



**National Aboriginal Housing Association  
Association Nationale d'Habitation Autochtone**

Suite 102, 396 MacLaren Street  
OTTAWA ON K2P 0M8

Tel: 613-236-0288 [info@aboriginalhousing.org](mailto:info@aboriginalhousing.org) [www.aboriginalhousing.org](http://www.aboriginalhousing.org) Fax: 613-232-1977

**PRESENTATION TO  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES:  
ABORIGINAL HOUSING IN CANADA**

**NOVEMBER 29, 2007**

**Introduction and Overview of Presentation:**

This submission is in response to your invitation which we were pleased to receive. My name is David Seymour, and I wish to present my colleague, our Treasurer, James Lanigan, and our Executive Director, Charles Hill. All of us have extensive and lengthy experience in the field of social housing, and if we had the time and resources of a well-funded body, we would have undertaken a much more in depth study into the matter. When urban Native (Aboriginal) housing programs received initial support some thirty or thirty-five years ago, we were pleased that the federal government had finally recognized the great and pressing need among our people for safe, decent and affordable housing. Unfortunately, this recognition has apparently fallen by the wayside, because our people are still the worse housed in this great country, and we constitute a disproportionate number among the homeless on the streets of our cities coast to coast.

We have a firm grasp of the situation, and understand not only the causes, but we also have a clear picture of action required to remediate the current, atrocious housing conditions and homelessness endured by Aboriginal peoples across this country. This understanding is one of the key elements that led to the development of our national organization in the first place.

NAHA was incorporated in 1994 as a membership-based, non-profit organization working on behalf of non-reserve Aboriginal housing corporations, Aboriginal non-profit societies and Aboriginal housing providers and the people they serve in cities, towns and other non-reserve areas, including the north. The 110 urban Native (Aboriginal) housing providers serve First Nations, Métis and Inuit families and individuals in urban centres coast to coast to coast. Our Board of Directors is made up of representatives from urban Aboriginal housing organizations from each of the provinces and territories. Our Mission is to build safe and healthy Aboriginal communities by supporting Aboriginal housing corporations to achieve standards of excellence in the management and delivery of quality affordable housing and counselling support services to Aboriginal tenants and potential homeowners

This present paper is a compilation of our position on the various housing and homeless issues, and the continuing struggle to end poverty. The approach we want to take in this presentation is to provide you with background information so you too have a clear picture of events that have led up to the current situation, and can empathize with the remedies we propose.

In overview, our paper will be presented in keeping with the following headings:

**Background:**

Provides information leading up to the need for federal programs to help Aboriginal peoples in urban areas acquire safe, decent and affordable housing.



### **Confirmation of Need:**

Provides information from studies conducted by NAHA, and cites the Royal Commission, speaking to the need and offering solutions to bring parity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Housing.

### **Human Right to Housing and the Right of Indigenous Peoples to Housing:**

Speaks to internal and international efforts to get Canada to accept that Aboriginal peoples have a right to housing, and that this right includes delivery of programs in a culturally-sensitive manner.

### **Required - Vehicles for Change:**

Calls for legislation to ensure equitable treatment, and development and acceptance of an Aboriginal Housing Policy in and by Canada. (Such policy should provide flexibility and enable to render their projects self-sufficient.)

### **Need for New and Increased Funding:**

Studies confirm that new and increased funding is needed to help urban Aboriginal peoples acquire sufficient numbers of housing units, and to help people overcome homelessness. Financial support is also needed to increase capacity in the operation of the urban Aboriginal housing delivery organizations, and also to help organizations advocating on their behalf.

### **Recommendations:**

NAHA recommends that Canada:

1. develop a ten-year (10 year) strategic housing plan that has within it Aboriginal elements and components;
2. recognize that the Aboriginal peoples constitute distinct peoples and cultures in Canada;
3. revive and revitalize Aboriginal-specific housing programs at the National (Canada-wide) level;
4. revive and pass legislation pertaining to human rights to housing, ensuring there is specific reference to the Aboriginal right to housing;
5. require that any monies provided to provinces and/or territories for Aboriginal housing be spent for that purpose;
6. recognize the Aboriginal right to govern our own affairs and to ensure administration of programs intended to serve Aboriginal peoples are directed and operated by Aboriginal persons and Aboriginal personnel;
7. ensure sufficient and on-going funding to enable Aboriginal housing delivery organizations and NAHA to meet their legal obligations to meet at least once a year and to meet their day to day responsibilities to Aboriginal housing providers and Aboriginal peoples in all areas of Canada;
8. work with Aboriginal peoples through their (Aboriginal) organizations to develop, implement and fund a National Aboriginal Housing Policy;
9. provide money to enable NAHA to carry out research; and
10. cease the concerted effort currently underway to assimilate us.

