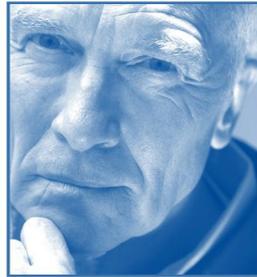


# *A Roof Over Their Heads*



## A Report on the **Renters Listening Forums**

### **Hosted by**

City Councillor Michael Phair

And

The Edmonton Social Planning Council

May 23rd and 24th, 2007  
Edmonton, Alberta



Report produced by  
**The Edmonton Social Planning Council**

**June 2007**

## This report includes the following sections:

- ◆ Event Details
- ◆ Common Themes of What We Heard
- ◆ Recommendations
  
- ◆ Appendix
  - What We Heard

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## EVENT DETAILS

Two listening forums were held on Wednesday, May 23 and Thursday, May 24, 2007 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Stanley Milner Library (downtown, central Edmonton). Approximately 130 people attended the Wednesday evening forum, and around 90 people attended the Thursday evening forum. The vast majority of those in attendance both evenings were renters.

Participants were invited to line up in groups of four by the microphone and podium to speak. A total of 62 individuals spoke out publicly about their situations over the two evenings.

Each night a moderator was assigned to introduce the listening panel. Harvey Voogd, Chair of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, moderated the Wednesday evening forum and Susan McGee, Executive Director of the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing, moderated the Thursday evening forum.

The role of the moderator was to explain the format for the evening and the purpose of the event. The moderator also indicated that all presentations would be duly recorded, and that a report and recommendations would be developed and provided to elected officials and senior decision-makers of all orders of government.

The listening panel was composed of the same four individuals both evenings. The listening panel included:

- Ward Four City Councillor Michael Phair;
- Ward Six City Councillor Dave Thiele;
- Don Mayne, Quality of Life Commission; and
- Susan Morrissey, Executive Director, Edmonton Social Planning Council.

The formal public dialogue took place from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. To ensure that the panel heard from as many people as possible, each individual who chose to speak publicly was given a 3-minute time limit. A 30 second warning card was raised when their time was nearly over.

There were a sufficient number of attendees wishing to speak and, as a result, the 90-minute time period went by very quickly. However, everyone wishing to speak was afforded an opportunity to do so.

Following the presentations to the panel, an opportunity was provided for individuals to speak in small groups with one of the four listening panel members. Those in attendance took full advantage of this opportunity, with informal discussion extending beyond the allotted half hour.

In addition, those in attendance were given a sheet of paper with some guiding questions in order to record their information and tell their stories in writing. Instructions were provided to return these notes to the confidential comment box. This was done to allow individuals who did not wish to speak publicly to convey their

**“I fear the next increase. 2<sup>1/2</sup> year wait for subsidized housing. Where can I go? Where is the Alberta advantage for me?!”**

situations in a more comfortable manner. A total of 63 participants provided written comments.

Attendees were also given a fact sheet, which contained some statistical information about rents in Edmonton as well as the phone number to the Alberta Government renters help line.

Television, radio and print media were in attendance, primarily for the first evening. They were directed to set-up their equipment in an area that would not detract from people speaking. Media wishing to do personal interviews was encouraged to step out of the room for privacy and to prevent causing a distraction to the formal presentations. In addition, some Members of the Legislative Assembly attended as observers.

A staff member of the Edmonton Social Planning Council remained at the back of the room, handing out renter's fact sheets, collecting comment forms and managing the general noise level. Coffee, tea, juice and cookies were provided. Another staff member recorded all of the public presentations.

## COMMON THEMES OF WHAT WE HEARD

**“My rent went from \$665.00/month to \$975.00/month. I have been living there for 5 years, usually getting one rental increase of about \$25.00. I could live with that. All of a sudden I was facing a rental increase of \$310.00!”**

1. People who are working full-time for low wages cannot afford rising rents. Those who are making less than \$10 an hour are afraid that they will not be able to pay rent and will end up on the street. Some renters are receiving increases of hundreds of dollars per month, and other shelter costs such as utilities (heat, electricity, water, and sewer) are rising rapidly. In addition to rising rents, tenants are being required to pay a greater share of utility costs. Costs for child care, food, and other essentials are also going up.
2. People with disabilities need affordable, accessible housing. Many people with disabilities depend on a maximum allowance from AISH of \$1,050 with no other source of income. There is not enough subsidized accommodation to go around, and people are waiting for two or three years (or even more) to move into a unit. In the meantime, anywhere from 60 to 80 per cent of their monthly AISH allowance goes to pay rent. This forces them to use the Food Bank to stretch their budget for necessary food.
3. Skilled worker immigrants move to Canada for the promise of a better life. When they arrive, they find that their skills and credentials aren't recognized. They accept low-wage jobs to make ends meet, but it isn't enough. Recent immigrants are forced into substandard accommodation or into accommodation that they cannot afford.
4. Single parents are trying to make a better life for their families; however, due to rising rents, are too busy working to spend time with them. Children may be restricted from participating in school field trips and special programs where fees are required. Children are becoming socially isolated from peer groups.
5. Condominium conversions are taking away options for affordable rental housing. Several presenters said that the new regulation requiring one year's notice for condo conversion is having unintended consequences. Some landlords are instead giving notice of significant rent increases and/or major renovations, thereby forcing tenants to relocate within 3 months.

Renters would also like more help with down payments so that they can afford to buy their unit when conversion takes place.

**“Since this whole deal with rental increases, we have been afraid to start asking for regular maintenance, upgrades and fixes.”**

6. Tenants are afraid to ask for maintenance to their rental units because their landlords might raise the rent to an unaffordable level. Some rental units no longer meet the building codes. Tenants are afraid to complain to housing authorities about substandard conditions because they fear losing their homes.

Some presenters said higher rents might be justified if major improvements were made. However, in most cases, improvements are not being made, and landlords are taking advantage of the tight housing market to raise rents.

7. Seniors on a fixed income have no resources to cope with rising housing costs. Some presenters suggested adjusting seniors' pensions and benefits to reflect increases in living and housing costs.

**“My family is under extreme mental stress but my concerns lie foremost with the seniors who live in my building. I am lucky, I don’t want to get a 3<sup>rd</sup> job but I can, these people can’t!”**

8. Renters believe that there is no help for them due to “red tape,” the length of waiting lists, and provincial or city regulations that prevent them from accessing the housing they need. They would like more choices in their living situations. To find affordable rents, they are often forced to move further away from family, friends and support networks. Allowing rental subsidies to be attached to the tenant, not the suite, would give those individuals more choices and more freedom.
9. The boom in Alberta has resulted in people coming from other provinces and countries, placing further strain on an already tight housing market.
10. Quality of life is declining for many people. Choices have to be made between food, health care, and paying the rent.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduce a two-year Rent Stability Guideline that would:
  - a. stipulate rent increases once annually;
  - b. be in place for a two-year period;
  - c. keep rental rate increases to a rate of the Consumer Price Index plus 2%;
  - d. allow owners to apply for an increase over the annual guideline to recover actual costs (utilities, taxation, capital improvements, etc.);
  - e. exempt new construction.

This recommendation is the same as recommendation 2A of the Affordable Housing Task Force.

Since October 2006, vacancy rates in Edmonton have declined from 1.5% to 1.1% in April 2007. The availability rate (units that are vacant, or where the tenant has given official notice but a new tenant has not signed a lease) was only 0.5% higher. Average rents increased almost 10% from October 2006 to April 2007. The average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Edmonton was \$808 in October. In April 2007, the average cost was \$877 per month.

2. Provide increases to government assistance that are linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This includes AISH recipients, Income Support (Alberta Works) clients, and low-income seniors who qualify for the Seniors Benefit.
3. Give tenants whose units are being converted into condos first right of refusal to purchase their unit. Education about homeownership and support program options for “unsophisticated” or first-time buyers would give them the power they need to move into owning a home.

