

C U S J

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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Prime Minister Stephen Harper,
Government of Canada,
Parliament Buildings,
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Prime Minister Harper;

Now that you have a majority government, you have the power to make a real difference on poverty issues in Canada. It is inexcusable that in a rich country like ours, we still have people living on the street. But the homeless are not the only ones who are stressed by too expensive, inadequate housing in Canada. Others include:

- Aboriginal people, on reserves and in cities.
- Young workers
- Minimum-wage workers
- Hospital and clerical workers starting at the bottom
- Service and retail workers
- In Vancouver, entry-level firefighters, paramedics, police, nurses and teachers
- Retirees who rent
- Single income and single-parent families
- People on fixed incomes (disability pensions, old age pensions, income assistance)

Too many people are paying half or more of their income in rent. Our food banks are lined up, and there are not enough people who are able to give. We should not rely on food banks. A rich country like ours cannot accept this way of treating people.

We feel humiliated that in 2007 the United Nations declared a housing crisis in Canada, especially for aboriginal people. In 2011 we have done nothing about it. Every level of government has a job to do to solve these problems. The municipality must provide the land. The provincial government must provide the operating costs of public low-cost housing units. The Federal Government must provide the structure for capital funding.

We urge you to call a conference with all levels of government and create a national housing strategy. Let's put our shoulders to the wheel and do something about this social crisis. I want to feel proud to be Canadian again.

In Faith,

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