

County of Huron

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN HURON COUNTY

2020

COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

www.HuronCounty.ca



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About this Toolkit

There is a great deal of stigma and misinformation surrounding the topic of homelessness. Informed messaging can help present the facts and dispel myths. Awareness opens minds. Education changes hearts.

This *Addressing Homelessness in Huron County: 2020 Communication Toolkit* is designed to help inform Huron County municipal leaders, staff and residents about some of the complexities surrounding the topic of homelessness in Huron County.

As an educational piece, this toolkit can be shared in its entirety or individual pages can be extracted and shared where needed. The Communication Toolkit's simplified messages and graphic appearance aim to help make a complicated issue easier to digest and understand. For a more comprehensive report on the County of Huron's homelessness prevention initiatives please refer to the document [*A Long-Term Affordable Housing & Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron 2014-2024*](#) and subsequent follow-up reports.

Found within this toolkit is a selection of jpeg files that are intended to be shared as a social media campaign. Instructions for this campaign are included in this toolkit.

More information on Homelessness in Huron County and the preventative initiatives underway can be found on the County's website at: www.HuronCounty.ca/homesslessness-prevention.



This Addressing Homelessness in Huron County: 2020 Communication Toolkit is a brief consolidation of practices, procedures, and subsequent information related to the Corporation of the County of Huron and its homelessness programs and initiatives, which may be subject to future revisions.

The compilation is for convenient administrative purposes. The most current version or any legal interpretation of the documents herein should be verified with the County of Huron.

Warden's Message

The County of Huron continues to work diligently in addressing the challenges associated with homelessness, poverty and housing instability in Huron County. While much work is left to be done, the County remains committed to improving the quality of life for the people of Huron.

The County of Huron's Social and Property Services Department has a number of initiatives and programs that have been developed to address homelessness complexities, create affordable housing units and support low income households to remain housed.

While Provincial and Federal funding partners provide annual allocations, locally, the County continues to make commitments for reducing the level of poverty in Huron, to encourage safe and affordable housing opportunities and to provide supports for those facing multiple barriers so that they may live independently.

As a region, we look to our collective assets and continue working together to support our most vulnerable. Recently, a County-wide homelessness prevention task force was developed to address complexities around homelessness in Huron County. This task force includes stakeholders and community partners from across the County. By working together we can ensure that our collective communities are the best they can be.

The County of Huron has a ***Long-term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan, 2014-2024***. This Plan provides guidance to the County and its partners in planning, coordinating and delivering housing and homelessness services through an integrated system. See the Plan and its ***5-Year Review, 2014-2019*** on the County's website: Huron County Housing Study Reports.

Jim Ginn
Warden, County of Huron
September, 2020



What is Homelessness?

The situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it.

Myth: People choose to be homeless.

Fact: A variety of different factors can contribute to an individual's experience of homelessness. Often, people experience homelessness when all other options have been exhausted, and/or they are dealing with circumstances that make it difficult to maintain housing.

Myth: People experiencing homelessness are lazy.

Fact: In order to survive, many people who experience homelessness are constantly in search for the necessities of life, such as food, shelter and a source of income. Therefore, due to the barriers that they face, many people experiencing homelessness do not have the option of being stagnant or lazy.

Myth: All people who experience homelessness are addicts.

Fact: Many people who experience homelessness do not struggle with substance abuse problems. Just like in the general population, only a percentage of those who are experiencing homelessness deal with substance use. People experiencing homelessness may deal with other complexities related to their experiences of homelessness, including trauma and mental illness, for example.

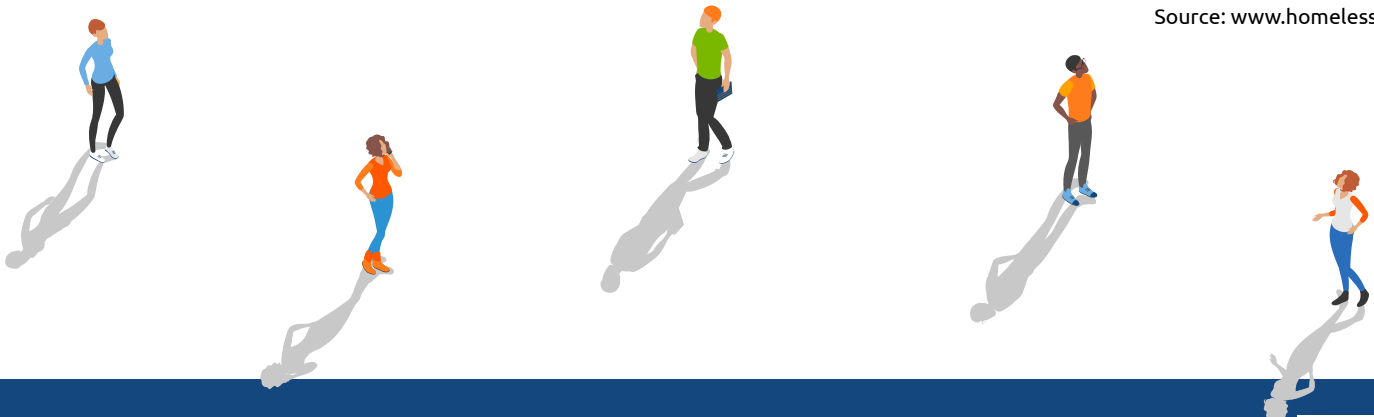
Myth: People experiencing homelessness should just find a job.

Fact: There are already people experiencing homelessness who are employed; however, it is much more difficult to find a job while experiencing homelessness. A number of different challenges, such as: lacking a permanent address, not having regular access to showers, barriers to transportation, and other difficulties like mental illness, make it difficult to obtain employment. Even when individuals experiencing homelessness find jobs, they are often part-time or minimum wage positions. This work fails to adequately meet their needs, due to expensive housing costs.

