

Cross-Sectoral Roadmap for Change: Addressing Homelessness in Peterborough/Nogojiwanong

Research for Social Change Lab

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Background and Rationale

Ontario is currently facing a housing and homelessness crisis. While mid-sized cities have grappled with hidden homelessness for a long time, homelessness in our communities has become increasingly visible. This is exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, the financialization of housing, and the downscaling of non-profit housing by the provincial government. Peterborough is no exception. The United Way Peterborough & District reported that the most recent Point-in-Time count found [176 individuals](#) experiencing homelessness during a 24-hour period in December 2021. They reported a 350% increase of people living outdoors since 2018. The count identified [trends](#) among those experiencing homelessness in the region, including that: (1) they are experiencing longer periods of homelessness, (2) they are less likely to stay in shelters, (3) and they are more likely to have Indigenous ancestry. A limitation of the PiT Count is that it can miss people who are provisionally sheltered or experiencing hidden homelessness. Importantly, Peterborough's shelters are typically at [92% capacity](#), meaning that there are an insufficient number of beds, and that shelters are not meeting the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. In February, 2022, the City of Peterborough's By-Name List indicated that there were at least [300 individuals](#) experiencing homelessness in Peterborough City and County. These two approaches to measuring local homelessness both show that the number of people living in homelessness exceeds the [number of shelter beds, 127](#). Notably, there are no available local homeless numbers since 2022, and no new PiT Count will occur until the end of 2024.

The responsibility for homelessness differs across provinces. Ontario is unique: the delivery of homelessness services is largely the responsibility of the municipal government. The Province of Ontario designated [47 Service System Managers](#) under the Housing Services Act, 2011, effectively downloading the responsibility of housing onto municipal governments. The Service System Manager, in this case the [City of Peterborough, is responsible for:](#)

1. Managing affordable housing units.
2. Administering, funding, overseeing standards, and capacity building for non-profit and cooperative housing providers.
3. Providing affordable housing options, including shelter, transitional and supportive housing, rent-geared-to-income housing, and affordable rentals.
4. Providing affordable homes.
5. Managing waitlists and access to affordable housing.
6. Meeting the complex housing needs of their communities.

Increasingly, community members are dissatisfied with the government response to homelessness. While municipal governments are constrained by inadequate budgets and the inability to run a financial deficit, they are also critiqued for their lack of political will or knowledge of their [legal obligations](#). Community organizations and civil society have an increasingly important role in collaborating to find better solutions for the housing crisis, and in advocating to all levels of government to prioritize tackling homelessness.



Report Purpose and Outline

This report acts as a cross-sectoral roadmap for change, focusing on issues of housing and homelessness. This roadmap was co-created with the community through two events: a forum in May 2023, and a symposium in February 2024. The report is intended to document the process by which the community priorities were created and agreed upon, how actions were distributed, and how resources were pooled. Furthermore, it presents next steps and actions that the community must take to better its response to the housing and homelessness crisis.

The report begins by describing why the symposium was created, and how it developed over the last year and a half. The symposium logistics, many intentionally constructed to align with conference themes, are then outlined. Next, the action planning which was facilitated in working groups is described, with an overview of community priorities that align with each working group topic. The symposium culminated with a shareback and task assignment meeting where service providers, nonprofits, and others volunteered to lead an action on the priority list. The report moves to describe the agreed-upon community actions, outlining the commitments made by various entities to effect positive change. Additionally, it highlights steps and actions that are yet to be undertaken, underscoring the ongoing nature of the community's response to the housing and homelessness crisis. The report concludes with final thoughts on the process, imbued with both hope and urgency to collectively take action to take care of our community.



Cross-Sectoral Roadmap for Change Co-Creation

This roadmap was created by the community through two events over the last year. The first event, the Forum on Housing and Homelessness in Peterborough was created in 2023 following a series of [contentious decisions by City Council](#) on the winter homelessness response. They had led to a winter homelessness budget shortfall of \$200,000 and a lack of necessary services for individuals experiencing homelessness in Peterborough. Several community groups in Peterborough partnered to fund and fill the service gap for unhoused community members. This kind of partnership, while unprecedented, sparked a sense of hope. What if the wider community came together in partnership with the City to make the lives of all residents better? Enthusiasm for, and arising from, the first *Forum* suggested that there was interest in working better together to improve homeless-serving resources and access to housing.

As will be described, the next event, the *Peterborough Community Symposium on Housing and Homelessness*, was developed to allow for more action planning and to fill the gaps identified in the initial forum. Together, these events have informed the roadmap of priorities and actions in this report.



May 2023: Forum

On May 9th 2023, the Research for Social Change Lab, United Way Peterborough & District, and Peterborough Drug Strategy [hosted a one-day forum](#) that featured local researchers and allowed for cross-sector community collaboration: [The Forum on Housing and Homelessness in Peterborough](#). At the forum, researchers from the Research for Social Change Lab presented their [research](#) on the Coordinated Access system, Peterborough Drug Strategy presented their [research](#) on the housing response of different mid-sized cities across Ontario and the government responsibility for housing, and United Way Peterborough & District presented on the [Reaching Home program](#) in Peterborough.

The symposium was open to ~75 service providers, municipal staff, academics, people with lived experience, and interested community members. Bursaries were available to any person who felt that the \$20 cost was a barrier to their participation. The event featured intentional networking time, and brainstorming sessions for solutions-oriented actions, which were documented and collected by researchers to integrate into the community roadmap. Based on post-symposium feedback, one thing was clear: symposium attendees were hungry to learn more and were eager to collaborate more.



Photo by William Pearson

February 2024: Symposium

The organizers immediately began planning a second event as a follow-up to the initial forum: [The Peterborough Community Symposium on Housing and Homelessness](#). It took place on February 22- 23, 2024. This time, the symposium would be two days and would have a stronger emphasis on cross-sector systems planning to problem solve the housing and homelessness crisis in Peterborough, allowing more time and resources for structured brainstorming and collaboration. In particular, the symposium was intended to:

1. Mobilize, exchange, and confirm knowledge with local attendees representing lived expertise, frontline expertise, policy expertise, and research expertise.
2. Action this knowledge locally through problem solving, strategizing, task distribution, and resource pooling.

The conference was constructed by two committees. **The advisory committee** was responsible for guiding the direction of the symposium. The large group, made up of service providers, Indigenous organizations, representatives from local government, people with lived experience, and academics, guided the symposium in how it actualized the listed goals. Led by the feedback and learning from the first symposium, several priority areas were developed, including: the value of lived expertise, harm reduction, decriminalization, understanding Indigenous homelessness, housing stock, and the right to housing. These priority areas directed the topics of keynote panels, concurrent sessions, and working groups. In addition, the advisory committee discussed the ways in which working groups could tangibly action plan a community-based housing strategy. A representative from the advisory committee further consulted [a panel of people](#) who have lived experience of housing precarity, homelessness, and/or substance use. All people involved in the advisory who have lived experience were paid for their time. **The organizing committee** was a smaller group of representatives from the Research for Social Change Lab, the Peterborough Drug Strategy, and United Way Peterborough and District. They were responsible for symposium logistics, integrating priority areas into the symposium program, and intentionally creating knowledge co-production processes. The organizing committee was accountable to the advisory committee, updating the group on the shape of the conference and iterating logistics based on feedback.

