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# The state of the nation's housing

Federal election 2008

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October 2008

## Housing insecurity at record levels

- One-in-four Canadian households pay 30% or more of their income on housing – that's three million households, or close to eight million women, men and children.
- Housing is the biggest expense for low, moderate and middle-income households; housing costs over the past decade grew faster than inflation even though incomes were stagnant.
- High housing costs forced 720,231 Canadians to line up at food banks in March of 2007.
- In the early 1980s, more than 10 out of every 100 new homes in Canada were truly affordable. By 2007, less than one-in-one-hundred new homes were truly affordable.
- Canada's rental vacancy rate has been below 3% (the danger zone) since the year 2000.
- More than 300,000 Canadians experience homelessness annually; the number of shelter beds in Canada jumped by 22% in one year to 26,872 in 2007.
- Research funded by Wellesley Institute and others links poor housing to poor health; premature death. Housing insecurity disrupts communities; drags down local and national economies.

## Federal investments lowest in two decades

- Federal housing investments of \$2 billion in 2008 are at their lowest level since 2002. On a per-capita basis, or as a percentage of Canada's Gross Domestic Product, federal housing investments in 2008 are at their lowest level in two decades.
- Federal per capita spending on housing of \$61 is half the \$115 average among the provinces.
- Canada has slipped from number two in 1980 to number seven in 2003 among our partners in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- In 2006, the United Nations called housing and homelessness in Canada a "national emergency", a finding confirmed by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing during his official fact-finding mission to Canada in 2007.

- From 2004 to 2012, net income for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (the federal housing agency) is projected to rise by 49% to \$1.4 billion annually, but CMHC affordable housing spending will drop by 95% to \$8 million for the entire country in 2012.

## Key federal investments renewed, but funding frozen despite growing need

- The federal homelessness program (Homelessness Partnering Initiative – \$135 million annually) was renewed for five years just three days before the election was called. HPI funds hundreds of programs and services in 61 communities, but the need outstrips the available resources.
- The federal housing repair program (Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program - \$128 million annually) also renewed for five years.
- Before election, the federal government also announced a five-year extension of its affordable housing program at \$125 million annually (which will fund less than 900 homes each year).
- Funding for all three programs have been frozen at previous levels, so federal housing investments – even with extensions – remain at lowest level in two decades, on per capita basis.

## Analysis of housing in 2008 political party platforms

NDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$3.5 billion over four years (\$500m; \$1b; \$1b; \$1b) – to reach One Percent Solution (\$2 billion annually)</li> <li>• New investments in:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New social housing</li> <li>○ Supportive housing</li> <li>○ Extending homelessness initiatives</li> <li>○ Extending housing repair program</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Aboriginal housing (on and off-reserve)</li> <li>• Energy conservation program for housing</li> <li>• Partial re-investment of national housing surplus</li> </ul>
Bloc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase affordable housing investments to reach One Percent Solution (\$2 billion annually)</li> <li>• 20,000 new social housing units annually (5,000 in Quebec); per-unit subsidy of \$100,000</li> <li>• Partial re-investment of national housing surplus (CMHC)</li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$2.6 billion over three years (\$430m; \$867m; \$1.3b)</li> <li>• Energy efficiency program for residential and commercial buildings (\$200 million in 2009 and 2010; \$150 million in 2011)</li> </ul>
Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-Income Homes Retrofit Partnership (\$140 million)</li> <li>• 30,000 new social housing units; refurbish 30,000 existing units</li> <li>• \$620 million over four years (\$155 million annually)</li> </ul>
Conservatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$200 million for first-time home owners</li> </ul>

**HOUSING INVESTMENTS:** The NDP, Bloc and Greens propose new investments to fund a significant amount of urgently-needed new homes. The dollars proposed by the Liberals are far short of the goal they have set and would fund less than 15% of the new homes they promise. Just three days before calling the election, the Conservative government extended funding for five years for three housing and homelessness programs, but froze funding at previous levels. Under the Conservatives, federal housing spending, on a per capita basis, is at its lowest level in two decades.

**RE-INVESTMENT OF FEDERAL HOUSING DOLLARS:** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the federal housing agency, has been recording significant surpluses in recent years. Also, the federal government is reducing its commitment to existing social housing. Both are leading to substantial national housing surpluses. The NDP and the Bloc propose to partially re-invest federal housing surpluses in new housing initiatives.

**COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMS, SPECIFIC TARGETS:** The NDP has a plan for an Aboriginal housing strategy (on and off-reserve) and for specific elements of a new national housing strategy (affordable homes, supportive housing, homeless programs and services, home repairs). The NDP, Greens and Liberals propose investments in energy conservation programs.



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