

# Shifting Mindsets: An Advocacy Coalition Framework Analysis of Canadian Federal Housing Policy

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## ABSTRACT

Thousands of people across Canada are struggling to find affordable and adequate housing. The following study is an analysis of housing policy in Canada, in order to shed light on its past shortcomings. After applying the advocacy coalition framework, I will demonstrate how the federal government has historically divided into two main coalitions when it comes to addressing inadequate housing in Canada; the market housing coalition and the social housing coalition. By implementing a process tracing methodological approach, I will examine the effects of past housing policy and how it has led to present-day legislation. I will conclude that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has promised housing advancements and through incremental changes, he has established, for the first time ever in Canada, the right to housing.

## Introduction

Since the first housing policy was passed by the federal government in 1935, Canada has attempted to discover the best methods to address the issue of lack of adequate housing. While the Executive branch of government has historically been controversial, debating internally the best response to help house homeless Canadians, the housing situation has continued to worsen across the country. This issue can not be sufficiently addressed by individual governments on the federal or provincial level. Leadership needs to be concentrated at the federal level in cooperation with the provincial and municipal level, in order for effective change to pursue. Hence the scope of this paper will focus on the Federal government and its leadership in the housing field. By applying the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), I intend to analyze federal housing policy to uncover the internal debate in government that has allowed this housing problem to persist. Through a chronological account of Canadian housing policy, I will evaluate how the current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, and his Liberal majority have done in upholding their campaign promises to address the lack of adequate housing nationwide. In Canada, more and more adults and children are living in terrible living conditions because previous Federal governments have eliminated numerous social housing policies. This topic needs to be explored and the issues need to be brought out of the shadows.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how ACF can provide a new perspective on this historic social issue. I wish to understand the implementation of housing policy while under the leadership of Justin Trudeau. I intend to explore housing policy and question whether current Canadian efforts are enough to solve this Canadian social issue.

This raises the question, why is housing policy an important concern in Canada? Simply put, housing inadequacies and housing needs are deeply rooted social issues in Canada, impacting over one-third of Canadians. According to the 2006 Census and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) that number is only increasing (Waterston et al. 2015, 3). Young and Moses (2013, 9) make a direct correlation between the homeless population and the roll-back of social programs. Additionally, with the low minimum wage and the rising costs to live, without social housing, many poor working citizens are being left in housing need (McBride & McNutt 2007, 191).

Furthermore, housing needs disproportionately target social minorities in Canada. Inadequate housing “directly affects the health of children and youth, including their ability to develop optimally and achieve life goals” (Waterson et al. 2015, 1). Brushett (2007, 378) continues to explain that youths are impacted because the housing

shortage is responsible for the breakdown of families who cannot afford to support their children. Additionally, Indigenous households “are four times more likely to be overcrowded (25% compared to 7%), with remote communities experiencing a higher percentage of overcrowding” (Young & Moses 2013, 10). Addressing housing issues in Canada would help prevent a great deal of hardship to youths and the Indigenous community.

## Methodology

For the purposes of this paper, process tracing will be implemented in order to consider how housing policy has developed over time. To conceptualize process tracing, I look to the literature to best define this method. A process, as understood by Waldner (2015, 128), looks at the intermediary links that combine the cause to the effect. This sets the stage by introducing the idea of cause and effect, and how by analyzing the process, researchers can better understand the causality of a phenomenon. Beach (2017, 1) further explains that, “process tracing is a research method for tracing causal mechanisms using detailed, within-case empirical analysis of how a causal process plays out in an actual case”. Process tracing will prove to pair well with the advocacy coalition framework as it will support a causal analysis of why housing solutions have remained in the market throughout a majority of Canadian history.

To build on the explanations above, Abbott (1992, 428) provides a contrasting definition, as he defines process as a narrative; a narrative containing a social reality with actions that are constrained by structures (socially constructed, physical, systemic, etc.). These actions create a process to be analyzed.

Hence, this study will be tracing intermediary links through a narrative format to best understand the causes that influence housing policy. Pierson (2003) offers an effective method at understanding process tracing, which he calls *Threshold Effects*. This is the idea that the time horizon of cause can be quick or gradual, but this does not matter until it hits a critical level or threshold, which triggers major change, the effect (Pierson 2003, 182). Time horizons can be understood as a period of time where significant change occurs (Pierson 2003, 179).

