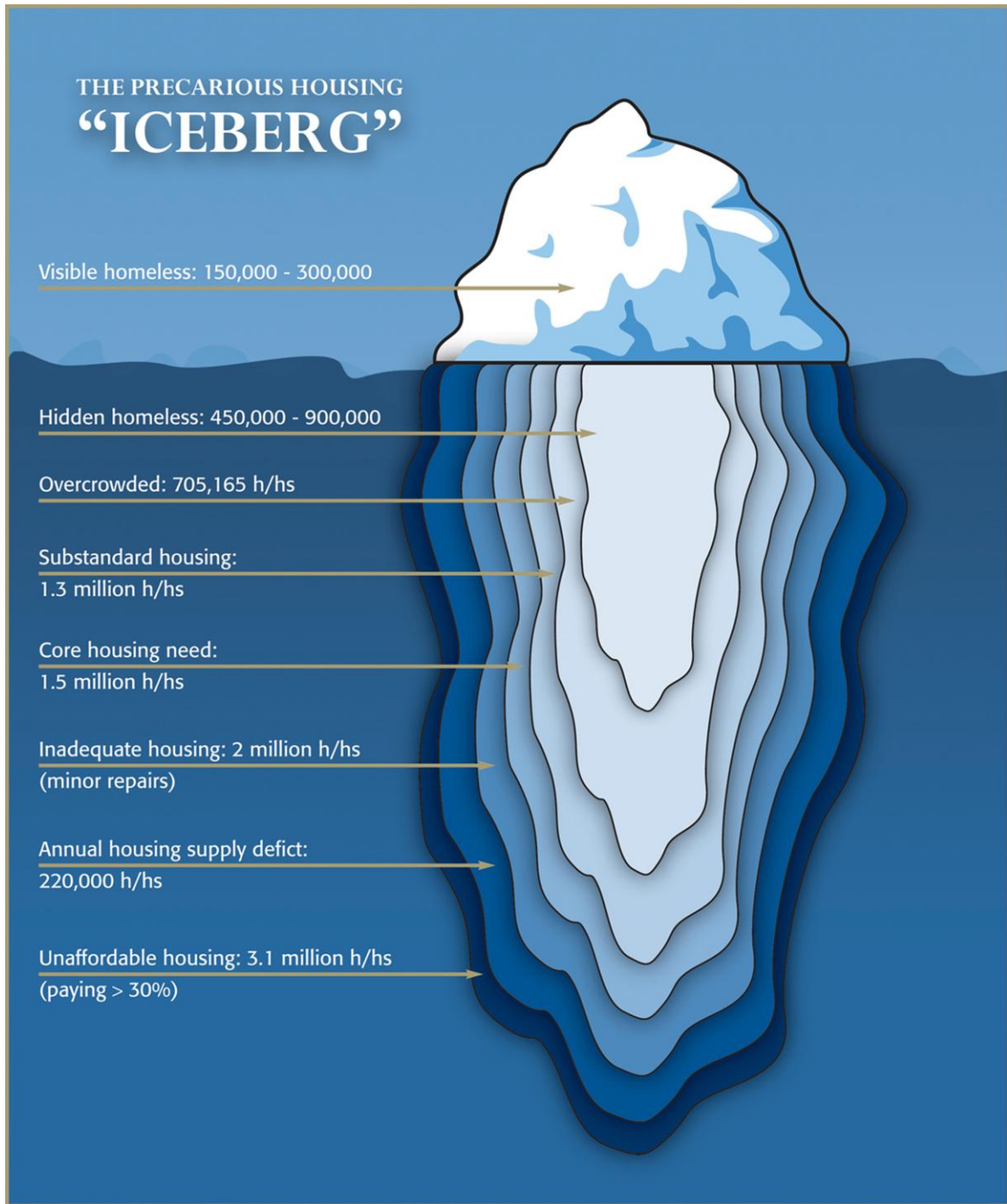


## International Partnership Convening Canada's Homelessness Non-System

- ***No accepted national or sub-national definition of "homeless"***
  - No national count, widely varying methods for limited number of local counts, limited ability to set targets, timelines and measure accountability for results.
  - Federal government cites 150,000 homeless – advocacy groups cite 300,000+.
  - Major sub-groups among homeless include: Aboriginal people, youth, single people, families, women, seniors. No accurate numbers on long-term homeless, but likely in 15 to 20% range. Relatively small number of homeless veterans.
  - "Core housing need" widely used as key indicator of housing need. 2006 census reported 1.5m households in core housing need (12.7% of Cdn households). Federal government has since cancelled this census tool.
- ***Growing problem as toll from 2008 recession continues to mount***
  - Job loss and high continuing unemployment, although foreclosure issues less in Canada than US due to differently structured mortgage market.
  - Little new private rental housing being built and ongoing demolition/conversion means overall private 'universe' shrinking in most parts of Canada.
  - During 1990s, large scale cuts to health and social security systems, including welfare, jobless benefits and other income transfers.
- ***Right to housing – international obligations***
  - Canada is signatory to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and numerous other international treaties and legal instruments, but right to housing has never been incorporated into domestic law.
  - Numerous reviews of Canada's obligations under ICESCR by competent international authorities since 1993 (including Universal Periodic Review in 2009) find Canada has failed to meet its international obligations, but no mechanism in domestic law to realize international rights, including right to housing.
  - Bill C-304 (national housing / homelessness plan) – which has support of majority of Members of Parliament – awaiting final reading in House of Commons, but may die on order paper if an early federal election.
- ***No national housing plan***
  - Jurisdiction for housing not assigned in Canada's Constitution, so continual jurisdictional battles. Multiple jurisdictions make it hard to track dollars. (Ontario auditor in 2009: Province cannot account for \$330m in federal housing dollars)
  - From 1973 to 1993, more than 600,000 co-op, non-profit and municipal affordable housing units funded under national housing plan. Funding for new housing ended in 1993. Most existing federal programs were transferred to provincial/territorial administration. In 1996, feds started a 'step-out' of housing commitments. In five years to 2014, rent subsidies for 50,200 homes will expire.
  - Since 1999, periodic pieces of funding at national and sub-national level (1999, 2000, 2005, 2009) but trend has been that federal spending as percentage of GDP has been cut by 50% since 1989. National and sub-national housing and homelessness programs scattered among multiple departments with inadequate

- funding, limited co-ordination. “Fraying patchwork”. Navigating this disjointed non-system represents big challenge to housing and homelessness groups.
