

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**HASTINGS COUNTY ASKED TO COMMIT TO AFFORDABLE**  
**HOUSING SOLUTIONS**

The Affordable Housing Action Network (AHAN) made a special presentation to the Hastings/Quinte Social Services Committee on July 13, 2005. Patty Park, the Executive Director from Three Oaks Shelter and Services for Abused Women and AHAN member, told the Social Services Committee that there is an affordable housing crisis in Hastings County.

Park told Committee members that there are over 100 households in Hastings County who are homeless or who have temporary housing. Park informed the Committee that affordable housing affects all areas of Hastings County. In 2004, 396 households were provided with emergency shelter from Hastings County's after hour's services. This only represents about one-third of all people assisted in emergency housing situations as the other two-thirds are helped when the Social Services offices are open.

Park cited results from a report entitled, "Boxed-In: The Affordable Housing Crisis in Hastings County". The "Boxed-In" report is a result of interviews with 781 low-income people. The interviews asked various affordable housing questions. The number one recommendation from people surveyed was to create more subsidized or rent geared-to-income housing. Noting the harsh difficulties many low-income people face, one person interviewed was quoted as saying, "Rent is too high for people to live. Pay rent and don't eat or eat and don't pay rent".

Park related other startling facts: There are currently over 1,100 households waiting for subsidized housing in Hastings County. A single person waiting for a subsidized unit can wait up to four years before they are housed. The Ontario Works Emergency Worker in Belleville sees about 30 people a week who are experiencing an emergency situation and many of these are housing related.

Noting the cost of homelessness Park said that a homeless person costs society about \$60,000 a year. Costs are related to emergency funds, health care, policing, and use of resources. There are also unknown costs such as the stress placed on homeless people and their families, recovery from substance abuse, criminalization and mental health issues. Park also noted the value of having affordable housing in a community including a reduction in emergency services spending, stability for families increased employment opportunities, healthy children and allowing people to become hard working, tax paying citizens. When people are homeless or have temporary housing it makes it nearly impossible to focus on getting or retaining employment, building a healthy family or creating a positive environment for children.

There have been recent announcements from the federal and provincial governments regarding affordable housing initiatives. The province recently announced that they will be investing \$602 million in affordable housing across the province. The federal government has announced their intention to invest \$1.6 billion into affordable housing in

the next two years. While it is unknown how much of this funding will come to this area, what is known is that whatever funding is available will flow through Hastings County and that Hastings County may have to apply for this funding. Park appealed to Hastings County to commit to getting as much funding as possible for affordable housing.

Park said that AHAN is a community group made up of representatives from over 15 different community agencies and that AHAN is committed to taking action. AHAN is aware of the affordable housing needs in Hastings County and is able to identify locations for affordable housing. AHAN also has the capacity, ability and resources to improve affordable housing options in Hastings County.