

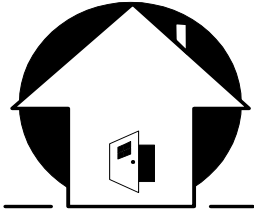
The Alliance to End Homelessness

Homeless in the Nation's Capital

Policies and Funding to House and Help Canada's Homeless Citizens

Submission to the
Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-Budget Consultations
November 2004

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A submission to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Finance

Pre-Budget Discussions for 2005

The Alliance to End Homelessness is an effective coalition of community stakeholders committed to eliminating homelessness in Canada's fourth largest city, Ottawa. Our coalition represents a broad cross section of 72 organizational members and funders who provide services and shelter to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Ottawa.

The Alliance has developed a model of collaboration that strengthens a cost effective delivery of service, discouraging duplication and filling in gaps. Our members provide a continuum of service beginning with prevention of housing loss through to palliative care for the City's most vulnerable homeless citizens.

The Alliance also has a Research and Evaluation Working Group which facilitates research into homelessness in Ottawa and at other sites across Canada and tracks emerging homelessness issues. This group transfers research knowledge to the members of the Alliance to End Homelessness and the broader community by making research reports available on the web and at meetings, conferences and forums. Indeed, we are holding **A Community Forum on Homelessness: Linking Ottawa Research with Action and Policy** for 170 people involved in homelessness in the nation's capital **to honour of National Housing Day on November 22nd**.

Our number one goal is to promote more affordable housing, but we also recognize that varying kinds of support are needed for people to keep housing to prevent becoming homeless in the first place, to stay in housing once they have found it and to use that base to move ahead with personal and financial goals and dreams.

After nine years of work in Ottawa, the Alliance appreciates the opportunity to share with Standing Committee on Finance our recommendations. The Alliance to End Homelessness recognizes that the challenges confronting homeless people and those at risk of homelessness require long-term

public policy commitments. On a daily basis, we see the continuing need for a renewed and strengthened national focus on helping communities prevent and reduce homelessness.

More than ever the women, men and children who are homeless and continually at risk of homelessness need a National Housing Program with national standards and national funding that includes a federally funded Social Housing Program.

We also recognize that a stable National Program to End Homelessness is necessary, one with long-term federal funding to address the ongoing need for homelessness prevention services and for emergency, transitional and supportive housing and to provide funding for research. We know now that an initiative approach is not sufficient.

Who Are the Homeless in Ottawa?

The Ottawa Panel Study

The Ottawa Panel Study was done with homeless people in the city of Ottawa. In-depth interviews were conducted with 416 homeless people in Ottawa's emergency shelters and drop-in centres during late 2002 and early 2003:

- 88 single men
- 85 single women
- 79 male youth
- 81 female youth
- 83 adults in families

The Panel Study investigated diversity among the homeless population in Ottawa looking for implications for developing effective housing policies and programs.

This study is the first longitudinal study of its kind in Canada to examine the pathways out of homelessness by following persons who are homeless over time. There is recognition among policy-makers that the homeless population is characterized by diversity requiring a wide variety of responses based on specific needs. This study is part of ongoing collaborative research efforts in Ottawa to inform policy and program development.

The recent analysis of the health status of the homeless citizens in this study may come as a surprise to some. The analysis looked at the role played by physical and mental health status, including use of alcohol and or drugs, presence of chronic health conditions, utilization of health services, and childhood stressors?

Previous research in the United States has attempted to differentiate the homeless population into subgroups according to contributing factors to and consequences of homelessness. This research builds on this line of research by identifying health-related characteristics of different subgroups making up the homeless population in a Canadian city.

Results show that there are three distinct clusters or groups in these 416 people are homeless, characterized by different levels of severity of health problems:

- 232 people (56%) form a predominantly “Economically Disadvantaged” group of individuals who have significantly higher levels of health than the other two groups.**
- 103 people (25%) are in another group with “Substance Abuse Problems” being prominent.**
- 80 people (19%) are in a third group presenting with the most severe “Health Problems” that include chronic health conditions, physical health problems, and mental health difficulties**

These findings challenge the way some in the community have viewed the nature of homelessness in Canada in the last decade. The findings suggest:

- That social policies addressing poverty and its negative effects on housing stability of those who are economically disadvantaged will have a significant impact on reducing the size of the homeless population.
- For this “economically disadvantaged” subgroup of individuals and families, social policies targeting poverty are needed to address homelessness, including:
 - Social housing
 - Rent subsidies and rent supplements
 - Increased income support.
- For the other two subgroups faced with substance abuse problems and health problems, the development of programs that combine housing and support are indicated such as:
 - Supported housing (portable intensive supports focusing on finding and maintaining housing;
 - Supportive housing; and
 - Transitional housing especially for persons with severe addictions and minimal independent living experience.

