

Health Canada: Place Matters Workshop - February 6, 2006

Housing and homelessness: A look at 21 Ontario cities and communities

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Where's Home?

- ◆ Detailed, longitudinal study of housing, homelessness in 21 Ontario communities by Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Ontario Region, Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
- ◆ Started in 1999 in response to:
 - links between housing and health
 - Toronto homelessness task force



What we know. . .

1. Lack of good quality, affordable housing affects health
 - *homelessness, insecure housing ⇒ higher morbidity and higher mortality*
2. Subsidized housing is key factor in helping the homeless become housed
 - *subsidized housing ⇒ housed*



Toronto flop house, 1914



The Bruce Report (1934)

- ◆ A study of Toronto's slum districts at the depths of the Great Depression:
 - “These areas of misery and degradation exert an unhappy environmental influence upon many of our citizens.”

Dr. H.A. Bruce, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario



Housing and health (1984)

- ◆ “Inadequate accommodation is not sole solution to health problems among Toronto’s poor, but being homeless or living in unaffordable or substandard housing makes it difficult, if not impossible, to engage in many practices that promote health. Moreover, inadequate housing foster stress which lowers physical resistance to disease and exacerbates pre-existing emotional strains.”

Housing and Health: Public Health Implications of the Crisis in Affordable Housing, Toronto Department of Public Health, 1984



Homelessness and health

- ◆ “Specific health effects of homelessness and underhousing are difficult to separate from often-associated effects of poverty, unemployment, pre-existing mental and physical disabilities, and age-related vulnerabilities in children and the elderly. . .”
- ◆ “The health effects of homelessness include:
 - ***cold injury*** [hypothermia and frostbite];
 - ***cardio-respiratory disease*** [coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, emphysema]
 - ***tuberculosis***;
 - ***skin problems*** [infected and ulcerated lesions];



Health effects of homelessness

- ***nutritional disorders*** [leading to a greater risk for infectious diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, skin disease and nervous system dysfunction];
- ***sleep deprivation*** [leading to instability, emotional irritability, concentration deficits, cognitive impairment, apathy and behaviour disorders];
- ***children's mental health disorders*** [leading to developmental lags, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties];
- ***adult psychiatric disorders***; and
- ***chronic stress*** [including insomnia, anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem and withdrawal].”

Public inquiry into homelessness and health, 1987



Morbidity and mortality

- ◆ “Homeless women and men do not have ‘different’ illnesses than general population. However, their living circumstances and poverty affect their ability to cope with health problems.” - *Street Health Report, 1992*
- ◆ Homeless women and men have mortality rates 8 to 10 times higher than housed women and men - *Dr. Stephen Hwang*



Homeless families in NYC

- ◆ Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City: From Shelter Request to Housing Stability
- ◆ *American Journal of Public Health*
- ◆ Volume 88(1), November 1998, pp.1651 to 1657



Method

- ◆ 568 homeless and housed poor families
- ◆ First interviewed in 1988, then interviewed again in 1993
- ◆ Questions:
 - Who was stably housed (> one year)?
 - Why were they stably housed?



Factors not affecting stability

- ◆ NOT – race, age, pregnancy, persistent poverty, education, work history, marriage, teen motherhood, child poverty, mental illness, substance use, physical health, incarceration, social ties domestic violence, childhood disruptions



Who was stable?

- ◆ 80% of families who went into subsidized housing
- ◆ 18% of families who went into unsubsidized housing



Only factor affecting stability

◆ *Subsidized housing*

- ◆ Marybeth Shinn: “Subsidized housing is both necessary and sufficient to ‘cure’ homelessness among families.”



Housing succeeds. . .

◆ “We found that subsidized housing succeeds in curing homelessness among families, regardless of behavioral disorders or other conditions. Whatever their problems – substance abuse, mental illness, physical illness or a history of incarceration – nearly all of the families became stably housed when they received subsidized housing.”

Marybeth Shinn



Guelph Campus Co-op, 1913

- ◆ Established as a retail co-op in 1913
- ◆ Started student housing co-op



Regent Park, 1948



Ukrainian Seniors, Sudbury

- ◆ Non-profit seniors' housing
- ◆ Supportive housing
- ◆ Resource library



Charles Village, 2003

- ◆ 22 single units of supportive housing in Kitchener
- ◆ Multiple-funding sources
- ◆ Geo-thermal heat source



Question???

