



Presentation - A Strategic Housing Action Plan for NS May 2/09

Preamble:

Housing must be understood in its most inclusive sense - as a whole made of parts which interact together to make a whole greater than their sum. All citizens of Nova Scotia need to be housed and housed appropriately and affordably encompassing diverse needs for the low wage to high wage earner; unskilled and highly skilled workers; singles and family households; young and old people.

Housing makes a major contribution to the province's economy and is of great social/cultural/environmental and economic significance. Yet at present, market housing is left to its own devices ('laissez-faire') and public/social housing is treated as a residual 'social benefit'. Neither is appropriate. Action to reduce costs fail to link effectively with other service policies thus undermining anti poverty strategies

Energy efficiency and affordability must be linked.

A well balanced stock of safe, affordable and appropriate housing is a key driver in reducing poverty. Increased viability of the housing development and construction industry provides economic stimulus and growth and encourages training or workers in construction, home furnishing and renovation employment.

Beliefs

Nova Scotia must acknowledge the need for a social economic backstop that is linked to housing affordability strategy.

Access to decent and appropriate housing is a fundamental social/economic right and is recognized as such by the UN - but not by Canada or any of its provinces or territories.

Housing poverty hurts all Nova Scotians. (ratio shelter cost to income) regarding consumer participation, health issues, building industry and household goods sales decline. Access to affordable house is a key tool in reducing poverty

Stable neighbourhoods are supported by the presence of wide spectrum of affordable housing.

Current Situation

At present, in NS housing (that is, the housing 'universe') has no Ministry of its own. Housing initiatives focus on the social housing sector neglecting province wide needs for comprehensive housing policy and balanced housing sector

NOTE to SELVES: When NS disposed of its Housing Ministry and sold off its land-bank - it made huge mistakes for which all Nova Scotians will go on paying for decades.

By arguing for a Ministry, Minister and Secretariat, we would be advocating for a permanent arm of the provincial government, a new institution that would be sustainable over the long term. IE. This would NOT be another hand-to-mouth Non Profit - constantly off-balance/always looking for money - etc.

approaches that grow the economy , attract people to the province and offer diverse housing types and prices.

Strategic Remedy

(High level policy) Social/Economic Rights must be enshrined in Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms OR NS must have such a Charter (as does PQ) OR both. Seek a provincial charter of affordable housing rights.

NS needs a Ministry of Housing with its own Minister. A first step would be a dedicated deputy minister.

At the direction of the Minister, the Ministry would through policy and programmes deliver on the social/economic right to housing.

Create a housing secretariat A Secretariat, broadly representative of the Housing Sector (governments, NGO's and private sector), would be established. It would: monitor housing need and supply; monitor the existing stock and report regularly on its condition; report to the Minister of Housing, both to advocate for the Sector and advise the Minister annually on the priority of housing needs and supply - where & how best to distribute the province's housing resources as well as build on private sector and non profit sector resources.

The Secretariat would be a resource to the Sector and on the basis of 'best practices' would advocate for the Sector. It would be proactive in its advocacy and animate discussion and debate and would support such through its research and networking activities.

The Secretariat would have a staff and the financial wherewithal, provided by the Minister, necessary to support it.

The Secretariat would facilitate/animate the development of a Provincial Housing Strategy and Action Plan. SO if housing is a basic social and economic right, AND NS embraces that position, what impact might that have on Policy and Programmes?

Desired Outcomes:

There would be indicators of our efforts to make good on the right:

- housing would be more affordable
- there would be more of it (affordable housing)
- there would be greater selection of tenure and building forms
- annual announcements of 'starts' would reflect the effort to broaden, balance and diversify the stock
- location/ distribution and character of new supply would address environmental priorities - lower footprint/encourage intensification/support mass transit/
- inspection and maintenance of the existing stock (a HUGE resource always of far greater significance than the small amounts added each year) would be organized, orderly, well planned and efficient
- all housing would be well- built - no skimping/ good housing costs what it costs.

- the processes of consultation/negotiation/reporting would be
TRANSPARENT
- the processes would be inclusive and representative of all parts of the
Sector
- the processes would demand cross-ministry communication and support
- etc/etc/etc.

Actions to get there

- ✚ Research on community based participation that worked well.
- ✚ Local community management of nonprofit housing
- ✚ Incentives for profit housing sector
- ✚ Renewal of government managed social housing
- ✚ Proclamation of provincial statement on affordable housing
- ✚ Information sharing, community forums and action planning sessions.
- ✚ Liaison- community based group link government with community

- ✚ Establish a ministry
- ✚ Minister
- ✚ Deputy minister
- ✚ Secretariat and necessary resource established
- ✚ Private for profit sector council
- ✚ Nonprofit housing association
- ✚ Housing trust fund and innovation fund
- ✚ Partnership with CMHC and other federal departments, municipal units and non profit housing organizations and interested faith organizations fast track non profit and for profit affordable housing
- ✚ Create 5000 affordable units for Nova Scotia

