

Liveable Peel, Feb. 10, 2006

**Housing and health:
*What are the costs?????***

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Prerequisites for health

◆ Housing is a prerequisite for health

◆ World Health Organization's Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) states:

- The fundamental conditions and resources for health are:
 - ◆ peace,
 - ◆ **shelter**,
 - ◆ education,
 - ◆ food,
 - ◆ income,
 - ◆ a stable eco-system,
 - ◆ sustainable resources,
 - ◆ social justice, and equity.



What we know (micro). . .

1. Lack of good quality, affordable housing affects personal health
 - *homelessness, insecure housing ⇒ higher morbidity and higher mortality*
2. Subsidized housing is key factor in helping the homeless become housed
 - *subsidized housing ⇒ housed*



...and we also know (macro)

3. Housing insecurity causes social and economic problems for communities
 - Poor housing ⇒ social problems, higher taxes, diminished competitiveness
4. Subsidized housing is a good investment in people and communities
 - Subsidized housing ⇒ new homes, good jobs, economic stimulation



Dr Charles Hastings, 1918

◆ “Every nation that permits people to remain under fetters of preventable disease and permits social conditions to exist that make it impossible for them to be properly fed, clothed and housed so as to maintain a high degree of resistance and physical fitness; and, who endorses a wage that does not afford sufficient revenue for the home, a revenue that will make possible development of a sound mind and body, is trampling on a primary principle of democracy.”



Toronto flop house, 1914



The Bruce Report (1934)

- ◆ A study of Toronto's slum districts at the depths of the Great Depression:
 - “These areas of misery and degradation exert an unhappy environmental influence upon many of our citizens.”

Dr. H.A. Bruce, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario



Regent Park, 1948



Housing and health (1984)

- ◆ “Inadequate accommodation is not sole solution to health problems among Toronto’s poor, but being homeless or living in unaffordable or substandard housing makes it difficult, if not impossible, to engage in many practices that promote health. Moreover, inadequate housing fosters stress which lowers physical resistance to disease and exacerbates pre-existing emotional strains.”

Housing and Health: Public Health Implications of the Crisis in Affordable Housing, Toronto Department of Public Health, 1984



Homelessness and health

- ◆ “Specific health effects of homelessness and underhousing are difficult to separate from often-associated effects of poverty, unemployment, pre-existing mental and physical disabilities, and age-related vulnerabilities in children and the elderly. . . .”
- ◆ “The health effects of homelessness include:
 - ***cold injury*** [hypothermia and frostbite];
 - ***cardio-respiratory disease*** [coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, emphysema]
 - ***tuberculosis***;
 - ***skin problems*** [infected and ulcerated lesions];



Health effects of homelessness

- ***nutritional disorders*** [leading to a greater risk for infectious diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, skin disease and nervous system dysfunction];
- ***sleep deprivation*** [leading to instability, emotional irritability, concentration deficits, cognitive impairment, apathy and behaviour disorders];
- ***children's mental health disorders*** [leading to developmental lags, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties];
- ***adult psychiatric disorders***; and
- ***chronic stress*** [including insomnia, anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem and withdrawal].”

Public inquiry into homelessness and health, 1987



Morbidity and mortality

- ◆ “Homeless women and men do not have ‘different’ illnesses than general population. However, their living circumstances and poverty affect their ability to cope with health problems.” - *Street Health Report, 1992*
- ◆ Homeless women and men have mortality rates 8 to 10 times higher than housed women and men - *Dr. Stephen Hwang*



Other studies have reported:

- ◆ Definitive links between poor housing conditions and poor health
- ◆ Over time, combination of poor housing factors leads to poor health outcomes
- ◆ “Dose-response” relationship – the worse the conditions, the greater the health effects



Conclusion #1

 Housing is bad for personal health of women, men and children



Homeless families in NYC

- ◆ Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City: From Shelter Request to Housing Stability
- ◆ *American Journal of Public Health*
- ◆ Volume 88(1), November 1998, pp.1651 to 1657



Method

- ◆ 568 homeless and housed poor families
- ◆ First interviewed in 1988, then interviewed again in 1993
- ◆ Questions:
 - Who was stably housed (> one year)?
 - Why were they stably housed?