Lead Researchers: Tim Aubry, Fran Klodawsky, Daniel Coulombe & Lara Mills

Study Partners: University of Ottawa (Centre for Research on Community Services, Institute of Population Health)
Carleton University
St. Paul University
City of Ottawa, Housing Branch and
Alliance to End Homelessness

Funding: Social Science Humanities Research Council, Homelessness and Diversity Issues in Canada and
National Homelessness Initiative, Supporting Communities Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) through the City of Ottawa, Housing Branch

Help for the Homeless in the Nation's Capital

Three Levels of Government Working Together

There is much to be proud of here in Ottawa. Working collaboratively, in spite of funding challenges, we have developed with the community many effective and creative programs and services to meet the needs of those who are homeless.

Federal Funding and the City:

Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI)

City managed one time Federal Funds for Homelessness

- **2001-2003 – \$ 13.6 million** with \$ 9.5 million for support services and \$4.1 million for capital projects (supportive and transitional housing, improvements to shelters). *
- **2004- 2006 – \$ 15 million** with \$4.5 million for support services and \$10.5 million for capital projects. *

The Province and the City:

Over \$16 million per year for services for homeless individuals or those at risk of becoming homeless funded by Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) delivered by the City.

Social Housing (The City of Ottawa is the provincially legislated service manager.*)

- **11,500 families on waiting list for 5 to 10 years**
- 22,500 rent-geared to income units now (approx.)
- **3,000 rent subsidies in a rent supplement program**
- In Ottawa, priority given to absolutely homeless (residing in shelters or on the street) and to other vulnerable populations
- 58 housing providers, including OCHC, accessed through the Ottawa Social Housing Registry.
 - \$180 million – total operating cost
 - \$60 million – City's portion
 - **\$30 million – Federal portion**
 - Remaining portion is rent income from tenants.

Affordable Housing Development through the Action Ottawa Program

Year	# Units	City Funds*	Federal/ Provincial	Total
2002	39	\$ 1.9 million	None	\$ 1.9 million
2003	329	\$ 3.8 million	\$ 8.1 million	\$ 11.9 million
2004**	220	\$ 7.3 million	\$ 5.94 million	\$ 13.24 million
Total	588	\$ 13.0 million	\$ 14.04 million	\$ 27.04 million

* Additional incentives were provided by the City of Ottawa to reduce the cost of development to make rents affordable.

** These funds are budgeted but not yet allocated.

Supportive Housing

Options Bytown, Bruce House, Cornerstone, Daybreak, Hope Discovery, Hope Living, Horizon House, Horizon Renaissance, Ottawa Salus Corp., Project Upstream, St. Joseph's Mission House, Housing for Legal Offenders, seven homes for Victims of Abuse + Family Violence . . . and others.

Transitional Housing with a range of community-based supports to clients.

Rooming Houses City Rooming House Services

Emergency Shelters*

- 820 clients housed per night
- 65 parents with over 135 children per night
- The per diem of \$39.15 is cost shared: 80% Provincial – 20% City

Shelters for Families Who are Homeless:

Carling Family Shelter, City of Ottawa, 44 rooms.

Forward Family Shelter, City of Ottawa, 21 rooms.

Oshki Kizis Lodge, Aboriginal Women's Support Centre 19 beds for aboriginal women with children, single adult and young women.

Reception House, Catholic Immigration Centre, 25 beds for newcomer families and singles.

Emergency Housing, YMCA-YWCA, 25 beds as overflow for homeless families, women, youth and men.

Emergency motels, number depending on need. **Ottawa turns no one away.**

Shelters for Single Homeless People:

Cornerstone/Le Pilier Women's Shelter, for homeless women, aged 18-65, accommodates 49

The Mission, 227 beds for homeless men, including 15 hospice beds and 13 rehab beds.

Salvation Army Booth Centre, 169 beds for men, 20 beds in a Special Care Unit (10 more planned), 24 beds young men (16-19 years), 24 beds Addiction Recovery.

Shepherds of Good Hope, for 198 adults (approximately 30 spaces for women), and 25 beds in the Managed Alcohol Program

Young Women's Shelter, Youth Services Bureau, 12 beds (12-20 years).

Emergency Temporary Mats, as required. **Ottawa turns no one away.** The Van provides transport to shelters and outreach services.

For People at Risk of Homelessness

Housing Loss Prevention: Services are available from the Housing Loss Prevention Network, Action Logement, Housing Help, the Community Health Centres and Community Resource Centres, HomeSafe and The Rent Bank at the Booth Centre, and the Employment and Financial Assistance Branch of the City of Ottawa.

Drop-ins: Causeway, Centre 507, Oasis, Centre 454, Odawa, St. Joe's Women's Centre, The Well, YSB Downtown Services and Drop-in.

Services During the Day: Inner City Health Project, Street Health Outreach (Canadian Mental Health Assoc., Ottawa Public Health, Royal Ottawa Hospital...and others), Meal programs, Food Banks and GoodFood Box.

* Note that the source is the City of Ottawa, September 2004

The Homelessness Crisis is Still with Us

1. **Too many people have inadequate incomes.**
2. **We have a serious shortage of appropriate housing for Canada's citizens living on low incomes.**
3. **And for some, challenging health problems are part of the struggle to find adequate housing and supports.**

Our recommendations build on our own experience helping homeless people and on the federal government's past successes. While the federal government has set aside money for affordable housing, the provinces have been inconsistent in matching those funds and too little of it has been spent. People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are still waiting and a shelter is not a home.

