



News Release

Federal homelessness initiative comes up short

OTTAWA, Ontario (December 17, 1999) – The Government of Canada’s announcement that it will invest \$753 million in an approach to help alleviate and prevent homelessness across Canada is a positive step, but it comes up short for northern and rural areas of Canada.

The Government of Nunavut sees an opportunity in some of the programs announced today, but explains that homelessness in Nunavut manifests itself differently than in urban and southern Canada.

“Fifteen people in a house is homelessness” Nunavut’s Homeless Minister Ed Picco said. “Eighty-five percent of our residents are aboriginal and our jurisdiction does not qualify for urban, reserve, and other southern-focused initiatives.”

Twenty-two percent of households in Nunavut have six or more people, compared to 3.3 percent overall in Canada.

In 1993, the federal government withdrew funding for new social housing. The cutbacks caused a crisis situation in the North.

There are presently 1231 households on the waiting list for social housing in Nunavut.

“We look forward to continuing our discussions with the responsible federal ministers over the coming weeks, and we will continue to press the federal government to accept its responsibility for aboriginal social housing in northern and rural Canada,” said Premier Paul Okalik.

Premier Okalik and Minister Picco were attending federal/provincial territorial meetings in Ottawa this week.

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