The symposium was designed for community learning and community action planning. It was open to ~100 individuals with 12 funded positions for people who have lived experience (of homelessness and/or substance use) to participate and be compensated for their expertise. The rest of the participants included individuals from the service sector, nonprofit sector, Indigenous organizations, academia, local government, and interested community members. Some of these individuals also had lived experience. Many of the conference logistics were intentionally planned and aligned with the theme of community collaboration. For instance, we used local caterers and provided healthy food, were situated at the downtown university campus, supported Indigenous cultural practices like smudging and a drumming circle, and provided private and peer-supported space for people who have lived experience to connect with one another.



The symposium was designed to facilitate the production of a **local cross-sectoral roadmap for change** – which was originally promised as an outcome of the Research for Social Change Lab’s research on the implementation of Coordinated Access and the Peterborough Symposium on Housing and Homelessness. Rather than impose a roadmap on the community, we took the central action themes emerging from the first forum, and designed a two day event that would culminate in the production of a cross-sectoral roadmap for change. This report is the roadmap for change that we offer back to our community, on the basis of the extraordinary insights and ideas mobilized during the 2023 and 2024 events.



Photo by William Pearson

Event Logistics

Day 1

Time	Activity	Session and Speaker
8:30-9:00 AM	Breakfast and opportunity for networking	
9:00-10:30 AM	Introduction and Indigenous Drumming circle Keynote Panel: Lived Experience Leadership	Lived Experience and Research: Jayne Malenfant Lived Experience and Social Service Practice: Janalyn Dodds Lived Experience and Advocacy: Alex Nelson
10:40-11:55 AM	Concurrent Session: Financialization of Housing and Local Stock	Introduction to Financialization: Naomi Nichols Update on local housing supply and plans to meet demand: Rebecca Morgan-Quinn The local rental market: Annie Hedden Non-profit housing provision and supporting congregate living settings: Tammy Kuehne
	Concurrent Session: Working with People with Lived Experience – What Have We Learned?	Peterborough Drug Strategy's Lived Experience Advisory Panel
11:55-12:45 pm	LUNCH catered by local business	
12:45-2:15 pm	Concurrent Session: Decriminalising/Destigmatizing Approaches to Unstable Tenancies	HUTS and the "playbook" for community collaboration: Melissa O'Donohue, Natasha van Renesse, Alana Parisien Mediation for housing retention: Marion Little Challenges and barriers for women who live with their abuser: Brittany McMillan
	Concurrent Session: Addressing Indigenous Homelessness in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough	Indigenous homelessness in the area: Brianna Kitchener How Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre supports local Indigenous people navigating the housing crisis: Ashley Safar How the First People's House of Learning supports Indigenous students navigating the housing crisis: Dawn Lavell-Havard
2:25-3:55 PM	Working group: Decriminalizing Approaches to Housing Stabilization	
	Working group: Increasing Housing Stock	
	Working group: Addressing Indigenous Homelessness in Nogojiwanong	
3:55-4:00 PM	Wrap-up and Goodbye	

Event Logistics

Day 2

Time	Activity	Session and Speaker
8:30-9:00 AM	Breakfast and opportunity for networking	
9:00-10:30 AM	Local Initiatives Plenary	Understanding and influencing political processes: Alex Bierk Modular Bridge Housing Community: Debbie Carriers, Jessica Penner Trinity Community Centre: Auden Palmer, Christian Harvey
10:40-11:55 AM	Concurrent Session: Realizing the Rights to Housing and an Adequate Standard of Living	What are tenant unions and how can they help to realize the right to housing: Nicola Koyanagi, Irene Sullivaga Basic Income and the Right to Living: Elisha Rubacha, Joëlle Favreau
	Concurrent Session: Harm Reduction	Harm Reduction – What is it? What is the science suggesting it works? How do we combat disinformation about it: Thomas Piggot How do we practice harm reduction as we move toward health equity: Shannon Culkeen How do we realize harm reduction in housing? Introducing flow-through housing models: Shawntell Campbell
11:55-12:45 pm	LUNCH catered by local business	
12:45-2:15 pm	Working group: Realizing Harm Reduction Practices and Principles	
	Working group: Realizing the Right to Housing in Peterborough	
	Working group: Realizing the Right to Housing in Peterborough	
2:30-3:30 PM	Working Group Shareback; Next Steps; Task Assignments; Wrap Up Indigenous travelling song	

Community Workshopping

Purpose

To attend to the symposium goals, fostering the creation of community-based solutions was a main feature of the symposium. Home-grown and place-based solutions are integral for a successful response to the housing and homelessness crisis. Each community is unique in its challenges and context in making decisions to best fit the city. Each day began with opportunities for learning through keynote presentations and concurrent sessions. These sessions were intended to augment participants' understandings of the various dimensions of homelessness before bringing their knowledge and perspectives into working group sessions. Participants were encouraged to sign up for a working group that aligned with their professional expertise or interests. Each group was made up of individuals from across the sector, who were supported by a facilitator and note-taker. Facilitators had access to a facilitation guide developed by the organizing committee, but were free to facilitate the working groups as they thought best. Some working groups were split up into two smaller groups, while others had only one group. The facilitator led the participants through activities, using verbal discussion, post-it notes, and chart paper. The activities were intended to identify solutions for the working group topic, co-creating an action plan by thematically organizing the group's brainstormed ideas. Although each working group varied in methodology, they ended the session with a draft action plan, some organizing their recommended actions along micro, meso, and macro scales and others dividing theirs into short-term and long-term actions.

At the end of the symposium, all participants gathered together for the *Working Group Shareback*. Each facilitator explained the working group's action plan, and representatives from agencies across Peterborough 'signed up' to take accountability for various actions. While the symposium saw great progress with various participants taking responsibility for specific actions (see Community Action), some actions have yet to be taken on (see Next Steps).



