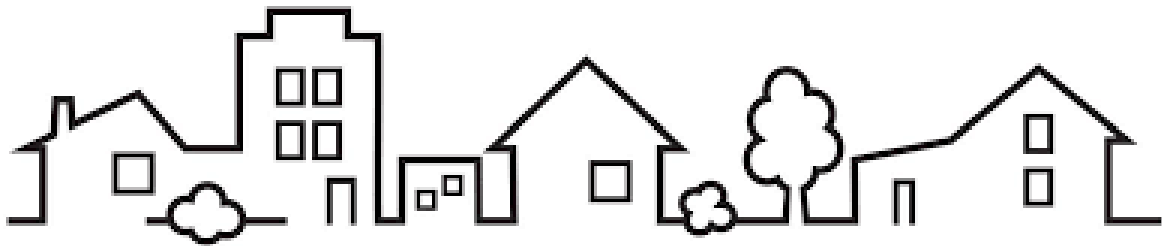




# **Addressing Homelessness in Prince Edward-Lennox and Addington**

## *Homelessness Action Plan*



Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Social Services  
Housing Services  
August 2023

Contents

- Purpose ..... 3
- Background ..... 3
- About This Plan ..... 6
- Existing Conditions..... 7
  - Understanding the Homeless Population ..... 7
  - Supports & Services Available..... 9
    - Homelessness..... 9
    - Emergency Shelter ..... 10
    - Transitional Housing ..... 10
    - Community Housing..... 11
    - Affordable Housing ..... 11
- Issues & Gaps ..... 12
  - Issues..... 12
  - Gaps ..... 13
    - Operational pressures on Service Providers ..... 13
    - Public Perception ..... 14
    - Complexity of Clientele ..... 14
    - Navigating the Housing Market ..... 14
    - Lack of Coordination ..... 15
    - Accessibility of Service ..... 15
    - Government Funding ..... 15
- Reviewing Options & Practices ..... 16
  - Increased Coordination..... 17
  - Communication & Information Sharing ..... 17
  - Collaboration with Community..... 18
  - Client-centric Approach ..... 18
- Recommendations & Priorities..... 18
  - Conclusion..... 22
- Appendices..... 23
  - Appendix A: List of Community Programs and Agencies..... 23
  - Works Cited..... 25

## Introduction

Prince Edward-Lennox & Addington Social Services (PELASS), serving as the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager (CMSM) for the Counties of Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington, is responsible for managing and delivering social housing and homelessness services. As the needs of the unhoused and those facing adversity become more pronounced, the imperative to confront the homelessness crisis grows stronger. In light of this, PELASS has crafted the following **Homelessness Action Plan**, designed to inform the community with pertinent perspectives, scenarios, and initiatives indispensable for tackling homelessness in the counties of Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington.

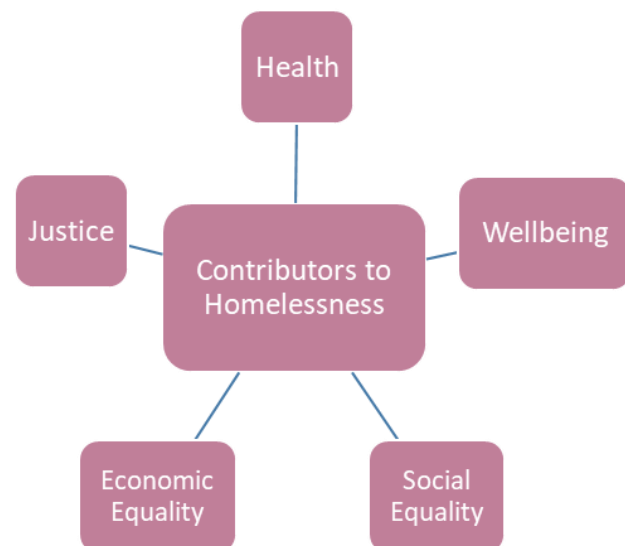
## Purpose

The objective of this Homelessness Action Plan is to:

- Empower the communities in Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington with the insights and information required to comprehend existing systems and fundamental causes that contribute to the cycle of homelessness and housing insecurity within the service area.
- Identify the requirements of priority populations, community partners, the general public, and individuals with firsthand experience of homelessness.
- Catalog discoveries and resources for people seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique manifestations of and solutions for homelessness in the service area.
- Provide information aimed at enhancing the management of homelessness services and developing solutions to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and to improve efforts for people at risk of becoming homeless.
- Enhance outcomes for people who are unsheltered.

## Background

Concerns about the escalating incidence of homelessness, the well-being of these vulnerable community members, and strategies for addressing this issue persist at various levels of government. The impact extends beyond housing availability and supply, affecting individuals, families, and the entire community. The multifaceted contributors to homelessness encompass health, well-being, social and economic equity, and justice. Reflecting on these contributors, it becomes evident that multiple avenues exist for addressing and breaking the homelessness cycle.



Each person follows a unique journey to overcome homelessness. It is pivotal for service providers like PELASS to initiate the process by engaging, comprehending, and validating the diverse perspectives involved.

Homelessness is characterized by a lack of stable, permanent housing, or the immediate prospects, means, and ability to secure it (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 4). Homelessness encompasses living on the streets, in shelters, or experiencing housing insecurity due to overcrowding or excessive costs. The Government of Ontario's definition of homelessness encompasses individuals who are **unsheltered**, in **emergency shelters**, **provisionally accommodated**, or **at-risk-of-homelessness**.

Homelessness, as observed in Prince Edward Lennox and Addington (PELA), presents distinctive challenges in the blend of urban and rural space. Covering 3,845 square kilometers, the service area caters to over 70,886 residents across five communities. These communities, ranked by population density, are as follows (Government of Canada 2023):

- Addington Highlands (2.0 people/km<sup>2</sup>)
- Stone Mills (11.3 people/km<sup>2</sup>)
- Prince Edward County (24.4 people/km<sup>2</sup>)
- Greater Napanee (36.5 people/km<sup>2</sup>)
- Loyalist Township (52.4 people/km<sup>2</sup>)

Some forms of homelessness are less apparent to the public eye and are often referred to as "hidden homelessness". Hidden homelessness refers to unhoused individuals provisionally accommodated with friends or family. Those facing hidden homelessness are less visible than those seen sleeping rough, panhandling, or seeking support in urban areas (Taylor 2018); (Waegemaker, Jeannette and Turner 2022). When weather permits, people also seek temporary refuge in outdoor spaces like parks, wooded areas, public restrooms, and RVs—locations less frequented by the public in small rural communities (National Alliance to End Rural and Remote Homelessness). Notably, in such cases, reliance on informal arrangements compromises personal privacy for those experiencing homelessness. Seeking support also exposes them to the risk of being labeled and stigmatized by community members aware of

**TIP:** Definitions can be found on the margins of pages →

**Unsheltered**  
Living on the street or in places not intended for human habitation

**Chronically Homeless**  
People who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year

**Emergency Sheltered**  
People staying overnight in shelters, including those who have received hotel/motel vouchers where no emergency shelters exist

**Provisionally Accommodated**  
People who are homeless and whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure. Provisional accommodations may include: staying with friends/acquaintances, correctional institutions, hospitals, and residential treatment

**At-Risk of Being Homeless**  
People who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious and/or does not meet public health, or safety standards

**Episodic Homelessness**  
People who are currently homeless/have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year

**Chronic Homelessness**  
People who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year. These are individuals who move in and out of homelessness

their housing status, jeopardizing safety, dignity, and overall well-being (Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Social Services 2021; Taylor 2018; The County Foundation 2018).

