

## ***Put down the Guns, and pick up the Hammers and Nails!***

### ***Housing Not War – Pan Canada rally – Toronto***



HOUSING NOT WAR!! I am a Street Nurse. Street Nurses and outreach workers and homeless people all know that bandages, triage on the street or in a drop-in centre, mash unit style, is not enough. Not for 1 year, not for 5 years and not for 20 years. People need homes!

**10 years ago**, we formed the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee and declared homelessness a national disaster, in response to refugee like conditions across the country after our national housing program was killed.

We called for the 1% solution: an additional 1% of the federal budget to be allocated each year to a national housing program and we also said we needed immediately money for disaster relief here in Canada!

**10 years ago**, the mayors of Canada's biggest cities agreed with us and they also declared homelessness a ***national disaster***.

**10 years ago**, the United Nations agreed and said that the state of homelessness in Canada should be considered a ***national emergency***.

Where are we today? **10 years** have passed and the federal government – both Liberal and Conservative, failed to reinstate and fund a national housing program.

Three days ago Miloon Kothari, the UN Rapporteur on Adequate Housing reported on recent his fact-finding mission in Canada.

“As a very wealthy country, with significant surplus in federal budget, immediate attention is required for the most vulnerable part of the population living in inadequate housing and living conditions. There is no justification for not massively engaging in the improvement of the situation of all those that face inadequate housing and living conditions throughout Canada.” March 12, 2008 - Geneva

We asked ourselves at TDRC “Where was the money going?” We’re not economists, but we went on the money trail.

We know of course that a chunk of money has repeatedly been given as tax breaks for corporations or put towards deficit reduction.

But we wondered “Where was the rest of the money going?”

Was the money going to Home Care or Pharmacare?	NO
Was it going to a new national child care program?	NO
Was it going towards education or to help reduce tuitions?	NO
Was it going to help provinces raise welfare rates?	NO
Was it going to improve and expand employment insurance?	NO
Was it going to increase old age pensions?	NO
Was it going to provide better security for injured workers?	NO
Was it going to make sure we meet Kyoto standards?	NO

Well, it sure as hell wasn’t going to housing. There was NOTHING in the last federal budget for renewal of two programs – the national renovation program and the homeless disaster relief program HPI, due to expire in fiscal year 2008. There was NOTHING for a national housing program.

Now that may be because as Minister Monte Solberg told TDRC’s Beric German on a national radio debate that the numbers of homeless people:

**“have been going down in the last few years” ..... NOT TRUE!**

He also left us speechless, declaring that his government is:

**“spending more money today on housing than any (Canadian) government in history!” NOT TRUE!**

What we discovered is that ten years after homelessness was declared a national disaster the Harper government is spending more money on the military, (not housing) than any government in history!

This fiscal year a whopping \$18 Billion will go towards the military. That is 8.5% of our federal budget.

They say that if you spend money on armaments, sooner or later you are going to use them. The military brags that Canada fired 4.7 million bullets in Afghanistan in the past two years.

And in Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries on earth, we are spending \$100 million dollars a month on war – only 1/10th of that is aid, and only 1/10th of that aid even gets to the people.

We are told that the Karzai government, which our government sides with in the civil war, is fighting for democracy and helping a downtrodden people. Oh, and we are helping establish women's rights. Therefore, Canada is on the right side of history.

### DOWNTRODDEN PEOPLE

This war in Afghanistan, which has gone on longer than WWII, has left the people of Afghanistan poorer than the day the war began. And General Hillier says that the war could go on for generations.

In Afghanistan, 3 million people are displaced – made homeless, forced out of their homes (UNHCR) – by bombing from air and tanks. And there is famine - 7.5 million people on the verge of starvation. Thousands of Afghans killed, hundreds made homeless by the war froze to death this winter.

Well, we know about downtrodden people. We see people begging and hungry and dying in every city and town in Canada. Each year, 300,000 people are homeless, displaced in Canada. And we know about freezing deaths, that officials refuse to acknowledge, like the recent death of Robert Maurice, an aboriginal man.

All this, while our young soldiers are being brought back badly maimed or transported in coffins along the Highway of Heros.

And still our government wants more war – two more years.

Their slogan must be 'War not Housing!'

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

And what about women? I am a woman. I am now a grandmother. I care about the thousands of homeless women and their families, their children, in Canada and I care about the women and children in Afghanistan.

So let's listen to the voices of women you seldom hear.

There is a media truth-telling voice:

Cathy Gannon is a journalist who worked in Afghanistan for over 15 years. She says that the Karzai government is the largest collection of mass murderers you'll find in one place.

Perhaps our soldiers should have been arresting them and taking them to the Hague for trial – instead of propping them up.

There is another woman's voice – a clear and brave voice:

Malalai Joya. She is the young, Afghan Member of Parliament who was illegally ejected for criticizing the warlords that surrounded her. Then it got worse. She had four assassination attempts on her life. Her home was blown up and she was assaulted and threatened even inside the parliament chamber. The Karzai government took away her security protection.

Joya, you see, speaks out against the abuse of women and for human rights.

About women, she says, "their position is catastrophic. The Northern Alliance are made up of fundamentalists, just like the Taliban were, and they oppress women in horrendous ways. As a result, suicides are more numerous today than ever before."

And we should note that back at home the Street Health Report has shown that homeless people's health is deteriorating too and many are attempting suicide.

Joya runs the Hamoon Clinic in Farah province - the only health care centre in the area that offers free services, including medication, to its patients, who are mainly women and children. She reports that the Northern Alliance warlords, who we help, control much of Afghanistan: "kidnap girls and women and rape them regularly."

"We need the material support of Canadians for health and education in Afghanistan, not for the warlords, druglords and criminals."

She also advises us to take heed: "The US and Canada are supporting the sworn enemies of our people. If they continue this wrong policy, one day they will be faced with the massive resistance of our people, as our history shows."

We must be brave like Joya and honest like Gannon. We must roar against the Conservative and Liberal vote that extended Canada's mission to 2011.

We must bring our young soldiers home safely. Canada must give real aid – and reparations – to Afghanistan, and we want aid in the form of housing in Canada.

Stephen Harper and Stéphane Dion - Put down the guns, and pick up the hammers and nails!

Housing Not War for Canada and Afghanistan!

Housing Not War!

**Cathy Crowe - March 15, 2008**

The TDRC *Housing Not War* campaign is one expression of what Canadians want – housing, childcare, education, improved care for our seniors and attention to the environment. Please go to our website and sign our declaration! [www.housingnotwar.ca](http://www.housingnotwar.ca)

*Check with delivery*