



HART Launch Event Transcript

March 29 2023

Panelists

Penny Gurstein (HART)

Penny Gurstein is the founding Director of the Housing Research Collaborative, and the Co-Lead of the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project. She is the professor and past Director of the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) and the Centre for Human Settlements at UBC.

Craig Jones (HART)

Craig is the Associate Director of the Housing Research Collaborative and the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project. He received his Ph.D. in Geography from UBC, and currently teaches community data analysis in SFU's City Program. His research examines redevelopment pressures on purpose-built rental housing in Metro Vancouver's suburbs.

Cam Power (HART)

Cameron is the Land Assessment Coordinator for the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project. He received his MCRP from UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning, and his work focuses on mapping well-located government-owned land to meet affordable housing need.

Joseph Daniels (HART)

Joseph is the Acquisitions Strategy Coordinator for the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project. He received his joint Ph.D. in Geography from UBC and the University of Nottingham. His research focuses on urban governance, financialization of housing and real estate, and digital platform economies.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART)

Carolyn is the Expert Advisor and Outreach Coordinator for the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project. She is a planner, professor, and author of several books discussing the right to the city in contemporary and historical perspective.

Sahar Raza (National Right to Housing Network)

Sahar is the Director of Policy and Communications at the National Right to Housing Network, and sits on HART's Advisory Committee.

Erin Black (City of Edmonton)

Erin is the Social Planner, Policy and Planning, Affordable Housing and Homelessness with the City of Edmonton, and represents one of HART's partner governments.

Alexandra Flynn (HART)

Alexandra is the Co-Lead for the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) project, and an Associate Professor in the Allard School of Law at UBC. Her research focuses on municipal law and governance, administrative law, property law, and experiential education.

Introduction

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Sam Roberts (HART): Good morning. Good afternoon, everyone joining. We do have quite a few folks joining this morning, so we're just going to wait one more minute while they all filter in. Well, it is 10:02, so I will get things started as we do. Have an action packed event going on for you today. Hello! Good morning or afternoon, depending on where you're joining us from. My name is Sam Roberts. I'm the Communications officer for the HART project and I am so excited and happy to welcome you all here today. I would like to begin by acknowledging our role as uninvited guests on the traditional ancestral and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations in the area now known as Vancouver. This acknowledgment is particularly relevant for this event, given that one of the most impactful ramifications of colonization is the ongoing displacement of Indigenous people from their communities and Indigenous folks face housing need at rates far higher than the community at large. We have people joining us from 12 different provinces and territories today, and over 100 different municipalities. So, I encourage you to consider the story of the land where you live and where you're joining us from at native-land.ca that my colleague Morika will throw that in the chat for you to take a peek. But I look forward to introducing our very first panelists. We're going to have the next 2 hours showing you all the very for the very first time, our Housing Needs Assessment Tool, our Land Assessment Tool, our Property Acquisitions Tool which we've been working on since 2021. So, for the last couple of years. We're going to talk about how we got here and where we're going, and we're really grateful to be joined by 2 of our partners to talk about the impact of our tools so far as well. Before we do, we do have some housekeeping. We do have Q&A enabled for this event. I encourage you to ask questions throughout the event. We will have a short Q&A at the end but our panelists will be replying to questions as we go, so please don't wait until the end to type those questions in feel free to go for it as the thought comes up. Our event will be recorded and posted online. So, if you miss any part of it, you can revisit it. We will also have our transcript translated into French, which will be posted alongside the English transcript for any of our Francophone attendees and if you do have any technical issues, please use the Q&A function. One of my colleagues will reach out to you to help you out. And without further ado, I am pleased to introduce Penny Gurstein, one of our primary investigators and the founding director of the Housing Research Collaborative to tell you all a little bit about how we got here. So, Penny I pass over to you.

Penny Gurstein (HART): Yes, thank you. So, we are really pleased to launch the Housing Assessment Resource Tools today. Given the housing crisis in Canada, and the difficulty in determining how big is the problem, it has never been more critical to have a set of easy to use evidence-based equity-focused tools that will support communities to measure and address their housing need with funding from CMHC Housing Supply Challenge. We developed our [methodology and prototype](#) in 2021 for the City of Kelowna.

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Penny Gurstein (HART): We have now further refined our methodology and developed a dashboard in the second phase, working with 13 partner governments in all regions in Canada, and from rural communities to large metropolitan regions. As well, we have 17 organizations on our Advisory Committee across the country, including Indigenous community organizations. Our work entails the development of 3 tools: A Housing Needs Assessment Tool, a census-based tool that measures core housing need and affordable shelter cost by income, category, household size and priority populations. Our methods allow governments to set effective housing targets that will lift Canadians and out of chronic housing need and homelessness. We also have a Land Assessment Tool, a mapping tool that assesses suitable public land for nonprofit affordable housing based on proximity to key services and amenities. It allows governments to effectively use land, including housing on top of libraries, and health centers to maximize deeply affordable homes. In addition, we have a Property Acquisitions Tool, a policy-based tool that helps prevent the loss of affordable housing through property acquisition by governments, non-profit housing providers and community land trusts. In addition to the development of these tools, we've worked on housing affordability task force in 6 provinces, consulted with countless municipalities, regions, provincial bodies, and the federal government on evidence-based housing policy and to better understand how to use HART's tools, we are developing an e-learning platform that will be launched in fall 2023. Please sign up on our website to pre-register. Now I would like to introduce Craig Jones, who will present the Housing Needs Assessment Tool in greater detail.

Housing Needs Assessment Tool

Craig Jones (HART): Thank you, Penny. Hi, everyone I'm Craig Jones. I am the Associate Director of UBC's Housing Research Collaborative and the Housing Assessment Resource Tools Project. I recently completed a Ph.D. in Urban Geography. I've been conducting affordable housing research for little over 10 years. A shared nuanced understanding of how we need across Canada is important. We currently have various estimates of housing need across the country. Housing need assessments can be expensive, they can employ different methods, use different data which can make a comparison almost impossible. With HART, we have produced a Canada-wide equity-focused Housing Need Assessment Tool that is free to all communities to help them produce consistent, replicable, and comparable assessments of their housing need and we do this by basing our work on custom ordered census data, which is the most reliable source of data that covers the entire country. Now, to my knowledge, this is the first time that census data has been ordered according to a design that allows for the combination of income, categories, household sizes, and equity deserving groups. Before I demonstrate what we call the HNA dashboard, it's important to understand the income categories through which all of our data is organized. Note that the tool is currently built on 2016 data. So, we have 5 income categories which are defined by the relationship to Area Median Household Income or AMHI. The Statistics Canada calculated the AMHI for every community. These income categories are Very Low, which generally equates to shelter allowance for welfare recipients; Low, which is generally equivalent to a full-time minimum wage job; Moderate, which approximates the starting salary for professional work; Median, which represents the middle class who can still struggle to move into home ownership and High Income, which accounts for approximately 40% of households across Canada. As you can see. our

income thresholds are determined by their relationship with the Area Median Household Income of 20% or less, 21% to 50%, 51% to 80%, 81% to 120% and above 120% of Area Median Household Income. So, we took this approach so that the households could be understood relative to the incomes of their communities in which they have to find housing. We show the percentage of households which fall into each income category. Pardon me, we show the annual household income ranges associated with each income category and we show the affordable monthly shelter cost range for each of the categories which assumes that no more than 30% of household pre-tax income should be spent on housing.

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Craig Jones (HART): Before I demonstrate the functionality of the HNA Dashboard, I should mention that custom 2021 census data is arriving any day, and this tool will be updated with 2021 data as soon as possible. We don't anticipate that it will take long. However, when using this tool in the future, I do encourage users to continue to refer to the 2016 data. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit temporarily raised incomes for the lowest income Canadians in 2020. But basically, what that means is that many of the people in core housing need captured in the census receive CERB, which reduced core housing need that year. And so, I encourage users to compare 2016 and 2021 to see if they trust the reduction in their community has been sustained. Okay. So, I would like to thank Licker Geospatial Consulting for their work developing this tool with us. The Housing Needs Assessment HNA Dashboard aligns with national, provincial and territorial census geographies, and with census divisions and census subdivisions which are general terms for regional planning areas and municipalities respectively, and you can find your community of interest in 2 ways, so we can use the map first. So, let's say I want to take a look at information at London, Ontario. I click on Ontario. I know that London is in the region of Middlesex. and then I click on London here. And so, what that does is it highlights, the municipality of London in green, with its surrounding region in blue. And as I've been clicking through the map, all of the information here has updated automatically, and I'll cover that in just a moment. The second way that you can find your community of interest is simply to type in the name and to select the option that you want from the drop down menu. And so, we can see that London is a city which is a census subdivision, municipality in the province of Ontario, and that will update all of the information here. When complete, there are five key components of this dashboard, and today we're going to take a look at 2 of them: core housing need and household projections. So, a household is considered to be in core housing need if it falls below affordability, which is spending no more than 30% of income on housing; suitability, which is a measure of the number of persons per bedroom also refers to overcrowding; or adequacy, which is the condition of the building, whether the dwelling, which is whether or not it's in need of major repair. So, the household falls underneath one of these 3 criteria and crucially they would not be able to find housing that would meet their needs within their community that they could also afford. Then they would be, they are in core housing need so effectively households in core housing need are stuck, and they're not able to find somewhere to live in their community that meets their needs. So, as we review the tables here, we see the information that I summarized before, which is specific to London, Ontario. So, when we take a look at the percentage of households in core housing need by income category, we can see that the Very Low income category which households could afford a maximum shelter cost of \$310 a month, 59% of those are in core housing need. Of the larger Low Income group which is in core housing need, they can afford a maximum shelter cost of \$775 a month. Almost 64% of those households are in core housing need. We can dig further into households that are

in core housing need by their income category to take a look at the number of persons per household within. So, we can see that within the Very Low and Low income categories that are in core housing need, the majority are one person households. But when we move into the Moderate income households in core housing need, over 80% of those have at least 3 persons in their households. Our affordable housing deficit table, it nominally shows the number of households in core housing need by income category and by household size, so we can see of the total number of households and core housing need in London, over 17,000 of them were in Low income. And so, the Low income category makes up the bulk of the households in core housing need, and within that income category we can see that the majority of Low income households in core housing need are one person, so this can be used to identify where the need is nominally the greatest.

