

bethlehem

housing and support services

Supporting Those Who
Struggle Silently



2024 Spring Newsletter

[BETHLEHEMHOUSING.CA](https://bethlehemhousing.ca)

Community Impact

PRIORITIZING RESOURCES FOR THE MISSING MIDDLE,
BETTER KNOWN AS THE “HIDDEN HOMELESS”

Hidden Homelessness – There Is Just Nowhere To Go

Homelessness is more of a widespread issue in Canada and locally here in Niagara than we traditionally think of. Hidden homelessness refers to people who live temporarily with friends, family or strangers (couch surfing), or in temporary accommodation such as hotels with no long-term housing security. Another term for hidden homeless is transitional homeless; people that have a sudden life-changing or catastrophic event that causes homelessness. Those events include reduction in rent affordability through renovictions, mental illness, substance abuse, divorce, job loss, domestic abuse, a medical condition, etc. Some do have a job but cannot afford rent and/or utilities. These individuals often face uncertainty and instability, which can lead to negative consequences such as difficulty in finding employment, social isolation, and mental health issues.

Hidden homelessness affects a wide range of people such as:

- Single mothers with children living with grandparents
- Couch-surfing seasonal workers
- Indigenous youth
- Youth who don't feel safe or secure at home
- Newcomers living with another family
- Low-income seniors – mostly women who are widows
- Renovicted tenants who cannot afford higher rents



Hidden or Transitional homeless is often unnoticed. Since they lack access to housing support resources and cannot be identified, they are 'hidden' from national or local statistics on homelessness. The Canadian observatory on Homelessness (Homeless Hub newsletter) estimates that there are 3 people who are considered to be unhoused for every one person who is experiencing chronic homelessness (sleeping rough on the streets). In Niagara we currently have approximately 1200 people experiencing chronic homelessness and therefore potentially, 3600 hidden or transitional homeless households on any given night.

Bethlehem's mobile outreach team of Community Support Workers (CSWs) support an average of 150 individuals and families annually. These are people in housing need, sitting on housing waitlists, and have experienced a situation or event that has put their housing at risk, and have become transitional hidden homeless. Sometimes all we can do is support them to address their issues and connect to services while they wait for housing. When there is nowhere to go, the wait can be long, but they are not alone.

HERE IS CATHY'S STORY...

Cathy's life took a heart-wrenching turn when her marriage ended, triggering mental health challenges that shook her foundation. Her situation affected her ability to maintain her long-term job. Every day felt like an uphill battle as Cathy was left to care for two young children. The comfort of home and marriage had vanished, and the weight of uncertainty bore heavily on her shoulders.

"I used to judge people I'd see on the side of the street – those who looked homeless," admits Cathy. ***"There is such a stigma surrounding not being able to organize your own shelter."*** The mother of two girls speaks frankly about her own situation – about the day she realized she was herself without a home.

She rented a 2-bedroom room unit in a house, but ***"The day that I realized I couldn't afford the extra rent that my landlord starting charging, I was devastated. I cried and cried. Friends offered me places to stay, but I knew long-term that with two daughters I had to face up to the fact that I was homeless."***

Supporting Niagara

AFFORDABLE HOUSING & SUPPORT SERVICES ARE CRITICAL FOR A VIBRANT, CARING & INCLUSIVE NIAGARA COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE HAS A HOME

Cathy is among those known as the hidden homeless – a section of our society who may not sleep on the streets, but who have no home to call their own – no security, no peace.

Long waits are very challenging

"I felt so guilty about not providing a real home for my children. I swallowed my pride and contacted some local services for some kind of support. It was a long wait and after living in a Niagara Falls hotel for two months, where we had one room between the 3 of us, we finally got the call to move into Transitional Housing at Bethlehem Place". Although a challenging adjustment, Cathy says "we received incredible support – support that I will be forever grateful for from the Community Support Workers and the EarlyON Centre. We were happy there and the girls and I participated in programs."

