2022 OMDREB Scholarship Essay

Across Canada, lower-income families continue to suffer at the hands of our ever-present and growing housing crisis. Many families rely on subsidizing as well as co-op housing options to get by but it is by no means a reliable or long-term solution to this problem. Over the years, many solutions have been put forward, but no solution is a fix-all, but there are a couple of fixes that might help to bridge the gap and help them along. They are to address the number of abandoned and unused houses across the province and revitalize them so that they can be used for lower-income housing, put a stop to large scale suburban neighbourhood development and instead build affordable family-scale apartment buildings, and finally, limit the number of homes being rented out by the private sector and increase funding to Canada Housing Benefit so that lower-income families have the assistance they need.

Firstly, across Canada, there is an abundance of abandoned and unused housing in almost any city or town that you visit. These houses are in varying stages of decay and some of them have nothing wrong with them structurally but are simply just not being used or sold. In Canada as a whole, there is an estimated 1.34 million homes sitting empty and or vacant according to Canadianrealestatemagazine.ca. In Toronto alone, there are an estimated 66 thousand empty and unused houses in the city, and it is possible that there could be even more according to a report from Cubetoronto.com. These homes are likely vacant due to things such as bankruptcy, being taken by the bank as collateral, not making payments on time, and other legal or financial issues. If the government were to undergo a project that would seek to revitalize these houses and make them livable for lower-income families, it would greatly reduce the availability and affordability of housing. Along with this, the government needs to make sure that private buyers don’t purchase all the homes and jack up the prices again so that the houses remain affordable for everyone.

Next, in almost any direction that you look or go, you can always find some kind of construction or development on housing. It is everywhere. Too many single detached home neighbourhoods are being constructed and these are out of the price range of lower-income families. A much better and more affordable option is to build up instead of outward. Building affordable and family friendly apartment buildings comes with a whole host of benefits; not as much space is taken up, more affordable and cost-friendly to lower-income families struggling with money, and more people are able to be housed in less space than a few houses. It might not be the ideal option in a perfect world, but it provides an option for those who need it. House prices are at an all-time high and continue to climb higher and higher with each passing month. As of May 2022, Wowa.com reports that the average home in Ontario is selling for around $985 354. This is $119 047 up from the average house price in May just last year and the graph continues to move up. Each passing day that wages stay the same, house prices will continue to go up until it is next to impossible to even get a foothold in the housing market. Compare these numbers to the average prices of apartments in Ontario. Rentals.ca currently has the average price for a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto at $2849 per month for rent. While this number is still scarily high, it is a little more manageable than purchasing your first house for a million dollars. Combine that number with subsidizing and the lower prices that would come along with lower-income apartment buildings and the rent becomes much more manageable.

Lastly, one of the reasons why rent continues to remain to high and continuously rising is because of the grip the private sector has on the house and rental market. A common source of extra income for many families in higher-end areas is to purchase a house, renovate it, and then put it back up on the market for sale or rent it out to tenants. Since they have control over the rent, they usually base it around the average or median rent rates in the area, but depending on the house and its amenities, they can charge even more. This power means that it is very challenging to find a good enough housing for a low-income family at a lower income accommodating price. This is somewhat related to the first point and a possible fix would be to undergo a plan to purchase a lot of these rental homes and convert them into affordable housing so they can charge less rent. In the same breath, if the government were to put more funding into the Canada Housing Benefit, we would be able to support these families for longer so that they can feel a little bit safer when they attempt to build themselves and their families up to the point where they become stable and independent.

In conclusion, solving the issue that is the Canadian housing crisis is one that is going to take a lot of time and effort on the behalf of everyone but using the following strategies, some progress can be made. They are to address the number of abandoned and unused houses across the province and revitalize them so that they can be used for lower-income housing, put a stop to large scale suburban neighbourhood development and instead build affordable family-scale apartment buildings, and finally, limit the number of homes being rented out by the private sector and increase funding to Canada Housing Benefit so that lower-income families have the assistance they need. Hopefully, lower-income families in the future will not have to worry about having a roof over their heads and they can focus on their jobs and other things. After all, everyone deserves to have a place they can call home

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