This presentation includes information relating to the needs of the community. Numerous studies have demonstrated that Aboriginal housing and homelessness is the worst in Canada. It is our hope that we do not need to “prove” this. However, we do want to support our arguments as to the need for help by citing our most recent study. All the data available in the present day demonstrate that Aboriginal housing and homelessness is the worst in Canada, and confirm that something must be done, and soon.



## **BACKGROUND:**

In the 1950's, more and more Native/Indian/Aboriginal persons began moving to urban and non-reserve rural areas across Canada. Cultural, social, linguistic and economic differences, along with sheer racism, resulted in the majority of the Aboriginal peoples ending up in the worst housing in these communities.

After prolonged insistence by the Native Council of Canada and other Native organizations, Canada (Central) Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) established the Rural and Native Housing Program, a subsidized home ownership program open to non-Native as well as Native persons in small communities and later introduced the Urban Native Housing (UNH) Program an rent geared to income program for larger urban centres.

Under the UNH, Native (Aboriginal) housing delivery corporations borrowed money from commercial lenders to purchase houses to rent to Aboriginal peoples in urban centres. CMHC provided subsidies to help the corporations take ownership mount programs services and repay their housing loans.

From the beginning of the programs until 1993, the 110 Urban Native Housing corporations across Canada acquired approximately 11,000 units, while the RNH acquired about 9,000 units. In excess of 50% of rural units were accessed by the mainstream public.

In 1993, Canada, through CMHC, ended assistance, stating that beginning in 1994, they would not provide subsidies for any new social housing projects; they would only continue to pay down the existing mortgages and operating agreements.

It was at this time (1994) that the National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) was incorporated. NAHA's primary objective initially was to urge the federal government to change its collective mind about restricting further program growth.

Moreover, in 1995, the decision was taken that, beginning in 1996, Canada would transfer administration of their non-reserve and other social housing programs to the provinces and territories.

We believe that Canada has a fiduciary responsibility and historically-based obligations to deal directly with the Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Accordingly, NAHA began to advocate against the download to the provinces, insisting that the UNH program be exempted. This has been to no avail, so far. It is interesting to note, however, that another national housing organization, made up of non-Native membership, was in fact exempted, with NAHA being told that the other organization serves a "*special clientele*".

Nevertheless, NAHA continues to serve as an advocate on behalf of urban Aboriginal housing, at the same time, speaking out against homelessness.

## **ABORIGINAL HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS WORST IN CANADA:**

Study after study confirms that Aboriginal peoples occupy the worst housing in Canada, and for the same reasons as when the UNH program began years ago. A study that NAHA completed in 2004 shows the following:

### **Non-Reserve Aboriginal Housing Need**

- 2001 Census:**
- total Aboriginal population in Canada just under 1 million persons;
  - 320,000 Aboriginal households;
  - 71% of Aboriginal population lives off-reserve;
  - almost three-quarters of those off-reserve live in urban areas.
  - 48% are renters.



### **Comparative Need - non-Reserve Aboriginal vis-à-vis Non-Aboriginal Populations:**

- Among Non-Aboriginal households there is a 50-50 split of families and non-family households (predominantly single persons). 71% of Aboriginal households are made up of families.
- 16.5% of dwellings rented by Aboriginals need major repair compared to 9.0% for Non-Aboriginals.
- 37% of Aboriginals spend more than the norm of 30% for their rent while 15% (1 in every 6) experience a severe rent burden, paying greater than 50% of income for shelter.
- Although non-family households are a smaller proportion of Aboriginal households (30%) these primarily single person households experience a greater incidence of severe rent cost burden. 20% of non-family Aboriginal households spend more than 50% of their income on shelter (vs.13% among **non**-Aboriginal families).
- At a national level, the average household income of Aboriginal households is 87% that of Non-Aboriginal households.
- In the city of Ottawa where Aboriginal people are considered to be economically successful, it might be suggested that housing assistance there is not a priority; on the contrary, in a recent survey only 14.6% of Aboriginal respondents own their own homes while 85.4% are renters.