"I was extremely down and they helped me an awful lot. I can't thank them enough. I was embarrassed to tell anyone that I was homeless, but I do think others should reach out and get the help that is on offer. Don't struggle alone. I walked in there and asked for help and they changed my life. They helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel."

For Cathy, the word home means security, it means peace and it means happiness. She worked hard on her journey to change her life while staying at Bethlehem Place. After another long wait, she moved into her own affordable 2 bedroom apartment at one of Bethlehem's permanent community housing buildings.

"I've worked all my life, so for me to admit I couldn't provide a home for me and my daughters, was horrendous. This is a problem people don't know enough about – we need more affordable housing. We are not looking for mansions, all people like me want is a front door to walk through and close behind you on the world. I'll never forget the day I was able to do that. A home should be a safe haven, and we all deserve that."

Niagara's Surging Poverty & Housing Demand

Here in Niagara, we currently have almost 24,000 households in core housing need and over 10,000 households on the regional waitlist searching for affordable housing. We at Bethlehem have our own waitlist of 500 families for our affordable housing units. The folks of the missing middle are lower income working individuals and families. Those that are the transitionally homeless or better known as the hidden homeless are at risk of becoming homeless.

DID YOU KNOW - 30% of people in shelters have been reinvicted.



Single working-age adults experience the highest rates and deepest levels of poverty.

25.8%

of single parent families are low-income.

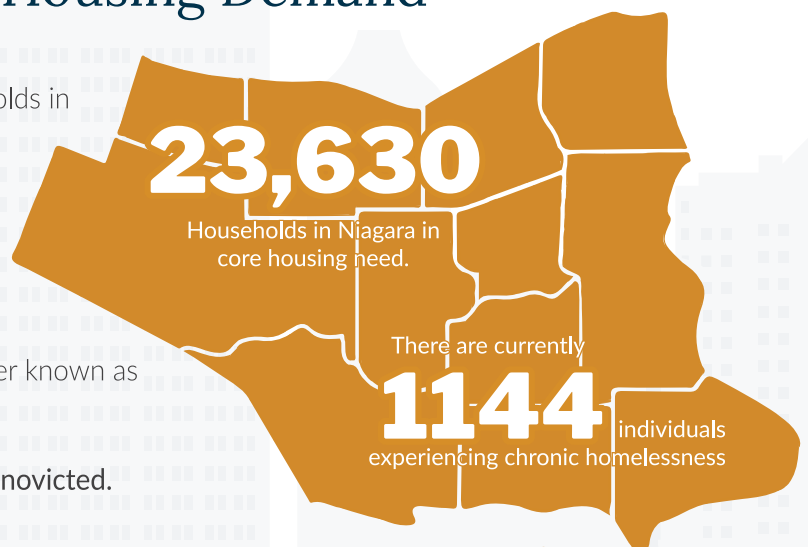


1 in 5

households (20.7%) in Niagara are food insecure.



Inflation effects are driving an unprecedented increase in demand for Niagara's ten partner food banks, and a reduction in charitable giving.



It's Spring

IN THIS SEASON OF RENEWAL, YOUR KINDNESS WARMS OUR HEARTS

Transitional Housing Families at Bethlehem Place participate in family & children services programs and access available resources.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide free opportunities for children from birth to 6 years of age to participate in play and inquiry-based programs.

These centres offer safe & welcoming environments open to all families across Ontario, with qualified professionals and quality programs.

Families & caregivers will be provided with support, advice, personal connections and access to a network of resources.



EarlyON

Child and Family Centre

NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Thank you to Niagara Region Children's Services. The funding they provided enabled us to replace the existing structure that was not serving the needs of the children. Outdoor play and climbing are an important key role in early childhood motor skills development. Evidence suggests that climbing at a young age helps hone spatial and directional awareness, and also boosts physical skills such as balance, hand and foot coordination, and agility.



