

FEDERAL ELECTION ISSUES

RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

HOW DO HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS IMPACT OUR COMMUNITY?

Housing and homelessness are real concerns for members of our community. Many people are concerned about the cost of renting, buying, and maintaining a home, including seniors, families, persons with disabilities, people who are coping with an unexpected job loss, and people living on a fixed income. Some have concerns about where they will live when they can no longer live in their own home or need to live closer to services and employment opportunities. Others still are faced with not having a place to call home.

“Homelessness is not just a city issue... People are living in cars and tents in our small towns.”

Homelessness in rural communities is often hidden. It might look like couch-surfing, staying in overcrowded accommodations, living in a tent, living in interim housing (e.g. motel), living in shelter without electricity, water, etc.

WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

Affordable housing is just that: housing that is affordable. It is not a particular type of housing; it includes a range of housing options from emergency shelters to home ownership. Generally, housing that costs more than 30% of a household’s income is considered unaffordable, and places the household in Core Housing Need.

NATIONAL DATA

- In Canada, nearly 1 in 4 households (24.1%) and 40% of renter households are in core housing need. Unfortunately, there is no data currently available that accurately captures the estimated number of households in Core Housing Need outside of urban centres or in rural areas in Canada.
- 18% of Canadian renter households spend more than 50% of their gross income on housing. This is considered to be at a crisis level of spending, which puts individuals and families at risk of homelessness.

DID YOU KNOW?

Taking action to ensure everyone has access to a healthy, safe and affordable place to call home benefits us all. **Affordable housing** supports the economy, including a more stable tax base; increases community sustainability; promotes better health and reduced health care costs; lowers crime rates and improves community safety; enhances social inclusion and sense of community.

Housing in Western Nova Scotia

Across Western Nova Scotia, 15.5% of all households are in core housing need (40.3% of renter households). An affordable housing cost for an individual working 40hour/week at minimum wage (\$11.55/hour) is \$555/month. With an average rent of \$804 month across the region, an individual working at minimum wage would be spending nearly \$250 more a month than is affordable for them.

The number of households in core housing need (14,525) in Western Nova Scotia is more than the total number of households in all of Digby and Shelburne County (114,300)!

The Affordable Housing Continuum
Source: CMHC



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CONCERNS

- There is no unique housing and homelessness strategy for rural and remote communities. In the development and implementation of the National Housing Strategy (NHS) and Reaching Home despite the differences between urban and rural housing and homelessness issues.
- Under Reaching Home, the rural and remote funding stream has been allocated \$11.2 million/yr, in contrast to \$110.8 million/year allocated for urban centres. Less than 10% of the total funds allocated for addressing homelessness across Canada are being spent in smaller communities, despite the fact that 1 in 3 Canadians live in rural and remote communities.
- Research and data on the housing and homelessness needs of rural and remote communities in Canada is lacking, which limits the ability of communities to access funding and supports to address the needs.

Learn more about the housing needs in your community

Share rural concerns and opportunities for action

How can I make rural affordable housing and homelessness a federal election issue?

Ask candidates questions at the door, in debates, or online

Talk to your family, friends, and neighbours about the need for action

OPPORTUNITIES

- Rural and remote perspectives must be included as the NHS and Reaching Home are implemented to address the unbalanced distribution of funds to better reflect the needs of Canadians living in rural and remote communities.
- Ensure vulnerable populations living in rural and remote communities are represented through the advisory committee to the Federal Housing Advocate, the National Housing Council and the Advisory Committee on Homelessness.
- Ensure that funding through the NHS and Reaching Home is accessible to rural and remote communities.
- Enhance research and data on rural homelessness in Canada. The development of baseline data of homelessness in rural communities can significantly improve understanding of the issues, and inform solutions.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

How would you describe the housing and homelessness needs in South Shore-St. Margaret's?

If you are elected, what role will you play in addressing housing needs South Shore-St. Margaret's?

How will you and your party take action on affordable housing in rural and remote communities at the federal level and support efforts at the provincial and municipal/local levels?

What are your thoughts on the National Housing Strategy and the National Homelessness Strategy in the context of rural and remote communities?



For more information contact the **South Shore Housing Action Coalition** at sshousingaction@gmail or visit our website at <http://sshac.ca>