Previously, the Alberta Real Estate Board has offered a home education program where individuals attended educational classes and then received help from a real estate agent and a grant to assist with the closing costs on a mortgage. Re-instating this program with provincial government financial support would provide a perfect opportunity for private business to run a program which could benefit many potential first time home buyers.

4. Establish municipal and provincial programs that will allow low-income renters to address barriers to obtaining a mortgage (lack of down payment, problems with credit worthiness to mortgage companies). Increased home ownership will take the heat off a stressed rental market.

The City of Edmonton’s First Time Homebuyers Program provides an avenue for renters to get into “obtainable home buying.” The First-time Homebuyers Program is not a subsidized or social housing program. This program will be of interest to employed persons/families who qualify for a conventional mortgage on a modest first home.

We recommend that the province help cover up to 5 per cent of down payments for those with limited incomes. In addition, the federal government could cover the extra cost of mortgage loan insurance for those who can’t come up with a 20% down payment.

**“I am a landlord who is in favour of rent controls; those who claim to speak on behalf of landlords, and oppose rent controls, do not speak for me!”**

**“This year I have been diagnosed with leukemia and been told I will be fighting this cancer for the rest of my life. With loss of work, increased medical expenses and rising cost for even just a place to live, why would I want to go to treatment? Why bother if it will be just living on the street?”**

5. Affordable housing should be built throughout the city instead of being concentrated in certain apartment complexes or a few low-income neighbourhoods. To accomplish this, project developers need to consult with existing residents in a meaningful way to get their input and allay their concerns about these new initiatives.

In addition, a city-wide campaign based on the theme “mixed-income neighbourhoods are healthy neighbourhoods” or something similar could help change public perceptions to be more welcoming of income diversity.

6. Alberta minimum wage needs to be raised over the next two to three years to \$10.00 per hour and tied to the CPI after that time period.

In 2005, a single individual who made \$9.99 an hour earned \$20,778 a year—still at the low-income cut off. Larger families need an even higher hourly wage.

7. Persons with disabilities and seniors who are no longer as physically able need affordable, accessible housing that meets their needs with appropriate support services.

It costs less to construct new buildings that use barrier-free design than to renovate already constructed buildings to meet the needs of people with disabilities and physically challenged seniors.

Assisted living costs \$1,100 a month and up, and nursing homes cost even more. Barrier-free designed housing will allow more people to live in the community independently.

8. Increase wages of support workers so that they are able to maintain their own affordable housing without leaving the field.

Hourly wages begin at approximately \$12 for disability support workers. Workers are leaving the field to accept jobs in fast food or other service industries at higher wages or working long hours (sometimes at more than one job) to support themselves and their families.

Increasing the wages of support workers will enable people with disabilities to maintain their lives with the supports they need without going to a more expensive institution, and will allow workers to avoid housing worries that might lead to a vicious circle.

9. Attach subsidies to the person in need, not the rental unit. Provide options for individuals to live in private rental housing and still receive subsidies (increase funding).

Even with an upper limit on the units that would be eligible for subsidy, this would provide significantly more choice as to where they live.

10. Provincial legislation needs to give authority to landlord/tenant board to ensure the rent increase guidelines are being enforced.

The Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS), currently running as a pilot project in Edmonton, allows landlords and tenants to resolve serious disputes outside of court. This project needs to be expanded to other parts of Alberta.

11. Require multi-unit residential developments to include a minimum percentage of affordable rental units.

We recommend 15% of affordable multi-unit residential developments with 10%

of those units being barrier-free to allow people with disabilities greater choice in living arrangements and to allow “aging in place.”

12. Strengthen the building inspection actions of the provincial and municipal agencies. This will help to ensure that secondary suites are properly built and maintained, and that tenants are provided with safe, clean and decently equipped suites. If there is approval for secondary suites, then ensure that there is a full and adequate inspection for the safety of the tenants.
13. The provincial government needs to better publicize its efforts to help struggling renters. Details on the Homeless and Eviction Prevention Fund are not easily accessible through the provincial government website ([www.gov.ab.ca](http://www.gov.ab.ca)), and not everyone has ready access to the Internet.

The program needs to guarantee flexibility for the needs of renters who need to access emergency funds.

## APPENDIX

### May 23rd, 2007 Forum

#### NOTES

##### **SPEAKERS:**

1. Nicole (30ish female)
  - Disabled person
  - Rent has been threatened to increase by \$300.00
  - She is on a fixed income
  - If increased she will have to move onto the street as she cannot afford increase
  
2. David (male)
  - One of the working poor
  - Current rent is \$625.00 for 1 bedroom
  - Rent increases are affecting low income/fixed income and dysfunctional families throughout the city
  - Long term renters are being forced out by rising rents
  - This situation will increase violence and homelessness within the city as well as all kinds of other social issues.
  
3. Male
  - Rent is going up to a point where he cannot afford
  - He can't sleep at night worrying about paying his increased rent and other bills
  - Is affecting his health and he is already ill
  
4. New Canadian Female
  - Came from Bangladesh in August 2006 for a better life for herself and her young son
  - Single working mother trying to make ends meet
  - Rent originally (August 2006) was \$749.00 and is going up to \$1,000.00
  - She gets paid only \$9.15 per hour
  - Currently is on subsidized housing but that is not increasing to cover her increase in rent
  - Landlord says that they are charging the current going rate for rent
  - Landlord should adhere to agreement they signed with Capital Housing subsidizing program
  
5. Young (under 30) male
  - Has been on AISH for 10 years (fixed income)
  - He has a brain injury
  - Rent is currently \$665.00 and increasing to \$815.00
  - He has no furniture
  - He was abandoned by his family at a young age
  - He wants a roof over his head, a safe place to sleep
  - He was living on the street prior to getting this apartment and feels he will be there again because he cannot afford this increase
  - He feels people should have affordable housing available to them
  
6. Young single mother
  - Under the age of 20 with 3 year old son
  - She goes to school and receives \$1,300.00/month to live on from a student grant
  - Her expenses are as follows:
    - Daycare: \$550.00/mo
    - Rent: \$770.00 (2 bedroom)/mo
    - Food: \$400.00/mo
    - Diapers: \$150.00/mo
    - TOTAL: 1,870.00/mo
  - Was previously living in a 3 bedroom split level townhouse for \$695.00 but rent increased
  - Wants to see more fixed rate supplements. The waiting list is too long.
  - This situation is going to cause overworked/stressed parents who don't spend time with their

families because they are too busy working.

7. Disabled elderly male (Ken)
  - Lives in a co-op and is not currently being affected by rent increases
  - At meeting to show support for those who are
  - He is afraid that if his Home Support Workers are not able to find affordable housing, and increases in wages the resulting staff shortage will force him back into institutions for his car.
8. Bob (elderly male)
  - He is on a fixed income
  - Rents in Princess Apartments. Apartments have been sold and converted into condos
  - He questioned about the Rainy Day funds
  - His rent is increasing to get him and other tenants out to assist in converting apartments into for sale condo's (condo's selling at \$159,000.00)
  - He suggested that government purchase condo's or convert apartments and rent out at reasonable rates to low and fixed income tenants.
9. Joyce (middle aged single female - working)
  - She has a great landlady now
  - She has been in subsidized housing before and it was deplorable
  - Capital Region Housing should be checking into the eligibility of the people in the program and should be doing follow ups to ensure that they really need the program
10. Diane (middle aged single female - working)
  - Lost her home of 8 years and she has been forced to sign a lease for \$850.00 to keep a roof over her head
  - Her rent did not go up for 8 years and then went up to \$850.00
  - She just wants an affordable and safe roof over her head
11. Middle aged single female – (working)
  - 2 years ago she was renting a 2 bedroom in the inner city for \$650.00
  - Moved to Riverbend area because rent went up and had bad roommates so moved
  - She currently sleeps on her friends couch
  - It took her 3 months to find an apartment she could afford (\$625.00) but she didn't get it because there was other people willing to pay more for it
  - She now has rented a 1 bedroom basement suite for the same price as her 2 bedroom was and there was 40 other people waiting to rent that same suite.
12. Elderly male (renter)
  - Living in apartment for 18 years and 6 months.
  - He took his landlord to court because landlord wouldn't remove snow this winter. Couldn't get to work for 5 days.
  - He lives pay cheque to pay cheque
  - All people deserve to have an affordable and safe roof over their heads
  - Worker must make a decent wage
  - Suggest that government purchase apartments and rent to fixed and low income renters.
13. Middle aged male
  - Comments that there are three groups in this country – the affluent – the poor – and the working poor
  - The affluent can change their situation but others cannot
14. Asian male (30ish)
  - Disabled – lives on AISH
  - Rent increased by landlord
  - There should be more low cost housing for all disabled, fixed income and working poor
  - The apartments with the higher rents are not worth the increase
15. Cora (middle aged single female)