Both Prince Edward County and the County of Lennox & Addington have identified homelessness as a priority within their ongoing strategic planning efforts. In Prince Edward County's **Community Safety and Well-Being Plan**, they acknowledge the connection between secure housing and the physical, mental, and social health of the community. To this end, they outline the following goals:

1. Mitigate the impact of the housing crisis through collaborative and innovative solutions.
2. Reduce the number of service calls related to unhoused individuals.

The strategies to achieve these goals encompass:

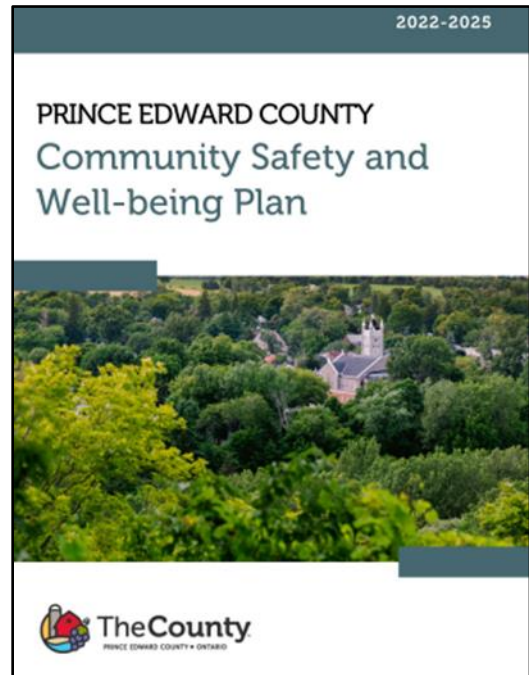
- Embracing new financial mechanisms to support and incentivize affordable housing creation.
- Providing tenant support for finding and maintaining affordable housing.
- Developing a collaborative housing and homelessness evaluation and monitoring plan.
- Creating integrated communities that incorporate housing across the spectrum.

PELASS's **Housing and Homelessness Plan**, initially released in 2014 and updated during its 5-year review in 2019, publicly outlines the community's commitment to **Housing First** principles and housing-related activities until

**Housing First**

Recovery-oriented care of a homeless person by first securing housing and connecting them with supports and services as required after they are housed.

2024. Pillars of the revised plan include homelessness prevention, eviction prevention, affordable housing, community engagement, political advocacy and education.



The anticipated goals of the plan include:

- Deepening the understanding and application of **Housing First** principles for informed planning and decision-making.
  - Expanding **partnerships** and **collaboration** to enhance service delivery and shared outcomes.
- Supporting tenants, community-based housing providers, and private landlords for improved tenancy success and reduced evictions, ultimately lessening homelessness.
  - Innovating and testing ways to broaden the housing options for those homeless, transitioning, or seeking stable, long-term housing within the two-county region.

Recently, the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus initiated the **7 in 7 Regional Housing Plan**, encompassing 13 upper-tier and single-tier municipalities along with 90 local municipalities from Cobourg to Quebec. This organization, of which the counties of Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington are a part, advocates for Eastern Ontario development and taxpayers. The plan's aim is to establish

7,000 new affordable housing homes within 7 years, requesting \$3.1B from the provincial government. The PELASS area is earmarked for 456 of these new units if the plan comes to fruition.

At the local government level, communities have recognized the necessity to address homelessness, initiating research, strategic planning, and resource allocation to elevate the attention and resources dedicated to this pressing issue.

## Methodology

The Homelessness Action Plan builds upon the groundwork established in the aforementioned documents and harnesses the ongoing momentum in addressing homelessness within PELA.

To shape this report, preliminary research was conducted through a comprehensive literature review, encompassing articles from academic journals, grey literature, and publicly accessible search engines. This research, coupled with insights from the **Point-in-Time Counts (PiTC)**<sup>1</sup> conducted by PELASS in 2018 and 2021, has provided a deeper understanding of homelessness at both regional and local levels.

**Point-in-Time Count (PiTC)**

Method to measuring the number of homeless people in an area at a specific point in time.

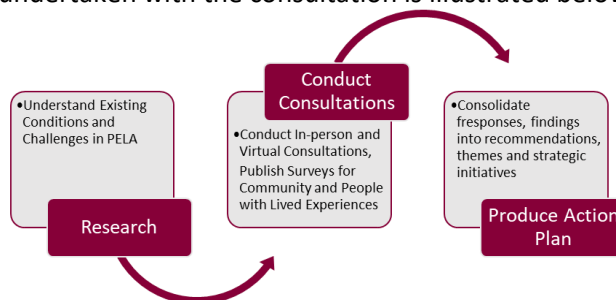
PiTC is used in conjunction with the By-Names List

In pursuit of current insights into homelessness within the service area, four consultation sessions were organized: two in-person sessions for PELASS staff and two virtual forums for community agency partners. Additionally, surveys were crafted for the broader public, including community service providers and members of the community, as well as people with lived experience. These engagement platforms facilitated valuable feedback on prevailing homelessness issues and highlighted opportunities and priorities for enhancing outcomes for individuals and the community.

The level of participation in each of these consultations is summarized below:

Consultation Type	Number of Participants
<b>In-Person (Staff)</b>	29
<b>Virtual (Community Service Providers)</b>	23
<b>Survey (Community)</b>	50
<b>Survey (People with Lived Experience)</b>	6

A diagram of the process undertaken with the consultation is illustrated below:



<sup>1</sup> Read the 2018 Enumeration Report here: <https://lennox-addington.on.ca/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/Social%20Services%20PDFs/Report%20on%20Homelessness%20in%20Prince%20Edward%20Lennox.pdf>

## Existing Conditions

### Understanding the Homeless Population

In November 2021, PELASS carried out its most recent Point-in-Time Count (PiTC), which encompassed the enumeration of 95 individuals. These people experiencing homelessness were queried about their present housing situations, backgrounds, and histories across the service area. The aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding of their situations and gather service area-specific data. A succinct summary of the PiTC and its pivotal insights is presented below:

#### BACKGROUND

*Individuals from Service Area: 18%*

- Respondents from outside the service area primarily travelling from the Kingston and Belleville areas. However, some originated from as far as Alberta, British Columbia, and the United States.