Pierson (2003, 191) outlines his idea around slow-moving outcomes and how cumulative outcomes are seen predominately in the development of public policy. Due to the fact that the implementation of housing policy and the unfolding in society could be a very long process, (outcomes can be delayed, altered or blatantly cancelled) an analysis of housing policy, will be classified as a threshold effect process tracing model with a long time of horizon for both the cause and effect.

To support Pierson’s (2003) concepts, I consider the work of Waldner (2015), who offers the following algorithm to explain process tracing:

$$X \rightarrow M_1 \rightarrow M_2 \rightarrow Y$$

This model demonstrates a cause and effect relationship beginning with X, the independent variable (IV), running through intervening variables or mediators, to arrive at Y, the dependent variable (DV) or effect (Waldner 2015, 130-131). Thus, through process tracing, I will consider how housing policy has shifted according to the intervening ideological variables.

## Paper Outline

This paper will be broken down into four main sections. The first section will outline how housing policy has been analyzed in the past, then explain how the advocacy coalition framework will be implemented in this study. This framework will be instrumental at helping to understand and examine housing policy in Canada. The second section will provide an account of the international human right to housing and an overview of the current Canadian constitution. Next, by using past and present literature, I intend to draw a political roadmap to illustrate housing policy in Canada. The fourth section will demonstrate how ACF can be applied to Canadian housing policy in order to reveal the internal government struggle that political actors face in advancing housing policy.

## Housing Literature

Analyzing housing policy is not a new issue. Countries across the world are dealing with inadequate housing, housing affordability issues, homelessness, and various other results of insufficient housing policy. Housing issues has been analyzed by many scholars in multiple different ways. A popular approach is through the legal lens. Lorne Sossin (2010), former Dean of Osgoode law school, has discussed housing from a Canadian legal perspective, applying public administration and what that means for housing policy. Eyal Benvenisti (1993), is also a legal scholar of international rights, who takes a global approach in analyzing housing rights. As well, Wayne Sandholtz (2015) analyzes international law within domestic legal systems and combats housing policy issues from a legal perspective.

Another approach to addressing housing policy is through a social lens. Bruce Porter (2004; 2013), who has written extensively on housing rights in Canada, has fought for housing as a human right in order to protect the homeless population in Canada. He is an advocate for implementing a rights-based approach in order to fight poverty and argue for those suffering from lack of adequate housing.

Addressing housing policy from a legal and social perspective are both strong approaches but have already been done. Neither explain the comparative ideological stances of government actors like ACF will reveal. This study would provide a unique perspective, filling a gap in academia, as the ACF will provide a different lens of analysis, which I argue can help shed light on the federal government's struggle and address this key issue in order to better protect the rights of Canadians.

ACF was strategically chosen, as opposed to theories like institutionalism, because ACF is an actor-focussed theory, which helps clearly contain my analytical unit of the actor, as actors make up the coalitions. As well, unlike other public policy theories such as multiple streams or comparative theories, ACF best implements a longitudinal approach at examining completing ideological coalitions over time, which strongly supports my methodology of process tracing.

## Advocacy Coalition Framework

This section will examine ACF to show how it is the optimal framework to guide our analysis of housing policy. ACF was first theorized and published by Paul Sabatier in 1986. He was examining how some policy theories focus on a 'top-down' approach to understanding the policy process, while others used a 'bottom-up' approach (Sabatier 1986, 38). Sabatier (1986, 38) believed there was a way to combine the best features from both approaches, while also being able to analyze policy implementation through a longitudinal lens. Hence, he came up with the advocacy coalition framework.

Drawing from the 'bottom-up' approach, Sabatier (1986, 38-39) explains that one needs to start from a policy problem or subsystem, rather than the law and then look at how policy actors and strategies have attempted to deal with the issue. ACF is an actor-focussed framework and the assumption for this paper will be that in order to analyze housing policy, key actors who influence policy need to be the unit of study. Harold Lasswell (1970, 5) provides the argument that policy scientists are the most knowledgeable of the policy process. The policy process "is the study of change and development of policy and the related actors, events, and contexts" (Weible et al. 2012, 3). Hence, actors as the focus of this study will provide useful in evaluating housing policy.

Furthermore, policy actors can be divided into three main categories. The first is government actors, who consist of the elected officials, the bureaucracy, and other government employees. The second is non-government or societal actors, who impact policy. These actors are from interest groups, lobbyists, non-for-profit organizations, and other individuals and organizations that advocate to influence public policy. The third category of policy actors is the international actor, from the United Nations and other international bodies, who provides reports and communicates with the government to influence policy outputs. These three categories comprise the policy community of actors (Wu et al., 2018, 11). Each will play a different role within the ACF.