- Question, How many jobs does she have to have to make ends meet?
  - Her rent is increasing to \$900.00 (a \$300.00 increase)
  - She feels that the landlord wants to get her out of the building to convert to a condo
  - She has had a rent increase every 8 months for the last 2 years
16. Middle aged female
- Her concern is what is her landlord going to do with their rents
  - There should be a 0% increase
  - Possibly have businesses by day and convert to shelters by night
17. Mary
- Disappointed in Edmonton City and government who hasn't planned for the boom
  - People living in deplorable conditions – she pointed out in the audience an immigrant who with his family are living in a slum environment.
  - She blames the city and province for their lack of vision
  - It is a disgrace that for a province as rich as Alberta they did not do any planning
18. Young (under 30) male
- Pointed out the low vacancy rate problem
  - Pointed out that there should be construction incentive for investors to build affordable housing. Why hasn't government done so
  - Could use closed down buildings (ie. Schools) and convert to shelters or room rentals
19. Linda
- She wanted to see the building maintenance costs to justify the rental increases
  - Her current landlord has increased rents every 90 days
  - Suggest that city takes abandon buildings and converts into affordable housing for rent
20. Tigg (disabled 40ish male)
- Currently stays with elderly handicapped lady on couch
  - Can't find affordable apartment but when he does he loses out to people willing to pay more then he can afford to get the apartment
21. Middle aged working female
- Rents a house with 5 other people
  - Lives with elderly mother, Sister (on AISH), son (on AISH) and other son
  - She works 60 hours per week as a Support worker
  - Her rent has increased \$900.00 in the last year
  - She is forced to pay or landlady will give her eviction notice
  - She is considering moving out of the province to be able to afford to put a roof over her families head
  - Need more subsidizing for working people
22. Retired female
- Worked for 39 years and is now on fixed income
  - Her university son (has degree) is currently living with her as he cannot get a job in his field and has major debit to pay off
  - She suggested that people get active and unite.
  - Go to liberal office and sign the housing petition they have
  - Also vote differently next time
23. Young male
- There is a crisis in the city
  - Cost of living is increasing
  - People are giving up the necessities to pay their rent and keep a roof over their head
  - Need affirmative action NOW from city council and government
  - Big businesses needs should not out-weigh the needs of the people
24. John (middle aged male)
- He spent 2 years on the street until his current girlfriend took him off the street

- His girlfriends rent has increased 3 times in the last year
25. Middle aged (30ish) female
- Currently lives in house
  - They live in fear that their rent is going to increase if they ask landlord to fix anything in the house
  - They are afraid that the house is going to get torn down
  - They are disappointed because they moved here to have a better life and they are not having one
26. Senior female (60 years old)
- She has lived in Edmonton for 19 years
  - Came here with 3 degrees from Italy that Canada wouldn't recognize
  - She returned to school at age 50 to get a Canadian degree and still could not get work here
  - 12 years ago her rent was \$421.00 and has increased to \$794.00
  - Building has not been kept up. Drug dealing and security issues for tenants in building
  - Her apartment is not a safe or clean place to live
  - Question – why doesn't the government implement rent control?
27. Middle aged male
- Suggested that if we group together we can create a force and the government will have to pay attention
28. Tammy (middle aged female)
- On AISH
  - Has been struggling to make ends meet for the last 8 years
  - Social assistance needs to be increased
  - Her current rent is \$600.00 and bills are \$300.00 and she only receives \$1,000.00 per month
29. Middle aged female
- She received a 25% rent increase
  - She was laid off from her job in October 2006
  - She found another job at 5% less pay than her previous job and she and her husband are now on strike

## COMMENT SHEETS

I haven't had a date yet. If it does I can expect to starve.

Rent increased 2-3 times

I see the effect and problems more now – more violence, crime and gangs

I prefer not to be homeless

So far I have been lucky, the last rent increase the landlord gave us was in March and about the same time this whole rent increase craziness started, so he has a year before wreaking anymore havoc. Sitting and listening to all who spoke, I couldn't help but notice the smug looks on the faces of the panel. Shame Shame I have been trying to stay above water since leaving my husband in 2000. I believe the social programs that were so botched by whichever government should be brought up to par. By that I am saying if somebody is receiving AISH or Social assistance. Whatever that person has to pay for rent should be what you're given. Not \$472.00 for a single person to pay for everything in a month. Also, the Landlord & Tenant act is not in place for the renter at all. My place of residence has a thirty year old fridge, rotten carpets. No locks on basement windows. Yes, last but not least rent caps must come into effect.

I have had to bounce from couch to couch and back to my families house for myself a non-smoker cannot find a place to rent for what I have. We currently have to live in a friends basement who is a "in the house smoker" and damages our choice to have clean lungs. I quit smoking 3 years ago. I should be able to find a place free of smoke.

I am fortunate enough that my rent has only increased \$55.00 in 2 years. I live in a bachelor suite downtown Edmonton. I currently pay \$605.00/mo. My concern is I am stuck and can't afford to move because rents are between \$850.00-\$1,050.00 for a 1 bedroom. Families grow and need the option of moving into affordable housing. I have pets (2 cats) and I can only find housing in Boardwalk Properties which have astronomical rent rates. I am worried for the future because I, like many people, don't make very much money and housing shouldn't be so high. I am scared I will be homeless if my rent reaches \$900.00 or more. I work fulltime at \$9.00/hr. Something needs to be done for us lower income people. I work for \$9.00/hr. I live in fear everyday that eventually I will be homeless based on the rent increases and lack of affordable housing available. The government or somebody needs to take action to put some rent controls/aid.

I have yet to worry about rent increases but fear that one is coming. This year I have been diagnosed with leukemia and been told I will be fighting this cancer for the rest of my life. With loss of work, increased medical expenses and raising cost for even just a place to live why would I want to go to treatment? Why bother if it will be just living on the street?

My rental property is run by Home Ed. The rent is considered market rent. Grant funding nor SFI supplement use the market rent guideline. It is much lower. I am always looking for ways to make ends meet. As the children reach their teenage years there is little money for an allowance of \$5 a week if there is a little left over. Going to a movie is a rare occurrence. Their friends soon stop calling them. They are becoming more and more isolated. Socializing is a necessary part of their development. Life becomes very stressful and sad. I am in school, training, and that I will be able to get work at a better wage and be employable for a longer time. Otherwise I would work 2 jobs just to put a roof over our heads (children need their parents, it is a parents responsibility for provide guidance and direction). While looking for a summer job I have found it difficult to know how to get that all important interview. We are told to apply on the internet. I and others do not have internet at home. We go to the library or employment center. Because I have little experience using the internet, applying for work becomes very frustrating and discouraging.

I managed townhouses for 18 years. There was a period within that time that there was a cap on the rental increases, my tenant's were very pleased and my bosses (owner's) were great about it. So what's the problem. Cap the rental increases

The rent went up \$100.00 more. That will make it very hard on the low income and seniors like me. (no respect for seniors). I am very upset. I might have to go to the food bank for my food.

I am on a fixed income and I have had a girlfriend stay 3 months because she could not find a place to live. If this (the rents) keeps going up I will not be able to stay where I am at and I will have to move.