*Individuals who identify as having Indigenous Ancestry: 21%*

- Solutions employed should be considerate of individual's experiences and history (e.g. spirituality, culture, cognizant of history, etc.).

*Age: 25 and under: 23%      26 to 45: 44%      46 to 65: 28%      65 and Older: 5%*

- Majority of homeless individuals captured in the enumeration were between the ages of 26 and 65 but a significant amount of youth were captured, indicating need for youth-oriented services.

*Level of Education Achieved:*

#### Primary School

5.6%

#### Secondary School

Partially: 50%

Completed: 25%

#### Post-Secondary

Partially: 6.9%

Completed: 9.7%

#### HOUSING STATUS

*Sleeping Rough: 7%*

*No Access to Safe/Permanent Residence: 35%*

*Transitionally Housed: 44%*

*Provisionally Accommodated: 31%*

- Respondents had experienced homelessness between 2 weeks and 18 months.
- People had access to temporary accommodation, which includes couch surfing. This is consistent with literature that states couch surfing is a prominent culture with homeless people in rural Ontario.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

*Has a Physical Limitation: 44.4%*  
*Has a Cognitive Limitation: 29.1%*  
*Has a Mental Illness: 75%*  
*Has a History of Substance Abuse: 47.2%*

On average, people experiencing homelessness have been:

- To the emergency room 5.1 times in a year
- Hospitalized 2.1 times/year
- Interacted with police 4.6 times/year
- In prison 1.1 times/year

## INCOME SOURCES

*Full or Part-time Employment: 7%*  
*Informal (e.g. Bottle Returns, Panhandling.): 4.1%*  
*No Income: 2.8%*

*Disability Benefit: 57%*  
*Social Assistance: 29.1%*

- Most homeless individuals rely on income from the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works

## BARRIERS TO FINDING HOUSING

*Rent too high: 91.7%*      *Poor Housing Conditions: 40.3%*      *Low Income: 80.6%*  
*Mental Health: 43%*      *Family Breakdown: 31.9%*      *Health and Disability Issues: 27.8%*

- Other barriers included navigating domestic violence, places not allowing pets, discrimination, addiction issues, and individuals having a criminal history

## CONTRIBUTORS TO HOMELESSNESS

*Not Enough Income: 22%*      *Tenant-Landlord Related Conflicts: 11.1%*      *Unfit or Unsafe Housing Condition: 12.5 %*

- Other reasons included: conflicts with others, experiencing abuse, mental health issues, and their homes being sold or renovated

## SERVICES NEEDED

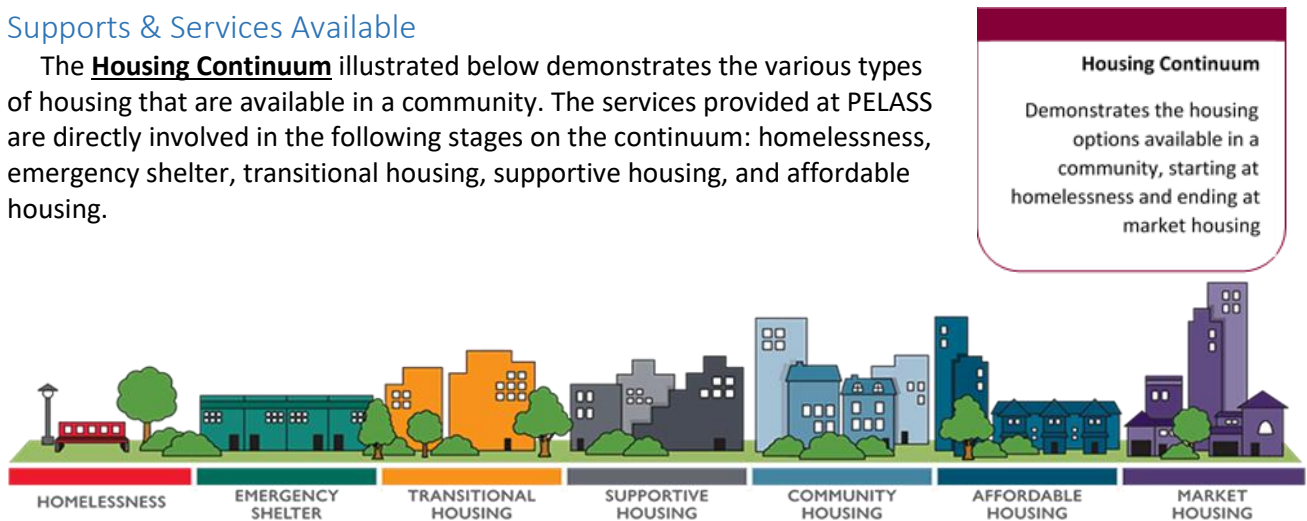
*Mental Health Counselling: 61%*      *Help With Serious Ongoing Medical Condition: 31%*  
*Addiction or Substance Abuse: 26%*      *Physical Disability: 21%*      *Learning Disability: 16%*



- When asked what services individuals experiencing homelessness would have a need for, the responses imply the importance of health and accessibility supports for individuals on their way to housing security

## Supports & Services Available

The **Housing Continuum** illustrated below demonstrates the various types of housing that are available in a community. The services provided at PELASS are directly involved in the following stages on the continuum: homelessness, emergency shelter, transitional housing, supportive housing, and affordable housing.