Myth: There are plenty of adequate services and supports to help those experiencing homelessness.

Fact: Many of the solutions and supports for homelessness have focused on emergency services, such as shelters and food banks. For individuals who are trying to escape a cycle of poverty and homelessness, emergency services alone are not adequate. There is a need to focus on the larger systemic factors, including the lack of affordable housing and the criminalization of homelessness that prevent people from obtaining permanent and suitable shelter.

Source: www.homelesshub.ca



What does it mean to be homeless in Huron County?

While the experience of each homeless individual varies, here are some examples of what homelessness means to many in Huron County:

Limited access to services. Services in Huron County are spread out over its 3,399.27 km² of land.

Transportation challenges are of significant issue due to the geography of the County. Many people are forced to settle in communities that allow amenities to be reached by foot.

“Sleeping rough” provides little or no privacy and little protection from the elements.

Personal hygiene is more challenging with limited access to amenities.

Homeless often have no income source and poor or no credit rating.

Housing is not affordable and the subsidized housing waiting list is too long.

When affordable housing is available it can often be in a location that does not provide access to necessary services.

Many of Huron County’s homeless face the additional challenges of mental illness, substance use, disability, and other health issues.



Source:
*A Long-Term Affordable Housing & Homelessness
Plan for the County of Huron 2014-2024*

www.huroncounty.ca/housing/housing-study-reports

Homeless in Huron

In March 2018 the County of Huron conducted its first ever homeless enumeration to better understand the scope of homelessness within the County.



100 individuals were experiencing homelessness in Huron County.



Out of the 100 individuals, 93 were determined homeless by completed survey results,



and 7 individuals were observed homeless but not surveyed.

Source:
*A Long-Term Affordable Housing & Homelessness
Plan for the County of Huron 2014-2024*

www.huroncounty.ca/housing/housing-study-reports

Hidden Homelessness

In March 2018 the County of Huron conducted its first ever homeless enumeration to better understand the scope of homelessness within the County.

14% of respondents indicated they were 'couch surfing'.

This number is the most elusive as there is a high probability that those who are staying with friends or family temporarily, moving from one friend's couch to another, may not see themselves as homeless believing that homelessness is a term that belongs only to those sleeping outdoors. It is believed that nearly 80% of homelessness is hidden with only 20% visible in shelters on the street representing the tip of the iceberg.

(The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness)

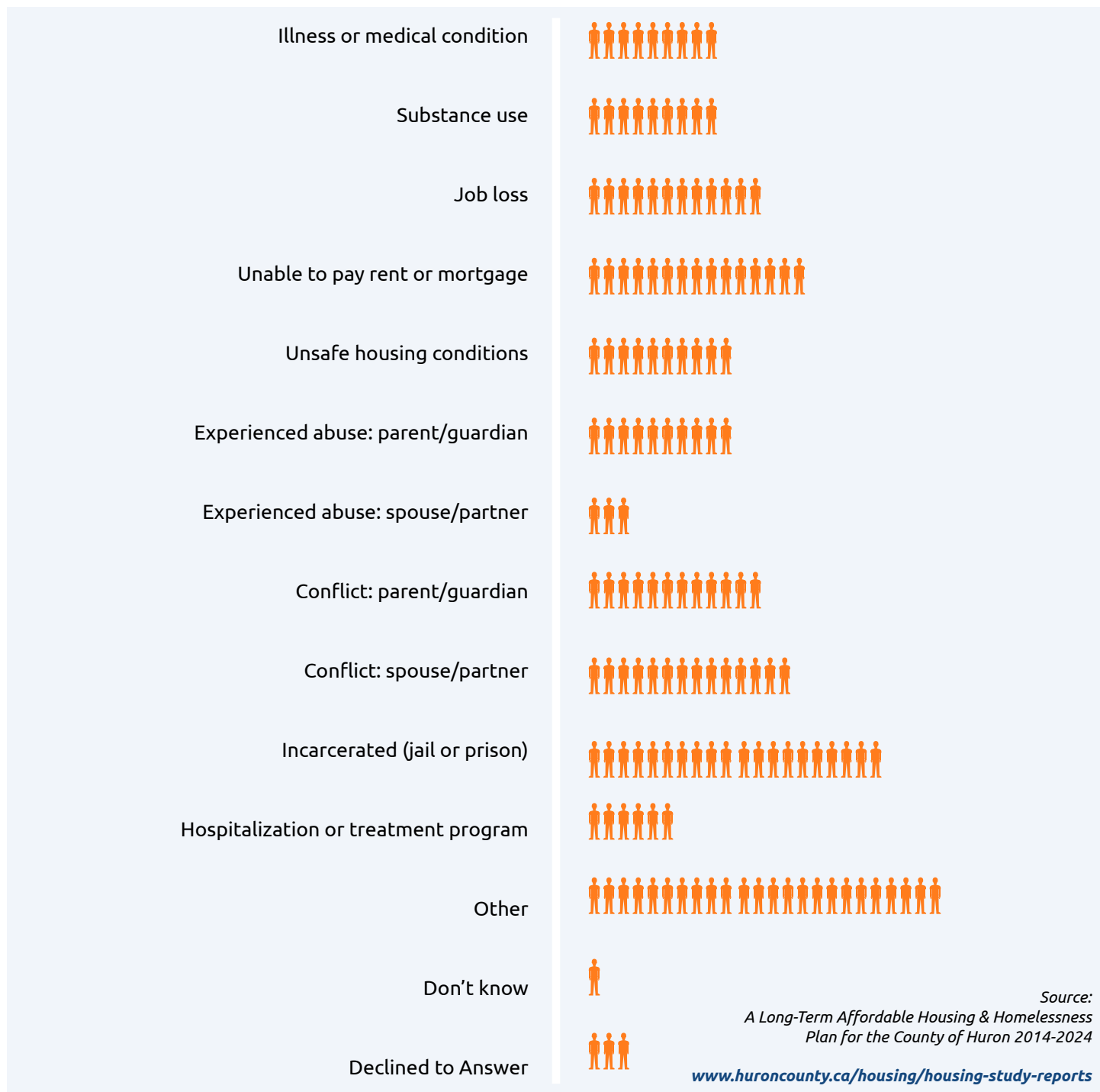


Source:
A Long-Term Affordable Housing & Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron 2014-2024