My rent was increased twice from January 1, 2007 first-time by \$25.00. Second time on April 27, 2007 by

\$175.00. Now my rent for a one bedroom is \$700.00 per month. I am a single parent. I have two children. They are both students. I have sole custody of a 17 year old son. I cannot afford that because of my fixed income.

Moved here from Lethbridge. Rented a house for about 9 months. Then we were told it was getting torn down for a new development. So then we found another house to rent – luckily it was nice and affordable. We have been there since August, but since this whole deal with rental increases, we have been afraid to start asking for regular maintenance, upgrades, fix-its, etc. So we have started fixing things ourselves. The landlords have caught onto this and have insinuated that we could do more work. So its like a trade off so we don't get our rent increased. My husband installed insulation in our attic in the winter and it looks like he might be refinishing our deck outside. So we feel like serfs? We are lucky, but I live in fear that when something does get fixed, we will have to pay for it. Instability – hopelessness.

I have been relatively fortunate, no rent increases. However, I rent a ½ basement suite for \$495.00, but I get what I pay for. It's very hard for us young people who don't work in Ft. Mac. to find affordable housing. I can't afford to go to post secondary and further my education because rent is too high. Something needs to be done. Immediately. Good people are going homeless because our basic needs of housing is not being met.

Had to quit my job due to medical reasons and can't afford the rent that people are asking. Being on a fixed income now, the places that I can afford are surrounded by hookers and drug-dealers. I may have to move onto the streets which I know is a big problem for Edmonton right now. Something that I don't want to do because I don't think I could survive.

Live with senior on a fixed income

AISH – lived in co-operative housing

Live also with 2 adult sons – one has disability and other works fulltime

Received notice to vacate

Causes more conflict, stress, working more hours and worried especially about the people in my family who are not able to live on their own financially.

Our rents are the same for now. But in December it is going up \$100/mo. As a low income senior I find it hard to pay the rent and get groceries and pay bills. Also I know that you have to pay for your dental work – false teeth. Also some of your medicine's. This all cost a lot of money. And a small monthly cheque does not go far. Rent. Food. Bills. Medical, dental and so on. Every time I go for groceries I end up paying more. You have to pay for telephone, lights, water, rent and a small cheque does not go far. We need help. Seniors can not afford to have their rent raised up. I can not afford it. Why does the government allow the owners of these buildings to raise the rents so high?

I am not a renter but I have great concern for the elderly, single parents, the handicapped, students and young people who have been hit by the rental crunch. We have thousands of homeless in Edmonton, we will soon have tens of thousands of homeless. The doubling and tripling of rents is gouging pure and simple. The provincial government should put a 15% cap on rent increases. The excuse from Mr. Stelmach that rent caps would discourage development is gobs wallop. The provincial government has always been in bed with big business. The mayor and his councilors need to find a piece of city owned property that the poor can use to create a tent city. Using the police to evict tent dwellers from one location after another is not showing compassion for the poor. It should be kept in mind that tent cities are a temporary solution. Some long term planning and solutions are required to help with a potential monumental catastrophe. What will happen come winter? The city seems to have money for a new Art Gallery, a new stadium and a \_\_\_\_ leaning pyramid to welcome people to Edmonton. It's too bad it doesn't have money to give quality life for our most vulnerable citizens.

I am on a fixed income. My rent has doubled in 5 years. Soon there will be no place for me to live. I fear the next increase. 2.5 year wait for subsidized housing. Where can I go? Where is the Alberta advantage for me? I live in fear of the next increase. I need help to stay off the street.

I rent a bachelor apartment downtown. I pay \$650.00 for rent, this costs more than half of my monthly income. My rent is going up by 30% (approx) in August. I can't imagine people with kids and families being able to afford this even though I am single and support myself. Even dual income families will be paying over half of their income to pay rent. How will we pay our bills and eat? I don't know if I will be able to find somewhere else to live, if and when I can no longer afford to live at my current address. Alberta is one of the

richest parts of Canada and yet we do not have rent caps. B.C. and Ontario have implemented rent caps, why not Alberta. I WISH the government could answer that question.

This talk about building a new ART GALLERY and talk of redoing the entrance of Churchill LRT station on the southeast side of City Hall. Why don't they take the money used for those 2 items and use it for Rent subsidies for low income housing and give subsidies to people in 1, 2, or 3 bedroom apartments who are struggling – most likely to low income.

Rent went from \$1,200.00 to \$1,695.00 per month. My concern is to get a hold of my management company to discuss rent problems with caretaker, etc. Alliance Reality Management.

Hi, my name is Greg a renter (share rent with a roommate). Single and work fulltime. Lived for 6 years there was fine. Rent went up this Jan./07 by \$25.00. O.K. fair but another jump this August/07 by \$165.00 not fair to \$850.00 and landlord responsibilities is forever disappearing always fighting for their responsibilities. But rent needs a cap. Causing me grief and despair.

Heritage Rainy Day trust fund! Spend the money – it is raining. Control rent increases and profit mark-ups. Group investment clubs. Are apartment buildings recently converted to condors.

Forced to move March 1<sup>st</sup> because the house I lived in was sold. Was relocated to another house by same owner where tenant was evicted and refused to move out. She had the house filled with so much filth it stunk and was mouse infested. We were homeless 2 weeks waiting for her to finally get out and are still trying to clean and repair her filthy mess. She went to WEAC then got a room in a crack house up the street. I realize I am fortunate to have a home at all.

My rent has only gone up \$70 in January but is expected to rise from \$670.00 to \$1,200.00 January/08. New renters now pay \$970.00 for their 2 bedroom apartments. My family is under extreme mental stress but my concerns lie foremost with the seniors who live in my building. They cannot pay these increases. I am lucky, I don't want to get a 3<sup>rd</sup> job but I can, these people can't. There should be some protection for fixed income individuals. Rent controls ARE necessary! Where is the compassion for the people who built this province and country they protected us while growing up – we now have to protect them. Control rent for fixed income individuals.

It has been raised \$385 in the past 18 months (now \$780.00/mo). I only get \$700.00 per month from working. My brother gets \$669.00/month for his income and rents a one bedroom. We had to move in together but are still barely making it month by month. The bills all separate and our building converting into condos. We can not afford to move or buy. We will have to live on the street soon.

10 months ago my husband and I were forced (not literally) to move out of our seemingly respectable apartment building after having been robbed by an individual hired by the management of that building. Understandably, the most important feature of our new place was to be security, so we chose the most secure and well-situated apartment we found, just barely within our means at the time. As our lease comes up for renewal in August, we have only seen an increase of \$100.00 which is still within reason for us (as we both work fulltime), but our rent will now be over a quarter of what we bring home combined each month and leads me to the following worry. Within a year, my husband and I will not longer be able to afford our rent when the next big increase comes. Being both in our twenties and freshly out of college with \$600.00 worth of student debt every month between us, we now have to decide whether we stay for the year and face the hopeless housing situation 12 months from now, when the housing market prices are even more insane than they are now and there are no apartments downtown to be rented for less than we are being charged now, or we cash out now, give up our comfortable home and try our luck buying a condo, with 0 savings between us and no idea how to go about it. What would you do?

As an emergency stop gap and for certain migratory types who have nothing but a grocery cart. Can recycling depots with security room & person at night be converted to shelters in the evening. By night person a pup tent with a lock and key for the zipper. Build lofts/shelves 8 fee wide around inside/upper level. People would be gleaning the avenues by day and have a safe place at night. In their neighborhoods. Could be located anywhere that is zoned for a business. Have a dozen around the city call them "The Pop Can Pad"

Grad Student at U of A. On limited income - \$1,268.00/month. Had to relocate to extreme south end of town and utilities and rent will take 90% of income. University has to be on board along with the city and the

province. University housing is reserved for international students. Need to adjust student loans to accommodate higher rental and utility costs. As a single student you don't qualify for university subsidized housing. University administration seems not to be grappling with this problem of the lack of housing available for students.

