Finding Room
Options for a Canadian Rental Housing Strategy

Edited by J. David Hulchanski & Michael Shapcott
Foreword by Mayor David Miller, City of Toronto

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The twenty-seven chapters by two dozen authors in Finding Room all focus on solutions to the toughest challenge in Canada’s housing problem: how to house people with moderate and low incomes in a country where the market mechanism is the main provider and allocator of housing, and where the price structure for residential land is driven by the ownership market. Homeowners in Canada have, on average, double the income of renters.

Out of the mixture of strategies and instruments governments can deploy to meet housing policy objectives, there is no escaping the need for a more significant federal and provincial government role. But what should this role be?

This book provides:

- a resource for community leaders, policy makers, researchers, and students;
- a source of up-to-date information, critical analysis, and informed opinion on policy options;
- a short course on the economic and political context for affordable housing by leading researchers;
- a diversity of voices – from the business community to the non-profit sector to the Aboriginal community. It is the first Canadian book to focus solely on rental housing: how to house low-income households.

Over recent decades, the growing gap between rich and poor Canadians has increasingly manifested itself in the housing system. Despite great social need for housing, the households most in need lack the money to generate effective market demand.

Public policy decisions since the mid-1980s have exacerbated the problem and failed to respond to harmful trends. The most extreme manifestation of the housing and income inequity problem is homelessness. Homelessness is not only a housing problem, but it is always a housing problem.

This book is intended to inform the discussion of policy options for affordable rental housing. It is intended as a resource – a source of both information as well as analysis from a broad range of housing policy expertise.

Part I of the book sets the context by explaining the nature and scope of the problem and issues that an affordable housing policy must address.

In Part II, specific housing needs and policy options are presented by individuals from different backgrounds, representing different organizations.

Part III presents specific policy and program advice, for Canada as a whole, and for Canada’s largest metropolitan area.

All the chapters, to varying degrees, help answer the main question: how to house people with moderate and low incomes in a country where the mar-
The market mechanism is the main provider and allocator of housing.

The following key sub-questions are also addressed throughout the book:

- How should new housing and services be structured to make sure that they are cost-effective and accountable, and provide the best quality of service?
- What role can various sectors (non-profit, volunteer, co-operative, government, for-profit) perform in a comprehensive national housing strategy?
- What types of innovative housing solutions are available for the “affordable” part of the rental housing sector?

The individuals and organizations invited to contribute to this book have been deeply engaged in policy work on issues related to affordable housing. Their contributions to this book reveal a growing consensus about certain policy responses, as well as providing a better framing of the debate over some of the remaining controversial policy choices.

**Keywords:** rental housing; affordable housing; homelessness, social housing; public policy, inequality

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