



Breaking Ground: A Panel on Public Land for Community Housing

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Panelists

Carolyn Whitzman

Carolyn Whitzman is in the middle of her third career as a researcher, consultant, and advocate, focused on housing and planning policy that advances the right to the city. In the past, she has worked for the City of Toronto, the University of Melbourne. Professor Whitzman is the author, co-author or editor of five books related to 'the right to the city' in both a contemporary and historical perspective. These include *Building Inclusive Cities: Women's Safety and the Right to the City* (Routledge, 2013); *Suburb, Slum, Urban Village: Transformations in a Toronto's Parkdale Neighbourhood 1875-2002* (UBC Press, 2009), and *The Handbook of Community Safety, Gender, and Violence Prevention: Practical Planning Tools* (Earthscan, 2008). She is also the author or co-author of over 50 book chapters, articles and published conference presentations on housing policy, children's independent mobility, women's safety, and disability rights. She frequently provides policy advice to local, state and national government and to the UN, including addressing the plenary at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador in September 2016.

Dr. Brian Doucet

Dr. Doucet is the Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Social Inclusion and Associate Professor at the School of Planning in the University of Waterloo. His research examines housing, gentrification, displacement, transportation and neighbourhood change. He currently leads five major SSHRC-funded research projects and has co-authored and co-edited several books on transit-oriented development and urban inequality. Born and raised in Toronto, he resided in the Netherlands between 2004 – 2017, where he completed his PhD at Utrecht University in 2010. He is currently working on the documentary film *Thinking Beyond the Market: a film about genuinely affordable housing*, which will be released in 2024.

Jaimee Gaunce

Jaimee Gaunce is the Director of Policy and Stakeholder Relations for the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. Celebrated for her skill at blending data and lived experience for the organizations she has supported, Jaimee is an internationally recognized Indigenous public policy leader. Hailing from Pasqua First Nation in Treaty Four Territory in Saskatchewan, she has built a career out of working with the housing and natural resources sectors to empower Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, and around the world. In addition to her time supporting Homeward clients, she currently sits on the Justice Committee for her First Nation, The Regina Homelessness Board, and several other committees and boards of directors in the community housing sector.

James Connolly

James Connolly is Associate Professor in the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC and Co-Director of the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability (BCNUEJ) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Spain. Before coming to UBC, James was at Northeastern University in Boston, USA, where he was awarded the Northeastern Humanities Center Fellowship, and Columbia University for his PhD. He has also worked as a staff researcher at the Earth Institute's Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) and the Spatial Information Design Lab. His research focuses on Conflict in social-ecological urban contexts, Urban greening, Urban infrastructure and Urban institutional change. Most recently, James led the [Land Assessment](#) within the HART project, where he worked to map and score public land in Canadian cities.

Introduction

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Sam Roberts (HART): Okay. I will get started. Hello, everyone. Good morning or afternoon, depending on where you were joining us from. My name is Sam Roberts. I am the communications officer for the [Housing Assessment Resource Tools](#) project, and today I am very excited to welcome our panelists for what will be a very engaging discussion on the use of public land in so-called Canada. Just a couple of pieces of housekeeping: we do have a Q&A function, so I encourage you to insert questions that you may have for the panelists as we go. We do have some questions we want to talk about and then, towards the end if we have the opportunity, we will get to those questions, so please feel free throughout the event to add in questions to that Q&A. We will have back-end support, so if you have any questions or problems, you can pop those into the Q&A as well, and we will be inserting some links to the audience using our function with any kind of files and links that the panelists mention.

But before I get to that, I do want to acknowledge that I am joining everyone from the unseated and stolen territories of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations in so-called Vancouver. It's particularly important to do an acknowledgement here because Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by housing inequality as a direct result of colonial violence, and so we encourage you to consider where you live, work, and play and how the land stewarded by Indigenous folks for longer than written history plays an important role in your life. So, we should have a little link, but [native-land.ca](#) is a really great place, for you to check that out.

Then I am pleased to introduce our moderator and our speakers today. I'll start with Carolyn Whitzman who is in the middle of her third career as a researcher, consultant and advocate focused on housing and planning policy that advances the right to the city. She is an invited professor at the University of Ottawa and importantly, she is the Expert Advisor to the Housing Assessment Resource Tools project. In the past, she has worked for the City of Toronto and the University of Melbourne in planning and teaching capacities. She is also the author, co-author or editor of 5 books related to right to the city in both a contemporary and historical perspective with a new book coming out, I believe this year. She frequently provides policy advice to local, state, and national governments and to the UN, including addressing the plenary of the Habitat 3 Conference in Quito, Ecuador in September 2016.

She is joined by 3 distinguished panelists, who I am happy to introduce. The first being Dr. Brian Doucet, who is the Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Social Inclusion and the Associate Professor at the School of Planning in the University of Waterloo. Dr. Doucet's research examines housing, gentrification, displacement, transportation, and neighborhood change. He currently leads 5 major SSHRC-funded research projects and has co-authored and co-edited several books on transit-oriented development and urban inequality. Born and raised in Toronto, he resided in the Netherlands between 2004 and 2017 where he completed his PhD at Utrecht University in 2010. He is currently working on the documentary film [Thinking Beyond the Market](#), a film about genuinely affordable housing, which will be released this year.

Next, we have Jaimee Gaunce. She is the director of policy and stakeholder relations for the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Incorporated or NICHI. She is celebrated for her skill at blending data and lived experience for the organizations she has supported and an internationally recognized Indigenous public policy leader. Hailing from the Pascoe First Nation and Treaty 4 territory in Saskatchewan, she has built a career out of working with the housing and natural resources sectors to empower Indigenous peoples in Canada, United States, and around the world. In addition to our time supporting homeward clients, she currently sits on the Justice Committee for her First Nation, the Regina Homelessness Board, and several other committees and boards of directors in the community housing sector.

Finally, we have James Connolly, who is an associate professor in the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC, and co-director of the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. Before coming to UBC, James was at Northeastern University in Boston where he was awarded the Northeastern Humanities Center Fellowship and Columbia University for his PhD. He has also worked as a staff researcher at the Earth Institute Center for International Earth Science Information, and the spatial information design lab. His research focuses on conflict and social ecological urban context, urban greening, urban infrastructure, and urban institutional change. Most recently, James led the [Land Assessment](#) within the within the HART project where he worked to map and score public land in Canadian cities. And so, now I will pass it over to Carolyn to get the questions rolling.

Discussion

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Carolyn Whitzman: Thank you so much, Sam. So we have a pretty power packed group of smart people today, and we rely on evidence, and we know that the national and international evidence shows that land is one of the biggest determinants of housing costs and if we desperately need affordable, well-located housing as we do, we need to look at land, which can be anything from 15 to 30% of the total cost of housing. We also are looking at non-market housing as a way to get affordability. The same national and international studies have been saying for 80 to 100 years now that for low-income people—the lowest income quintile or 20% of the population—the market simply can't or won't provide adequate affordable housing. So how can we get more non-market housing on government land? I'm

going to start off, asking Brian: what is the importance of government land for the affordability of non-market housing? Can you add anything to that summary that I just provided?

