



**FAMILY SERVICES of PEEL**

Since 1971

## **Housing in the Region of Peel Family Services of Peel's (FSP) Position Statement**

Family Services of Peel was established in 1971 as a non-profit, registered charitable organization to provide family and community support services for the people of Peel. As a multi-service agency, we provide professional counselling, educational programs, employment support services, support for people with disabilities and their families, as well as support for victims of violence and abuse. Through leadership, collaboration and innovation, we support families and individuals in Peel to transform their lives.

As an agency committed to equity and access for all, Family Services of Peel believes that affordable housing is a social right of every resident of the Region of Peel. Housing is recognized by researchers and policy-makers as an important determinant of health – people require stable housing not only to meet their physical shelter needs but also for their mental, social and emotional health.<sup>i</sup> Access to safe and affordable housing will provide the foundation from which to obtain and secure employment, raise families, and strengthen community.<sup>ii</sup> Affordable housing is integral for a stable and healthy life for individuals and families, enabling all persons to more fully participate and contribute to their communities, as well as reducing the need for emergency shelters. “Housing is a necessity of life... What’s more, the lack of affordable housing is a problem confronting communities across the nation – from large urban centres to smaller less-populated areas. As such, it is steadily gaining recognition as one of Canada’s most pressing public-policy issues”<sup>iii</sup>

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has described the lack of a national housing and homelessness strategy in Canada as constituting a “national emergency.”<sup>iv</sup>

Ontario has the highest rate of persistent core housing need in the country, with low-income households often spending between 30% and 50% of their income on rent.<sup>v</sup> In 2013, the average wait time for affordable housing in Peel was eight and a half years, longer than in York Region or in the City of Toronto.<sup>vi</sup> Further, although Peel’s population grew by 31.1% between 2001 and 2011, only 0.4% of all housing built by the private market in 2011 were rental units.<sup>vii</sup> Peel’s private rental housing market has not kept pace with the increased demand.

A nationwide poll conducted by Environics Research on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, shed some light on Canadians’ values around poverty and the role of government. A majority of Canadians (85%) believe governments can take concrete action to reduce the nation’s growing gap by creating more affordable housing for low-income Canadians and increasing minimum wage for workers.<sup>viii</sup>

The right to adequate housing is affirmed under both the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. There is a social dimension to housing in that it is a right and it should not be treated as a commodity. Housing is an essential human right and government must ensure that all people have access to decent and affordable housing.<sup>ix</sup>

Family Services of Peel believes that there should be a holistic, collaborative approach between all levels of government: federal, provincial, municipal, as well as non-profit, co-op housing organizations, and the private sector to create and develop affordable housing solutions. We support a range of housing options to benefit individuals or families to live independently. We believe programs and services that assist homeless people to secure appropriate housing should be made a priority. Research has documented that the links between housing and health are complex and powerful.<sup>x</sup> Unaffordable and inadequate housing introduces hardships and stresses which compromise the health and well-being of individuals and families. The cost of not investing in housing also deeply impacts children's well-being. The lack of decent housing at prices which low-income families with children can afford makes it all but impossible for many families to bring up their children in a safe and secure home. Having adequate housing is vital to all aspects of children's development and is essential for creating a healthy environment where children can grow and thrive.<sup>xi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, "Appropriate Housing", March 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> "Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan: A Community Strategy 2014-2024."

<https://www.peelregion.ca/housing/housinghomelessness/> pg. 7. Accessed April 19, 2016.

<sup>iii</sup> TD Bank Financial Group. June 17, 2003. As quoted by the Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Inc., Ont. Division. February 2004.

<sup>iv</sup> Canada Without Poverty. "Just the Facts". <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/> Accessed April 18, 2016.

<sup>v</sup> Monsebraaaten, L. "Affordable Housing Wait Lists in Peel and Ontario Growing". The Mississauga News. November 12, 2013.

<sup>vi</sup> Monsebraaaten, L. "Affordable Housing Wait Lists in Peel and Ontario Growing". The Mississauga News. November 12, 2013.

<sup>vii</sup> "Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan: A Community Strategy 2014-2024."

<https://www.peelregion.ca/housing/housinghomelessness/> pg. 8. Accessed April 19, 2016.

<sup>viii</sup> Citizens for Public Justice, "Time to Ensure Housing for All". June 2008.

<sup>ix</sup> Citizens for Public Justice, "Time to Ensure Housing for All". June 2008

<sup>x</sup> Wellesley Institute. (2009). A submission from the Wellesley Institute to the Commons HUMA Committee. <http://wellesleyinstitute.com/files/billc304wellesleysubmission.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> Citizens for Public Justice, "Time to Ensure Housing for All". June 2008.