

# Does Housing First policy seek to fulfil the right to housing? The case of Alberta, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

Housing First (HF) operates on the premise that permanent housing is the first need of people experiencing chronic homelessness. It understands housing as a resource to which everyone is entitled, not a privilege that must be earned. In these respects, HF is consistent with housing as a human right. However, little is known about if or how HF policy seeks to fulfil this right. To address this gap, we conducted keyword and content analyses of HF policy in Alberta, Canada. Direct references to the right to housing were few in number and lacking in detail and justification. Terms related to rights were also seldom referenced, although the presence and absence of ‘conditions’ within HF were discussed. Plans to end homelessness focused on affordability, but failed to consider other necessary components of the right to housing. Greater engagement with international human rights law would provide HF policy with a normative foundation for addressing homelessness as a severe breach of the right to housing.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, Canada has experienced a sustained homelessness crisis. The phenomenon of large numbers of Canadians living on the streets and in emergency shelters – including on a chronic (long-term) basis – is both an acute policy problem and ‘a human rights calamity’ (Young, 2015, p. 47). Public policy responses to this crisis have come to centre on a Housing First (HF) approach, which prioritizes rehousing chronically homeless people and supporting them to remain housed (Goering *et al.*, 2014). The adoption of HF by all levels of government in Canada reflects and contributes to the international prominence of HF in homelessness policy and program planning (Johnson, 2012). In Alberta, where this research was conducted, HF has been central to responses to homelessness since 2008, with over 15,000 individuals receiving support from HF programs by late 2017 (Alberta, 2017).

HF has largely supplanted the Linear Residential Treatment (LRT) model in Canada, which requires homeless people to progress through a series of residential settings towards independent living, dependent on compliance with

medical treatment, psychiatric stability and abstinence from drugs and alcohol (Johnsen & Teixeira, 2012). Under LRT, clients' behaviour and sobriety are assessed to determine their 'readiness' to progress up a series of steps on the pathway out of homelessness (Stewart, 2019). HF removes these conditions and offers direct access to permanent housing in the community. In this respect, it reflects an underlying view that housing is something to which homeless people are entitled, rather than a 'privilege' they must earn (Greenwood *et al.*, 2013).

HF is *prima facie* consistent with the premise that everyone has a moral claim to housing, including society's most 'marginalized, disempowered, precariously situated and vulnerable' (Heffernan *et al.*, 2015, p. 41). Moreover, it provides housing with few conditions: clients must typically agree to sign a regular lease, accept visits from support workers, and make contributions towards rent (Goering *et al.*, 2011; Tsemberis, 2010). As a 'housing-led' model, rather than a 'housing-ready' approach such as LRT, HF complies with the notion that housing is a necessary foundation (or prerequisite) for addressing other challenges in the lives of people exiting homelessness (Stewart, 2019). In all of these respects, HF potentially realizes the right to housing.

The objective of this research is to evaluate whether HF policy in Alberta, Canada seeks to fulfil the right to housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness. The term 'fulfil' is derived from international human rights law, where it refers to the obligation of states to adopt measures to ensure that a right can be realized. With respect to the right to housing, 'fulfilment' requires adopting policies that address housing need, prevent and respond to homelessness, and ensure the adequacy of housing (OHCHR, 2009).

We have three primary motivations for identifying and categorizing rights language in HF policy. First, we seek to put to the test the claim that HF is *based upon* the principle of housing is a human right. As explained below, this claim is frequently made, but seldom subject to serious scrutiny. Second, we understand rights language in HF policy as politically consequential, because it signals a specific approach to governance of homelessness. At minimum, it frames homelessness as a rights issue demanding a collective response (Young, 2015). More generally, rights provide a powerful vocabulary for articulating harms and demanding redress (Hohmann, 2013). Third, we understand domestic policy as critical to states meeting their international human rights commitments. Under international law, ensuring universal access to adequate housing is a fundamental duty of the state. To meet this duty, governments must adopt policies that enable the right to be *fulfilled* as a matter of practice (Fitzpatrick & Pleace, 2012; Stewart, 2019).

Canada has historically been a challenging terrain for housing rights. Until recently, no statutory rights to housing existed, and courts were 'reluctant to impose positive obligations on governments to adopt reasonable measures to ensure access to adequate housing' (Jackman & Porter, 2014, p. 5). Indeed, courts repeatedly dismissed claims that Canadians' constitutional rights to life and equality require public policies that ensure basic material needs are met (Young, 2015). This situation changed in November 2017 with the launch of *Canada's National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home*, which adopts 'a rights-based approach to housing [that] prioritizes the most vulnerable Canadians' (Canada, 2017, p. 4). Informed by 'core principles of inclusion, accountability, participation and non-discrimination' (Canada, 2017, p. 2), it commits the federal government to 'progressively implement[ing] the right of every Canadian to access adequate housing' (p. 8). Specific goals include halving chronic homelessness in 10 years and increasing the social housing stock by 20%; however, the strategy falls short of creating a justiciable individual right to housing.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. First, we briefly review three areas of relevant literature in order to outline key concepts informing our research. Second, we describe our dataset – 81 policy documents guiding implementation of HF in Alberta – and methods of analysis. Third, we present the results of our evaluation of HF policy in Alberta from a rights-based perspective. Fourth, we discuss the degree to which this policy engages with the concept of the right to housing, including the frequency and quality of this engagement, and its level of compliance with international law. We conclude by identifying two key findings, and reflecting on the potential of HF to fulfil the right to housing for people experiencing homelessness.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Housing First

HF emerged in the 1990s as a radical alternative to the status quo of managing homelessness through a combination of emergency shelters and the staged and contingent re-housing process offered by LRT. Especially

influential was the Pathways to Housing model developed by Sam Tsemberis in New York City in 1992. It re-housed chronically homeless clients in independent market apartments, coupled with voluntary support services (Tsemberis, 2010). Early studies of Pathways to Housing generated quantitative evidence of its effectiveness in improving clients' housing stability and reducing their use of public services (Evans *et al.*, 2016). Such findings were central to the widespread uptake of HF within and beyond North America, even as there was increasing proliferation of HF models and 'drift' away from the Pathways approach (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019; Baker & Evans, 2016).

