

HALTON LEARNING FOUNDATION ACCEPTING DONATIONS FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL NECESSITIES

Some kids want the hottest pair of running shoes to start their school year off right, while other kids simply want shoes that fit them.

With just days left until the school bells start ring-

ing, Halton families are busy outfitting their kids for school and filling their backpacks with classroom supplies. For many Halton families, though, the additional costs of new clothes, educational materials and

activity fees are beyond their means.

That's where the Halton Learning Foundation (HLF) comes in.

The organization is now accepting donations for back-to-school necessities,

with Milton's Rockwool to provide matching contributions of up to \$10,000 for donations made by Sept. 7.

"All students, regardless of their families income, should have the

tools they require to do their best work at school," said HLF executive director Lesley Mansfield.

To donate or for more information, visit halton-learningfoundation.ca/backtoschool.



Please keep our community clean!

OPINION

THE INVISIBLE CRISIS: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS IN HALTON

NEARLY 5 PER CENT OF REGION ARE WORKING POOR HOUSEHOLDS, WRITES MOON



TYLER MOON
Column

Imagine for a moment, having to choose between paying rent or buying groceries. The hard truth, is that far too many in our community struggle with this reality every month.

Unaffordable housing places significant stress on low-income Halton residents. Over 12,000 Halton Region residents - or 4.7 per cent - are of working poor households, trying to get ahead working multiple part-time jobs.

When monthly housing costs exceed 30 per cent of the total household income, this becomes increasingly difficult to afford other expenses. Residents have to make tough choices and skimp on necessities like food and transportation. Furthermore, individuals may

even be forced to uproot themselves or their families and move to somewhere with more affordable housing.

This makes it even more important to look at poverty, mobility, and social services at a regional level, because a tight rental market in Halton can directly impact Hamilton. What appear to be low poverty rates in one city, can be hiding a different story about displacement, opportunity, and uprooted families struggling to stay in the community they call home.

In Halton, housing costs are continuing to skyrocket, while vacancy rates continue to fall. Vacancy rates in a healthy rental market are a minimum of three per cent. Community Development Halton reports that Halton's vacancy rate is 1.3 per cent and it has been below three per cent for over a decade.

Coupled with the highest apartment rent in the GTA, accessing affordable housing in Halton is nothing but a dream for many people. For our most vulnerable citizens, this is particularly true for lone-parents and non-family households, who are more likely

to spend greater than 30 per cent of their monthly income on housing.

Unaffordable housing has a severe consequence of driving individuals to homelessness. Homelessness isn't easily visible in Halton, but it is a major problem. For example, couch surfing - which is when people sleep on a friend or relative's couch because they have nowhere else to stay - is a reality for many individuals.

According to Home Suite Hope, there have been recorded cases of people living in cars and sleeping on rooftops or restaurants. Youth have been found climbing into clothing collection bins and sleeping in them. Homeless Hub Halton recorded that 271 individuals in Halton experienced homelessness in 2018.

To learn more about unaffordable housing and ways in which you can help, visit United Way Halton & Hamilton's website at www.uwhh.com.

Tyler Moon is the senior manager of community impact for United Way Halton and Hamilton, on behalf of the Halton Poverty Roundtable.

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