



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

LIBBY DAVIES M.P.
2412 MAIN ST.,
VANCOUVER, BC.
V5T 3E2
TEL: (604) 775-5800
FAX: (604) 775-5811

ROOM 483
WEST BLOCK
OTTAWA ON. K1A 0A6
TEL: (613) 992-6030
FAX: (613) 995-7412
E-MAIL: daviel@parl.gc.ca

January 21, 1998

Nancy Dautovich
3890 Alexandra
Vancouver, BC
V6J 4C4

Dear Nancy:

Nancy -

Thanks so much for coming to the Housing Forum on Monday.

Although the situation seems bleak, there were lots of good ideas and commitment to find ways to get the federal government to address the need for a national housing program, with national standards and funding. It's vital that we push the government to recognize and act on the issues we're facing in Vancouver, and I'm glad that we've agreed on some local direct actions to highlight the situation here.

Although we don't have a firm date for the release of the federal budget yet, word is that it will be in early February. The Alternative Federal Budget will be released February 10, so I've set our **next meeting date for February 5 at 4:00pm at 2412 Main Street**. The Health Ministers' meeting has not yet been confirmed, but it will likely be in mid-February.

Attached are the minutes of our meeting.

I'm looking forward to continuing our work. Please let Janet Woo (775-5800) know if you can make it.

Sincerely,

Libby Davies, *MP*
Vancouver East

encl.
LD/en

HOUSING FORUM

MINUTES

January 19, 1998

After Introductions and agreement on the agenda, discussion focused on devolution and fact that federal government seems to have left the housing scene for good, leaving a huge void. "Public-private partnerships", research and RRAP are not answering the needs or filling the gap left by the federal government when it canceled its programs in 1993.

PRIORITY ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- ** maintaining current funding and operating agreements (vs. allowing complete devolution)
- ** we're losing ground -- 8000 units in B.C. alone have been lost since feds pulled out in 1993
- ** loss of non-subsidized units
- ** acceptance of homelessness in context of federal fiscal policies, rather than looking at long-term social impacts of that homelessness
- ** a year ago there were 1700 SRO's in Downtown South and Victory Square area; we've lost 38% of those and so-called low-income replacements don't necessarily house those who have been displaced
- ** somehow, the lowest standards became acceptable; we must stand in solidarity, flushing out proposals and refusing to accept/endorse eroding standards
- ** there's no national voice on housing; need a strong national lobby
- ** the feds just walked out, with no alternatives offered
- ** there's general acceptance of homelessness, as though it's "their" fault they're homeless; gentrification and local government policies are facilitating it; need direct action at local level
- ** there's a lack of a National Agenda: need to use economic arguments to promote the elimination of homelessness (i.e. savings in other costs and creation of jobs by investing in housing); Port Corporation is prime; city is also delinquent;

** there must be housing for drug users; HIV crisis will explode across the country; attitude that 25,000 homeless won't be 'noticed' in Vancouver; need coordination across the country, with direct action

** we have to start using the language of the debate, talk in "cost-savings" language

** the federal government has walked out the door and is not coming back; the "management of poverty" will soon be downloaded to the provinces; need national standards

** concern re: demolition of even moderate income housing -- city is allowing it;

** need for seniors' housing; decent standards and space;

** "market-reliance" is a mistake

OBJECTIVES:

- Establish that housing is a basic human right
- Get more community based housing with green space, decent standards/size
- Establish that there must be basic minimum standards
- Demand federal responsibility/presence
- Demand dialogue/debate/consultation
- Need national program and standards
- Must have a needs-based strategy
- Government must change the way it does accounting, looking at social benefits/losses versus monetary
- Must be information-sharing, critical evaluation amongst ourselves and between government levels
- Re-instate old programs and funding -- with appropriate amendments that support, recognize and use community innovations
- Must be a capital pool and tax incentives

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Wherever there's federal land, there's room for social housing -- i.e. Port Corp., (also example of B.C's "Housing First policy)
- Federal Budget (early Feb.) and plug in to Alternative Federal Budget with (CCPA), which will be released February 10.
- Call for Non-Profit Housing Foundation as proposed by CHRA;
- Call for national standards
- Raise the issue of HIV emergency and need for housing -- link health and housing and pressure Rock to lobby federal housing minister Gagliano
- Health ministers are meeting here at end of February - highlight housing needs, coordinate a tour
- Link with other issues as well, i.e. child poverty
- Link with national groups, i.e., CHRA, CFS, and other cities' organizations
- False Creek and other mega-developments and developing suburbs: insist on money for mixed communities; especially where federal money is committed to development, also insist on national standards
- Heritage sites can be used for affordable housing
- Link housing with community development and economic development
- Raise protection of housing in relation to MAI
- SRO concerns: raise fact that if feds hadn't backed out, there would be 8000 more units and problems wouldn't be so severe
- Build our momentum based on local issues and then bring to national level
- Use leverage we do have and counter misinformed blame: get provincial government to help (ie., province made salmon a national issue)
- Reach out to non-housing activists, broaden the base of support for housing movement

- Develop model of creative financing - economic development
- National Day of Action on Housing
- Coordinate event on local issue linking with other cities -- target Federal Budget
- Juno Awards in Vancouver, bringing national attention, March 22/98
- Homelessness campaign/forum, get galleries and communities involved
- Seek business allies - "Homelessness is bad for business", flyer/button campaign
- Hold housing "summit" - governments, community, private and non-profit sectors

The group agreed to focus efforts on actions around budget time, including trying to plug into the Alternative Federal Budget (to be released February 10), and the Health ministers' meeting here in mid-February (date to be confirmed), relating the HIV emergency and health crisis with the crisis in lack of housing.