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Craig Jones (HART): Following the National Housing Strategy we order data to identify or get as close as we could to identifying the housing need amongst priority populations, those that are in need of potentially the greatest housing support. And we did this for every single community, so that those communities can understand the housing need of their vulnerable members. Also this allows for consistent reporting and tracking of core housing need amongst priority populations over time and between communities. Within this chart the overall rate of core housing need is highlighted in green. So, in London, Ontario, in 2016, 15% of all households were in core housing need. The priority population that has the greatest incidence of core housing need is always bolded in a stronger blue. So in this case in London Ontario, new migrant-led households have the highest incidence of core housing need at 37%, and the second highest incidence group is single mother-led households at almost 33%. We can dig even further into the priority populations to understand the income dynamics for those groups in core housing need. And what I found interesting within this chart is that households that have a head under the age of 25, and over the age of 65, are largely in core housing need due to the fact that they are in the Low or Very Low income categories. Another function that we've built into this tool is to allow for comparisons between communities and regions. So in this case I will, I know that London is in the region of Middlesex. So, I will type the name of Middlesex here and all of the information below has automatically updated to include Middlesex in comparison with London, Ontario, and so we can do direct comparisons of the incidence of core housing need, household size and income groups, the nominal deficit and something to note here is that Middlesex accounts for the vast majority of core housing need. Sorry, London accounts for the vast majority of core housing need within Middlesex, and so much of the information that is displayed from Middlesex will be relevant to the city of London. Great. But we can compare any 2 geographies side by side to see what they look like next to each other. Okay. So, core housing need is not a perfect measure. There are several households that are not captured within core housing need, that are not considered for core housing need, that are undoubtedly facing housing pressure, and are in need of some assistance. My colleague will post a list of the [households that are not included in core housing need](#). Another issue that we can come across is with census data is a matter of suppression. So, for very small communities. Let's take a look at Bridgewater, which is a town in Nova Scotia. As you see the map automatically updates. It is here within the region of Lunenburg. and so, the number of households that are in core housing need here is relatively small to a total of 510. And what that means is that when we go to look at the priority populations, in order to avoid the potential that any household could be identified through this data,

suppression will kick in, and will just 0 out the data. So, with these priority populations it doesn't necessarily mean that there is no incidence of core housing need. It just means that the number is so small that it can't be reported. And so, one way we sought to address this, is that we built in a function that allows for immediate comparison or moving to the region. So, by clicking on the view census division button, I will immediately, all of the information will automatically update to the Lunenburg region, and we can see that the number of households in core housing need have gone up, and we do have a bit more information about the households and core housing need by priority population. You can also click up to the province for a quick reference, back down to the region, and then immediately go back down to the municipality. So just go between charter piece for quick and easy comparisons.

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Craig Jones (HART): And to reset the map, you just click the reset the map button. Okay, so let's take a look at our household projections tab. I'm going to look at the municipality of West Vancouver, which is close to where I'm coming from right here for this. So, our household projections at this time are based on trends from 2006 to 2016, and we project household change by our income categories and by household size. In this table we show the income categories. The 2016 number of households are projected, gain and lost by income category, and then our total at the end, and we show these charts. Before moving on, I should mention that record immigration and significant movement within Canada means that these projections are almost guaranteed to underestimate household formation and high growth areas because they are based on the trends from 2006 to 2016. We will be updating these projections when our 2021 data comes in. For each of the income categories and household sizes where we project there to be growth, that is above the bar, and we project loss that is shown below. We show our projected total number of households by income category, and household size to 2016, and our projection for the change in households by income category, and household size out to 2016. And again, where we project there to be gain, that is above the 0 line and losses below. We've added one additional feature to the projections which is to automatically compare municipalities growth rates to those of their regions, and so we can see that for West Vancouver the growth rate amongst almost all of the income categories is well below that of Greater Vancouver, and we see a similar pattern for the growth rate for those households by household size. And we show this to provide a comparison between how the municipality is growing relative to its region, and also to provide a bit of a check on the projections that we have provided, because if there has been little to no growth within a municipality within a growing region, then our 10 year projections need to be scrutinized a little bit further, and to consider whether or not these growth rates should be higher, or in some cases you know lower, but that's probably unlikely. Great. So, as you're watching me move through the dashboard, some of you may be thinking, Well, what other questions can I ask you? What about for certain priority populations? What about certain combinations of variables? And so, for advanced users, we have uploaded all of this data to the Housing Research Collaborative Dataverse which is on the Borealis Dataverse network. And this is this, all this is now publicly available as of this morning. and a link will be posted in the chat. So, what you can do here is you can download our process data in a CSV file format that works with Excel. So, you can download these big sheets and ask your own questions of it, and we've also made available all of the raw data that was sent to us by Statistics Canada in the IVT file format for use in Beyond 2020. So advanced users can actually create their own custom cross-tabulations of our data. For those of you who are really advanced users and see the dashboard, and want to know if you can create your own

custom dashboard, your own custom outputs. The answer to that question is, Yes, if you are an advanced user because all of the code for the analysis and for the visualizations will be posted to our GitHub repository in the coming days to allow for advanced users to get in there and do their own work. And so, all of our work that we have done is publicly available to all who have an interest. So, moving forward on our timeline. The first step that we have ahead of us is to update this tool as the 2021 custom census data comes in. You may have noticed that we had an Indigenous core housing need tab, that we'll be updating all of the outputs related to core housing need to specifically speak to that amongst Indigenous populations, Indigenous households across the country.

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Craig Jones (HART): And we will be further developing our How-To Guides in our instructions for use of the tools. We will be updating our household projections with household size, we'll be combining household size with family type in order to suggest a number of bedrooms and a unit mix projection. And we will be adapting the tool in order to support CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund proposals. So, we really do want to hear from you, if you are interested in putting in the HAF proposal, and if we can help. In the fall we'll be launching our E-learning course, which will be a comprehensive online training experience which will teach everyone how to make the most of all of our tools. And so now I'd like to hand off to Cameron Power, who will introduce our Land Assessment Tool.

Land Assessment Tool

Cam Power (HART): Oh, great yeah, thanks, Craig. Hi, everyone. My name is Cameron Power. I'm the Land Assessment Coordinator for the HART Project, and I work alongside Professor James Connolly, who's our research lead for the Land Assessment Tool. So today I'll be talking a bit about our Land Assessment Tool. I'll start with a brief introduction to our objectives. I'll demo a couple of our land assessment maps, and then I'll conclude with the summary of what you can expect to see from us on the land assessment front. So, I thought we'd start by just framing one of the challenges that we're looking to address with the land assessment, and that's the challenge of land cost. So, in Canada, often the single biggest factor in improving the bottom line for affordable housing projects is the cost of land, and this is something that we're starting to see everywhere. There's growing consensus internationally that leveraging low cost land and the right locations is key to achieving affordable housing targets. So this is just one example from a [McKinsey report](#) that was published in 2014. In the report, they look at 4 key interventions that governments might use to reduce housing costs by up to 50%. What they calculated was that in some big cities land costs can account for as much as 80% of property costs, so they conclude that low and no cost land in those in those right locations really has this great potential to reduce the cost of affordable housing projects. Of course, the lowest cost land that governments have access to is the land that they already own. So, one strategy that governments have to improve the economics of affordable housing projects is to unlock some of their own land supply through leasing it to nonprofit providers for affordable housing development. We've seen a couple of examples of this here in Canada. The city of Vancouver's leased 11 parcels of city on land to the BC Community Land Trust. 700 homes are being built on city and federally-owned land around transit hubs in Ottawa. So these are just a couple of examples. But there are others across Canada. But really, in order to support projects like these, the questions that we're looking to answer with the HART Land Assessment Tool

are: firstly, where is this municipal, provincial, and federally-owned government land that might be used to reach affordable housing targets? And here we're interested specifically in vacant lands or lands that are potentially underutilized in the sense that they have a short building with that could be redeveloped with some housing units on top. And the second question we're looking to answer is, which of those parcels are the most well-located for affordable housing. So, to conduct our assessments, we've partnered with 12 local governments across Canada, and our partners help us identify government-owned lands within their jurisdiction. We start by compiling this comprehensive inventory of all government-owned lands, municipal, provincial, regional, federal, etc., and then we start to weed out some sites that are probably unsuitable for housing development. So maybe they're in heavy industrial zones or in environmentally protected areas. These criteria vary a bit based on the land use planning context. So our partners help us understand the local regulations that we should consider in our assessment. Then, once we have our set of candidate sites, we take a look at which of those sites are the most well located for affordable housing, and we do that by looking at how close they are to different amenities. Then, finally, we produce a map of those candidate sites to display how well each of them score, and with the launch of the HART website, we'll be publishing maps for our land assessment in 3 communities across Canada, so we'll be releasing maps for Ottawa, Whitehorse and Victoria County in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. More to come in the next few months. But today I'll be sharing a brief demo of our Ottawa and Whitehorse land assessment maps to give you a sense of how to use the Land Assessment Tool, and also what you can expect to see in our other partner communities. So I'll share my screen now. Okay.

