

Right to Housing

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January 13, 2009

Hon. Jim Flaherty
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Flaherty:

RE: Social Housing as an Economic Stimulus

Manitoba's Right to Housing Coalition urges the government of Canada to prioritize investment in non-profit social housing development in the 2009 federal budget. While the need for affordable housing for low-income Canadians pre-dates our current economic crisis and requires a long term funding commitment, we strongly believe that investing in social housing at this time is particularly critical as it will result in significant social and economic returns at a time of great need.

Contrary to popular thinking, investing in social housing is not simply a charitable venture. While the main benefit is to provide housing for the thousands of people currently on waiting lists for public housing, living in overcrowded, unsafe, or over-priced homes or simply on the street without a home, housing is also a powerful economic driver.

It is estimated that for every \$1 million invested in housing development, 30 jobs are created and \$1.5 million is added to the GDP. Investing in housing development will stimulate the floundering lumber industry; provide innovative, sustainable, alternative 'green-building' solutions that meet the needs of an 'energy conscious' future and provide a more full range of housing options for Canadian households.

Integrating a targeted training and employment strategy will provide opportunities for individuals in greatest need. This will have the added

benefit of increasing tax revenues as well as stimulating consumer confidence.

We are calling for a \$2.5 billion investment over two years toward the creation of 30,000-50,000 new social housing units countrywide. At an estimated cost between \$150,000 to \$200,000 per unit, our goal will require the participation of provincial and municipal governments but we believe that it is the responsibility of our federal government to lead the way on this important public need. We propose that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation be mandated to kick-start this process by redirecting a significant portion of its billions of dollars of accumulated profits to this initiative.

While there are many worthwhile areas that would benefit from economic stimulus, we believe that social housing should be a priority given the broad social and economic impact.

Sincerely

Clark Brownlee
Coordinator
Right to Housing Coalition - Manitoba

C.C.

Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Hon. Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Opposition
Hon. Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Hon. Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Quebecois
The Honourable Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba
Hon. Hugh McFadyen, Leader of the Opposition
Hon. Gord Mackintosh, Minister of Housing
Hon. Greg Selinger, Minister of Finance
Hon. Jon Gerrard, Leader of the Liberal Party