Next Meeting:

**February 5, 1998
4:00 pm
2412 Main Street**

Follow-up Meeting (Hsqg)

Feb 5/98

- Local action \rightarrow national approach to increase visibility federally
 - fed budge, ~~at~~ end of Feb, early March
 - alternate budge Tues Feb 10
 - prov health minister here at end of Feb
 - Fed/prov housing ^{Ministers, Gagliano} meeting \rightarrow Feb 19th?
-
- submit a letter at Ministers meeting, signed by many groups?
indiv letters from grps expressing desire for mtg? unity of letter?
 - ? Bobby Dosange (P) mtg at end of March in Montreal Feb 79
 - \$1 mill \rightarrow where coming from, where going \rightarrow remained $\frac{1}{2}$ going to housing? \rightarrow thru health, not housing
 - Libby points out lack of long term commitment \rightarrow 1 mill only goes so far \rightarrow need nat. prog.
 - \rightarrow $\frac{1}{2}$ million would only amount to about 5^{10} units \rightarrow this
 - not actually provide hsqg, but support systems w/in existing units
 - broaden out health issue (focus not just on DTEs)
- New Cda Hsqg Act coming out this month
- \rightarrow can't abolish soc. hsqg (we say)
 - \rightarrow must chg act in order for devolution to happen \rightarrow facilitate fed withdrawal from hsqg
- send letters to fed/prov mtg
 - health board meets last Thurs of month
 - Roch's visit
 - Com Dev Inst (July) here
 - lost 8000 units since '93

ROOM 483
WEST BLOC
OTTAWA ON, K1A 0A6
TEL: (613) 992-6030
FAX: (613) 995-7412
E-MAIL: daviel@parl.gc.ca



2412 MAIN ST.
VANCOUVER, BC.
V5T 3E2
TEL: (604) 775-5800
FAX: (604) 775-5811

LIBBY DAVIES, M.P.
VANCOUVER EAST

MEMO

To: Vancouver Housing Activists (you know who you are)

From: Libby Davies

Date: April 7, 1998

Re: Letter to Provincial Health Ministers

Pursuant to our last meeting, Ken Lyotier and Tom Laviolette wrote an excellent letter about the need to view housing as a health issue. I've forwarded the letter to all the provincial health ministers across Canada.

I've included a sample of my cover letter and Ken and Tom's letter for your information.

On other fronts: still no word yet about when a meeting of Provincial Housing Ministers will take place. Let's keep each other apprised on this one.

Also, I did meet with Mr. Gagliano in Ottawa and was able to discuss housing issues generally. My main point was to get CMHC to agree to allow RRAP funds to be used for upgrading the Washington and Sunrise Hotels. This looks somewhat promising.

If anyone is able to go to the upcoming CHRA (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association) Conference in Ottawa, April 15-18, please let us know!

LD/jw
PASS

The Vancouver Housing Forum
c/o 52 East Cordova Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6A 1K2

April, 1998

The Canadian Provincial Ministers of Health

Dear Ministers:

Re: Decent Affordable Housing - A Health Imperative

Poor housing causes poor health!

We are writing to seek your commitment to a national strategy that will address the critical housing problems faced by many low income Canadians. Today, many thousands of Canada's poorest citizens are homeless or live in substandard housing.

In our province alone, inspite of efforts made by our provincial government to maintain some role in the provision of social housing, we are falling badly behind. The federal government's abandonment of housing programs in 1993 translates into the loss of more than 8000 homes for British Columbians most desperately in need. Our information suggests that this is a national experience.

We think it is a national tragedy!

Poorly housed Canadians are more likely to get seriously ill. This creates enormous pressures on our limited health care dollars. We know that keeping Canadians healthy is of vital concern to you.

We would like to suggest that you strongly consider the implications of the throne speech commitment to "devote one-half of the surplus in this mandate to addressing the social and economic needs of Canadians," as it relates to better health and housing. Libby Davies, MP, Vancouver East, has raised this point as well in a letter to the Honourable Alfonso Gagliano, Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

The federal minister of health must acknowledge the obvious role that decent housing plays in the health of all Canadians. As provincial health ministers, you can move this

issue forward by maintaining a united voice in calling for immediate federal participation in the provision of new social housing.

We are counting on your support.

Sincerely,

Ken Lyotier
for The Vancouver Housing Forum