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Cam Power (HART): So now we should all be looking at a map of the Ottawa region. So for those of you who are unfamiliar with Ottawa, the downtown core is located here in the center of the map, and then around the downtown core, you have some satellite village centers or suburban areas. So this is Kanata to the east, or Kanata to the west, and you have Orleans to the east. Each point that you're seeing on the map represents one of those candidate parcels. The colors represent the amenity proximity score. So the highest scoring sites are in blue, and the lower scoring sites are in grey. Some of the patterns that you see, or what you might expect. So you have clusters of high scoring sites in the downtown core, and also in some of the surrounding village centers, and I'll also note that nearby parcels are grouped into these larger clusters. So you'll see these larger circles, and those represent a number of points, and for labels with the number of parcels that are included in the cluster. You'll also notice some widgets that we include on the right hand side to help, that'll help you explore the data in the map. So these widgets, with these widgets you can search for an address, view the map legend, filter parcels, or generate some charts from the data. I won't be going over how to use each of these widgets in much depth. But if you're interested to learn more, you can refer to the instructions tab in the top right hand corner of the page. So the first widget that you'll notice, is the legend, this is what opens on load and in the top left here. It basically just describes what each of those symbols on the map mean. Below the legend widget, we have 4 filters, so you can filter parcels based on nearby amenities, the level of government ownership, amenity proximity scores, and then building status, which is whether a parcel is vacant, or it contains a short building on top of it. So if, for instance, I was interested in not looking at provincially-owned sites, I could open the ownership filter here, turn off provincial sites, and I can see that they disappear from the map. But for now I'll turn this back on for us

to look at. Finally at the bottom, at the bottom of our widgets, we have the chart button. So if you click this button, it'll generate a chart based on the total area represented on that those candidates in the map that are represented on the map account for. So we break down candidate parcel area by the level of government ownership. So here in Ottawa, we have municipal, federal, and provincial, of course, but then we also have some regional entities like the National Capital Commission and the Conservation Authority. You'll notice that the greatest proportion of land is occupied by provincially-owned land, namely, vacant provincially-owned land. So that's sort of interesting, when you look at the aggregate of all of the candidate sites. But if I were to filter out parcels that don't score very highly, for instance, so I'll turn off the low and very low scoring sites. We'll see that the proportion of provincially owned land drops quite dramatically, and the proportion of federal and municipal land is much higher for those well located sites. So if you were to zoom in on the map, then you'll start to see some of the parcel boundaries, and if you were to click on a parcel, you get some information about that parcel. Generally, the information that we include in the parcels varies a little bit based on the community and the data that's available. But typically we try to provide information about the level of government ownership, how that parcel is zoned, and it's building status. So I can see here that this parcel is federally owned, and it's vacant in the sense that there's no building on top of it. Then we also provide some information about the amenity proximity scores, and how it's broken down across those the amenities that we look at. So you'll notice here that we include 10 amenities in our score. And here we're looking at things like community, child care centers, health care centers, grocery stores, parts, and so on. The amenities that we look at actually come from the CMHC and they're based on what the CMHC refers to as [their Social Inclusion Proximity Criteria](#) which is basically just a list of amenities that can be considered part of a complete community. And we assess those parcels proximity to each of those amenities based on walking distances. And then, finally, we assign each parcel a 20-point score, based on that proximity analysis so typically parcels that are closer to a greater variety of amenities receive a higher score. If you're interested to learn more about how we calculate the score, you can refer to the methods document on the HART Land Assessment page on our website. So here I can see that this parcel scores relatively well. It received an overall score of 17, and if I'm looking at the scorecard here, it looks like libraries are the only amenity that's maybe a little further away than the others.

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Cam Power (HART): But something that I'll note here is that even for sites that score low, the land assessment can still tell us some interesting things. So I know a lot of communities are exploring the possibility of combining affordable housing projects with other civic services, like libraries or recreation centers. The sites that we identify here in this land assessment might be good candidates for those. So it is worth considering those low scoring sites as well. So in this case, if I'm curious about where the nearest library is, I can close this pop up here, and I can search for it, using the search function at the top. So if I look up Ottawa public libraries. It looks like there's a library over here which is a few kilometers away, so I know that that's beyond the threshold for the land assessment score. But I thought it would be also a little bit interesting to look at another map, just to think about how they compare. So now I'll switch over to our map of Whitehorse. So you'll see here the region of the city of Whitehorse. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the geography of Whitehorse you have the downtown core in the center of the map here, and then towards the north and the south, you have some more suburban areas we see some similar patterns. So the well scoring sites are typically located

in the downtown core. But I think it's interesting to me to look at this cluster here, because there's so, you know, I can see there's so many parcels. So I'll zoom in. Based on our discussion with the city of Whitehorse, we know that this is an area that's sort of in transition. A lot of it's already slated for development but we can see that a lot of it is currently under government ownership, and relatively far away from amenities compared to some of the sites in the downtown core. So this this does raise some interesting questions about how someone might, or how one might bring amenities to this area, and one possibility is through mixed use development like co-locating affordable housing projects with some of those amenities that are lacking. I'll open the chart so we can take a look at the breakdown of candidate parcel area, and we can see sort of a similar pattern that we noticed in Ottawa. So territorial land in this case has the greatest share of candidate parcel area. But if again, if I were to filter out those low scoring sites by opening the amenity proximity score filter. We can see that the most of those territorial parcels, are actually not particularly well located, so we can infer that those are probably what our pieces of land outside of the urban centers, and the greatest portion of land is, of well-located land is actually owned by municipal and federal governments, which is something, which is a pattern that we see in a lot of the communities that we're working with. The federal land case in Whitehorse is a bit unique, but generally municipal governments own a large portion of the well located land in their jurisdiction, well-located government land in their jurisdiction, I should say, which is promising, because this is probably perhaps the most readily available government owned land that can be leveraged to reach affordable housing targets. But that's a brief walkthrough of the map functions like I mentioned earlier. If you're curious about how to use the map, you can refer to the instructions tab at the top here and there's also, maybe a couple of important points that I thought I would just mention now that are good to keep in mind when using the HART Land Assessment Tool. So, firstly. The HART Land Assessment is really an initial estimate of government owned land that might be suitable for affordable housing. It's not necessarily, it's not intended to be a site-level analysis of feasibility. Really, the objective is to encourage a more expansive view of the options that are available. So there are sites included in the assessment, particularly that are occupied by buildings that might not be coming up for development right away. But if they were to come up for development and they are well located, there is a reasonable case for that new development to include some housing on top. Promising sites that are identified through the assessment really should be evaluated by local governments to determine the feasibility at the site-level. Also due to data constraints, our land assessment focuses specifically on government owned land. Future land assessment should also consider land owned by non-profit organizations, like places of worship, for instance, as potential sites for affordable housing development. And of course, all you know, I should mention that this is a data-driven tool. The accuracy of the assessment is limited by the completeness of the data that we use to create it. So if you were interested in conducting similar assessments in your community, please do feel free to get in touch. We'll be sharing our contact information at the end of the presentation. But now I we can stop sharing my screen, and we can flip back over to the slides, so I can talk a little bit about our next steps to the land assessment.

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Cam Power (HART): Right. So in April, over the next few weeks we'll be adding some additional functionality to the map, so we'll be exploring whether there are other charts or statistics that would be useful to include. We'll also be including other geographic data sets on the map that might provide

a little bit more context, and we'll also be able to support users to upload their own geographic data to see how our sites align with priority development areas that they've defined, for instance. In May we'll be continuing to publish maps, and you can expect to see maps for our partners in Calgary, Edmonton, and in Gatineau, and then in June we'll be releasing maps for the GTHA, which includes Toronto, Hamilton and the regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York. So what is our vision for land assessment moving forward. Like I mentioned earlier, we did focus specifically on government owned land in this assessment, namely, because of data constraints. But it's our belief that future land assessment should certainly consider, including nonprofit land as well. For our assessment, we apply a general, a pretty, a fairly general score to assess the proximity amenities, and that score captures a pretty wide range of amenities that meet the needs of a pretty broad population. But for projects that target, certain populations, the considerations might be a little bit more specific. So if you're looking at seniors housing projects, for instance, maybe you would like to weigh proximity to healthcare centers or pharmacies a little bit more highly than proximity to primary and secondary schools. This is something that would be great to, this level of flexibility would be great to include in future iterations of the tool. And finally, something that we didn't really anticipate being such a barrier at the beginning of the project is the limited availability of information about government owned land. So in lot, in a lot of provinces, this information is actually proprietary, and it's held by private organizations that aren't subject to freedom of information requests. For Ontario, we actually needed to pay tens of thousands of dollars to a private company just to display and access this data for one year. In Alberta, no one could actually direct us to a provincial entity that kept track of the location of provincially owned land, and it's worth knowing that this is quite odd. So Canada is a little, is quite a bit behind in this regard. Even in the United States this sort of ownership information is openly available. So, in order to support broadening this sort of assessment across Canada, there is this important data advocacy piece about making this information more available. So to conclude my portion of the presentation, I'll just say that it's probably true that in a lot of communities they'll be completing their housing needs assessments, and maybe feel a little bit overwhelmed about the scale of housing deficits in their communities. The purpose of the Land Assessment Tool, and also the Property Acquisitions Tool, is to help governments think a little bit more expansively about the types of solutions that are available to them. So, as we've seen across Canada, there are vacant and potentially underutilized public lands that could be leveraged to meet affordable housing targets. And, as Joe will explain, existing buildings can be acquired by governments to preserve existing affordability. So now I'll be handing it over to Joe to explain that acquisitions piece.

