

**October 2013, Updated August 2016**

If you are having money problems that have made it hard to pay your rent, or to make payments for water, heating and electricity bills, there are resources in the community that may help you.

Recent cuts by the provincial government led to some changes to the way that homelessness prevention funding is delivered. People receiving social assistance may have heard that there is no more Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit. There is also no more "Rent Bank" for other people living on a low-income. However, it is important to know that there are other programs available to help you keep your housing by paying for expenses like rent and utilities arrears.

How you get help from these programs depends on where you live. If you live in Hastings County, you can apply for homelessness prevention money through the Housing and Homelessness Fund (HHF), which is run by Hastings County. For people receiving social assistance, you should contact your Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) caseworker to get a referral to the HHF. If you do not receive social assistance, you can apply by calling 1-866-414-0300 or (613) 771-9630.

If you live in Prince Edward County or Lennox & Addington County, you can access homelessness prevention money through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), which is run by Prince Edward – Lennox & Addington Social Services. OW recipients should call their caseworker to apply for CHPI benefits. Everyone else in Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington Counties should call 1-866-354-0957 or (613) 354-0957 in order to apply.

Both the HHF and CHPI are intended to cover emergency housing expenses that are needed to help people keep a roof over their heads. You must have a low income in order to qualify for financial help from these programs.

Community Trust is another financial resource available to residents of Hastings County who need help with payments for emergency expenses like rent, heat and hydro, appliances and groceries. It can be contacted at the following numbers:

Belleville .....(613) 962-3070  
North Hastings/Bancroft .....(613) 339-1100  
Quinte West .....(613) 392-1387 x. 2202  
Centre Hastings/Madoc .....(613) 473-5258

[www.communitylegalcentre.ca](http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca)

158 George Street, Level 1  
Belleville, ON K8N 3H2  
Tele: (613) 966 8686  
Toll Free: 1 877 966 8686  
Fax: (613) 966 6251  
TTY: (613) 966 8714

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## WHERE CAN I GET HELP IF I HAVE TROUBLE PAYING MY RENT OR UTILITIES?

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Other programs available to help specifically with heating and electricity bills include the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) and the Winter Warmth Program. You can access LEAP by contacting your utility provider directly (see contact information on your bill). The Winter Warmth Program also provides help for people to pay natural gas bills with Union Gas. The program is delivered by different agencies depending on where you live. You can go to <https://www.uniongas.com/about-us/community/energy-assistance-program> for more information.

For information about low-income energy issues, go to the Low-Income Energy Network's website at <http://www.lowincomeenergy.ca/>.

Low-income tenants can get free legal advice about housing problems or a threatened eviction by calling the Community Advocacy & Legal Centre at the phone number below.

Free legal information for tenants is available at:

Community Legal Education Ontario - [yourlegalrights.on.ca/housing-law](http://yourlegalrights.on.ca/housing-law)

Community Advocacy & Legal Centre (Legal Information for Tenants) - [http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca/legal\\_information/HSG/Tenants.htm](http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca/legal_information/HSG/Tenants.htm)

Free legal information for landlords is available at the Landlord's Self-Help Centre. You can access this information online at <http://www.landlordselfhelp.com/frontpage.asp>.

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This column provides general legal information and not legal advice. It was written by staff lawyers from community legal clinics, or Legal Aid Ontario, and volunteer local lawyers. The law can change. You should contact a lawyer to determine your legal rights and obligations. If you are living on a low income, you may be eligible for free legal help from LAO (criminal, family or immigration) or your clinic (income security programs, employment law, tenants' rights, consumer law, or human rights). You can reach LAO at 1-800-668-8258 or visit them online at [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca). Contact your local clinic (Community Advocacy & Legal Centre) at 1-877-966-8686 for more information or visit [www.communitylegalcentre.ca](http://www.communitylegalcentre.ca).

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