



sleepless in our **city**

Feb. 20, 2020

Facts: Homelessness and Poverty in St. Thomas and Elgin County

Homelessness in St. Thomas and Elgin County

- Locating and obtaining housing in Elgin-St. Thomas is very difficult. The vacancy rate for a bachelor apartment in Elgin-St. Thomas is effectively 0%.
- An estimated 80% of people without a place to call home are less visibly homeless. Consider the youth who moves from friend-to-friend while seeking affordable housing or the woman who accepts housing from a man, even if the situation is dangerous, rather than being on the street.
- Through the 2018/19 winter, 242 people accessed the Inn Out of the Cold shelter.

Poverty in St. Thomas and Elgin County

- Approximately 16% of Elgin-St. Thomas residents live under the low income cut-off rate.
- One in five children in Elgin-St. Thomas lives in poverty.
- The number of households receiving social assistance in our community is almost double pre-recession rates (819 households in 2006; 1449 households in 2019).
- In Elgin-St. Thomas 28% of the population has an annual income of less than \$20,000.
- According to 2016 Census data, almost 45% of households in St. Thomas and Elgin county are paying more than 30% of their gross monthly income on housing.

Homelessness

- The Canadian Homeless Research Network (CHRN) defines homelessness as being without stable, permanent, acceptable housing, or in the immediate prospect of acquiring it.
- Many individuals experiencing homelessness in our community are not seen. Homelessness could not only be sleeping outside, in the rough, it could also be sleeping in a car, an abandoned building, a shed or barn, or couch-surfing with a friend.
- Major contributing factors to homelessness in Canada are deep poverty, substandard housing and the lingering impact of residential schools on Indigenous communities. Indigenous people are dramatically over-represented among homeless populations in Canadian cities.

Housing First

- Housing First is a successful and transformational housing model used in a number of Canadian communities and is supported by United Way Elgin Middlesex.
- Housing First puts the priority on a rapid and direct move from homelessness to housing, instead of requiring people to graduate through a series of steps before getting into permanent housing.
- There are four core principles to Housing First:
 1. Consumer choice and self-determination
 2. Immediate access to permanent housing with the support necessary to sustain it
 3. Housing is not conditional on sobriety or program participation
 4. Social inclusion, self-sufficiency and improved quality of life and health

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