



The Alliance to End Homelessness

Advocacy ~ Partnerships ~ Research

www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca

Community and Protective Services Committee, City of Ottawa
October 29, 2009, ATEH Submission on Draft Budget
Presented by ATEH Vice Chair Dan Sabourin

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The opportunity to make recommendations on the CPS draft budget has come during a very troubling week. As the new Vice Chair I would like to tell you about that before speaking to our recommendations.

On Monday we were advised that the Premier and Cabinet of Ontario have cut spending at the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by 7% that is \$52.1 million*. \$38.9 million of the cut was to the affordable housing program. This happened right in the middle of the provincial consultation to develop a long term affordable housing strategy. *Since 2005, instead of recognizing the plight of communities, Ontario has cut this budget line by a total of 24%!*

On the same day, an 11 year Canadian study was released on mortality rates for 15,100 people of varying ages who were homeless or marginally housed living in shelters, rooming houses, and hotels and it showed they have life expectancy a great deal shorter than the general population.** Researchers led by highly regarded Stephen Hwang looked at Canada from 1991-2001. They found that the chance of surviving to the age of 75 among the homeless or inadequately housed is 32% for men and 60% for women. By comparison, for the lowest income group in Canada the chance is 51% for men and 72% for women. For the highest income group it is 83% and 81%. We urge you to read this research abstract. The probability that a 25-year-old man in marginal housing today would make it to 75 is that of the average young male in 1921!

On the ground in our community, our member agencies see the human side of these harsh realities every day. As you know homelessness has increased since 2001 and affordable housing is scarcer than ever. There can be no doubt now; the human cost of homelessness is unconscionable. It is also very expensive. Continuing and improving the range of housing available including supports reduces the use of hospitals, ambulance, jails. The quicker we get people appropriately housed the more revenue and taxes are brought into the city. As a nation we should be ashamed but in the face of this research all orders of government should respond immediately to end homelessness! ***What does this mean for the CPS draft budget? We have two recommendations.***

First, we see a commendable continuation of service funding aimed at ending homelessness and that's something the city and its community partners can be proud of.

- **But we do not see funds set aside to begin implementing Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy – a good faith down-payment so to speak to begin making changes next year.**

Unfortunately, we see that funding for affordable housing has not been increased; last year the result was only 134 new units, far short of the city's own target of 500 units.

- **We expect this budget to show dollar growth at least at the rate of the city's contribution to reach 500 units. That way even if the province walks away from providing adequate funding the city can add some new units on its own.**

Now more than ever our community needs affordable, stable and good quality housing. Like it or not, leadership on ending homelessness falls to the municipal government and today we ask the Community and Protective Services Committee to act on our recommendations.

*2009 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review,
http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/fallstatement/2009/paper_all.pdf;

**British Medical Journal, <http://www.bmj.com/channels/research.dtl>