A core characteristic of HF is that it targets the chronically homelessness – people experiencing long and/or repeated episodes of homelessness, often combined with complex health needs (Baker & Evans, 2016). This focus follows from the high public costs of chronic homelessness, in terms of shelter stays, hospitalizations and social service use – 'costs [that] keep people alive but leave them on city streets' (Hennigan, 2017, p. 1423). The prospect of permanent re-housing with supports is generally offered *only* to this subset of the homeless population; the non-chronic majority are deemed capable of navigating more traditional forms of support (Baker & Evans, 2016). Implicit in this description of HF is a focus on *responding* to chronic homelessness, rather than on *preventing* it from occurring, which circumscribes the ability of HF to achieve the policy goal of 'ending' this form of homelessness altogether (Anderson- Baron & Collins, 2019).

As a response to chronic homelessness, HF is often characterized as a principled approach (Gaetz *et al.*, 2013; Goering *et al.*, 2014). Anderson-Baron and Collins (2019) found a lack of consistency in how HF principles are articulated, but identified four recurring ideas: (1) *Consumer choice* in housing and service engagement; (2) A *recovery orientation* with support for client goals and a harm reduction approach; (3) *Community integration* to reduce clients' social isolation and stigmatization; and (4) *Separation of housing and services*, so that clients are not required to pursue treatment once housed, but may choose to do so. In combination, these principles indicate a focus on client agency, needs and wellbeing that is consistent with a rights-based approach to housing.

The alignment of HF with the right to housing is often alluded to in the literature. Sam Tsemberis argued that HF was founded on a belief that housing is a basic human right rather than something that must be earned through undertaking treatment or achieving sobriety (Tsemberis, 2010). This belief also meant that HF eschewed moral judgements about who is deserving of housing (Greenwood *et al.*, 2013). These points are frequently cited in academic accounts of HF, and the phrase 'housing is a basic human right' repeatedly appears in descriptions of its ethos or philosophy. However, these claims are seldom elaborated upon or interrogated, with rare exceptions.

Several studies have identified a tension between a rights-based response to homelessness and the cost-savings logic on which HF is most often promoted; the former is grounded in enduring moral values, whereas the latter is dependent on conditional forms of calculation (Baker & Evans, 2016; Stanhope & Dunn, 2011). Hennigan (2017) takes HF's claims to fulfilling the right to housing seriously, but cautions that it may be operationalized in a way that subjects clients to new forms of discipline and paternalistic case management. This interpretation speaks to a critique of rights as tools of liberal governance, deployed to maintain social order and authority in lieu of more overtly coercive means (Lippert & Walby, 2016; Sokhi-Bulley, 2011). From this perspective, the right to housing offered by HF renders the chronically homeless population more governable, by reintegrating them into the norms and values of a market-driven housing system. In this way, it may advance social order and regulate behaviour while simultaneously normalizing the idea of housing as a right, which can be claimed in and through civil society (see Lippert & Walby, 2016).

## 2.2. Economic, social and cultural rights

Human rights protect the equality and autonomy of all human beings. Since 1945, there has been growing recognition that such protection depends not only on classical liberties (e.g. freedom of speech and assembly) but also on the material conditions of existence. This realization gave rise to Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights, which seek to ensure an adequate standard of living for all people. The underlying purpose of the ESC rights paradigm is to secure the preconditions for individual dignity and participation in society (Hohmann, 2013). Its potential lies in the ability to advance 'human capability, and the substantive freedom to function and achieve goals' (Williams, 2010, p. 87). ESC rights are strongly embedded in international law, most notably via the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). As Williams explains: 'Each of these documents has been adopted, ratified or signed by nearly all States, and it is universal acceptance of their terms that makes them compelling, unique and legally enforceable' (2010, p. 57).

ESC rights impose a range of duties on State parties: they must take immediate actions to protect rights (e.g., by prohibiting discrimination) as well as incremental steps to ensure their fulfilment (OHCHR, 2008). Incremental actions are appropriate (and necessary) where rights depend upon scarce resources, as is the case with access to adequate housing. The ICESCR recognizes ‘that the realization of these rights can be hampered by a lack of resources and can be achieved only over a period of time’ (OHCHR, 2008, p. 13). Nevertheless, States must commit the maximum of their available resources to realizing these rights and undertake meaningful progressive steps to ‘address broader structural patterns of disadvantage and exclusion’ (Porter, 2014, p. 10).

The most direct protection for the right to housing in international law is Article 11 of the ICESCR – a treaty to which Canada acceded in 1976. It articulates the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing. A subsequent interpretation prepared by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1991 – *General Comment No. 4* – provides a substantive description of the entitlements and obligations associated with the right to housing. It specifically identifies homelessness as a breach of the right and emphasizes that ‘housing should be ensured to all persons irrespective of income or access to economic resources’ (Para 7). It also sets out seven essential components of the right to housing: (i) security of tenure (protection against arbitrary eviction); (ii) availability of services and materials (drinking water, cooking, heating, lighting, etc.); (iii) affordability (housing costs must not compromise other basic needs); (iv) habitability (physical safety of the dwelling and its occupants); (v) accessibility (for persons with disability or illness); (vi) location (proximity to employment, health care, schooling, etc.); and (vii) cultural adequacy (supportive of diverse cultural needs). Viewed as a whole, *General Comment No. 4* provides an international standard for assessing housing policy, and a common reference point for housing rights analysis (Hohmann, 2013).

Of particular note is the focus on affordability. Unlike many other rights, including ESC rights to education and health care, the right to housing does not provide an entitlement that can be accessed for free, or for only a nominal charge. As Bengtsson (2001) explains: ‘Since housing is always provided through markets, analogies with other welfare sectors, where state allocation is the main mechanism of distribution, are often misleading’ (p. 257). The right to housing does not necessitate a shift away from market-based provision; rather, it requires states to adopt policies that provide correctives to the market, including to ensure affordability (Bengtsson, 2001). HF can be understood as one such corrective: it seeks to reintegrate homeless people into the housing market through subsidized leases on private apartments (Hennigan, 2017). Subsidies work to ensure that housing remains affordable for HF clients, by limiting their rent payments to a portion of their incomes – commonly 30% (Canada, 2014; Tsemberis, 2010). As Hennigan (2017) notes, these arrangements speak to the ambivalent politics of HF, encompassing both a neoliberal commitment to the market and a progressive commitment to the provision of affordable housing without tests of deservingness.