It is time to acknowledge that implementing the federal government's policy intentions requires a shift to assuming more national leadership in order to more humanely spend that money and build housing for those with low incomes no matter what is happening in any particular province.

A National Housing Program

More than ever, the women, men and children who are homeless and continually at risk of homelessness need a **National Housing Program** with national standards and national funding. Key Components of that program need to be a federally funded **Social Housing Program** with a renewal of the national **Rent Supplement Program**.

The federal Liberals promised during the 2004 election campaign to provide an additional **\$1.5 billion** for new housing. We encourage the government to move ahead with this funding, which was promised over a three-year period, and to invest that amount in new social housing starting with the federal budget of February of 2005.

It is time to move beyond promising to spending and **fully commit the \$1 billion** for affordable housing promised by the federal government (the \$680 million over three years promised in November 2001 and the additional \$320 million promised in February of 2003). Most of this money has not yet been invested in new housing. The unspent funds from that \$1 billion should be invested in new social housing.

Even when all the funds remaining from the total of 2.5 billion start to be spent under federally driven partnerships with cities and/or provinces, the federal government will be limited to an average annual amount of \$500 million for new social housing.

Given the depth and severity of homelessness in Canada, the Alliance to End Homelessness continues to support the National Housing and Homelessness Network's call for a **One Percent Solution**, with the goal \$2 billion annually for new social housing. We urge the federal government to commit to spending a full \$2 billion annually for new social housing as the critical component of a National Housing Program.

The Alliance also welcomes a **new national rent supplement program as part of a national social housing strategy**. The rent supplements should be tied to the new social supply program. The current federal Affordable Housing Program offers only capital subsidies and no rent-geared-to-income assistance. In order to complete the program, rent supplements should be offered. But they must run for a minimum of 20 years, with the provision for renewal.

National Program to End Homelessness

We also realize that a **National Program to End Homelessness** is necessary, one with long-term core federal funding to address the ongoing need for homelessness prevention services and for emergency, transitional and supportive housing and to provide funding for research. Since 2001, our work with the help of **Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative** (SCPI) funding has made it abundantly clear how very necessary federal support is for community-based programs, services and research to help the homeless.

Unfortunately, the "initiative" approach of three year SCPI funding is inherently unstable and disruptive. No matter how promptly the federal government renews its commitment to social housing, it is going to take many years to reach the goal of a home for every citizen of Ottawa. And, there will always be citizens who need help to maintain their tenure in a home of their own. The support services for people who need to find and maintain housing while living with many obstacles, both economic and health-related, must always be available.

The recent Throne Speech promised to "extend and enhance" the federal homelessness strategy, the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative, plus the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. Both SCPI and RRAP are due to expire in 2006.

Substantial new funding to match current spending and add new dollars is needed in the federal budget of February 2005 to ensure that there is a smooth transition into a new longer-term program. Both of these initiatives should be transformed into permanent programs in 2005 and given a secure funding base as part of a **National Program to End Homelessness**.

Funding Sources for Social Housing

1. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, our national housing agency, ran a surplus last year (income after taxes) of \$667 million. This surplus is projected to grow (according to CMHC's own calculations in the CMHC Annual Reports) to more than three-quarters of a billion dollars by the year 2008.

One important source of revenue for a new national social housing program is to ensure that the **surplus from CMHC is reinvested in new social housing supply and rent supplements.**

2. Also, the annual step-out of federal social housing programs is an opportunity for reinvesting current social housing dollars. The financial design of the federal social housing programs from the 1970s to the 1990s allows for a gradual "step-out" of federal financing as the projects mature. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association has pointed out that this step-out will increase dramatically as more projects near the typical 35-year life of their operating agreements.

The funding that is freed as the existing **social housing agreements step-out should be reinvested in new social housing supply and rent supplements.**

Summary of Recommendations for the 2005 Federal Budget

Our recommendations build on our own experience helping homeless people and on the federal government's past successes. We recognize that while the federal government has set aside money for affordable housing, the provinces have been inconsistent in matching those funds and too little of it has been spent.

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are still waiting here in the nation's capital and right across the country — a shelter is not a home.

Therefore, we have five recommendations:

1. That a National Housing Program with national standards and national funding be introduced, one with more national leadership and involvement working with cities and /or provinces if needed, to more humanely built housing for those with low incomes no matter what is happening in any particular province.
2. That a National Housing Program include a federally funded Social Housing Program and the renewal of the national Rent Supplement Program.

3. That the \$1.5 billion for new housing promised by the federal Liberals during the 2004 election campaign be fully committed and that investing this amount in new social housing start with the federal budget of February of 2005.
4. That a National Program to End Homelessness with long-term federal funding be introduced to address the ongoing need for homelessness prevention services and for emergency, transitional and supportive housing and to provide funding for research.
5. That the surplus from CMHC be reinvested in new social housing supply and rent supplements and that social housing agreements step-outs be reinvested in new social housing supply and rent supplements.

Respectfully submitted by Lynne Browne, Coordinator, Alliance to End Homelessness on behalf of the Steering Committee.