We are having a hard time paying \$665.00 dollar for rent in a 1 bedroom apartment. We don't have any furniture ever since we moved in to the apartment in 2005. We are on a one year lease, but in 2008 of March 1 we are going to be paying \$815.00 dollars a month and we are not going to be able to afford to support ourselves. The only thing we are sleeping on is a \$30.00 airbed because we can't afford a real bed because of our rent that we are paying and we can't afford to buy food either.

I live in a cooperative and my rent is not effected by the housing crisis right now because I live in a cooperative. Although the aids who help me with my daily care needs are effected, which affects me and all other persons who have disabilities who live in the community and need help. Last Thursday I went to the rally at the Legislature and I told a reporter the following. I AM HERE TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING OF THE LOW INCOME EARNERS WHO LIVE IN ALBERTA MANY OF WHOM HAVE DISABILITIES LIKE MYSELF. ARE WE GOING TO BE FORCED BACK LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS BECAUSE WE CANNOT FIND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND WE CANNOT FIND SUPPORT STAFF TO HELP US LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN THE COMMUNITY. OUR SUPPORT STAFF CANNOT PAY THEIR RENT WITH THE SALARY/WAGE THEY RECEIVE AT THE PRESENT TIME EITHER. FOR OVER A YEAR NOW WE AND MANY OTHER HOME CARE PLACES HAVE HAD A REALLY HARD TIME FINDING AND HIRING HOME CARE STAFF. I TALKED TO ONE FRIEND WHO ALMOST DID NOT GET TO BED LAST WEEK BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT FIND NIGHT STAFF AT THE PLACE HE LIVES TO HELP HIM INTO BED. FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THESE TWO GROWING PROBLEMS (RENT INCREASES, STAFFING CRISIS) SHOULD BE THE PRIORITY OF ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES and city councilors WORKING TOGETHER.

At a meeting with ED at Candora last week, it was recounted several crisis situation of people they have dealt with around lack of housing. Many of our FCSS agencies are finding they are spending a lot of their time dealing with community people's housing issues which detracts time from their regular programs.

I found out about your meeting in a church pamphlet and wanted to contribute some comments however I am not a renter that is affected by the situation of Low vacancy rate etc. My job is one where I am the property manager for a rental complex and I wanted to give some valuable information of what I experience daily. I get a lot of calls for three bedroom vacancy so my point is even if you have development of apartments would you be getting what you need for the crisis even with rent controls. Then there is the need for handicap access not only to get into the building but to function in the unit itself. Another point I wanted to bring up, why doesn't government help families to take in their elderly relatives, be it immediate members or an aunt or uncle; such as low interest loans to build onto their existing homes. Our society has gotten away from trying to compartmentalize people the young have to exist with the old or they will loose how to be compassionate to those whom they will eventually become one day; I know that sounds like the Walton family from the T.V. series but we should think about it. The idea of allowing people to turn their homes into rental accommodations and subject their lives to the hassle of dealing with problem renters and gaining enough confidence with the Landlord and Tenant Act is not practicable. It seems like this is an attempt in re-distribution of population the problem is where do people move to on a fixed income where living expenses are more affordable, access to medical help etc. Then you have to live great distances away from the family core. I don't have the answers but hopefully that the comments I offer helps to make some very important decisions for what you are trying to accomplish with this meeting because if private industry doesn't get motivated then government has to get involved and the ones who are getting a free ride will have to be taxed more. We have been down this boom town road before and how we got caught literally without our pants down in this whole mess is the problem of governance. Last but not least is the fact of the homeless population, the three levels of government have fallen short of there responsibility to help the people and organizations who are already doing this job. I remember when the powers that be shamed the churches out of having bingos and games to help support their efforts to help where they could; again I am sure that I am over simplifying in ignorance.

## May 24th, 2007 Forum

### NOTES

#### **SPEAKERS:**

1. Middle aged male:
  - Rent has skyrocketed
  - Lives in ward 4
  - Must blame government and city councilors have imposed such large tax increases to owners
  - Have opposition to get government to force rent controls or increase subsidy payments to cover increased costs.
  
2. 30ish Male:
  - Lives in 1 bedroom apartment with girlfriend and has no furniture
  - Feels that rich don't care about the poor
  - He lived on street for many years
  - He needs low rent NOW not later. Crisis is now.
  
3. Middle Aged Male:
  - 18 years ago forced into Capital Region Housing.
  - Has been trying to break free of Capital Region Housing to make room for someone else who needs it.
  - Low rental housing is not the place to raise children
  - On AISH and gets \$1,050.00
  - Must raise amount for people on social assistance
  - MLA's get \$1,700.00 rental allowance
  - Can't get out of Capital Region Housing
  - Must implement rent control or raise social assistant \$.
  
4. Elderly Female (Fran)
  - Lives in her apartment for 2 years with her disabled son
  - Apartment is being converted into condo's
  - Rent is \$1,000.00 per month including utilities
  - No pets allowed in building
  - Police harassing homeless people. Where else is there for them to go
  
5. Young Female (Angela)
  - Has lived in apartment for 2 years
  - Is on AISH
  - Can't cope with the increase in her living expenses
  - Her apartment is a slum (leaky ceiling, drug dealing in building, etc.)
  - Keep rents down
  
6. Young male (William)
  - Makes \$11.00/hr at Shaw and also works a 2<sup>nd</sup> job
  - Is currently homeless and sleeps in his car or at work
  - Can't get an apartment because he doesn't make enough money as far as landlords are concerned
  - Rents are not going to go down and he needs help now
  - He is one of the working poor being impacted by the increase in costs of living.
  
7. Aboriginal Middle aged female (Bernadette)
  - She can't afford to retire
  - She can't afford to rent
  - Supposedt to be a wealthy province but where is the money going. Not to the people who need it the most
  - There must be a solution

8. Middle aged female:
  - Rent increasing
  - Apartment is not worth increase. Heat not working so she uses gas from oven to heat her place
  - Drug addicts in downstairs apartment
  - Landlord is not fixing problems or supporting her complaints
  - Apartment is in slum conditions (ie. poor electric)
  - Landlady threatens to evict if she continues to complain
  - She has been on the Capital Region Housing wait list for 5 years
  
9. Middle Aged Female (working poor)
  - Been a renter for 25 years in Alberta
  - Had 3 jobs to afford rents
  - Finally go a job that pays better and now only works 2 jobs
  - Lives in a basement suite that is over a water main that floods her place
  - Had money to move elsewhere but then rents went up and she can't afford to move now
  - Works in service industry
  - Her current rent is increasing
  - Alberta's temporary workers are taking all the good apartments at whatever price the landlord is charging
  
10. 99 year old senior citizen:
  - He can't afford to stay in his home because of increased taxes
  - He currently makes only 1,400.00 per month
  - This city is for the rich and they want the poor out of the city.
  - Anyone could be homeless very easily
  - Alberta is becoming a province that workers do not wish to come to.
  - Homelessness should not be in a province so rich
  
11. Middle aged New Canadian male:
  - Has lived in Alberta since 1976
  - Rent was \$421.00 for the last 6 years. Increasing to \$630.00
  - Monthly expenses are \$849.00
  - He is on EI
  - Subsidized rent programs are not easy to get on and the waiting list is too long
  - Wants rent controls
  - Government owns – they don't know what it is like to face these issues
  
12. Disabled female (Francis)
  - Lives in downtown Edmonton
  - Lives in accessible housing
  - Looked for 4 years for accessible housing
  - Has no choice if rent goes up
  - Has a decent job but her costs of living because of her disability is more then others
  - Disabled individuals want to have a job and wants to contribute to society too
  - Need more affordable and accessible housing options
  
13. Middle aged female:
  - Here entire building got an eviction notice so they could convert to condo's
  - Building was full of professionals
  - When converting the eviction notice time frame goes from 6 mos. to 3 mos.
  - Developers are looking for desperate apartment building owners who are wanting to sell and buying up rental properties and converting
  - They wanted to purchase their own suites but were not given the opportunity
  - Apartment conversion and reno's are not regularly monitored

14. Senior female (Faith)
  - Feels that there is a lack of compassion in society
  - Richest province in Canada and what are we doing with it
  - Social Assistance rates are \$402.00/mo how can anyone live on that
  - She receives \$1,500.00/mo.
  - She applied for a credit card (for emergency use) and her application was denied because her rent exceeded 30% of her income.
  - Noted that if we were hit by a natural disaster we would have relief immediately
  - Why can't we do something NOW
  
15. Elderly female:
  - Started paying \$600.00/mo plus a \$650.00 security deposit
  - Now paying \$900.00/mo
  - Only gets \$1,500.00/mo on pension (is a fixed income individual)
  - Really stressed out – PLEASE HELP
  
16. Middle aged male (Steven):
  - Rent o.k. for now but concerned about what the increase will be in a years time
  - Could a certain % of apartments in each building be earmarked for low income tenants. Could the government regulate this
  - The city, provincial and possibly federal government needs to work together to come up with solutions to the crisis.
  