### 2.3. Homelessness and the right to housing

Adequate housing is critical to meeting fundamental human needs – not only shelter, but also privacy, autonomy and health (Kenna, 2005). Indeed, the right to housing can be understood as a ‘bedrock’ for the realization of other human rights (King, 2003, p. 666). To be homeless is to lack a necessary resource for personhood. The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing characterizes homelessness as ‘perhaps the most visible and most severe symptom of the lack of respect for the right to adequate housing’ (Kothari *et al.*, 2006, p. 51). The severity of this rights infringement lies in the consequences that follow from being deprived of housing – including economic exclusion, social stigmatization and severe risks to health (Heffernan *et al.*, 2015). Put another way, the experience of homelessness ‘is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing’ (Gaetz *et al.*, 2012, p. 1).

A rights-based approach is not necessarily a panacea for homelessness. First, evidence that the right to housing can be translated into policies and programs that make a meaningful difference is limited (Hohmann, 2013). Second, a focus on rights can lock campaigns for housing reform into domestic legal systems that are hostile to ESC rights (Heffernan *et al.*, 2015). Third, even where a right to housing is recognized and legislated, fulfilment requires engagement with private housing markets often characterized by unaffordability and insecurity (Verstraete & Moris, 2019). Such markets both contribute to homelessness, and complicate efforts to respond (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019). Finally, despite enthusiasm for housing rights among many homeless advocacy organizations, what is meant by a rights-based response can remain vague (Fitzpatrick & Pleace, 2012). Here, attention to *General Comment No. 4*

is critical, as it offers ‘clarity as to the intent, meaning and content’ of the right, and provides an authoritative basis for its implementation (OHCHR, 1996, p. 17).

Insights into the utility and limitations of rights-based responses to homelessness can be gained from contexts where legal duties to provide the homeless with settled accommodation exist – specifically, Scotland, the rest of the UK, and France. Scotland has been lauded for extending an enforceable right to housing to house *all* persons experiencing homelessness (Stewart, 2019). Importantly, this duty can only be discharged by local authorities through the provision of a permanent tenancy. However, Stewart (2019) reports that service providers in Scotland continue to impose conditions related to housing readiness. The duty to provide settled accommodation is recognized, but is not necessarily filled immediately: ‘ample discretion remains to determine when and how this will be achieved’ (Stewart, 2019, p. 1134). In the rest of the UK, the statutory duty of local authorities is limited to rehousing priority groups (households with children, pregnant women, vulnerable adults) and as such excludes most single homeless people. This system has struggled with over-reliance on temporary housing, but is generally effective in improving eligible groups’ housing status and quality of life (Fitzpatrick & Pleace, 2012).

In France, an enforceable right to adequate housing was formalized in 2007 and can be claimed from Departments (sub-regional public authorities). Lévy-Vroelant (2015) problematizes reliance on Departments to find solutions, as many lack access to a sufficient stock of affordable housing, due in part to disinvestment at the national level. The right is also conditional, with immigration and income requirements, as well as considerable discretion in determining who will be prioritized. Critically, Lévy-Vroelant finds that an approach based on ‘individual rights consolidation for targeted rights-holders’ cannot address widespread homelessness and housing deprivation without systematic measures to address ‘[a] housing supply [that] has just become too expensive and too selective’ (2015, p. 108).

### 3. Methodology

This research analyzes Housing First policy in Alberta through a right to housing lens. We focus on Alberta as an exemplary case in which HF policy is particularly well-developed. It was the earliest adopter of HF in Canada, via 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness (10YPs): Calgary created the first municipal 10YP in 2007, and Alberta released the first provincial 10YP in 2008. In addition, by 2014, all seven urban centres in Alberta had adopted HF. In the same year, the federal government released a *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* anchored in HF, and since that time ‘homelessness service delivery in Alberta’s cities [has] occur[ed] in a context where all three levels of government formally endorse and fund HF’ (Anderson-Baron and Collins, 2019, pp. 1287–1288). This context has been stable over recent years, reflecting a strong political consensus around HF: provincial and municipal 10YPs have remained in place through several electoral cycles, while the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* was operative for five years (2014–19), until replaced by a new (but still HF-based) national strategy.

We focus on policy documents as they communicate governments’ assumptions, normative beliefs and logics (Hyshka *et al.*, 2017). They frame social problems and preferred solutions in particular ways, and in so doing render them visible and comprehensible. At the same time, framing necessarily *constrains* how problems and solutions are understood (Bacchi, 2009). Just as policy proceeds through problematization, analysis can problematize and interrogate policy discourse, and the concepts, categories, distinctions and subject positions it articulates (Goodwin, 2011). In this study, we evaluate HF policy in Alberta against criteria anchored in international understandings of housing as a fundamental and universal human right.

#### 3.1. Data collection

In Canada, responsibility for issues of housing and homelessness is shared across all three levels of government. In practice, federal and provincial/territorial governments set policy directions and create funding streams (often, but not always, through bilateral partnerships). Responsibility for most aspects of program design and delivery is devolved to ‘communities’, especially urban municipalities (Canada, 2014, 2017). The priorities of higher orders of government are, in principle, binding on lower orders of government (so, e.g., municipal policies should be consistent with both provincial and federal plans).

Given this shared jurisdiction, developing a comprehensive understanding of HF policy in any context in Canada requires attentiveness to municipal, provincial, and federal documents. For this study, we identified all HF policy documents applicable to Alberta from the time HF was first adopted by Calgary in 2007, until the end of August 2016. At the municipal level, we collected documents produced by the seven cities that have adopted HF: Calgary,

Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (which includes the urban area of Fort McMurray). These included 10YPs, plan updates and progress reports. At the provincial level, we identified the Government of Alberta’s 10YP and Plan to End Youth Homelessness, and one progress report. With regards to federal policy, we compiled a document from the official website of the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* (Canada, 2014). This was not a single consolidated page, but rather a network of links (several of which were broken). We categorized the federal strategy as a plan, as it establishes a policy framework and funding mechanisms, although it is not a 10YP in the sense of outlining a specific pathway to ending homelessness (something it devolved to communities). In total, 81 documents were identified and analyzed, including 77 from municipalities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Study dataset – number and type of documents, by jurisdiction.