Other studies confirm these findings, and also confirm that Aboriginal homelessness is highly disproportionate, based on the proportion of Aboriginal peoples compared to the general population.

### **Aboriginal Housing Policy in Canada is noted by others:**

In a recent report on *Suicide Among Aboriginal People in Canada* prepared for The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2007), the link between Housing and homeless and suicide is made:

“Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the urban homeless population. For example, in Edmonton, Aboriginal people comprise about 6 per cent of the overall population, but 43 per cent of the homeless (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat). A study of 330 homeless people in Toronto found that about 61 per cent had suicidal ideation and 34 per cent had made a suicide attempt (Eynan et al., 2002). In a qualitative study of street youth, 46 per cent had attempted suicide at least once and the majority had made multiple attempts (Kidd, 2004).” (Page 57)

The Unicef Canada organization recently reported in their article titled the same “*Too Many Children Still Left out Eighteen Years after Children’s Rights Convention Adopted.*”

“Aboriginal children are one of the most vulnerable populations in Canada, facing enormous challenges. Overall, the poverty rate for Aboriginal children is close to three times that of other Canadian children. As well, children in some remote Aboriginal communities lack access to adequate housing, clean water and quality education. In addition, Aboriginal children are disproportionately represented in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.”

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Miloon Kothari; in his recent mission to Canada in October 2007 made the observation that:

“Everywhere that [he] visited in Canada, [he] met people who are homeless and living in inadequate and insecure housing conditions. On this mission I heard of hundreds of people who have died<sup>2</sup>, as a direct result of Canada’s nation-wide housing crisis. In its most recent periodic review of Canada’s compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the United Nations used strong language to label housing and homelessness and inadequate housing as a ‘national emergency’.”



## **National Aboriginal Housing Policy Required:**

NAHA has proposed that a National Aboriginal Housing Strategy (Policy) be put in place, along with ample financial resources, to help meet the need. An outline of the proposed Strategy is appended to this document.

## **Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP):**

The **RCAP Report**, released in 1996, made the following recommendations specifically with regard to Aboriginal Peoples living in non-Reserve communities, to quote from Volume 3, Chapter 4:

### **“5.4 Conclusions and Recommendations**

There is clearly a need for subsidized housing for Aboriginal people living in non-reserve communities. Whatever differences may exist about details, the Commission found broad agreement among leaders, experts, and community representatives that CMHC programs directed to Aboriginal people who do not live on-reserve need to be restored, with appropriate modifications for greater effectiveness and to stimulate individual self-reliance.

Over the past decade, Aboriginal people have made significant progress in developing the institutional capacity to address housing problems in non-reserve communities. The Commission is concerned that the federal government, having helped to create the institutional base for housing programs, is now undermining that base with the elimination of key CMHC programs. We understand that the federal government's 1994-95 program review was based on the principle of reducing program activities that are not core functions of the federal government. Many programs, in addition to CMHC's social housing programs, have been affected.

However, the Commission believes that the federal government's withdrawal from this area is unrealistic and at odds with one of its responsibilities to Aboriginal people. Governments have a duty to ensure that Aboriginal people have the means to afford their own housing and, failing that, to supplement the resources Aboriginal people can supply. A major catch-up effort requires collaboration by all parties. In this constrained fiscal environment, the federal government cannot assume that its withdrawal from CMHC programming in non-reserve communities will mean that provinces will take over. If anything, the federal withdrawal creates a vacuum and loss of the critical mass of resources needed to leverage other resources, private sector and Aboriginal, necessary for a catch-up effort.”

Further, “The Commission recommends that

#### **3.4.12**

The government of Canada and the governments of the provinces and territories undertake to meet fully, in co-operation with Aboriginal people and within 10 years, the need for adequate housing of Aboriginal people not living on reserves.

#### **3.4.13**

Aboriginal people not living on reserves make every effort to marshal more resources for housing in a variety of ways, through contributions in kind, use of local materials, and effective housing organizations.

#### **3.4.14**

The government of Canada engage the provincial and territorial governments in a strategy to meet the housing needs of Aboriginal people living in non-reserve communities by

- reinstating and increasing funding for new social housing and mortgage subsidies under the Aboriginal off-reserve programs of CMHC;
- providing greater autonomy and flexibility to Aboriginal organizations delivering the program in rural areas and to urban social housing corporations; and
- providing rental subsidies as a cost-effective option where rental markets exist.”

