

When you have lost hope, you have lost everything. And when you think all is lost, when all is dire and black there is always hope.

- Pittacus Lore

We are writing this letter to you not just as concerned people, but as people who know the experience of homelessness firsthand. We are a group who have lived in the streets and shelters of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge, and navigated through the various housing systems put in place to help us. We are grateful for the help we received but as we look at our cities we can see that those systems are not doing enough.

We are a society of labels and homeless people are the recipients of many labels. We have been told we are just looking for a free ride or a handout, or that the situation we are in is our own fault. While that may be true for some, they and anyone else experiencing homelessness, are deserving of care, clothes, food, and shelter. Everyone deserves the chance to become a productive member of the community, to have the opportunities of a good quality of life that many others enjoy.

It has been said of homeless people that they are not the problem, but that they are the result of a problem. Problems of affordable housing, problems of our treatment of mental health and addiction. We are not asking for pity but for an opportunity.

Homelessness is not a disease and it cannot be cured by medication, it can only be solved by the hard work and compassion of others. In your positions of power you have the ability to become a part of the solution, to join in on the hard work and compassion needed to address homelessness. So next time you are voting on a new bill or budget, take a moment to think of the homeless, all we are asking for is some hope. That we will have the opportunity for a decent quality of life.

We'll close with a reflection by one of our members:

Realistically, you aren't going to completely end homelessness,
but we certainly can do a much better job than we're doing right now.

Yours sincerely,

The People's Action Group