Working Group 1: Decriminalizing Approaches to Housing Stabilization

The current approach to managing local homelessness is often critiqued as penalizing and/or criminalizing. That is, formal laws and rules penalize (e.g., through the imposition of tickets and fines) or criminalize (e.g., through charges of trespassing) individuals for simply trying to survive and live their private lives in the absence of housing. A punitive orientation to homelessness is evident in the use of municipal by-laws that, for example, prohibit tenting on public property or prevent ‘panhandling’, and in rules by local housing and homelessness organizations that, for example, utilize service restrictions to exclude people from shelters who use substances or fail to comply with shelter rules. The working groups who focused on decriminalizing approaches to housing stabilization discussed criminal justice reform, discharge planning, collaboration, harm reduction, and the building of more housing. In particular, the following themes emerged out of their discussion:

I. Decriminalization, criminal justice reform, and alternative methods:

Participants in both working groups described the need to decriminalize homelessness, in both the laws and in the service response. In utilizing the concept of criminalization, we are referring both the explicitly criminal-legal processes that result in detention or incarceration as well as the array of other everyday encounters with law enforcement that provoke a feeling of being targeted, surveilled, and/or punished (ex. requests to move along when found sleeping in a public space; arrests and detention – even if no charges are laid – for public drug use; punitive sanctions and surveilling tactics in organizations that are reminiscent of time spent in jail or which mirror criminal-legal processes). People in this working group observed that municipal by-laws that prohibit tenting and zero-tolerance policies regarding public drug use have been harmful to individuals who are vulnerable because they have no place to sleep or to use substances in private. They expressed frustration with the use of police resources and taxpayer dollars to respond to visible homelessness with punishment, rather than considering what resources would help individuals in these situations experience safety and stability in their lives. In addition, symposium participants expressed concern about an increase in housing unit takeovers (HUTs) in Peterborough. Because of their connection with organized crime, HUTs are often addressed by police. However, the working group pointed to programs like Community Mediation Peterborough through the John Howard Society or other HUT intervention programs in Peterborough as viable non-criminalizing alternatives to police intervention.



2. Discharge planning and cross-sector collaboration: Challenges with discharge planning were discussed among participants. In particular, they highlighted how individuals leaving detention or incarceration or being discharged from the hospital are not given the supports needed to thrive in the community. People frequently exit provincial custody into homelessness. The working groups suggested stronger discharge planning from prison, hospital, and the Children's Aid Society (CAS), and intentional cross-sector collaboration to action-plan for housing stabilization upon institutional discharge.

3. Harm reduction¹: Participants in both working groups frequently spoke about harm reduction, naming its importance to the accessibility of shelters and the community's response to the volatile drug supply more broadly. They specified that all housing options need to be grounded in a harm reduction approach, and that harm reduction strategies (such as, allowing people to use drugs in their rooms or ensuring people have access to medically assisted treatment) would drastically reduce people's exposure to criminalizing experiences as they seek housing stabilization. While the participants argued that upstream changes are needed (such as quicker and easier access to mental health and addictions support services), the reality is that the unpredictable drug supply in Peterborough is an urgent problem that requires an emergency response. At a very basic level, this means reducing the harm to individuals who are trying to survive what has been described in the media as a [drug poisoning epidemic](#). This working group highlighted the need for low or no barrier shelter where people can safely use substances (and will not be criminalized for doing so) and an array of housing options, to meet the needs of all individuals who are looking to be housed.

4. Breaking the silos and addressing sector loneliness: The working groups named a shared experience of deep loneliness in the homelessness sector. Many participants spoke openly and vulnerably about how this sense of isolation affected them as frontline workers or as program managers. They described the heavy weight of these issues, and a sense of anger about how siloed the sector is. A common sentiment from participants was, "I wish I knew this sooner!", indicating a disconnect between organizations and knowledge of programs. They discussed how symposiums like this are helpful to network and build knowledge capacity, but that more work is needed to continue to break the silos and keep practitioners and managers up to date on services in the community.

¹ For those who are not familiar with the term, harm reduction is a philosophy and set of practices, informed by research and the experiential knowledge of people who use substances. Harm reduction approaches recognize that people will use substances, even when substances are criminalized; as such, harm reduction includes an array of strategies for reducing the harms associated with substance-use and improving the quality of life for people who use substances and the community more broadly (National Harm Reduction Coalition, 2020; Taha et al., 2022; Roe, 2005). Harm reduction depends on the use of non-judgmental and non-coercive strategies to promote safer and healthier individuals and communities (Canadian Mental Health Association, n.d.; Pauly, 2008).

5. Building a community of care: The participants emphasized the need to build a community of care. Both working groups spoke about how policies that support criminalization of homelessness are often rooted in stigma, and that helping the community understand the root causes and effects of homelessness with openness and empathy has the potential to shift the narrative, thus shifting political pressure. Public perceptions about homelessness and drug use, the participants argued, are often rooted in divisive politics and an ‘us versus them’ mentality. They suggested communications training for politicians around contentious issues and also highlighted the successful YIMBY (Yes in My Back Yard) campaign in Guelph.

6. Streamline processes: Many participants in the working groups discussed the issues with processes related to housing navigation. They suggested a strategy of ‘barrier busting’, with the goal of making systems navigation seamless to meet individual needs. The participants argued that sometimes people break rules and receive service restrictions because they are unaware that there may be other local resources they could access instead that may better suit their needs (ex. places to sleep that will not enforce service restrictions when people consume substances onsite). Participants brainstormed new ways to enable cross-sector collaboration to provide low-barrier services, and discussed restarting the coordinated outreach table for frontline workers. In addition, the working group brainstormed a community hub model that could make sharing information easier, as well as a need for more mobile service delivery.

7. Building continuum of housing opportunities: The working groups underscored the need for a continuum of housing opportunities. This means offering housing options that best support individual needs (e.g., the provision of wet and dry shelters; recovery oriented and harm reduction supports; and housing initiatives developed to meet the diverse needs of local community members). They suggested tangible actions like using the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) to help individuals transition out of rent-geared-to-income housing, the use of vacancy controls², creating a landlord registry, integrating affordable rental requirements at the building permit stage, and advocating to change planning requirements that restrict the building of useful housing.

² Vacancy regulation: “In regimes with vacancy control, the rent for a unit follows the increase guideline even when tenants move out. The new tenant pays the same rent as the old tenant. In regimes with vacancy decontrol, landlords can increase rents by however much they want between tenants.” (The Monitor, 2024)

Working Group 2: Increasing Housing Stock

Canada currently faces a housing crisis, largely driven by inadequate housing stock and the financialization of housing. While the answer is seemingly simple (build more houses!), it is complicated by government regulations, corporate investors, and a lack of housing starts explicitly designed to meet the diverse housing needs of community members. The working group that focused on increasing housing stock and workshopped the following solutions:

1. **Cross-sector collaboration:** The working groups discussed how there is a need for cross-sector collaboration among nonprofit organizations, government, and developers to ensure that housing is being built that meets the needs of the community. They argued that innovative solutions may emerge that could not be imagined when working in silos. The participants suggested establishing advisory committees made up of representatives from the nonprofit sector, government, and developers that would enable the streamlining of housing development and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of housing initiatives. This would enable a platform for productive discussions and the balancing of needs for all stakeholders.

2. **Housing development and design:** Building housing that actually meets the needs of community members was a recurring topic in the working groups. This includes processes for accurately forecasting housing needs as well as processes for building higher-density housing. Further, it necessitates the promotion of a mixture of affordable and group housing to accommodate a diverse range of residents including families, seniors, individuals who have disabilities, and individuals who have mental health conditions. The participants highlighted how the community has started to see new modalities of housing being built including garden suites and modular housing, however planning policy must evolve from its restrictive, single-family home obsession to a more inclusive and humanistic approach.

