



# OUR UNNATURAL DISASTER - HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA



**We have come together as compassionate Canadians on several occasions over the past twelve months.**

We opened our hearts, homes and communities to thousands of Syrian families seeking refuge from a devastating civil war.

We also opened our hearts and wallets to contribute over \$165,000,000 to the Red Cross to help fellow Canadians rebuild their homes and lives after wildfires destroyed most of Fort McMurray.

We are, in fact, very good at 'disaster relief.' When faced with a disaster, Canadians act. We seize ideas, find untapped strengths. We use what we have and become resourceful. We don't wait for a perfect plan. We don't seek permission.

In the face of disaster, we rise up and take a stand, reflecting a spirit that 'we're in this together', that if a member of our family or a guest in our house is in trouble, we're all in trouble.

Unfortunately, we have yet to 'rise up' to address the unnatural disaster of homelessness that afflicts over 235,000 Canadians every year. Somehow we've grown accustomed to seeing fellow Canadians sleeping 'rough' on the street. We walk around. We step over. We look the other way.

**JOIN US ON OUR SHARED  
MISSION TO END HOMELESSNESS  
BY SUPPORTING THE 20,000  
HOMES CAMPAIGN  
[WWW.20KHOMES.CA](http://WWW.20KHOMES.CA)**

Today, with **'The 20,000 Homes Campaign'**, we have an opportunity to look homelessness in the eye, and to put an end to an every day disaster that has been swept under our collective carpets for decades.

Today, this formidable grass roots campaign is unfolding across the country, a campaign that isn't simply about counting the number of homeless people. It is about getting to know each and every person by name and understanding each personal story. It is then about wrapping our arms around every person with the support needed to make the difficult transition from street to home.

Most importantly it is about taking action.

The incredibly successful **'100,000 Homes Campaign'** south of the border demonstrated that fulsome community engagement works, that chronic homelessness CAN be eliminated. This campaign has clearly shown that the 'key' to success is NOT about adding shelter beds to an already challenged system. It is, rather, about a 'key' to a front door, a place to call home, a safe and private place to re-group with support from new friends, neighbours and health care workers from the local community.

**'The 20,000 Homes Campaign'** is building on the success achieved in the United States, and is currently unfolding in 36 communities across the country. The campaign's manifesto tells it as it is, calling homelessness **'a national emergency requiring urgent and immediate action.'** It goes on to say that 'The time has come to stop managing homelessness, and start ending it.'

If we've given any thought at all to chronic homelessness, we've probably concluded that this is a problem for government to solve, that we don't have a role to play. The reality is that we do have a role, and that we all have something meaningful to contribute.

There is no doubt that government funding is needed, but the path to ending chronic homelessness is a shared path, with every one of us walking hand in hand to the finish line.

We've shown the 'best of our love' to our new Syrian friends, and have tapped a deep well of compassion in the face of many emergencies and natural disasters over the years. It is time to show the same depth of compassion for thousands of homeless Canadians who need our help.

**It is indeed time to end homelessness in our communities.**

MITCHELL COHEN,  
**President, The Daniels Corporation**  
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**SEND A LETTER TO YOUR MP**