- ◆ We know that housing is one of key determinants of health...and that housing cures homelessness...and we have plenty of housing successes...
- ◆ ***What is state of homelessness disaster and affordable housing crisis in Ontario?***



Where's Home? (1999)

◆ Initial survey of 8 communities:

- Barrie, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kitchener-Waterloo, North Bay, Ottawa-Carleton, Peel, Peterborough, Toronto

◆ With part 2, another 13 communities:

- Cornwall, Oshawa, Guelph, Kingston, London, Muskoka, Owen Sound, Sarnia, St. Catharines-Niagara, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Windsor



Key findings (1999)

1. On the supply side, rental vacancy rates were falling in most parts of Ontario
2. Even in areas where rental vacancy rates were slightly higher, rents were continuing to increase – causing affordability problems
3. On the affordability side, average rents were increasing in all parts of Ontario faster than the rate of inflation
4. On average, tenant household income declined, even as rents went up



Key findings (1999) – cont'd

5. Almost half of all tenant households (44%) had affordability problems
6. Contrary to expectations, biggest affordability gap reported in Peterborough (55%), followed by Barrie, Hamilton-Wentworth, North Bay, Kingston and Sudbury – **all higher than Toronto**
7. Owners doing much better overall than tenant households
8. Almost one-in-four tenant households at risk of homelessness (300,645 households)



Key findings (1999) – cont'd

9. Big (47%) increase in tenants paying 50% or more of income on rent in previous five years
10. Rental production crashed during 1990s (decline in private sector started in early 1970s, decline in social housing started with end of federal housing program in 1993 and provincial program in 1995)
11. Growing need: CMHC estimated Ontario needed 16,000 new rental units on average in 1990s and 20,000 new rental units in 2000s
12. Dwindling rental supply: An estimated 14,000 private rental units lost to demolition / conversion; an estimated 3,000 subsidized units cancelled



Key findings (1999) – cont'd

13. Growing homelessness: almost 1.5 million overnight stays in permanent shelters (not including Out of Cold, etc.); shelter usage up 100% over five years in Peterborough, also up in other communities
14. Growing hunger: 293,105 people served by food banks monthly; 42% of them children; biggest increase in food bank usage in Peterborough, Kitchener-Waterloo
15. Social housing waiting lists up significantly in every community



Key findings (2000)

1. Rental vacancy rates fell to 10-year low
2. A slight uptick in number of new rental units (about 2,000 annually), losses to existing rental stock continued to outpace new construction (about 2,600 units annually), leaving an ongoing net loss in rental stock
3. Biggest losses were outside Toronto (Ottawa, Windsor, London, Guelph, Owen Sound, Peel, Sarnia, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton, St. Catharines-Niagara)
4. Rents increased in all 21 communities, even in communities with high vacancy rates



Key findings (2001)

1. In average year, Ontario loses 50% more rental housing than is built; over previous decade, province lost 24,298 rental units
2. There were fewer private rental units in 2001 than in 1991
3. Rental vacancy rates remain critically low
4. Average rents rise at more than double rate of inflation over previous two years



Key findings (2004)

1. Rental vacancy rates were up in almost all communities across Ontario
 - ◆ At top end of market, tenants becoming homeowners (low mortgage rates)
 - ◆ Drop in net immigration also contributed to lower vacancy rate
 - ◆ High youth employment forcing young people to stay at home
2. Rent increases continued to outpace inflation for most tenants in Ontario



Key findings (2004) – cont'd

3. Tenant household incomes remained at roughly half those of owners; tenant and owner incomes rose at roughly same rate from 1995 to 2000, but tenants were behind their 1990 levels
4. 42% of tenant households had affordability problem in 2000 (slightly down from 1995, but up from 1990)
5. 20% of tenant households at risk of homelessness in 2000 (265,990 households)
6. Cost of renting relative to average wages (2003) showed carpenters, medical secretaries, labourers, data entry clerks, retail staff, chefs, cooks, servers earned less than average rent in selected cities (Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Sudbury)



Key findings (2004) – cont'd

7. Rental production (espy affordable / subsidized rental) remained critically low in all parts of Ontario
8. Losses to existing rental stock continued to outpace new construction
9. Overall, loss of 7,660 rental units over ten years to 2003 (CMHC said Ontario should have had 172,000 new rental homes)



Key findings (2005)

1. Overall, rental vacancy rates continued to rise; but Sudbury (which had the highest vacancy rate in 2000 reported the lowest in 2004) and many other smaller communities also reported low rates
2. Even with higher vacancy rates, social housing waiting lists growing longer and number of those in overcrowded housing (“hidden homeless”) increasing
3. Rents for most Ontario tenants continued to outpace inflation
4. Cost of renting continued to outpace average salaries in key Ontario markets



Key findings (2005) – cont'd

5. New rental construction remained well below need (95% of new construction in ownership market)
6. Modest uptick in rental starts in early 2000s starting to decline
7. Continuing overall loss in rental market (Ontario down 16,435 rental units over previous decade); biggest losses in London, Ottawa, Peel



Looking ahead



CMHC released its 2005 rental market reports in December. Overall trends:

1. Rental vacancy rates are dropping in Ontario after slight uptick in early 2000s
2. Average rents continuing to increase in most communities
3. Average rent in Ontario is \$845 (annual income of \$33,800 required to afford that rent – 2/3rds of Ontario renter households earn less than this amount)
4. Overall number of vacant units in Ontario remains critically low (23,337 vacant units as set against an estimated 158,000 households on social housing waiting lists)



The view from CMHC

◆ "...many households are still facing affordability issues across Canada. Either these households need to move to less expensive units or require additional help to make their monthly shelter costs more affordable. In many cases, however, there are not enough vacant units to meet the needs of all households in core housing need. Therefore, additional affordable housing units continue to be required."

