

Defining the end of homelessness - Report

For Immediate release

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CALGARY- Communities across Canada and around the world have embarked on a wide range of initiatives with the goal of ending homelessness. Some jurisdictions have declared progress but rarely have they clearly defined their goal. Has their goal been to literally end homelessness or something more modest? What should the short-term and long-term goals be for alleviating the problem of homelessness? The School of Public Policy in collaboration with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) released a report today that investigates this and related questions.

The ground breaking report, released at a press conference in Calgary today, analyzes data and policy from **60 jurisdictions** in Canada, the U.S., Australia and Europe. It was co-authored by Dr. Alina Turner, Fellow, The School of Public Policy, Tom Albanese, ABT Consultants and Kyle Pakeman, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.

According to co-author Alina Turner, “When we talk about ending homelessness, we should be talking about a functional zero, not an absolute zero. The meaning of functional zero, as opposed to absolute zero, is to get to a point where there are enough services, housing and shelter beds for everyone who needs them, and anyone who experiences homelessness does so only briefly, is rehoused successfully, and is unlikely to return to homelessness again. The two definitions do not stand in opposition to each other. Rather, communities should use the functional zero definition as a way to design policies that work. The goal, of course, is to get as close to absolute zero as possible. But adopting a functional zero approach creates a realistic way to approach the various policy problems that contribute to homelessness.”

“In order for us to properly set out to achieve functional zero (and aspire to absolute zero), it is crucial to specify what we mean and make it measurable, and consistent, so we can assess our progress,” concluded Turner.

The report can be found online at www.policyschool.ca/publications/

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