Brian Doucet: That's a great way to start off our discussion. Carolyn and you know, maybe I'll add a bit of big picture thinking that, you know, building on what you said. We've talked a lot in recent years—really just the last 2, 3, 4 years—in the broader political debates about a housing crisis. And so, for many people this is seen as a new thing, but you think about lower income households like the percent of the population you just discussed, and we've been in a housing crisis for decades if not centuries. So, we're now in a situation where many people who never would have dreamed, they'd be in a housing crisis are now struggling to find adequate affordable appropriate shelter. But that doesn't mean it's not new. Thinking about non-market housing, thinking about public land, that combination is able to build the kind of housing that the market is either unable or unwilling to build. Also, at times when maybe the market, like now, the private market actually isn't building the kind of housing or the scale of housing that we need. So, we see this urgent need to add more units at the same time that the market conditions are meaning that we're seeing far fewer units being built and proposed. So public land and non-market housing has the chance both to fill that gap in a time perspective (We're not building as much private housing. Let's build more public. Let's build more social, non-market housing), but also in terms of serving segments of the population that just simply aren't catered to by private development. The big picture is you know we're not going to build our way out of this by enabling developers to build more for-profit housing. Because so much of the housing that's built in the private sector is built to cater to wealthier households (something like bigger suburban houses) or investors who own the vast majority in many cases of new condos.

I'm sitting here in downtown Hamilton; I can see a number of condos under construction here and recently built—the majority of those units are owned by investors and that shapes the supply of that new housing. We also have in a planning perspective, very weak rules that can actually shape and influence what kind of housing is built on private land. We have a few rules in some parts of the country about things like inclusionary zoning, right, which means that a certain percentage of new units in a development must be affordable. But in Ontario, in our biggest province, those rules are incredibly weak. They're very much focused on transit stations—which isn't a bad thing, but it's about 5% of units, at a very high ratio of average market rent for 25 years. A drop in the bucket. So if we're going to build the kind of housing on mass, on a scale that's needed to address particularly the low-income housing issues, but increasingly, more and more people are not being served by the private market, increasingly moderate and middle income households, we really have to think beyond what the market can do, beyond what the market is willing or able to do and use that public land differently.

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Brian Doucet: The beauty of it—I'm sure we'll get into this more later on—the beauty of public land is you can kind of set the rules. Your province doesn't have rent control? You can have rent control on a development on public land. You don't want investors buying 3 quarters of the new units? You could put a primary residency requirement on any unit that is bought or sold on the open market. Like you can set the rules. And I think if we actually understand the potential of that—and it's so far beyond the

way we normally think about housing—but if we actually understand the potential, and the power of it, the possibilities are literally endless.

Carolyn Whitzman: Brian, I know you've just finished a documentary called [Thinking Beyond the Market](#). Can you give an example from the past (or another place, but I think there's examples from Canada in the past) where government land has helped enable scaling up affordable housing?

Brian Doucet: That's in some ways a frustrating thing about this, Carolyn. We spoke when we when we were filming the documentary. We spoke right there in the St. Lawrence neighborhood in Toronto, which is a very good example of formerly federal land that was owned by CN when it was still a public crown corporation, that was surplus to CN's needs as railway logistics shifted out of downtown Toronto. And the creation of a wonderful neighborhood 40-50 years ago that kind of has that one third or the one third social kind of one-third rental one-third owner occupied—like this really nice mix on a scale that makes a difference. We're talking about thousands of people. We're talking about a whole new neighborhood being created. Where it looks like other neighborhoods in many ways, it is unique in some ways, but the way it operates—the governance, the tenure—is so different. So, we've done it. And I'm not saying we would replicate exactly what St. Lawrence was 50 years ago, but we have to think on that scale. I mean the best examples that we have now in Canada are actually really small-scale examples.

So, in the film, I talk about, and I go visit a very small site in the city of Kitchener where I live and it's on a road—Block Line Road. It's about 500 meters from an LRT station, good access to transit, and a few years ago, the city of Kitchener really didn't know what to do with this land. It was just a random strip of land between a road and a high school. I was on their affordable housing strategy advisory committee. And, you know, I was definitely not the only person talking about this, but I remember in that committee meeting and in some of those discussions you have with planners I was like “look, you have land. Do something with it. Work with nonprofits. You don't need to sell it. You don't need to build it yourself but use that as a foundation.” And lo and behold on that site on Block Line Road in Kitchener, today sit 2 buildings, that are run by the YW. One provides supportive housing for single women. The other provides supportive housing for families. They got rapid housing financing from the federal government. The Region of Waterloo also kicked in some money, and it went from 3 or 4 years ago what are we going to do with this land? Who knows? To now, there is actual genuine affordable housing on that site. One small example, Carolyn, but that could be a template, to think about this on a much bigger scale.

Carolyn Whitzman: Definitely. Now Jaimee, speaking of Back to the Future, I am joining you today from the banks of the Kichi Sibi River in the city colonially known as Ottawa, which once was a thriving trading settlement. Can you tell me a little bit about what's meant by urban Indigenous land back, when we talk about it in Canada?

Jaimee Gaunce: Hey, we're coming out of the gate hard. I love it. I want to just touch with on what Brian just talked about. The importance of these communities that he just spoke about when we're looking at Indigenous people living in urban world or northern areas that are off their traditional lands. We tend to forget that while the housing continuum is a Western concept, I looked at it, I broke it down and I

used it in an Indigenous lens and those communities that Brian just spoke about are incredibly important to restructuring how that housing continuum works for Indigenous people living in urban centers.

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Jaimee Gaunce: Those types of communities that have several different types of supportive and open housing allows an Indigenous person that's coming off reserve, because they have no choice, to come into a community where they might start out with rent supplements or supportive housing, but throughout some support and some years and some growth they might move into different kinds of housing. And it allows them to be positive and successful within their housing journey and not always just feel like they're pigeonholed into being poor, getting what's given to them, and that's as far as they can go in their life. Those types of communities give them that opportunity to dream bigger, once bigger, grow their family and feel supported and accepted within a within a global community like that. It's incredibly important. When we're talking about, urban land for Indigenous people, we have to start with where is the problem coming from? A long time ago, we were born, and we were then stuck on these reserves, and this reserve land has never changed. From the time that my First Nation was designed and put together and the land was given and the kilometers that we were given for land, that has never changed. I'm almost 50 years old so there's 2 generations before me that lived on this land. But we're a growing population, and if the land space has never changed on reserve, where do we go? We're literally being forced off of our traditional lands off of our reserves because there's no space for us.

So now we're being forced into urban centers. Well, where do we go there? We have no family. We have no connections. We have no way of accessing traditional ways of life or ceremonies. It's not really acceptable to you know hold a sweat lodge or grow medicines in the middle of the city. So, we are essentially outsiders on our own land which makes us even further dissected away from what we feel is our land. So, when we're looking at urban centered lands, we have to encourage and become allies for Indigenous people, we look at First Unitarian Church. And that's how I met you, Carolyn. The first Unitarian Church—you guys are a beacon of what relationship building looks like, that respect between Indigenous people and others. You invited us in as family you participated in the process, you listen to us. Now, First Unitarian Church and Indigenous people are building this incredible piece of land that encourages the folks of First Unitarian to become family and be in this wonderful set of land.

