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NOVEMBER 15, 2007

NORTHERN WOMEN'S HOMELESSNESS SHAMES CANADA: NDP

NDP calls on Harper Conservatives to act on recommendations

OTTAWA – Reports of homeless women having to sleep with rotting garbage in order to keep warm during Arctic winters shames Canada, and immediate action must be taken, four NDP MPs said today.

On November 14th, a report called “You Just Blink and It Can Happen: A Study of Women's Homelessness North of 60” details realities of homeless women or women at risk of becoming homeless living in Canada’s Northern Territories. For the report, women from the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut shared their stories and insights, and called for action to end what is clearly an intolerable situation.

“The revelations in this report are difficult to take,” said NDP Northern Development Critic, Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic). “They clearly show the need for action on providing more affordable housing in the North. Unfortunately, Stephen Harper believes tax breaks to big business, announced in the recent mini-budget, are more important than addressing the social problems suffered by Northern women.”

“The shameful conditions outlined in this report echo the recent findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing, Miloon Kothari, whose preliminary report is a devastating indictment of Canada’s housing situation,” said NDP Housing Critic, Bill Siksay (Burnaby-Douglas). “Canada is failing to meet international standards and the Harper Conservatives still have no plan for providing safe and adequate housing. We need a national housing strategy now.”

“This study clearly underlines the reality of the tragedy faced by women who must choose between living with abuse and being homeless. This is a choice no one should ever have to make,” said NDP Status of Women Critic, Irene Mathysen (London-Fanshawe).

“Housing and homelessness are at the root of social problems in the North. Family violence, youth suicide, poor health – it is all related to homelessness,” said NDP Aboriginal Affairs Critic, Jean Crowder (Nanaimo-Cowichan). “Where is the money the Conservatives have promised to fix this problem?”

The Conservative government of Brian Mulroney first cut back and then eliminated federal support for affordable housing, which resulted in a homelessness crisis. Canada’s three northern territories were particularly hard hit due to the high cost of housing construction and limited territorial budgets. Successive Liberal governments turned their backs on northern homeless women and all low income Canadians by failing to restore the program despite repeated calls to do so.

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