17. Middle aged women:
  - Came here as an immigrate with family
  - Lives with widowed mother and grandmother
  - Have received a \$200.00/mo increase
  - Works but pays 50% of her income towards rent
  - Is very frugal and is too proud to ask for assistance
  - Diversity in rental units is key
  - Very stressed out
  - Temporary workers are taking up the apartments in her building
  
18. Young student (goes to university)
  - She cannot find a place to live for the upcoming year
  
19. Middle aged female (Sara):
  - Lived here in Alberta since 1985
  - Has sent new mayor an email suggesting some affordable housing ideas. Still awaiting response
  
20. Middle Aged female:
  - Currently makes \$1,400.00 per month and rent is \$800.00/mo
  - Is on a disability income
  - She sent in her Housing application and was approved and then told they didn't have the funding to cover her approved application
  - Then told her later that \$800.00 was too high to qualify for subsidized housing
  - She got her MLA involved in the dispute and when she was called back she was told she was supposed to rent in a Boardwalk building
  - Note Boardwalk rents are well over \$800.00
  
21. Disabled female:
  - Has a disability. Hard to walk up stairs
  - Is on AISH and gets \$1,050.00/mo
  - Her church has to help her out financially
  - Rents too high or not accessible to her because of her disability

22. Elderly male (senior)
  - Been in Edmonton since 1951
  - He is not a renter
  - Problem is not new but is definitely the worst it has ever been
  - Used to help plan for the city
  - Concern for the upcoming seniors who are on fixed incomes. They will become the next generation of homeless.
  - All 3 governments must get together
  - Subsidies should reflect the current market. Subsidies should be on the individuals not on the rental unit.
23. Elderly male (61 years old):
  - Can pay his rent BUT his quality of life is suffering
  - Recently swallowed his pride and phoned for assistance and he was denied because they said he made/received too much \$
  - Had an illness and needs quality food and quality of life to remain healthy
  - He can't afford the food he needs because he must pay his rent
  - Stress sets in and his health is declining
24. Middle Aged male (divorced):
  - Recently divorced and makes good wage
  - His payments (child support, etc.) is over half of his income
25. Middle Aged female:
  - Lives with husband in coop housing
  - Coop housing has huge wait lists
  - Here on behalf of others
  - Has a disabled daughter (received AISH \$1,050.00) who wants to be independent
  - Also has an 18 year old son who works 2 jobs and his rent is \$750.00/mo
  - Disabled persons are hardest hit. They fear they were going to be living on the street
26. Young Aboriginal female (under 18):
  - She lives in shared accommodation to make ends meet
  - She will have to move when she turns 18
  - Not realistic to expect young people to pay \$750.00 for rent when they are coming out of school and just getting started.
27. Elderly immigrant Male:
  - A crisis has been created by the politicians because of poor planning of the influx of workers
  - Landlords had previously been capped and now they are wanting the \$ out of their buildings.
  - Install rent caps and increase unit numbers available to low and fixed income renters
28. Elderly female:
  - City councilors did not have foresight
  - Developers are not asked to develop affordable housing in any of their units
  - She is a property manager
  - Immediate action must be taken right NOW. We can't wait
29. Disabled female:
  - Immigrated from India
  - Not proud to be a Canadian anymore
  - Where is the compassion
  - Everybody has their right to live with a roof over their head
  - She is expecting a baby and she is homeless
  - Don't give up
30. Young male:
  - Both him and girlfriend doing o.k.
  - Loves this city
  - City has lost its affordability and charm
  - It is a problem for the city

- Going to lose good working people who chose to go elsewhere for their careers
- Need to find solution or will be losing good people

## COMMENT SHEETS

If the government doesn't want more people on the streets they should lower the rent prices on all apartments, condos and houses or other homes. I used to pay \$450.00 for a bachelor and it had a lot of problems and now I have to pay \$500.00 for the same bachelor suite and it still has a lot of problems including a leaky ceiling and the price is going up again. Rent should not be sky-rocketing especially for students, people on AISH or other's who struggle in financial situations and have difficulty making money. People shouldn't have to pay so much for rent because some people are barely getting by while others are ending up on the streets.

August 25, 2006 I had a nice 1 bedroom apartment at St. Josaphat's (verkharyna) at the cost of \$425.00/mo (including utilities except phone and cable). August 26, 2006 I fell. Although I can still walk to a limited extent with my walker, the medical team decided it would be more convenient to move me to assisted living at \$1,100.00 (including meals). I am only 69 years old! Most of the other residents are waiting to die because they are in their late 80's and 90's. I am way too young to be condemned to a facility which although physically beautiful, is very similar to a nursing home. We desperately need affordable housing (maximum of 30% of income) for the handicapped – including seniors. Seniors need to be in handicapped apartments with a cross section of ages in a high rise building. Siphoning seniors off into "assisted living" facilities promotes depression, a sense of futility. With home care, a "lifeline" service and meals on wheels (or some similar service) I and many others would fare very well in a truly wheelchair accessible 1-bedroom apartment. Seniors are on a fixed income – at least a lot of us are! Pensions do not go up at the rate that food and rent does! Seniors should not have to share an apartment with other seniors! We are not college students anymore! (ie. most D.A.L. units). I have virtually no disposable income. The atmosphere is very depressing. I have lost all of my privacy and more independence than I needed to. Friends no longer come to visit me. Two of my daughters who live out of town are unable to stay with me when they come to town. (one lives in France and so do my grandchildren, the other lives in Ottawa). I strongly object to wealthy developers receiving government grants to build "assisted living" facilities when their primary goal is to line their own pockets. They hire sub-standard, uneducated staff for minimum wages and caterers who provide sub-standard, even unhealthy food.

My idea is that all apartment rents shall be limited to no more than \$300.00/mo with utilities and cable included for 1-bedroom and no more than \$500.00/mo for 2 bedroom units in Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer and all cities and towns in good Neighborhoods. Not in run down areas of towns or cities.

Our apartment building of 10 floors, ie (that has an elevator & allows pets), many seniors there, many disabled – we have to move (for condos) along with 5-6 other buildings just in our area. We can't find any affordable place.

When I moved into where I am, I paid \$475.00. When I had been there my rent went to \$525.00. Considering where I live, that is pretty cheap. Then, like a lot of other apartments, was sold & people were converting them into condos. The new owner wants me now to pay \$950.00. That is too much. Not everyone can afford much rent. I live alone, and I make next to nothing on Medical income support. With rent going up, it is going to get to the point of living on the streets.

