

HOMELESS SINGLE PERSONS AND



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

The highly visible aspect of the homeless crisis is the 14,150 single homeless persons turned out of Canada's emergency shelters onto the streets each morning. They are the reason for \$1.1 billion being spent on "homeless" projects over 4 years that shamefully did not develop affordable independent living homes or more shelter space.

- Statistics Canada reported in 2001 that there were 14,150 persons, mostly single adults, in Canada's homeless emergency shelters. 10,685, or 80%, were single persons between the ages of 15 and 64, 1490 (11%) were under the age of 15, while 1,365 (9%) were 65 or older. In addition the number of absolutely homeless without even shelter because of a lack of basic emergency shelter space in major cities, is estimated to be 2,000 – 4,000 persons.
- Canada's 14,150 total emergency sheltered homeless population can be identified by the following approximate breakdown of need:

25% (3,537) of emergency sheltered homeless persons are mentally challenged and are in need of lifestyle assistance, either partially or substantially. Many are the casu-

alties of the unconscionable de-institutionalization experiment gone awry.

25% (3,538) of emergency sheltered homeless persons have debilitating addictions and need an institution that would accept and not be judgemental of their addictions. With stabilized shelter, some could be enrolled in programs that might lead to control, abstinence and rehabilitation.

50% (7,075) of all emergency sheltered homeless persons simply need modest, affordable, single room homes that they will pay for themselves if this housing were available.



25% of homeless persons suffer from sever addictions 25% more are the result of deinstitutionalization. Over 50% are fully capable of paying for affordable singles independent living homes but there just aren't any. \$1.1 Billion homeless funds spent but not for homes!

- Over the last thirty years, cities across Canada have closed, shut down, torn down and not replaced 75% of all modestly priced single room homes while at the same time the numbers of homeless single adult persons seeking emergency shelter have increased dramatically.

• Since 1999, \$1.1 billion in federal funds have been committed to help the homeless : \$753 million in Budget 1999 and \$405 million in Budget 2003. This funding has produced practi-



cally no net increase in basic emergency shelter spaces, or independent living homes for single persons while the numbers of homeless persons on the street across Canada has actually increased!

- Assistance for the homeless should, first and foremost, be focused on ensuring that Canada's major cities have adequate basic emergency shelter for all who want and need emergency shelter. Then solutions must be found to reduce the number of persons in these emergency shelters. Single persons are the dwellers of Canada's emergency shelters not families. Family housing is important but separate from this discussion.
- More than 50% of emergency shelter users are financially, physically and mentally capable of living independently. They have some income and can afford to pay \$300 - \$400 per month for a modest independent living single room home – but there just aren't any. Meanwhile, it costs taxpayers in excess of \$20,000 per year for each emergency shelter floor mat space and -- much more for sometimes dubious programs, to essentially warehouse persons in a shelter industry, who otherwise have the means to live independently, at no cost to taxpayers.
- Minimum wage earners can pay for affordable entry level housing if it were available. In Alberta \$5.90 per hour earns \$1020.00 per month, providing for \$300.00 per month rent at

30% of income. In Ontario the rate is \$7.15 per hour, earning \$1240.00 per month and allows \$370.00 per month for rent. The problem is not the minimum wage level but the absence of modest, singles, entry-level housing.

- The primary means to reduce the greatest number (over 50%) of emergency sheltered homeless single persons is by increasing the stock of modest, private, affordable, \$300.-\$400. per month, single room independent living homes historically provided by the private sector.



Fort McMurray Today

When visiting Fort McMurray, Peter talked to this person, newly arrived from the Maritimes looking for work & living in an Fort McMurray Homeless Shelter.

- The private, tax paying, sector will need development encouragement and a level playing field in order to re-enter a market that is now skewed in favour of the social non-profit, but extremely high cost, tax-free, emergency and transitional shelter sector. Investing one year's cost of sheltering one homeless person- (\$20,000) -in helping to build new affordable, independent living single

room homes, will start the process of emptying and then closing many homeless shelters.

