

Housing for All !

Written by

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PEJ News - Please attend this important meeting to help plan a successful event on Oct. 23rd coinciding with the Union of BC municipalities 2006 Convention in Victoria. The more people to help, the better the event. Bring a friend.

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Housing for All !

The next meeting of the group is Tuesday, Oct. 17 th, 7pm at the Silver Threads office, 1740 Douglas Street (at Harold). We will also be meeting on Sunday, Oct. 22 nd at 2pm to complete last minute details and produce some banners and a "shanty" town. This meeting will also be held at Silver Threads.

For further info. Contact the Ad Hoc Committee to End Homelessness c/o Victoria@communitysolidarity.org or 920 9091

The group also wanted people to write to news groups, and I am attaching a sample letter for ideas.

Sample ideas for letters to the Editor?pick and choose.

Should not housing be a basic right for all.?

As experience of huge numbers of homeless shows in Victoria and across Canada, it cannot be left to the private market to provide housing for all. Skyrocketing land prices, low rental returns, poverty level incomes and out of this world housing prices do not provide sufficient profit margins for developers to build low cost housing.

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What we need is massive federal, provincial and municipal intervention to provide family housing and singles apartments for people on middle to low income or without means of sustenance.

New York for example grabbed the bull by the horns and wrestled rampant homelessness to the ground. According to the Globe and Mail, "In 1990, homelessness, not crime, was the No. 1 issue on the minds of most New Yorkers. The homeless were everywhere. That year, the census bureau estimated there were 12,000 people in homeless shelters on any given night and another 10,000 in visible street and park locations. The bureau would later concede that the estimates were likely low by four or five thousand. Six years later, you had a hard time even finding a homeless person in the Big Apple. The number of those in shelters was down to 4,000 a night, and the number on the street was estimated to be between 3,500 and 4,000. What happened? In a word, housing.

According to Dennis Culhane, a professor in the School of Social Policy and Practice at the University of Pennsylvania, the city provided 21,000 units of permanent housing for the down and out. "That was the difference," said Prof. Culhane, one of the leading authorities on homelessness in the world.

"Unlike the flophouses of yore, these places are run by not-for-profit organizations that compete for these contracts so they haven't turned into our new slums. The organizations running the housing programs have a mission and a funding stream and the whole idea is to provide a quality of life. The units are maintained because there is a whole regime of discipline and connectedness."

Why cannot we Canadians, who pride ourselves on our civil society and social conscience, do the same? Families are breaking up, poverty and homelessness are exacting untold stress and housing services are overwhelmed.

Housing waitlists are chockerblock. The Capital Region Housing Corporation Executive Director estimates 17, 000-20,000 families need housing in the Region, since many pay 50% or more of their income on rent.

The Province' proposed s rental subsidy for working poor families excludes the families on

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below poverty level social assistance, subsidizes landlords and encourages them to maintain unreasonably high rents. The marketplace cannot solve the problem but only make it worse.

If incentives are given to developers for densification to build condominiums across the Region, more than the current 10% of new stock should be required to be turned over to the Housing Corporation for income based subsidized shelter. The Juliet, Bay Towers Project, Langford tower project are all in process. Did the relevant municipality extract, or currently negotiating to extract, sufficient subsidized housing to justify these huge developments?

Let's act in unison to tackle this problem through subsidized housing. Most residential and business taxpayers would agree, since we all benefit as a community'

Come out on Monday Oct 23rd at noon at the Victoria Conference Centre, behind the Empress Hotel, to show Government and Municipal officials at the Union of BC Municipalities Convention that they must act now to avert social disaster!