

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Study finds homelessness widespread in rural and northern Ontario

Guelph, ON, June 7, 2017 – Homelessness is often portrayed in the Canadian media as a social problem of big cities. A study released today challenges those popular perceptions.

[*Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario*](#) confirms the widespread prevalence of homelessness in rural and northern communities, even though it may be less visible. The research team analyzed recent Canadian Social Survey data and discovered that, compared to city dwellers, a higher percentage of people from rural Ontario reported that they had experienced homelessness or hidden homelessness.

The report explores the context of individuals living in temporary, provisional accommodations or in situations that are unsustainable. This population can be described as ‘hidden’ because they usually do not access supports and services. The study identifies the types of hidden homelessness and issues identified as significant in the lives of people living with homelessness, such as challenges with living expenses, addictions, institutionalization, discrimination, loss of social networks and unemployment. The study also confirms that it is often difficult for service providers to identify and record people who may be experiencing homelessness: only 32 percent of service providers in rural and northern areas reported that records are kept to document the level of homelessness.

The comprehensive report, *Homelessness and Hidden Homelessness in Rural and Northern Ontario*, includes informed perspectives gathered by a study team composed of Carol Kauppi, Laurentian University; Bill O’Grady, University of Guelph; Rebecca Schiff, Lakehead University; independent researcher Fay Martin; and Elisa McFarlane and Debora Daigle with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. The study involved service providers, service managers and individuals with lived experience from rural and northern parts of the province.

The report also includes descriptions of over 30 promising practices that were identified by participants in the study. These programs, many operating at the grassroots level and specific to the local context, have been designed to respond to absolute and hidden homelessness and the prevention of homelessness in rural and northern Ontario.

“Without the willingness of many individuals to openly share their thoughts, views and experiences with homelessness, including those with first-hand experience serving individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, this report would not have been possible,” says Norman Ragetlie of the Rural Ontario Institute. “We are grateful to all those who contributed and hope the report can be a springboard for further dialogue about how we can collectively respond to these real challenges.”

The Rural Ontario Institute gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for the study.

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