

dignity for all
the campaign for a
poverty-free canada



dignité pour touTEs
la campagne pour un
canada sans pauvreté

Kathleen Wynne, Premier
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

July 16, 2013

Re: Council of the Federation meeting, July 24-26 2013

Dear Premier Wynne,

On behalf of our over 600 organizational and 10,000 individual supporters across the country who want to see rigorous and sustained government action against poverty, *Dignity for All: the campaign for the poverty-free Canada* asks that you and your fellow premiers put adequate, affordable housing at the top of your agenda at the upcoming Council of the Federation meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We were encouraged that you identified housing as a key priority when you were chosen as premier and are hopeful that you will use this opportunity to make good on that commitment.

First, and in particular, we ask that the premiers urge the federal government to recommit vital operating funds for social housing providers. We join the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, and others in calling for immediate action to address the rapidly expiring \$1.7 billion in annual federal social housing investments.

As you know, up to \$500 million of this funding will expire each year between 2014 and 2019, and could force existing social housing providers to raise rents or evict low-income tenants. The time to act is now.

Second, after July's Council of the Federation meeting, we propose that the premiers call for an immediate federal-provincial-territorial housing ministers' meeting to take further action on housing. Such a meeting could engage key stakeholders and lay the groundwork for a national housing strategy which respects provincial jurisdiction. This is something that people across the country, all levels of government, and the United Nations recognize as both desperately needed and required to solve the housing crisis. As recently as April, members of the UN Human Rights Council reiterated the need for a national housing strategy in order for Canada to comply with its human rights commitments and obligations.

While in some respects Canada may have fared better than other developed nations following the 2008 recession, in many other respects we are not making the grade. The cost of housing continues to increase faster than incomes. We have a shrinking rental market. Together, this has put added pressure on low-income families. In your own province, for example, the total income of a single person living on welfare in Toronto is just \$7,878 annually. Each month they are expected to find adequate accommodation with a meagre \$376, while the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in greater Toronto and surrounding area is \$1,010. The numbers just don't add up.

Canada is a wealthy nation with a stable economy, and yet millions of households are housing insecure and at

www.dignityforall.ca & www.dignitepourtous.ca

c/o Canada Without Poverty, 251 Bank St., 2nd Floor, Ottawa, ON K2P 1X3
a/s de Canada sans pauvreté, 251 rue Bank, 2e étage, Ottawa, ON K2P 1X3

least 200,000 people are homeless each year and waitlists for social housing continue to grow.

A robust national housing strategy based in human rights, which focuses on those most in need, includes measureable goals and timelines, engages a variety of stakeholders and provides monitoring and accountability mechanisms, is urgently needed.

As a critical social determinant of health, adequate housing can improve health outcomes (both physical and mental) and assist in reducing the resulting human and financial costs. A report just released by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness estimates the cost of homelessness is \$7 billion annually. Meanwhile, provinces such as Alberta have demonstrated that a coordinated approach to housing reduces costs to both the health and criminal justice systems.

As you prepare to discuss critical issues of importance to people living in Canada, the *Dignity for All* campaign urges you to put housing at the top of your agenda and to draw on the experiences of other premiers facing similar challenges. We and our campaign partners know the connection between adequate housing and poverty: housing is the greatest expense for individuals and families and a key stabilizing factor for enhanced well-being. In pushing for greater federal action on housing this July, you and the other premiers have an opportunity to make significant progress against poverty.

We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and your colleagues all the best during these important discussions.

Sincerely,



Leilani Farha, Executive Director, **Canada Without Poverty**



Joe Gunn, Executive Director, **Citizens for Public Justice**

CC: Provincial and Territorial Premiers
Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition
Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
Daniel Paillé, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Dignity for All campaign partners

Signatories:

25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario
Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa
Anglican Church of Canada
BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
Campaign 2000: end child and family poverty in Canada
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
Canadian Association of Social Workers
Canadian CED Network - Manitoba
Canadian Council on Social Development
Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)
Canadian Federation of University Women - Ontario Council
Canadian Nurses Association
Canadian Pensioners Concerned (CPC), Ontario Division
Canadian Public Health Association
Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice
Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation
Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia
Dalhousie Legal Aid Service
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
Faith in Action Victoria
First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Le Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU)
Halton Poverty Roundtable
Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (Waterloo Region)
Homes for Women
House of Friendship Social Services in Waterloo
Income Security Advocacy Centre
June Callwood Coalition Against Child Poverty
Multifaith Housing Initiative Ottawa
Ontario Campaign 2000
Ontario Council Canadian Federation of University Women
Ontario English Catholic Teacher's Association
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
Peel Poverty Action Group
Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario
Renfrew County Child Poverty Action Network
Right to Housing Coalition (Manitoba)
Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
Social Development Council of Cornwall and Area
Social Planning and Research Council of BC
Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries
Social Rights Advocacy Centre
Society of Saint Vincent De Paul, Toronto Central and Ontario
Tri-Cities Homelessness & Housing Task Group
Unitarian Congregation of Niagara

Women's Action Alliance for Change-Nova Scotia

Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition

Yukon Status of Women Council

YWCA Canada