



Statement of the London Homeless Coalition regarding Social Assistance Reforms

November 22, 2018

Today National Housing Day is being recognized across Canada. When it comes to housing locally, our chief concern continues to be affordability. In particular, for those receiving support through Ontario Works, rents in London are far out of reach.

Since 2014, the London Homeless Coalition has been clear in our stance that social assistance rates in Ontario are woefully inadequate given the reality of market rents. Today a single adult receiving Ontario Works in London would be short \$250 per month to pay rent on an average bachelor apartment. At a time when our community is seeing increased emergency shelter utilization we need the Government of Ontario to step up and provide adequate financial assistance to those who are struggling. A recent enumeration of those experiencing homelessness in London asked people the cause of their housing loss and what they needed to find home. In both cases, the first priority was a need for more adequate income.

Today's announcement by Minister MacLeod provides little clarity about the future of those receiving support through Ontario's programs. While the Minister highlighted some positive changes such as reduced rules and increased local flexibility, in light of this year's miniscule increase to Ontario Works of \$11 (as opposed to the \$22 increase budgeted by the previous government), it is worrying that no numbers were provided regarding future rates. Additionally, the Minister refused to answer whether reforms were projected to increase or decrease the total spending on social assistance in Ontario.

With the \$250 gap remaining between social assistance and rents in London what we need now is a clear commitment from the Government of Ontario to raise the rates. Not only was this commitment lacking today, but the Minister would not give any clarity on rates on a go-forward basis. The London Homeless Coalition continues to seek ongoing increases to reduce the gap.

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