



CHF BC reminds candidates they hold the key to affordable co-op homes

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(VICTORIA) You hold the key to keeping low-income, senior and disabled British Columbians in their homes.

That's the message the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C. (CHF BC) has for candidates of all political parties on the eve of the 2013 provincial election campaign.

“During the life of the government we're about to elect, over 1,500 co-op households in B.C. will lose the rent support that currently makes their housing affordable,” said Patty Shaw, a CHF BC Director who lives in the Kailasa Housing Co-op in the riding of South Saanich.

“In Victoria, more than 130 households face the loss of the support they rely on. The MLAs to be elected in this campaign need to know they hold the key to keeping those homes affordable when the federal agreements providing that rental support end.”

Shaw and a delegation from CHF BC went to the B.C. Parliament Buildings today to meet with members of the Legislative Press Gallery as part of the federation's “You Hold the Key” campaign kick-off. Events were also staged in Vancouver. During the provincial election, CHF BC will seek commitments from all candidates and parties to continue rent-geared-to-income support for low income co-op members.

The federation is fielding its own team of “Shadow Candidates” to attend all-candidates meetings and other events to get party and candidate positions on the record. Shadow Candidates are co-op members concerned about their neighbours and communities if expiring federal assistance is not replaced.

In Vancouver, CHF BC Executive Director Thom Armstrong told an audience at the Lakewood Terrace Housing Co-op that between now and 2017, one quarter of B.C.'s housing co-ops will lose rent-geared-to-income subsidies as their federal housing agreements end. That number will climb to 3,000 households by 2020, 330 of whom live in Victoria.

And that will impact those who can least afford to lose their homes in the most expensive housing market in Canada – families with low-incomes, the elderly and the mobility-challenged.

“The next provincial government has to be prepared to maintain long-term rent assistance for low-income co-op members as federal agreements end,” Armstrong said.

From 2011-2014, the federal government is contributing \$90 million to B.C. to spend on housing. To date, none of those funds have been ear-marked to assist co-op members who will soon lose their federal assistance.

Armstrong was also joined at the event by some CHF BC Shadow Candidates as well as Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada President Anne Davidson and Vancouver City Councillor Geoff Meggs.

Armstrong said good working relationships with municipal governments like Vancouver and Victoria are crucial to developing more affordable housing in the province.

“Working with all levels of government and the business sector is the key to unlocking the potential of the co-op model to provide safe, secure, affordable homes for all British Columbians,” Armstrong said.

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