Elsewhere in the Report, the Commission recommends that there be Aboriginal control of Aboriginal programs.



Ten years after the release of the Report, minimal action has been taken. Over the years since the cap was placed on new social housing subsidies, Aboriginal housing conditions have continued to worsen and homelessness in Canada has grown significantly among all populations, but especially among the Aboriginal populations.

### **THE RIGHT TO HOUSING:**

We have been insisting over the years that we, as indigenous peoples, are not only entitled to a share of the benefits from the natural resources of this country, but that we also have the human right to adequate, affordable housing. This point is expanded upon clearly and succinctly in Appendix 2, which contains the presentation made to the UN Special Rapporteur who was in Canada recently.

### **PROPOSED LEGISLATION RELATING TO HOUSING:**

In 2001, a Bill Respecting Rights to Housing was proposed, then died on the floor. It has been subsequently been introduced as Bill C-382 and is currently before the House of Commons. Section 12 of the proposed Bill made specific reference to Aboriginal housing:

- “12. (1) The Minister shall, within 180 days after the coming into force of this Act, convene a conference of the ministers of the Crown for each province responsible for housing and representatives of municipalities **and the aboriginal communities.**
- (2) The conference convened pursuant to subsection (1) shall
- (a) develop standards and objectives for the national housing strategy described in section 8, and programs to carry it out;
  - (b) set targets for the commencement of the programs;
  - (c) recommend a time by which an additional one percent of the annual expenditures of the federal and all provincial and municipal governments during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002 are to be assigned to national housing programs throughout Canada; and
  - (d) develop the principles of an agreement between the federal and all provincial governments and representatives of the municipalities and aboriginal communities for the development and delivery of the programs.”

This subsequent Bill is not likely to survive this parliament.

### **FUNDING NEEDED FOR REGIONAL AND NATIONAL OPERATIONS:**

Regional and national organizations are required by corporate law to hold annual general meetings. The National Aboriginal Housing Association does not receive any significant funding from any source to prepare for or host an Annual General Meeting and Conference. The exception to this was for fiscal year 2006, when we received some funding from the Office of the Federal Interlocutor in relation to our annual meeting and for production of a DVD on Aboriginal Housing in Canada, in relation to the World Urban Forum III. We also received some funding from HRSDC to enable 12 of our members from “east of the Rockies” to participate in the World Urban Forum III.

We carried out all of the agreed upon activities and submitted comprehensive reports on these activities, to the satisfaction of the funders.

However, we are seeking funding now to enable us to continue work on putting in place our AGM for 2008, but federal departments are not responsive to our requests.



### **ACCESS TO AND USE OF MONIES FROM URBAN ABORIGINAL HOUSING TRUST FUNDS:**

Three hundred million dollars (\$300 M. CAD) in federal money was placed in federal trust funds, to be drawn out by the provinces to respond to the need for affordable housing for Aboriginal peoples in cities across Canada. However, the only place there seems to be any progress is in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Quebec and New Brunswick, with regard to accessing the funds. At least plans are being put in place, even though little money has actually flowed, to date.

In Ontario, however, the money is still held in provincial government coffers. Moreover, although the province has said that they are now prepared to meet with several Aboriginal organizations to set up a framework for consultation, Ontario refuses to include in the discussions any of the 42 urban Aboriginal housing providers in Ontario.

Moreover, that 18 months have elapsed since the trust funding was made available to the provinces is worsened by the fact that the funding is for only three years; the sunset for this funding is March 31, 2009, and to date no new urban Aboriginal housing units have yet been built or acquired, using the trust funds.

### **MONEY NEEDED FOR RESEARCH:**

In 2003, we received a small amount of funding from the PCO to carry out research cited on page 2, above. In 2005-06, we were permitted to co-manage a comparative analysis of indigenous housing in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, but we were unable to obtain any money to carry out or oversee any research ourselves. We have been provided with draft copies, but CMHC has not yet finished production and translation of the final report. When we receive this, we will provide a copy for your reading and/or archives.

### **FORCED ASSIMILATION OF URBAN ABORIGINAL HOUSING:**

In 1940, the eminent anthropologist, Diamond Jeness, made a presentation to the House of Commons, advocating the assimilation of the indigenous peoples in Canada, doing away with reserves and rendering the "Indians" as non-existent.