	Plans	Progress Reports	Other
Municipal	11	36	30
Provincial	2	1	0
Federal	1	0	0

### 3.2. Data analysis

#### 3.2.1. Keyword analysis

The first phase of our analysis sought to identify and categorize rights language within the dataset. To achieve this, we conducted a keyword analysis on the main text of all documents (excluding tables of contents, headers, images, appendices, etc.). Keyword analysis is well-suited to identifying patterns within large bodies of text in an efficient and potentially replicable manner, and can be a powerful tool for categorizing words and phrases within semantic fields (Seale *et al.*, 2006).

First, we searched for the word ‘right’ itself; all instances potentially relevant to understanding policy were retained for analysis – only entirely unrelated uses (e.g. copyright, right-hand side) were omitted. Following a keyword- in-context approach, we next sought to categorize each use of the word according to its intended meaning. An initial inductive analysis identified three distinct ways in the term was used: ‘right’ as in correct; ‘right’ as in entitlement; and ‘right’ as in immediacy. Categorization of this data was undertaken by both authors in a collaborative, iterative process.

Second, following the qualitative conception of ‘keyword’ identified by Seale *et al.* (2006), we identified other terms that were relevant within the system of ideas under investigation. Here, we looked beyond common synonyms for ‘right’ to encompass a broader set of terms relevant to our inquiry. From the literature on international human rights, we identified two clusters of keywords, relating to *entitlement* (concerning the legitimate claims of individuals, and the duties these claims create) and *morality* (relating to what is ethical and proper). From the literature on HF, we identified a third cluster, centred on *conditions*. A focus on conditions is critical for understanding who HF policy in Alberta seeks to house, and subject to what expectations and eligibility criteria. Moreover, as noted above, HF is distinguished from previous approaches to homelessness by the claim it does *not* impose strenuous requirements on clients. As shown in Table 2, a total of 14 keywords was identified across these three clusters.

Table 2. Rights-related terms included in keyword search.

Category	Key term (word searched)
Entitlement	<i>Duty</i> (Dut*)
	<i>Entitlement</i> (Entitle*)
	<i>Free</i> (Free)
	<i>Liberty</i> (Libert*)
	<i>Just</i> (Just)
Moral	<i>Fair</i> (Fair)
	<i>Moral</i> (Moral)
	<i>Proper</i> (Proper)
	<i>Wrong</i> (Wrong) [Antonym]
	<i>Ethical</i> (Ethic*)
Conditions	<i>Condition</i> (Condition)
	<i>Eligible</i> (Eligib*)
	<i>Expectation</i> (Expect*)
	<i>Requirement</i> (Requir*)

Again, only relevant uses of these keywords were retained for analysis. For example, ‘duty’ was excluded when referring to purely administrative responsibilities, as was ‘just’ when used as an adverb (e.g. ‘just like that’). ‘Free’ was omitted when it referred not to freedom but to something being ‘free of cost’, and ‘fair’ was excluded in the context of accounting (e.g. ‘fair market value’). When searching for words referring to the presence (or absence) of conditions placed on access to housing, we excluded references to the eligibility of programs to receive funding, to administrative ‘terms and conditions’, and to rules around accessing emergency shelters (as this research focuses on the right to *housing*).

### 3.2.2. Content analysis

This second phase of our analysis sought to identify whether Plans to End Homelessness in Alberta articulate a commitment to fulfilling the right to housing – with or without direct use of rights-related language. To do so, we assessed eight operative plans (seven municipal and one provincial) against the components of the right to housing set out in *General Comment No. 4*. We focus on plans because they are overarching guides for responses to homelessness, and have associated resourcing, in a way that other types of policy document do not.

We followed the deductive content analysis approach set out by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), employing the components of General Comment No. 4 as a structured matrix, and identifying corresponding elements within each plan – that is, points which acknowledged and/or were consistent with the components. This approach enabled us to characterize the level of ‘fit’ between the plans and General Comment No. 4 – both discursively, and by way of a scale identifying three types of response: 0 – did not address the component; 1 – acknowledged the component, but made no substantive commitment; 2 – articulated specific actions to address the component (e.g. in terms of resource allocation and/or programmatic responses).

One component – availability of services – was ultimately excluded from the evaluation of the municipal plans, as it was deemed not relevant in the urban context. This is because access to basic services such as electricity, water, and sewage is essentially universal in cities. The component was retained for assessing the provincial plan, as Alberta includes rural and remote communities (including First Nation reserves) where some essential services are not available.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Keyword analysis – ‘right’

The word ‘right’ appeared 184 times across 81 documents. Table 3 shows the breakdown of these references, organized into three primary categories and across jurisdiction types. These categories are examined in further detail below.

Table 3. Instances of the word ‘right’, by category and jurisdiction.

	Municipal	Provincial	Federal	Total
Number of Documents	77	3	1	81
Entitlement	83	2	4	89
Correct	77	7	2	86
Immediacy	8	1	0	9
Total	168	10	6	184

#### 4.1.1. Entitlement

The word ‘right’ was used to refer to entitlements 89 times: an average of just over one reference per document. These references were more prevalent in plans (79 references) than in progress reports or other documents (10 references). Table 4 shows the subcategories of entitlements that were acknowledged.

Table 4. Instances of ‘right’ as entitlement, by subcategory and government.

