

- 24 **ON.15.04** **Provision of Regulated Housing for the Chronic, Severely Mentally Ill**
25 **E&H, CL**
- 26 **Whereas,** There is a critical shortage for regulated safe, appropriate, geared-to-needs
27 housing for those with severe and chronic mental illness in Canada; and
- 28 **Whereas,** The Canadian government research (2008 – 2013) confirms that appropriate,
29 geared-to-needs housing for people living with serious mental illness supports
30 recovery and is an economically sound approach; and
- 31 **Whereas,** Provision of safe, appropriate, geared-to-income housing is a counterpart to a
32 reduction in mental health care hospital beds; therefore be it
- 33 **Resolved,** That Ontario provincial council of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada,
34 in 68th annual convention assembled strongly urge the Ontario provincial
35 government to increase provision of regulated safe, appropriate, and geared-to-
36 needs housing for those suffering with severe, chronic mental illnesses; and be
37 it further
- 38 **Resolved,** That the Ontario provincial council encourage its members to become more
39 educated on this issue and advocate/act in their communities; and be it further
- 40 **Resolved,** That this resolution be forwarded through national council to the other ten
41 provincial councils, encouraging them to become aware of this issue as it
42 pertains to their province/territory, and to act on it, as deemed
43 necessary/prudent.

Gifted from Ontario Provincial Council

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46 **Brief**

47 “Recovery begins with a place to call home” (Mental Health Commission of Canada. Topics:
48 Housing and Homelessness). Governments are urged to increase the provision of safe,
49 appropriate, geared-to-needs housing because the Mental Health Commission of Canada
50 (MHCC) has identified said housing as a key component in the path to recovery for persons
51 suffering with a severe and persistent mental illness.

52 In the last decade, research in the global psychiatric community has led to a focus on “recovery”
53 as opposed to “management” of serious mental illnesses. Recovery is defined by the MHCC as
54 follows: “Recovery is a process in which people living with mental health problems and illnesses
55 are actively engaged in their own journey of wellbeing.” (Mental Health Commission of Canada.
56 Topics: Recovery). The goal is to enable people to enjoy a meaningful life in their community
57 and exercise all their rights as citizens, while still striving to achieve their full potential.
58 “Recovery principles, including hope, self-determination and responsibility can be adapted to the
59 realities of different life stages and to the full range of mental health problems and illnesses.”
60 (Mental Health Commission of Canada. Topics: Recovery).

61 The Comprehensive Assessment Project conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental
62 Health (CAMH) from 1998-2002 concluded that 40% of psychiatric hospital patients could be
63 better served in the community if given proper support and housing (Butterhill, et. al). This
64 finding, coupled with the paradigm shift to a recovery model of care, has led to a drastic drop in
65 the number of available hospital beds.

66 The savings in the high cost of hospitalizations was to be offset by resources in the community to
67 help people maintain their path of recovery (Butterhill, et. al). Improper housing results in heavy
68 use of emergency services, rehospitalisation, stress on policing systems and inappropriate
69 incarcerations (Canadian Mental Health Association, Criminalization of Mental Illness). This has
70 created a medical and societal challenge that needs to be addressed. The resources needed are
71 varied but paramount for recovery is dedicated, appropriate housing. Dedicated housing has been
72 described as special apartments and group homes with rent-geared-to-income, supervision and
73 links to psychiatric services, all of which may be among the supports made available. Mental
74 health organizations may provide residential care for clients who require ongoing, long-term
75 treatment (Centralhealthline; Mental Health Commission of Canada, March, 2015).

76 “Despite our social security system, homelessness is a serious problem...mental health plays a
77 significant role” (Mental Health Commission of Canada. *Topics: Housing and Homelessness*). A
78 recent fire, causing death, in an unregulated home in November in London, Ontario focused the
79 problem in a tragic way (O’Brien; Richmond). Clearly the burgeoning crisis in housing presents
80 the unsavoury choice between unregulated, inadequate housing or the street in many cases. The
81 MHCC has completed a five-year, national study called “Housing First”, with findings released
82 in April 2014. The objective of the study was to examine the outcomes of providing housing
83 prior to offering services to this population. It states that, “secure, quality housing is often a
84 catalyst for people to achieve their goals....and also has a positive impact on service systems and
85 communities (Mental Health Commission of Canada, Jan. 2015).

86 Across the country funds have not been provided in an adequate or timely manner. The
87 disenfranchised, stigmatized and severely mentally ill require increased provision of dedicated,
88 safe, appropriate, geared-to-need housing across the country and accessible in every community.

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Action Plan

1. Develop a postcard campaign to lobby all levels of government for safe, affordable, regulated, geared-to-needs housing.
2. Write letters to appropriate levels of government to advocate for needed housing.
3. Encourage members to become aware of the housing needs in their community and develop or join with other local efforts to find ways to help.
4. Support members living with mental illness within our own community by being welcoming and compassionate.