Moreover, Sabatier (1986, 39) concludes that the best way to organize the actors is by belief system. He argues that “this produces a focus on 'advocacy coalitions,' i.e. actors from various public and private organizations who share a set of beliefs and who seek to realize their common goals over time” (Sabatier 1986, 39). Put more simply, “advocacy coalitions are groups of policy actors that share policy core beliefs and coordinate their behavior to influence the policy process” (Pierce et al. 2017, s16).

The belief system is organized by three streams: deep core, policy core and secondary aspects (Sabatier 1986, 42). Deep, or normative core beliefs, are fundamental core axioms that people live by and are incredibly hard to alter (Sabatier 1986, 42-43). Near core, or policy core, beliefs are fundamental policy positions people have that they believe will help them achieve and maintain the deep core beliefs; strategies and mechanisms to implement to hold true to their beliefs (Sabatier 1986, 43). Secondary aspects are information searches and decisions actors make that allow them to implement core policy positions (Sabatier 1986, 43). It can be seen how each part of the belief system is integral to the whole process and are intertwined with each other. This strong belief system is what I will demonstrate causes friction between opposing coalitions, while also strengthening the cohesion of those who are in the same coalition. Due to the strongly held deep core beliefs, ACF argues that government actions will typically remain stable over time (Sabatier 1986, 42). Major alterations of the policy core, although rare, can happen and would normally be the product of changing external subsystems or large-scale socio-economic events, such as the introduction of new parties into government (Sabatier 1986, 42).

## Framework Premises

Sabatier (1988) further explains how there are three basic premises to the ACF. The first premise is that “understanding the process of policy change -- and the role of policy-oriented learning therein -- requires a time perspective of a decade or more” (Sabatier 1988, 131). The idea of policy-oriented learning is a critical aspect of ACF, as it helps comprise the core beliefs and strengthens their stance (Sabatier 1988, 133). This is done through internal feedback loops of reflexivity, understanding external dynamics and building on your knowledge of the state and factors affecting the people (Sabatier 1988, 133). ACF assumes that learning is instrumental to gain a better understanding of the world in order to further policy objectives, and to resist learning would suggest that their beliefs may be invalid or unattainable (Sabatier 1988, 133). Hence, policy-oriented learning is a key premise of ACF that helps maintain the strength of the coalitions.

The second main premise is that the best way to understand policy change is through subsystems (Sabatier 1988, 131). This can be seen through the interactions of the actors from different institutions and how they work together in a policy subsystem (Sabatier 1988, 131). It is further explained that “within the subsystem, it is assumed that actors can be aggregated into a number of advocacy coalitions composed of people from various organizations who share a set of normative and causal beliefs and who often act in concert” (Sabatier 1988, 133). Thus, seeing how actors of a coalition can unite under their belief to implement policy would be the best perspective to understand change.

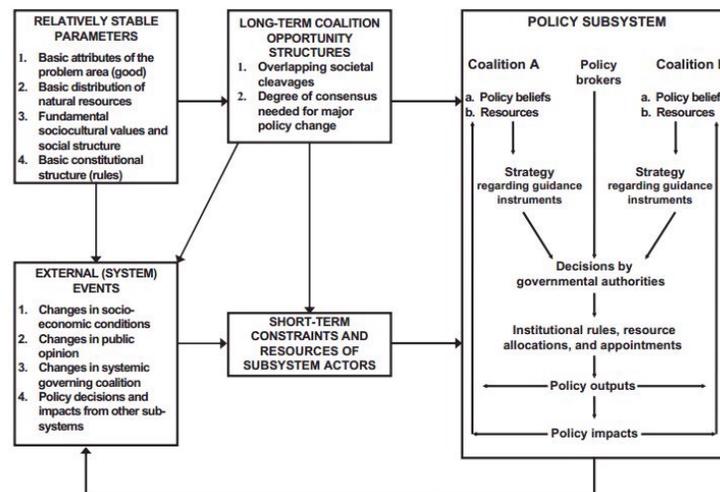
The third premise is that public policies or programs can be conceptualized by considering their belief system, as a coalition's values and priorities guide their actions (Sabatier 1988, 131). Beliefs and the role they play are crucial to the policy process. Coalitions continuously try to implement their beliefs into policies (Sabatier 1988, 142). This is where problems arise. There may be multiple coalitions within the government, who wish to apply their beliefs, resulting in policy formulation becoming difficult.

