

June 2007
2nd Quarter
Newsletter

North House Newsletter



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Message from the Board

A recent study on Homelessness completed by students at the University of Ontario, Institute of Technology, included a brief report on Rural Homelessness. Due to the fact that rural areas, such as north Durham, do not have the number or variety of services that are available in south Durham, those who are facing homelessness have a tendency to utilize a variety of social supports – family members, friends, churches – therefore, becoming the ‘invisible homeless’.

One problem mentioned in the report that is increasing greater is the lack of housing stock in rural areas, especially rental accommodation. There is a distinct “lack of housing suitability” meaning the size relative to the family size; and a “lack of housing adequacy” (maintenance and repair problems). Approximately, 2500 people last year in Durham Region were in need of housing and only 55 were placed.

North House, as a transitional shelter, continues to see a lack of housing as a problem when we assist clients with a rent subsidy for a few months up to a year and then try to assist them in finding more suitable permanent accommodation. There is no housing.

Over the past year, North House has been approaching various government departments at all government levels, to try and make the point that ‘affordable’ housing is not available to the working poor let alone the homeless. A definition of ‘affordable’ housing is sadly needed in any new policy development. The present definition of 51% of ‘market value’ is not appropriate for new working families, the working poor, and those on subsidy who are locked out of the housing market.

To solve the problems of the homeless and those at risk of being homeless, a more comprehensive housing policy is required. Such a policy would address a definition of ‘affordable’ based on income or ability to pay; would assist shelters with a per diem rate that better reflects their costs; would assist groups trying to do transitional housing with subsidies and operating costs; and finally, would assist with ‘affordable’ housing – maintaining and repairing old housing stock and developing new housing.

With a provincial election and perhaps even a federal election in the near future, question your candidates on their ideas for solving the housing situation in Durham Region.

Heather Beveridae Chair. North House Board of Directors



Feature Article – The Residential Tenancies Act

The Durham Community Legal Clinic recently held a workshop that detailed changes to the legislation governing landlord and tenant relations in the province of Ontario. The former Tenant Protection Act (TPA), which had been in effect for almost a decade has been replaced by the new Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) which came into effect January 31, 2007. Although the two acts are similar in many ways, there are important new tenant protections that will be elaborated on below.

1. Default evictions have been removed from the act. In the past, tenants who did not respond in writing to the landlord's application for a hearing could arrive at their hearing with an eviction order in place. The RTA corrects this and does not make the filing of a dispute a pre-requisite for an eviction hearing.
2. The RTA has prohibited landlords from increasing rent if they have received an "order prohibiting a rent increase" (an OPRI). These orders are effective in getting landlords who have allowed their properties to fall into a state of disrepair to do renovations. To ensure that new tenants are aware that the rent cannot be increased until ordered repairs are completed, the landlord is legally required to give written notice to any new tenant what the legal rent is under the OPRI, and what it will be if the OPRI is lifted.
3. In the past, if a tenant vacated a rental unit without giving proper notice landlords were eligible for rent long past the date had they given proper notice. Tenants who leave without proper notice will now be responsible for reimbursing the landlord for 28 days notice for weekly tenancies, and 60 days for monthly or fixed term tenancies.
4. Under the TPA landlords could bring forth their applications for eviction and tenants would not be able to respond as to why they did not pay the rent. The RPA recognizes that many conflicts between landlords and tenants stem from disrepair or other breaches of responsibility by their landlords. Tenants may now bring forward any issues regarding a landlord's serious breach of responsibility at an eviction hearing even if they have not made a formal application regarding the issues. The raising of these issues could reduce the amount of arrears owed or could eliminate the arrears owed entirely.
5. Under the RTA tenants have the opportunity to void an eviction order issued because of arrears, post enforcement date but prior to the Sheriff's arrival. This opportunity will be available to a tenant only once in a tenant's particular relationship with the same landlord. The void will be granted only if the tenant is able to pay the arrears owed to the landlord.
6. Under the TPA, landlords could apply to evict tenants if the landlord or their family member required the rental unit to occupy, or to demolish or make substantial repairs. If a tenant discovered that a landlord did not in fact do what they said they were going to do, the Tribunal did not intervene. Under the RTA if the tribunal determines that the landlord gave the eviction order in bad faith, then the tenant can apply for damages from the landlord.
7. According to the RTA, after an eviction tenants had 48 hours to remove their belongings. The new legislation provides evicted tenants with 72 hours to remove their belongings.