We look at the [Winnipeg, Hudson Bay](#) area. The Hudson Bay building is a phenomenal concept. They have the wraparound services. They have the connections to all of the things that make us human beings that we need to survive and thrive. And they're small, but mighty examples that are happening right now that we can really duplicate and show why, providing space and giving Indigenous people back their land to lead the way, is most important and why it will be successful. We've been seeing it for the last 2 years front and center from the Indigenous people that are leading.

Carolyn Whitzman: Thank you, Jaimee. That example that Jaimee was talking about is on the banks of the Kichi Sibi River—quite close to it in west Ottawa—and it's close to a new train station that's coming in. So, I'm actually going to move on to James and ask him: what do we know about government-owned

land and also nonprofit owned land? How much is there in Canada, and where can we find that kind of well-located land?

James Connolly: Thanks for the question, Carolyn. First, I just want to say it's a real honour to be part of this conversation, which I think is a real nod to the inspiration for some of the data work that I've done kind of looking at public lands and in Canada. In response to the question, I would start by saying it's an extremely uneven landscape of information out there in terms of public lands in Canada and specifically in Canadian cities. I'm drawing on the research that I was a part of a large team of people working on at the [Housing Assessment Research Tools project](#) that we've been working on over the last couple of years.

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James Connolly: As part of that project, we were trying to assess in a number of cities throughout Canada: what public lands are available, where are they located, are they appropriate for housing development? Questions like that. And what I would say is it's quite uneven because you're talking about public lands, very importantly talking about public lands owned at multiple levels—so federal provincial and municipal lands as well as some regional lands—and you're talking about lands that nonprofits might be owning as well as governments. In the [HART project](#) we ended up looking at 12 cities across Canada and we spent a good amount of time and energy, working with partners that worked for those cities who were ready and willing and able to kind of direct us toward the information. And even in that case for 2 of the cities, we had to report partial data because it just wasn't possible to know all the public lands in those cities. But I would say, you know, at the federal level, we have a very good understanding of where public lands are located. When you move down to the provincial and municipal levels it gets much more uneven in terms of what we can know and what even the cities themselves know about the lands. But that said—and I should say in terms of nonprofit land, that's an even murkier, zone because it gets, now you're moving into how information about land ownership is stored and it's stored very differently in different provinces throughout Canada as well—and even if you know who owns the land identifying the nonprofit ownership is still another question.

So actually, in our research, we left off the question of nonprofit ownership of land, though it was up high interest to us. It was simply too complex to be able to identify all the lands. But that said, it's a very uneven landscape of information, but we did—for 12 cities at least—identify mostly what the public land situation looks like in these cities. And I thought I might just give a few examples just to talk about the scale and scope of what it is we're thinking about, especially relative to some of the suggestions that that my co-panelists have made here in terms of the possibilities and the potential for public lands in terms of addressing the housing questions in Canada. I might start just with as a reference point here in Vancouver where I am, the [Sen'ákw development](#), which is an Indigenous led development and an example of urban land back. The plan is to build 6,000 units of housing on about 4.25 hectares of land in the center of Vancouver. So that's the high bar—it's a very dense development—it's a high bar of what one can do. You're talking about 4.25 hectares of land with 6,000 units on it to be built soon in Vancouver. Our recent data search found that in—what we did is we identified the lands and also identified what's well-located for housing: What's near to the amenities you would want for housing. Things like libraries and stores and transit and things like that. Our analysis found that, in Toronto, we

have, almost 150 hectares of publicly owned land. That is at least moderately or well-located and about 190 hectares all together. In Calgary, we're talking about, something just over 100 hectares of publicly owned land that's moderately or well located, meaning quite suitable for housing development and that's out of a total of about 250 hectares. In Ottawa, we're talking about around 250 hectares of moderately or well-located public lands. Even in small communities like Whitehorse, you still have about 17 hectares of well located, land, within the city limits that, that is publicly owned. So, if you go back to that example of, you're talking about 4.25 hectares that's providing 6,000 units of housing. And, you know, just going back to Toronto again, you have 190 hectares of publicly owned land that's moderately or well-located for housing. In the city. I'm not saying all that 190 hectares could be developed into housing, but even if you took half that off the table right away, you still got a very large amount of land that you can have a conversation about.

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James Connolly: We hope, and my personal hope would be that simply knowing that—simply knowing the amount that there is, to be talking about (and when I say publicly, I mean, municipal, provincial, and federal considered altogether), but just knowing that amount as one cumulative unit, should, I hope, raise lots of questions for people, like okay, how can we think about this? How can we plan for that amount of land? And going back to the point that Brian raised, how can we also account for the fact that when you're talking about public lands, you can really set the rules? You can really kind of determine what purpose it's going to serve. So thinking really carefully about planning for the population of Canada using these lands as an asset, I think just these numbers shows us that, even if people in their minds are right away saying “oh, yeah, there's all that land, but a bunch of that's going be taken off,” you're talking about a very large amount of space, and even if you start taking off large quantities of it you still have a lot of space left—and a lot of units that could be built on that land.

Carolyn Whitzman: Oh, I think we've thank you, James. We've heard great examples from you in terms of Senákw and Brian in terms of his example in Kitchener and Jaimee in terms of her example in Ottawa of how a relatively small piece of land can make a really significant difference. I think I want to move now into challenges. I mean, if it's worked in the past and it's working the small scale now. Why aren't we doing more of it? And actually, Jaimee, I'd like to start with you.

I'm embarrassed to say, I don't know that much about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. How is Canada falling short of good practices? Like I know Senákw, it took. Oh, a hundred years for Squamish Nation to settle some land claims and they only got a portion of the land back in Vancouver. What is Canada doing wrong in terms of its international obligations towards Indigenous people. Where do you start?

Jaimee Gaunce: Those are amazing questions. My argument has always been we have to first start at the beginning. And the beginning is: Canada was set on treaty land, and it was part of a treaty agreement. This is the basis of Canada. Indigenous people are 50% of the treaty and Canadians are the other 50% of the treaty, and it up until this point there has been no real recognition of that, no real respect of that, and it's been eroded over time. This is what brought forward the conversation about truth and reconciliation. If we were honoring each other inside of that treaty the way that we should,

the way the intent was written around that treaty, we wouldn't have to have truth and reconciliation. We would have a relationship that protects and allows both people to be part of the process—to be part of the success and the celebration. Unfortunately, we've seen through residential schools, we've seen through historic events, that Indigenous people are not truly respected and encouraged to be a part of the entire process. And now we're at this point where we have to have reconciliation. People throw this word around so much—"Well, we're practicing reconciliation because we're doing land acknowledgements." And I had an elder once tell me: If reconciliation isn't uncomfortable, it doesn't make you angry and sad, you're not doing it right. Reconciliation for Indigenous people is just having our brothers and sisters of our treaty say "we did you wrong and you suffered horrible historic events and it has changed your future trajectories. It has changed your successes and has changed your opportunities. We understand, we take responsibility for it and now we're here to help you get past this, heal from it, and become a thriving community and people." That's all Indigenous people really want. We want a chance to be part of the socioeconomic table. I had another elder tell me, which always stuck with me, and I always remind people, that Indigenous people, if they're not invited to the table, if they do not have a seat at the table, then they are on the menu. And when we're looking at land and we're looking at reconciliation and we're looking at ensuring that treaties are honoured, and people are honoured. We have to ensure that we are at the table in part of the conversation. We cannot be talked about anymore and we can't have those conversations as, "oh, those poor Indigenous people. I just have no way to help them. I don't know what to do, so we're just going to ignore them." Because usually that's what happens, or we're presented and paraded as show ponies— "We have an Indigenous person at the table. We're good now. We're not racist. We're okay. Look, we're there."

