



Poverty Roundtable

Hastings Prince Edward



Call to Action

Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing

A Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing needs to ensure that housing is:

- Affordable
- Attainable
- Available
- Appropriate
- Protected
- Without discrimination
- Free from violence

Housing needs to be attainable and free from discrimination for all.

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A human rights-based approach to housing ensures that housing is attainable, available, affordable, appropriate and protected for all Canadians without discrimination and that people have a say in their housing.

The Poverty Roundtable of HPE was formed in 2013 to study the things we could do, or do differently, to address the causes of poverty and to broaden our community's capacity to do so by working together. Membership of the roundtable includes those from social services, business, government, health, mental health, education, justice, housing, labour, faith, food security, people with first-hand experience of poverty and community members at large.

Our vision is: a community where everyone experiences a standard of living which is sufficient for their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being without compromise of dignity and self-respect.

Our mission 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.

On April 30th 2018, the Poverty Roundtable HPE gathered members of our Housing Working Group to discuss what a human rights-based approach to housing should look like in Canada. The group was made up of housing providers, Hastings County staff, lawyers and people who have lived experience with inadequate and unsafe housing.

The group identified a number of barriers that lead to housing instability and sometimes homelessness, summarized below.

We believe that a human rights-based approach to housing is needed to ensure that housing is attainable, available, affordable, appropriate, and protected for all Canadians. The right to housing must be free from discrimination. People need to have a say in where they live.

A human rights-based approach to housing:

- Ensures that everyone has a home
- Provides housing that is adequate
- Does not infringe on other basic needs such as food and health
- Is free from discrimination
- Is shaped by those who have experienced housing need
- Provides the dignity of choice
- Includes engagement with and by people who have lived experience in a meaningful, purposeful, authentic, trauma-informed, and valued way
- Is free of barriers
- Includes supports for the most vulnerable
- Has a straight forward mechanism of enforcement
- Places responsibility on all levels of government to play a role and to be accountable in upholding housing as a human right



Building a Rights based framework around housing:

Attainable

- Every citizen must be able to access safe, stable, affordable housing
- This may include prioritization for those reintegrating into the community from incarceration, hospitalization, or other related barriers
- Application processes that are free from discriminatory tactics, such as asking for a criminal record check are needed
- Simple mechanisms when discriminatory practices are engaged in, such as denial of housing from reasons such as gender, race, culture, disability, income source, children or pets are needed
- Elimination of false barriers to attaining housing, such as up-front deposits for processing applications are needed

Available

- There must be multiplicity in housing options; choice on a place to live is basic to the exercise of a right to housing
- Alternate housing models such as co-operatives and tiny homes need to be explored to improve choice
- Access to options must be readily available

Affordable

- Housing rights are tied to livable incomes
- There is a housing crisis in our community and in many areas of our country
- Too many households are allocating well above 30% of their incomes to shelter costs
- Incomes need to increase and/or affordability must adjust to income for more Canadians
- Rent controls are needed to ensure affordability and to limit the potential for rent increases that outpace in incomes

Appropriate

- The housing framework needs to recognize the need for individual housing options, for flexibility, for stability, and for urgency
- Currently, the route to affordable housing is plagued with few options, long wait lists for social housing, inflexible eligibility criteria, overcrowding, homelessness and instability.
- People are housed in situations that exacerbate physical and mental health concerns
- A human rights-based approach ensures options so that people can choose an environment that supports recovery, growth, and stability
- Supportive housing should be an available option for those who require it for mental or physical health needs and for those who are aging and are unable to maintain independent housing
- Housing needs to provide long-term stability, including security of tenure; housing precarity leads to extreme stress and takes a toll of the health and well-being of individuals, families, and the community



No Decision Made About Me Without Me

Protected

- All Canadians need protection from housing loss – including individuals who are living in social housing and those who incur a sudden loss of income
- Tenants need better protection from unlawful eviction and economic eviction
- Greater protection is needed for individuals who are renting rooms, and situations that are not currently covered by Provincial law
- Tenants and landlords will need education on the meaning of the right to housing and mechanisms for enforcement
- Vulnerable tenants need easily available, no-cost access to legal support through legal clinics and advocacy groups to enforce newly acquired right to housing

Participation, people have a say in their housing

- No decision made about me without me – must be a guiding principle which incorporates the need for a cultural, organizational and procedural shift in the way that social housing is managed

Supported by the Voices of HoPE Advisory Council and the Affordable Housing Working Group of the Poverty Roundtable HPE.

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