



Media Release

Federation of Canadian Municipalities Calls for Action in Affordable Housing

NIAGARA REGION, February 6, 2008 – Following the January 23 release of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) report, "Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness", Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) has renewed optimism for the future of affordable housing in Niagara.

FCM released its plan at a news conference led by Mayors Sam Sullivan of Vancouver and Anne-Marie DeCicco-Best of London, Ontario, co-chairs of the FCM Big City Mayor's Caucus working group on housing. "Too many Canadian are forced to choose between food and rent, clothes for the kids or making the mortgage payment," said Mayor Sullivan, "The high cost of housing also undermines the ability of people who want to get ahead but cannot, because they cannot afford a secure and decent place to live".

Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) General Manager, Lora Beckwith, agrees wholeheartedly. "Without a place to live, everything else falls apart, she said, "Mental and physical health, the ability to go to find and retain a job.....all of it is incredibly difficult to sustain without a home. Right now, we have more than 4,500 households on our waiting list – this means more than 8,300 individuals in Niagara who are struggling to keep it together. For example, we have a growing number of seniors in Niagara who need affordable housing; we have young families and newcomers who need the stability of housing in order to be productive members of our community".

In 2009, federal housing programs are scheduled to expire and across Canada the state of affordable housing will undoubtedly deteriorate further. The FCM Action Plan anticipates the consequences of federal funding withdrawal and has set out a broad framework to avert the potential crisis. The Action Plan was developed with the participation of municipal leaders nation-wide and presents three possible investment scenarios, with the preferred option a marginal increase over current spending. Costs would be shared by the federal and provincial/territorial governments, with municipalities tailoring strategies to fit local needs.

"In order to get federal and provincial governments to recognize the problem and support the solution, we need to demonstrate the severity of the local situation," added Ms. Beckwith, "In Niagara, we are working hard to address our citizen's needs, but it's an uphill battle. We are dependent on federal funding to maintain

the current and future viability of our existing units. The loss of that funding will have a social and economic impact on Niagara. The FCM call for action could be just the momentum we need to avoid a crisis." For more information, see the Niagara Regional Housing website at www.nrh.ca

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For more information, contact:
Lora Beckwith
General Manager
Niagara Regional Housing (NRH)
(905) 682-9201, Ext. 3900

Alternate contact:
Maryellen MacLellan
Manager, Community Programs
Niagara Regional Housing (NRH)
(905) 682-9201 Ext. 3938