www.huroncounty.ca/housing/housing-study-reports

Reason for Homelessness

In March 2018 the County of Huron conducted its first ever homeless enumeration to better understand the scope of homelessness within the County. Out of the 100 homeless individuals accounted for...



Homelessness Supports And Services: Who Provides What?

Canada

The government of Canada provides a variety of *Homelessness Prevention Funding Streams* as well as managing the *National Housing Strategy*.

Ontario

The Province of Ontario provides funding through the *Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)* as well as offering *Affordable Housing* and provides front line support and enforcement through the *Ontario Provincial Police*.

County of Huron

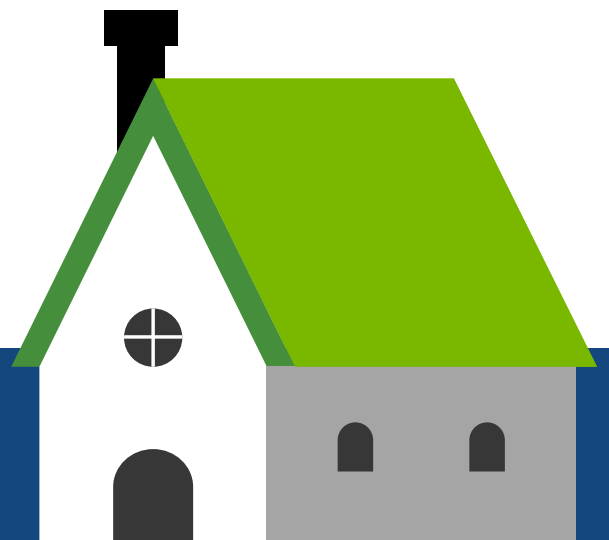
With federal, provincial and local funding sources, the County of Huron provides front line support and resources through *Housing and Property Services*, *Children's Services*, and *Ontario Works*.

Local Government

Lower-tier municipal governments are responsible for the management and maintenance of many public facilities and spaces such as washrooms, beaches and parks.

Community Agencies and Not-For-Profits

Local community agencies and not-for-profits manage many local fundraising initiatives as well as offering a variety of front line programs and services, including mental health resources, substance abuse supports, food services or meal programs, and more.



Did you know?

Addressing Homelessness in Huron County

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The County of Huron owns and manages 415 rent-geared-to-income units located throughout the County.

The current wait list for these apartments varies between 1-5 years depending on location and apartment type.

As of 2019 there were 448 individuals on the wait list, up from 239 in 2015.

LIVING WAGE

In 2019, the living wage in Huron-Perth is \$17.55 per hour.

Source: Perth-Huron United Way



TRANSPORTATION

Huron County is spread over 3,399.27 km² of land. Transportation is a significant challenge for many homeless individuals who need to walk to the services they require.



LODGING

39 individuals indicated using transitional housing or emergency shelter.

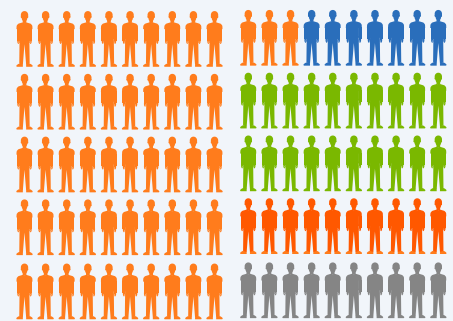


HURON TURNING POINT

A 6 bed transitional supportive housing program for men experiencing homelessness.

100 INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN HURON COUNTY

53 - single
7 - with partner
20 - with family: child(ren)
10 - with relative: adult
10 - unknown



HIDDEN HOMELESS OR 'COUCH SURFING'

It is believed that nearly 80% of homelessness is hidden with only 20% visible in shelters on the street representing the tip of the iceberg.

Source: *The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness*



ADDICTION SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Established in 2015, Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH) offers housing and intensive case management supports under a harm reduction model.



HEALTH

57 individuals indicated mental health issues
26 individuals indicated substance use issues
28 individuals indicated physical health issues
57 individuals indicated chronic health issues



Where do Funds For Homelessness Prevention Initiatives Come From?

Most of the homelessness prevention initiatives managed by the County of Huron are funded through federal and provincial grants and staffed by County of Huron employees.

Using these funds the County of Huron works alongside local community agencies and not-for-profits to delivery services and programs including mental health resources, substance abuse supports, food services and meal programs, and more.