3. **Political engagement and advocacy:** The participants discussed the importance of policy change, as it relates to the increasing of housing stock. In particular, they highlighted the need for stricter legislation on foreign investors who buy Canadian housing, policy to reduce ‘renovictions’³, a vacancy tax, incentives on building affordable housing, and fixing tax loopholes that advance economic gains for those who benefit from financialization of housing. The groups highlighted the necessity for political engagement on all levels, encouraging community members to be vocal about housing issues and advocate for affordable housing solutions. One tangible suggestion made by a participant was to support tenant unions and empower residents to join, harnessing the power of advocacy in numbers.

³ Renovictions happen when a landlord evicts their tenant to accommodate renovations to the unit, leaving the tenant in a precarious situation and often leading to the unit becoming unaffordable.



4. **Social supports and harm reduction:** The working groups spoke briefly about the value of social supports to keep people who have housing, housed. This includes lowering barriers to staying in housing and reducing punitive approaches taken by some housing providers. They indicated how the philosophy behind Housing First⁴ and harm reduction align closely with increasing housing stock, focusing on stability and compassion. They also discussed the need for supports that cater to a wide range of needs, with a special emphasis on individuals who have disabilities, and families.



Photo by William Pearson

⁴ The Housing First model prioritizes helping people move directly from homelessness into independent, permanent housing while offering, but not requiring, people to engage with supports and services. (Homeless Hub, 2021).

Working Group 3: Addressing Indigenous Homelessness in Nogojiwanong

Individuals who identify as Indigenous or who have Indigenous ancestry are overrepresented in Peterborough's population of individuals experiencing homelessness. While 4% of Peterborough's population identifies as Indigenous, 27% of the individuals experiencing homelessness in Peterborough's most recent [Point-in-Time count](#) identify as Indigenous. It is clear that the Indigenous community is disproportionately affected by homelessness. In each of the working groups that addressed Indigenous homelessness in Nogojiwanong, the discussion and problem-solving centered around community care, allyship, collaboration, and education. Notably, several themes emerged out of the working groups in relation to Indigenous homelessness:

1. Education and training: The participants underscored the value of public education for individuals, organizations, and the community at large regarding Indigenous homelessness. In particular, they emphasized that education which challenges colonial norms would be valuable, especially as it relates to urban Indigenous homelessness. Some participants suggested accessible educational material like Indigenous 101s, how-to's, and resource lists would be helpful to educate the broader community. To ensure that the education is accurate and culturally sensitive, they encourage agencies to draw on Indigenous knowledge and businesses and to pay Indigenous consultants well for their expertise.

2. Data collection: Both working groups discussed a need to improve data collection and analysis with respect to Indigenous homelessness so that analysis is nuanced and reflective of Canada's colonial past and present. Data collection, ownership and analysis should reflect the [First Nations Principles of OCAP](#): ownership, control, access and possession of data about Indigenous homelessness. Data collection practices should also forefront transparency and clarity about why the data is being collected, how data will be accessible, and the ways that data collection, analysis and sharing practices strive to be culturally appropriate. In addition, the participants emphasized that researchers must value the lived experience of Indigenous community members in both data collection and in leadership roles.



3. Indigenous empowerment: Many participants in the working groups agreed on the need to build capacity for Indigenous leadership, and leadership by those who have lived experience of homelessness. This includes building relationships between and among individuals to foster support, creating a safe space for sharing and feedback, and ensuring that Indigenous voices are central to the decision-making process. The participants often mentioned the need to pay those in leadership roles a living wage. They emphasized that agencies must take the lead in creating these shifts in power and compensation, restructuring their processes to ensure they are inclusive of Indigenous voices in frontline, advocacy, and management roles.

4. Allyship and cross-sector collaboration: The participants underscored the role of allyship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members in the empowerment of Indigenous voices. They discussed how better connections and relationships and inter-agency collaboration are integral to creating safe spaces that respect Indigenous culture. Some discussed how symposiums like the Peterborough Community Symposium on Housing and Homelessness are important starting points in discussions of allyship, especially when work in this sector is draining and employees lack capacity for collaboration.

5. Systemic change: Both working groups emphasized the imperative of addressing the root cause of homelessness and understanding how upstream interventions can change Indigenous homelessness. This includes improving housing in Indigenous communities and ensuring that there are adequate cultural, social and housing supports for urban Indigenous people in cities. They discussed increasing accountability for money- and power-holders, like politicians and corporate landlords, through methods like self-evaluation, building relationships between nonprofit organizations and the government or for-profit corporations, and by integrating local Indigenous communities and leaders. Importantly, an increase in support from funders to build capacity was named as integral for this advocacy work. The working groups highlighted how the systemic change must be led by those who are outside of the Indigenous community, like housing corporations, local government, and the broader settler community.

6. Safety and cultural sensitivity: Participants discussed the importance of safe and culturally appropriate spaces. This involves ensuring that city shelters are welcoming to Indigenous community members and foster a sense of cultural safety and support for Indigenous ceremony, as well as ending the criminalization of homelessness, and funding better victim services. The participants shared that ideally, the decisions and the program design of enhancing shelters for cultural appropriateness would be done by Indigenous community members who are adequately compensated for their work.



7. Resource mapping and knowledge sharing: To encourage inter-agency collaboration and allyship, the working groups suggested resource mapping. They discussed a 'living' internal list that would enable service providers to know what services are offered and identify service gaps in the community. This includes building knowledge and relationships to ensure that resources are being used efficiently for a coordinated approach and to avoid redundancy. Despite the existence of 211, they emphasized that it does not capture all services and does not allow for a coordinated approach. The participants brainstormed that this list must be hosted on a public server, like the City, and could be compiled by an individual or agency.



Photo by William Pearson

Working Group 4: Realizing Harm Reduction Practices and Principles

Issues around housing and homelessness often intersect with the drug poisoning epidemic. It is clear that the issues cannot be discussed in silos as many of the criminalizing and/or penalizing approaches to housing and homelessness service provision are associated with drug use. While many unhoused individuals in Peterborough are on the frontlines of the drug poisoning crisis, the [evidence](#) is clear: housing reduces the harms associated with drug use. In this case, it is important to incorporate harm reduction into housing. [Harm reduction](#) is a “set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing the negative consequences associated with drug use”. It is often accompanied by the phrase, ‘meeting people where they are at’, indicating a humanizing and supportive approach to caring for the community. Harm reduction and recovery-oriented approaches can work together. The working groups focused on:

1. [Education and public awareness](#): Both of the working groups frequently discussed the misconceptions associated with harm reduction, which leads to a stigmatizing response by the public, service providers, and policy makers. They suggested reframing the conversation through the lens of love and justice, and helping people understand how harm reduction is connected to housing. The participants underscored that harm reduction enables life to convey the urgency of this practice and philosophy. Participants also argued that the media has an important role to play in combating misinformation about harm reduction and restraining from the perpetuation of narratives that sustain NIMBY attitudes with respect to substance use and homelessness.

