



Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

A national faith-based organization founded in support of Unitarian values

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President, Rev. Frances Deverell

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January 20, 2013

The Hon. Diane Finley,
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development;
House of Commons,
Ottawa, ON., K1A 0A6

RE: Bill C-400 to Implement a National Housing Strategy

Dear Hon. Diane Finley:

I write to appeal to you to honour the commitment you made in May 2012 when you and the Prime Minister and the whole conservative caucus voted that *“the Government “should keep with Canada’s obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing as guaranteed under the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.”*

We are well aware that this government has renewed its homeless strategy till 2014, and has spent 1.2 billion under the Affordable Housing Initiative as well as other initiatives. We note your programs to support infrastructure maintenance. We thank you for these positive efforts, but they are not enough. A patchwork, ad hoc group of initiatives has not realistically addressed the problem that around 400,000 people in Canada are either living on the streets or using shelters at least some of the time. Thousands of low-income people wait years to get into social housing. We are embarrassed to note that the ***United Nations has identified homelessness in Canada as a human rights crisis!*** We need a comprehensive national housing strategy that is adequately funded, based on consultation with vulnerable target groups in Canada.

We are looking for:

- Engagement and consultation with all stakeholders including First Nations, organizations representing persons with mental health issues, people on welfare or disability, the working poor, people escaping violence, the elderly, retired soldiers, and the private sector.
- Clear targets and timelines to end homelessness.
- Independent processes for evaluation and accountability
- Effective complaint mechanisms and resources to investigate and respond.
- Financial supports for those who cannot afford market rates.

Bill C-400 is a good bill that provides legislative commitment to implement the promise you made last May. It affirms that access to affordable housing is a human right. It is a good first step towards action for change. Support for this bill by the Conservative caucus would demonstrate your good will and intentions to solve the problem of homelessness in Canada.

Faith Communities such as Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice (<http://www.cusj.org>) and Not-for-profit organizations who work to improve the condition of the poor are looking forward to working in collaboration with you to solve these problems in Canada. Give us Bill C-400 as a foundation for real change.

In faith,



Rev. Frances Deverell,
President, Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice

cc. The Hon. Prime Minister Stephen Harper
The Hon. Thomas Mulcaire, Leader of the Opposition
Bob Rae, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
News Media
Canadian Unitarian Council
Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada
Dignity For All
Canada Without Poverty
Citizens For Public Justice