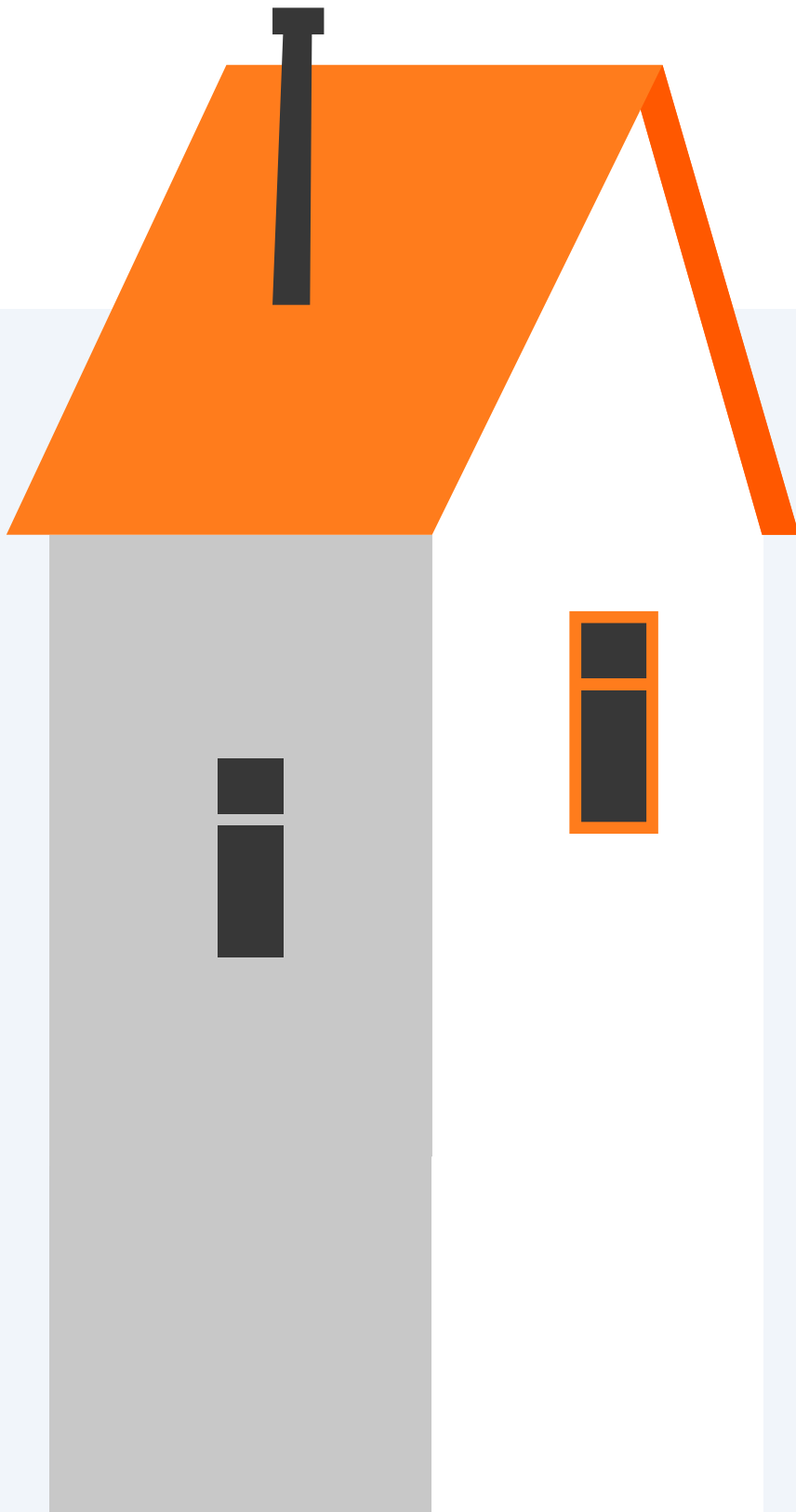
Province of Ontario
Homelessness Prevention Funding Streams
www.ontario.ca/page/affordable-housing-ontario



Government of Canada
Homelessness Prevention Funding Streams
www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/homeless.html



Long-Term Affordable Housing & Homelessness Mission:



To improve access to housing that is affordable to people of low and moderate income across the County.

To prevent homelessness by supporting people at risk of losing their housing to access short-term and longterm assistance and affordable housing.

To end homelessness by supporting people who lose their housing to transition into permanent, stable and affordable housing with supports to help sustain them in housing.

*Source:
A Long-Term Affordable Housing & Homelessness
Plan for the County of Huron 2014-2024*

www.huroncounty.ca/housing/housing-study-reports

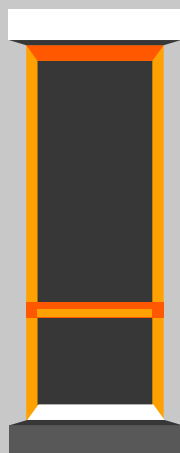
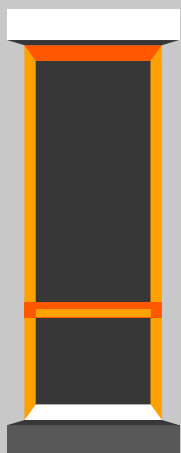
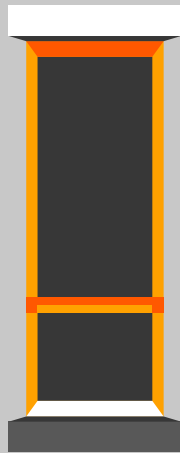
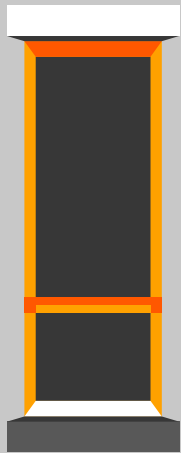
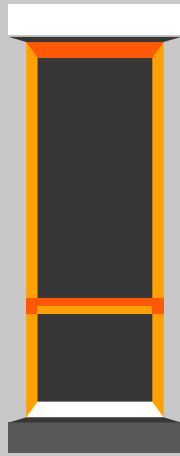
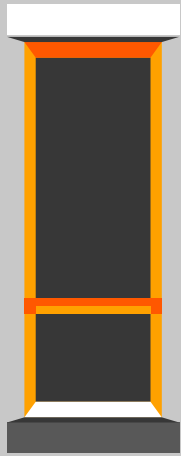
County of Huron Affordable Housing

The County of Huron owns and manages 415 rent-geared-to-income units located throughout the County.

