

Editor,

Housing is a Human Right

This past Friday (Nov. 22) on National Housing Day, a rally in Toronto started the Pan-Canadian Week of Action for Housing. By the end of this week of action, thousands of people across Canada will have raised their voices in support of housing as a human right. Canada is the only country in the G8 without a national housing strategy. According to the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's 2013 report on the State of Homelessness in Canada, 200,000 people are absolutely homeless in Canada every year, and millions more are inadequately housed.

Provincially, B.C. claims both the infamous titles of the highest poverty rate in Canada (at 10.7% in 2011; low-income cut-offs after tax) and the highest child-poverty rate in Canada (at 11.3% in 2011; risen from 10.5% in 2010; LICOs after tax). B.C. is also one of the only two provinces left that do not have a poverty reduction plan nor in the processing of adopting one.

Locally, as Richmond Children's First recently released their "Face of Child Poverty in Richmond" report, we are reminded once again that one out of four Richmond children live in poverty (after-tax, 2006), which is the second highest rate in B.C. With such levels of poverty and an expensive housing market, these families are having to choose between paying rent and buying food.

These poverty and housing issues are why, as some of you may have seen, a group of Richmond residents, including members of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee and the Social Housing Coalition BC, were out at the corner of No. 3 Road and Granville Ave. this past Saturday (Nov. 23rd) with banners calling for "Social Housing Now" and "Homes for All."

The Christmas and holiday season is one of the high times for acts of charity. However, let us realize and remember that charity is only a band-aid solution; it only treats the wound but it does not address the unjust system that causes the wound. One way of addressing the injustice is by having a national housing strategy. The housing crisis in Canada is unacceptable; housing is a human right!

For more information about the Pan-Canadian Week of Action, please visit <http://action4housing.wordpress.com/>

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