## *Policy Process*

The advocacy coalition framework has a set structural process. As demonstrated by Figure 1, the main units of analysis in ACF are subsystems, which are comprised of the actors in a geographic area who are trying to influence the policy (Pierce et al. 2017, s15). Pierce et al. (2017, s15) explain it best when they state,

In this figure, coalitions compete within a policy subsystem to translate their beliefs into policies. They use strategies to influence government authorities, which eventually influence policy. Coalition beliefs and actions are impacted by long- and short-term opportunities, constraints, and resources that are affected by both relatively stable parameters and external subsystem events. The impacts of government decisions feed back into the subsystem, and also may affect factors external to the subsystem.

This explanation provides a very procedural account of the ACF and how actors go about influencing policy change. Thus, policy change can be viewed as the outputs of past winners of the policy process (Pierce et al. 2017, s17).



**Figure 1.** General Overview of Conceptual Framework of Policy Change (Sabatier 1986, 41).

Figure 1 explains four major pathways to policy change within the subsystems: “external shocks, internal subsystem events, policy-oriented learning, and negotiated agreements” (Pierce et al. 2017 s17). Consequently, from Figure 1, it is evident that only through a major event or change, can policy transform. However, Pierce et al. explain there is a fifth alternative that can influence policy change and that is the changing of the governing coalition (Pierce et al. 2017, s17). Yet, each of these paths that lead to change are all still guided and rooted in a coalition’s deep core beliefs (Kübler 2001 624).

### *Theory Critiques*

To provide a critical review of the ACF, it is important to note some shortcomings of this framework that scholars have pointed out. Kübler (2001, 625) questions the formation of coalitions and how they are divided by behaviour. This is a valid critique because beliefs and behaviours can overlap with each other and it can be hard to find distinct coalitions. As well, Kübler (2001, 626) continues by arguing that “the ACF still needs to come up with a theory of action capable of respecting the framework’s own assumption of complex actor motivations”. Furthermore, Luxon (2019, 119) argues that the ACF is too broad and needs specifying for accurate and effective implementation. When a theory is considered too broad, it can lead to the superficial application of the framework and result in an ineffective analysis. However, through the work of Sabatier and his colleagues, I argue that these critiques, while valid and need to be recognized, do not discount the legitimacy of the advocacy coalition framework, if applied to a specific circumstance with valid evidence.

## Canadian Ratification of International Housing Rights

International laws are incredibly important to recognize and uphold. To be perfectly clear, for the purposes of this paper, a normative assumption is the importance and authority of internationally ratified treaties. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, established in 1948 after the Second World War, provides every country with a human rights framework (Nielsen 2004, 63). Following this document, the United Nations passed the *International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR). The world needed universal standards for the inherent rights of humans. Yet, to this day, a majority of countries around the world do not adhere to their ratification obligations.

The United Nations Treaty Collection (2002) provides a list of every country which has signed and ratified the ICESCR. Canada ratified this treaty, voluntarily obligating it to embed the standards of this document in the Canadian legal and political framework. The main article under analysis in this paper is Article 11 of the ICESCR.

This section states:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent (ICESCR, 1976).

This article lays out the rights that every individual has to housing. Adequate housing is an international human right and needs to be recognized and protected.

Canada's official position on the ICESCR is that they have ratified it and intend to promote its values, but the federal government's position has been at odds regarding its obligation to implement right to housing policy (Porter 2004, 133). This raises the concern as to who makes this decision and why the right to housing has been continuously neglected over the last 40 years? Since policy is greatly influenced by actors and interests in the field, depending on the leading interests in the political housing arena, policy will be swayed by their stance.

With regards to human rights in Canada, only recently have they been embedded into the Canadian Constitution. It was not until the 1960s when "Parliament adopted the Canadian Bill of Rights and currently every Canadian province and territory, as well as the federal government, has adopted antidiscrimination legislation and established a human rights commission. Since 1982, the constitution has contained an entrenched Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms" (Vago & Nelson 2014, 216). Since 1982, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been the central source of human rights in Canada. However, nowhere in this document is there any mention of a right to housing. Unfortunately, without constitutionally implementing the agreed upon ratifications, Canadians have no supreme authority to argue for their rights.