Evicted, for condo conversion development (entire building). Looked at 35 places before found an apartment that was 1. clean and in good repair and 2. had a rent I could afford. Found small privately owned building with young owner, by luck. Managed to keep rent the same. Old apartment building was a community. Just as if it was a city block. Lost my community. Currently rebuilding one. Moving costs and disruption of life/eviction stressful. Note: old building had mix of university professionals, professionals, trades people and retired people. All of us had difficulty finding accommodation at a reasonable price. We set up a meeting to discuss. Is the city aware that information collected by our tenant committee:

1. Any major renovations planned for commercial apartments cuts the eviction notice from 6 mo. To 3 mos. Under current L & T Act.
2. Some developers are working with people to identify apartment buildings that might have owners who could be persuaded to sell – especially older owners.
3. Many owners not aware that can sell units individually rather than selling the building as a whole. Increases costs to potential buyers.
4. Developers are often countering and selling to other investors ie. flipping renovated units to 2<sup>nd</sup>

- 5. time investors who in turn sell the units again for a profit before someone lives in the apartment.
- 6. Down payments on investment properties can be so low that the mortgage is substantial. Many people are then renting the investment properties at rates that cover the high monthly mortgage.
- 7. The improvements done by developers is often repairs but not always necessary and is used to justify high prices.
- 8. Renovations done by developers are not well monitored

Family forced to live in fungus laden house . No ability to complain as no alternatives.

There is no housing available. I am a waitress. I will move back to Ontario soon.

Rent raised 3 times. One of my family members killed himself.

Large increases that are far too high. Made us homeless.

I had finally saved up enough money to cover the costs of moving to a slightly better apartment. My personal definition of slightly better? Same cost as I pay now, but NOT in a basement suite due to health problems; possibly a slightly larger accommodation; a place in a part of town I can access both my job and means to meet my needs (stores, medical, etc.) that does not have me living in the inner city, constantly worrying about being the victim of the habits of others. I earn \$12.00/hr. I work usually 30 hours/week – that makes my take home pay \$1,200.00/mo. - \$1,300.00/mo. I pay my rent, bills, food and needs. My rent is going up slowly. I can't afford to move, because rent at a new apartment would be at least \$700.00 for a bachelor. That would mean I would need a second job just to get by... and I am already having health problems. I can work I do work. I pay my taxes and bills. I get too sick, I cannot work. Disability benefits are now not enough to support a person financially. What am I supposed to do, move to another province, pray I can find a job, and start over again at minimum wage? I am NOT young, and that prospect seems rather intimidating at the least. Suggestions: Mines up north like in Alert have bunkhouses and own housing for employees. Why cannot the oil fields do the same? Stop rent increases. Single parents, immigrants, fixed income persons, and pensioners cannot afford it. How can Alberta have a tourism industry and good quality streets if people cannot afford to live in Alberta if they work in the service industry. ND: A friend looking for an apartment overheard 2 employees of one of the large property management groups comment re: how there was NO intent to build more housing until rent was over \$1,500/mo. How do families/people earning less than \$30k/yr manage to afford rent this high.

I currently make what should be a decent wage. It is not a great wage, but until recently, it was enough. Up until last December, it was fine. However, at the beginning of December, I received a notice of rental increase. My rent went from \$665.00/mo to \$975.00/mo. I had been living there for 5 years, usually getting one rental increase of about \$25.00. I could live with that. All of a sudden I was facing a rental increase of \$410.00! There was no way that I could afford that. I looked at many apartments. Landlords were charging \$800.00/mo for one bedroom basement suites. I am now living in a place that I can barely afford. It is a struggle to make ends meet every month. I am on a 1 year lease, but I worry about the kind of rental increase that I am going to face at the end of this year. It is difficult to make ends meet. I am struggling to pay my bills. I only pay power and telephone. I have been forced to cancel my cable, cancel my internet, and disconnect my cellular phone. I have to watch every penny I spend on food. I haven't bought any new clothes since I moved. What's worst than all of this though, is that I am trapped. Paying as much as I am for rents, I cannot save any money for a down payment on a condo or a house. I was doing very well for a while there, but now ... I am in trouble.

There is more help for immigrants!!!!!!!! than middle age widows who are forced into poverty by excessive and ridiculous high rents in Edmonton. Get rid of the city council that do not care!!!!!!

Why not limit number of buildings converting to condo's? No money to buy condo's. No money for accelerated rents.

My very good friend, my boyfriend's mother is a full-time staff at a daycare and works very hard, every day of the week. She is 64 going on 65 in November and she can hardly retire because of the prices in rent. She suffers from chronic bronchitis as well and the people above her kept her up all night, fighting, breaking things and there were people doing drugs next door and she would get sick almost all week. She's 64 for god's sake, and she needs the rent to go down and the owners to make sure there are no drugs and noisy violent people in the apartments. She is tired, we are all tired of the stupid rent going sky high!

My name is Angel and I am on medication and have a disability. I have AISH but that is only \$1,050.00 a month and that's not enough for me to cope with these days. I don't get to go out much for supper or a movie. I will have to pay more rent soon and I will barely even have enough for my medication and without my medicine, I am too stressed that I can be impulsive enough to cut my wrists or harm only myself in other ways. It is not right, I know that, but if I can't afford my meds because my rent is too high, I will never be healthy enough physically, mentally and /or emotionally. And I don't want to upset my family with these problems. I can't even afford to visit my aunty because of the rent and I have been trying to save money for so long now. I finally have enough to go only for 4 days to Kanaska with the help of my friends/staff.

Unbelievable high and frequent excessive increases. No one from out east in family will move here for trades!

I was living in subsidized housing until April 30, 2007 at this time was asked to move to give up residence to another client. You are only allowed to reside there for a certain amount of time. Due to the drastic raise in rents my son and myself are left homeless. I have tried but cannot find such demands. I turned to the subsidized housing but had no luck. I am always stressed out about housing. We live in fear of our safety.

My rent for a 1 bedroom apartment increased over \$200.00 since the year 2001, now it is \$625.00 per month and my monthly income is \$848.00 per month on unemployment insurance. I and my family get poorer every year. I have pain in my knee, so if I get a job it would most likely be part-time or temporary job and my income wouldn't be enough to pay for all of my expenses.

Discriminated against by some of subsidized housing based on being a widow. Income too low.

15% increase. While my rent increase was felt much less than some of tonight's speakers, it is felt nonetheless. I wish to express my disbelief and anger that 95% of the speakers were seniors/low income/disabled. I am not angry at them, however, I am astonished at the lack of advocacy/awareness in the Edmonton public. Let us create ghettos, and name them after the governments that spawned them!!!!

Unable to bring my family here, housing too high. Recommend other workers not to come here.

I am homeless, wishing to have a place to stay or to call home. I am expecting a baby, I am disabled (got polio when I was little). From the last few months of being in the street, walking many miles a day just to keep myself warm or find some food to eat. My body can be paralyzed. Because of the walking. Edmonton, Canada is the country I decided to live in because of the opportunity that I want my kids and many kids and people to have is fading away because of the high rents. I can't afford it and so many people are in the same situation. Please Canada be considerate with your people. Be for them. Help! is what we are crying about.

Far to high. One death in my family.

Many friends who would establish businesses here will not move to Edmonton. They have money but are afraid. Expenses are too high for families.

I am a landlord who is in favour of rent controls; those who claim to speak on behalf of landlords, and oppose rent controls, do not speak for me. Landlords don't need to jack up their rents dramatically. Unless a landlord actually bought a property recently, their financing cost (if any), have not gone up significantly. And if they did buy recently, they knew they were paying more for property, and weren't unfairly forced into it. In addition to rent controls, another option would be for the city to abolish the restrictions on ordinary homeowners renting out suites, or for the provincial government to ban those restrictions. Too many homeowners are disallowed from renting out rooms or suites by antiquated single-family zoning rules. Why should our governments want to fight against one restriction of the market (rent controls), while continuing on with another restriction on the market (single family dwelling rules)? Getting rid of single family dwelling rules would: put a lot of affordable rental units on the market, right away – dealing effectively with the immediate rental crisis – provide a business and financial opportunity for homeowners – provide a new tax base that would enable the city to pay for important services – increase urban density and help reduce sprawl (which creates all sorts of health and environmental costs), and support the key ideas behind Edmonton's Smart Choices program. I hope the governments will listen, and do the right thing.