Factors not affecting stability

◆ NOT – race, age, pregnancy, persistent poverty, education, work history, marriage, teen motherhood, child poverty, mental illness, substance use, physical health, incarceration, social ties domestic violence, childhood disruptions



Who was stable?

- ◆ 80% of families who went into subsidized housing
- ◆ 18% of families who went into unsubsidized housing



Only factor affecting stability

◆ *Subsidized housing*

- ◆ Marybeth Shinn: “Subsidized housing is both necessary and sufficient to ‘cure’ homelessness among families.”



Housing succeeds. . .

◆ “We found that subsidized housing succeeds in curing homelessness among families, regardless of behavioral disorders or other conditions. Whatever their problems – substance abuse, mental illness, physical illness or a history of incarceration – nearly all of the families became stably housed when they received subsidized housing.”

Marybeth Shinn



Housing first (a new practice)

- ◆ “Vulnerable and at-risk homeless families are more responsive to interventions and social services support *after they are in their own housing*, rather than while living in temporary/transitional facilities. For over 10 years, the housing first methodology has proven to be a practical means to ending and preventing family homelessness... The housing first methodology was designed to more effectively address economic root causes of problem: poverty and lack of affordable housing.”

Beyond Shelter, Los Angeles



Conclusion #2

 Subsidized housing
cures homelessness



Housing crisis hurts economy

- ◆ “As Toronto has grown, supply of affordable housing has shrunk. Many people who work in Toronto can no longer afford to live here. Those who find a place often struggle with high costs of shelter, while others who choose to live outside Toronto become unwitting contributors to urban sprawl and traffic congestion.”
- ◆ “Without enhanced investment in city’s infrastructure, Toronto will be unable to maintain its competitive edge, resulting in city playing a much diminished role in economic life of province and nation.”

Toronto Board of Trade, 2003



Even bankers have noticed

- ◆ “Housing is a necessity of life. Yet, many in Canada cannot afford acceptable shelter. In fact, at last count, roughly one in five Canadian households were in this situation. Even more troubling, ten years of economic expansion have barely put a dent in problem. As Canadian households struggle to find shelter and still make ends meet, their plight is spawning a series of related social problems in communities making the shortage of affordable housing one of the most pressing public policy issues”.

TD Economics, Special Report, Affordable Housing in Canada: In search of a New Paradigm, June 17, 2003.



Cost of “doing nothing”

◆ Costs of housing “options” (per day):

- Psychiatric hospital bed - \$360
- Prison / detention centre - \$124
- Homeless shelter - \$43

Golden task force, 1999

◆ Average daily cost for existing federally-funded subsidized housing - **\$8.66 per day**

- \$2 billion in annual spending for 632,650 units

CMHC, 2004 actual costs



Saving taxpayers' money

- ◆ “Service **and** shelter costs of homeless people ranged from \$30,000 to \$40,000 for one year (including costs of staying in an emergency shelter). Combined costs of services and housing for housed individuals ranged from \$22,000 to \$28,000, assuming they stayed in supportive housing. The total government costs for the housed individuals amounted to less than costs for homeless individuals. Providing adequate supportive housing to homeless people saved the provincial government money.”

Gov't of B.C., 2002



Conclusion #3

 **Costs of ignoring homelessness and housing issues are expensive**



NYC Mayor Bloomberg (2002)

◆ “We have a vision for New York City as a city where people want to live, work, raise their families, educate their children, and socialize. It must also be a place where business wants to locate and can attract the best people. Housing is a key part of that vision, and this Administration is focused on making housing affordable and available and on enforcing standards to ensure its quality.”



NYC (cont'd)

- ◆ “To spur and complement the market, over the next 5 years we are committed to investing more than \$3 billion to preserve and create 65,000 units of housing for low, moderate and middle income New Yorkers, including providing City-owned land for new construction of over 7,000 units of housing.”



