



## Press Release

### Homelessness during a pandemic: Learning lessons for disaster preparedness in Nova Scotia

April 6th, 2022

**Halifax, NS** – Today, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia released the report, *Homelessness during a pandemic: Learning lessons for disaster preparedness in Nova Scotia*.

Study lead and co-author Jeff Karabanow, Dalhousie Social Work Professor says, “This study describes the events, actions, and experiences of being homeless while living through COVID-19, and shows how the pandemic unfortunately amplified the suffering of being homeless-of being stigmatized, dehumanized, and experiencing unforgiving and dire consequences of not having a home.”

“The interviews for this study were done between February and April 2020, and even then, access to affordable housing was described as a crisis in Nova Scotia and a core theme of this study. The reality is that this is not just about housing supply--most participants noted how limited income through social assistance contributed to their inability to break the cycle of homelessness,” continues Karabanow.

Reflecting on the findings, study co-author, Catherine Leviten-Reid, Cape Breton University Professor and Research Associate of CCPA-NS, shared, “Despite service stakeholders being stressed, scared, confused and generally anxious, with no road map to navigate the pandemic, everyone really mobilized to keep people safe. It was consistent, trustful partnerships among different organizations that really made the difference. The knowledge and expertise of those working and supporting the homelessness sector during this time of crisis and continuing today is invaluable.”

This study is important for the lessons that need to be learned. As co-author, Haorui Wu, Canada Research Chair in Resilience at Dalhousie, points out: “In order to be ready for future disasters, more resources need to be directed to address the crises of homelessness--lack of affordable housing, poverty, food insecurity, and insufficient income supports.”

As CCPA-NS Director, Christine Saulnier, says of this study, “It is critical that the province learns these lessons, so they can respond more quickly during disasters, and ensure that resources and responses are similarly available across Nova Scotia. As this study shows, resources were made available quickly in Halifax communities, but needed to be made available at a much faster pace in Cape Breton.”



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Saulnier adds, “It is also critical that we ensure that emergency responses prioritize the most marginalized and excluded from society and that their voices and their participation is made possible for shaping the solutions.”

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The report, **Homelessness during a pandemic: Learning lessons for disaster preparedness in Nova Scotia**, is co-authored by Jeff Karabanow, Kaitrin Doll, Catherine Leviten-Reid, Jean Hughes, and Haorui Wu. It is available for download, at <https://policyalternatives.ca/offices/nova-scotia/publications>

Note that we are also releasing a short, animated video to accompany the written report, explaining its findings.

For more information or to arrange an interview, contact Lauren Matheson, 902-579-9555 (cell) or [lmatheson@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:lmatheson@policyalternatives.ca)

*The CCPA-NS is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social and economic justice, as well as environmental sustainability.*