	Calgary	Edmon- ton	Grande Prairie	Leth- bridge	Medicine Hat	Red Deer	Wood Buf- falo	Alberta	Canada	Total
Number of Docs	33	11	3	6	10	8	6	3	1	81
Human rights – Housing	6	3	3	6	2	0	10	0	0	30
Human rights – Other	13	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	19
Tenant	1	0	2	1	4	2	0	0	3	13
Client	6	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	10
Other	14	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	17
Total	40	3	8	9	7	4	12	2	4	89

The human right to housing was the most frequently referenced entitlement, with 30 occurrences – albeit only in municipal documents. Many were direct but simple acknowledgements, such as ‘housing is a basic human right’ (Lethbridge, 2013, p. 9) and ‘housing [is] a right, not a privilege’ (Medicine Hat, 2011, p. 3). In some cases, the right was linked to broader social objectives: e.g., ‘whatever the situation, housing is a basic right and a pillar in our city’s goal of ending poverty’ (Edmonton, 2015, p. 5). It was also referred to in the context of HF principles: e.g., ‘rather than requiring someone to prove their worthiness for housing, such as being sober, or getting job, etc., HF considers access to housing a basic human right’ (Calgary, 2015, p. 43); ‘the principle of “HF” [is] that every person has the right to a safe, secure home’ (Edmonton, 2012, p. 3).

Wood Buffalo made the most direct case for the human right to housing. Its plan stressed that ‘housing is viewed as a right of everyone within society and not a reward for clinical or programmatic success’ and ‘we believe acknowledging housing as a human rights issue improves how homeless people are viewed and treated’ (2010, p. 5). Moreover, it acknowledged that understanding housing and homelessness in this way required ‘a critical shift in thinking away from a perspective of homelessness as an individual issue to one that frames it as a societal one and a threat to basic human rights’ (Wood Buffalo, 2010, p. 5).

On 19 occasions, human rights were mentioned without specific reference to housing. These included statements recognizing the rights of vulnerable citizens and persons with disabilities. Rights associated with tenancy were acknowledged 13 times. These emphasized that HF clients receive permanent housing in the community, under the same legal framework as other renters. To the extent that the federal strategy acknowledged rights at all, it focused on



tenancy: e.g., ‘clients housed have rights consistent with applicable landlord and tenant acts and regulations’ (Canada, 2014). It is important to note that these are narrow and specific rights, related to legal occupation of a rented dwelling. Moreover, they were paired with responsibilities: e.g. ‘clarity and acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of both parties as defined by the Landlord Tenant Act is essential to protect the rights of the tenant and the land- lord’ (Lethbridge, 2009, p. 34).

The rights of clients *within* HF programs were mentioned 10 times, typically in ways that restated HF principles. For example, the following statement appeared twice: ‘Participants have the right to choose, modify, or refuse services and supports at any time, except regular face-to-face visit with staff’ (Medicine Hat, 2014, p. 5; Red Deer, 2014, p. 5). Other documents made brief references to ‘[the] client’s right to self-determination’ (Grand Prairie, 2014, p. 19) or simply to ‘client rights and satisfaction’ (Calgary, 2012a, p. 7). *Other* references acknowledged the statutory rights of young people, and Aboriginal rights under federal law: e.g.: ‘It is important for any organization working with the Aboriginal population to fully understand the rights inherent to different Aboriginal populations, as this may limit or expand specific supports and assistance available’ (Calgary, 2012b, p. 58).

#### 4.1.2. Correct

The keyword search also revealed uses of the word ‘right’ to refer to something being correct. Here, we distinguished between references to an action that is correct for *moral* reasons, which suggests an obligation or duty in line with a rights-based approach, and one that is correct because it is *appropriate*, in the more pragmatic sense of being effective, efficient and/or timely. As Table 5 illustrates, references to appropriateness far outnumbered moral claims.

Table 5. Instances of ‘right’ as correct, by subcategory and government.

	Calgary	Edmonton	Grande Prairie	Lethbridge	Medicine Hat	Red Deer	Wood Buffalo	Alberta	Canada	Total
Number of documents	33	11	3	6	10	8	6	3	1	81
Appropriate	32	5	0	6	15	3	6	3	2	72
Moral	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	14
Total	35	9	0	6	15	3	9	7	2	86

‘Right’ as an appropriate course of action most often referenced the provision of suitable housing and support services, e.g.: ‘Having access to the right staff and the right mix of housing is critical’ (Calgary, 2015, p. 6); ‘the HF approach ... ensure[s] that persons who are chronically and episodically homeless receive the supports they need at the right moment and by the appropriate service’ (Canada, 2014). There were also several references to ensuring services were appropriate for specific subpopulations: ‘youth with complex needs must be matched appropriately with the right level and intensity of care’ and “‘every door is the right door,’ is the philosophy behind the wraparound services [for] youth’ (Alberta, 2013, pp. 24, 23).

References to a moral obligation were considerably rarer. Wood Buffalo included this concept in the title of its 10YP (*Heading Home: The Right Thing to Do*) because: ‘Socially, morally and ethically, it is the obligation of this community to do something, to do the right thing’ (Wood Buffalo, 2010, p. 5). Calgary made a very similar claim: ‘ending homelessness is the right thing to do by moral and ethical standards; it is a vision we continue to strive for’ (Calgary, 2015, p. 1). It is notable that this approach was only sketched in basic terms, including in the Alberta 10YP, which stated: ‘it is simply the right thing to do’ (Alberta, 2008, p. 44).

In six of 14 instances, references to moral obligation were paired with the economic argument that HF contributes to cost containment. For example: ‘helping people experiencing homelessness is ethically “the right thing to do,” but research also proves in many cases it costs less ... compared with them using short-term and/or ongoing emergency and other institutional services’ (Calgary, 2015, p. 8); “‘We share a common belief that ending homelessness is the right thing to do and will result in social and economic benefits for Edmonton” (Edmonton, 2009, p. 60). In Edmonton’s policies, *every* reference to moral obligation was coupled with reference to economic benefit or fiscal responsibility.

### 4.1.3. Immediacy

‘Right’ was used to refer to immediacy just nine times in the dataset. These included six references to status quo conditions, such as ‘our thinking right now’ (Calgary, 2013, pp. 3, 4) and ‘housing options for people who are home- less right now’ (Red Deer, 2014, p. 8). More relevant from a rights-based perspective were two references to urgency in addressing homelessness – ‘help those people find homes, right away’ and ‘there [is] need to right away seize upon proven initiatives to end homelessness’ (Edmonton, 2009, pp. 49, 59) – and one reference to client needs: ‘Harm reduction ... meets individuals where they are right now’ (Calgary, 2012b, p. 30).