Housing Services provides all of the administrative and property management services for these properties; essentially acting as the landlord for these County-owned units.

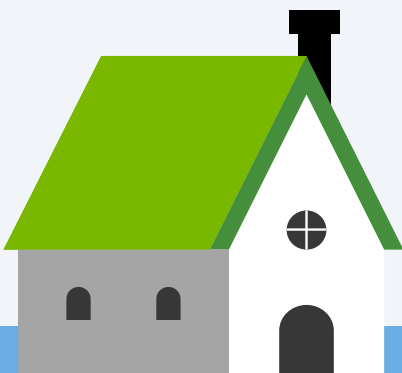
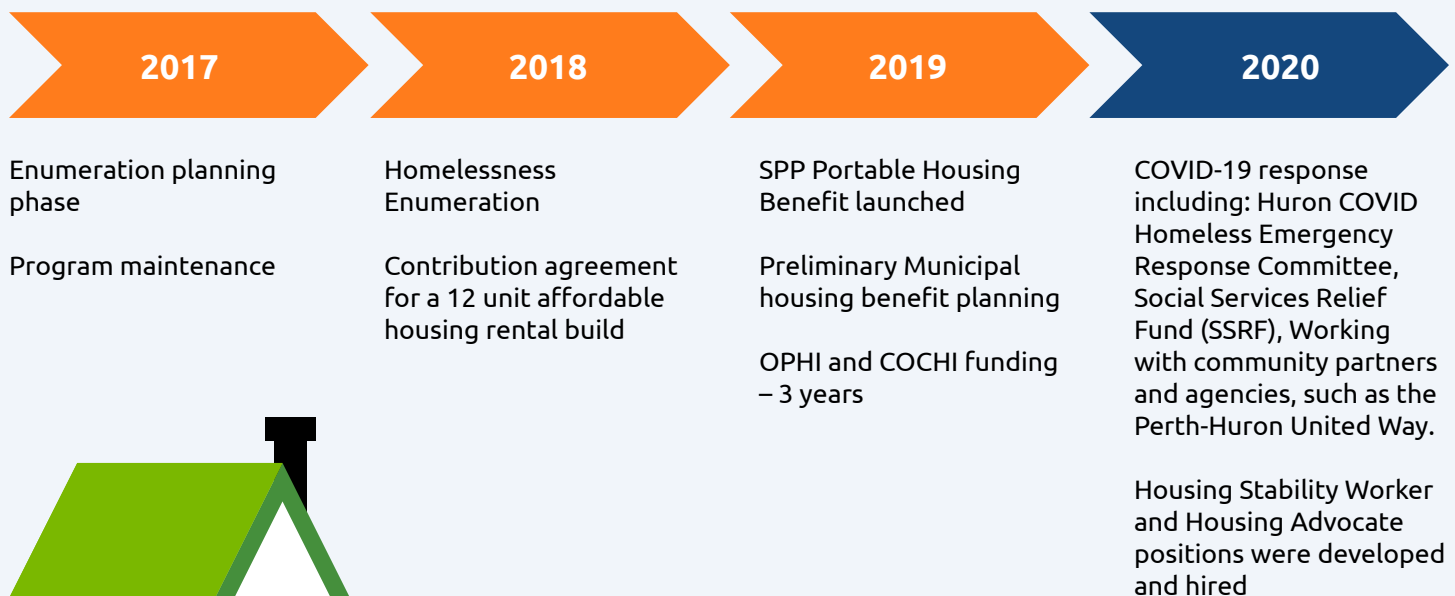
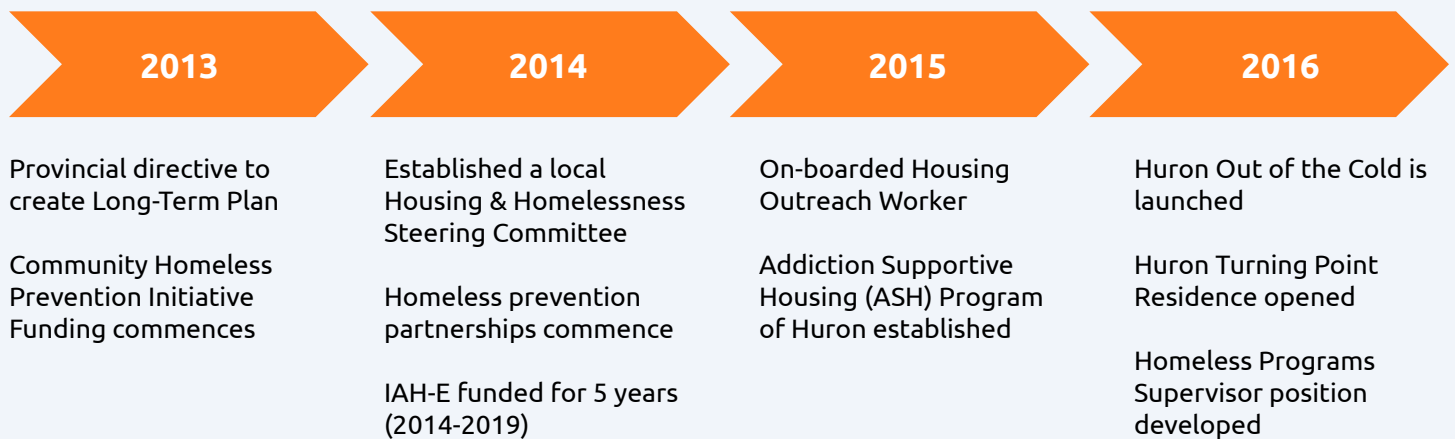
The current wait list for these apartments varies between 1-5 years depending on location and apartment type.