2. [Changing cultural perspectives and organizational boardrooms](#): The participants highlighted the problematic ways in which ‘old-school’ mentalities around drug use are leading to stigma. They also spoke of how narratives about Peterborough as a retirement town and the desire to ‘get back to the old Peterborough’ are harmful because they fail to acknowledge the strengths of Peterborough’s changing demographic composition (such as an increase in newcomer families), and fail to acknowledge the negative impacts of growing inequality in the region. Because many social service organizations are accountable to a Board of Director’s, the participants discussed how this governance structure can hinder harm reduction in practice. By this, they mean that some board members are unfamiliar with the evidence in support of harm reduction as a healthcare practice and philosophy and are ignorant about the volatility of the current drug supply. In some cases, Boards of Directors knowledge and values are misaligned with the perspectives of service providers. Some suggestions to mitigate this barrier included board member education and board-to-board mentorship.



3. Providing a housing continuum: One critique of harm reduction in housing is that some service users would actually prefer to live in a sober house or dry shelter (where no drugs or alcohol can be consumed) for comfort and safety. While low barrier housing or wet shelters (where drugs or alcohol can be consumed) may invite some individuals into housing that were previously restricted, these environments can be exclusionary for others (ex. those who are in recovery or those who have traumatic histories associated with their own or others' substance use). The working groups suggested that service agencies work together to ensure that there is a spectrum of shelter and housing supports across Peterborough so that we better accommodate people's diverse needs. – that is, a spectrum that includes abstinence housing, safe use housing, mixed gender housing, single gender housing, pet friendly housing, etc. The options, they argued, are just as important as having all low-barrier housing, to truly align with the idea of “meeting people where they are at”. The participants highlighted how strong and up-to-date data would help service providers understand what is needed in the community.

4. Cross-sector collaboration: Cross-sector collaboration was highlighted by many participants when it came to housing agencies and drug use agencies. From their experience, they found that these sectors are largely separate and work in silos. They discussed how information sharing across sectors would lead to a more holistic harm reduction response in housing, as experts in each of the sectors could share information and best practices. They also spoke about how agencies across sectors could work together in advocacy towards the power-holders and policy-makers, holding the city, province, and country accountable for taking care of their residents.

5. Valuing lived experience in policy and program decisions: Notably, the groups discussed the value of the lived experience of individuals who use/have used drugs and who have experienced homelessness. They highlighted the importance of meaningfully engaging people with lived experience (PWLE) of homelessness, housing insecurity and substance use in policy and programming decisions for better outcomes, and described best practice including: proper compensation, job descriptions that value lived experience, integrating feedback from the hiring process to be inclusive of PWLE, and support for PWLE in the workplace.

6. Working with families and youth: Some of the participants explained the importance of supporting families and young people as a form of harm reduction. They explained how programs that support parents and educators in talking about mental health and drugs with children would be useful in breaking stigma and in answering questions early in development. They also discussed the value of family mediation and relationship-building for families who are struggling with substance use or housing issues, ensuring that individuals in the family unit feel supported by a community of care and trust.



Working Group 5: Realizing the Right to Housing in Peterborough

The human right to housing is [affirmed](#) by the federal government through the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Canadian Charter of Rights. In a notable step by the Government of Canada in 2019, the right to housing was ratified through the [National Housing Strategy Act](#). It is clear that housing is a right in Canada. However, this rights-based approach to housing is not realized on the ground. Some believe that this [right to housing is not known by local government](#), while others argue that the limited resources and vast responsibility that municipalities must shoulder, make it difficult for any meaningful action. This working group brainstormed how the right to housing can be realized in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough. They focused on the actioning of legal frameworks, education, and cross-sector collaboration, including the following themes:

1. [Legal and legislative actions](#): Most notably, the working group discussed larger legal actions that could be taken by the community. They highlighted how rights-based language is powerful when employed in a way that centers the state, and wondered how this important information could be accessible to all. The participants suggested a focus on due process, legal education, and generally making the criminal legal system more accessible, accountable, and just. In practice, this might include partnerships with the Fleming College Paralegal program to train students to be liaisons with tenants and those who live in encampments, using their knowledge to inform them of their rights and in fielding questions. In addition, the working groups discussed lawsuits like the [precedent setting case in Kitchener-Waterloo](#), where encampment residents were granted the right to tent in public space when there was limited shelter capacity. They suggested deeper engagement with organizations like ACORN to delve into potential legal routes for tenancy rights and rights-based advocacy.

2. [Community building and solidarity](#): To complement other themes, community building, care, and solidarity were often brought up by participants in the working group. They spoke to the value of connecting with one another and knowing neighbours as a form of advocacy. One participant highlighted how common spaces are being removed from apartment buildings, and posited that landlords do not like tenants talking to one another in fear that they will learn about their rights. The participants encouraged community-building through bulletins, events, and forums like Peterborough Reddit, Peterborough Streetvoice, and Politics in Peterborough.



3. Education across the lifetime: Intersecting with many other themes, ‘knowing your rights’ was frequently discussed by participants. They wondered if a key piece of realizing the right to housing was actually just ensuring residents realize their rights. The public education piece, they argued, is important across the lifetime. That is, starting the education early in K-12 education like the integration into CHV20 (Civics and Citizenship course), integrating tenant rights education into university orientation, and making older tenants aware of their rights through the neighbour-to-neighbour communication, social media campaigns, and events. The working group also discussed how education for municipal employees and city councillors would be invaluable, to help them understand their role in realizing the right to housing.

4. Cross-sector collaboration: The participants underscored the value of working across sectors to provide safe and supportive housing. They discussed how the right to housing can be realized on an organizational level through making housing more accessible and increasing housing options. In particular, the participants questioned whether there are duplications and redundancies across organizations, such that resources are not being used as efficiently as they could be. The working group suggested a living document that accounts for all community services and for organizations to work together to remove duplicates and address gaps in services. In addition, they thought that cross-sector collaboration would be helpful for the education discussed previously. Instead of every organization starting their own tenant rights program, resources could be invested into one organization to become experts.

5. Removing barriers: Organizations have a role to play in realizing the right to housing for their clients. Due to the criminalization of homelessness, housing becomes conditional on following the (sometimes arbitrary) rules set by shelters and housing providers. Thus, individuals do not experience an unequivocal right to shelter or housing. The working group participants recommended that organizations aspire to a harm reduction and Housing First approach to ensure that this right is being upheld at the lowest level.



Working Group 6: Enabling Lived Experience Participation and Leadership in Peterborough

Too often, decisions about housing and homelessness are made by politicians and practitioners who do not have first-hand experience. This kind of ‘top-down’ decision making results in programs, policy, and research that do not attend to the actual needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Repeatedly, people with lived/living experience (PWLE) of homelessness and/or drug use are calling on the people in power to include them in decision making. This working group discussed how PWLE can be safely integrated into policy, programming, and research. The participants focused on the legitimization of the voices of PWLE, collaboration, and intentionality of inclusion. The working group focused on several themes, including:

1. Mental health and wellbeing: The working group discussed the imperative of mental health support for PWLE. This includes resources to support mental health like financial compensation for appropriate counselling, ensuring that all work is assigned in a way that avoids burnout, and that PWLE are given opportunities to debrief, especially with their peers. The participants discussed how toolkits, access to mental health services, and fostering a supportive environment in the workplace would help to achieve this goal.