Property Acquisitions Tool

Joseph Daniels (HART): Thank you. Cam. My name is Joe Daniels, the Acquisitions Strategy Coordinator and I've been working with Associate Professor Martine August, to better understand how property acquisitions can support the expansion of affordable housing. With each of our tools, we address one key challenge within the Canadian housing policy landscape. Whether it's the understanding of housing need across Canada in a standardized fashion or the assessment of available public land for affordable housing. Each addresses a key challenge with a tool to respond. One critical area of concern which has been ignored by policymakers is the loss of affordable housing from existing stock. This is a particular problem within the existing unsubsidized market, where some two-thirds of low to moderate income renters obtain their housing well. While precise figures remain a challenge, [estimates](#) of the losses of unsubsidized units serving the needs of those very low to moderate income tenants reflect a real

barrier to securing housing affordability overall, often equating to more than double the announced goal of new affordable units under the National Housing Strategy. The housing price boom, combined with significant consolidation of ownership within the purpose-built rental market over the past 20 years has left us in a dire need to maintain what affordability remains while creating opportunities for its future expansion.

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Joseph Daniels (HART): One solution is the development of an acquisition strategy to stabilize existing affordability where it remains. An acquisition strategy is one that aims to identify and remove existing unsubsidized, affordable rental housing at risk of loss from the profit-driven market by transferring its ownership to a non-market entity. It might be at risk of loss due to rapidly rising rents, but also because of events such as renovictions, redevelopments, or new neighborhood development pressures. Moreover, it is at risk precisely because it is providing relative affordability often to vulnerable and priority populations, many of whom face greater risks of harassment by landlords. Simply put, an acquisitions strategy attempts to stabilize existing affordability by removing the profit motive from the equation, placing the property in the hands of an entity with an affordability mandate. It does so with the understanding that it is far easier to maintain affordability than to gain affordability once it has been lost. This approach has a variety of benefits, including the mitigation of gentrification-induced displacement that forces tenants into housing markets where affordability has long passed them by. As a result it can support the prevention of homelessness before it happens, and the adaptive reuse of acquired rental buildings can support climate justice for vulnerable populations, and it achieves these while strengthening the non-market housing sector to gain the portfolios and asset management expertise it needs to grow its contribution of the housing stock well above the current 4%. It does this while also being cost-effective housing policy, both the short and long term cost savings over a 50 year building life cycle. But what many municipal, provincial, and federal leaders have been asking for most is to better understand what an acquisitions strategy looks like. In other words, how do we go from a theory into Canadian practice? The policy infrastructure for the acquisition of multi-family rental properties in Canada remains uneven, often best described as ad-hoc or reactionary, with the exception of perhaps Quebec. But not only is acquisition commonplace elsewhere in North America, Europe, and Asia, but it is fully integrated into wider national housing strategies. Our task is to devise policy-driven tools to help move Canada in that direction where acquisition was normal. In other words, how does an acquisition policy get crafted? The 3 tools we have developed include a policy map and database, an acquisitions report focused on the multi-family rental properties, both of which are available now, and a series of practical how to guides coming very soon. Our first answer to this how question took us to asking, what does this look like elsewhere? Our database contains over 100 different acquisition strategies from around the world, ranging from small pilots to large scale tax incentive programs. This can be a great resource to explore different models for acquisition that might inform your own policy developments. We have developed a map interface that allows you not only to look at policies in particular cities, but see how they are nested with policies created by higher orders of government. There are examples ranging from Korea to Europe, revealed in the shaded areas of the map. They can provide guidance to federal, provincial and municipal governments alike. This not only shows that this can be done, but provides quick policy details that might help you to form your own specific requirements in your acquisitions programs. Each entry provides essential information about the

program, including its name, the properties it targets, the funding organization, funding amounts and information on its core programmatic features. Each entry also has one or more links to learn more, often directly from the source. For example, if you click on San Francisco, you will see it has 3 municipal acquisitions policies listed in the sidebar, but by scrolling down further you will be able to see that it sits alongside policies in California and the US, that work in a complementary way to support a robust acquisition ecosystem. You can use these examples in reports to councils or legislatures to make an acquisitions policy concrete for stakeholders with the decision making power. Moreover, it is clear in this database that the larger and more impactful acquisitions programs, those that protect thousands of units of housing, do so only when generously supported by federal or provincial level funding. Whether this is through direct funding or by allowing existing programs of sufficient scale to support acquisitions. Our second policy tool answers: how does the acquisition become more commonplace in Canada? Our acquisitions report summarizes our findings from the development of our policy database and the dozens of interviews we completed with our government partners and allied housing professionals. The primary takeaway is this: there are many promising practices in Canada and elsewhere, but not yet the funding environment to support them to have the impact necessary to establish acquisition as a self-sustaining practice. More funding, provided primarily by federal and provincial governments, could not only make acquisition commonplace and more effective, but help to multiply current investments in new supply now and into the future.

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Joseph Daniels (HART): The report establishes the foundations for what an acquisition strategy should be in Canada, while pushing governments at all scales to seek out innovation and cooperation based on the myriad of local and international examples. In our report we cover why acquisition strategy for multifamily housing is an important tool in the affordable housing toolkit. We go into greater depth on the social policy goals advanced by property acquisition, and we flesh out 4 promising Canadian approaches in Nova Scotia, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver and BC, which can be built upon to scale up acquisitions to national practice. Again, these show great promise, but lack the funding commitments necessary to have the broad impact imagined. Uniquely, this report brings together the many pieces of an acquisition strategy that have emerged over the past decade or so into one place to give governments, housing providers, and advocates a clearer picture of what an acquisition strategy is, and could be, in Canada. All of this results in 6 best practices which we recommend for all governments interested in protecting the declining stock of affordable homes we have left. First, we recommend governments and housing providers work together to systematically identify buildings based on shared criteria. Simply put, we should not be finding properties by way of whack-a-mole surprise, or in a reactive way. We should create a system that identifies buildings that could be acquired and put in place early warning systems for being able to act. One way is to engage in your data collection, whether voluntary or acquired of by landlords, that allow for much closer tracking of properties, but also should consider new legal powers, such as a first right of refusal on specific properties that give a seat at the table right away. Second, we recommend acquisitions programs have strong affordability parameters for acquired properties. These should consider both the term of affordability, and for how we might grow affordability over time, particularly given, many acquisitions will not be at the deepest levels of affordability at the outset. Toronto's required 99 year term of affordability for its Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition program is exemplary, but should also ensure

there are long term plans for growing that affordability either in depth or number of units over time. Third, acquisitions program delivery should ensure streamline, sustained and dedicated funding. This means reducing the time needed between applications and to receiving funds which often needs to take place within 30 to 60 days. It means delivering funds over the long haul rather than from year to year, with no known continuation, and be focused on the task of acquisition. Put simply, it means a funding program from federal and provincial leaders on the order of hundreds of millions of dollars annually as grants to cover the gap between a property markets value and its value to remain affordable. These allowed not only for nonprofit entities to acquire at the speed of the market within that market without disadvantage, but also support their desire to dedicate resources to the tasks. Fourth, we recommend governments focus on building out the capacity of the nonprofit sector. Partly this will come with large scale funding from higher orders of government, but additional efforts should focus on nonprofit capacity in the area of active asset management. That is, the more entrepreneurial approach to maintaining one's portfolio of assets to grow affordability, in this case. This will require not only startup support for acquisition activity, because many nonprofits have not engaged in this in some time, but also an encouragement of nonprofit housing providers to scale up their operations, whether through entrepreneurial growth, or through mergers and cooperation, to gain the economies of scale needed to sustain acquired buildings with minimal operational support and become more proactive developers of future housing affordability. Fifth, we recommend that governments fund and coordinate programs across all scales of government. We recommend large-scale federal and provincial funding programs so that way this tool can be available to all communities, not just the large or sophisticated few where it currently operates. We recommend that governments aim for common requirements, common applications, and common timelines, deferring to local and provincially developed schemes. Often this means that such a program should be delivered to a single delivery vehicle in each province. This might be a vehicle like that which is emerging in British Columbia under the Rental Protection Fund, and managed by the Housing Protection Fund Society, a \$500 million dollar fund to support the acquisition of non-profit housing. This could also incorporate other sources of funding federal or private as well. And sixth, we recommend governments deliver acquisitions programming alongside supportive policies and legal powers. An acquisition strategy does not happen in a vacuum, but instead often flourishes when it is complemented by other policies.

