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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
ALBERTA

**Brian Mason, MLA**  
Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood

July 3, 2015

The Honourable Pierre Poilievre, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Employment and Social Development  
Minister Responsible for CMHC  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister of State:

I call on you and your colleagues in the federal government to commit to strengthening and increasing the rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance program for low-income residents living in Canadian co-operative communities.

With economic disparity growing across this country, it is imperative that the Government of Canada continues to provide Social Housing operating agreement funding to support the growing number of families in need of secure and affordable housing. The federal operating grants that currently support Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation long-term funding initiatives support many groups including seniors, our First Nations, people with disabilities and new immigrant households that require access to subsidies to ensure they have a roof over their heads.

According to data from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, and the City of Edmonton's Social Housing Regeneration Advisory Group, upon the expiration of the existing agreements an estimated 334,000 very low-income and deeply subsidized Canadian households would be at risk of losing their homes. Of that, almost 21,000 are federally-funded co-op households representing nearly 52,000 individual Canadians. Alberta has nearly 1,700 co-operatives spread across urban and rural communities, and 35% of co-op households in Edmonton alone would be directly affected by the expiring federal-provincial operating agreements.

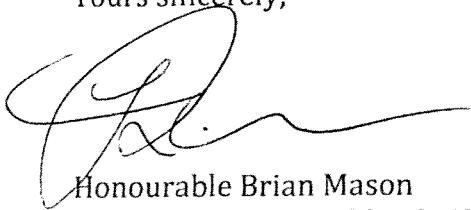
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The RGI program is integral to supporting and maintaining affordable housing for some of our lowest-income Albertans that live within the co-operative model. Affordable housing is already approaching near-crisis levels in our major cities and we would not want to see our current shortages and inadequate housing inventory further pressured by a surge in need before alternative resources are made available.

While the RGI program currently plays an integral part in supporting Canada's social housing framework, it will never be the entire solution. Indeed, the Government of Canada must work alongside its municipal and provincial counterparts to develop infrastructure projects that support the diverse needs of all our communities.

Social housing projects can serve to strengthen our communities and contribute to creating healthy and inclusive neighbourhoods. I urge the federal government to prevent the development of a national housing crisis by reinvesting in the RGI program while at the same time committing to sustainable and predictable funding and the development of a comprehensive, long-term social housing program specific to the needs of our Canadian citizens.

Yours sincerely,



Honourable Brian Mason  
MLA, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood  
Minister of Infrastructure & Minister of Transportation

cc: The Honourable Candice Bergen, Minister Responsible for Housing  
MP Peter Goldring, Edmonton-East  
Ms. Andrea Rogers, Sundance Housing Co-operative