

Key Messages - Homelessness Advocacy

- *“Housing as a human right” means that all people are equally entitled to live with dignity in a safe and secure home.*
- *The right to housing is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1976, agreeing to comply with the right to housing under international human rights law.*
- *Canada’s National Housing Strategy Action (passed in 2019) recognizes housing as a human right and commits organizations and governments to reform housing laws, policies, and programs from a human rights perspective, prioritizing the most vulnerable groups and those in greatest need of housing while working towards housing as a human right for all.*
- *Homelessness can be caused by many different, and often overlapping factors, like the economy; shortage of safe, affordable housing; lack of adequate income; personal circumstances (like rental eviction, job loss, or health crisis); family and domestic violence; difficult transitions out of the child welfare system; lengthy stays in hospital, corrections or treatment facilities; and mental health and/or substance use challenges (self or family member).*
- *Homelessness and inadequate housing can also be attributed to discrimination against particular groups and by failures of governments to address the particular needs and circumstances of groups such as Indigenous women and girls, youth and women escaping violence, people experiencing mental health and substance use issues, people with disabilities, people needing support for independent living, young people, seniors, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQI+ people, and others.*
- *Housing is a major social determinant of health. Safe and stable housing can make it easier for individuals to access food, medicine, and medical services, and decrease reliance on publicly funded support like emergency health services.*
- *Homelessness can happen to anyone at any age; most of us are one life crisis away from housing insecurity.*
- *There is a lot of stigma around homelessness and visible poverty; it can be very uncomfortable to witness and brings up different emotions for different people. This stigmatization can further isolate and harm people experiencing homelessness*

- *Homelessness is often criminalized and individuals who are visibly experiencing homelessness or poverty can be villainized when accessing public spaces.*
- *There are real impacts of homelessness on a community, and we need to take a fulsome approach in addressing community need.*
- *Breaking out of the cycle of homelessness and poverty is difficult given job and income options, rental availability and cost, access to food and medical care, and more.*
- *Many supports and services focus on emergency services, like shelters and food banks, but these are not adequate for individuals who are trying to break a cycle of poverty and homelessness.*
- *Emergency shelters are an interim measure to provide immediate and temporary shelter but do not address the need for safe, long-term housing.*
- *The qathet Region's 2023 Point in Time Homeless Count, the Region's first, identified 126 people experiencing homelessness in our community.*
- *These are community members who have long-standing ties to the qathet Region: 52% of respondents have lived here their whole lives, and 85% of respondents have lived here for at least 5 years.*
- *There is a lack of available, affordable housing in the qathet Region: the 2021 qathet Regional Housing Needs Report found that available rental housing meets less than 40% of demand, and that the average rent increased by 49% between 2016 and 2021.*
- *To address homelessness in our community we need*
 - o *prevention (supports that stop people from becoming homeless in the first place),*
 - o *emergency responses like shelter, food banks, and resource centres, and*
 - o *additional housing and accommodation supports so that everyone has access to adequate and affordable housing*

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