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Conservatives Must Bring Dollars to Meeting with Housing Ministers

OTTAWA - The Conservative government must make it clear whether it will extend federal affordable housing programs at tonight's makeup meeting of federal provincial and territorial housing ministers, Liberal Social Development Critic Ruby Dhalla and Cities, Communities and Infrastructure Critic Paul Zed said today.

"The provinces and territories have reason to be concerned about the future of these programs given the Conservative record," said Dr. Dhalla. "The Conservatives have cut funding for affordable housing booked by the previous Liberal government and they have ignored calls for long-term commitments to federal programs."

Dr. Dhalla explained that tonight's meeting will be the first time Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Monte Solberg will meet with his counterparts to discuss the future of federal affordable housing programs. The last time that provincial and territorial housing ministers met, the federal minister was a no show.

In 2006, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities called for a five-year commitment to the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. The Conservatives responded by cancelling the program and introducing the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, but the funding for that initiative will dry up at the end of this fiscal year.

Major federal housing programs, including the National Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, and the Affordable Housing Initiative are also set to expire at the end of March 2009.

"A crisis is looming. The provinces and territories deserve a commitment and need predictable funding in order to continue to work with municipalities to build and maintain affordable housing for Canadian families," said Mr. Zed.

“Since the Conservatives have taken office, the issues of social justice like affordable housing and homelessness have fallen off the agenda,” added Dr. Dhalla.

“They have an ideological opposition to the federal government playing a role in affordable housing. The Conservatives need to show leadership and take action to address the crisis that exists in our country,” she said.

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Contact:

Office of Dr. Ruby Dhalla
(613) 995-4843

Office of Paul Zed
(613) 947-2700