As of 2019 there were 448 individuals on the wait list.



Addressing Homelessness

What we've done so far in Huron County...



Current Homelessness Prevention Programs in Huron County

The County of Huron manages and/or financially aids many homelessness prevention initiatives in Huron County. Some of these programs include:

Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH):

ASH is a transitional housing program for eight individuals working directly with Choices for Change (Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Counseling Centre).

Pathways to Self-Sufficiency:

Pathways to Self-Sufficiency provides rental and utility arrears funding to low-income households experiencing potential eviction and/or utility disconnection.

Huron Out of the Cold:

Huron Out of the Cold provides cold weather emergency shelter to homeless individuals. The shelter was operated through a partnership with the Salvation Army, and ended in April 2020.

Safe Homes for Youth:

Funding was provided to Safe Homes for Youth to assist in the supports and shelter for youth facing homelessness.

Yes I Can:

Yes I Can is a youth homelessness prevention program offering employment and education supports.

Housing Allowances:

This long-term support provides \$250 each month directly to low-income households to help with rental and/or utility costs.

Rent Supplement:

A monthly fee paid directly to landlords who enter into a formal agreement with the County.

COVID-19 Impacts on Homelessness in Huron County

Huron COVID-19 Homeless Emergency Response Committee

The Huron COVID-19 Homeless Emergency Response Committee was formed during the early days of the pandemic response period consisting of service partner agencies in Huron County to explore methods of unrolling a micro-coordinated access system rapidly.

Provincial Funding

Huron County received \$708,100 from the Province of Ontario's \$200 million Social Services Relief Fund in response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The County of Huron has allocated these funds to the following initiatives:

Temporary Emergency Accommodation created in response to the pandemic

Perth-Huron United Way: Urgent Needs Fund

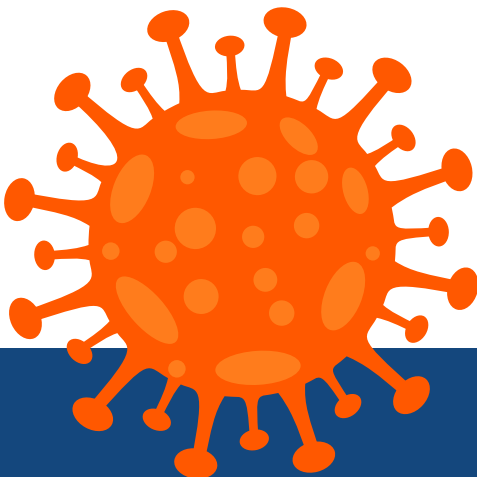
The County has partnered with the United Way Perth Huron to deliver the Urgent Needs Fund through our Ontario Works Case Managers, to low-income households. A portion of the SSRF has been flowed to this program for social agencies to access to assist with their supports to low-income households.

Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF)

The Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) provides funding to support social service providers to continue to deliver their critical services, hire additional staff, and find ways to promote social distancing and self-isolation to keep clients safe and promote good health practices

Reaching Home Ontario Rural and Remote COVID-19 Funding

Reaching Home Ontario Rural and Remote COVID-19 Funding provided to the County to help support rapid re-housing initiatives intended to provide direct needs to clients. This funding will work in concert with the work undertaken by the Housing Advocate in sourcing units. Once in place, this work will be a critical asset in the next steps in providing services to those in the community experiencing or are at risk of becoming homeless.



Types of Homelessness

Unsheltered or 'Sleeping Rough'

Individuals who are 'sleeping rough' are those living without any form of shelter to protect them from the elements.

Examples of sleeping rough include, living and sleeping on the street, or in tents or makeshift shelters.

Individuals who are unsheltered and those sleeping rough may face complex challenges that could include past trauma, mental illness or substance use.

Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelters can provide immediate overnight accommodation for those who are sleeping rough or those who have lost their accommodation or temporary accommodation for various reasons.

Individuals in need of emergency shelter can access emergency accommodation by contacting County of Huron Social Services directly or by being referred by a partner organization.

It is the goal of County of Huron Social Services to transition individuals using emergency shelter to permanent homes.

