

## Newsletter on Poverty and Rural Communities

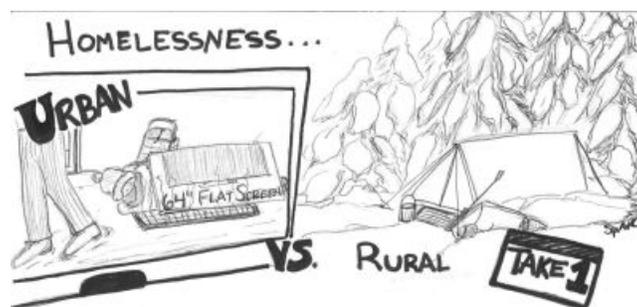
Welcome to the first edition of the Newsletter on Poverty and Rural Communities, a newsletter dedicated to raising awareness of issues of poverty in rural communities and advocating for the reduction and ultimate elimination of rural poverty through investment in the resilience of rural residents.

A [report on rural poverty](#) recently released by North Hastings Community Trust and its community partners gave impetus to this newsletter. The report explores, as will this newsletter, how "Inadequate income, combined with lack of affordable housing, rising utility costs, food insecurity and scant public transportation, intensifies the experience of poverty in rural communities."

If you have an article to contribute, please send it to [infopfib@gmail.com](mailto:infopfib@gmail.com).

## Homelessness in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties

What happens when an individual is facing homelessness in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties?



In a community that has few options for emergency shelter, there is little that can be done to support people in a housing crisis. In August the lack of housing reached the acute stage – no affordable housing could be found. Many people are couch-surfing, finding a place to stay with friends or acquaintances, sometimes remaining in unsafe situations, and there are those who live in tents or vehicles. Many more are experiencing elevated stress levels due to precarious housing or unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions. That there are few, if any, places to go is the current situation across the counties.

## The Canadian Mental Health Association responds

When an individual or household is facing homelessness in Hastings county, the community responds through emergency services that provide very temporary shelter. Responsibility rests with the Canadian Mental Health Association who now manage and respond to emergency shelter requests, placing individuals in motel rooms or providing transportation so that they can access shelter in neighboring cities such as Kingston - cities with emergency homeless shelters. Increasingly, nearby city shelters are at capacity.

## Transitional housing

Transitional housing is also at capacity in the region, where people have nothing to transition into, making it a double challenge to meet the needs of those who have on-going requirements for housing, and those who suddenly find themselves homeless.

## Emergency housing

Currently, individuals seeking emergency housing assistance are directed to the CMHA during after hours and on weekends. A shelter is in the works in Belleville, which is desperately needed, as are more long-term housing and income based solutions.

## Old stereotypes no longer apply

Homelessness has often been thought of as a big city problem, but it is here. Increasingly those experiencing homelessness are no longer the old stereotype of single men in their 20s, but include seniors, women, youth, families who are working, who are on social assistance, or who have lost social assistance supports because they no longer have a home.

*The author, **Christine Durant**, is the Director of Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward.*

*The mission of **Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward** is to eliminate the causes of poverty in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties by building the capacity of our community to work together to plan for and implement strategic, long term solutions that result in fair and equitable opportunities for all.*

**Put Food in the Budget** is a grassroots activist group working to hold the Ontario government to its promises made - but not kept - to reduce poverty. Our broad goal is achieving social and economic justice for the growing numbers of poor people in this province.

A printable PDF version of this newsletter is available [here](#).

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