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Jaimee Gaunce: So, we have to be real and honest about these conversations, about what we are truly looking for when we're asking Indigenous people to come to the table. When we're looking at land, Indigenous people have—80% of us, 83% I think right now live off reserve. We live in the cities. We live around you. We are your neighbors. And we have to make space for us. We have to make space for you, and we have to find a way that we can partner, we can trust, we can build. And we can move each other out of—right now in the Canadian economy, we're all suffering. It doesn't matter what colour your skin is. We have to find solutions that look at the situation and not the person and create resolutions that really make a difference and take people out of the survival mode and move them into a space where they can thrive. Indigenous people have never been there. We have suffered, we have clawed, we have grabbed every little piece and we have taken a tiny little speck of gold and turned it into something beautiful every time. Indigenous people really are resourceful. I grew up very poor, and I honour everything that I have, and I honour all of my brothers and sisters who are not Indigenous. When we're looking at creating space in urban centers, it's not about—and this is going to be a little sandpaper— it's not about giving Indians a little piece of land so that they be quiet. It's about becoming and building communities and neighbors and neighborhoods and resources because—my husband is not Indigenous. That doesn't segregate me in our household. I don't have one side of the house that I can go to, and he has another side. We're all in this together and we have to start looking at our cities like this. Because I have friends that are not Indigenous, they have friends that are Indigenous, and we shouldn't be segregated by our socioeconomic status, by our skin color, by our status if we're Indigenous, or by demographics, because we all contribute to that fabric, to that family, to the success

of our country. So that was a little bit long-winded, but I think really getting to the heart of it, it's about the people. In ensuring we focus on what people need and not those firecracker results that I think the news is always looking to post on.

Carolyn Whitzman: Thank you, Jaimee. I mean, I was asking about legal obligations and what you brought it to was our interpersonal and our moral obligations. Brian, I'm going to turn to you next. Just to give a sense to the audience, we're going to explore the questions on the panel for the next 20 minutes or so, and then we'll be taking questions and answers—which I'm sure you have questions right now. Brian, we have the National Housing Strategy Act that talks about the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. Where is Canada falling short right now in terms of its practices? Why aren't we progressively realizing the right to housing in relation to the very important resource of land that we have?

Brian Doucet: Yeah, that's a that's a great question. There's big picture things and maybe smaller scale things but if we think of the National Housing Strategy and the billions that are being invested in housing—on the one hand, it's positive to see more federal attention and more federal dollars going to housing. But we're not seeing that going to building the kind of housing that we need, in the large sense. I mentioned that example in Kitchener did get some funding from the rapid housing financing initiative, which was fantastic and a great initiative that we could roll that out, but a lot of that funding goes to things like supporting the construction of new market-based rental units, rather than thinking beyond the market.

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Brian Doucet: So again, thinking about this big picture that we're in, we are in a situation in a context in Canada and many other countries around the world where the market is good, and government is bad, right? The market knows we've had decades of people on the right side of the spectrum saying government is not the solution. Lower taxes. Less intervention. And that permeates pretty much now—not entirely across the political spectrum, but across a very good part of it. We've kind of lost that broad belief in the role in which governments can play in ironing out the social and spatial and economic unevenness of capitalism, and we had that to some extent going back 40-50 years that produced St. Lawrence. That broad belief. We don't really have that today. At the small-scale level, down at the very local level, it's just not in the window of thinking that we could actually take a public site, put out a tender to do something radically different—which isn't really radical, but we perceive it as radical.

I think what's also happening is—I said at the outset, there are now millions of people who never would have dreamed they'd be victims of a housing crisis, whereas we've had a housing crisis for low-income households for decades if not centuries. And what we're seeing is for a lot of middle-class households, we're seeing a real housing crisis that's emerging, but the solutions that are being talked about from that perspective are, well, how can we build more market rate units that might be slightly cheaper? It's all the issues around zoning—about loosening regulations. We are at a point where a lot of people are talking about housing, but we're talking in many ways about two very different things. We frame it under this umbrella of a housing crisis, but a housing crisis for someone who's experiencing homelessness or someone who's on minimum wage has a very different interpretation to someone who can't afford the

1.5 million dollars detached home in a nice urban setting but might be able to afford a duplex or a triplex unit. And it's not to say that these aren't all issues that need to be addressed, but I think we have to be very careful that the focus doesn't just go to building more market-based housing that might be slightly cheaper, to loosening planning regulations without thinking about maybe what the consequences of those are. I think we really need to center— that's why we have this great panel. We need to center some of those experiences of people who've been in a housing crisis for decades.

Some of the work that I've been doing with partners across Ontario, we've been looking at displacement and run eviction in communities all different communities across the province. When you start to listen to those perspectives and hear those perspectives, you realize that the market simply isn't going to solve that issue. But how often do we hear those perspectives on being displaced, on being evicted? Not very much. When we do, we see very different interpretations. I'm here in Hamilton today. I live up in Kitchener Waterloo. I'm here in Hamilton today because I was speaking at Hamilton City Council this morning because Hamilton City Council is voting. I'm kind of dark on the internet right now because I'm in the panel, so I don't know where the vote is, but Hamilton City Council is voting today on adopting anti-renoviction bylaws, which would be the best in Ontario, and would become pretty close to what New Westminster did and the tenant protection that Burnaby, B.C. has—which is fabulous. And you have to start asking, well, where does this come from? It doesn't come out of thin air. It comes from groups like ACORN who have really been organizing tenants really been pushing politicians getting these ideas on the agenda, getting those tenant experiences, getting those lived experiences, into broader debates. Because if they don't happen, we don't hear them. We don't see that we need to think beyond the market for these solutions.

Carolyn Whitzman: Thank you, Brian. I'm going to shift here slightly just before we start talking about the ways to overcome barriers because, James, you and I worked in the HART project together and I think we both were a little bit stunned with how hard it was just to get some basic information about where government and as you say non-profit land was almost impossible—where it was, who owned it, and how let alone to make it public information. How, in an ideal world, would you see that kind of data transparency working better?