## 4.2. Keyword analysis – related terms

As outlined above (see Table 2), we also searched for 14 related keywords, organized into three clusters. Five words relating to the concept of right as *entitlement* were searched for. No relevant uses of two terms (liberty and just) were found. ‘Duty’ appeared only twice, in the term ‘civic duty’, used to suggest a moral rather than legal obligation, and these were coded as a ‘moral’ reference. ‘Free’ also appeared only twice, in the form of a repeated recognition of the right of young people experiencing homelessness to ‘Live free from fear of abuse and violence’ (Alberta, 2013, pp. 8, 15). The term ‘entitlement’ was used five times, with three references to the legal entitlements of young people experiencing homelessness, and two mentions of more general entitlements to social assistance income.

Five words relating right as *moral* were searched for: ‘proper’ and ‘wrong’ did not appear, while ‘moral’ appeared 12 times, ‘ethical’ three times, and ‘fair’ twice. Homelessness was occasionally presented as a ‘moral problem’ or ‘moral issue’, and responding to it was framed as a moral and/or ethical ‘obligation’. Several mentions of this concept were overtly humanitarian – e.g. ‘the moral cost of allowing our fellow citizens to suffer is simply too much to bear’ (Calgary, 2009, p. 5) – while others linked moral imperatives to financial concerns: ‘homelessness ... [is] a moral and social catastrophe with serious economic implications: ... the cumulative economic cost could be more than \$9 billion in the next 10 years’ (Calgary, 2008, p. 3). There were also two identical uses of ‘civic duty’ to refer to moral obligation, paired with an economic logic: ‘Taking action to end homelessness isn’t just about civic duty; it’s about good business strategy’ (Edmonton, 2009, p. 55; Grande Prairie, 2009, p. 44). The term ‘fair’ was mentioned twice, in relation to the need for Calgary’s HF system planner to employ ‘fair processes’ (Calgary, 2013, p. 13).

We also searched for four words relating to the presence or absence of *conditions* for accessing to housing: conditions, eligible, expectation and requirement. Collectively, these terms were moderately prominent in the dataset, with 134 references overall. As shown in Table 6, we identified 65 references to the relative absence of conditions in HF compared to LRT. Calgary placed particular emphasis on unconditionality, consistent with a rights-based approach – e.g.: HF prompted a key shift in service design: whereas people experiencing homelessness were expected to address the issues leading to their homelessness, such as mental health issues or addictions, before being housed, with HF, the priority is to quickly move people experiencing homelessness into appropriate housing aligned with supports as needed, where they are better able to work on the issues contributing to their homelessness (Calgary, 2015, p. 72).

Table 6. References to conditions, by category and government.

	Calgary	Edmonton	Grande Prairie	Lethbridge	Medicine Hat	Red Deer	Wood Buffalo	Alberta	Canada	Total
Number of docs	33	11	3	6	10	8	6	3	1	81
Absence of conditions	26	2	6	5	5	9	8	2	2	65
Presence of conditions	12	3	10	18	4	1	1	16	4	69
Conditions: HF client eligibility	9	3	9	14	3	0	0	1	1	40
Conditions: HF program requirements	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	5
Conditions: Other services & supports	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	13	0	19
Conditions: Housing providers	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	5

We also identified 69 references to the presence of conditions, which fell into four categories. The largest category concerned eligibility for *becoming* a HF client (i.e. being accepted into a program), or for receiving HF specific supports *after* intake, such as rent subsidies. Of the 40 references to eligibility, very few specified actual criteria. Lethbridge, for example, referred to eligibility 14 times – most often in describing a centralized intake system used to screen clients – but only identified one reason for ineligibility: ‘individuals do not qualify for Housing First ... due to fact that they are relocating to Lethbridge’ (Lethbridge, 2013, p. 16). No explanation of this criterion was provided. Calgary repeatedly identified a need to develop and refine its intake and assessment tool, including through ‘formalized eligibility criteria to support streamlined referral and matching of clients to services’ (Calgary, 2011, p. 12). It did not elaborate on these criteria, despite an acknowledgement that they should be ‘transparent and equitable’ (Calgary, 2015, p. 70). Grande Prairie noted ‘misconceptions’ and widespread misunderstanding about who was eligible for HF services (Grande Prairie, 2014, p. 12), but did not directly address these issues. It did, however, provide specific information on the income levels below which households qualify for rent subsidies.

The second largest category of conditions concerned expectations and requirements for accessing services and supports *other* than HF, especially provincial income support. Alberta acknowledged that requirements for photo ID and/or proof of residence were often a barrier for homeless people seeking to access provincial support. It also referenced other eligibility criteria that can impede access to services, e.g. ‘Too often an Albertan who is in need of assistance faces a maze of qualifying thresholds and requirements which can be incompatible, result in claw-backs, or create gaps into which the person falls’ (Alberta, 2008, pp. 35, 24).

The third and fourth categories concerned expectations and requirements placed on clients in HF programs. There were five references to standard HF conditions such as meeting with caseworkers and paying rent: e.g., ‘the program requires that clients pay 30 percent of their income for rent and participate in two home visits by their case manager each month’ (Calgary, 2008, p. 76); ‘assistance is conditional with the requirement of a caseworker’ (Grande Prairie, 2009, p. 23). There were also five references to conditions that departed from HF norms. These included three mentions of programs that had expectations of sobriety or treatment compliance, although in all instances it was noted that other HF providers did not impose these conditions. There were also two references to time-limits within HF programs.

### 4.3. Content analysis

We assessed the eight formal plans to end homelessness in Alberta against the components of the right to housing set out in *General Comment No. 4*, and generated scores (between 0 and 2) to measure levels of acknowledgement and consistency. As shown in Table 7, all plans considered the issue of *affordability* in a substantive manner, and this component received the highest possible total score of 16. The plans acknowledged the importance of rent subsidies and the necessity of affordable housing in both responding to and preventing homelessness. Some included detailed goals around the supply of affordable housing. For example, Lethbridge’s (2009) plan included the goal of building 1000 new affordable housing units by 2014, and identified specific strategies to accomplish this, including ‘influenc[ing] the development of the Municipal Development Plan’ and ‘...work[ing] with developers and the city to commence approved projects’ (p. 32).

