

Community Education Sub-Committee Report to AHAC-2010-2011

In 2010 the Community Education Sub-Committee produced its fifth annual edition of "Housing Is Fundamental", a report to the community on housing matters and issues.

Throughout five years of production, we have been able to consistently demonstrate that affordability is an issue in the Peterborough Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Lack of affordability is impacting on the daily lives of our citizens. When more than thirty percent of household income is spent on housing, we can say that the household is in 'core housing need'. Furthermore, these households experience something called 'housing-induced poverty'. Like all poverty, this imposes real limitations on how people engage in the society around them. Not being able to afford nutritious food or health care products, or not being able to buy necessary clothing is common among households in core housing need. As core housing need becomes more serious, households find themselves depending on food banks, community meal programs and used clothing.

Moreover, we have showcased the connection between housing affordability and one of life's most important qualifiers – health. Housing affordability and condition is positively consistent with health outcomes as measured in longevity and mortality rates. We know that chronic health conditions are more prevalent among those in poor housing. It is clear that housing status is a powerful determinant of health. No discussion of health or housing should omit the other – they are inseparable.

For myself, the most shocking of evidence reveals that the health conditions of persons who are vulnerably-housed (living with friends, couch surf, living in shabby housing) are no different than those of the homeless.

In February of 2011, CMHC, using Stats-Can. Data, verified that the Peterborough CMA has the highest percentage of households in core housing need both in Ontario and Canada. Certainly, we trust that the significance of this fact will not be disregarded or diminished.

As a sub-committee we believe that there is justification for Housing Is Fundamental being published in the future. It continues to serve as a means for AHAC to communicate with City, County and Township Councils as well as the many agencies in the area involved in housing. It is a yearly opportunity to highlight the need for affordable housing, however that is to be achieved.

This year Housing Is Fundamental will focus on mental health, addiction and housing. We will attempt to demonstrate the potential of safe, affordable housing on improvement, prevention and recovery. We will also continue to supply core data expected from year to year.

A small committee works on this tedious task; the end product is reward enough. I'd like to thank the loyalty of John Martyn, Cheryl Lyon and Gayle Hutchison. Recently Corry Wink has joined us. Gayle is presently taking a sabbatical and will hopefully rejoin us at a later time.

Paul Armstrong, Chair, Community Education Sub-Committee
May 5, 2011