



Renfrew County  
**United Way**

A Celebration of **National Housing Day**

***Youth at Risk: Homeless in  
County of Renfrew***

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**United Way Executive Director**



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## Some background info about United Way

- Annual fundraising campaign is currently underway to Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> – goal is \$400K
- Health and social service charities in Renfrew County funded for 2014 and received over \$170K:
  - Arnprior Regional Health = \$15,000
  - Boys & Girls Club Pembroke = \$20,000
  - Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley = \$1,000
  - Community Resource Centre – Renfrew County = \$20,000
  - Deep River & Area Family Enrichment Network = \$1,000
  - North Renfrew Family Services = \$34,750
  - Pembroke Regional Hospital = \$1,000
  - Petawawa Military Families Resource Centre = \$9,000
  - Phoenix Centre for Children & Families = \$24,000
  - Renfrew & Area Senior's Home Support = \$13,200
  - Robbie Dean Family Counselling Centre = \$9,000
  - The Algonquin Way Cultural Centre = \$4,500
  - The Grind Salvation Army Youth Centre = \$16,800
  - Whitewater/Bromley Community Health Centre = \$1,000



## Profile of Renfrew County as it relates to Youth

- Largest county in Ontario – mostly rural land with a population density of only 13.6/square km;
- **Youth population aged 15-24 = 12,500; roughly 12% of total population. Only 6% less than total senior population aged 65 and older;**
- Shift in local industries from manufacturing, forestry, and agriculture, to retail, healthcare and public administration., resulting in negative impact on employment rates and an increase in low paying jobs;
- Projecting 13% population increase over next ten years. However, from 2006-2011, only experienced 3.9% increase in growth; significantly less than provincial average;
- Aboriginal population (5.6%); over double the Province of Ontario (2.0%);
- 97.5% of all businesses in 2011 were small businesses with food & beverage service being identified as the sector of main employers in the region; and,
- 3.3% of the total households are maintained by youth under the age of 25 years.



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## How do we address the issue?

- Initial partnership was formed including:  
Family & Children's Services of Renfrew County,  
Phoenix Centre for Children & Families and  
United Way
- Ontario Trillium Foundation provided funding for research
- Contracted researcher for six months who prepared draft report
- Now need to reach out to the community to validate findings and develop next steps
- Need additional partners from all sectors including health and mental health, addictions, education, justice, governments at all levels to work together



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## **Important findings:**

- At any given time, at least 30 youth are homeless in the County;
- Not always visible, i.e. sleeping on the street;
- May be “couch surfing” – e.g. staying with friends or other relatives;
- In good weather, may be sleeping in a tent or a barn on vacant land;
- Lack of services and housing; often have to leave the community;
- Youth on the street are “in crisis” – no family or friends and having to leave familiar surroundings; subject to exploitation (sex trade, addictions; gangs, etc.); physical and mental health deteriorate; and,
- Very few transportation options available throughout the region.



## Draft Recommendations

### 1. Family-related issues

- a) Services and supports (e.g., crisis counseling, mentoring, parenting skills) to enable youth to continue to live at home by, improving relationships with parents/caregivers.
- b) Appropriate supports for youth to live outside the home, if the home is deemed an unsafe or unsupportive environment and/or for youth who are refugees with no family sponsors/supports



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

### 2. System Reform

- a) Comprehensive, youth-focused supports for youth leaving child protection, foster care and group homes, ensuring a range of flexible housing options, such as co-op, transitional, supportive and independent housing
- b) Link existing strategies around poverty reduction, health care, education, welfare,
- c) Justice systems and child protection
- d) Link with youth-in-care campaigns to extend supports



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

### 3. Leaving School Early

- a) Supportive learning environment to help keep young people in school through services
- b) Non-traditional approaches to literacy and education, e.g. Youth Hub partnership program in Pembroke
- c) Identification of learning needs and supportive programs





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## Draft Recommendations (continued)

### 4. Outreach & Engagement

- a) Access to specific services for youth to have basic needs/issues dealt with before they become entrenched in street life
- b) Culturally appropriate services, i.e. services with an anti-racist and anti-oppression framework and with staff teams that represent the diversity of the youth being served
- c) LGBTQ-specific services (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered/transsexual, queer) – Robbie Dean Centre has an LGBTQ group
- d) Transportation to improve accessibility to services
- e) **Website for Youth – [www.thrive4youth.com](http://www.thrive4youth.com) (updated 2014)**



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

### 5. Emergency Response

The basic needs of street-involved youth must be addressed before they can engage in the complex process of transitioning from the street. Those needs include:

- a) Accessible emergency accommodation e.g. youth-only shelter
- b) Youth-responsive health, mental health, addiction and concurrent disorder services and counseling
- c) Harm reduction services that help support homeless youth with mental health issues, addiction and concurrent disorders
- d) Emergency and transitional housing options for youth discharged from correctional facilities



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

### **6. Transitions out of Homelessness**

Transitional housing supports must go beyond emergency response and provision of basic needs.<sup>1</sup>

#### **a) Accommodation**

- i. Youth housing options – shelter, transitional housing – e.g. Columbus House, temporary “time-out” housing for two to three nights provided by faith-based volunteer homes (screened and trained by F&CS), foster care, supportive housing using both public and private market housing stock, housing placement services

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.raisingtheroof.org/RaisingTheRoof/media/RaisingTheRoofMedia/Documents/RoadtoSolutions\\_fullrept\\_english.pdf](http://www.raisingtheroof.org/RaisingTheRoof/media/RaisingTheRoofMedia/Documents/RoadtoSolutions_fullrept_english.pdf)



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

### **b) Support Needs – Youth-only Clinic Days**

Medium and longer-term support required for:

- i. Education
- ii. Pre-employment training
- iii. Legal
- iv. Health and mental health and complex needs
- v. Follow-up system



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

- c) **Employment & Training Opportunities – alignment needed with other sectors who want to support youth but are not currently connected**
  - i. Comprehensive government-funded employment and training strategies, delivered by community-based organizations that support gradual entry into the workforce
  - ii. Increased support for community-based employment and training programs
  - iii. Engage private and public sector employers who create employment and training opportunities for youth



## Draft Recommendations (continued)

- d) **Coordination & Data Collection - include youth indicators in any community study and ensure youth are represented**
  - i. Support identification of models of data collection that contribute to understanding relevant issues
  - ii. Provincially and federally coordinated funding to support community needs
  - iii. Internal collaboration between government departments
  - iv. Collaboration within communities with all key stakeholders



Youth homelessness in a rural setting, i.e. Renfrew County is an important and complex issue that will require multiple strategies and solutions, as well as collaboration across various sectors and communities. Together, we can and will make a difference!

Thank you.

**Give – Volunteer – Act! It's the United Way.**