

Canada's Homeless Singles



Need Homes Now!

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

The certainty of an independent living home, no matter how basic, is essential to human and psychological well-being. Canada needs a more accountable and sustainable National Affordable Housing and Emergency Shelter Strategy.

The current hodgepodge Liberal approach to affordable singles rental housing and homeless singles emergency shelters is both financially wasteful and appallingly ineffective.

Homeless emergency shelter usage and affordable singles housing availability are interrelated concerns. A shortage of affordable low cost singles entry level rental units leaves many no option but to seek very costly emergency social shelter space. Any discussion of housing needs must include a basic understanding of the most needy, single people who dwell in Canada's emergency shelters.



3 private developers proposed 120 units of \$300/month singles housing if granted \$20,000/unit, but were turned down by funders.

asking one primary question, which is: "Do you have a permanent home to go to tonight?" In May of 2000, the count was 1125 and in 2002 the count had climbed to over 2000 so-called homeless persons. The latest homeless count in Edmonton is up once again. Edmonton is a city where many thousands visit but have their permanent home in another city. Are people homeless because they are staying with friends or at an Edmonton hotel?

National homeless estimates vary from Stats Canada's 14,150 single persons (2001) to a high of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' estimate of up to 3,000,000 homeless or near homeless persons. Many demonstrations have been noisily conducted in the name of the homeless, with the Liberals giving again and again, without even determining who the homeless are. Money is disappearing into an insatiable homeless industry that seldom provides homes for the homeless.

Who Are The Homeless?

It's impossible to individually categorize all the sheltered homeless, some have varied levels of mental capabilities and addictions that generally inhibit independent unsupervised living, let alone employment. Most of those living in home-

How Many Homeless Are There?

Edmonton homeless counters use questionable methodology to identify the homeless by



less shelters though, are fully capable of paying their own way in modest, independent living, affordable homes, but none are available. Canada's sheltered homeless population approximate breakdown of circumstances by cause:

- **25% are de-institutionalized singles really in need of institutional care**
- **25% are unemployed, hard to house singles with addictions**
- **50% are simply low income singles in need of affordable rental housing**

Statistics Canada (2001) says that there were 14,150 homeless single persons in Canada's Emergency Shelter System. In Edmonton there were 590.



\$5.5 million was granted for building 105 units, 27 which were \$295/month singles units. A community action group changed them to unaffordable luxury one bedroom plus den units at \$550/month.

Of course Canada needs affordable rental housing for low income families, but for those of the 14,000 homeless singles in emergency shelters across the country who are able to live independently, the need is great for simple entry level single room housing.

Unworkable Federal Solutions

After more than six years, the Federal Government has spent 1.15 billion dollars in Homeless Funding and not built a single independent living home. After spending \$30 million in Edmonton alone, during the winter of 2004 the City of Edmonton was forced to move emergency equipment out into the cold to provide, at a cost of \$3000 per night, emergency shelter space in a fire hall because a few square feet of warm shelter floor space was not available.

Research has indicated that at least 50% of Canada's homeless residing in shelters are actually low-income individuals with some income but with no independent living rental housing alternatives. Federal funding flows into replacement emergency shelters and assisted living transitional social shelters but not into the building of independent-living, private singles homes.

Nationally, 75% of all private single-person entry level rental housing has been torn down or closed down over the last 20 years, but has not been replaced.

During the same period, singles homeless emergency shelters have been expanded and now are one of Canada's fastest growing industries. Unavailable private \$350 per month self-paid entry level singles homes are now being replaced, out of necessity, by \$1500 per month emergency shelter and transitional social shelter industry taxpayer-paid emergency beds.

The Government waste in dollars and human lives has been absolutely appalling. \$ 1.15 billion of Federal Homeless funding spent and the homeless counts are up. \$30 million of federal, provincial, and municipal homeless funding in Edmonton's Housing Trust Fund spent in Edmonton by March 2004 added 13 new emergency shelter bed spaces and no singles independent living rental homes. Homeless funding spent to that date could have helped develop 1,000 affordable singles and family rental homes. The federal homeless funding nationally also would have half emptied Canada's 14,150 emergency shelter



beds. The 14,150 persons who reside in Canada's emergency shelters are single men and single women, who should be on the highest priority to be properly housed in entry level housing, but are not.