2. Fair compensation: A critical theme addressed by the participants in this working group was the necessity for fair and equitable pay for PWLE. They discussed how PWLE must be revered as experts in their field and can provide invaluable context and nuance that decision-makers without this experience would not otherwise know. As such, the participants called for the end of gift cards as compensation, and advocated for a living wage for preparation, work time, and the emotional processing that takes place after the ostensible work is finished. Furthermore, they highlighted how compensation needs to be sustainable and not reliant on piecemeal pilot funding.

3. Reducing Stigma: The reduction of stigma, especially in the workplace, was highlighted by the working group. Some participants underscored how employers must understand that they may already have PWLE working at their organization. As such, they described how employers must work to create safe spaces, destigmatize the hiring of PWLE by increasing their representation, and legitimizing their experiences.



4. Increasing support: The participants discussed the need for better support for staff with lived experience. They highlighted how employers could use a toolkit for working with PWLE, and encouraged thoughtfulness around fair compensation, follow-through (i.e. no tokenism), lower barriers, diverse representation, wraparound care, mentoring, etc. The working group described how beyond tangible supports, it is important that PWLE feel valued in the workplace. Furthermore, they underscored the importance of PWLE as well-supported leaders, beyond just employees of an organization.

5. Community collaboration and sharing resources: The working group described how cross-sector collaboration can support PWLE. They discussed how working together and building trust is integral, as organizations can share lessons learned, resources, and best practices for the engagement of PWLE. To ensure that PWLE are being included in workplaces safely, extensive pre-planning is required. Rather than 'reinventing the wheel', the working group highlighted how collaboration is essential to ensure they are using the limited resources and funding in nonprofit organizations wisely. A suggestion among the participants was a visual map of lived experience engagement and services that support PWLE in Peterborough and beyond.



Photo by William Pearson

Community Action

The following actions were brainstormed and committed to action at the Working Group Shareback. Progress, up-to-date in June 2024, is noted for each action.

A living list of resources

Who: Research for Social Change Lab

What: A living list of all of the services in the community that can be updated as services change.

Why: Several working groups highlighted the lack of knowledge about services in the city and county. They discussed how this can lead to inadequate care for individuals experiencing homelessness, and also duplications in programs which can waste money and resources. They asked for a living list that they are able to reference as they help clients navigate the services in the city.

Progress: The Research for Social Change Lab has a team currently building a living list of resources. They are contacting all local service organizations and surveying them about their current services, as well as harm reduction and cultural practices.

Taking stock of action tables and expanding membership

Who: United Way Peterborough & District

What: There are several action tables that address housing and homelessness and other intersecting issues. This action aims to understand how each table functions, if the tables are in dialogue with one another, and how they can work better. Some working groups identified the absence of a table working towards income security, which the United Way committed to starting. In addition, they committed to expand membership to their Community Advisory Board (CAB).

Why: Many organizations have mandates to action plan the housing and homelessness crisis in our community. The working groups called on cross-sector collaboration, and the breaking down of silos in this work. To do this, understanding what collaboration is already happening, identifying any redundancies, and highlighting what is missing is important for an effective and efficient response. Furthermore, bringing a wide array of individuals across the service sector to the CAB will ensure that there is diversity and many voices to discuss community priorities.

Progress: The United Way is working to take stock of the action tables, and has recently expanded membership to the CAB and developed new terms of reference. They are also currently developing an income security/anti-poverty table.



Coordinating an advocacy committee

Who: One City Peterborough

What: A committee of individuals who advocate to those in power positions on behalf of the housing and homelessness sector.

Why: While there are several action tables in our community, none have the specific mandate of advocacy. The working groups called on cross-sector collaboration and advocacy. The creation of an advocacy committee to share the same message of community care and support, is integral for a unified and coordinated response. The group will advocate to various levels of government on behalf of the housing and homelessness sector in Peterborough, and, importantly, our community members who are unhoused.

Progress: One City has developed Terms of Reference for an Advocacy Committee co-chaired by One City staff and a Board Member and open to community. One City also continues to provide Community Education, with education for activists and advocates as one of its central offerings.

Community-driven data

Who: Peterborough Community Knowledge Network (PCKN) and City of Peterborough

What: Community-based data collection by different service organizations in Peterborough to identify trends in homelessness-related data, which they are able to share with other organizations.

Why: Important data often remains isolated, and not shared between organizations due to the lack of infrastructure or capacity.

Progress: The Peterborough Community Knowledge Network acknowledges the importance of up-to-date and accurate data to best serve the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness, and will continue to collect and share data on gaps in the current system and mortality tracking. For more information check out the [website](#). Additionally, the PCKN, Peterborough Public Health, and the City of Peterborough are currently exploring the revitalization of Peterborough Data Share, and Trent Professors (Stephanie Rutherford and Naomi Nichols of RSCL) are collaborating with the New Canadian Centre and the City of Peterborough (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Department) to complete a social data audit for our community.



Non-emergency support for the downtown

Who: One City Peterborough

What: In the winter, One City Peterborough began a program called the [Unity Project](#). Unity Project aims to provide a rapid and non-punitive, supportive response for individuals in the downtown area who are in distress, with expertise in [de-escalation, system navigation, and sharps disposal](#). It also aims to support downtown business owners, equipping them with tools and resources to help community members that they might come across at their business or generally in the downtown.

Why: Some participants underscored the value of non-punitive responses to address homelessness, especially when considering decriminalization approaches to homelessness. In addition, many working groups discussed the desire to see more collaborative efforts. Unity Project, though run by One City Peterborough, is deeply supported by downtown businesses (including financially as around half of the program costs are funded by the businesses themselves) and is intended to strengthen relationships between the business community, service sector, and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Progress: The program continues to run five days per week, 11 am to 6 pm.

Distributing co-created resources to work with the Indigenous community

Who: FourCAST Peterborough

What: FourCAST and Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag Services Circle to distribute culturally-appropriate and trauma-informed resources about housing Indigenous community members.

Why: The working groups emphasized the importance of education and culturally-appropriate care. During the action session, it was revealed that FourCAST and Nijkiwendidaa Anishnaabekwewag Services Circle had co-created a resource that bridges the gap between western and Indigenous healing methods, several years ago. This resource has not been used in a long time, but will be found and re-vamped to service the needs of urban Indigenous community members in Nogojiwanong/Peterborough.

Progress: TBD



Creation of support group for people with lived experience in the workplace

Who: United Way Peterborough & District

What: Several working groups called for more support for service workers who have lived experience in the workplace. United Way committed to starting a peer-to-peer support group for individuals who work in the service sector (both frontline and other) who have lived experience of neurodivergence, trauma, or oppression.

Why: Many participants with lived experience expressed feeling isolated in their workplace. As one of the main themes emerging from the conference was integrating lived experience into homelessness policy and programs, a support group is a necessary addition to the community.

Progress: The support group has met once, and [is accepting new members](#).