- Latest federal spending estimates overall spending at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (the federal government’s national housing agency) will be cut from \$3.1 billion in fiscal 2010 to \$1.9 billion in fiscal 2011 - down by 39%. Funding for Canada’s national homelessness plan is to be cut by 11% from \$124 million to \$110 million, and funding for national homelessness research will be cut by 70% from \$2.5 million to \$750,000. CMHC corporate forecasts confirm cuts: Affordable housing initiative to be cut to zero by 2014, and number of homes renovated will be cut by 96% (with only 745 home repairs by 2014). At same time, CMHC is projecting doubling of its net income from \$911m in 2010 to \$2b in 2014.
  - Robust community housing / homelessness sector continues to deliver innovative and effective solutions in every part of Canada, in spite of funding and related challenges. At national level, Mental Health Commission of Canada has four-city pilot project on housing first. Housing first widely used. Growing recognition of harm reduction housing as model preferred to abstinence-based.
  - Dynamic research and practice networks link communities and, at national level, two emerging entities – Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and Canadian Observatory on Homelessness – will fill critical roles.
- **Federal homelessness plan**
- Rise in mass homelessness in Canada coincided with dramatic withdrawal by national and sub-national governments from affordable housing in 1990s
  - Federal government launched national homelessness plan in 1999. Roughly \$135m annually – with no increase in funding since then to cover inflation or population growth. Most funding (80%) goes to ten largest cities, with remainder going to 51 smaller communities. Rest of the country gets nothing.
  - Despite inadequate funding and limited reach, national homelessness plan is considered good, ‘community-up’ model. Each community develops local plan, and federal government (and sometimes others) shares the funding.
  - No national strategy to ‘end homelessness’
- **Provincial homelessness strategies**
- In Canada, constitutionally provinces responsible for delivering broad range of social and health services, and should lead on homelessness strategies. Few provinces have a strategy to end homelessness, or even ‘secretariat’ to coordinate responses.
  - Seven cities in Alberta created partnership and effectively leveraged local plans into strong funding and policy support from Alberta government and created a model for the rest of Canada of building from community up.
- **Key priorities**
- Enhancing specific capacities at the community level, including more reliable numbers and assessment of effective local responses.
  - Aggregating from community to provincial and then to national level through strong and robust networks and alliances. Powerful new national champion.
  - Need to shift emphasis at national, regional and local levels from emergency services, to robust strategies to prevent homelessness, and rapid re-housing.



The “iceberg” from [Precarious Housing in Canada 2010](#)  
– a research and policy compendium

On-line portal: [The Homeless Hub](#)