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*Murray Rankin*

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February 4, 2016

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos MP  
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi MP  
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers Duclos and Sohi,

I am writing to urge your government to make immediate investments in social housing in the upcoming federal budget. I am heartened by the Prime Minister's direction in your Ministerial Mandate Letters to "create a housing strategy to re-establish the federal government's role in supporting affordable housing." I would like you to consider the situation in the Greater Victoria region and invite you to visit our city and see firsthand the crisis our local government and social agencies are trying to manage.

The consequences of continued federal inaction on the housing file are evident in the City of Victoria. For years, our region has been grappling with high levels of homelessness and a severe shortage of affordable housing. While media attention is currently focused on people taking shelter on the grounds of our provincial courthouse and in our parks, this is not a recent development: it is an ongoing and pervasive problem. While the City of Victoria continues to develop temporary shelter alternatives a real and lasting solution must include building more social housing.



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Please consider these facts:

- According to a December 2015 report released by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Victoria has the lowest apartment vacancy rate of any major city in Canada at 0.6 per cent.
- According to the recent Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, Victoria has the second least affordable housing market in Canada, after Vancouver.
- In the Victoria Capital Region, there are 1,239 households on the wait-list for B.C. Housing social housing, about half of them in Victoria proper. About 40 per cent of the people on the wait list are seniors.
- The City's last annual facility count in February 2014 found that in one night 1,167 people were using some form of temporary shelter (i.e. emergency shelter, motel, transitional housing). This group included 70 families with 116 children. Of the 78 individuals turned away from shelter on this one night, there was one youth and 11 children.

It is also increasingly evident that market housing is unaffordable for many and cannot be relied upon to solve the problem of housing affordability. A recent housing-gap analysis, prepared by the Community Social Planning Council for the Capital Regional District, found that new housing supply is focussed on the high-end or luxury market with very little being developed in the rental market that would be affordable at or below the median income rate. A variety of factors have contributed to Victoria and British Columbia having among the highest housing and living costs in Canada that make it extremely challenging for lower income families to access any kind of market housing.

Again, I encourage you to visit Victoria at your earliest opportunity and would be pleased to arrange meetings with local governments and social agencies. Our local and regional governments, along with housing agencies, are actively working on proposals that could get underway in short order with a federal partner prepared to help.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Murray Rankin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Murray Rankin

Copy:

Adam Vaughn, Member of Parliament, Spadina-Fort York

Mayor Lisa Helps and Victoria City Council