Bob Dugan, Chief Economist



Key trends (1999 to 2005)

- ◆ Affordability squeeze
 - Tenant incomes were stagnant or declining while rents are rising faster than inflation; as rents reach “price-sensitive thresholds” tenants (esp. youth, seniors, single moms, low / moderate income households) are literally being priced out of the market
- ◆ Supply squeeze
 - Supply of rental housing is down even as need for new rental housing increases; number of vacant units in private sector is not enough to meet the housing needs for Ontarians
- ◆ Cross-Ontario
 - Not just a big-city issue, supply and, in particular, affordability are problems throughout Ontario
- ◆ Private market not helping
 - In areas where private market have high vacancy rates, affordability problems are equally intense (ie – market forces are not driving down rents to affordable levels) – eg, Timmins



The root causes. . .

◆ Federal:

- 1984 to 1993 – almost \$2 billion cut from spending
- 1993 – all new housing spending cancelled
- 1995 – CAP cancelled, social transfers cut
- 1996 – housing downloaded to provinces

◆ Ontario:

- 1995 – all new housing spending cancelled
- 1995 – welfare rates cut
- 1998 – housing downloaded to municipalities



Turning it around. . .

- ◆ The One Percent Solution
- ◆ \$2 billion for a fully-funded national housing strategy
- ◆ \$2 billion from the provinces and territories



Comprehensive strategy

- ◆ New social housing – 20,000 to 30,000 new units
- ◆ Supportive housing – 10,000 new units
- ◆ Rent supplements – 160,000 new units
- ◆ Shelter and services for the homeless
- ◆ Renovation funding



Housing / homelessness gains

- ◆ Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative and federal homelessness strategy (December 1999)
- ◆ Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (December 1999 and federal budget 2003)
- ◆ Federal Surplus Real Lands for Homelessness Program (December 1999)
- ◆ Affordable Housing Framework Agreement (November 2001 and federal budget 2003)
- ◆ NDP budget bill (June 2005)
- ◆ Extension of SCPI and RRAP (November 2005)



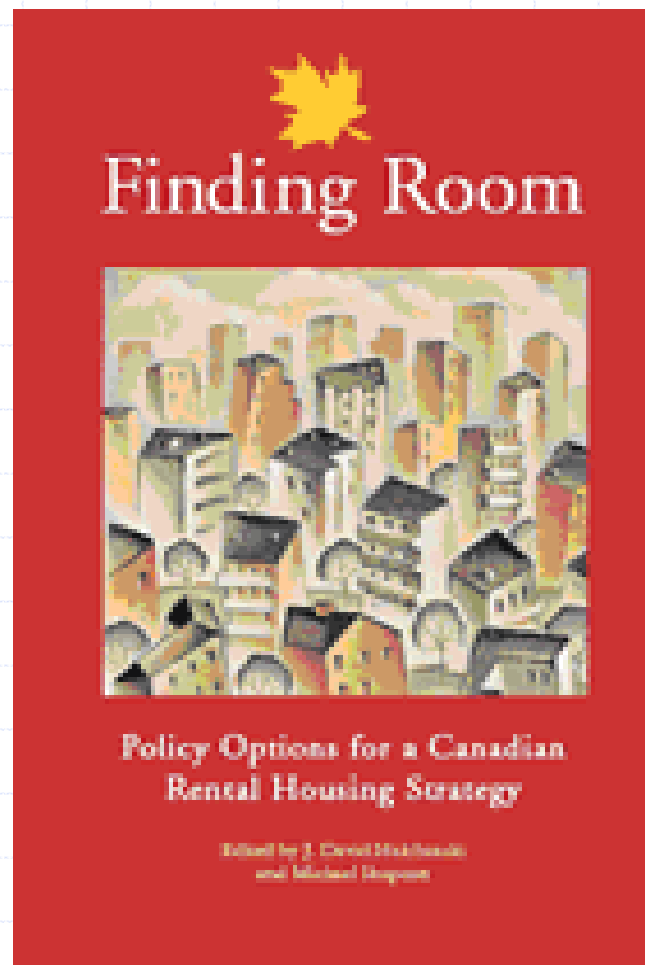
Promised vs. delivered

<i>Fiscal year ending</i>	Ontario promised: <i>(number of new homes announced by federal and Ontario governments)</i>	Ontario actually delivered: <i>(number of new homes committed as reported in audited statements)</i>
2002	9,800	22
2003	13,912	23
2004	22,620	18
<u>Total</u>	<u>46,332</u>	<u>63</u>



For more information

- ◆ **Finding Room:
Policy Options for
a Canadian Rental
Housing Strategy**
- ◆ **J. David Hulchanski,
Michael Shapcott,
editors**
- ◆ ***www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca***



On the web...

◆ Where's Home?

- Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
- www.onpha.on.ca
- Search "Where's Home"

◆ On-line housing library and links

- Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto
- www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca

◆ Wellesley Central Health Corporation

- www.wellesleycentral.com



Working towards our goal