## Canadian Housing Policy

To analyze housing policy, it is critical to procedurally trace this policy area to its origins and understand how housing has been dealt with by the federal government for the last century. Historically, there have been two main options when it comes to rectifying the housing issue in Canada; maintaining separation between market and state, allowing the market to correct the issue, or the government taking an active role by providing social housing. The main difference between these two housing options is "while market housing is allocated by market forces, i.e. supply and demand, social housing is allocated through non-speculative measures" (Althawabteh 2016, 7). Hulchanski (2005, 1) notes that 95 percent of Canadians rely almost completely on the market to "supply, allocate, and maintain its housing stock". In other words, they are buying or renting their homes through economic transactions that are regulated by the market. On the other hand, the other 5 percent require social housing, which is a form of public relief made available by the state when the market is inadequate. While there are nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and private

institutions that have demonstrated a will to provide social housing, the volume of available units is just not enough to address the overwhelming number of people in need without state assistance. The National Housing Strategy notes that 1.7 million people in Canada are in need of adequate housing (Government of Canada 2017, 3). There is a need for a fully functioning right to housing policy in Canada.

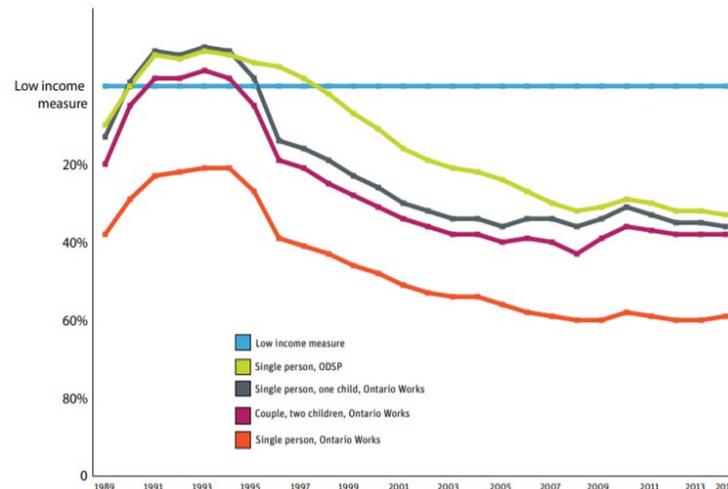
Tracing housing policy to its origins, until 1935, the Canadian Federal stance on housing had been to leave it to the market to figure itself out. However, in 1935 the Dominion Housing Act (DHA) was created and this was the first Canadian federal housing policy (Bélec 2015, 341). The goal of this policy was to promote homeownership by manipulating the market while supporting mortgage lending (Bélec 2015, 343). When the debate arose as to whether the government should adopt a social housing policy, the federal response was content with the DHA and thought this policy was a better response than providing social housing (Bélec 1997, 54). Thus, the goal of the DHA was to remain faithful that the market would work through the 1930s housing crisis.

After three years, the DHA proved ineffective and, with the influence of their American partners in the south, the Canadian National Housing Act (NHA) was passed in 1938 (Bélec 2015, 341). This was the first time the federal government took it upon itself to assist in securing housing for Canadians. Due to political conflicts and elections, Canada did not provide any support to those in need of housing in subsequent years. The NHA was continuously amended to address all of the key concerns of Canadians to help combat the issue of housing inadequacies, but nothing worthwhile transpired. Though, in 1946, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation was implemented as the first housing agency in Canadian history, with the sole purpose of providing adequate housing to Canadians who for a short while, began to feel supported by federal funds.

Through 1954, there still continued to be tensions between social housing and market housing. The government hoped for the market to address housing, while it continued to help with mortgages (Poapst 1956, 234). However, the problem remained that mortgages were not the all-encompassing solution, as they were not available to everyone. Poapst (1956, 236) notes that people living in any small cities, less than 5,000 in population, were far less likely to be able to receive a mortgage, as the Canadian government did not provide those places with enough assistance to support financial institutions to loan large sums of money.

With the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, things looked brighter from a housing perspective. Significant policy reform dedicated both money and resources to address social programs including adequate housing. The federal government led the charge, beginning communications with the provincial levels of government to work together by providing a split of 50% each for financial contributions in social programs (Leone & Carroll 2010, 391-392). This time in Canadian history also brought out the first Ministers dedicated to housing from the Federal government (Leone & Carroll 2010, 393). The 1960s and 1970s were a prosperous time dedicated to social housing efforts, but this did not last much longer. By the end of the 1970s, budget cuts swiftly halted the federal and provincial efforts to provide Canadians with homes (Leone & Carroll 2010, 393).

