

## Housing Is Fundamental:

### A report to the Community from the Affordable Housing Action Committee

October, 2011

The Affordable Housing Action Committee (AHAC) has recently released its sixth edition of *Housing is Fundamental*. The document is “highlighting the theme of mental health, addiction and housing. In this examination, the potential of housing to mitigate and become a catalyst for stability and recovery illustrates once again the fundamental relevance of housing. Housing is at the centre of everything”, states Paul Armstrong, chair, community Education Sub-Committee, AHAC.

Copies of the report can be obtained from:

- The Peterborough Social Planning Council
- The Planning Department, City Hall
- the City of Peterborough’s website

The report documents trends in a number of areas that impact housing affordability. It quotes a number of sources that make the case for an affordable housing strategy – both locally and nationally.

This edition focuses on mental illness, addiction and housing. Here are some highlights from the report:

- Peterborough renter households are poorer than Canadian renter households in general.
- Between January, 2007 and December, 2010, Ontario Works (OW) caseloads have increased by 27.55%. Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP) caseloads have increased by 29.8%. Further, All OW and ODSP recipients spend in excess of 30% of their total monthly entitlement, placing them in ‘core housing need’.
- Operated by the Housing Resource Centre, the ‘Reducing Rural Poverty & Homelessness Programme’ increases access to City-based housing and homelessness prevention service for residents in rural areas of Peterborough County. It creates the capacity for City-based agencies to develop stronger connections with rural communities. Statistics indicate that 355 county households are at risk of homelessness (2010). One-hundred and seventy-eight households were at imminent risk of homelessness.
- In the County of Peterborough, 2,610 people live in low-income households (4.7%). In the City of Peterborough, 9,140 people are classified as living in low-income households (12.6%).

- Peterborough tops the list of all the cities in Canada – but not for a good reason. The top cities in Canada for the percentage of renters with core housing need are:

Top cities in Canada for % of renters with core housing need	30% and over: core housing need	50% and over: severe core housing need
Peterborough, ON	50.43%	22.79%
Kingston, ON	48.01%	21.80%
Kelowna, BC	47.90%	22.72%
Barrie, ON	47.89%	22.80%
Windsor, ON	47.15%	22.45%
Toronto, ON	46.41%	46.41%

- According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (June, 2008 “Housing & Mental Illness”), the seriously mentally ill are:
  - Disproportionately affected by homelessness
  - Tend to be homeless for longer periods
  - Have less contact with family and friends
  - Encounter more barriers to employment
  - Tend to be in poorer health than the general homeless population
- “Hospitalizations were reduced from an average of 53 days per year prior to having supportive housing to only ‘half aday’ after supportive housing was provided.” Source: Joint Submission to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Long Term Affordable Housing Consultation Session, July 22, 2009.

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