

## Turning the lens on Hamilton's homeless

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An unscrupulous landlord. A failed marriage. A lost job.

They can all lead down the road to homelessness. So discovered Toronto filmmaker Laura Sky, who this week releases her third documentary on poverty and homelessness, this one filmed in Hamilton.

Sky is an award-winning filmmaker who has been documenting the precarious housing situations of the poor and impoverished for many years.

Her previous documentaries were filmed in Calgary and Toronto. Two years ago she turned her lens on Hamilton because of the large number of immigrants and urban aboriginals here as well as what she calls, the "sense of community."

Story continues below▼

"Hamilton has this sense of solidarity and of helping each other out through hard times," said Sky.

Florence Hill and her three daughters were among the "cast" of Home Safe Hamilton.

They lived in a rundown trailer on Six Nations where the water wasn't safe to drink and conditions were deplorable.

They were among the lucky ones, however. They eventually found safe housing in a social housing unit in Hamilton.

Her film also includes two Vietnamese teens from an inner city high school and a Somalian family, as well as steelworkers in Nanticoke who were on the verge of losing their jobs.

"Some of the housing I saw was disgusting. That's all I can say. It was disgusting," said Sky.

Story continues below▼

In her two years of researching and documenting Hamilton's homeless situation, one of the biggest surprises was how vulnerable immigrants were to becoming homeless simply because of unscrupulous landlords.

"They didn't know where to make a complaint and had to deal with superintendents who threatened to call the Children's Aid Society (CAS)," said Sky.

"We're hoping the police and CAS will use this film as training," Sky added.

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