

It Doesn't Add Up!

The federal government will spend \$75 million to build and repair homes over the next two years (estimates indicate this will amount to 480 homes).

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Ron Evans says there is a need for 16,000 homes, therefore, the 75 mill will fill 3 per cent of "the gap". The AMC estimates that it will cost \$2.7 billion to address the entire backlog in housing which faces First Nations in this province.

And, with the population on Reserves exceeding 2.5 per cent per year, another 300 houses are needed every year.

This does not include what they call "existing homes" ("houses" really, because how do you make a "home" out of the one-fourth of the approximately 67,000 Reserve houses which have been classified as "inhabitable" but are all, in fact, inhabited? Severe overcrowding, like that which exists in Pukawagan, where upwards of 25 people live in mould-infested, 4-bedroom shanties, are more the norm, the nightmare really, which is far removed from the Canadian Dream (2.3 children, 1.6 automobiles, 3 bedrooms..)

But Arnold's problem is with the "missing math". The numbers that don't appear in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, or on the First Nations which exist in these provinces, alone.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the only two provinces in Canada which do not pay Shelter Allowance to Indians who live on Reserves.

For those who are not familiar with the concept of shelter allowances, it is most simply defined as one of those basic components of Canada's "social safety net" which guarantees every Canadian the right to food, water, shelter, medical services and other care/necessities. If you live two feet outside a Reserve in Manitoba or Saskatchewan, you are eligible to receive about \$300 a month to pay for shelter, but if you take one step inside your "home" (the Rez), you are completely cut off.

This is your federal government implementing a measure which is completely based on an arbitrary decision which was made by government bureaucrats who have no authority to do so. Shelter Allowance is provided to every other Indian who lives on a Reserve anywhere else in Canada except here and in Saskatchewan.

If you added up the amount of money which the province of Manitoba is losing by not forcing the Canadian government to live up to their Charter obligation to pay shelter allowance to Indians who live on Reserves in this province, it adds up to a lot of "houses" that can be built in addition to this 3 per cent of what is needed that was provided in this latest grand gesture.

How many Indians live on Reserves in Manitoba? Multiply that number by \$300 and you will find out how much money we are losing each month that we could use to provide badly needed housing in First Nations communities (e.g. 100,000 registered Indians equals $100,000 \times \$285 = \$28,500,000$ per month!)

Think of how many homes you can build for that much money!

Source: grassrootsnews.mb.ca