

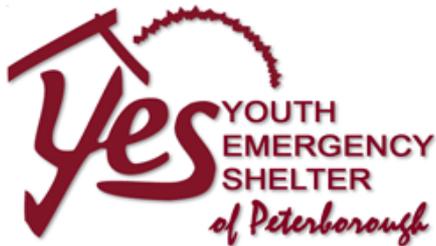
To Go Or To Stay:

Migration decisions and homelessness in
East Central Ontario

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Peterborough, Ontario



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Introduction

A qualitative enquiry intended

- 1) To better understand the mechanics of how rural youth think about and implement the decision to either stay (or return to) their rural community, or to move to an urban centre,
- 2) To explore the impact of informal and formal resources on risk of homelessness, and
- 3) To make recommendations based on the findings that would reduce or reverse risk of homelessness.

Methods

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 48 rural youth, aged 16-30, recruited through social agencies & social networks
- 24 migrants, 24 non-migrants
- 27 females, 21 males
- mean age 23
- Direct-scribed interview edited/approved by youth
- Data collaboratively analyzed with Advisory Committee
- 3 focus groups (13 youth) and key informant interviews (3 youth) to further explore identified issues

Results

- Generally rural youth felt they had little option but to migrate because of lack in rural communities of post-sec education, jobs that pay a living wage, affordable housing; and/or to 'prove they could' manage in another environment
- Those who didn't leave or returned by plan generally felt they would face similar challenges elsewhere without the social support; and/or 'didn't fit in' elsewhere
- Lack of formal infrastructure → youth in high-risk situations migrating/being sent away to have needs met → high risk of marginalization/homelessness, especially if separated from families
- Acts/conditions of social exclusion contribute cumulatively to risk of homelessness; acts of social inclusion reduce or reverse risk. Social inclusion = reality and feeling of belonging.
- Sustained support from families essential for successful launch into employment whether rural or urban
- Many youth from supportive families failed to launch to employment after post-sec and returned to regroup and try again; others stayed in urban environments to save face, take advantage of resources and/or enjoy social opportunities

Conclusions

- Support families with a Guaranteed Annual Income, for which lone youth are also eligible; recognize the cost and value of extended family functions and of essential non-waged work through income tax policy.
- Create safe, affordable housing for youth, along with personalized support to make the transition to post-secondary life; make the practice of urban service providers more relevant to the cultural adjustment required of rural youth.
- Make public the cost of private transportation through income tax policy, and support the development of rural public transportation systems.
- Recreate public spaces in rural communities; return extra-curricular activities to the community; develop and deliver non-academic curriculum in collaboration with the community; provide frequent, universally available, mandatory interactive school field trips to urban settings throughout public school.
- Improve preparation for post-secondary choices; provide free post-secondary education based on merit; teach skills needed to perform non-waged roles well.
- Full narratives available on www.TGOTS.ca or www.to-go-or-to-stay.ca.
- Further information at fay.martin@fayandassociates.com