Up until the mid-1980s, the federal government played a key and influential role in housing; whether through the assistance of the market by supplying mortgages or by providing social housing (Brushett 2007, 390). This all changed in the next couple of decades, into the turn of the century. Governments on both the federal and provincial levels have one at a time abandoned social values, especially during the fall of the welfare state in the 1990s (Brodie 2007, 99). In 1995, the Canadian budget was in a huge federal deficit, and Prime Ministers Chrétien and Martin decided on their solution, which was to cut social programs. As a result, the federal government replaced the traditional transfer payments to provinces and territories with the new Canada Health Social Transfer (CHST) along with cutting six billion dollars over two years in health care, social services and education (Facal 2005, 1; McBride & McNutt 2007, 186). They also cut unemployment insurance and the number of resources that used to be transferred to help provinces and territories pay for social programs (McBride & McNutt 2007, 178). The overall coverage of unemployment insurance reduced from 1990 to 2001 by 35% (McBride & McNutt 2007, 187).



**Figure 2.** Poverty Gap for Select Family Compositions who Qualify for Social Assistance in Ontario (Tiessen 2016, 6).

Furthermore, Tiessen (2016) provides a study examining Ontario's social assistance and poverty gap. While this does not speak for all of Canada, this study can demonstrate the number of social cuts to Canada's largest populated province. Ontario offers two main social programs, Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Figure 2 demonstrates the steady increase of the poverty gap in Ontario. Tiessen (2016, 5) explains how, in 1989, a single person qualifying for Ontario Works faced a poverty gap of just under 40%. By 1993, the gap had been cut in half and singles on social assistance faced a poverty gap of 20%. By 2014, the gap had widened dramatically to 59%. People receiving benefits from Ontario's social assistance programs are living in a greater depth of poverty now than a generation ago. Additionally, Scott et. al (2006, 58) report that Canadian governments have collectively reduced social assistance spending from "41% to 31% of the GDP and transfers to individuals from 11.5% to 7.8% of GDP".

All this being argued, there is some critical literature that denies the shrinking of the welfare state. Hartman (2005, 61) argued that while "welfare may now be leaner and meaner for some, the welfare state has not shrunk; rather different forms of welfare have arisen coupled with new modes of administration and underpinned by a theoretical rationale which has shifted from entitlement to obligation". While this is a valid point, I argue that it comes down to accessibility. If there are too many rules and regulations preventing citizens in need from accessing social services, then the overall outcome is still the degradation of the poor.

It is important to note that in February 1999, a key document arose that had the provinces outlining their responsibilities for social welfare. The Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) was an intergovernmental agreement between the provinces (except Quebec), territories and the government of Canada outlining their social responsibilities. Throughout Canadian history "SUFA is the only nonconstitutional agreement attempting to clarify the respective roles of federal and provincial...It grew out of a concern to limit the federal spending power in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, ensure adequate, stable and sustainable funding for social programs, prevent duplication and overlap, accentuate transparency and public accountability, and manage intergovernmental disputes" (Facal 2005, 1). Its principles outline the necessity to respect constitutional jurisdiction while committing itself to the equitable treatment of citizens (AGREEMENT- A Framework to improve the Social Union for Canadians, 1999). SUFA sought to meet the social needs of Canadians through active participation and partnership with the community, in regard to the social programs and policies being enacted. These programs are the principal mechanisms "by which governments aim to reduce the extent of socioeconomic disadvantage in society. These programmes are designed to provide a modest level of financial assistance to low-income populations" (Faraz et al. 2019, 198). The state took ownership of preserving the social programs and services in order to make life for all Canadians more adequate and affordable (AGREEMENT- A Framework to improve the Social Union for Canadians, 1999). Unfortunately, SUFA

did not gain traction, nor commitment from the governments, and by 2005 was useless, as the same disputes around social programs were at the forefront of Canadian politics (Facal 2005, 17).