## Homelessness

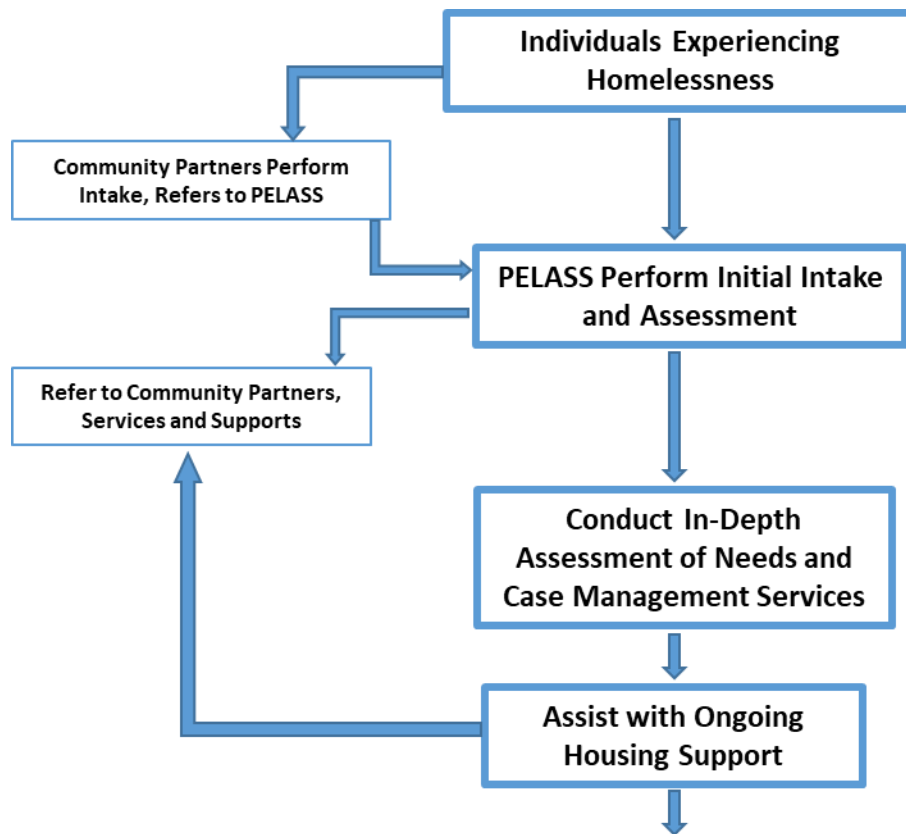
PELASS functions as a bridge and case manager, facilitating connections between people seeking homelessness-related assistance and appropriate support services. When an individual or family in need of help presents as homeless, PELASS engages with them to provide access to secure emergency shelter, support services, and housing opportunities such as Transitional, Community, and Affordable Housing. These housing options are available within the service area and can be accessed through either the Centralized Waitlist or By-Name List mechanisms.

People apply to join the Centralized Waitlist. If their eligibility is confirmed upon application review, they are added to a list of people awaiting vacant housing units. Of note, PELASS will work with all people identifying as being homeless, regardless of their income. Special Priority Policy applicants, including domestic abuse or human trafficking survivors, are given priority status on this list. As of June 2023, the Centralized Waitlist contained 1,074 households (A household could be a single person, a couple or a family).

Additionally, people experiencing homelessness are encouraged to register on the By-Name List. Managed by designated staff members who work directly with the homeless population, this list is intended for individuals actively committed to engaging with resources that enhance their housing prospects. The By-Name List is a real time list of all the people experiencing homelessness in the PELASS area. It helps to link people to the services they need and for these services to case plan together. The By-Name List contained 61 engaged participants that have consented/agreed to be included on the list, as of June 2023. 53 of the people on the By-Name List live in Lennox and Addington County and 8 live in Prince Edward County.

Outreach services extend to community partners, and in suitable scenarios, individuals are often linked with supplementary resources beyond PELASS. These connections might encompass Ontario Works, financial literacy programs, mental health and addiction support services, training opportunities, food security programs etc. For clients, collaboration with a designated case worker leads to a

comprehensive assessment of their needs and assistance with subsequent steps. The diagram below illustrates the client journey upon connecting with PELASS.



### Emergency Shelter

There are no emergency shelters for people experiencing homelessness in the PELASS area. Instead, PELASS has supported a warming centre during the winter months and has forged partnerships with local motels and hotels to offer emergency shelter options for individuals across both counties. PELASS also partners with local agencies for “after hours” provision of emergency hotel/motel stays. There are resource limitations, including insufficient funding and operational capacity to provide a traditional emergency shelter. Shelters provide temporary housing for people experiencing homelessness, but do not solve homelessness. There is data to indicate that communities that have shelters have people from outside the area interested in staying there, further adding to the numbers of homeless people and compounding the issues when people reach their end of stay at a shelter. Creating shelters do not follow the Housing First principles.

### Transitional Housing

PELASS operates a Transitional Housing Program, which was initiated in spring 2022. Led by PELASS's Tenant Relations Officers in collaboration with community organizations, individuals from the By-Names List sign occupancy agreements, marking the commencement of the first stage of the transitional program.

During the initial phase of the Transitional Housing Program, people receive secure shelter and opportunities to enhance their self-sufficiency. Concurrently, they benefit from resources like addiction

and mental health services, life skills training, alongside other necessary stabilization resources. As people progress through their own personal journey, additional or new supports are provided, equipping individuals to transition to independent living with necessary assistance.

Upon successfully completing the Transitional Housing Program, people may be eligible to secure private leases within the Local Housing Corporation (LHC). Notably, within the LHC, every tenth vacancy is earmarked for participants from the By-Name List. Moreover, PELASS collaborates with private landlords who also allocate transitional housing units within the community.

### Community Housing

Through the Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Local Housing Corporation (LHC) portfolio, PELASS is responsible for the management of 421 units distributed across 16 properties within the service area, catering to seniors, adults, and families. In partnership with five non-profit housing providers in the vicinity, there are 233 additional community housing units available to households on the Centralized Waitlist.

PELASS also has 159 rent supplement units with private landlords across the service area. Rent supplements work like this: PELASS partners with a private landlord. A household from the centralized waiting list moves into the housing unit. The tenant pays 30% of their income towards rent and PELASS pays the landlord the difference between what the tenant can afford to pay and the market rent. For example, if a tenant had \$2,000/month in earnings they would pay \$600/month towards their rent. If the market rent was \$1,000/month, PELASS would pay the landlord the difference of \$400/month. The landlord still receives market rent and PELASS has the opportunity to house a low income household.

Financial support to prevent homelessness is facilitated through PELASS' Homelessness Prevention Benefit. Collectively, these support mechanisms encompass a spectrum of needs such as rental and utilities arrears, moving expenses, first and last month's rent, daily living costs, assessments, and health-related assistance. PELASS assisted 595 different households through the Homelessness Prevention Benefit program.

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), is an additional financial aid initiative administered by the Government of Ontario, and offers assistance to eligible individuals. The COHB covers rental expenses within the private housing market, offering portability to beneficiaries regardless of their Ontario housing location.

### Affordable Housing

Through various funding programs including the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative, Ontario Priority Housing Initiative, the Social Services Relief Fund, donations of land and services by Stone



Mills Township, and the application of a little over \$1,000,000 of housing reserves held by PELASS, we were able to build eight new accessible and barrier free units in Tamworth. The building is the first new community housing build in PELA since the 1990's and critically increases the number of units in the LHC portfolio.

With two of the new apartments tenants pay 30% of their income towards rent. The remaining six apartments have their rents set at 80% of market rent, which works out to be \$686/month.