I have lived in Edmonton since 1976 when I moved from Montreal where housing at that time was affordable. I am on AISH since 1990 and can see myself staying on it forever. I have lived since July 2004 in a

downtown high rise which is considered to be one of the few places for affordable housing. When I moved into my one room (450 feet) apartment rent was \$450.00. On January 1, 2007 the rent increased to \$540.00. Previously I could barely make ends meet. Now I don't make ends meet. I cannot rely on getting work because of my condition so have to rely on AISH. Even with the recent increase to \$1,050.00 monthly that is still at poverty level and according to our provincial government there will be no increase for at least the next two years. At this point with rents being so high and rental spaces being virtually non-existent I am in that crack of not being able to afford to move and having nowhere to move to. I pray that continued lobbying will open the eyes, ears and minds of the powers that be to make rental costs and enough housing available IMMEDIATELY. We call the province of Alberta the Alberta advantage. Let's see it include ALL ALBERTANS, especially the poor, working poor, street people and all the rest of us HUMAN BEINGS that deserve to live and love life. ALL OF US NEED HELP!

I am a 47 year old single mother and double graduate who is concerned about the growing number of homeless people in Alberta, particularly in Edmonton. I understand a number of Affordable Housing initiatives have been approved that will apparently eventually make over 11,000 new housing units available in Alberta; and that Capital Region Housing may provide rent supplements for those that qualify through them and that the One Stop Service Center for Housing Pressures assist those potentially or already evicted and homeless. These affordable housing initiatives sound good, but in reality they are not addressing the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community. I just saw the River Valley area there are some thirty or more homeless people currently living under the bridge at 109 Street, Edmonton, with only sleeping bags. Obviously, there is a gap between what is being done and what needs to be done to address those in greatest need. For example, although there has been legislation to restrict rent increase to once per year, there has been no percentile or dollar cap on how much rent can be increased within that year. More pressing still is the fact that homeless shelters close during the summer due to lack of sufficient funding, though apparently that funding was supposed to increase by \$3 million? Further, those currently homeless are probably either not aware, not capable of accessing, or do not qualify for the very programs that are supposed to be addressing their needs. This is likely because a high percentage of those currently homeless also suffer from either a mental and/or physical illness and/or a learning disorder or illiteracy and are unable to advocated for themselves, especially in their psychologically, mentally or physically compromised condition. Insufficient funds for shelters and safe houses and/or restrictions on qualification criteria oust those most needy. The Service center only assists those who are evicted or homeless "through no fault of their own". However, I wonder how a fair determination of who is at fault can be made given that those who are homeless often are the ones least capable of advocating for themselves. A relative of mine left an abusive environment to reside in her son's former apartment. It goes without saying that there were no "safe houses" available and, in any case, they are only a temporary alternative. Though the landlord in which her son was living are aware she is residing there and paying the rent, which has increased recently by \$300, they will not allow her to apply for the very unit in which she is living. This makes her vulnerable to eviction. She has applied with Capital Region for subsidized housing, but it takes anywhere from 1 to 3 years for a unit to become available. In regard to rental supplements through Capital Region Housing, she was told that they only provide supplements through Boardwalk, the units with the highest rents in the City. This is of no value whatsoever to the lower income families like hers. Even if she could, moving is very costly, time-consuming and emotionally and physically draining for the entire family. For a middle-aged, ill single mother with two younger children with special needs, moving to yet another temporary unit is not a reasonable option. She worries she will have no place to go and no way to afford it if her current landlord evicts her; or if they increase the rent beyond her income level; or if she gets sicker and can't work at all. Even if she may apply for disability support, approval can take from months to years, depending on what medical documentation is requested and whether it meets their criteria. Though Social Services is a source of temporary financial support, it too fails to provide sufficient funds for current non-subsidized rental units, which as already noted, may take years to become available. She sees hypocrisy in the way Provincial and City social advocacy representatives advise women to leave abusive environments, yet deny them the very means by which they need to house and support themselves. There are too many ways for the needy to fail to qualify for the assistance that should be accessible to them. Because of the many cracks through which the most vulnerable can fall, there should be no criteria in providing merely emergency shelter. Moreover, even for those apparently homeless because of their own supposed bad choices (sometimes there is only a choice between two equally ad alternatives), there should be mercy and assistance. Offering supplements and temporary funds, as beneficial and helpful as they my be, does not address the underlying issues of poverty and homelessness. I see a need for social and human rights advocates to approach the homeless directly and discover what they need in the way of mental or other healthy services; rehab services; literacy educational services; disability support; and/or training and employment assistant to enable them to have an affordable place to live and become stable members of the community. Moreover, there should be legislative changes that allow vulnerable groups, such as single mother in distress, to access community housing far

more quickly. Likewise, if the Province is serious about actually addressing the needs of the poor (rather than just appearing as if they do), there should be legitimate rent supplements for all dwelling units whose occupants qualify on the basis of their income.

I had a brain injury and cannot work (this letter is being penned by a friend). I have a worker at Edmonton mental health and in fact I was the artist set up by the food line in the city hall lobby during the Mental Health Awards/Kick Off. It is important to us to have our own independence, it is part of our rehabilitation process to allow us to do things on our own so maybe one day we can be part of the "Normal Society" again. Those who are fortunate enough to qualify for AISH receive around \$1,000.00 a month and those who don't receive \$635.00 from Income Support (lowest payments in Canada). Try finding a place to live with that when rents are more than your cheque. Now you could say that the government should raise these rates, but that doesn't help us NOW. You could say we should move in with our families, get a roommate, or move to somewhere if it affordable. But the truth is some of our conditions family/friends cannot mentally or physically handle some of us – we may need to be alone for recovery and as for moving you need deposits and other expense come into play. As for me I have Agoraphobia, Cognitive Disorder, Anxiety, etc., etc., etc. I am afraid to leave my house, don't remember things and have anxiety attacks all the time. My dog keeps me somewhat grounded, but she is a 7 year old rottweiler and I cannot find places to accept her (I have had her since she was 8 weeks old). I could not move, it would be too much for me and I would not feel safe even with my dog. And now my retired parents are talking about moving out of the city because they are having troubles with the cost of living in the city. That is not good for me or my mother who worked for Alberta Treasury Branch for 25 years in this city that is not right. Before the accident I lived in Florida during their real estate boom and saw what happened. People moved to Georgia, North and South Carolina because they could not survive even with wage increases. This became a huge problem, not only was there no one to work attraction parks, there was no one to work at restaurants, stores warehouses, etc. A problem we already face (example: Wal-mart West end on a Saturday with only 2 cashiers) and will only get worse if you do not do something fast. You have to think outside the box. I know that bylaw is no tenting in the city limits but for now make a temporary exception. Designate a policed area, maybe have permits or fees for those who can afford it and others get proceeds from other organizations. Have an ETS route for them, showers, laundry mat, billboards, soup kitchen and an answering service for job opportunities. Ask the people of Edmonton to help and donate to get through the summer. This only buys time until winter then what? I know that the thought is rent control does not encourage development, but we need housing now not next winter. And besides where is the skilled labour we need to build the housing and where will they live? Answer - temporary rent controls until we catch up. We will need a program to make affordable housing obtainable ASAP. Since we do not have time or the labour we need to look outside the province. Manufactured homes built and brought in with a reasonable program to make them accessible to purchase. If boom ends we won't have empty apartments, we will have homes that can be sold and moved, refitted for other purposes (libraries, schools, construction, etc.) This is what they did for Hurricane Andrew but they built it for temporary and not permanent which we need to do (a community not a concentration camp). We all have to do our part as a city. I have no money and even I am trying to get one of my art pieces made into prints to donate with all the proceeds going to the Edmonton Shelter. If I can do this I expect businesses and citizens do their part before Edmonton's homeless and crime rates destroys our way of life we have enjoyed for as long as I can remember.