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Joseph Daniels (HART): These include the strengthening of rent controls, the permitting of new legal powers, such as first right of refusal, or even the rewriting of tax codes to give incentives to owners of buildings to sell to nonprofits, say, for example, by reducing their capital gains; and while the specifics might change, the different tax choice, or a different legal power. We must think about not only how the practice of acquisition needs this supportive ecosystem, but by providing that, how it can support the wider, affordable housing policy. These recommendations or recommended best practices, set the direction towards which all government should aim to enable acquisition as a policy tool but one might ask, what does my government whether it's municipal, provincial, or federal, need to do so? We want to provide a path forward, particularly in communities where the resources to implement an acquisition strategy are more limited. Our third tool to be delivered in the coming weeks is a series of standalone how-to guides, providing step by step instruction for how to take each of our best practices and turn them into action. These will take the form of 6 very short guides, which communities can use to organize

their plans for an acquisition strategy. We see these guides as informative for all those in the housing sector, but we make specific effort to ensure that we identify each tier of government, when each tier of government is needed to act. But they are presented as an all hands on deck manner to ensure there is clear visibility on where to collaborate and where to push ahead. They also inform the steps that governments can take even before major funding has been committed. We will also support these guides with quick access to practical resources. Together they provide a map of a comprehensive acquisition strategy, but each individual practice can be acted on independently, while funding is always key. Communities can already move towards advancing some of the best practices. They need not wait. These are not pre-conditions for success, but rather ongoing actions to support the work of improving the viability of acquisitions as a critical tool in the toolbox of Canadian housing affordability. From today you'll be able to access the policy database and the acquisitions report. Very soon you'll be able to have access to the how to guides. But as we move into the future we recognize that there's still much more that we want to support with our understanding of what an acquisition strategy looks like and how it might be implemented. We want to refine our strategies and develop new measurement indicators. In many ways, the data landscape remains a key challenge, and we want to pilot innovative measures to support communities grasp the scope of what needs to be done, but do not believe that this should be a precondition for action. This is why we have pushed ahead with our policy tools. We also want to extend our work to consider the acquisition of privately owned vacant land and commercial properties, particularly as vacancy rates for commercial properties have grown significantly in many communities. We want to continue the work necessary to ensure acquisitions do not remain a forgotten policy tool in Canada. I'll now pass off to our colleague, Carolyn Whitzman, for conversation about the impact of HART.

HART's Impact

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Thank you, Joe. Let's see if I can start my video now. I can't start my video because my host has stopped the video. Oh, well, let's try that again in a couple of minutes. My name is Carolyn Whitzman and I'm a housing and social policy consultant who has the honor of being an Expert Advisor to the HART project. And without our 13 government partners and our 17 members of our Advisory Committee. This would be a piece of research sitting in a drawer instead of changing the conversation as it is around housing in Canada. So today I'm going to speak to one government partner and one member of our Advisory Committee. Erin Black is a social planner with policy and planning affordable housing and homelessness with the city of Edmonton. Sahar Raza is the director of policy and communications at the National Right to Housing Network, and she works to end homelessness and implement the human right to adequate housing across the country, particularly by ensuring that Canada's National Housing Strategy is revised to meaningfully target and improve housing outcomes for people in greatest need. Thank you for joining us Erin and Sahar. Erin, I'm going to start off with you. Tell me a little bit about how you've worked with the HART that in the last year and what aspects have been most useful to your work.

Erin Black (City of Edmonton): Thanks, Carolyn. So the city of Edmonton completed a [Housing Needs Assessment](#) last year, and that was based specifically upon the HART methodology, and then built upon it. So the city was in need of the housing needs assessment for a long time, and now that we have such a comprehensive document, it's used in nearly every facet of our work, including the development of

strategies, plans, grant programs, advocacy communications. It's been really helpful to help, to understand and tell the story of who is in housing need in Edmonton.

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Erin Black (City of Edmonton): Edmonton is often touted as one of Canada's most affordable housing markets. But that prosperity isn't shared equally between home owners and renters. Edmonton's Median income is higher than the Canadian Median income, but Edmonton exceeds national levels in the Very Low and Low income categories. So, for example, 9% of Edmonton's renter households earn less than \$15,000. Compare that to 6% nationally and 29% earn between \$15,000 and \$30,000 compared to 18% nationally. And we now know from the housing needs assessment, that renters in Edmonton are 4 times more likely to be in housing need than homeowners. Edmonton is a hub for services in northwestern communities, as well as the oil and gas industry which is susceptible to boom and bust cycles. We're also a young city with a population more than 5 years younger than the national average, and we also have the second highest Indigenous population among Canadian cities. So all of these factors go into influencing housing need in Edmonton. The needs assessment we did involved the synthesis of census data and qualitative data to understand who's in core housing need in Edmonton. It was really helpful to anticipating housing trends and determining which forms of housing are most needed, and whether housing really needs to be provided at deep subsidy, or affordable near market rates or rent geared to income, where these subsidies may be out of reach. It was also helpful with an understanding of what size of units are needed. So appropriately sized housing with the right number of bedrooms can be provided at the appropriate subsidy level. Also focusing on the 13 priority population groups identified in the HART methodology was really helpful to informing an understanding of the distinct needs of priority populations in Edmonton, and also to informing housing strategies that will address those needs. This focus is really significant from the perspective of an equity focused approach to housing need. So, for example, you know the needs assessment confirmed the over-representation of Indigenous people living in the core housing need and homelessness in Edmonton and an Indigenous affordable housing strategy has recently been developed to dive into and explore the housing needs of Indigenous people in Edmonton. The 23 recommendations which came out of the strategy are currently being implemented into our work. The city is also in the design phase of an Indigenous led shelter. Indigenous organizations are being asked to share their knowledge and guidance on how to create a safe, comfortable, and culturally appropriate space where Indigenous people experiencing homelessness can find the physical, emotional, and spiritual support they need while staying in an emergency shelter. The city is going to use the input received to help shape a proposal for city funded emergency accommodations designed by and for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton with a target date to begin providing services in winter 2025. Another piece to mention is the city of Edmonton's grant program. This Grant program provides capital funding to nonprofit and for profit organizations to encourage affordable housing development. Grant funding covers up to 25% of capital costs associated with the affordable housing components of a development, and over the last 4 years, there was more than \$48 million invested for more than 1,100 new or refurbished units for the program. Each city dollar spent on affordable housing attracted about \$8 in investment from non-market housing developers and other levels of government, and recently a new stream of funding has been added to focus specifically on Indigenous housing. So the new Indigenous housing stream supports both new construction and rehabilitation projects. This grant

program is one part of the city's overall affordable housing investment plan, which also included land and grants for permanent supportive housing, affordable secondary suites, and the redevelopment of surplus city land no longer needed for schools. \$132.5 million was committed over 5 years, with a goal to create 2,500 units. and that was to include 600 units of supportive housing. and I'm happy to say we've exceeded this overall target with more than 2,700 units created, including 648 units of support of housing. The city of Edmonton's affordable housing strategy is also being updated to respond to the insights from the housing needs assessment. Its team is currently working on an implementation plan, and the final strategy is going to be presented to council this fall and then there are the impacts to the work specific to addressing homelessness. So, as a result of the pandemic, the number of people experiencing homelessness is nearly doubled and the city's role in responding to homelessness is expanded in response. We know these numbers because of data collected and recorded by an organization called Homeward Trust Edmonton. They maintain a registry, or by names list of people experiencing homelessness, and these numbers were also reported in the Housing Needs Assessment. Even though the number of people experiencing homelessness is up, Edmonton was successful in cutting chronic homelessness in half between 2008 and 2019, which resulted in Edmonton being named an International Vanguard City, for its data oriented approach to ending homelessness. So the city is currently working in partnership with Homeward Trust Edmonton to create the next community plan to end homelessness. This work is focused on developing a plan that addresses our shared priorities to end chronic homelessness through sector collaboration, evidence based best practices and a clear accountability framework.

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Erin Black (City of Edmonton): And at the same time the city is developing a separate and complementary corporate homelessness plan to define its role and accountabilities in responding to homelessness, so that we can better support our partners in ending it. Data from the housing needs assessment is going to inform the corporate homelessness plan projections. So, as you can see, Carolyn, there have been lots of impact to our overall work of the city.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Thank you so much, Erin, and bravo to the city of Edmonton! I think one of the, I'm just going to do a little tldr. It's really great to see Edmonton using need assessment that looks at income categories, at household sizes and at priority populations to set meaningful targets and sub-targets, using a rights-based approach. It's also really wonderful to see you thinking about separate for Indigenous by Indigenous strategies, which is very much where we should be moving to across Canada, and I'd like to mention that one of the pleasures of the HART project has been our monthly partners meeting, where there's been a high degree of peer learning between the governments involved in the HART project. And really there's so much to learn about what municipalities are doing, and perhaps not echoed as yet in many provinces and at the federal level, which brings me to you, Sahar, you work at the federal level. How have you worked with HART data, and what aspects have been most useful for your work in national advocacy?