These new aspects of the legislation governing landlord and tenant relations are important for all service providers and tenants to take note of. The Landlord and Tenant Board are well versed in all aspects of the RTA and are just a phone call away. I would urge any tenant or service provider to call the Board if they have questions or concerns regarding a tenancy. The telephone number of the LTB is 1-888-332-3234. For additional legal advice, low income individuals and families can utilize the assistance of the Durham Community Legal Clinic at 1-888-297-2202.

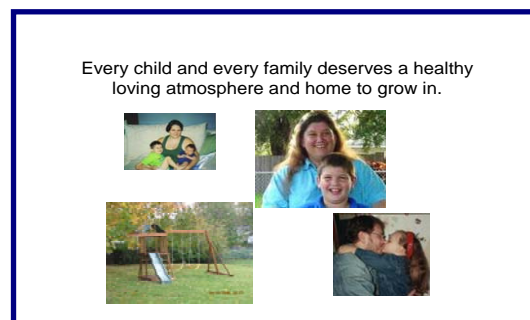


Program Manager's Report – Ann Watson

Often in spring we see people on the move, changing residence. Those who are hoping to move see this time of year as bringing about an increase in vacancies making moving to more suitable or affordable units possible. Unfortunately, this appears not to have been the case this year.

A number of families working with North House who had hoped to move this spring have been left shaking their heads at the lack of vacancies, particularly in the Uxbridge and Port Perry areas. Though rents are high, and units often in disrepair, families are willing to rent but unable to find units that are available. Weeks would go by with no new rental adds making competition for the few that were available fierce.

Where does this situation leave the many people in our communities who cannot afford to buy a house? How do families stabilize and get ahead if they are under housed and/or renting beyond their means? The reality is that many jobs in North Durham are close to minimum wage, part time, and without benefits. This leaves many families facing a daily struggle to survive. This struggle impacts everyone in the family, the medical system, schools, family ties...the list goes on.



Office Updates and Announcements

Apartments Needed:

If you, or someone you know, are aware of an apartment that is coming available for rent we would appreciate it if you could give us a call. Anything you can do to get families off to a better start is a step in the right direction.

Board Members Required:

Do you have time to give – a few hours each month – to an important, worthy cause? If so, North House is seeking new Board members for its upcoming term. Please contact Heather Beveridge at 905-852-7003 for details.

Annual General Meeting:

October 24th featuring guest **speaker The Rev. Maisie A. Watson**, a Housing Social Worker and Deacon with All Saint's Anglican Church in Peterborough. The meeting begins at 5:00 PM at Precious Minds Resource & Learning Centre – 21980 Hwy # 12, north of Greenbank.



North House Vision and Values

Vision

North House will facilitate responsive approaches and supports to housing that is safe and affordable, meeting the changing needs of the people in the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge.

Core Values

We believe in:

1. The rights of our participants to confidentiality and privacy;
2. Safe, supportive, non-judgmental and healthy environments;
3. Breaking the cycle of homelessness by providing a supportive, integrated continuum of housing services and supports;
4. An innovative approach that uses a circle of supportive services and a focus on the strengths of the participants which enables them to find and enact their own solutions to positive change.

Many, Many Thanks

North House acknowledges the support provided by FaithWorks, the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, the Bay of Quinte Conference of the United Church of Canada, the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Sisters of Service of Toronto and The Ontario Trillium Foundation.



Donations Most Welcome

North House thanks and appreciates the generosity of our donors. Your support helps ensure our long-term financial stability.

- **I would be pleased to support North House in its work with homeless families and children.** -

- Yes, I'll support North House with a monthly donation of: \$10 \$15 \$25 \$50 -
 - on the 10th of each month. I have included a void cheque for this purpose.

- I prefer to give a one-time donation of \$ _____ -

- Name _____ -
 - Address _____ -
 - City, Province _____ -
 - Postal Code _____ -
 - Telephone _____ -
 - Email _____ -

- Please mail your donation to: **North House, P.O. Box 1097, Uxbridge, ON L9P 1N4** -

- Receipts will be issued for income tax purposes. -

- **North House is a registered charity. Charitable # 85682 2077 RR0001** -