The 1969 White Paper proposed the same thing.

Although there is no one piece of legislation or written public policy in place, it appears that the federal government(s), both former and current, are pressing for the assimilation of the Aboriginal peoples, by turning urban Aboriginal housing programs and administration thereof over to the provinces. Indeed, in Ontario, the provincial government has downloaded the urban Aboriginal housing programs to the municipalities, despite protest from some of the municipalities, as well as from the urban Aboriginal housing delivery organizations. Ontario is the only province to take this approach.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:

Immediate and urgent action is needed at once in effort to help Aboriginal peoples in Canada to be able to enjoy the same level of shelter as that enjoyed by Canadians who make up the mainstream population.

### NAHA recommends that Canada:

11. develop a ten-year (10 year) strategic housing plan that has within it Aboriginal elements and components;
12. recognize that the Aboriginal peoples constitute distinct peoples and cultures in Canada;
13. revive and revitalize Aboriginal-specific housing programs at the National (Canada-wide) level;
14. revive and pass legislation pertaining to human rights to housing, ensuring there is specific reference to the Aboriginal right to housing;
15. require that any monies provided to provinces and/or territories for Aboriginal housing be spent for that purpose;
16. recognize the Aboriginal right to govern our own affairs and to ensure administration of programs intended to serve Aboriginal peoples are directed and operated by Aboriginal persons and Aboriginal personnel;
17. ensure sufficient and on-going funding to enable Aboriginal housing delivery organizations and NAHA to meet their legal obligations to meet at least once a year and to meet their day to day responsibilities to Aboriginal housing providers and Aboriginal peoples in all areas of Canada;
18. work with Aboriginal peoples through their (Aboriginal) organizations to develop, implement and fund a National Aboriginal Housing Policy;
19. provide money to enable NAHA to carry out research; and
20. cease the concerted effort currently underway to assimilate us.

Presented by:

David Seymour  
President



## FOUNDATION FOR A NATIONAL NON-RESERVE ABORIGINAL HOUSING STRATEGY

### **Guiding Principles for a New National non-Reserve Housing Strategy.**

#### Fiduciary Responsibility, Self-Determination & the Need to Consult

- ensure an Aboriginal component in any federal unilateral or bilateral housing program;
- provide for self-determination and self-governance;
- Consult with the Aboriginal community (Aboriginal Housing Corporations)

#### Cultural Sensitivity and Well-Being

- guidelines must facilitate incorporation of culturally appropriate and sensitive management
- respect differing First Nation, Metis & Inuit needs.

#### Access to Adequate Resources

- provide adequate capital assistance to non-reserve Aboriginal communities;
- base affordability on the principle of paying not more than 30% of household income

### **Developing a National Aboriginal Housing Strategy**

The high incidence of housing in need of major repair is unacceptable; Continuing high levels of homelessness is unacceptable; a rent burden of 30% or greater is unacceptable. NAHA/ANHA requests the federal government convene a national roundtable among federal/provincial, territorial officials, with NAHA/ANHA, First Nation, Metis and Inuit national representatives to establish a base for a National Aboriginal Housing Strategy.

#### **An Agenda for Action:**

NAHA/ANHA recommends an agenda for action, including the development of a National Aboriginal Housing Strategy, to address the serious housing conditions of Canada's non-reserve Aboriginal population. The agenda requires the co-operation of all levels of government and the Aboriginal community.

1. Establish Framework for the National Aboriginal Housing Policy
2. Fix Existing Programs
3. Establish A Consultative Framework With Aboriginal Housing Providers
4. Protect the Existing Portfolio
5. Recognize Aboriginal Housing as the Cornerstone of Sustainable Communities



**TO THE NAHA PRESENTATION TO  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES  
November 29, 2007**

Statement Regarding the Right to Adequate Housing

By

Marcel Swain, LL.B

CEO, Lu'ma Native Housing Society, Vancouver, Canada

If, internationally:

**“the human right to adequate housing is defined as the right of every woman, man, youth, and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity”,**

then Canada has failed to meet its international and domestic obligations by denying Aboriginal Peoples the right to an adequate standard of living.

With respect, I say this, based on the following facts that I now present.

In 1979, the federal government through its Crown Agency, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, put forth a National Policy to: “help low income Native households living in urban and rural areas obtain suitable, adequate, and affordable rental housing on the private market by providing assistance to Native sponsors whose purpose is to supply housing for low income Native families”.