The 2000s were not a hopeful time for social assistance in the housing market. By 2008, lending standards by the Canadian government substantially declined, making mortgages harder to attain (Walks 2014, 257). With no social housing and minimal mortgage support, what options did Canadians, who were homeless or living in inadequate conditions, have? This time in Canadian history marked a low point for social programs and very little was done over subsequent years to help resolve the cutbacks of the Chrétien government on social programs. Harper showed minimal signs of improvement as he began intergovernmental communications again, but not much can be shown on the housing front. This all led to the housing efforts under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The federal government released its 2017 budget intentions and outlined what they did in 2016 to begin their housing efforts. The 2017 budget states, “to help address immediate housing needs, Budget 2016 committed to invest \$2.2 billion over two years, to give more Canadians access to more affordable housing” (Morneau 2017, 132). It went on to claim a new ‘National Housing Strategy’ that was developed with the support of “provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous Peoples, industry experts, stakeholders and, most importantly, those Canadians who are living with the challenge of finding adequate and affordable housing in many of Canada’s big cities, and rural and remote communities” (Morneau 2017, 133). All of these promises and intentions were laid out in this budget, yet very little political accountability is present when the highest form of political action is a strategy, which holds no legally binding authority.

While many were critical and pessimistic about the National Housing Strategy, On June 21, 2019, the National Housing Strategy Act was assented, declaring policy that deemed housing a human right. This was a huge political shift in addressing inadequate housing in Canada. Section 4(a) of this policy declared, “that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law” (*National Housing Strategy Act*, 2019). This was a major development for Canadians. After over 40 years since Canada has ratified the ICESCR, this is the first piece of legislation upholding the right to housing.

Canadians have seen a long history of this dichotomic battle between social housing and market housing. Through the ACF, I will provide an explanation as to why this battle has taken place and how change can possibly pursue.

## ACF and Canadian Housing Policy

Having provided a fulsome account of ACF and seen the history of Canadian housing policy, I will now demonstrate how this framework is the best option to analyze housing policy in Canada. As seen by Figure 1, ACF lays out a multi-level form of analysis, where internal and external factors are considered, as well as different subsystems.

As such, the initial starting point is the 1935 DHA. This can be considered the X, according to Waldner (2015). For the last 80 years there have been two very distinct coalitions that have been butting heads, as seen through the policy outputs over time. The first coalition, or coalition A, I will call the ‘Market Housing Coalition’. This can also be seen as M<sub>1</sub>. The second coalition, or coalition B, I will refer to as ‘Social Housing Coalition’. This can be seen as M<sub>2</sub>. Each coalition is rooted in its deep core beliefs. These coalitions and the conflict between them, introduces the intervening variables. These variables provide a direct causal connection to policy outputs.

The Market Housing Coalition, which has dominated the policy process for a majority of Canadian history, is deeply rooted in neo-liberal beliefs. Porter (2012, 19-20) explains how neo-liberalism is essentially a market-based political ideology; one that emphasized reduced government intervention, free market forces, individual responsibility, and the extension of globally capitalist relations. This is the agenda that has predominated globally for the last 30 years and has been followed, more or less, by Canadian governments since the 1980s.

This is the deep core belief that has been rooted in housing policy. Policy core or policy strategies have been to maintain the budget and make more money to allow the market to grow and produce a stronger economy. Neo-

liberal beliefs dictate that this would help the housing market provide to Canadians. Secondary aspects of this belief would be making social welfare cuts and diminishing social programs.

The market housing coalition is comprised of actors, both government and non-government, who have deep core beliefs that housing can be rectified by the market. This coalition will have members who believe government interference in supplying adequate housing is unnecessary. These actors would historically consider themselves as more conservative along the political spectrum. In specific this can include government actors like Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, who in 1947 declared “no government of which I am a part will ever pass legislation for subsidized housing” and reverted many progressive steps towards social housing that were made by his predecessor, Prime Minister King (Brushett 2007, 379). Further actors in this coalition can include non-government actors, who occupy the top 1% and support neo-liberalist ideologies. Consequently, due to the overwhelming amount of money and power that supports the market housing coalition, it is not hard to recognize why they have stayed in power for so many years throughout Canadian history.

For the social housing coalition, the deep core belief is neo-conservatism or progressive, which “has goals that appear somewhat in contradiction to those of neo-liberalism; it emphasizes social order, morality, traditional family measures, and (in contradiction to neoliberalism’s emphasis on reduced state involvement)” (Porter 2012, 20). Porter(2012, 20) notes that this belief system has been seen at times in the Canadian context. However, it has been suppressed by the dominating coalition a majority of the time.