This past year, our EarlyON Child and Family Centre welcomed

- 276 children who made 1324 visits
- 199 parents or caregivers who made 947 visits

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

We are so pleased to announce our partnership with the Rotary Club of St. Catharines and the Niagara Community Foundation to establish an endowment fund that will support our new Housing Affordability Assistance Program (HAAP). Otherwise known as a Rent Bank, the program will assist eligible individuals and families with costs that are barriers to housing transitions. For example, a low-income household may not be able to move into permanent housing due to the extra costs for moving or do not have enough money for a last month rent deposit; the HAAP program will assist the family with these costs to help them move forward and into their permanent home. Sometimes a family's income changes due to an unforeseeable event such as a health issue. The HAAP program will assist with a temporary rent subsidy until that family has stabilized their income. We are so grateful for this opportunity to offer our families a hand-up to reduce barriers to housing.

Thank you, Rotary Club of St. Catharines, for supporting our Bethlehem families!

Rotary
Club of
St. Catharines



You Helped Us Achieve Our Goals!



On Wednesday, March 6, 2024 we celebrated our 19th Anniversary of Empty Bowls at the Americana Conference Centre in Niagara Falls

This year's event was our most successful yet, raising **\$94,000** in net proceeds. Thank you to our donors, vendors, volunteers and sponsors, YOU are the true heroes! WITHOUT YOU we couldn't work to provide supportive transitional and permanent housing for individuals and families across the Niagara Region.

Thank you to all of the artisan potters, the hobby, and student potters who donated so much of their time and talent to create the beautiful bowls that they donated to this year's Empty Bowls event!

Congratulations to our winners! The **Twisted Pig Italian Kitchen** won the Judges Choice Award for their delicious Duck Chowder with Duck 3 Ways and **Niagara College Canada** took home the People's Choice Award with their delectable Kumara Soup w/brown butter, crème fraiche and macadamia crumble!

Save The Date!

Come check out our Lunchtime Soup Event
Wednesday October 16, 2024

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NIAGARA
PEN CENTRE

On Wednesday October 16, 2024, in the Event Court at The Niagara Pen Centre – St.Catharines, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services will host the 2nd Annual Country Harvest Soup Fest fundraiser. We have started planning for the event and are gathering Sponsorships so please contact us if you are interested in supporting this upcoming event.



HOUSING HERO

These amazing companies are making an incredible impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in our communities by organizing fundraisers to support the work we do at BHSS. They are true "HOUSING HEROES".



For every soup order in February, they contributed \$2 towards our Housing Hero Initiative.



In January they donated \$1 from every order of their crispy, delicious fish & chips to our Housing Hero Initiative.



Proceeds from their solar eclipse event were donated to our Housing Hero Initiative.



Donated Summer Live-On-Location spin wheel proceeds to our Housing Hero Initiative.



They donated proceeds from their Songs in Support - Holiday Edition Event - a series sharing the talents of POP students.



For a few years now, NAJC has been generously donating the proceeds from their Annual Niagara Jeep Fest event.



Order some delicious, savoury wine and your order is delivered right to your door and the fundraising proceeds are delivered to us!



BEING A HOUSING HERO is as easy as 1,2,3

1

BRAINSTORM IDEAS

Engage your team in a brainstorming session and discuss ideas. At this point, no idea is a bad idea. Document every idea then discuss viability, goals, timeframe, etc.

2

GET OUR HELP

This is not our "first rodeo" as it is said. Our team has experience and can help guide your ideas and help you come up with a plan for successful execution.

3

HAVE A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

We will assist you in supporting and marketing your event using our team's expertise as well as outside media channels and community partners.

Engage your community of friends, family and colleagues to join you in your Housing Hero efforts. Event ideas might include:



Family
Reunion



Dance
Party



Pool
Party



Customer
Appreciation



Anniversary
Celebration

Upcoming 3rd Party Fundraisers



June 24
Sawmill Golf Course

See niagaramarathons.com for more information and updates.



July 11
Dillon's Small Batch Distillers

See niagaramarathons.com for more information and updates.



Jeep Fest - September 15
Merrittville Speedway

See niagarajeepfest.ca for more information and event updates.