Where PELASS is unable to provide services along the housing continuum, the network of services within the community provide critical programming to the homeless population. Eligible community partners receive funding from PELASS to support the operation of their own homelessness support programs. Their services include but are not limited to:

- Health Care
- Hygiene Services
- Food Security
- Emergency Funding
- Life Skills Development and Daily Living Support
- Emergency Shelter/Warming Centre
- Supportive Housing
- Rent Supplements
- Housing Allowances
- Utility Arrears
- Mental Health and Addiction Supports
- Spiritual or Cultural Supports
- Eviction Prevention, Legal Support, Landlord Assistance

## Issues & Gaps

Efforts to end the cycle of homelessness require defining the needs of priority populations, community partners, the general public, and people with lived experience. In consultation sessions, the following questions were posed to help understand the state of the homelessness service system and identify any issues and gaps.

For individuals with lived experience, they were asked:

**What are your thoughts on the current system of supports for individuals experiencing homelessness?**

**What is the most difficult thing about transitioning from homeless to housed?**

**What are the gaps you see in the supports that are currently available to you?**

For community partners, and members of the community, they were asked:

**What are the most pressing issues or gaps that you see in the homelessness system today?**

**Which local programs/initiatives to help homeless people worked well and why? If not, why not?**

**Is there sufficient capacity within the local system to adequately address homelessness needs?**

The issues and gaps that were brought forward in the consultations and survey responses are summarized in the sections below.

## Issues

Respondents with lived experience identified the following when asked about their thoughts on the current system of supports available:

- Temporary solutions (e.g. shelter, foodbanks) are only partially helpful, permanent housing options that are not time-limited are needed

- More affordable housing is needed
- More outreach programs, harm reduction programs, food programs, support workers and social and housing workers that are accessible are needed
- Having intrinsic motivation to become successfully housed is crucial
- Needing the structure and stability of external supports is necessary to become successfully housed

*“There is a lot of support out there. I don't choose to use it. However the community has been amazing to me. I hope to one day give back. But the drugs seem to prevent that from ever occurring.”*

*Re: Intrinsic Motivation  
- Homeless Individual in PELA*

People with lived experience identified the following as the most difficult challenges in the transition from homelessness to becoming housed.

- Lack of support financially, emotionally, physically, mentally
- Lack of trust and feeling that they are not treated as humans, just as numbers
- Public perception
- Finding the right supports

*“Expecting people to get clean on their own while being homeless before housing them is impossible, sickening and disgusting. There also needs to be far more medical detox spaces and long term rehab spaces and programs.”*

*Re: Structure and Stability  
- Formerly Homeless, now Successfully Housed Individual in PELA*

## Gaps

Upon evaluating existing community programs, common themes have surfaced from input gathered from PELASS staff, community partners, and individuals with lived experiences. These themes underscore critical gaps that require attention and resolution within the PELASS homelessness service system. These encompass:

### Operational pressures on Service Providers

Due to the sheer size of the service area and the limitations of being in a semi-rural region, it is challenging to establish coordinated systems of services that are accessible to all members of the

community. Many service providers also find it challenging to extend their services within their capacity, exacerbated by the fact that recruiting and retaining staff is difficult in the current labour market. As a result, staff are limited by what supports they can direct clients to. Overall, there was a general sentiment that PELA needed more accessible supports in the following areas:

- Mental Health and Housing supports
- Health and hygiene opportunities (shower, health care)
- Shelters that serve all populations safely
- Acute, Home and Emergency Care
- Populations with histories of difficult behavior
- Hotels and Motels with seasonal limits

Another operational challenge arises from the increasing demand for services. Demand for services is surpassing the capacity of both PELASS and community partners to adequately support the growing number of individuals experiencing homelessness. Instances such as extended waitlist times for community housing and difficulties in accessing medical professionals for necessary form signings compound a sense of hopelessness for service providers and recipients alike. This situation hinders the pursuit of actionable steps to enhance their health and housing situations.

### Public Perception

As homelessness gains visibility, increasingly vocal negative attitudes and viewpoints have emerged. Respondents have highlighted local community opinions, including:

- Disapproval of shelters within their neighborhoods.
- Unwillingness of private landlords to rent to individuals with a history of homelessness.
- A prevailing notion that individuals exhibiting the most negative behaviors receive prioritized services.
- Homelessness negatively effects small businesses

These conversations primarily stem from a blend of intolerant attitudes, stereotypes, and misconceptions. Addressing public perception, educating the public and gaining their support is pivotal for any viable solution moving forward.

### Complexity of Clientele

Each individual with lived experience has a unique background. Many within the homeless community carry complex health histories and might lack consistent access to communication tools or reliable internet, making outreach difficult. More and more studies are identifying the strong connection between housing services for people experiencing homelessness and health. Greater outcomes are achieved when these two support systems are working together. Providing assistance becomes even more nuanced when considering potential struggles with addictions or mental health. Furthermore, their difficulties in navigating past traumas and harboring distrust in the system add layers of complexity to their situations. Therefore, it's crucial to have services and support that address their diverse needs.

### Navigating the Housing Market

Individuals aiming to find housing on a fixed income encounter financial obstacles due to the unaffordable rents prevalent in the private housing market. Even with financial assistance, shelter rates don't match the rents demanded by the private market. Moreover, those who do secure housing might

face displacement due to "renovictions," where landlords evict tenants for property upgrades, often re-leasing the unit at a much higher rate afterward. The housing market lacks diverse affordable options, necessitating comprehensive approaches. While expanding housing supply helps, initiatives must also tackle rising shelter costs and broader barriers to housing security.

An issue further compounding the complexity when seeking solutions to homelessness is the lack of affordable housing and the lack of rental units. There is a general lack of housing across the PELA area and across Canada. Fewer rental options means that the price for this now scarce commodity increases. As prices increase, middle income people compete for the lowest priced housing, actively squeezing low income people out. Low shelter rates for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients results in affordable housing being out of reach for many homeless people. The maximum shelter rates for a single person are \$390/month and \$522/month respectively.

### Lack of Coordination

Throughout each consultation session, a common concern emerged—namely, a pronounced lack of coordination within the sector. Evident inefficiencies included service duplication and the absence of communication among agencies serving mutual clients. Providers emphasized that services were often delivered in isolation, rather than collaboratively, thus missing out on the potential to optimize efficiency and effectiveness in their programming efforts.

### Accessibility of Service

Limited public transportation from rural to urban areas, where social supports are concentrated, poses challenges for individuals without private vehicles. Even for those who secure transportation, there is heightened interregional migration towards these support hubs, where individuals seek essential assistance. This migration displaces local homeless individuals from their existing support networks, leading to "increased isolation, disconnection from natural supports, [and] exposure to new risk factors" (National Alliance to End Rural and Remote Homelessness, 2). Consequently, services remain inadequately accessible across all areas under PELASS's jurisdiction.

### Government Funding

Since 2014 PELASS has been able to obtain and redistribute 3,640,826 across the PELA area. This has funded activities that generated affordable housing and supported our clients, tenants, applicants, and community partner agencies.

