



Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

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

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For Immediate Release:

Twentieth Anniversary of Federal social housing cut: Shortfall of 100,000 homes despite 200,000 homeless

Ottawa, January 28, 2014- The federal government's decision to withdraw completely from the provision of long-term funding for new social housing in January 1994 has deprived some of the most vulnerable members of Canadian society of over 100,000 homes.

CUSJ calls on the government to renew subsidies for existing social housing in the 2014 budget and create new subsidized housing. CMHC is predicting 72,000 of cuts in subsidized rental homes to 540,000 by 2015 if this is not done.

“Between 1985 and 1989, the government funded an average of 5356 units per year of social housing. At this rate we would have built another 107,120 homes over the last twenty years” said Frances Deverell, President of CUSJ (Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice.)

As of January 1994 Mulroney froze the budget of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) was frozen at \$2 billion and CMHC no longer funded social or co-op housing. Since then, support from any government was limited to the occasional short-term housing programs.

“The Church and Charitable sectors have tried to work for more low-income housing over the past twenty years. They simply can’t do it without solid government subsidy programs,” said Deverell.

More than 380,000 tenant households in Canada are in severe housing need (living in poverty and spending more than 50% of their income on rent) according to the Canadian Homelessness Research Network. (158,000 households across Ontario, including 90,000 in Toronto.) As many as 1.3 million Canadians experienced homelessness or extremely insecure housing in the last five years. “It is Canada’s greatest shame” said Margaret Rao, (Toronto Chapter and VP of CUSJ.)

“Tenants in existing social housing now face a dramatic rise in their housing costs as long-term federal subsidies are expiring,” notes Margaret Rao. “The Minister of Finance should listen to provinces, cities, community organizations and tenants and continue these subsidies in the 2014 budget. We cannot afford a repeat of the cutbacks of twenty years ago.”

Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice call on the Federal Government to renew existing long-term agreements and to invest in many more of them to deal with what can only be called a housing crisis. “Lack of housing leads to greater social and health care costs. There is no real savings by such short-sighted cuts.” Said Deverell. People receiving rent supplements in private housing or living in public housing, housing cooperatives, nonprofit and Aboriginal housing will all be affected.

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