00:40:14

James Connolly: That's a great question. If I can preface my answer a little bit here to say that I agree I was equally taken aback by how sometimes quite difficult it was to unearth what public lands were out there in in Canadian cities. I do want to say that I think that this is more than just an open governance question. It's more than just a—democratic society needs data and information available to its people to make decisions. It is really in my view of talking to many people that are working in these cities, also the fact that the extent and location of public land was so sort of hidden from view, also made hidden from view the potential for people to think about these as the degree of resource that are, which is to say there's seemingly no kind of like mechanism for planning public lands per se, especially relative to housing. If you wanted to meet some of the goals of affordability that targeted the actual population that lives in Canadian cities, if you wanted to meet some of the goals of building real meaningful communities for Indigenous populations in Canadian cities using public lands, there's no vision, there's no plan, there's no mechanism for taking all the public lands as a whole and saying “here's what we can

do with that resource.” One big reason I would say is because people don't know what it is. They don't know what public lands we actually have. They don't know the extent of that resource, especially when you when you consider that those lines are federal, provincial, and municipal, and all 3 levels own or control quite a lot, and quite a lot of land is well-located for housing and could be part of a bigger vision. But I would say, for me, that means that a step one is simply opening up this information. Simply putting it out there and especially—there are several provinces who rely very much on private sector firms to manage their land data, and in doing so they [essentially hide much of that data from the public](#), because the private firms, in order to operate and to keep that data managed, they need revenue to be generated from the data, meaning they close it—they don't allow it to be just openly released. That creates huge complications for understanding what's actually out there. So, I would target that a little bit.

Also, there's a lot of municipalities that simply don't have a central database on what all their lands are, and municipalities are very meaningful here. In many cases, municipalities own or control as much land—I'm talking about land outside of parks and outside of those kinds of already designated lands—they own or control quite a lot of land that's right on par with the province and the federal government within the city limits. But it's not always very clear what exactly they want to control because different agencies in different units within the city have that information housed in different ways. So simply centralizing and opening up that information would be a huge step toward letting people understand the extent of the resource and the extent to which we could actually start to say, “just on public lands alone, we could have a plan—we could have a plan for what we're going to do with public lands that tries to address some of these issues.” Because the nature of public lands, that plan could start from a different place than other plans that are out there, perhaps.

Carolyn Whitzman: Thank you so much, James. I'm seeing some really wonderful questions from the audience, and I really want to move to that. Before I do, I have a last question for Jaimee and then for Brian. Actually, I'm going to give Jaimee the last word—I'll start with Brian. I've got a doozy of a question: so, I'm a great believer in a big tent. I'm a great believer and I worked on a national housing accord that involved— well, that ideally would involve all 3 levels of government, Indigenous government, it would involve private developers, it would involve non-market developers, it would involve architects, construction companies, etc. How should all of these actors be working together in order to use land, that precious resource, Brian, to maximize public housing good? I know that's a really big question, but I hope you can handle it.

00:45:08

Brian Doucet: That's a great question, and it is a really big question. To some extent, I think back to my time in in the Netherlands. I lived there for 13 years. I was researching housing there and was looking critically at what was being done and I still do look critically at some of the work that is often praised from afar, because when you go into the detail, it's a little more complicated than maybe a little tweet or a newspaper article about housing in Rotterdam could entail. But I think some of the big redevelopment projects that have happened in the Netherlands and in cities like Rotterdam, the municipal government has retained ownership of that land. I think that is the first—in terms of not selling land at a discount to developers to let them do their thing—I think that is key. But there was a

lot of conversation and what you describe of private developers, non-profit developers, local governments, national governments, nonprofits and so on, they were they were all involved in in big redevelopment there. But there's some broad frameworks—so I think we kind of need to have a conversation of, what kind of housing do we actually need? What isn't the market doing now? It is not to say that Private developers aren't involved in public land, but we need to do things differently. We need to do things fundamentally differently, and that involves not selling that land to a developer. If we start to think about what we need, we can start sketching out visions of what that looks like.

Carolyn, we've talked before about, a third, a third, a third—different types of housing. I'm going to extend that and so to say a quarter, a quarter, a quarter, a quarter, because I'm just sketching out my starting point of what this land could achieve. A quarter of social housing, a quarter co-op housing, a quarter rent-controlled rental (unit-based rent control), and a quarter, do whatever you like, with one condition: if you sell units, they have to be the primary residency of the people who buy them, so investors and speculators are not welcome on that public land. What could you do with a starting point like that or something similar? Again, we've come to a discussion, it might look a little different, but let's just take that as an example—you could put out tenders. You could put out a call for proposals—who wants to be involved? Who wants to do it? These are the conditions, these are the criteria, but it can be any number of combinations of partners. Of course, if you're getting the social housing and the non-market housing with the private development and the private, market-based rental under rent control, you have to have partnerships to come together. You have to have nonprofits and for-profit developers come together, and I think what that would do is that would encourage different actors to work together to be part of a project. You could have a competition. Say we've got this piece of land. These are the conditions. Show us what you got. And it would also open the door—because we talk about who's not part of development, and there's a lot of nonprofits that are just simply not part of development. It's not because they don't necessarily have access to the skills and the expertise. They get crowded out because land is so expensive.

In Hamilton there was a school right on the future LRT line. Hamilton District School Board didn't need it anymore. The City of Hamilton passed on its opportunity to acquire that site at market value under the Ontario Realty Directive. So, what happens? The land goes up for sale, and there are 2 bids. There's one bid from Hamilton Community Foundation and Indwell, a nonprofit housing provider. They bid the assessed market value: about 5 million dollars. The other bid came from a private developer for \$15 million. Hmm. How do you compete, right? What that nonprofit bid would have done, it wouldn't have all been social housing, it would have been a mix, would have brought in different partners. It would have brought in actors that are crowded out today. I think if you can set some of those rules of like we want this to directly achieve certain housing outcomes that the market can't do, and then you open things up and you see you'll get a range of different innovative and dynamic and exciting proposals coming through because we've seen those exciting innovative and dynamic proposals come through, it's just they're outbid by private developers. So, if you reshape the rules, you'll see a lot more exciting things happen.

00:50:14

Carolyn Whitzman: So, make the rules and the competitions work for public benefit. I'm totally on board with that, Brian. Jaimee, as I promised, you get the last word before the questions. I want you to imagine a table, and at the table is the National Indigenous Community Housing Inc. (NICH I for short), and provincial and federal and territorial and municipal governments and private developers and non-market developers. How is this amazing group going to use public land for public good?

Jaimee Gaunce: I was a little worried Brian wasn't going to say it, but he did say it: too many times we come in—and I'm always one to say things just a little bit sandpapery, but you just got to take it because that's who I am—but when we come into the room, our egos lead us and we forget about the results we're looking for. I agree with Brian 100%. We have to design the results we need and build backwards from there. What are we looking to achieve with the housing that we're trying to build? Who are we trying to serve? What are their issues? What are their concerns? What do we need to recognize? And support in the individuals we're trying to house, if you don't answer those questions, you can build all the houses you want, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be successful for the people you're trying to house. We have to ensure that we're building partnerships, and we have to stop using the language of co-development with Indigenous people. Co-developments with non-profits and Indigenous people do not necessarily mean Indigenous people are at the table. It means that you made space for us, but we don't really have a say—we're co-developing it with you. Instead, use the language of allyship. Allyship means that we're in this together, that if you fail, we fail. If we succeed, you succeed. Ensuring that supportive, respected opportunities and processes are at the table and not, “this is what I want. This is what I need, and if you don't like it, well, you're just going to have to come along.”

