

Municipal Leaders Launch New Campaign to Fix Canada's Housing Crunch (28/10/2013)

OTTAWA - The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) announced today that it is launching a campaign that calls on the federal government and all political parties to work with provincial, territorial and municipal leaders, as well as the private sector, to develop a credible long-term housing plan. This comes as new polling numbers were released that show one third of families are struggling to pay for the growing costs of housing.

"Our cities and communities need a stable and secure housing market that creates jobs, attracts new workers, meets the needs of seniors and young families, and keeps our most vulnerable citizens off the streets," said Gregor Robertson, Mayor of Vancouver and Chair of the Big City Mayors Caucus, who launched the campaign on Monday.

FCM members will be taking the campaign, entitled "Fixing Canada's Housing Crunch", to decision makers in Ottawa in the coming months in advance of the 2014 budget. The first step in the process is that communities in every region will be passing a resolution calling for the federal government to take action. Joining Mayor Robertson at the campaign launch were Luc Montreuil, City Councillor for Gatineau, and Ana Bailão, Toronto City Councillor and Toronto's housing campaign lead. Toronto will be the first in the country to put forward the resolution.

The high cost of housing in Canada is the most urgent financial issue facing Canadians today. According to Statistics Canada and the Bank of Canada, rising housing costs have pushed Canadians' personal debts to record levels and are putting Canada's national economy at risk with Canadians carrying more than \$1.1 trillion worth of mortgage debt.

A growing number of Canadians are being priced out of the housing market, putting pressure on a crowded rental market and crumbling affordable housing units, and forcing the most vulnerable citizens onto the streets. Compounding these problems is the coming expiry of \$1.7 billion annually in federal affordable housing dollars with the greatest drop in funding, \$500 million a year, ending between 2014 and 2019. This will put 200,000 units at risk and could lead to a crisis unless all orders of government take action.

"We believe the government's commitment in Budget 2013 to evidence-based solutions such as the Housing First approach for homelessness is a promising start, but they need to back it up with real results and expand that action to other areas of our affordable housing problem. Canada's housing challenges are too big and too complex for any single order of government to solve on its own," added Mayor Robertson.

As part of the campaign, FCM is launching an interactive website at www.fcm.ca/housingcrunch. The site also provides the results to the new housing survey, tools and information that illustrate why Canadians continue to struggle to pay for the costs of shelter.

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SAMPLE MODEL HOUSING RESOLUTION FOR SUPPORT FROM COUNCIL

Please customize as appropriate, particularly by providing examples of high-priority housing projects that require continued federal support.

RESOLUTION

Development of a New Long-Term Federal Plan to Fix Canada's Housing Crunch

WHEREAS, a stable and secure housing system that creates and maintains jobs and allows for a range of living options is essential to attracting new workers, meeting the needs of young families and supporting seniors and our most vulnerable citizens; and,

WHEREAS the high cost of housing is the most urgent financial issue facing Canadians with one in four people paying more than they can afford for housing, and mortgage debt held by Canadians now standing at just over \$1.1 trillion; and,

WHEREAS housing costs and, as the Bank of Canada notes, household debt, are undermining Canadians' personal financial security, while putting our national economy at risk; and,

WHEREAS those who cannot afford to purchase a home rely on the short supply of rental units, which is driving up rental costs and making it hard to house workers in regions experiencing strong economic activity; and,

WHEREAS an inadequate supply of subsidized housing for those in need is pushing some of the most vulnerable Canadians on to the street, while \$1.7 billion annually in federal investments in social housing have begun to expire; and,

WHEREAS coordinated action is required to prevent housing issues from being offloaded onto local governments and align the steps local governments have already taken with regard to federal/provincial/territorial programs and policies; and,

WHEREAS, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has launched a housing campaign, "Fixing Canada's Housing Crunch," calling on the federal government to increase housing options for Canadians and to work with all orders of government to develop a long-term plan for Canada's housing future; and,

WHEREAS FCM has asked its member municipalities to pass a council resolution supporting the campaign;

AND WHEREAS, our community has continuing housing needs, such as the XX and the XX, that can only be met through the kind of long-term planning and investment made possible by federal leadership;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that council endorses the FCM housing campaign and urges the minister of employment and social development to develop a long-term plan for housing that puts core investments on solid ground, increases predictability, protects Canadians from the planned expiry of \$1.7 billion in social housing agreements and ensures a healthy stock of affordable rental housing for Canadians.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the minister noted above, to the (provincial/territorial) minister of municipal affairs, to (Name of local MP), to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and to the (Name provincial/Territorial association).