Housing investment is good

- ◆ Rebnys senior vp Michael Slattery estimates that every million dollars spent in construction will create six construction jobs... every million spent will also create three secondary or induced jobs
- ◆ A 1993 study for CHAO found that every 1,000 new subsidized homes generated 2,210 person-years of employment



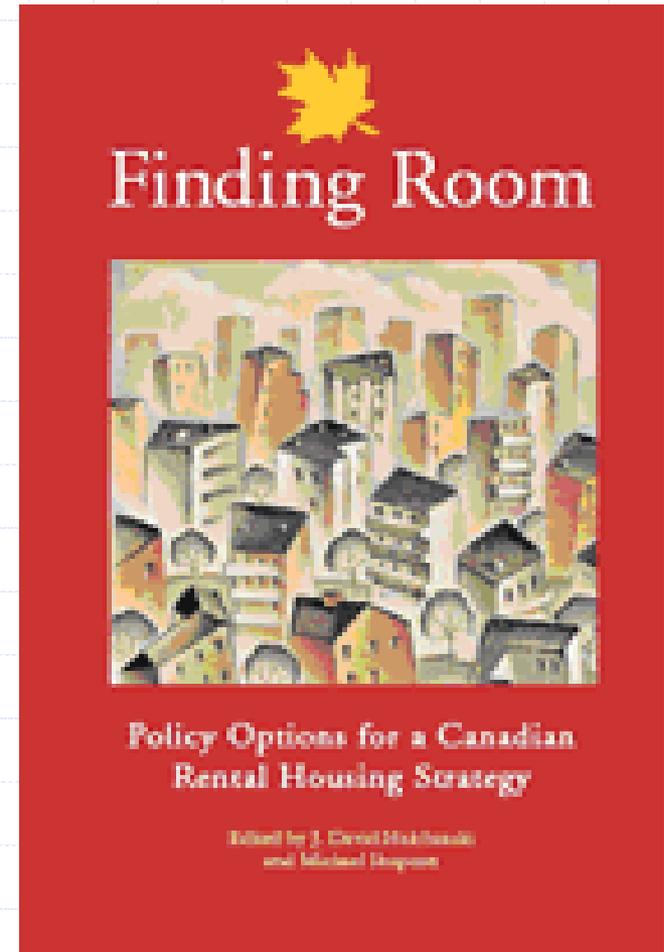
Conclusion #4

 Investing in
subsidized housing
creates benefits



For more information

- ◆ **Finding Room:
Policy Options for
a Canadian Rental
Housing Strategy**
- ◆ **J. David Hulchanski,
Michael Shapcott,
editors**
- ◆ www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca

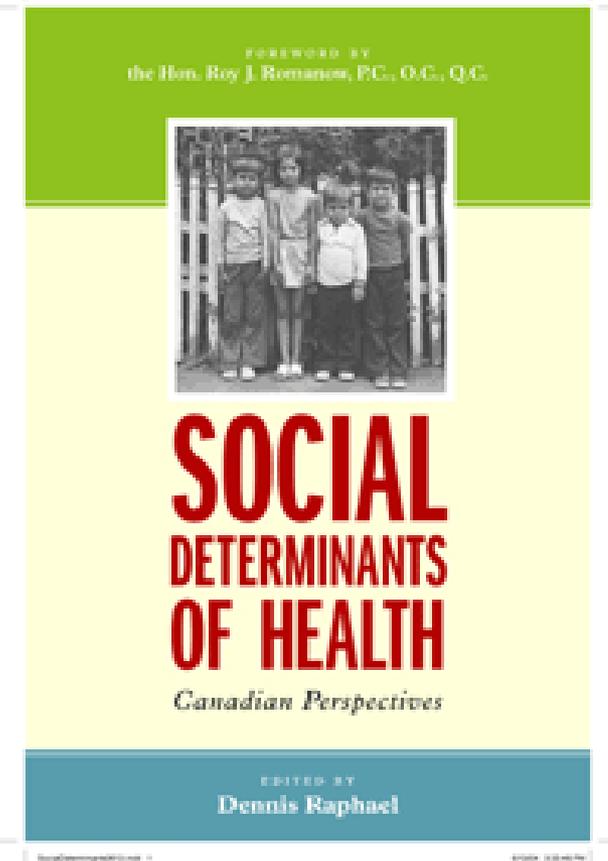


For more information

◆ **Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives**

◆ **Dennis Raphael,**
editor

◆ <http://www.cspi.org/books/s/socialdeter.htm>



On the web...

◆ On-line housing library and links

- Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto
- www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca

◆ Wellesley Central Health Corporation

- www.wellesleycentral.com



Working towards our goal