The social housing coalition comprises of actors who value government efforts in supporting those in need of adequate housing. While not rejecting the market and its value, actors in this coalition would root their deep core beliefs in the fact that the market is not sufficient in providing enough adequate housing, and the government has a necessary role to play. A government actor who can be seen to align with this coalition was former Canadian Minister Basford, who explicitly stated in a House of Commons debate (1973), “good housing at reasonable cost is a social right of every citizen of this country. ... [T]his must be our objective, our obligation, and our goal. The legislation which I am proposing to the House today is an expression of the government’s policy, part of a broad plan, to try to make this right and this objective a reality.” This positive rights argument is rooted in social liberalist ideologies that would place him in the social housing coalition. Another famous Canadian political actor that can be associated with this coalition is Pierre Elliot Trudeau who was the Prime Minister during the peak of social housing and a huge supporter of human rights in Canada. In terms of non-government support in this coalition, actors from advocacy groups such as the Right to Housing Network, or in Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. Both key actors in the fight for social housing and government assistance.

This coalition made advances in the 1960s to help provide more social assistance, which shows their policy beliefs and secondary aspects, but was forcefully suppressed when the Chrétien government took over. These two coalitions have been influencing housing policy decisions since the 1930s and continue to conflict with each other in 2020. This conflict emphasizes how policy has been influenced by competing ideologies which results in shifts between  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ , while tracing housing policy in Canada.

This now raises the question; which coalition is currently occupying the federal government? There is no doubt that these two coalitions within the federal government are still in conflict. However, only recently have mind-sets began to shift again. Canada has seen only two major changes in coalitions regarding housing policy. In the 1960s when the social housing coalition gained power over the market housing coalition for a short period of time. Then in the 1980s, the major ideological shift returned to market reliance. However, in 2019, Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government passed the National Housing Strategy Act.

Until this point, Justin Trudeau had been highly scrutinized for his National Housing Strategy passed in 2017. David Hulchanski, professor at University of Toronto, wrote in the Globe and Mail condemning the proposed National Housing Strategy. He states that “the document provides no assessment of Canada's housing system, what works well, what does not” when a strategy should “focus on those most in need. But to give a plan the grand title of a housing strategy for the country implies that it deals with the housing system as a whole. Instead, the document is just another

policy paper outlining potential subsidies to help a few, very few, of those in housing need” (Hulchanski, 2017).

Yet with the implementation of the National Housing Strategy Act, tides may be turning in Canada. Subsection 4 of this Act states, It is declared to be the housing policy of the Government of Canada to

- (a) recognize that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law;
- (b) recognize that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities;
- (c) support improved housing outcomes for the people of Canada; and
- (d) further the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (*National Housing Strategy Act*, 2019).

This is the first legislative document in Canadian history to recognize the right to adequate housing. The National Housing Strategy Act outlines accountability mechanisms, budgetary allotments and guiding judicial principles to protect the rights of those suffering from inadequate housing.

Yet, what was the threshold or external shock that Canada faced to finally implement the right to housing in its political framework? I see two possible thresholds that may have worked in tandem to reach the tipping point in Canada. The first is the fact that the homeless and poverty rate has continued to rise, due to the neo-liberalist agenda dominating political decisions. Or it could have been the fact that in January 2019 Toronto advocates declare homelessness a ‘State of Emergency’ (Miller, 2019). Even at a municipal level, the country felt the national implications of one of Canada’s largest cities suffering. The second threshold or external shock, through a political lens was the election of Justin Trudeau, who promised from the beginning that he would improve Canadian housing policy. Finally, Canada has found a politician who is willing to make radical change and recognizes the long history of Canada neglecting the right to housing. Through a combination of these factors, Canada hit its threshold and the effect was the implementation of right to housing legislation.

## Conclusion

While the National Housing Strategy Act provides both political and legal grounds to now protect those suffering from inadequate housing, it is too soon to tell the impact this policy will have moving forward. Especially considering it is only a piece of federal legislation and not a constitutionally embedded right, so subsequent governments can easily repeal this Act. That being said, Canadians can and should hold on to hope that with political and legal support, those suffering from inadequate housing may have a means of protecting themselves moving forward. It is safe to say, that with the enactment of the National Housing Strategy Act, those actors advocating in the social housing coalition are making their voices heard. It is fair to now question whether Canada is about to see another monumental shift in the dominant housing coalition. Has there been a monumental shift in deep core beliefs in actors within the Federal government? Will we start to see more resources dedicated to social housing? Only time will tell.

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