- Given the amount of public funds dedicated to helping the homeless--\$1.1 billion over four years--there should be a publicly-released annual census of the emergency sheltered homeless, coupled with credible estimates of the number of unsheltered homeless, in order to monitor progress. A national understanding of shelter use and shelter users must be developed to add



more clarity to regional efforts.

- The first step for the homeless single person on the road to re-entering mainstream society is an independent living, single room home through a hand up, not by a handout.

“Homelessness” as a word to define a problem is in itself a problem

There is no generally accepted definition of the word “homelessness”. Thirty-eight separate definitions were used in just nine homeless reports. Problems with definition lead to problems with consistency in identifying those who are intended to be recipients of assistance. The homeless cannot be helped in a fiscally responsible and focused manner when the variously accepted meanings of “homelessness” describe the circumstances of well over 80% of all Canadians, at one time or another in varying non-critical, lifestyle experiences

Assistance must be directed to the most primary needs of emergency shelter users. On Census Day 2001, there were 14,150 who stayed in emergency shelters the previous night. While there were other unsheltered persons unable or unwilling to access emergency shelter that were not part of the Census, there must nonetheless, be a practical and defensible point of reference, which can be subsequently refined. The current practice of well meaning groups randomly asking inner-city pedestrians or soup kitchen clients if they have “a permanent home to stay tonight” serves to more distort the homeless count numbers. This question includes temporary hotel dwellers, which, if asked in Ottawa, would even include, in

the homeless numbers, many Members of Parliament.

Effectiveness of Funding

In Budget 1999, federal funding of \$753 million, was intended to increase basic emergency shelter space, so that emergency shelter would be available to all who needed it. These funds did not increase emergency shelter space, but were spent primarily on shelter asset accumulation and spent on many homeless “programs” more properly funded out of other spending envelopes—such as health.



Peter Goldring, Conservative Member of Parliament, Conservative MLA Julius Yankowsky & Gordon Stamp wrap up a midnight tour of Edmonton Emergency Shelter System at the Churchill LRT subway station.

shelter space, a few square feet of floor space in a warm room, ergo yet another billion dollar Liberal failure.

Many argue that homeless initiatives should first target psychiatric and substance abuse challenges. While important to address, these public health issues are more properly addressed through a different spending envelope, and should not be funded out of homeless spending allocations intended to provide basic minimal emergency shelter space and homes for the homeless.

Affordable Housing and Homeless Singles

Advocating a federal role to help the homeless, without at the same time addressing affordable singles housing issues, is simply an effort doomed to failure. In fact, the reason the numbers of homeless singles has increased, after \$1.1 billion homeless funding has been spent over four years, is due to serious deficiencies in planning, exacerbated by the disconnection of the homeless federal ministerial file from the housing federal ministerial file and an abject, overall misunderstanding of basic shelter needs of single persons.

Emergency shelter use by single persons and housing affordability are two directly interrelated issues. The absolutely shelterless and homeless individual living under a bridge, plus the emergency sheltered homeless individual, turned out in the morning and both on the street for the day, represent the highly visible aspect of the homeless

situation. Across Canada, the reasons for the rapid increase in the numbers of absolutely shelterless and emergency sheltered homeless persons are explainable and mostly reversible. However, it will take a government that cares to return the dignity of independence to those that can live independently and bring the proper care to those that cannot.

Clearly, the largest group of homeless persons—50% or more—are the emergency and transitionally sheltered single homeless persons who can be most easily and economically assisted through the availability of affordable, modest, entry level singles independent living housing.

Update: January 2004 again saw Edmonton with a shortage of Homeless Emergency Shelter space causing the opening of a fire hall and a church gymnasium for emergency shelter. Shamefully after 4 years and \$20 million federal funding that added practically no additional shelter space, or independent living singles housing, the number of homeless people actually increased. Nationally \$1.1 billion of homeless funding were spent but not for homes!

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This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment and fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Do you agree that Canada's major cities should have sufficient basic emergency shelter floor mat space?

Yes No

Should we have a national housing and emergency shelter policy?

Yes No

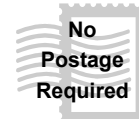
Do you believe that private industry can provide independent living affordable singles housing?

Yes No

Would you agree that the federal Liberals have failed the homeless!

Yes No

Name: _____
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