Temporary, Transitional or Supportive Shelter

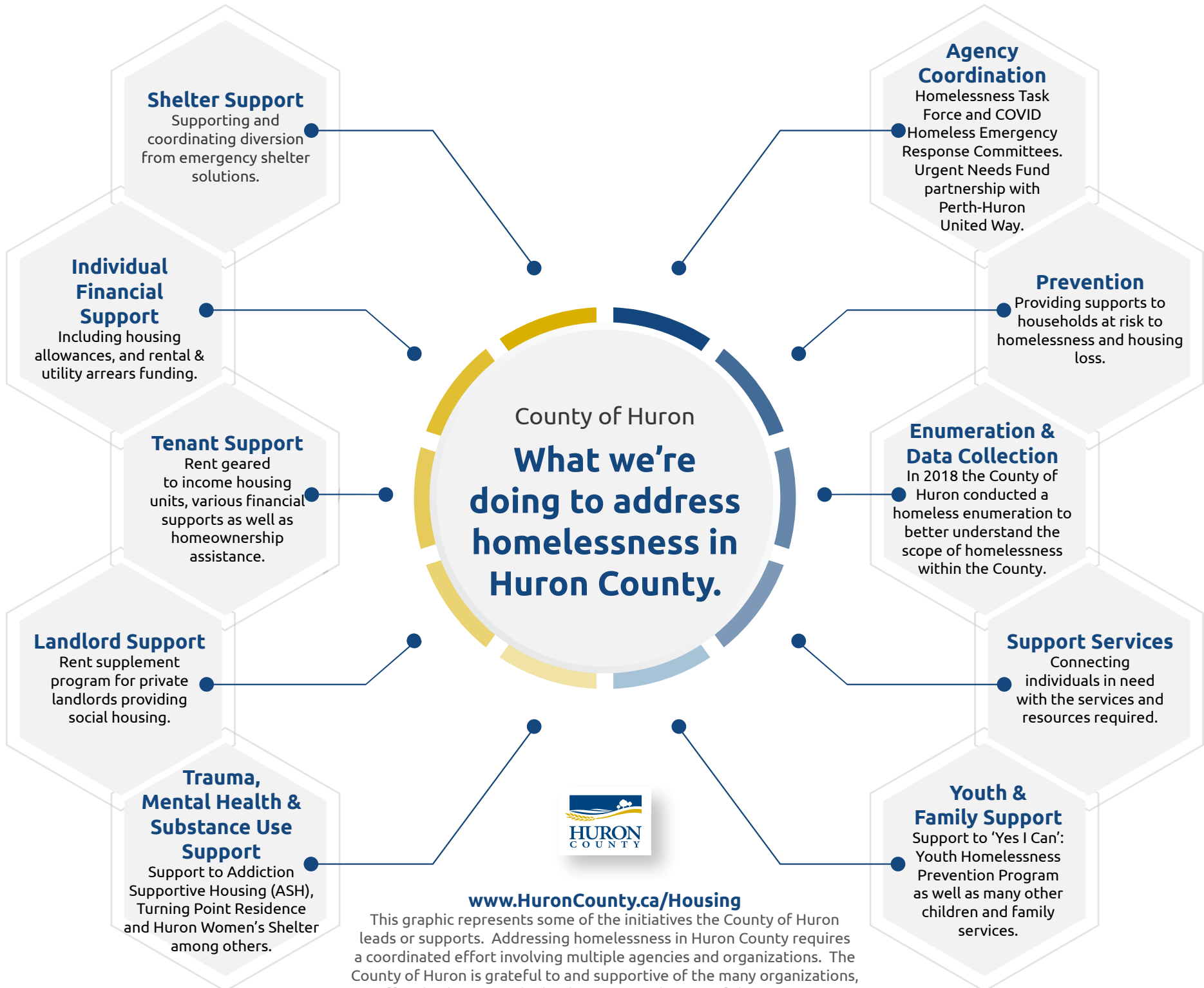
Individuals utilizing temporary, transitional or supportive shelter are those living without a fixed address. Often these individuals are required to move frequently and may be living out of suitcases.

Examples of temporary, transitional and supportive shelter include those who are 'couch surfing' and those utilizing housing programs such as Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH), Turning Point Residence or the Huron Women's Shelter.

Individuals in this type of shelter are at an increased risk of becoming unsheltered and it is the goal of County of Huron Social Services to transition individuals using temporary shelter to permanent homes.

Homelessness is a complicated issue and there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Individual people, each with unique experiences and challenges require an individualized response. Responding to homelessness is not just about providing housing, it requires relationship and trust building and often means addressing complex issues including past traumas, mental illness or substance use. For these reasons, addressing homelessness takes time and commitment.



County of Huron
**What we're
 doing to address
 homelessness in
 Huron County.**



www.HuronCounty.ca/Housing

This graphic represents some of the initiatives the County of Huron leads or supports. Addressing homelessness in Huron County requires a coordinated effort involving multiple agencies and organizations. The County of Huron is grateful to and supportive of the many organizations, staff and volunteers who lead or assist with some of these initiatives.

Shelter Support

Supporting and coordinating diversion from emergency shelter solutions.

Individual Financial Support

Including housing allowances, and rental & utility arrears funding.

Tenant Support

Rent geared to income housing units, various financial supports as well as homeownership assistance.

Landlord Support

Rent supplement program for private landlords providing social housing.

Trauma, Mental Health & Substance Use Support

Support to Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH), Turning Point Residence and Huron Women's Shelter among others.

Agency Coordination

Homelessness Task Force and COVID Homeless Emergency Response Committees. Urgent Needs Fund partnership with Perth-Huron United Way.

Prevention

Providing supports to households at risk to homelessness and housing loss.

Enumeration & Data Collection

In 2018 the County of Huron conducted a homeless enumeration to better understand the scope of homelessness within the County.

Support Services

Connecting individuals in need with the services and resources required.

Youth & Family Support

Support to 'Yes I Can': Youth Homelessness Prevention Program as well as many other children and family services.

County of Huron Housing & Homelessness FAQ

Q: What causes homelessness?

There are many factors which can put an individual at risk for homelessness, and every experience of homelessness is unique. Some factors include job loss, experiencing trauma, lack of social supports, and health problems.

Q: How many people are homeless in Huron County?

In March 2018, the County of Huron conducted its first ever homeless enumeration to better understand the scope of homelessness within the County. It found that 100 individuals were experiencing homelessness in Huron County.

Q: Why do some people choose to sleep outside, instead of staying in a shelter?

Staying in a shelter is not ideal for everyone. Some of the reasons include overcrowding, conflicts with other people there, and substance abuse.

Q: What resources are available in Huron County for those without a home?

