

## **Resolution**

Title: Housing Call to Participate

Submitted by: Toronto Conference

Original source: Church in Society committee

Conference Action: passed

**MOTION** that this 78<sup>th</sup> Toronto Conference strongly urge congregations and presbyteries in the conference to:

- Study the 37<sup>th</sup> General Council resolution on housing and the charter and discern appropriate housing ministry in light of the current housing crisis throughout Canada such as initiatives as non-profit, affordable and co-operative housing, tenant rights groups, and housing registries

**Be it further resolved** that this 78<sup>th</sup> Toronto Conference call on the Government of Canada:

- To remember and honour its commitment to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
- To develop a national affordable housing policy and to initiate negotiations with provincial and municipal governments to develop long term plans, strategies and adequate financial commitment,
- To reject emergency shelters as the answer to the housing and homelessness crisis in our country,
- To address issues of racism, and physical, mental and developmental disabilities, which further limit accessibility to housing,
- To spend on housing, at least 1% more of its existing total budget than it does now,
- To consider other initiatives, such as reduced GST on housing, tax incentives, cost-sharing of ongoing subsidies administered through provincial programs; to encourage and support the creation of an adequate stock of community owned, affordable housing for low-income families and individuals, both rental and assisted ownership, including co-operatively owned projects.

### **RATIONALE AND FAITH BASE**

As a sign of God's forgiveness, Isaiah describes God's new creation in such concrete terms as provision of food and shelter. "The Lord says, I am making a new earth and new heavens. The events of the past will be completely forgotten. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create. The new Jerusalem I make will be full of joy and her people will be happy... People will build houses and get to live in them – they will not be used by someone else. They will plant vineyards and enjoy the wine – it will not be drunk by others." Isaiah 65: 17-18, 21.

Housing has been a persistent concern of The United Church of Canada throughout our history. Both urban and rural housing needs were one of our core concerns in the 1930s. In 1934, at the 9<sup>th</sup> General Council, the United Church acknowledged stable, adequate housing as “essential to the moral, social and material needs of the people”. We helped to develop the co-operative housing movement in the ‘50s and 60’s and were one of the significant initial funders of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. Many of our inner city agencies have expanded their shelter services over the past 10 to 15 years from temporary shelter care to long term housing to provide opportunities for more stable, hospitable, long-term living environments.

In addition, housing has been a consistent issue for many of our congregations throughout Canada. They have been involved in supportive housing projects for years. Many more have converted their church basements and fellowship halls to temporary shelters for those living on the streets. We passionately long for human dignity and respect for those who seek shelter in our church basements. We are delighted to be neighbours to these sisters and brothers of ours (and their families), but they deserve more than shelter accommodations.

In the housing resolution passed at the 37<sup>th</sup> General Council in 2000, the United Church asked the federal government to spend at least one per cent more of its existing total budget on housing for the homeless and those without adequate shelter, and to develop a national affordable housing policy. We also urged the federal government to negotiate with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to develop long-term housing plans and strategies, and to make a financial commitment to affordable housing. As well, the government was asked to "reject emergency shelters as the answer to the housing and homelessness crisis," and to address issues of racism and disabilities of all kinds that limit the accessibility of housing.

At the same tim