BILL C-400

Secure, Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing Act

BACKGROUNDER

Overview:

Bill C-400 is a private member's bill currently before Parliament that addresses the crisis of homelessness and inadequate housing in Canada. With the support of all NDP, Liberal and Bloc Quebecois MPs, Bill C-400 now needs the support of at least a few Conservative MPs in order to pass second reading in the House of Commons and be referred to Committee. The vote is currently scheduled for February 13, 2013.

Why this Bill Matters:

The number of people without a healthy place to live in Canada, frequently relying on emergency shelters or living on the streets, is estimated at about 400,000. The health consequences – both physical and psychological - and the human suffering behind these numbers are massive – both in human and financial cost. The United Nations has identified homelessness in Canada as an urgent human rights crisis. The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing has noted that **"Canada is one of the few countries in the world without a national housing strategy."** Without a coordinated approach, piecemeal programs and policies can lead to inconsistencies and gaps. Homelessness has continued to increase during years of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity in Canada.

Bill C-400 affirms that access to adequate housing is a fundamental human right. The Government of Canada and all of the provinces and territories are committed to guaranteeing the right to adequate housing under international law. The right to housing is a core Canadian value that is central to dignity, security and equality. It is not a partisan issue. Bill C-400 commits to a strategy to make this right real, calling on all levels of government, non-profits, and the private sector, in collaboration with key stakeholders – under a comprehensive framework guided by Ottawa – to take action.

For more information visit: http://dignityforall.ca/C400

How Does C-400 Ensure Adequate Housing as a Human Right?

Recognizing housing as a human right does not mean that governments have to provide housing to everyone. It does, however, require that they adopt a comprehensive strategy to address the causes of homelessness and implement a commitment to ensuring that, within a reasonable time, no one will be denied access to adequate housing in so wealthy a country as Canada. Bill C-400 would ensure:

- Engagement with multiple stakeholders: all levels of government, Aboriginal communities, civil society and the private sector.
- Clear targets and timelines to eliminate homelessness
- Independent monitoring of progress to ensure accountability.
- Mechanisms for affected individuals and groups to identify violations of the right to housing, have their concerns heard, and get needed responses and actions.
- A focus on the circumstances of marginalized groups vulnerable to homelessness, including persons with mental or physical disabilities, low income families with children, the elderly and those escaping violence.
- Financial supports for those who can't otherwise afford housing.

Bill C-400 requires the federal government to bring all of the stakeholders together to create and commit to a collaborative strategy. It is about far more than convening a meeting, however. It is about federal leadership in making the right to housing a reality through an effective and accountable implementation process.

This Government has Agreed in Principle:

Last May, a motion was introduced in the House of Commons stating 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."** The Prime Minister and all other government members voted in favour and the motion passed unanimously. This was a good start. But now we need the commitment made by all MPs in May to be implemented in legislation. It's time to pass Bill C-400 into law and put words into action.

Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Centre pour les droits à l'égalité au logement

dignité pour touTEs
la campagne pour un canada sans pauvreté

dignity for all
the campaign for a poverty-free canada

SRAC Social Rights Advocacy Centre