The County of Huron manages and/or financially aids many homelessness prevention initiatives in Huron County. Some of these programs include:

- **Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH):** ASH is a transitional housing program for eight individuals working directly with Choices for Change (Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Counseling Centre).
- **Pathways to Self-Sufficiency:** Pathways to Self-Sufficiency provides rental and utility arrears funding to low-income households experiencing potential eviction and/or utility disconnection.
- **Huron Out of the Cold:** Huron Out of the Cold provides cold weather emergency shelter to homeless individuals. The shelter was operated through a partnership with the Salvation Army, and ended in April 2020.
- **Safe Homes for Youth:** Funding was provided to Safe Homes for Youth to assist in the supports and shelter for youth facing homelessness.
- **Yes I Can:** Yes I Can is a youth homelessness prevention program offering employment and education supports.
- **Housing Allowances:** This long-term support provides \$250 each month directly to low-income households to help with rental and/or utility costs.
- **Rent Supplement:** A monthly fee paid directly to landlords who enter into a formal agreement with the County.

Q: Are people experiencing homelessness at risk of COVID-19?

People who are homeless are at risk of COVID-19. Because many people who are homeless are older adults or have underlying medical conditions, they may also be at higher risk for severe disease than the general population.

Q: How can you help?

- If you are a landlord, consider participating in the Rent Supplement Program.
- As a private citizen, consider a secondary unit in your home; low vacancy rates make it difficult to obtain affordable housing.
- Work with community partners to support those in emergency housing situations by volunteering or making donations.
- Support housing initiatives in your community.
- Become an ambassador for those most vulnerable in our community by breaking down stigmas.

Q: Why should communities address homelessness? Is it not the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments?

Homelessness is in every community across Canada, but every community has different challenges and strengths and needs to find solutions based on individual needs. By doing this, we can plan for sustainable, well-coordinated, long-term solutions, rather than simply reacting to crises as they arise. By demonstrating to the provincial and federal governments that we have a thoughtful, community-based plan, we greatly increase our chances to receive further funding as it becomes available.

County of Huron Housing & Homelessness Terms and Glossary

General Terms

Couch Surfing: Couch surfing is characterized by moving from one place to another, often with friends or acquaintances, but with no fixed address.

Hidden homelessness: Persons who live temporarily with others without the guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing.

Homelessness: Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.

Living Wage: The hourly wage a worker needs to earn to cover their family's basic everyday expenses, such as food, housing, utilities, childcare, and transportation.

Sleeping Rough: Sleeping in uncomfortable conditions, typically outdoors, for temporary shelter.

Types of Housing

Affordable Housing: Any type of housing, including rental/home ownership, permanent/temporary, for-profit/non-profit, that costs less than 30% of a household's gross (pre-tax) income.

Emergency Housing: Short-term shelter for people in crisis which may also provide meals and support services.

Non-profit and Co-operative Housing: Units providing rent-geared-to-income and market rent housing for families, singles or seniors.

Permanent Housing: Long-term housing with no maximum length of stay.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Housing: RGI housing, or subsidized housing, provides housing with rent amounts determined by income; approximately 30% of a household's gross (pre-tax) income.

Second Stage Housing: Second Stage Housing provides rent-geared-to-income apartments for women and children who are victims of family violence.

Supportive Housing: Supportive housing focuses on rehabilitation and community integration. It usually features group home settings but can sometimes include low-support self-contained apartments.

Transitional Housing: Time-limited, affordable, supported or independent housing. Tenants can usually remain in transitional housing for up to one year.

Programs & Initiatives

Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH): A program that offers housing and intensive case management supports under a harm reduction model.

Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB): A new funding program that will provide eligible households with a benefit to assist with rental costs. This benefit will be paid directly to the household and is fully portable. Unlike other forms of housing assistance, it can be used to help pay rent anywhere in Ontario.

Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI): Provincial funding used assist those experiencing homelessness to obtain and retain housing. Funding

is facilitated through a variety of services including a local Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH) program, a transitional housing program for men, affordable units, rental supplements, and housing allowances.

Housing and Homelessness Steering Committee: A group of core community agencies responding to housing and homelessness complexities, with a mandate that includes advocacy for housing initiatives, and broader awareness of programs designed to support individuals in their pursuit and stability of appropriate housing.

Ontario Renovates: A program designed to improve the living conditions of low to moderate income households in need. It offers financial assistance to complete home repair deficiencies, energy efficiency upgrades and accessibility upgrades for persons with disabilities.

Ontario Works (OW): OW provides income and employment support to people in temporary financial need. Recipients participate in a wide range of employment assistance activities which help them prepare for, find and keep a job.

Out Of The Cold: A program that provides a place to sleep overnight and a meal program that is delivered by volunteers in a network of inter-denominational faith-based organizations during the winter season (November to April).

Rent Supplement Program: A program offering private landlords a supplement and the ability to offer eligible rent-geared-to-income (RGI) applicants' accommodation.

Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF): This fund provides funding to support social service providers to continue to deliver their critical services, hire additional staff, and find ways to promote social distancing and self-isolation to keep clients safe and promote good health practices.

Agencies Working to Address Homelessness in Huron County

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Huron Perth

www.cmhahuronperth.com

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Middlesex

www.cmhamiddlesex.ca

Choices for Change

www.choicesforchange.ca

Food Banks, Meal Programs and Food Services Organizations

Huron Perth Health Care Alliance

www.hpha.ca

Huron Women's Shelter & Second Stage Housing

www.huronwomensshelter.ca

Huron-Perth Public Health

www.hpph.ca

Local Churches / Faith Based organizations

Regional Hospitals:

Alexandra Marine & General Hospital

Clinton Public Hospital

Seaforth Community Hospital

South Huron Hospital Association

Wingham and District Hospital

Safe Homes for Youth

www.huronsafehomes.com

Salvation Army, Goderich

www.sagoderich.com

Salvation Army, Wingham

Social Services: Ontario Works, Children's Services and Housing Services

www.huroncounty.ca

United Way Perth Huron

www.perthhuron.unitedway.ca

Ontario 211

www.211ontario.ca