Improved access to justice

Who: Community Counselling and Resource Centre (CCRC)'s Housing Resource Centre (HRC)

What: The Paralegal Program provides free legal services to prevent eviction for tenants and/or persons occupying a rental unit who are experiencing housing related legal issues, live with low income, and face complex barriers to accessing services. The program also increases access to legal support for tenants wishing to use the Landlord and Tenant Board to assert their rights.

Why: Many tenants in our community live with complex barriers to engaging with legal services and housing supports. This program combines these services and supports to provide a holistic approach to serving tenants who would otherwise not be able to access legal services, and who would very likely lose their housing without legal support. The program also helps to address the disparity in access to justice between landlords and tenants at the Landlord and Tenant Board. This program directly addresses calls from working groups.

Progress: The program is running and accepting clients. Tenants requiring legal information, advice, or representation can contact the [Housing Resource Centre](#) to see if they are eligible.



Accessible housing and integrated systems

What: Some groups discussed the absence of conversations of cross-sector integration between housing and disability systems. They highlighted the importance of education, adaptation, and collaboration on disability assessments, and hiring staff who have expertise in both sectors.

Why: The connection between disability and homelessness is clear. Around [45% of individuals](#) experiencing homelessness in Canada report having a disability or mental health disorder, and people who have a disability are [twice as likely](#) to live below the poverty line. And yet, symposium participants spoke about the siloed nature of both the housing and the disability sector. While efforts have begun to integrate, intentional work must continue to ensure that service users are receiving the best care.

Progress: One City Peterborough has been working with Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) to explore housing options and supports for unhoused individuals who have developmental disabilities. They are exploring how to utilize [Passport funding](#) and DSO expertise to provide additional housing units for individuals eligible for DSO support. This would provide sustainable funding for One City's supportive housing team to support individuals experiencing a combination of developmental disabilities, substance use, and/or mental health disorders.



Next Steps

The following actions were brainstormed in the working groups, and act as next steps in the cross-sector roadmap for change in Peterborough.

Improve data analysis and transparency at the City

What: Some working groups discussed the importance of up-to-date and accurate data from the City of Peterborough. This involves systematically collecting and analyzing the data, and publishing real-time data to the public. Useful data might include shelter use and capacity, and frequent updates on the By-Name List.

Why: To best use their resources, agencies need to know up-to-date information about the population they are serving. With this information, they can better cater their programs to service users and will be able to predict when an increase of services is needed. In addition, [other municipalities](#) have found that in the absence of up-to-date data, the public fills in the picture with their own perception of the issue. Thus, data transparency can be used as a tool to combat NIMBY-ism and to foster a community of care.

Progress: As of May, 2024 two new data analysts at the City have been hired and we are looking forward to improved access to this pertinent information.

Repeal by-law 19-074

What: In 2019, the [Parks and Facilities By-law](#) (by-law 19-074) was ratified. This by-law, among other restrictions, banned the use of tents on public property, like parks. Working groups, particularly Realizing the Right to Housing and Decriminalizing Approaches to Housing Stabilization emphasized how this criminalizing approach to homelessness has no place in a community that is trying to take care of its most vulnerable. Repealing the by-law will likely take advocacy from the public. The authors of this report think this is a necessary move and an important next step for our community.

Why: Canada has ratified several international agreements that recognize that housing is a human right, in addition to adopting the National Right to Housing Act in 2019. Yet, by-law 19-074 is in direct contradiction to this. There are inadequate and inappropriate spaces in Peterborough shelters, and unpaid tickets and fines can result in a bench warrant and time spent in jail. As such, this by-law is viewed as penalizing and potentially criminalizing. Furthermore, it is ineffective as people exit provincial jails directly into homelessness. By reallocating resources used in enforcing the by-law, Peterborough could more effectively advance the right to housing.



Inhalation drug use

What: Several groups recognized the need for harm reduction, and yet Peterborough does not currently have services for inhalation drug users. Many organizations came together in 2022 to support the opening of the Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS), however it is not currently able to offer inhalation services due to legislative and policy constraints. In late 2022, the [Board of Health](#) moved to write to the Minister of Health to request provincial support, but there have not been public updates since. Peterborough's unsanctioned Tweak Easy does provide inhalation services, but its services are continually threatened and infrequent due to lack of funding and resources.

Why: In 2022, [68% of drug-related deaths](#) were due to inhalation drug use, with lived and academic experts agreeing that this number is increasing. As individuals experiencing homelessness do not have the ability to use drugs outside due to Peterborough Police Service's '[No-Tolerance Approach to Open Air Illicit Drug Use](#)', and services like the CTS are successful in preventing injection-related drug poisoning deaths, supervised inhalation drug use is extremely important to bring to Peterborough to save lives.

Better discharge planning

What: In line with the theme of cross-sector partnerships and collaboration, several working groups called for better discharge planning and collaboration among local agencies and services who 'discharge', like the hospital, local prisons, and the [Children's Aid Society](#) (CAS). Working group participants called for cross-sectoral tables and intentionally built systems to make the transition for service users more streamlined.

Why: Lived experts and service providers agreed that when leaving services like the hospital, local prisons, or the CAS, individuals are not adequately supported or resourced to succeed. Some underscored how there is little communication between the sectors, which can lead to the system becoming a 'revolving door'. By building stronger and relational systems, service users will be able to navigate the services and will be better equipped to thrive outside of the institutions that they were discharged from.



Mobile and accessible services

What: To reduce barriers to service users, some working groups suggested increased access to services, with a particular emphasis on mental health and addictions services. They suggested using existing 'hubs' like Trinity and creating a 'one-stop-shop' of services like medical clinics, mental health and addictions services, identification clinics, OHIP, ODSP, OW, etc.

Why: Lived experts and service providers discussed the fact that the dispersal of services deters individuals experiencing homelessness from accessing the host of services that they need. Many are not receiving the best quality of care because it is difficult to keep track of where to go and when. Mobile services [reduce barriers](#) making it easier and more likely that individuals experiencing homelessness will seek care.



Preserving tenancies and preventing evictions

What: Some groups, especially the working group focused on increasing housing stock and decriminalizing approaches to housing security, emphasized the necessity to preserve tenancies. Often, individuals are evicted without appropriate measures to preserve the tenancy. That is, discussions and problem solving with the landlord. Mediation programs like [Community Mediation Peterborough](#) do excellent work, with positive results supported by data. However, this program has had to cease operations due to lack of funding. Programs like Community Mediation Peterborough are necessary during a housing crisis, and many individuals and agencies at the symposium expressed its importance.

Why: The housing stock available in Peterborough and surrounding areas is vastly inadequate and when individuals lose their tenancies, it is difficult for them to be rehoused. Further, landlords can increase the rent once tenants are evicted, making a previously affordable rental, less affordable.



