

Maytree's proposed Canada Housing Benefit System

Architecture recommendation

A national standard for housing benefits

- Federal, provincial, and territorial governments develop a national housing benefit standard.
- The standard sets general benefit parameters and eligibility requirements, guided by agreed upon principles. Flexibility can be negotiated.
- Housing benefits in each jurisdiction are consolidated to meet the standard.

Governments are equal partners

- Costs are shared among federal, provincial, and territorial governments.
- The federal government provides fixed plus per capita funding. Provincial/territorial contributions are based on how well their existing benefits meet the national standard.
- Governments also contribute in other ways, such as through stronger rent regulations.

Provinces and territories lead administration

- Keeping with the existing division of responsibilities, provinces and territories lead the assessment and delivery of housing benefits.
- Provinces and territories leverage their existing CRA agreements and social assistance systems for administration.

Design recommendation

Do what Manitoba does across Canada

- Housing benefits in each jurisdiction would meet the national standard, which largely mirrors Manitoba Rent Assist for the low-income renter population.
- The maximum benefit would be set at 80% of the median market rent (for the unit size needed) in the province's most populous region. Benefits pay the difference between this amount and 30% of a household's income.

Create two pathways into the system

- Private market renters access and receive benefits through the tax system.
- People who are unhoused or need immediate support access through social assistance systems.

Broad eligibility criteria

- Both streams have general eligibility criteria based on income, age, and residency.
- The benefit design focuses support on renters in the bottom two income quintiles.
- Proof of renter status would be provided by landlords following the approach used for the housing component of the Quebec Solidarity Tax Credit.