Then when we're looking at those results and building these communities or using this land for housing. We have to stop looking at it as heads in a bed or units, because there's so much more to a human being than just the structure. We have to, when we look at housing and capacity supports, when we look at capital, when we look at buildings, look at the wraparound services that ensure success for that individual. If we have young single moms that are going to school, we can't necessarily expect them to be able to fork market rent. If there is no babysitting or childcare in the neighborhood and then they have to travel 10 or 15 kilometers on public transportation, it's too cumbersome. It's setting us up for failure. I'm old enough, I remember my mother dragging me on the city bus at 5 o'clock in the morning to drop me off at public childcare and traveling across the city to go to her job. This was our daily life, and we didn't really have quality of life, and when we're looking at Indigenous people and we're looking at the urban centers and building communities, we want to build in good quality of life. Otherwise, what are we doing? We're just buying a house or suffering to pay for it, or we're renting a place that just we don't even get to enjoy.

For Indigenous people, wherever we are is our home. We don't need a specific building. We don't need specific things. As long as we have family as long as we have the things that warm our hearts, we're home. Anywhere on Turtle Island is our home. We don't need a street address necessarily, and it doesn't need to be in a specific neighborhood. We have to stop putting segregation, and communities that encourage segregation. We have to stop doing that. I grew up in Regina where we had North Central—that's where all the Indians went. We lived in North Central because that was the only place we were accepted, because NIMBYism was huge when it came to racial divide. Nobody wanted any Indian

families in their neighborhood. They were Eastenders. We didn't belong there, so we were always segregated in these neighborhoods.

00:54:56

Jaimee Gaunce: When we're looking at building these phenomenal pieces of land up, we have to look at legacy. The reason why we cannot build houses right now is just there's just not enough capacity. There are enough builders in the north to build a home right now. There're not enough construction workers. There're not enough materials. When we look at it through the NICHI lens, we're always looking at building capacity and leaving a better legacy than where we started. Ensuring there is a company that can support Indigenous youth, Indigenous males, whoever wants to get into construction and building houses or into the trades, that they have opportunity to come and work alongside some of the bigger tradesmen that have been doing this for a long time, learning the ins and outs, and really feeling supported and successful. We must build in that capacity. We must build in that legacy, because one day we're all going to get old and we're not going to be on rooftop shingling anymore, and who's going to take our jobs if we haven't trained the young ones to replace us. So, build capacity, support each other, and ensure that partnerships and allyship are front and centre of anything and everything that we build, and the success is almost guaranteed every time.

Q&A

Carolyn Whitzman: Amen, Jaimee. We're now going to go to the questions. I believe Andrew is going to read out a question all directed towards the panelists. We're going to try to take 10 to 20 minutes for the Q&A. Is it Andrew or Sam—Sam? I see you unmuting yourself. Ask away.

Sam Roberts: Hello, I'm here with the Q&A. We have a quite a few really great questions. I have the first one for the panelists, and I think this is for everyone: In a climate where capital dollars for construction is limited, what are the panelists perspectives on selling public sites to leverage the revenue for affordable housing development. I know this one's controversial. So, whoever wants to chime in.

Carolyn Whitzman: It is a tricky one. I'm going to take a punt and say Brian might want first crack at that one. Brian, do you want first crack at selling public land in order to raise revenues?

Brian Doucet: Sure. I mean, every rule has exceptions, but I think we don't have good acquisition strategies to acquire more public land and bring it into public ownership. Montreal is one of the few exceptions—they have a pre-emptive rights policy where the city can actually acquire land as it sold. It has identified about 350 sites, and it is primarily lower rent apartment buildings that they can acquire to prevent it from being bought by a financialized landlord. Anyways, we aren't acquiring more public sites that we can do things with, so I would be quite reluctant to sell that land as I already said. Also, because if you think about what you're doing: you're selling that land and using that money to maybe get on that site small pieces of affordable housing on a private site. It's very, very limited. I think it is easier in the long run to actually use those sites proactively. The land is already there, as you said at the outset, Carolyn. The build costs on public land are much cheaper than on private land. So, the question is: what are you going to do with that revenue? Where are you going to build if not on a public site? So,

I think as a general strategy, that land should not be sold to private developers because if we want to do the kinds of things that we've sketched out—and Jaimee sketched out beautifully just a moment ago—you can't do that on private land. Where you can't do that very easily on private land.

Carolyn Whitzman: Okay, so sorry, Brian. James, do you have anything that you want to add? Oh, sorry, Brian, go on.

Brian Doucet: What I would just say is, what would be the objective, and why can't you do it directly?

Carolyn Whitzman: Right. James, you have anything that you'd want to add?

James Connolly: I might just very briefly add—and first say I completely agree with the sentiment already expressed—but just add also that, embedded in the question is the implication that the only way of achieving affordability is through direct subsidy to a private developer to reduce the cost of development. That is one way of doing it, for sure. In other words, we have a pool of cash, you can give it to the developer and then they can produce more affordable units—which is something that I think is definitely an important pathway.

00:59:54

James Connolly: But things that have been done—and I welcome contrary points, especially from Brian—but other governments, in the Netherlands being one, have used their ability to lease public land as a way of operationalizing cooperative ownerships wherein the residents come together, get the finances from a bank basically, but cooperatively apply for the finances. And thus, because the cost of land is essentially 0, you're subsidizing that process and you're creating more workforce type of housing in those kinds of models. Which is just to say there's more ways of producing affordable housing than just having a stack of cash that you can hand over to a developer to reduce the cost of development, though that is an important way of producing affordable housing for sure. But that stack of cash coming from selling public lands—I don't know that that's the best source for that money to come from. I feel like that money generally would come from a federal support type of approach.

Carolyn Whitzman: Thanks, James. And Jaimee, do you have anything to add in relation to that question?

Jaimee Gaunce: I have 2 views. First off, absolutely—once you sell it and you have your cash in hand, there is no more value to the land to you, which means you have no say over what happens to land and it can be expropriated and changed and used, but if you keep it, it can become a leverage. You can build on it, you can rent it. There are so many opportunities. Selling things and giving them away and cutting free of it always puts you on the losing end. Owning land is valuable in this day and age. And number 2—I'm going to put my Indian hat on—give it back to us. Thank you. If you don't want it, give it back to us. We'll use it. There are a lot of Indigenous people that have brilliant ideas and opportunities for land to expand and explore those ideas, create office spaces, urban reserves, all of those things. Give it back to us because we'll show you the way, and how to really take a plot of land and turn it into a gold mine because we've done it time and time again.

Carolyn Whitzman: Awesome, Jaimee. The first rule of land club is, “don't sell land,” and the second rule is, “if you're going to sell it, give it away—or not give it away—give it *back* to Indigenous groups.” Sam, next question.

Sam Roberts: Alright, the next one is a little bit of a historical examples question. Are there examples of the use of public land to build housing during the post-World War 2 decade in Canadian cities, or was it all done through encouraging private development?

Carolyn Whitzman: Hmm. I'm going to shake things up a little bit and see—James, is this a question you feel comfortable answering? And if not, I'll lob it to Brian and Jaimee.