Photo by William Pearson

Saving housing stock from private market

What: As noted in the 2023 Greater Toronto [United Way's Affordable Action plan](#), and echoed in our community symposium, we must prioritize maintaining existing and securing new not-for-profit housing stock in Peterborough – including, not-for-profit housing provided by the charitable sector. Housing affordability will not be advanced by simply building more units nor via the public incentives administered by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Indeed, in January 2024, the National Right to Housing Network (NRHN) in Canada issued its [first review panel on the financialization of purpose-built housing](#). A submission by The Shift (a global right to housing non-governmental organization, spearheaded by the former UN rapporteur on the right to housing) [details how investors now own approximately 30% of all purpose-built rental units in Canada](#) benefiting from a swath of public policies and economic incentives. The report outlines several Canadian laws and policies that enable the financialization of purpose-built rental housing, such as CMHC initiatives (including rental construction financing programs and enhanced borrowing terms through CMHC mortgage insurance); tax exemption afforded to real estate investment trusts or REITs; provincial removal of rental controls; and municipal property tax waivers. Public-private partnerships have been demonstrated to enable – rather than restrain – the financialization of housing. In response, we propose public-nonprofit partnerships as a mechanism for protecting rental units from financialization. Our community should actively explore public-nonprofit partnerships, social finance opportunities, and land trusts, as mechanisms for preserving land and housing stock from commodification so as to keep housing costs as low as possible for those who will require affordable housing.

Why: The biggest driver of the global housing affordability crisis is [financialization of housing](#). In order to build and maintain an adequate supply of deeply affordable housing for our community, we need to preserve existing nonprofit housing and seek to de-commodify as much housing as possible. Building new units, as we learned during the symposium, is far more expensive than preserving and/or adapting existing stock for public purposes. We also learned that the municipal government cannot carry the housing debt required to enter into the market and take advantage of the cost-savings associated with the use of existing stock.



Conclusion

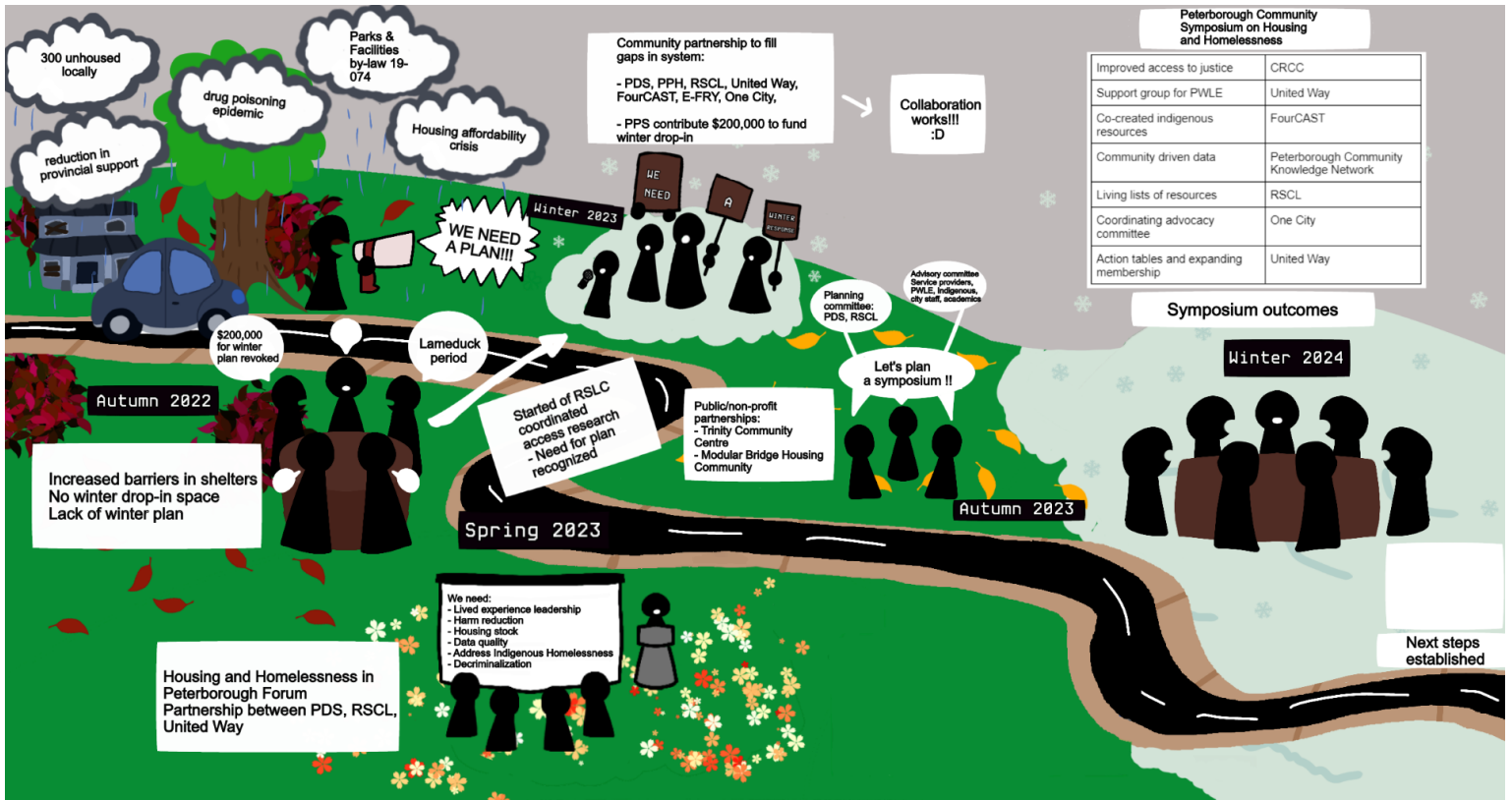
This report presented the cross-sectoral roadmap for change, addressing homelessness and other housing-related issues in Peterborough/Nogojiwanong. It highlights how the community priorities were identified, the actions that were committed to by local organizations, and the actions that will be important to guide future work in the community. While homelessness continues to be a pervasive, intensifying, and devastating issue, this report and the actions that led to its production provide a beacon of hope for Peterborough.

Several working groups called for a community of care. The forum and symposium hosting 75 and 100 participants respectively, demonstrate this ethos of care. It is clear that there are many people from across the sector, government, and community who are committed to making Peterborough's path forward one of love, equity, and solidarity. By action planning priority items and coming together to assign and commit to components of the plan, our community signals that it is up to the vast challenge of the present and future.

It is true that the local government, the City of Peterborough, is largely responsible for delivering homelessness services. However, due to constraints described previously, this must be a larger community effort. Community-led responses like [grassroots peer interventions](#), [public-nonprofit partnerships](#) like Trinity Community Centre, and other community collaborations that led to the [Consumption Treatment Services \(CTS\)](#), the [modular housing](#), and the partnership between Peterborough Drug Strategy, the Research for Social Change Lab, and United Way Peterborough and District that culminate in this report, are a sign of what is possible when we work together.

To conclude, this cross-sectoral roadmap invites its interested and engaged readers to commit or begin to discuss an action in the 'Next Steps' section. Our community has decided on the steps that must be taken to address homelessness, and now it is up to us to take action. A community of care is what will carry us forward.





Art by Axel Lavictoire

Cross-Sectoral Roadmap for Change: Addressing Homelessness in Peterborough/Nogojiwanong