Sahar Raza (National Right to Housing Network): I love the segue, and first of all, thank you, Carolyn and team for having me and for producing this amazing tool. The more I see you folks play with it, the more I am amazed and excited about how much it will advance human rights-based policy, advocacy,

and frankly, accountability to government's commitments. So some quick context to your points, Carolyn, so everyone's on the same page. My job is all about ensuring that Canada meaningfully implements the human right to adequate housing, which it historically legislated in 2019 and a huge part of that legislation is ensuring that we maintain a human rights based national housing strategy which targets its policies, programs, and funds towards people's and communities that are in greatest housing need and homelessness, because, of course, those are the people who are facing the most severe and overt violations of the right to adequate housing. So this is a huge deal. It's a big commitment for a wealthy country like Canada, which has the land and resources to house everyone adequately if we just meaningfully invest in it and target the communities who need it. But of course, to target those in greatest need, we need quality, reliable and consistent desegregated data, and that would really help us to identify and address the systemic patterns of inequity and exclusion in our housing system, and also allow us to monitor our government's progress in addressing those inequities. You know, we need to know who is in housing need, which populations, what's affordable for those populations? How big are their households? Where are they living? What services and infrastructure are available to them? What gaps are they facing, or barriers are they facing, and are Canada's housing policies responsive to their needs? Like, these are the questions we need to answer, and shockingly, these data are not available to us. So we've known across the sector for some time now, that the [National Housing Strategy is not targeting those in greatest need](#), but we don't know what the outcomes of the strategy actually are, and so that's where the HART data really comes in for us because it's giving us the desegregated data and evidence that we need in a digestible, accessible and useful way, so that we can identify the structural gaps in the National Housing Strategy, we can build our case for rights-based change, and we can ensure government accountability to their human rights commitments. So getting into some practical applications, we have been working across the sector to ensure that there is a consistent definition of affordable housing, because Canada has defined that affordability means you shouldn't be spending more than 30% of your income towards your housing. And yet the programs across Canada's National Housing Strategy have completely different affordability criteria that are often targeted, or attached to market rental rates rather than incomes.

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Sahar Raza (National Right to Housing Network): And so Carolyn has been kind enough to feed us the data we need to prove that actually 80% of market rent is so far beyond the threshold of what is affordable to low and moderate income households, particularly the most marginalized that we're supposed to be targeting with this National Housing Strategy. So folks like Indigenous peoples, single mother households, immigrants, refugees, racialized people, youth, seniors', people with disabilities, and so on. And as Erin said, we're actually able to paint that picture of what core housing need looks like and what affordability needs to look like if we actually want to house that community. I think it's important to also acknowledge here that the National Housing Strategy has even stated in its goals that it is seeking to lift 530,000 households out of core housing need and end chronic homelessness by 2030. So if that's what we're trying to do, we need to get much more serious about what affordability criteria we're building into our programs. We've also been using the HART data to that end to set our targets for what the National Housing Strategy should be trying to achieve, so that 530,000 number for the number of households we're trying to lift out of core housing need. It does not even match with the number of households that are in core housing need, which is 1.7 million. And so we're using Carolyn's

data to, you know, build a case for okay, we need more bold targets. We need more bold investments. We've also used HART data for a very specific purpose. Some folks may know that Canada just launched [Housing Accelerator Fund](#), which is supposed to be transferring funds to municipalities to address the housing crisis. And again, we were able to identify what affordability would look like. For example, single mother households which would actually need to be between \$1,000 to \$1,800 per month, as opposed to market rates, and so on. So again, we're using this data to push for policy change. And what I want to really emphasize for all of the nonprofit organizations like ours is that we are chronically underfunded. We do not have the staff and the time and the resources to find this data, to make sense of this data. We're not data scientists. And so this tool is just a game changer, because it gives us the evidence that we need to do what we do best, which is the advocacy and the communications and holding feet to fire. And so I'm just really excited to have this tangible evidence to push for that policy change.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Thank you, Sahar. That's such a heartening answer, although a disheartening situation, and indeed, part of the purpose of the HART project is to align good data on who needs what housing, where, and at what price, with the actual programs that all 3 levels of government are delivering quite often without much regard for who needs what housing, where and at what cost. So I guess I'm going to ask you both next to do a little crystal ball into the future. I have indeed been feeding data as the wonderful HART team develops it on housing need, particularly with our partners. Sahar, now that you've seen the complete tools as of yesterday, and you know what's coming. How do you see using those tools in the coming year? You've mentioned the Housing Accelerator Fund? Tell me, tell me more, please.

Sahar Raza (National Right to Housing Network): Oh, man, yeah, there are so many possibilities for this tool. So, as I've already mentioned, the National Housing Strategy's own targets currently appear to be selected out of thin air. I'm sorry if anyone in on this call was part of creating those targets, but you know there was no detailed needs assessment to create the targets in the first place. And now there's no monitoring to even tell us like, are we housing Indigenous folks? Are we housing single mother households? And so going into the future, I hope to use the HART data to really keep track of who is being housed? Are these outcomes changing, you know, new census data has come out. I'm sure you're going to be updating the HART tools. And so that will be such a meaningful form of accountability and kind of just reframing this strategy, like we're not trying to throw money at solutions that don't work. We want to end this housing crisis, we want to be targeted and strategic. And so, yeah, when it comes to the Housing Accelerator Fund, when the details come out about that program, if they're not meaningfully affordable based on the data, we're going to be pushing for changes, and especially because the HART data gives us access to community specific data.

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Sahar Raza (National Right to Housing Network): So we can ensure that when the Federal government is making fund transfers to municipalities, that those or to provinces that the transfers come with criteria that are tailored to their communities and the needs of those communities. I also am a bit frustrated right now about the fact that there was no acquisition fund announced in yesterday's federal budget. And so I think that the acquisitions tool that you folks have developed will be extremely

valuable in driving forward some of those efforts to ensure that we don't keep losing affordable housing stock and that nonmarket housing providers are able to access buildings and lands to produce new affordable housing stock. I also find the Land Assessment Tool to be this incredible creation that I didn't actually understand until yesterday, but it already implements and integrates housing adequacy so like not it's not just about what's affordable, but it's about what is nearby? Are there libraries? Are there schools, employment opportunities? I mean, that's the core of what a rights based approach is when it comes to thinking about housing adequacy, and so I see it being incredibly valuable, as we work with some of our local partners to ensure that their municipalities are using the right land to build the right kind of housing, and if it's unfavorable land, then we can also build an argument for improving the infrastructure around that new housing development if it doesn't already exist. So I just see tons of opportunities for ensuring accountability, monitoring and creating policies that actually meet people's needs. That's always the goal.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): So I'm just going to jump in with a couple of other bits of information. The Housing Accelerator Fund was announced less than 2 weeks ago, and the one heartening bit of news, pun intended, is that they ask for a needs assessment, and they give our the HART project a nod in terms of ways to do your needs assessment. So anyone here who's from a local or regional government and interested in the Housing Accelerator Fund, the CMHC, who of course generously fund our project have mentioned that they should use our work, which is great. It is going to be a challenge in the coming year, given well in the coming years, given that organizations ranging from Scotiabank to the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association have talked about doubling nonprofit housing production and acquisition, and the mechanisms still aren't quite there in a revised National Housing Strategy. So I just needed to editorialize there for a brief moment. But, Erin, you talked a little bit about revising the housing need assessment. We do know that need is increasing simply because of inflation, higher interest rates, increasing evictions, etc. Can you tell us anything more about how you plan on using the HART tools in the coming year or so?

Erin Black (City of Edmonton): Yeah, absolutely. You know, we'll certainly continue to keep the housing needs assessment updated and provided with new census data that's coming available, and the Land Assessment Tool is also very exciting. We could see this being useful in all sorts of ways. One way would be feeding this into a current scoring, using, you know, the social inclusion factors that are incorporated, and this will probably help to alleviate some of the initial screening work that is being undertaken by city staff currently being done on a project by project basis. And then, after this point, more detailed analysis to take place to align available land parcels with the city of Edmonton's policy to target its aspirational target of 16% affordable housing in all neighborhoods. And this policy, of course, it's based on principles of equity that people living in affordable housing should have as much choice in terms of what kind of housing they live in, and should be no different in terms of the options available to them than what other Edmontonian's have when they are looking for housing. So we have an inventory of affordable housing in Edmonton, have ratios of non-market to market housing in each neighborhood, grant applications coming in. We look at that ratio, and when the ratio is really high, for example, we might score that proposal a little bit lower than another equal proposal in another part of the city. So that's just one component of the scoring that takes place under the current process when looking at a project and considering where it is, the Land Assessment Tool could be really helpful for feeding into

this prioritization as well as to identify, you know, any gaps that we need to be aware of, and it's also going to help with say, land acquisition.