Despite this national policy on Aboriginal housing the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 1988 (CHRC) stated in its Annual Report that:

**“in a year that witnessed the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the contrast between that ringing affirmation of human solidarity and our common practices seems particularly harsh. The raw facts of poverty, homelessness, undernourishment, child abuse and battered woman, not to mention sophisticated issues like age and pay discrimination, attest to the need for Canada to recommit itself on a daily basis to the essential principles of the declaration”.**

In 1991 the CHRC stated the following:

**“It remains the Human Rights Commission’s view, as we told the Parliamentary Committee on a renewed Canada in December, that the situation of the aboriginal peoples is the single most important human rights issue confronting Canada today and it should be treated as such”.**

A few short years after the CHRC made these declarations, it again stated in 1992:

**“We are dealing with a severe problem of persistent and widespread human suffering to which we have drawn attention on numerous occasions. The affects of the system as we know it may vary from community to community and region to region, but they are marked by a degree of physical and psychological deterioration that no amount of**



**superimposed welfare can by itself combat. The problem goes to the adequacy of housing, sanitation, and schooling; it has become, in a much larger sense, a question of community health and development. School drop outs, family violence petty crime, drug, and alcohol and solvent abuse, and abnormal rates of suicide, particularly among the young, are clearly only the symptoms of a more general loss of social dignity and purpose”.**

Furthermore, the CHRC speaking of the distinct policies for on and off-reserve Aboriginal peoples stated:

**“ The consequences of this cultural straddling are perhaps most difficult for those aboriginal people who no longer have any clear or fixed territorial base, and especially for those trying to make a living in our major cities. In too many cases, it is these native people who fall between the cracks. They are over represented among the chronically unemployed; they are often ill fed and poorly housed; and they are common prey to the social ills and abusive behavior that generally accompany a *marginal existence*. As one might expect, their lot has not been improved by prolonged recession, the erosion of unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and general cutbacks in social support.**

In June of 1993, the National Aboriginal Housing Committee (NAHC) (now the National Aboriginal Housing Authority - NAHA) put forth the following statement to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP):

**“ It is our submission that the federal government has a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to continue funding Native housing both on and off-reserve, until at least such time as parity in living conditions between Native and non-Native is achieved”.**

The commissioners for RCAP took into consideration the brief provided by NAHA and concluded that Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve were in desperate need of 10,000 housing units immediately to address the housing crisis of Aboriginal Peoples living off-reserve. This information was subsequently presented to Canada through the RCAP Report as a reminder of its legal and moral obligations to Aboriginal Peoples.

Later in 1993, despite the statements of the CHRC and the RCAP Report the Federal government announced provisions affecting social housing in its budget by confirming:

**“ New funding for commitments for native on-reserve housing...will continue as planned”.**

However, the major impact of government policy was to bring the two other Aboriginal housing programs to an end by stating:

***“As of January 1, 1994.... no additional funding for new commitments under all other social housing programs will be provided.***

Since 1993 things have not changed; no new funding (other than the recent one time urban Aboriginal housing trust fund of 300 million dollars) has been provided to deal with the 10,000-unit backlog from 1993 or the current needs which has grown (in my opinion) to 40,000 units nationwide. As well, the new housing trust fund is problematic.



Firstly, the amount of money allocated is microcosmic in comparison to the need as it will only build approximately 2,500 units nation wide.

Secondly the funding is a one time allocation and is an allotment to the provinces with no national policy of delivery expectations.

Thirdly, the funding is not allocated to the Aboriginal community and thus the Aboriginal community is unable to build needed capacity.

Fourthly, of all the provinces, only British Columbia has allocated its funds in consultation with the Aboriginal community, which begs the following questions: what will happen in other provinces? And, will parity be granted to each Aboriginal community to address the backlog of waitlisted applicants?

Despite that fact that BC has allocated its funding, we will only receive an allocation (unit wise) of approximately 200 units, which is only 2 % of the housing need. We are not sure what this will mean for Aboriginal Peoples in other provinces. At Lu'ma we have a 78 years wait-list, given current vacancy rates, the rate of applications received, and the lack of on-going government commitments. This is unacceptable.

It seems to me that Canada places more value on Coffins, Care, or Corrections. I say this because that is where Aboriginal Peoples in Canada will end up without the basic human right to an adequate standard of living and housing.

