

Service

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Communiqué #04

Catholic and Living It!

FOR: Chairpersons of Service at All Levels (new structure) and Chairpersons of Community Life at All Levels (old structure)
THROUGH: Presidents and Secretaries at All Levels
CC: National Executive (for information)
National Life Member Liaison
FROM: Joline Belliveau, National Chairperson of Service

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness as “the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.” Indigenous people, youth and more men than women are at greater risk of being unhoused. Some reasons for homelessness include poverty, mental illness, a history of physical and emotional abuse, housing shortages and housing being too expensive.

People experiencing homelessness tend to live in densely populated cities, with Toronto having more people living unhoused than elsewhere in Canada. These people often survive by wandering the streets, asking strangers for money, sleeping in tents or sleeping bags, staying in shelters, eating meals in churches and relying on charitable organizations offering them warm meals.

The federal government aims to decrease the number of people experiencing homelessness by 50% by 2027/2028 by increasing the housing supply. The pandemic created interest in housing outcomes and shortages. Studies support building homes for unhoused persons as more cost-effective than having them survive on the streets, as is happening now.

Although not a solution, the provincial, territorial and federal governments provide funding for emergency shelters. However, many provincial governments are building homes specifically for the unhoused using federal grants.

Do you see unhoused people in your city, town or rural areas? Do you see Jesus in them—someone’s parent, sibling, child? Many people experiencing homelessness and living on the streets say the worst thing about being unhoused is feeling invisible. As Catholics, we should treat unhoused persons with kindness and respect in the same way we would treat others, offering them compassion and listening to their stories.

What can you do to help the unhoused people? There are several things you can do, if not to prevent homelessness, then at least to ensure their basic needs are better met. Most shelters welcome donations such as food, clothing and hygiene products. During the winter season, donations of blankets and socks are greatly needed. Consider printing the name and address of a shelter and handing them out to people in your area experiencing homelessness and giving out pre-paid debit cards or gift certificates. You could also organize and take part in fundraisers, volunteer at shelters or support political candidates who offer practical solutions and make caring for people experiencing homelessness a priority.

Your sister in the League,



Joline Belliveau
National Chairperson of Service