Right to housing component	Component scores (0–2) by jurisdiction								
	Calgary	Edmonton	Grande Prairie	Lethbridge	Medicine Hat	Red Deer	Wood Buffalo	Alberta	Total
(a) Legal security of tenure	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	5
(b) Availability of services, etc.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
(c) Affordability	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
(d) Habitability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(e) Accessibility	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	6
(f) Location	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(g) Cultural adequacy	2*	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Total	6	5	5	4	5	3	5	4	37

\* Calgary addressed Aboriginal homelessness in a separate plan, which was included for the purpose of calculating this score.

The second-most considered component was *cultural adequacy*. All of the plans acknowledged and problematized the over-representation of Aboriginal peoples and recent migrants in local homeless populations. They also recognized the unique cultural needs of these vulnerable groups, and the need to tailor services and supports accordingly. Here, the level of detail varied widely: from Lethbridge (2015) listing two bullet-point action items (employing Aboriginal managers; engaging elders in designing housing for Indigenous peoples), to Medicine Hat (2014, p. 39) undertaking to adopt a ‘priority populations lens to meet the needs of youth, women, families, seniors and Aboriginal people’, to Edmonton (2009, pp. 36–37) setting out specific strategies for responding to diverse needs, such as ‘develop[ing] the capacity of an Aboriginal agency or agencies to deliver Aboriginal specific services in support of the Housing First program’.

The third most-discussed component was *accessibility*, predominantly in reference to those with physical disabilities and seniors with mobility impairments, as well as the housing needs of at-risk women and youth. Calgary had the most substantive discussion of these issues:

We need to ensure units built are developed with accessibility in mind given the health needs those experiencing long-term homelessness, who are experiencing the effects of aging sooner than housed Calgarians. Youth’s housing needs are vastly different from those of single adults; we need to ensure our stock is flexible and responsive to population and individual needs to the best of our abilities. Women and children fleeing violence will have requirements around safety that must be accounted for in the development of housing and support options. (Calgary, 2015, p. 47)

Considerations of accessibility were otherwise very brief (e.g. single sentences or bullet points) and non-specific. For example, Medicine Hat’s plan (2014) was grounded in the principle that ‘everyone has access to safe, affordable, accessible, permanent housing’ (p. 7), but did not define ‘accessible’, nor elaborate on how it could be operationalized. Similarly, Alberta recognized people with disabilities as one of a number of groups for whom re-housing re- quired ‘targeted responses’, but did not expand on what these responses should entail, beyond a single reference to housing being barrier-free ‘where necessary’ (Alberta, 2008, pp. 13, 14).

*Legal security of tenure* was considered in a minority of plans, with several not mentioning even basic protections (e.g. that HF clients sign formal lease agreements). Some plans (Medicine Hat, Edmonton) identified a need for eviction prevention funds, and the ability to target households most at risk of losing housing. The importance of strengthening landlord relations was also recognized, and linked to goals of ‘increasing tenancy success’ (Medicine Hat, 2014, p. 59) and ‘encourag[ing] long-term stability and community integration’ (Grand Prairie, 2009, p. 38). Only Wood Buffalo adopted a genuine strategy for supporting secure tenure: it set out a detailed plan encompassing various forms of financial assistance (e.g. for rent, utility payments and arrears) and a commitment to intervening when tenancies are in crisis (to support both tenants and landlords).

Two components of the right to housing – *location* and *habitability* – went unconsidered in all eight plans. Although the importance of location was sometimes acknowledged in the abstract, no specific connections were made to where housing used in HF programs should be sited in relation to employment or services such as health care,

child care or education. Additionally, notwithstanding occasional remarks on the need for housing to be ‘appropriate’ or ‘adequate’, habitability was not discussed. *Availability of services* went unmentioned in the Provincial plan, even though (as noted above), it cannot reasonably be assumed that households in all parts of Alberta will have suitable access to vital utilities and infrastructure.

## 5. Discussion

Housing First policies in Alberta are characterized by limited engagement with the concept of rights. While we identified 184 uses of the term ‘right’ across 81 policy documents, only 46 of these references (or 25%) fell into categories that articulated a right to housing for people experiencing homelessness – i.e., the human right to housing (30), rights as moral claims (14), and calls for immediate action (2). Moreover, the great majority of these 46 references were simple (sentence-long) assertions, which did not advance arguments as to why housing is a right, or why homelessness is a rights breach. This mirrors the lack of substantive rights content in the academic literature, which seldom moves beyond the claim that HF provides housing as a human right and/or is ‘rights-based’. Of the seven municipalities considered here, only Wood Buffalo articulated a detailed commitment to housing as a right, consistent with the declaration in *General Comment No. 4* that ‘housing should be ensured to all persons irrespective of income or access to economic resources’ (Para 7). Remarkably, this right went entirely unmentioned in provincial and federal documents, which only acknowledged the much narrower category of tenant rights, centred on legal occupation of housing and compliance with lease agreements.

Our keyword-in-context analysis uncovered the diversity of ways in which the term ‘right’ is utilized in HF policy, in terms of three broad categories (entitlement, correct, and immediacy), as well as more fine-grained subcategories. The degree to which different uses of the term resonated with the concept of housing as a human right varied widely, and in many instances the connection was tangential. For example, of 86 references to the notion of right as correct, a majority (72) were anchored in concerns for appropriateness. These uses spoke to pragmatic concerns for effectiveness and efficiency that are relevant to the design of policy, but are at most indirectly concerned for fulfilling the human right to housing. The remaining 14 references to right as correct were moral claims, in the form of assertions that ending homelessness was the right thing to do. However, attentiveness to context revealed that in six instances these claims were linked to economic reasoning: ending homelessness was also right because it could ‘save money’. This weakened the moral basis for HF by linking it to something contingent – cost containment in the public sector (see Evans et al., 2016).

Given our concern to identify all references to the overarching *concept* of rights, we also searched for 14 related terms, across three different categories (entitlement, morality and conditions). Tellingly, we identified just seven references to entitlement, none of which recognized a legal duty to fulfil the right to housing. There were 21 references to morality, but the concept was usually framed negatively: homelessness was presented as a moral problem, crisis or catastrophe – while the notion that homeless people have a positive claim on societal resources went largely unrecognized.

