

# **Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada**

## **TALKING POINTS FOR PROVINCIAL TERRITORIAL SUMMIT MEETING**

**Ottawa, October 8, 2008**



# 1. Recognition of federal program renewal

CHF Canada expresses its appreciation to the last Conservative Government for the renewal, immediately prior to the dissolution of parliament, of the three federal housing programs – Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), and Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) – due to expire next March 31. We acknowledge the leadership and commitment this demonstrates and we challenge the provinces and territories to make a matching commitment.



## 2. A long term strategy still needed

The renewed federal spending, while welcome, will not alone deliver the new affordable housing needed to address fully the challenges of homelessness and core housing need. The federal government must commit to further funding, beyond the current five-year horizon, and to match spending to a long-term strategy that sets targets for reducing homelessness and core housing need. We endorse the targets set out in the FCM's report (*Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness*) of January 2008.



### **3. A policy framework for expiring legacy programs**

A comprehensive housing strategy must take account of the coming expiry of other federal housing commitments. The operating agreements and subsidy streams are coming to an end for hundreds of thousands of federally delivered social housing units, and at the moment this is happening in a policy vacuum. The government needs to turn its attention to the consequences of these expiries, and work to protect the purposes of this housing and its capacity to house low-income Canadians. Savings due to reducing federal subsidy obligations should be reinvested in Canada's stock of social housing and directed towards redevelopment, renovations, energy retrofits, and the continued provision of rent-geared-to-income assistance. To fail to act is to risk squandering, over time, a substantial public investment in affordable housing.



## **4. A strategic partnership among different levels of government**

The new national housing strategy must be developed in partnership with the provinces, territories and municipalities. The provinces and territories must also commit to co-funding a long-term strategy with dollars of their own. Municipalities should contribute to the reduction of development costs through, for example, the waiving of development fees, flexible zoning arrangements including density bonusing and by making municipally held land available for affordable housing.



## 5. Consulting the stakeholder groups

Housing stakeholder groups, such as those presenting today, need to be consulted on the design of the new housing strategy. These groups are expert, they are on the ground and can bring new ideas to the table that will maximize the value of public funds committed to housing.



## 6. New spending tied to both supply and demand solutions

A new housing strategy must include both demand-side and supply-side housing solutions. Supply side should include new co-op and other non-profit affordable housing, through new-build and/or acquisition of existing rental assets. Demand side solutions such as shelter allowance programs have a very useful role to play, and rent supplement programs are effective in delivering rents geared to income in affordable housing, but Canada's housing challenges will not be met through demand-side solutions alone.



## 7. Efficiency of scale in program design

While new program framework need to be adaptable to local priorities, we cannot lose sight of the efficiencies that common financial and program delivery mechanisms bring us. Large-scale program structures permit the transfer of expertise and experience and have worked well in the past.



## 8. The case for more co-operative housing

Co-op housing in Canada is a success story, and co-op programs have received consistently high evaluation marks from CMHC. Co-op housing is cost-effective for government and offers a truly community-driven housing solution that puts the member-residents in control of their housing. Co-ops offer a unique opportunity for the personal development and empowerment of the members. What co-ops have to offer should not be overlooked in devising a comprehensive housing strategy.



## 9. A problem that is too big NOT to fix

In Canada today there are 4 million in core need and there are an estimated 20,000 who are chronically homeless. 40,000 Canadians sleep in shelters every night. Canada's affordable housing shortage is not a problem that is too big to fix; it is a problem that is too big NOT to fix.