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Erin Black (City of Edmonton): So land acquisition is that you know it's a significant barrier for affordable housing developers and below market land sales can be an important tool that the city can use to help to encourage more affordable housing being constructed. So in 2021 city council in Edmonton approved a new approach to site selection and land disposal which improved access to the city's land inventory, and created a more consistent and efficient process. So previously administration had sought council's approval for every land sale to a non-market housing provider, and this was a fairly time consuming and a little bit inconsistent but now administration reviews and identifies sites suitable for residential development, and will seek approval to sell or lease the sites usually as batch, or at least you know more than one site at a time. And then they're publicly listed for sale or lease, and open to bids from nonprofit housing providers and proposals then, are evaluated through a competitive process and that process considers the city's affordable housing investment priorities, and the applicants organizational and financial capacity to complete and operate the post development. So, when considering land, proximity to transit and alignment with a you know, 15 minute district concept are prioritized, and these are factors that the housing needs assessment has identified as barriers for populations that are most likely to need affordable housing. So, having that scoring of the social inclusion criteria in the land assessment to explain, to be really helpful, to establish evidence based quantifiable justifications that could really help council and others to really understand the rationale behind any given decisions about land, and could also help to identify issues and stop gaps, and, you know even be able to perhaps monitor their evolution over time would be incredibly beneficial. So, that ability to filter by social inclusion factor is going to be really useful in identifying appropriate housing for specific populations. So, for example, the ability to filter proximity to child care centers could really help to identify housing with those amenities that will be needed for, say, you know, female headed households. Also the ability to filter by occupancy could help us if we're looking for specifically for, say, vacant land where we want to build permanent supportive housing, or, if we want to, you know, be looking for conversions. We can filter accordingly to identify appropriate housing. We'll also help to cross-reference our existing prioritization to make sure we're on the right track. So there's all sorts of possibilities. And we're really excited about these tools, and when we look at the insights that are coming out of the housing needs assessment, pairing this with the Land Assessment Tool, is really going to strengthen our ability to make evidence-based decisions about housing that is, that will target it to addressing the specific housing needs of the priority populations. The possibilities for integrating this into future work really are extensive.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): I'm so excited, and I know all 3 of us are policy wonks. I'm really excited about the land policy. I'm also looking forward to the work that it's been led by the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa, along with the Maytree Foundation to use Ottawa's land for nonprofit housing. I can't wait, which again is a policy wonk thing, I can't wait to see Edmonton's equity-based zoning by-law changes which I think are going to be really influential across the country. I'm going to end by asking for just a very quick answer on from Erin, and then from Sahar. What do you wish other,

in your case, Erin, other governments, and in Sahar's case other organizations knew about the HART tools? What's the one takeaway that you want to give, the 250 or so folks who are on this call?

Erin Black (City of Edmonton): I say, you know that the tools are really well designed and very easy to use, and you know, having equity focused housing policy tools is so helpful when it comes to developing monitoring and evaluating housing policy, so really powerful.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Thank you, Erin, over to you, Sahar.

Sahar Raza (National Right to Housing Network): Well, I would want organizations to know that. Well, there's a lot I would want them to know, but that if we meaningfully integrate the HART tools into our work, we can unlock the power of human rights-based policy change and achieve targeted strategic housing outcomes for those who need it most. And I think that's always our mission like we need to work ourselves out of our jobs and using quality data is how we're going to do it and so use it and thrive. I don't know, sorry that was a weird way to end.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): I'm really excited. Thank you so far. Thank you both for your guidance and your participation throughout our project. And with that I'm going to hand over to Alexandra Flynn.

The Future of HART

01:25:07.100

Alexandra Flynn (HART): Hello, everybody! Hopefully, you can hear me. That was incredible. Thank you so much, Carolyn Sahar and Erin for your insights on HART and also the challenges going forward. Your conversation illustrated what HART is really all about which is the tools for supplying evidence-based data to identify who is most in need of housing in Canada, where exactly housing need exists and at what price. My name is Alexandra Flynn, I'm one of the co-leads of HART. I'm a lawyer and a law professor at UBC. And I have the very lucky job of thanking this incredible team for the presentation so far, and also letting you know what is coming up next for the HART project. So first and most immediately, our website will be launched today following our webinar. That's at noon Pacific time and on our website, which will be located at hart.ubc.ca, you'll find detailed information on all of the features that we have described today. In addition, we'll soon be sharing information that includes how to guides better functionality and training guides in the coming weeks, and these additional tools will let users access our comprehensive material in accessible formats. We'll also be releasing the remaining land assessments for our partners, with the help of CMHC we'll be rolling out hands on training to help municipalities and housing providers to prepare housing need assessments in order to apply for the Housing Accelerator Fund and other sources of funding. So that's one big next step that we'll be working towards in the next little while. We also have a training module that will be released in a few months as well. So sign up for all of these notifications on our website, and you'll be first in line to receive them. Second of all, as Sahar and Erin illustrated, you know, these tools are really meant to be helpful to governments and housing providers in the work that they're doing to achieve housing justice. And so we're deepening our relationships with existing partners and advisory members to understand what housing and land assessment needs they have how our tools are helpful, and how they can be even

more helpful. We've seen in the chat some suggestions or comments from those of you here today on other functionality that you think would be important, and so we'll be continuing to learn from as these tools will roll out. We'll be continuing to learn what else will make them even stronger. We already know that, providing in, you know, additional functionality for the local level to take the tools that we've created to apply them to their home jurisdictions is a big need, and so we're enabling unique dashboards for a number of our tools, so that our partners are able to do this. And you know we know just from looking at the news, how incredibly important it is to know where public lands are located. Just this past weekend the British Columbia government announced that 330 new homes would be available for those in Vancouver's Downtown East Side neighborhood in the coming months. And this kind of initiative just showcases that in order to provide short term housing like this, we need to know where public lands are located, and that takes me to the third kind of looking forward pillar, which is data advocacy. You know, as Cam mentioned when we went into this project we didn't know the extent to which data was missing. We knew that there would be challenges. We knew that it was going to be a lot of hard work to pull together the existing data that was out there. But we didn't realize how many gaps there were in data. In our view it's unacceptable. If we want to address acute housing need, not to know where public lands are located across the country, everybody is harmed by the lack of comprehensive and clear data to come up with better housing solutions. So we'll be writing reports and articles, and op-eds to share our findings on how to use these tools, and also how to address the acute need for housing more broadly. And all of this is to support governments to progressively realize the right to housing. So the information on the slide right now is an excerpt from the [National Housing Strategy Act](#), which was enacted by the Federal Government a few years ago.

01:30:15.840

Alexandra Flynn (HART): And this act, this piece of legislation that Sahar and Erin mentioned as well, has committed the federal government to a human rights based approach to housing and HART aims to provide and support all governments, advocates, and those who care about housing, another tool to take this law from the page, to take this law from the website to action. And we know that there's many legal and policy tools that can work to help make this happen. This includes what Joe mentioned, changes to legislation and policy in respect of acquisition. It includes what Cam mentioned, data reform in the area of providing land data across the country to know where public lands and other kinds of lands are located. And we're also helping legal advocates with the information they need in their work as well in their law reform reports, and also for other initiatives that they may take, for example, legal cases, to achieve what this section of the National Housing Strategy Act embodies. So you know it's timely that our webinar is coming just on the heels of the release of the federal budget, and you know we see that there's funding that's been provided under the Housing Accelerator Fund and the Rapid Housing Initiative for Canadians in housing need, and we applaud these efforts to recognize that we need more housing, and we need it for very vulnerable people, in order that they can have the dignity that they need to live and survive in pretty dire circumstances. And there's so much more to do, and we hope that our data will provide the platform for showcasing how much more there is to do to build new and deeply affordable housing as organizations like Scotiabank and CHRA to name just two, have identified. So these are these are good initiatives. We're happy to see some funding coming. We're happy to see that British Columbia earmarked some additional operating and capital funding as well. And what we aim to do for this human rights based approach to housing that the federal government

has identified is to supply the evidence-based data, as well as other materials, like reports and articles to show where housing is most needed, in what municipalities to enable local governments and housing advocates to do the important work that they are doing already. Right. So with that, let's turn it over to the Q&A take some of your questions and thank you so much for attending today.

Questions & Answers

Sam Roberts (HART): Thank you so much, Alex. So I'll invite all of our panelists to come back on screen. We do have quite a few questions already lined up, so I'll get started on those, but feel free to use the Q&A function down at the bottom of your screen to ask any of our panelists a question, and we will get to as many as we can in this short period of time. So I'm going to start off with one for Craig on the housing needs assessment. The question is regarding projections, considering they are based on past trends which may have resulted from exclusionary zoning, which may show a decreasing share of, say, middle income households in desirable urban areas near quality active transportation jobs and amenities; have you considered incorporating latent demand into your model?

Craig Jones (HART): Yeah, thanks so much for the question and doing households projections was one of the challenges we really identified from the start, especially doing it at the national scale. We are continuing to refine our projection methods. So there's still more work to be done in that way. But yeah, our challenge remains. How do we produce estimates for household growth, for all geographies across the country without being able to account for local context to address that? We, you know, we were aware of the idea of what about household suppression of that households that wants to find housing, you know, in a given municipality, but are unable to for various reasons. And that is why we included the function to look at a municipal and regional growth rate. To really call out to up, to point out that difference, to say, look, this particular jurisdiction, your growth rate of middle income household is quite low relative to the regional growth to allow for that comparison.

01:35:12.300

Craig Jones (HART): I might also point out that we do see our household projections are not the end of the road. We see our projections as an input to a toolkit for local experts. We're not, you know there is. We're not trying to supplant the hard work that has to go into producing local household growth projections, but we do want to offer at least an idea of this is the trend of the past 10 years. Should this trend continue into the next 10 years, this is what you can expect. It's not to say that this is, we're not predicting the future with these projections.