James Connolly: I think I'll have to lob that question. Actually, I don't have that historical knowledge on hand.

Carolyn Whitzman: Okay. I think that Brian might. Brian, go for it.

Brian Doucet: So post-war, the big policies towards housing was subsidizing, in a variety of ways, new housing built in the suburbs. And any public land that was involved was then sold off, to the owners. But there were some urban examples—and if you think of some of the early social housing public housing projects in places like Regent Park in Toronto and others that maybe didn't necessarily stand the test of time the way the St. Lawrence neighborhood have, but it was an example of public ownership where land was acquired—expropriated—and redeveloped in ways we probably wouldn't do today, but did involve large public sector involvement from a variety of levels (funded by higher levels of government—owned and managed by municipalities). So, we do have a history of that. We don't have the same history of doing that as long as many European countries be it the Netherlands or the UK or Austria or Sweden, but we have some history of that predates the larger interest from the federal government, primarily in the 1970s and '80s when we did see a lot of non-market units being built.

Carolyn Whitzman: Okay. I'm actually going to take another question from you, Sam.

Sam Roberts: Yeah. How would public housing be funded sustainably with government debt at record highs, adding further public expenses with no way to pay for them, would add stress to an already stretched government expense and may further increase inflation, including rental rates? I know that there is a lot to say here, but please take it away.

01:05:01

Carolyn Whitzman: Okay, I'll start off with you, Jaimee. Is investment in public housing just a source of inflation—a way to build up government debt, which all of us must pay? What are your thoughts on that?

Jaimee Gaunce: I think we just have to be real about the conversation. Right now, most people can't afford their mortgages and the Bank of Canada is looking at increasing interest rates once again. Can

we afford it? Probably not. Can we not afford to create more housing? Absolutely not. I mean, with the last question, look at the social housing that came after the war—all the wartime housing—and now Sean Fraser, our housing minister is looking at rebuilding and doing the prefabrication housing because it's the simplest fastest way to reproduce housing and get people housed. So, I don't know. That is definitely a tricky question. How can we not? We have to figure it out and we're losing. We are losing all our social housing, because all of the agreements are running its course and they're ending and we're losing our social housing stock right now. Now all our social housing stock is becoming private homes. Well, what do we do then? If we look to the US, New York, they have rent caps and they have, you get grandfathered into your rent prices and stuff like that. They still have processes in place that ensure housing is affordable. If you can afford it, then you go to the high rises. If you can't afford it, then you stick in these rent-controlled buildings. But in Canada, it just seems like it's a free-for-all. Whoever can get rich the fastest is going to make it to the top and be damned to everybody else that can't afford it. So, what do you do in that kind of race? Is there really an answer?

Carolyn Whitzman: Right, and Brian, do you have anything to add to the question of whether public housing is a money sink or an investment?

Brian Doucet: Yeah, let's take a big picture view. Canada is an incredibly wealthy country. We are one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Let's take that as a starting point. But, if you look at our levels of taxation, they are much lower than other countries that invest much more in housing, and it is a little bit of you get what you pay for. We have relatively low taxes, and we have not always the best ways of investing and not always the best capacity to invest in the things that we need. I think there's a few ways to look at this. I think this is where we need sustained levels of funding for operations of housing—not just building new housing—from higher levels of government, from the provincial and federal government, to actually fund not just new construction of affordable housing, but ensuring that that housing is well-maintained, ensuring that housing remains affordable, and keeps the wheels turning on that. Another thing is if you think back to that that vision that I sketched out earlier of having all these different players, all these different parties involved, that opens up possibilities to actually cross-subsidize things. Especially if you're removing profit from the equation, because if you're moving profit from the equation of a housing development, that also lowers cost. There was a good report—I forget when it came out, but it was a number of years ago—that was looking at different models of construction: private, for-profit and so on. And yeah, if you can get rents down to a pretty reasonable level for low income households, if you have a mix of different housing options within the development that you use to help cross-subsidize, and this is something that other countries have done—when the Dutch were building social housing on a large scale, they were using that kind of model as well. I think there are ways that we can make it work. Again, we just have to think a little bit beyond the normal ways that we currently think and operate when it comes to housing.

Carolyn Whitzman: Great. I think we can take one more question, Sam, so let's see if it's a corker.

Sam Roberts: Yeah, well this one, this one's a good one for visioning. I know we talked a little bit about solutions and specific ways in which we could do some things better. This question asks, are there good current examples of other jurisdictions that have developed a good strategic vision for their public lens

that have that kind of overarching strategy? Who is doing this work well? And I will add just at the end of that question, if you can't think of anyone doing it well, what would your big strategic vision be?

Carolyn Whitzman: We'll start with James, because James, you worked with 14—sorry, 12—municipalities across Canada with the HART project. I don't want you to play favorites or get in trouble or anything, but did you feel that there was a municipality that was doing it just that little bit better.

01:10:11

James Connolly: I will point to a couple of examples here, but I first wanted to say that the overarching sentiment that I got from my work in terms of talking to lots of people and not to municipalities, is that that strategic vision that this question is asking about, is quite nascent—if present at all—in almost any city in Canada, let alone at provincial or federal levels. Especially when we think about the outside of what's particularly within the jurisdiction of a municipality or within the jurisdiction of a province, or within the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is to say combining all those public lands into one category. A strategic vision for all of that—I'm happy to be counteracted here—but I would guess does not exist basically, which is to say all public lands considered within a city or an area together and a strategic vision for all of that, I would guess that does not exist in Canada. Maybe somebody can bring forth an example that counters me on that. But I would point to a couple of promising areas here and I would say that in terms of taking first steps in this direction, actually, my province, the province of British Columbia, we didn't actually focus much on it in the HART project largely because they took steps in recent years to open up most of their most of their lands data, so a lot of that information is open and centralized, and publicly available throughout the province. Not to say that the strategic vision is necessarily sort of concretely there—I'm not pointing to it in that regard exactly, but they have taken these first steps in terms of really being quite open in that regard. I would also point in the direction of the city of Ottawa who—I think they have also taken steps in this direction, at the city level, particularly, and have opened up quite a lot. And they did indicate a lot of strategic thinking about how public lands plays out in terms of some of the larger goals of the city and I would say that there were some interesting trends coming out of there, but maybe Carolyn you would point to other examples as well.

Carolyn Whitzman: I feel across the river from Ottawa, that Gatineau was doing some really good identification of specific sites—the old police station. They were really engaging with nonprofit land in the way the other cities weren't and although it felt perhaps a bit short of an overall strategic vision, they were really doing a lot of thinking outside the box about using their government land. I'd say that Calgary used the hard work into a really great, strategic plan that had a vision of 3,000 new non-market homes a year and was definitely using our land information towards that goal. I'd say that Edmonton with its goal of 16% on market housing in every single neighborhood was also doing some really great thinking about zoning. So, I had a few top, top colleagues in the HART project just to use my little moderator's privilege. Jaimee, do you have a sense of a place that's doing that strategic vision right, or an Indigenous Nation, that's doing it really right?

