



Co-operative Housing
Federation of Canada



Fédération de l'habitation
coopérative du Canada

Party leaders' surprising silence on housing issues disappointing

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(VANCOUVER) Advocates for affordable, quality homes were surprised and disappointed that not a single question on housing was asked during last night's televised leader's debate. Nor did any of the four party leaders mention housing as a priority in their opening or closing statements.

Combined with the lack of substantive housing policy statements in any of the four major parties' platforms, voters have no clear idea of how the next Legislative Assembly will tackle the challenges around these issues, says Thom Armstrong Executive Director of the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C. (CHF BC).

"It's disappointing when such a major issue is not raised, even in passing, during the only televised debate between the four major party leaders," said Armstrong.

"We need our political leaders to show courage and state clearly, on the record, what they're going to do about critical issues, which have serious implications for low-income families, seniors and others."

Armstrong's sentiments were echoed by Anne Davidson, president of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada).

"Our members have talked with many candidates during the campaign about housing affordability – they see it as a priority, so we were surprised and disappointed that it wasn't mentioned at all during last night's leaders' debate," said Davidson, who is also a member of Granville Gardens Housing Co-op in Richmond.

"Federal agreements that provide support for low-income people will expire soon, so preserving affordable housing is critical not only for BC in this election, but across the country."

During the provincial election campaign, CHF BC in partnership with CHF Canada are working to keep low-income, senior and disabled British Columbians in their homes. Between now and 2017, some 1,500 B.C. households will lose Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) subsidies as their federal housing agreements end. That will impact those who can least afford to lose their homes in the most expensive housing market in Canada.

The “You Hold the Key” campaign has actively engaged the main political parties running in the election, meeting with candidates to determine their policies in regards to RGI programs and other issues of concern to co-op members.

Last Wednesday’s policy announcement by the NDP mentioned co-operative housing as part of the solution to the affordable housing crisis in B.C., but was silent on the question of rental assistance for those in need. Neither the BC Liberals nor BC Conservatives mention housing in their platforms. While the Green Party of B.C. has a general housing policy, it has no stated position on the RGI issue, critical to co-op members.

Here are a few facts on the challenges co-op members face:

- During the term of the government to be elected (2013-2017), over 1,500 B.C. co-op households will lose the federal rent support that makes their housing affordable.
- That number will climb to 3,000 households by 2020 and impact families with low-incomes, the elderly and the mobility-challenged
- From 2011-2014, the federal government is contributing \$90 million to the B.C. government for housing. But none of those funds have been ear-marked to assist co-op members who will soon lose their federal assistance

“The parties must come forward with clear, transparent policy statements on these important issues,” said Armstrong. “Further, we want the public to know about the looming challenge that faces dozens of co-op communities throughout the province.”

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