Despite the language of International covenants, accords, and other instruments (which should compel Canada to take proactive measures to correct the admittedly unacceptable situation) the Canadian Government continues today (in 2007) to oppress Aboriginal people by failing:

1. to sign the recent universal Declaration of Indigenous Rights;
2. to ensure that we attain a reasonable and safe standard of living in urban and rural communities;
3. to engage a national policy to end Aboriginal homelessness;
4. to engage a national affordable housing policy on an ongoing basis until Aboriginal Peoples living off-reserve are at parity with other Canadians;
5. to provide an national allocation of units to help Aboriginal Peoples address the approximately 40,000 Aboriginal families and others on Aboriginal waitlists nation wide; and
6. to allocate funding directly to the Aboriginal community instead of or in partnership with the provinces, to allow capacity building within the Aboriginal community.

Again, we see a government who lacks political will and continues to be unwilling to make its commitments to Aboriginal peoples, both international and domestically.

In my opinion, Canada is in dereliction of its fiduciary duties. The way I see it, Canada still owes us the 10,000 units that the RCAP report called for back in 1993 and two thousand units each year since then, which is 40,000.

Further, in my opinion, Canada is in breach of its international obligations, its own human rights, and the legal, moral and ethical duties which amount to systemic discrimination. Canada has



failed on the housing front for Aboriginal Peoples nationwide. Despite the recent allocation of trust funds, there is no national housing policy and provinces (with the exception of the Province of British Columbia) are failing Aboriginal Peoples by not applying consistent policies nation wide to ensure equity of access to affordable housing.

With respect to the 2010 Olympics being held here in Vancouver, both the Federal and Provincial Governments have not done enough to ensure that many more Aboriginal Peoples will not end up homeless or displaced during and after the Olympics.

I respectfully request, Mr. Miloon Kothari, that you remind the Canadian Government of their legal, moral, and ethical obligations and bring light to their violation of the basic human right to adequate housing. More specifically, I ask that you request Canada to implement immediate, effective and continuing improvements of urban Aboriginal economic and social conditions with Aboriginal informed consent that reflect Aboriginal priorities which will allow Aboriginal Peoples to achieve an adequate standard of living, including food, shelter, housing, and to the continuous improvement of Aboriginal living conditions.

I also ask that you demand Canada to implement the following without delay:

1. The creation and implementation of a national Aboriginal housing and homelessness policy complete with funding targets and sufficient resources (both capital funding and operating funding) to ensure that Aboriginal Canadians exercise their right to an adequate standard of living and to end the human rights violations of so many Aboriginal Canadians living in urban and rural communities and thereby bringing parity in housing conditions for all Aboriginal Peoples.
2. Provide funding for the Capacity Building of the urban Aboriginal community so that we can begin to address our housing crisis in a cultural appropriate manner. Such Capacity Development is critical to allow Aboriginal Peoples to not only provide housing but to preserve and promote Aboriginal customs, traditions, language, and create proper social relations within Canada and in Aboriginal communities.
3. Provide an immediate commitment of funding for 40,000 housing units nation wide to address the backlog of Aboriginal housing wait-list both in urban and rural communities.

And finally, I close by restating the words written by the CHRC in the years 1988, 1989, and 1991 as follows:

1988 the CHRC stated:

**“The situation faced by Canada’s native peoples is in many ways a national tragedy. The grand promise of equality of opportunity that forms the central purpose of the Canadian Human Rights Act stands in stark contrast to the conditions in which many native people live”.**



And in 1989

**“Let us make no mistake: there are human rights problems. If there is any single issue on which Canada cannot hold its head up high in the international community, any single area in which we can be accused of falling down on our obligations, it is in the area of Aboriginal relations”.**

And furthermore in 1991

**“Homelessness is a growing problem for many aboriginal people in urban areas. For those fortunate enough to have shelter, it is often less than adequate. Cultural isolation contributes to alcohol and drug abuse, child welfare problems and conflicts with the law. If the aboriginal people living in urban settings are not to become a permanent underclass and a perpetual blight on our human rights record, urgent action is required from all three levels of government. The first step should be a clear federal commitment to deal with the needs of all aboriginal people wherever they choose to live”.**

Sadly, since then, not much has changed for Aboriginal peoples in Canada; our social status continues to remain the worst of all Canadian Citizens.

Thank you for listening. May the rest of your visits throughout Canada be enlightening.