

A STATEMENT TOWARDS ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL CANADIANS

Adopted by the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section
Edmonton, Alberta, June 23-25, 1969

It is the policy of Lutheran Church in America—Canada Section that:

*This church should be alert to the manner in which social need is met, whether by government, voluntary, church, or proprietary agency. Wherever practice or policy threatens the rights and dignity of those who require aid, the church should strive to bring about correction.*¹

Today inadequate housing threatens the rights and dignity of an increasing number of Canadians. This statement supports the concept that adequate housing is a social right. It concurs with Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including . . . housing . . ." Furthermore, we believe that insufficient income must not be a barrier to the enjoyment of this right.²

It is regrettable that in Canada there has been insufficient research into the relationship between housing environment and family life and between inadequate housing and social problems, not to mention insufficient application of what is already known. This is also true of the impact of urban renewal and housing programs on the individual and the family. By contrast, there is considerable research on the technical aspects of housing and we know a great deal about financing housing to regulate the economy.³ But observation alone tells us that the dignity of a substantial portion of our population is being offended by inadequate housing and by exclusion from possibilities open to others.

In response to the problem of inadequate housing and its threat to the rights and dignity of people, Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section affirms its belief in two basic considerations:

First, we affirm our position that "meeting social needs in a democratic society requires the resources of the whole community, including those of the church."⁴ The realization of social rights requires collective action, and "a concern for the dignity of the individual requires the concept of community . . ."⁵

In accordance with this affirmation we believe that the church should actively support housing projects of all kinds for lower-income groups. The church at the local and regional level should act as a responsible partner, along with other community groups, to encourage and enable such projects, e.g., by identifying individual and family needs and making them known, by evolving feasible and appropriate solutions, and by mobilizing for action even to the extent of financial involvement. In addition, although it may be tedious and unrewarding, the church should collaborate with other groups for continuing surveillance at the local level by monitoring what is happening (and what is **not** happening) in the provision of housing, and for calling forth the best effort by all concerned, both in the public and private sectors.

Second, we affirm that the church as servant nurtures and supports those efforts and organizations which involve the disadvantaged in the decision-making which affects them. Therefore, we believe that those who are to be the users of housing must participate in determining the nature of their housing and in the

¹From statement, *The Church and Social Welfare*, adopted at Fourth Biennial Convention, Lutheran Church in America, June 19-27, 1968.

²Housing as a social right has recently been affirmed by the Canadian Welfare Council, the Canadian Conference on Housing (sponsored by CWC) and the Hellyer Task Force on Housing.

³"Housing, as one of Canada's major industries, is a large consumer of capital. As a result, it has been subject to manipulation for fiscal reasons to an extent quite inappropriate for such a fundamental human requirement. One cannot imagine hospital services or old age security being turned off and on like a tap because of year-to-year economic condition." *Social Policies for Canada, Part 1*, Canada Welfare Council, 1969. p. 58.

⁴From statement, *The Church and Social Welfare*, adopted at Fourth Biennial Convention, Lutheran Church in America, June 19-27, 1968.

⁵*Social Policies for Canada, Part 1*, Canada Welfare Council, 1969. p. 2.

subsequent management thereof. Users of public and other housing must have the freedom to seek improvements without fear of reprisal of any kind. Where urban renewal or rehabilitation is contemplated, it is incumbent that governments, together with the physical and social planners, involve area citizens from the very beginning of a project in determining what kind of housing and community will best meet their particular needs, even if this entails changes in current legislation and regulations.

We believe that the cost of social and other community services should be built into the capital and operational budgeting for a project to provide opportunity for choice and to enable users to reach and implement decisions for improving their housing and environment. This could include employment of a community development worker.

To achieve these aims Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section calls upon government at all levels, together with the physical and social planners, to develop specific means whereby citizens in a community who are directly or indirectly affected can participate effectively in decision-making to meet housing and environmental needs.

We further call upon the Synods, congregations, and members of the Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section to join in vigorous action with disadvantaged groups and with religious and other groups in the community to encourage and support such citizen participation, if necessary assisting people to engage in social action to attain it, to the end that all Canadians may.