Jaimee Gaunce: First, if there's land that's up for discussion or up for sale, there's no deep sense of partnership or even going back to the Indigenous community, this is their traditional territory wherever the land lies. This is their traditional territory, and they should be first talked to. That discussion should

be had with the nation that this land is within. That should be number one. Because we are the keepers of the land, because we're the land stewards, shouldn't we be involved in this conversation? Of course, I'm always going to put my Indian hat on because that's who I am. So, we need to ensure we respect those relationships the Indigenous people have with the lands where this land sits. Number 2, I'm from Saskatchewan and I think we have just over 70 reserves. Some reserves tend to blend and so the numbers are a little bit flexible but I think it's around 69 reserves in Saskatchewan right now, and if you look at reserves like Pasqua First Nation, Carry-The-Kettle, there's a ton of reserves that are creating TLE lands, they are accessing urban reserve lands within the cities in the urban centers, they are purchasing mining companies, massive corporations, and they're creating their own socioeconomic centers.

01:15:22

Jaimee Gaunce: And I will say this over and over and over again, if you want to see how to do it right, go visit an Indigenous community, because they take a resource that most people would throw away and they will turn it into a gold mine. Pasqua First Nation has a phenomenal reach when it comes to commercial and corporate business. And all of the nations within Saskatchewan, the moment the TLE land comes up or land that's for sale they are first in line to purchase it, they are first in line for the negotiation, and they are first in line to ensure the land comes back to Indigenous people. Saskatchewan is really moving and shaking and grabbing all that land, but there is a barrier: Some of the Saskatchewan politicians are hiding where the lands are, what these public lands are, what they're doing with them, and behind the scenes they're opening up doors so that major developers can purchase them and make a big dollar, and we see that in the green belt as well. We're seeing that conversation happening. We would get more bang for our buck, and we would have lands that are producing more economically, more sustainably, and ensuring more reach for public good, if we stopped looking for the profit, and ensuring the support for public. Indigenous people across Canada have been doing this, but we're humble enough that we keep our mouth shut and just do the work and we don't go bragging all over the news, so you don't know we're doing it. So, we got to knock on the Indigenous communities' doors and ask them, how are you doing this? And take a page from them and work with them and partner with them because they guarantee you, you're going to find some really good ways of using this land for greater good.

Carolyn Whitzman: Thank you. Jaimee. Actually, while you were talking, I was thinking of some of the other HART partners, and I do want to give a shout out to a couple. One is Toronto, which has Indigenous sub-targets, including land and is doing a partnership with Miziwe Biik, which is an Indigenous group around developing new housing. And I also want to mention 2 of the B.C. municipalities that James alluded to: Kelowna and Vancouver. Kelowna was our pilot project, and Vancouver was on our advisory committee, and they both have a strong commitment to government land for non-market housing. So, Brian, I'm going to give you the last word this time. Are there particular examples that you can think of in terms of strategic planning for use of government land.

Brian Doucet: You know, Carolyn, I always like to end on an optimistic or hopeful note usually, and I've got I've got a list, and thinking about that strategic discussion that you talked about in a holistic—looking at all levels of government land—I agree with James. I don't think there's a great example in Canada. I think this is something that the Dutch and probably other European countries do very well. The

challenge with that is the Netherlands is a very neoliberal country now, despite what it might look like from afar, so it does not necessarily mean you get social objectives coming out of that kind of strategic holistic thinking, but at least opens up that possibility. But in terms of sort of thinking about all those assets that are owned, and all the different ways you can leverage them, and partners from different levels of government, nonprofits, private sector working together, I think the Dutch do things well.

But I want to focus on a few in Canada. I think easily one of the most, if not the most, exciting development in the country at the moment is Senákw. I think it's a fantastic example. And if you actually look—I showed this to my students with this map where you see that land shrinking and shrinking and you look at the Just this obscure random piece of land that's just this weird shape. That's the land claims settled because that's all that was left. And you look at what they're doing with it—it is absolutely fantastic. I know the Squamish Nation is planning on doing sites like that around Greater Vancouver and beyond and I think this is just a wonderful thing to watch in the years ahead in terms of partnerships. I think the [Jericho Lands](#)—I think that's a really exciting development as well between Canada lands and the 3 nations—in Musqueam, in Tsleil Waututh, and in Squamish—that's really exciting. I think that's going to have a big impact and hopefully set the tone for the disposal of other federal government land.

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Brian Doucet: We don't see that with the big projects in Toronto like with Downsview, you're going to get a lot of homes there, but it's not going to have the same kind of partnership, the same kind of governance, that you see with something like Jericho. I think Montreal has a really good land acquisition strategy with their pre-emptive rights strategy and they have the power to identify buildings they want to bring into public ownership—that's very expensive. Obviously, it's much more cost effective to use the land that you have, but that's a good way of protecting existing affordable housing and ensuring and de-commodifying it, which I think is also very important part of the puzzle. Carolyn, you mentioned Toronto—Toronto is also developing new housing that will be a range of affordable options on City-owned sites. There's a couple of parking lots already that are being identified—one out in the West End on Dundas, I think, that's using timber frame construction It's going to be one of the biggest, if not the biggest, timber frame building in Canada on a former green pea parking lot—municipally owned parking lot. I think that's great. Kitchener has their heart in the right place and they're starting to move slowly. I gave that example at the outset, and a really interesting story recently coming out of Cambridge—which you don't associate with a lot of really progressive ideas about housing—but there's a councillor there named Scott Hamilton who put forward a motion to take one City-owned parking lot, and use it as a site to build affordable housing—above. So, you keep the surface parking lot, and you build above. That motion was voted down something like 4 to 3, at City Council, and the backlash, from even fairly conservative commentators locally are like, “what are you doing? How could you not approve that?” And now, I've been speaking with that councillor quite a bit. We're talking with some folks federally that might be able to help. Kitchener is looking at this, Waterloo's looking at this. This is a model: take a surface parking lot—I can see out of my window here I can see some surface parking lots where you could easily do this. That's an idea that's got legs—or stilts, in the case of building the housing above the parking lot. That will be exciting to watch in the in the years ahead as well.

Carolyn Whitzman: Well, we at HART do love our housing on top—that's for sure. I want to summarize some of the really exciting things I heard today. We have history, a strong history, of using government land for non-market and affordable housing. We have a strong present and future. There's some really exciting Indigenous land back projects and a couple of folks talked about Senákw, and Jericho Lands, and Hudson's Bay in Winnipeg, and some really great urban reserves within Saskatchewan, and this new piece of land in west Ottawa. We heard throughout that there's a need for better information transparency as a first step, and that there is a lot of land out there and we need a strategic planning approach that maximizes the use of well-located government and nonprofit land to build the kind of housing that we so desperately need. Jaimee Gaunce, James Connolly and Brian Doucet, thank you so much for sharing your expertise.

We will be putting the video recording up along with some of the links that we provided today, in the next couple of days. I want to thank as always, the HART team, Sam Roberts, Andrew Rigsby, Morika DeAngelis for putting together this really excellent seminar, and I want to thank the (at peak) 60 people who joined us today to learn more about breaking ground, non-market housing on government land. Thank you all.

Contact Information

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