

# NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

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POSTMEDIA

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## No homes of their own

New study looks at issues of poverty and homelessness across Northumberland

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NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

**NORTHUMBERLAND** — It's only part of the reality of homelessness in Northumberland — but it is a start.

More than 80 volunteers assisted Northumberland County and partner agencies to complete 304 one-on-one surveys last week with homeless people or those at risk of losing their home in

Northumberland.

This doesn't represent all of the county's homeless, says Kerri Kightley of Fourcast, but is a "good sample."

It provides the basis for being able to reconnect with the people and link them with supports and services in the next three to six months, even though the final report analyzing and prioritizing peoples' situations won't be completed until early in 2017.

Those who participated received \$10 gift guards to do so and not all provided their names but they have been individually identified.

Some of the results are disturbing.

There are:

- 59 families with 26 children homeless (which means no permanent home but perhaps staying with friends or in shelters);

- 179 people and 48 separate families are at risk of becoming homeless;

- 50% of homeless families and 30% of individual homeless people need permanent supportive housing;

- 29% of the homeless in Northumberland who are Aboriginal;

- those in the highest at risk category who are single - in 50 to 64 age group;

- 6% who are veterans; and

- 27% who are youth aged 16-24.

There are actual families who are described as "youth led" as opposed to living with parents or a single parent.

Kightley noted that the younger people are when they are homeless, the longer they will be homeless.

"We now have a clearer picture" of the homelessness situation in Northumberland and can use this information to set priorities and mobilize those who are most in need," the county's housing director Lisa Horne said during the public debriefing of the community-based survey initiative held at the Cobourg Lions Centre on Tuesday afternoon.

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### HOMELESS from A1

Though invited to attend, local riding MPP Lou Rinaldi was not there explaining that as head of the rural caucus chair he had a conflict due to the weekly Tuesday meeting — but he provided a letter read out by one of his staff.

"Our government is committed to ending homelessness in Ontario. Through provincial programs such as the Community Homelessness Preventative Initiative, we are helping communities like ours provide flexibility to address local pri-

orities," the letter states. "I'm sure you are aware that the province is launching a basic income pilot project and I'm please to announce that we will be hosting a consultation right here in Cobourg in early January."

At this time someone getting Ontario Works receives \$706 monthly; someone in the Ontario Disability Support Program gets \$1,128 monthly and if you are working 35 hours a week and getting minimum wage, the total for a month is \$1,835, Kightley noted.

Local riding MP Kim Rudd was not in attendance as she was in Parliament but in a statement delivered through her communications director, Jamie Simmons, said celebrating National Housing Day with Northumberland's first such survey, coupled with participation in the national 20K Homes initiative that is to build 20,000 homes for homeless individuals by July 1 2018, was an appropriate way to build awareness of the problem.

The federal government's budget allocation of \$2.3-billion over two years is to improve affordable housing and since intimate partner violence is a key contributor to homelessness, it has invested \$89.9-billion to support victims of violence shelters including housing and services for those in First Nation communities.

Quoting author Jan Schakowsky, Rudd stated that: "There is a lot that happens around the world we cannot control....but when we know where the hungry, the home-

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MPP Lou Rinaldi

less and the sick exist, then we can help.”

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