



NIAGARA POVERTY REDUCTION NETWORK

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For Immediate Release: NPRN Calls for Government-Ordered Moratorium on Rent for Third Consecutive Month

For the third month in a row, the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN) is calling for a government-ordered moratorium on the rent obligations of low-income tenants who cannot afford to pay rent for the coming month. June 1 is "rent-day" for most tenants, and thus a day of particular stress for the majority of those in lower income brackets who rent: The budgets of most of these tenants have been profoundly impacted by the economic implications of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 26, 2020, Premier Doug Ford said to reporters: "If you can't pay rent, and if you're in a crisis, you don't have to pay rent".

"NPRN is grateful that the Premier understands the challenges come tenants may be facing," says Ashley Chiarello, Lead of NPRN's Affordable Housing Priority Table. "However, we remain concerned by the fact that the Province of Ontario has not followed up on the Premier's words, in terms of concrete action to assist tenants in distress."

In order to advance its goal of a postponement of rent obligations, NPRN has been meeting with Niagara's MPs and MPPs, in order to discuss the proposed moratorium. NPRN has also been taking advantage of these conversations to discuss the idea of a rent bank – a government fund, to assist low-income tenants impacted by COVID-19 in the challenge of paying rent. Given the many pressures on government resources in the wake of the pandemic, the proposed rent bank would probably require support from both federal and provincial levels of government, in order to be set up.

In addition to a rent support program tenant protections must be considered. "When the Landlord and Tenant Board [which adjudicates landlord-tenant disputes] resumes normal operations, the Board will be facing a large number of applications by landlords requesting evictions of vulnerable families," says Aidan Johnson, NPRN Chair. "The Province needs to put rules and protections in place, in order to prevent the eviction of tenants who haven't been able to pay rent in the COVID-days, or who won't be able to afford rent on June 1."

For further comment:

Aidan Johnson
Chair, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
johnsona@lao.on.ca

Ashley Chiarello
Lead, Affordable Housing Priority Table, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
ashley.chiarello@bridgeschc.ca

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www.WipeOutPoverty.ca

c/o United Way Niagara

800 Niagara St, 2nd Floor, Welland, ON L3C 5Z4 email: info@wipeoutpoverty.ca