

FASD POLICY ALERT

October 2017



A Roof, A Right:

Bill C-325 and Implications for Individuals with FASD

On December 5, 2016, MP Rachel Blaney (NDP, North Island — Powell River, BC) tabled a Private Member's Bill to amend Section 1 of the *Canadian Bill of Rights*. The Bill, C-325, proposes the right to housing, at a reasonable cost, and free of unreasonable barriers, for all Canadians. The introduction and First Reading in the House of Commons occurred on December 5, 2016. Bill C-325 recently went through its Second Reading in the House of Commons on April 10, 2017. Bill C-325 would ensure that the right to housing in Canada is **recognized as law**.

Bill C-325 proposes the following changes to the *Canadian Bill of Rights*:

- ◆ The right of all Canadians to enjoy the security and benefits provided by proper housing
- ◆ Access to proper housing that is free of unreasonable financial or other barriers

Despite the potential of this amendment to the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, the proposed change is not without opposition. Challengers of the proposed Bill contend that this bill would not actually combat the real barriers of homelessness and would fail to deliver the necessary measures needed to help Canadians. Opponents have also noted jurisdictional concerns with the bill, including the complexity of shared housing responsibility between the provinces, territories, and municipalities. However, supporters of the Bill argue that housing is a basic right and should be treated as such.

In the coming months, Bill C-325 will be debated and discussed in Parliament. The Canada FASD Research Network is positioned and prepared to provide expert guidance relative to this Bill and the implications for individuals with FASD that is informed by evidence-based research, and grounded in best practice through member agencies and programs offering housing and providing supports in rural and urban communities.

For more information on Bill C-325, please visit: <https://openparliament.ca/bills/42-1/C-325/> or <http://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/BillDetails.aspx?Language=en&Mode=1&billId=8649205>

For more information about the **Canada FASD Research Network**, including other policy documents about FASD, please visit: www.canfasd.ca

There is currently a housing crisis in Canada. Homelessness in Canada includes unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of homelessness. 35,000 Canadians are homeless on a given night and at least 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness in a year (Piat et al., 2014).

Individual factors, such as substance use, relationship conflicts, mental health issues, and structural transitions (e.g., from foster care to institutional settings) significantly contribute to homelessness. However, limited research has been conducted on homelessness in the FASD population (Badry, 2016) and consequently there is a lack of understanding of the needs of individuals with FASD. Brownstone (2005) identified housing as a **critical area of focus** for individuals with FASD, given that 80% of individuals with FASD have difficulty sustaining independent living, and most will require interventions and support throughout their lives.

Individuals with FASD share similar issues with those facing homelessness, including substance use, mental health problems, criminal justice and child welfare system involvement, poverty, and low educational attainment. Currently, there are limited housing programs available to support the needs of individuals living with FASD. There is a need for **safe**, **affordable**, and **appropriate** housing for individuals with FASD.

For more information about **FASD and homelessness**, please refer to the work of Dr. Dorothy Badry: <https://www.jscimedcentral.com/SubstanceAbuse/substanceabuse-3-1027.pdf>

For further reading and resources on homelessness, please see: <http://homelesshub.ca/>