Provincial and Federal funding is typically allocated either on a per capita basis or according to the number of community housing units. PELASS represents roughly 0.5% of Ontario's population and possesses the seventh smallest housing portfolio among the province's other service managers. Consequently, when government funding is distributed, PELASS frequently receives insufficient funding to facilitate the creation of new multi-residential structures, the development of new supportive housing, or other extensive undertakings observed in larger service manager regions. Thus, the shortage of formal social housing infrastructure to accommodate homeless individuals is exacerbated by limited financial support from higher government tiers (Taylor 2018).

Considering this situation, PELASS is consistently committed to optimizing the utility of its available funding. Thus, for the program years 2023 to 2025, the existing funding sources from Provincial and Federal governments, from which PELASS can anticipate drawing homelessness funds, include the following programs:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI)	\$430,500	\$585,600
Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)	\$363,800	\$351,000
Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)	\$152,700	No allocation yet
Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP)	\$2,454,600	\$2,454,600

## Reviewing Options & Practices

During the consultations, the effectiveness of existing or previously implemented programs within the homelessness service system were evaluated. Feedback encompassed the successes and shortcomings of these initiatives in catering to homeless individuals. A condensed overview of these advantages and disadvantages is presented in the table below. For a comprehensive listing of all community program partners, please refer to Appendix A. While this summary evaluation does not cover all existing options and practices in the PELASS service area, it accurately reflects the programs and initiatives discussed during the consultation sessions.

<b>Program/Initiative</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Strengths</b>
PiTC and BNL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community doesn't understand the BNL or the criteria of getting onto BNL</li> <li>- Some people don't want to be involved or engage with services as required in the program</li> <li>- PiT asks invasive questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Data specific to homelessness is collected</li> <li>+ Opportunity for stabilization and improvement if actively engaged in program</li> </ul>
Shelters/Hotels/Motels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feeling unsafe</li> <li>- Does not solve homelessness</li> <li>- When motels are full, people are sent to neighboring municipalities to be housed at their shelters; puts people at further risk and removes them from their support community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Makes people more comfortable</li> <li>+ Saves lives by offering safety and warmth</li> </ul>
Transitional Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housed in a remote area (can't work, bored)</li> <li>- No/slow movement to permanent housing from transitional</li> <li>- Need operational dollars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Living with others going through similar experiencers can give sense of community</li> <li>+ Providing wrap around supports for individuals actively engaged in program</li> <li>+ Housed and off streets</li> </ul>



Practical Assistance Worker/Community Outreach Worker	- Not available across entire service area	+ BIG support from intensive case management provided
Health Care Services	- No doctors to: assess capacity; refer seniors looking for long term care; sign forms (homeless people who would be eligible for ODSP cannot be processed) - Walk in clinic will not fill out forms - Long wait for people receiving OW to get ODSP	+ When people receive regular health care, there is a noticeable, dramatic improvement to their health and they no longer have to rely on more expensive emergency room care
Food Services	- Duplicating programs for clientele who may not have anywhere to store food	+ Offering food to those who need it most

Participants were queried about their perception of the local system's capacity to effectively address homelessness needs. The prevailing sentiment leaned toward inadequate capacity, with a consensus that the demand exceeds the current service offerings. Yet, participants also acknowledged the commendable efforts undertaken within the confines of providers' limitations. They appreciated the groundwork laid by these programs, acknowledging their potential to sustain continued support in the future.

As a follow up, respondents were asked how collaboration and coordination could be improved and what generally could be done to improve the capacity of the system. The following suggestions given are explored below:

#### Increased Coordination

Enhancing coordination among current stakeholders emerged as a consistent theme across all consultation sessions. A recommendation involving a centralized decision-making process was proposed to alleviate the administrative referral burden on community partners. This approach also seeks to establish coordinated support, infuse routine and stability for those experiencing homelessness. The envisioned model underscores continuous and frequent communication, a streamlined and consistent resource hub, and the possibility of introducing a homelessness coordinator role to serve as the primary community liaison. This coordination effort would not only heighten awareness of available resources for clients but also empower agencies seeking partnerships or increased efficiency in their ongoing programs.

#### Communication & Information Sharing

In line with improved coordination, another recommendation emerged from consultations: the sharing of information (with client consent) to facilitate comprehensive care planning for individuals. This approach ensures that files remain current and involve all relevant parties actively assisting clients on their journey toward secure housing.

Interagency communication can be bolstered through initiatives like "Lunch and Learns," serving as both training opportunities and a safe platform for sharing experiences. Equipping agencies with resources like visual guides to local services serves as an additional aid.

A prevailing sentiment regarding communication and information sharing emphasized the need for ongoing openness and frequency among stakeholders, decision-makers, and people experiencing homelessness. The overarching objective is to cultivate lasting engagement among all stakeholders, ensuring their active involvement in discussions about innovative ideas, best practices, client experiences, program effectiveness, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving.

### Collaboration with Community

Alongside coordination and communication, it's recommended to maintain strong collaborations with the community. Consistent meetings with community partners to discuss funding and program initiatives are crucial for maximizing efficiency, minimizing redundancies, and comprehending the range of services each stakeholder offers. Engaging all community members in these discussions is essential.

Active involvement within the community can also reshape public perceptions. Through increased dialogue and engagement, stereotypes and social barriers obstructing support for homeless individuals can be effectively addressed.

Moreover, efforts to collaborate should extend to lower-tier municipalities, private landlords, and the broader public. These collaborations not only raise awareness but also establish the notion that addressing and ultimately eradicating homelessness requires the collective commitment of the entire community.

### Client-centric Approach

In developing initiatives for the short, medium, and long term, approaches should be client-centric from the onset. All approaches are not suitable for every client, recognizing that everyone's journey and past experiences are unique. It is imperative that services offered are **"flexible and creative in the help we provide so that we can assist people in practical, meaningful ways"**.

*"It should always be led by the individual we have housed, and we should be able to better help them meet their goals to work towards stability."*

*Re: Providing services that focus on the client's individual needs  
- Community Partner*

### Recommendations & Priorities

Respondents with lived experience identified the following ways the community can further support homeless individuals. This group comprised of six individuals: one was at risk of homeless, two were currently homeless, and three were previously homeless. It was a priority of the Homelessness Action Plan to have their recommendations and comments at the forefront to be prioritized and top of mind for readers.

