

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT
TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2008**

HOUSING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the first week of 2008, the Toronto Star carried both an editorial on tackling poverty and a story on the super-hot market in Toronto for luxury houses. The price of resale homes has risen over 11% in 2007 alone, and the top end of the market is now flush with palatial estates and condo penthouses valued in the millions. Sadly, this contrasts with the dearth of new affordable housing in the greater Toronto area.

Nine years after the mayors of Canada's biggest cities declared homelessness a "national disaster", senior levels of government have failed to deliver new funding or significant numbers of truly affordable homes despite signed agreements and solemn promises. A new analysis of housing spending by the Wellesley Institute shows:

- federal, provincial and territorial governments **invested fewer dollars** in affordable housing in recent years, despite agreements and promises to increase the investments;
- the number of affordable homes has **shrunk to a tiny fraction** of overall new housing construction across Canada in the past two decades, increasing the squeeze on low, moderate and middle-income households; and,
- at the national level, Canada **lags far behind** the United Kingdom and the United States in per capita spending on affordable housing, a sharp reversal from the 1970s and 1980s, when Canada's national housing program delivered more than half a million good quality, affordable homes.

Billions of dollars in federal and provincial social and affordable housing spending were slashed during the 1990s and housing programs were cancelled or downloaded. Twenty-five years ago, 12 out of every 100 new homes were social housing units in co-op or non-profit developments and were truly affordable. The Labour Council's Development Corporation was one of many active housing groups at that time. But in recent years less than 1 out of every 100 new homes are co-op or non-profit.

In addition to a lack of new supply, existing renter households are being squeezed out of the private rental market. The annual income for the median tenant household was \$29,600 in 1990 and remains stalled at that amount today, even though rents have skyrocketed.

The number of Toronto tenant households facing eviction reached an all-time high of 30,768 in 2006 – an average of about 123 families facing eviction every working day of the year. About one-third of households evicted in Toronto go directly to homeless shelters; another one-third join the ranks of the “hidden homeless” by staying temporarily with family or friends; and the remaining third are able to find another home.

The City of Toronto released a draft 10-year housing strategy called Housing Opportunities Toronto last November. The plan is to create 209,000 new and renovated affordable homes over the next decade. The proposed plan goes out for consultation to build political and public support over the next few months. This is a great goal - but it cannot be achieved without the active support of senior levels of government.

The Executive recommends that Labour Council:

1. Urge all governments to invest 1% of their budgets to the creation and maintenance of affordable housing, and support the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee’s Housing not War campaign.
2. Call on the federal government to fix the Canada Housing Act to provide development support for co-op and non-profit initiatives and restore rent supplements for low-income members
3. Work with TCHC tenants to demand Queen’s Park funding for the massive backlog of repairs to their buildings, and oppose the sell-off of scattered TCHC units
4. Advocate for major energy retrofits in all rental units to reduce carrying costs.
5. Support inclusionary housing policies for all municipalities in Toronto and York Region so that affordable housing is included in land use planning and development approvals across the GTA