We identified 134 references to conditions. This was a complex category, encompassing references to the *lack* of conditions in HF relative to LRT – precisely the grounds on which HF is often promoted as ‘rights-based’ – as well as references to the *presence* of conditions, particularly eligibility criteria. These criteria were almost never articulated, contributing to a lack of transparency around who is eligible to receive HF in Alberta. Baker and Evans have observed that ‘determining which individuals in the homeless population meet program eligibility requirements and who among this sub-population has the highest needs’ are key ‘calculative practices’ within HF (2016, pp. 34–35). However, little has been written about eligibility beyond occasional references to requirements that clients be chronically homeless and have a mental disorder or certain level of acuity at intake. A previous study of HF agencies in Alberta also found a lack of clarity around eligibility: even where centralized intake systems exist, ‘who is prioritized in reality appears ambiguous and sometimes based on little more than the preference of service providers’ (Anderson, 2016, p. 183).

The second phase of our analysis extended beyond rights-related language to consider the content of an important subset of the data: eight operative plans to end homelessness. Each plan was assessed against six components of the right to housing set out in *General Comment No. 4*. We found that only two of these components received consideration across all eight plans: affordability and cultural adequacy. The focus on affordability, including strategies for increasing supply of affordable units, reflects the extent to which HF is an affordable housing strategy

for those experiencing homelessness (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019; Polvere *et al.*, 2014). Plans were informed by an awareness that shortages of affordable housing are both a driver of homelessness and a barrier to HF program implementation. Commitments to addressing these shortages – when considered alongside standard features of HF (e.g. use of housing subsidies to limit clients’ rent payments) – indicate a high level of compliance with the affordability component of the right to housing. This was further underscored by references to improving access to social assistance payments – as well as advocacy for increasing payments levels – which would help clients to secure housing while also supporting ‘the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs’ (*General Comment No. 4*, para 7(1)(c)).

All plans gave some consideration to cultural adequacy, although this issue was not framed in the same way as General Comment No. 4, which emphasizes material dimensions of housing (e.g. construction, building technologies, modernization). Rather, there was a common recognition that certain cultural groups were more vulnerable to losing housing, resulting in their over-representation within homeless populations. Two cities (Calgary and Edmonton) articulated specific strategies for addressing this over-representation, with a focus on Aboriginal peoples.

Beyond these two components, there was limited consideration of accessibility and legal security of tenure. Five plans acknowledged accessibility issues, but only Calgary’s plan met the standard articulated in *General Comment No. 4*, which requires giving specific consideration to how ‘disadvantaged groups [could] be accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing resources’ (para 7(1)(e)). Four plans gave some consideration to legal security of tenure by articulating goals around eviction prevention and/or tenancy success, but again only one (Wood Buffalo’s) placed sufficient emphasis on this issue to meet the standard.

Habitability was not mentioned in any plan, possibly reflecting an assumption that all housing utilized by HF programs is adequate. Such an assumption is problematic, as HF service providers in Alberta have reported relying on poor quality housing, especially when market rents are high and vacancy rates low (Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2019). The plans were also silent on the location of housing relative to the amenities, opportunities and resources that support life in the community, separate from the specialized supports offered to HF clients. In combination, these two omissions suggest a lack of concern for whether housing provides more than ‘merely ... a roof over one’s head’, in order to fulfil the human need ‘to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity’ (*General Comment No. 4*, para 7(1)(e)). At stake here is the right ‘not just to housing but to adequate housing’, which encompasses both material characteristics (privacy, space, security, ventilation, etc.) and ‘adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities’ (para 7(1)(e)).

## 6. Conclusion

In a recent article, Stewart (2019) develops a model for realizing the right to housing that combines statutory rights, a political commitment to increasing the supply of affordable housing, and the housing-led ethos of Housing First. HF is included precisely because it prioritizes the provision of stable housing as the first response to chronic homelessness, and attaches fewer conditions than other service models, particularly LRT. Beyond these points, however, relatively little is known about the extent to which HF is ‘rights-based’, and no previous study has assessed HF against understandings of the right to housing embedded in international law. We conducted the first systematic rights-based analysis of HF policy, using a large dataset of 81 policy documents, collected across three levels of government. These policies are important because they shape the provision and funding of HF programs in Alberta, Canada, and speak to how homelessness is understood as a problem, for which particular solutions are available (see Bacchi, 2009; Hyshka *et al.*, 2017).

Our analysis points to two key findings. First, there is an absence of a substantive and direct rights discourse in HF policies in Alberta. The term ‘right’ is used sparsely, and of the references we identified, only a quarter articulated a right to housing for people experiencing homelessness. Extending the analytical frame to a broad set of 14 related words confirmed, rather than challenged, this pattern. Policy documents eschewed strong rights language that would frame housing as an entitlement, and never recognized the corresponding duty of governments to ensure access to adequate housing. No statements pointed to definitions of, or protections for, the right to housing in international law. This is a missed opportunity, as it is at the international scale that understandings of the right to housing, and the resource allocations and policy approaches required to fulfil it, are most clearly articulated.

Second, and more optimistically, 10YPs were found to have a consistent and substantive focus on affordability. In these critical policy documents, resource allocations and administrative practices were directed towards securing

affordable rental housing for people experiencing homelessness. This is important and valuable work. It is also rights-based in that it seeks to provide access to housing ‘irrespective of income or access to economic resources’, and in so doing prioritizes the needs of a group ‘living in unfavourable conditions’ (*General Comment No. 4*, paras 7, 11). Yet it is not, in itself, sufficient to fulfil the right to housing – a right that has many necessary components beyond affordability, including several (habitability and location) that go completely unmentioned in operative plans.

To build and support a HF system that genuinely fulfils the right to housing, policy at all levels of government needs to be attuned to, and more directly informed by, internationally-accepted understandings of that right. We emphasize this point not to criticize governments for not including (more) human rights language in policy, but to highlight that international human rights law, and authoritative interpretive documents such as *General Comment No. 4*, provide a valuable resource and a normative foundation for constructing HF policy. In so doing, they also provide a compelling justification for HF based on the fundamental equality of human beings, including those experiencing homelessness, rather than amoral and conditional calculations of potential cost savings.

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