Sam Roberts (HART): Thanks so much, Craig. I'll go over to Cam next. Will the Land Assessment Tool be limited to the 12 communities that you detailed? Is there a plan to expand beyond them?

Cam Power (HART): Thanks. Yeah, thanks, Sam. So I mentioned earlier that to conduct our assessments we partner with local governments in in the jurisdictions that we're mapping, and we really depend on those partnerships in order to firstly, access data that's maybe not openly available, that will inform our maps and also because we're doing this mapping as a third party, they also help us

understand some of the local land use planning contexts. So really, you know, we owe a lot to our partners, and this work wouldn't be possible with those partnerships. And yeah, we're not equipped to conduct assessments of communities that we don't, that we're not already partnered with. But with that said: If you are interested in in conducting land assessments in your community, please do get in touch. We'll be sharing our contact info at the end of the webinar, and we'd really like to hear from you.

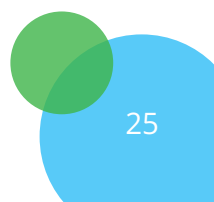
Sam Roberts (HART): Yeah, please get in touch once we're done the Q&A we will be sharing some ways for you to keep in touch with us, and I do hope you'll take us up on it. Next, I'm going to pass one to Carolyn, which is asking about accessibility for folks with disabilities and elders who are often excluded from consideration.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Yeah, I mean it's a good question. It's an important question. Core housing need as a measure was developed in 1991 it hasn't substantially changed in the last 30 years. It doesn't reflect what Alex was talking about with the National Housing Strategy Act. So core housing need currently excludes people who are without shelter, people are in emergency and temporary shelter. It excludes students because students are considered to be voluntarily and temporarily poor. But we know that they have tremendous housing needs. It excludes migrant workers, because farms aren't included in core housing need. I could go on. There is a need in the short term to include those groups and core housing need, as well as coming up with some way to deal with latent demand and suppressed household formation which Craig was already talking about. In the longer term there does need to be a way to include aspects of adequate housing. We're starting to deal with location. We haven't dealt with accessibility, yet in core housing need. The measure used for affordability, and the measures used for that matter, overcrowding are a little bit sus. Security of tenure which is very important to the right of housing, isn't included. So if you go to our housing need assessment tool, you will see a tab for the priority population, people with physical disabilities, and another tab for the population of people who have cognitive or mental disabilities. You'll also see a tab a bar for people over 85, for instance. But that's no substitute to the work that we are doing, and we'll continue to do with Statistics Canada, with the CMHC, and within infrastructure as well as with the National Housing Council and the Federal Housing Advocate to change the way we measure housing need.

Sam Roberts (HART): Thank you so much, Carolyn. There's so much. I think, if we've learned anything over the process of doing this project is that there's still a long way to go and a lot of ways that we would love to improve the work that we do into the future. So I now have a question for Joe on property acquisitions, which is what acquisitions policy could Canada implement at the federal level to have the greatest impact?

01:39:55.370

Joseph Daniels (HART): Yeah, I mean, simply put, it's provided a large scale capital grant scheme which is sizable to support thousands of units to be acquired per year, and to do so in a way in which it directs its energy towards being the funder, and then allowing local and provincial bodies to actually implement that. And that would be, for example, like supporting MURA, which is in Toronto. It doesn't have a long term funding scheme, but it's an effective program. It just can't scale up because it's only \$10 million a year for a couple of years, so providing those funds is really the most critical key, and to more or less



get out of the way of those who know where the problems are which are the municipalities and the nonprofit providers and whatnot on the ground.

Sam Roberts (HART): Thank you so much. If only if only the federal government had heard this presentation before yesterday. I have another question for Craig, which is asking if there are projections by tenure, and wondering if you can say a little bit more about that projection's methodology, if it's mainly based on a continuation of historical trends.

Craig Jones (HART): So yeah, it is based, it is entirely based on the continuation of historical trends in order to cover the country. Within our data that we have ordered that is available as of right now to download, it is absolutely possible to disaggregate households by tenure. Unfortunately, with the way that the data is structured, we're not able to segregate by tenure and household size. They're in the same dimension. It's just the way that census data is structured. However, it is entirely possible to disaggregate by tenure and priority populations, household income categories, and various core housing need indicators. It really is just about downloading the data either in the CSV format that we have made available, which does have a lot there, or to go into the IVT file format with Beyond 2020. And you know, if you are looking for specific outputs such as that, we have provided data just like this to several of our partners, and we're happy to entertain request for custom outputs to look at these kind of questions.

Sam Roberts (HART): Super. Thank you so much, Craig. I have a wonderful question that I love for Carolyn, I can see great potential here for presentations to city councils and staff. Do you, or will you have the capacity to assist in that effort?

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Well, please contact us with the help of this amazing team. I think we've been doing about one presentation a week since for the last 6 months or so. We're very happy to roll the tools out, particularly now that they're live. So contact us. And Sam will tell you how to contact us in just a few minutes.

Sam Roberts (HART): That is very true. We do have time for just a couple more questions, so if you have any burning ones, please put them in there. But the next one is for Cam, asking about development potential on government sites based off of zoning. So wondering if you've taken zoning into account, and how that plays into the Land Assessment Tool.

Cam Power (HART): Yeah. So I guess just to frame my answer. Our objective is really to present an expansive view of the options that are available. So in the selection of candidate sites, we did remove sites that are either in heavy industrial zones, or maybe they're in environmentally protected zones, you know. Maybe some other forms of zoning that came up in our discussions with our government partners. But here we do include sites that aren't already zoned necessarily for residential development. We do try to include some information about the current zoning in those pop ups that we looked at earlier, and in the very near future we'll be able to, you'll be able to overlay our candidate sites with zoning boundaries, so you can see how the sites align with those local bylaws.

Sam Roberts (HART): Amazing thanks, Cam, yeah. Zoning seems to be a very popular issue in a lot of municipalities. Certainly here in Vancouver, a lot of questions about that. Another one for you Cam on land assessment, wondering if there is an opportunity to expand the methodology to map affordable rental housing in the private market and monitor financialization?

01:44:58.020

Cam Power (HART): I think, so that might be, I think, the most challenging aspect of that question is to my knowledge, and maybe Craig would be able to jump in here is that information about affordable rental housing or data on that is quite limited. So I'm not sure. Yeah, I think Craig might have a better sense of that market or that data universe. So maybe I'll hand it over to him.

Craig Jones (HART): Sure, I think that comes down to what we mean by the private rental market. There are two distinctions which is the primary rental market, which is purpose-built rental. Data on that is tracked every year by CMHC, through their Market Rental Survey, so that we have annual data on that. But if we're talking about the secondary market, which is condominiums or basement suites or houses, other forms of rental. We really don't have a good data on that rental market, right now. It is something that we are aware of. The census does include some information actually quite a bit of information, and unfortunately the census doesn't distinguish between primary and secondary rental. So yeah, unfortunately, without access to better data on this subject, I don't think we could address that question. It's unfortunate.

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): And I just want to jump in and say that BC has a public assessment data system that allows one to say who owns what land. But when we're dealing with Ontario and Alberta, to name two other big provinces, and Quebec is public as well, but it's really hard to find out who owns which piece of land which is important for mapping.

Joseph Daniels (HART): And I'll add that, it's really hard to get that data that CMHC collects, at the building level. In fact, it's more or less impossible, at least under current ways in which they distribute that data. And so it's hard to keep track of individual buildings, although you can get it at perhaps the tract level, provided there are sufficient number of units or buildings in that tract, because if it drops below a certain figure they suppress it so it can be difficult. And that's one of the areas in which our work on acquisitions is perhaps a bit hampered and an area we're trying to explore, and there are possibilities for changing that through. For example, land registries or things where they have to submit what their rents are in buildings, and those could then be mapped and incorporated into a more data rich acquisitions approach.

Sam Roberts (HART): Great thanks, everyone, very comprehensive. You can see how all of these tools have a little bit of overlap. I think, we have time for one more question before we close out, and this one's for Carolyn. Will we be making recommendations to StatsCan based off of our long term vision and the challenges that we've encountered over the course of this project?

Carolyn Whitzman (HART): Yes, absolutely. So we're part of a data group that the Office for the Federal Housing Advocate has convened, and we do regularly depute. We were part of a deputation to the

House of Commons Subcommittee that helped create the Housing Accelerator Fund. So we're very much action researchers, as Alexandra, as Penny said. We're here to change the conversation. So we hope to continue doing that work into the future. It's not just about creating the data. It's about saying how the data could be better.

Sam Roberts (HART): Thank you so much. So with that I'd like to thank everyone so much for coming to this event to all of our panelists, especially our esteemed guests, Erin and Sahar. We are thrilled to share these tools with you. We hope that you'll keep in touch. My colleague will it just put in some ways that you can do so online through email, newsletter Twitter, LinkedIn. And you'll see all of the updates, all of the tools that we just spoke about in the coming months, and everything is on the website which I have just checked is now live. So you can go to hart.ubc.ca and check out all of these tools and all of these really exciting updates for yourselves. Thank you again for spending so much time with us on a Wednesday morning or afternoon, from wherever you would have joined us from. And I hope you all have a wonderful day. Thank you so much.

Contact Information

If you have further questions about our presentation, or want to inquire about using HART's Tools in your community, please don't hesitate to get in touch:

Email: hart@allard.ubc.ca

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