

File # 2-12

1947-1948

PER

om  
th,  
1  
7  
are  
ately  
now  
arge  
ely  
lays  
the  
s  
above-  
about  
an  
The



Tom Reid, M.P.:

C O P Y

For your information

VANCOUVER HOUSING ASSOCIATION

c/o Community Chest and Council,  
505 Hamilton Street,  
Vancouver, B.C.

June 29, 1948.

Rt. Hon. C. D. Howe,  
Minister of Reconstruction and Supply,  
Ottawa.

Dear Mr. Minister:

Your letter of May 26th in reply to ours of May 18th was read at the recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Association, and I am now instructed to reply. The Association wishes to thank you for your courteous attention, but is forced to point out that your letter is simply a repetition of the statement made by you in Vancouver on October 10, 1947, and does not deal with the specific matter to which our letter was directed.

Our letter did not raise the constitutional issue at all. We are fully aware that low-rent housing requires a full measure of cooperation from both provincial and municipal governments. The Association has in the past made presentations to the provincial government on the subject, and is again preparing to do so, at the present moment. Nor did we raise the question of rental accommodation for veterans. As you are undoubtedly aware, the Association has been active on this matter on many occasions; and we recognize the contribution of Wartime Housing in this field.

The concern of our letter was solely with ordinary low-rental housing, which received mention during the debate of May 5th-6th. We recognize clearly that this is a special branch of housing, on several counts. (a) It calls for legislative, financial and administrative arrangements not yet properly provided for in the present National Housing Act; (b) Low-rental housing, under present conditions, means rents not higher than \$25 a month, and desirably lower; and therefore involves rent-reduction subsidy; (c) It must be locally administered by properly constituted Local Housing Authorities.

The contention of this Association (itself representing a wide range of citizen groups), which has received growing support throughout the country in the last few years, is that proper legislation on this subject, and such negotiation between the three levels of government as may be necessary, is long overdue.

In order that there may be no doubt about the present communication, we are framing our inquiry specifically as follows:

M  
1947-1948  
File # 2-12



Page 2.

1. We take strong exception to the view that because houses at any price can be sold at the moment, this justifies present reliance largely on assisted building for sale and ownership. It is our conviction (a) that this policy is inducing many groups to assume obligations which they cannot afford or will not be able to maintain, (b) that it leaves far too large a proportion of people needing homes out of consideration altogether. Does the Minister think we are wrong?

2. Is it still the Minister's view, in the light of the arguments set forth in ~~our~~ our original letter, that a low-rental housing program would not produce a single additional house at the present time?

3. Does the Government disagree with our view that low-rental housing legislation should be enacted, the necessary administrative organization set up, and experimental building projects on a small scale begun now, in view of the time that will inevitably be consumed in getting action in this field?

4. Does the Minister agree with our view that a strong national lead in this field should be given by the Dominion Government; or does he believe that the Dominion should not act unless requested to do so by the Provinces? (The municipalities have, of course, already directed strong recommendations to the Dominion Government).

Your reply to these questions at your convenience will be very greatly appreciated.

Yours very truly,

(Mrs.) B. M. Marsh,  
Secretary.

M  
1947-1948  
File # 2-12



C O P Y

Office of  
The Minister of Reconstruction and Supply  
Ottawa, Canada

26th May 1948

Dear Mr. Marsh,

I wish to acknowledge and thank you for your letter of May 18th, regarding Government housing policy.

As I have enunciated our policy on several occasions, I feel there is little I can add at this time. I might emphasize, however, that constitutionally housing, being a matter of Property and Civil Rights, comes under the jurisdiction of the Province. I suggest that efforts towards any public housing programme should, in the first instance, be directed to that level of government.

It is true that arising out of the war, and post-war conditions, we are endeavouring to provide reasonable low rental accommodation for veterans. This of course is done only where and when we have municipal cooperation. I feel in this connection that where representation has been made by any municipality, it cannot be said that we have been non-cooperative in endeavouring to provide another veterans' housing project.

Again thanking you for your letter, and the interest you are showing in the housing problem,

I am,

Yours truly,

"B. D. Howe"

B. M. Marsh, Esq.,  
Secretary,  
Vancouver Housing Association,  
309- 626 West Pender Street,  
Vancouver, B.C.

M  
1947-1948  
File # 2-12