**When asked how the community could collaborate to support an individual's housing journey in a dignified manner, they said:**

- Accessible services
  - 24/7 mental health help to deal with traumas, addictions, and abuse
- Housing first
  - a warm place to rest, to protect their belongings
- Affordable housing

**When asked what key factors to ending their homelessness were, they said:**

- A safe place to stay
- Counselling/therapy
- Treatment for mental health, addictions, trauma
- Skill building
- Getting off drugs and working
- More resources to food
- Small homes and/or transitional housing

**When asked what resources would help individuals stay housed and avoid homelessness, they said:**

- Permanent housing
- More support programs
- Access to food banks, meal programs
- Transitional housing
- Accessible mental health and addictions services within the community
- Housing worker/homeless support worker/an advocate

**When asked what their greatest challenge was as an individual with lived experience (at-risk of homeless), they said:**

- Stress and anxiety
- Mental wellness
- Survival
  - Where will I eat, bathe, stay alive?
  - With no money, how do I eat? Steal? What's the solution?
  - Where do I sleep? Will I be arrested?
  - How do I get cleaned?
- Nobody cares
- Self-discipline
- A place to sleep and be warm
- Finding resources to connect to

While few respondents with lived experience left additional comments, one comment left was particularly enlightening.

*“...we need to look at why people are homeless. Give them a safe place and the tools to rebuild thru support, help, health. Broken [people] can be housed but they are still broken. So with the onslaught of broken [people] everywhere of course there's lack of housing. Nobody is fixing the problem, just patching it. Unless [you] have been homeless [you] can't possibly understand. The key is knowing that [people] are not homeless cause they want to be, they [aren't] addicted, abused, mentally ill, because they want to be!! They have lost trust, faith, support, hope and the ability to keep fighting to just survive.”*

*Re: Insight into the Reality of Homelessness  
- Individual at Risk of Homelessness in PELA*

In addition to the specific recommendations provided by those with lived experience, the following recommendations to address homelessness within the service area are as follows:

**Recommendation One - Strengthening Integration and Coordination:** Recognizing the crucial need for enhanced collaboration in our fight against homelessness, we must address the current fragmentation among community partners and non-profit organizations. This fragmentation hinders progress, obstructs the vital exchange of information, and does not provide the best service to people experiencing homelessness. To address this challenge, we propose the implementation of four key strategies:

- **Collaborative Workshops:** Regular workshops will unite stakeholders from various organizations, fostering a culture of cooperation. These workshops will facilitate the exchange of insights, discussions about challenges, and brainstorming of solutions, nurturing a network of shared understanding.
- **Creation of a Homelessness Working Group:** Create a working group comprised of people working at a variety of community agencies. This group would engage in discussions about overarching strategies to enhance outcomes for people facing homelessness or at risk of it. They would also delve into client-specific details, funding prospects, and craft strategies at the individual, group, and community levels. The aim is to minimize duplication of services and maximize efficiency.
- **Improved Coordination and Resource Hub:** Design improvements for the coordination of homelessness services. Features of improvements to coordination include overseeing cross-agency efforts, fostering collaboration, and bridging gaps. Additionally, create a resource hub that provides comprehensive information, tools, and support for stakeholders, promoting informed decision-making and facilitating effective interventions.

- **Shared Information Platform:** Establish a secure digital platform for sharing anonymized data and success stories. This platform will provide a comprehensive view of homelessness trends, fostering informed decision-making and enabling the replication of successful strategies throughout the network.

Embracing these solutions will amplify integration, bolster mutual support, and synergize our efforts to end homelessness in our community. Moreover, we aim to build strong partnerships with other agencies, leveraging relationships for educational opportunities, resource sharing, and holistic client support. By uniting in these endeavors, PELASS can play a pivotal role as a coordinator, enhancing the effectiveness of our collective mission.

**Recommendation Two - Foster Independence:** It is imperative to enhance support for independent living skills for people experiencing homelessness. To address this, we recommend establishing a comprehensive and easily accessible set of resources that cater to pre- and post-housing needs. These resources should not be limited and should focus on reinforcing existing skills while nurturing the development of new ones. By prioritizing lifelong learning and skill-building, we can empower individuals to successfully transition to independent living and contribute to long-term solutions for homelessness in our community.

**Recommendation Three - Incorporate People with Lived Experience in the Decision Making Process:** Prioritize the expansion of resources by incorporating peer support specialists and engaging people with lived homelessness experience in decision-making processes related to housing. Enhance our collective efforts by bolstering peer-support offerings and ensuring diverse perspectives are integrated into every stage of homelessness initiatives.

**Recommendation Four - Community Integration, Perception Change & Finding Purpose:** Prioritize the creation of comprehensive programs aimed at fostering community integration for people transitioning out of homelessness and addressing negative public perceptions. Develop initiatives that empower formerly homeless people to engage in volunteering, employment, and leisure activities, promoting a sense of purpose and connection within the community. Simultaneously, actively engage in community outreach campaigns to educate and change public perceptions about homelessness. By offering opportunities for meaningful engagement and addressing misconceptions, we can support their successful reintegration and contribute to the long-term solution of homelessness in our community.

**Recommendation Five - Diversified Housing Stock and Incentives:** Foster a collaborative approach among government entities, community partners, and non-profits to enhance housing accessibility. In addition, empower municipalities and townships to explore innovative solutions like permitting and encouraging residents to establish secondary residential suites on their properties. This strategic endeavor will not only expedite approvals and streamline regulations but also diversify our housing options, making them more affordable and accessible to those in need. Together, we can create a thriving environment that addresses homelessness by expanding the array of housing alternatives within our community.

**Recommendation Six – Create more Supportive Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness:** One of the main reasons people are homeless is simply due to a lack of affordable housing. The community needs to take action to create more affordable housing. This may include pursuing funding to create more housing, local municipalities modifying land use arrangements that will permit more housing,

housing providers, community support organizations and municipalities working together to create more housing, and other innovative ideas.

**Recommendation Seven – Pursue Funding Opportunities:** PELASS and community partners are encouraged to pursue funding opportunities that would improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and for those at risk of becoming homeless. Organizations should consider collaborating and partnering when considering the pursuit of funding opportunities.

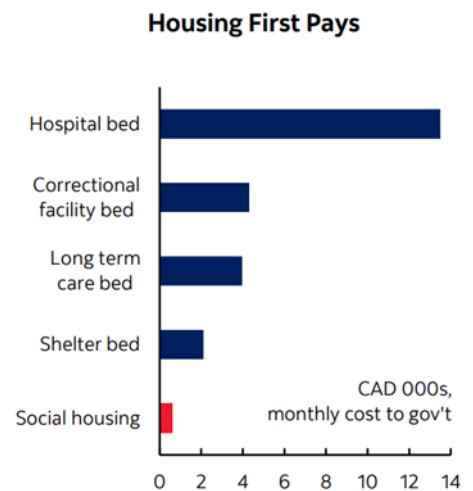
## Conclusion

In our steadfast commitment to tackling homelessness, PELASS will continue to embrace a "housing first" approach, channeling financial and human resources into strategies that align with ensuring permanent housing with supports is a priority. Feedback from consultations has underscored limited support for a homeless shelter within the PELASS area. While shelters offer immediate relief, they don't present a lasting solution to homelessness. Instead, our focus will be unwaveringly directed towards seeking permanent, supported housing options.

