[Your name/Parish name]

[Your address]

[Date]

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister,

The Hon. Sean Fraser, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities,

[Your MP]

Re: Protecting and Advancing the Human Right to Housing

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Fraser, and Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Canada has recognized the human right to housing in multiple international instruments, and has enshrined it in the National Housing Strategy Act, which commits the federal government to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. Section 5 (2)(c) of the Act also describes one of the key aims of the National Housing Strategy as focusing on improving housing outcomes for persons in greatest need.

We applaud your government for launching the National Housing Strategy and for committing funds towards the creation of new, and the repair of existing, affordable housing in Canada. It is long past time that the federal government reclaims a leadership role in the supply of affordable housing in Canada. Yet we cannot merely build our way out of the affordable housing crisis. For every affordable unit created, many more are being lost to rapidly increasing rents and the “repositioning” of rental housing stock at higher rates, particularly by financialized landlords such as Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), who represent a growing segment of private landlords. A 2022 report for the Federal Housing Advocate found that the growing financialization of housing “is associated with rising rent levels, displacement pressure, impacts on tenant quality of life, higher rates of eviction, and gentrification,” thus eroding the right to adequate housing. Moreover, these harmful effects are disproportionately experienced by people who are Indigenous, racialized, disabled, and/or newcomers to Canada, as well as those on low or fixed incomes – the same vulnerable groups the National Housing Strategy was meant to assist.

We have seen first-hand the effects of the worsening housing affordability crisis in our communities. The Anglican Diocese of Toronto, of which our parish is a part, is committed to advocating for policies and programs that protect and advance the human right to adequate housing. Our parish recently adopted a motion that calls on both federal and provincial governments to do their part to reduce barriers to the realization of housing as a human right in Canada.

Specifically,

1. We call on the Government of Canada to ensure that federal subsidies and incentives are targeted to those developers and projects that demonstrably address housing need and uphold the human right to housing by meeting clear conditions on affordable rents, non-displacement policies, and eviction prevention measures; and
2. We call on the Government of Canada to end the favourable tax treatment of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and tax them at the regular corporate rate, with resulting revenues being directed toward the creation and preservation of affordable housing.

A 2023 Parliamentary Budget Office report found that eliminating the favourable tax treatment of REITs could result in $285.8 million over five years, funds that could help finance even more creation of truly affordable rental housing.

If Canada is a country truly committed to realizing the right to housing, our laws, policies, and spending programs must all reflect this commitment.

I/we look forward to hearing from you on this matter,

Yours truly,

[Your name and/or parish name]