

# \$20 Million Homeless Funding Spent And Still A Shelter Shortage!

## Where Did The Money Go?

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

The deplorable lack of shelter space for the homeless 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 *The Moncton Times and Transcript* Jan 22, 2004.

In a recent Campbell Morrison article on the Martin cabinet ("New Human Resources Minister hails from Hub City", Jan. 12), reference is made to my criticisms of the performance of Claudette Bradshaw in terms of my view that Ms. Bradshaw has neither economically nor efficiently used funding intended to help Canada's homeless.

Mr. Morrison cites unsourced figures to ostensibly demonstrate that my concerns are unwarranted. What is missing from the data is information on how much actual new additional shelter space has been created in Canada, as contrasted with expensive replacement shelter space that adds little to Canada's ability to help the homeless in times of emergencies. If it were

otherwise, how is it that major Canadian cities, most recently Calgary, Edmonton, and Victoria, have all had to open emergency shelter spaces to cope with the overflow of homeless persons in inclement weather? For example, in Edmonton, editorial support for the opening of taxpayer-funded, church-operated shelters for homeless people reflects a common public misconception of the homeless emergency shelter situation. While there obviously is a great need for more emergency shelter space, a perennial "community church emergency homeless shelter approach" is not the

way to go. Previously introduced as an absolute temporary measure, it was repeated this winter.

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



Original Urban Manor Building with 62 bed spaces was rented for \$4000 per month, less than \$70.00 per person, per month.



200 people. Federal, provincial and municipal governments which have contributed very substantial taxpayer-paid funds must be asked a basic question: "Where did all the money go?"

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, 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 light rail transit stations at \$4,000 per night. Most recently, a fire station was made available for the homeless to sleep on its floor, which understandably caused concerns among firefighters intent on rapidly responding to emergency calls.

Throughout Canada and with the encouragement of Minister Bradshaw, the public is led to believe that it is 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.

Six years ago, Edmonton's most basic emergency shelter added a room for 12 floor mats by converting an office and still turned many away nightly. As in other parts of Canada, this shelter has undergone costly office construction additions, while their only improvement in capacity is to make the 12 temporary spaces permanent. Another new shelter (and part of Minister Bradshaw's statistics, presumably relied on



**New Urban Manor Built with only a 13 bed gain, at a cost of \$3 Million plus grants now is practically mortgage free, and still costs \$300,000 more per year to operate.**

by Campbell Morrison), 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.

The private sector has offered to help fill the void, but has repeatedly been turned down and discouraged by the local gatekeepers of the federal funding the various social groups to which Minister





Bradshaw's funds are entrusted. In Edmonton, private sector proposals for over 1,000 new units have all been rejected, with favour instead being shown to social sector groups, and their very expensive and ineffective consolidations of real estate holdings. Also in Edmonton, three different private-sector proposals to renovate a vacant federal building 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 "local gatekeeper" 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 regrettable bias, at the expense of homeless persons, has kept a very viable building empty. Statistics Canada states that there are approximately 14,150 singles living in Canada's emergency shelters. Surely, after spending over \$1 billion in public funds, Minister Bradshaw could ensure that there are at least sufficient basic shelter spaces to address the needs of the homeless. Instead, this expenditure has resulted in no new permanent shelter floor space and virtually no new independent living homes for single persons, the largest component of Canada's homeless population.

While it is commendable that residents in Canadian cities are willing to open their community church facilities as emergency shelters, to do so on a perennial basis is an affront to taxpayers who have contributed \$1 billion in an obviously wasted effort, which has neither reduced Canada's sheltered homeless persons nor even added a few square feet of floor space in existing shelters, to accommodate the obvious need of so many. Availability of emergency shelter floor space in major Canadian cities should be a basic human right, all year round. If this is too much to expect from \$1 billion and four 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.



George Spady Centre Shelter over capacity. For 6 years running added an addition that added no extra shelter space, only offices.

#### The Liberal Legacy after 3 years and \$20 Million in Edmonton

- Only 12 new emergency shelter beds No independent living homes for singles.
- Homeless numbers increase 60% over the three years.
- Homeless people forced to sleep on floor of LRT station because of no shelter space.
- Across Canada the homeless still suffer without relief.

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

Canadian Total: 14,150 (In Shelters)

Stats Can 2001



- 25% Deinstitutionalized: in need of institutional care (3, 537).
- 50% Low Income Singles: in need of affordable homes (7, 075).
- 25% Others: unemployable, hard-to-house, addictions, victims of abuse (3, 538).

**UPDATE**— In the Throne Speech of 2003 the Liberals were calling for yet again more money. The \$1.1 Billion spent already could have purchased a \$ 70,000 condo for each and everyone one of the 15000 homeless people in Canada's shelters.

9111 - 118th Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5B 0T9  
(780) 495-3261  
Fax: 495-5142

Web Site:  
www.petergoldring.ca  
E-mail:  
goldrp1@parl.gc.ca

411 Justice Bldg.  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6  
(613) 992-3821  
Fax: 992-6898

*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: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_



**Peter Goldring**  
Member of Parliament  
Edmonton Centre-East  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6