A recent report in Scotiabank's Global Economics January 2023 edition, referencing the Mental Health Commission of Canada, highlights a compelling statistic: an investment of \$10 in supportive housing yields an average savings of nearly \$22, along with substantial social returns (Scotiabank 2023). This reinforces the notion that prioritizing housing investments redirects costs from other essential services that homeless individuals might otherwise rely upon, like hospital beds or shelter accommodations.

The feedback and recommendations outlined in this plan delineate pathways through which both PELASS and the broader community can collectively influence homelessness on both a programmatic and systemic level. Combating homelessness necessitates a unified endeavor, leveraging the strengths of each stakeholder. This cooperative approach promises to yield the desired collective outcomes while maximizing the prudent use of PELASS's finite resources.

As progress takes shape and solutions materialize, the wholehearted support and active engagement of the entire community become imperative. Homelessness is a shared concern, it is a community concern, and its resolution hinges upon the concerted efforts of every member, collaboratively dismantling the cycle of homelessness and housing insecurity.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of Community Programs and Agencies

<b>Community Partner</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Contact</b>
<b>Addictions &amp; Mental Health - KFLA</b>	<b>Health Services</b>	<b>(613) 544 - 1356</b>
<b>Kingston Community Health Centre - Napanee</b>	<b>Health Services</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 8937</b>
<b>KFLA Health Unit - Napanee</b>	<b>Health Services</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 3357</b>
<b>L&amp;A County General Hospital</b>	<b>Health Services</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 3301</b>
<b>Lakelands Family Health Team</b>	<b>Health Services</b>	<b>(613) 336 - 8888</b>
<b>Counselling Services of Belleville and District</b>	<b>Counselling Services</b>	<b>(613) 966 - 7413</b>
<b>Centre for Abuse and Trauma Therapy - Kingston</b>	<b>Counselling Services Crisis Services</b>	<b>(613) 507 - 2288</b>
<b>Land O Lakes Community Services - Northbrook</b>	<b>Counselling Services Food Services Home Supports Transportation Tax Service Women's Support</b>	<b>(613) 336 - 8934</b>
<b>L&amp;A Interval House - Napanee</b>	<b>Women's Support</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 0808</b>
<b>Three Oaks Women's Shelter in Belleville</b>	<b>Women's Shelter Educational Upgrading Transitional Housing</b>	<b>(613) 966 - 3074</b>
<b>Victim Services - Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox and Addington Counties</b>	<b>Victim Supports</b>	<b>(613) 771 - 1767</b>
<b>Helping Hands Food Bank - Deseronto</b>	<b>Food Service</b>	<b>(613) 847 - 5658</b>
<b>Morningstar Mission - Napanee</b>	<b>Food Service Clothing &amp; Furniture Showers Spiritual Support Tax Services</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 6355</b>
<b>Northbrook/Cloyne Food Bank</b>	<b>Food Services</b>	<b>(613) 366 - 8934</b>
<b>Storehouse, Wellington Food Bank</b>	<b>Food Services</b>	<b>(613) 849 - 7403</b>
<b>Salvation Army Food Bank - Napanee</b>	<b>Food Services</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 7633</b>

<b>The HOPE Centre – PEC</b>	<b>Food Services</b>	<b>(613) 922 - 5279</b>
<b>Kingston Youth Shelter</b>	<b>Shelter</b>	<b>(613) 549 - 4236</b>
<b>Red Cedars Shelter - Shannonville</b>	<b>Shelter</b>	<b>(613) 967 - 2003</b>
<b>Kingston Legal Clinic</b>	<b>Legal Support</b>	<b>(613) 541 - 0777</b>
<b>Northern Legal Clinic - Napanee</b>	<b>Legal Support</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 4773</b>
<b>March of Dimes March of Dimes</b>	<b>Charity</b>	<b>(613) 549 - 4141</b>
<b>United Way of KFLA</b>	<b>Charity</b>	<b>(613) 542 - 2674</b>
<b>Career Edge - Napanee</b>	<b>Job Assistance Skill Development</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 0425</b>
<b>Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington</b>	<b>Family Services</b>	<b>(613) 545 - 3227</b>
<b>Kate's Rest Foundation - Demorestville</b>	<b>Social Enterprise Rent-to-own onsite housing</b>	<b>(613) 391 - 9711</b>
<b>L &amp; A Senior's Outreach Services - Napanee</b>	<b>Tax Services Transportation Social Activity</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 6668</b>
<b>Lennox &amp; Addington Youth Hub</b>	<b>Development Programs Social Activities</b>	<b>(613) 539 - 9933</b>
<b>Peer 17 - Napanee</b>	<b>Peer Support</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 1690</b>
<b>The Hub – Community Living</b>	<b>Disability Supports</b>	<b>(613) 354 - 2184</b>



## Works Cited

- Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. "Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population Profile Table." 1 Feb 2023, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=loyalist+&DGUIDlist=2021A00053513020%2C2021A00053511035%2C2021A00053511030%2C2021A00053511015%2C2021A00053511005&GENDERlist=1%2C2%2C3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>.
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "Service Manager Guidelines - Ontario. 2021." <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-service-manager-guidelines-by-name-list-implementation-homeless-enumeration-en-2021-08-03.pdf>.
- National Alliance to End Rural and Remote Homelessness. "Rural & Remote Homelessness A Call for Strategic Investments to End Homelessness in Rural and Remote Communities Across Canada." 2021. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/432/HUMA/Brief/BR11103191/br-external/NationalAllianceToEndRuralAndRemoteHomelessness-e.pdf>
- Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Social Services. "Point-in-time Count Homelessness Report." 2021.
- Scotiabank. "Canadian Housing Affordability Hurts." Post. 2023. <https://www.scotiabank.com/ca/en/about/economics/economics-publications/post.other-publications.insights-views.social-housing--january-18--2023-.html>
- Stafford, Amanda, and Lisa Wood. "Tackling Health Disparities for People Who Are Homeless? Start with Social Determinants." International journal of environmental research and public health, December 8, 2017. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5750953/>.
- Taylor, Malaika. "How Is Rural Homelessness Different from Urban Homelessness?" How is Rural Homelessness Different from Urban Homelessness? , July 26, 2018. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/how-rural-homelessness-different-urban-homelessness>.
- The County Foundation. "Prince Edward County VitalSigns 2018." Prince Edward County Community Foundation. 2018. <https://communityfoundations.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/The-County-Foundation-Vital-Signs-2018.pdf>.
- Waegemakers Schiff, Jeannette, and Alina Turner. "Housing First in Rural Canada : Rural Homelessness and Housing First Feasibility across 22 Canadian Communities." Policy Commons, May 30, 2022. <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1184026/housing-first-in-rural-canada/1737149/>.