One contributing problem is that the affordable housing funding agencies are very disconnected from the emergency shelter funding agencies and, sadly, neither recognizes the true need for private basic entry level singles independent living rental homes.

Historical Data Would Support Reasons for Decline

A primary role of the Federal Government should be to provide leadership and guidance for both Provinces and Municipalities through the development of comprehensive national Emergency Shelter, Affordable Housing standardized economic data, detailing trends of national need and production.

CMHC, which provides basic major city statistical housing information, insures mortgages, offers Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) funding and affordable housing funding, should be mandated to include emergency shelter initiatives.

While recognizing federal jurisdiction in Canada Mortgage and Housing, and Aboriginal affairs housing, and a provincial jurisdiction in the matters of emergency shelters, housing and related infrastructures, the Federal government must develop a much more comprehensive na-

tional research strategy in cooperation with and sensitive to both provincial and municipal agendas. It should include comprehensive data assessment with historical trends of occupancy rates, construction costs, Federal, Provincial and Municipal fees and taxation levies to demonstrate

how these factors impact the development of affordable singles rental housing. This research must necessarily include for regional comparison not only the major cities but also their surrounding suburban municipalities within commuting distance.

Summary

We need to return to the competitive singles rental market of the 70s where liter-

ally tens of thousands of very affordable, modest units were provided for entry level singles renters. The cause of today's affordable singles rental housing crisis is because we no longer have a stock of very necessary affordable single housing for entry level singles renters. Statistically identifying and then working with federal, provincial, and municipal departments to remove the barriers that inhibit private singles rental development should be the first priority. Then we must develop with the provinces a plan to proceed with workable guidelines to encourage competitive private enterprise to return to the business of building, owning and renting affordable entry-level singles housing. \$1500/month emergency and transitional shelter bed spaces are not a solution.



This project typifies homeless funding excesses. Moving from a 62 bed rental bldg with a \$600K/year budget into a brand new architecturally designed \$4 million 75 bed shelter industry owned bldg with a \$900K/year budget and adding only 13 very expensive beds.

PROMISES MADE—AFFORDABLE HOUSING

* Liberal Election 2000 Red Book promised \$680 million to build up to 120,000 affordable homes.

MONEY COMMITTED

2001 Budget	\$680 million	Affordable Housing	
2003 Budget	\$320 million	Affordable Housing	Total \$1 billion for Affordable Housing
2001 Budget	\$753 million	Homeless (Homes)	
2003 Budget	\$400 million	Homeless (Homes)	Total \$1.153 billion for Homeless (Homes)

Grand Total of \$2.153 billion on affordable housing and homeless homes.

* In addition, approximately \$1 billion in grants have also been given by miscellaneous federal, provincial, municipal, community, charitable trusts, and lottery funding.

PROMISE BROKEN—AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Total houses built in Canada to May 2005, less than 25,000—in Alberta 2,500. In Edmonton 647 units were built with Federal and Provincial shared funding of \$40 million, but only 172 units have rents at \$350/month or less for single persons, and only 20 of these are by private housing providers! \$30 million of homeless funding also has been spent mostly on new architecturally designed non profit owned shelters, to replace economically rented shelter space, with little or no extra space for the homeless yet, homeless counts still rise. Nationally, \$2.1 billion could have helped build over 150,000 units of affordable housing for single homeless persons and families in desperate need of housing.

Update: \$70 million has been spent in Edmonton to help the homeless and only 20 units of private independent living affordable entry level housing were built. High singles homeless counts were used to leverage \$70 million to build 627 units of mostly inappropriate social housing that single homeless persons will seldom or never be able to access.

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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 to 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 Canada 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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