



MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

The deplorable state of the homeless plight in Edmonton, in spite of large amounts of Federal & Provincial funds spent over the past 4 years is shocking.

The following is an article written by Peter Goldring and published in the Edmonton Journal, January 2004.

In a wealthy city like Edmonton with a harsh winter climate, there simply should not be a lack of the most basic shelter, a warm room, with floor mat space, for 200 people. Federal, provincial and municipal governments which have contributed very substantial taxpayer-paid funds intended to shelter the homeless must be asked a basic question: "Where did all the money go?"

The recent Journal editorial supporting the opening of taxpayer-funded, church-operated shelters for homeless people in Old Strathcona reflects a common public misconception of the homeless emergency shelter situation in Edmonton. While there obviously is a great need for more emergency shelter space, a perennial "Strathcona community church emergency homeless shelter approach" is not the way to go. Previously introduced as an absolute temporary measure, it is now planned to be repeated this winter.



*Peter Goldring, Member of Parliament, Julius Yankowsky and concerned citizen Gordon Stamp wrap up their midnight tour of Edmonton's Emergency Shelter System at the Churchill LRT Subway Station.*

In 1999, the federal Liberal government unveiled its three-year, \$753 million homeless plan. In 2003, an additional \$405 million was added, for a total of \$1.1 billion. The Edmonton Housing Trust Fund received and spent over \$20 million of this funding, without adding any new additional permanent emergency shelter floor space. Edmonton once again has to rely on well-meaning citizens to open, at taxpayer expense, their community churches at \$1,000 per night and LRT stations at \$4,000 per night.

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The public is led to believe that it's a lack of funding that is causing the homeless plight. However, the history of government funding reveals that the problem persists, not due to a lack of funding, but instead due to irresponsible spending and abysmal planning. Six years ago, the number of emergency shelter floor spaces was approximately the same as it is today and the shelters turned away dozens of people each night, much the same as they do today. Knowing this, why has Edmonton not added any permanent emergency shelter floor space?

Six years ago, the George Spady Centre, the city's most basic emergency shelter, added a room for 12 floor mats by converting an office — and still turned many away nightly. The Spady Centre has undergone costly office construction additions, while their only improvement in capacity is to make the 12 temporary spaces permanent. The new Urban Manor shelter, built to replace a building rented at a very modest \$3,000 per month, adds exactly 13 more beds at a total cost of \$4 million. Although the Urban Manor had enough floor space to

set up emergency floor mats, management of the Manor chose not to, saying that such emergency shelter was not within the Manor's mandate.



*Rented at \$3,000 per month, for 63 beds, the Old Urban Manor building was replaced at a cost of \$4 million and only added 13 beds.*



*Spady Centre with capacity for 62 was overloaded for 6 years has added an addition costing \$300,000 that added no extra mat space.*



*Edmonton opened the LRT at \$4,000 per night for 40 people in 2003 and a Fire Hall at \$2,000 per night for 25 people in 2004.*

The private sector has offered to help fill the void not being filled by existing shelters, but has repeatedly been turned down and discouraged by the Edmonton gatekeepers of the federal funding — the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund. Private sector proposals for over 1,000 new units have all been rejected, with favour instead being shown to a number of non-profit groups and their very expensive rental projects, involving consolidations of "non-profit" real estate holdings.

A case in point is the long vacant federal immigration building beside the overcrowded George Spady Centre and across the street from the crammed Herb Jamieson Centre. Three different private-sector proposals to create 150 units of affordable independent living housing for singles, plus emergency shelter space, were turned down over the years. An executive of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund stated that he would love to have a social group make a proposal on



the building, while at the same time turning down or discouraging private proposals. This regret-table bias, at the expense of homeless persons' great need for shelter, has kept a very viable building empty.

Statistics Canada states that of 14,500 singles living in Canada's emergency shelters, 595 reside in Edmonton shelters. Over 50 per cent of shelter users have a little money and could afford to rent \$300 a month single room homes if they were available. Twenty million dollars could have helped build 1,000 units of very affordable independent living for singles, greatly reducing shelter occupancy pressures. Instead, the \$20 million of funding, spent supposedly to help the homeless in Edmonton, has resulted in no new permanent shelter floor space and no new independent living homes.

While it is commendable that Old Strathcona residents have again opened their community church facilities as emergency shelters, to do so on a perennial basis is an affront to area property and zoning standards. It is

also an affront to taxpayers who have contributed \$20 million in an obviously wasted effort, which has neither reduced Edmon-ton's 500 sheltered homeless persons nor even added a few square feet of floor space in existing emergency shelters, to accommodate the very obvious need of so many.

Availability of emergency shelter floor space in major Canadian cities should be a basic human right, all year round. No person, whether in winter's cold or summer's rain, should be deprived in an emergency of floor space in a warm, dry, sheltered area. If this is too much to expect from \$20 million and three years of effort, supposedly to help those who are homeless and in dire need, then it's time to turn the job over to people who do care and can do it.



*3 private companies offered to open 150 spaces at \$20,000 per long term affordable units but was Turned Down by EHTF.*

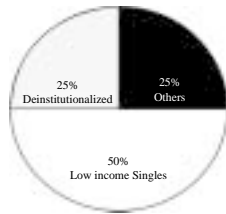
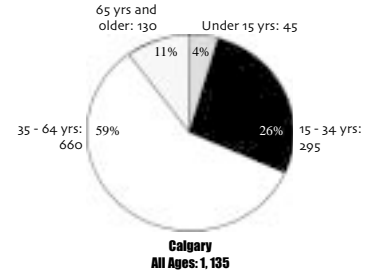
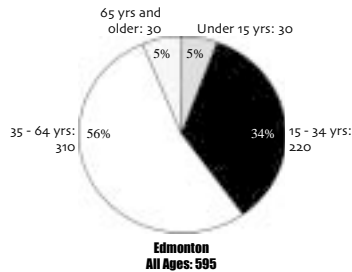
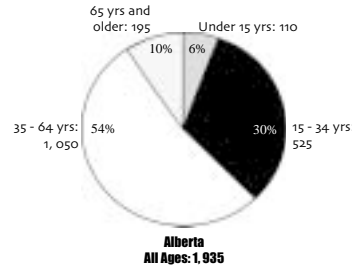
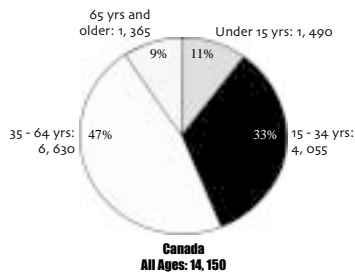


*Private company offered to rent emergency spaces for 150 persons for \$3000 per month but were Turned Down by EHTF.*



*AIM private non-profit organization offered to open space for 180 persons for \$10,000 per unit but was Turned Down by EHTF.*

*480 Real  
Housing Spaces  
LOST  
While EHTF  
Claims  
Success*



**Canada's Sheltered Homeless Population Approximate Breakdown of Need**

- Canadian Total: 14,150
- 25% Deinstitutionalized: Deinstitutionalization is a callous, ill-advised movement that pushed people in need of support onto the street and is one of the greatest national disgraces of our times. (3,537).
- 50% Low Income Singles: Are fully capable of paying their own way in affordable independent living houses but none are available (7,075).
- 25% Others: unemployable, hard-to-house, addictions, victims of abuse (3,538).

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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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