

# **Priority on People**

**Ottawa's 2006-2008 Community Action Plan on Homelessness**

**to create**

**“A City Without Homelessness”**

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## 1. Introduction

In 1999, Ottawa developed an action plan on homelessness<sup>1</sup> designed to respond to the growing issue of homelessness here and in cities across the country. Ottawa-Carleton had joined with other municipalities to declare homelessness a “national disaster” and to call for action from the federal government. The Province had designated municipalities as “local service system managers” for homelessness and had devolved many formerly provincial responsibilities to the municipal level. Toronto had released the “Golden Report,” Anne Golden’s seminal work that called for greater homelessness prevention and shared responsibilities on a host of actions to address the issue.

In this context, Ottawa developed the first action plan to “end” and “prevent” homelessness. It involved extensive community consultation and wide-ranging recommendations and was updated with a new plan three years later, “Ottawa’s Community Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness: 2002-2005.” That plan proposed continued work on increasing affordable housing and prevention initiatives and sharpened the focus of services to meet the emerging needs of the community. An update on progress to implement the 2002-2005 plan is included in Section 4 of this report.

The current plan, which is being proposed for 2006-2008, was commissioned by the Community Capacity Building Team (CCBT) for Homelessness, a steering committee for the community capacity building process that brings together housing and service providers, all three levels of government, other funders, researchers, and knowledgeable community members. This plan represents the final stage in the CCBT’s work to build the capacity of stakeholders in Ottawa to better respond to homelessness.

*In a country as prosperous as Canada, and in a city filled with some of the country’s best social agencies, caring corporations and intensive government programs, the presence and seriousness of homelessness in Ottawa is difficult to understand.*

The City of Ottawa Community Capacity Building Team

The current plan has been built through extensive community engagement. It is designed to promote collective endorsement of a vision, mission and principles, as well as specific actions and key results, so that the community is well positioned to respond to homelessness and to be proactive in its prevention. The plan requires commitment from the entire community for implementation to be effective – from all levels of government, from housing and service providers who comprise the homelessness service system, from the broader community including other funders, the business sector and the public, and from homeless people themselves.

The plan places priority on people and responds to the City of Ottawa’s strategic directions developed for the 2020 plan:

- Diversity and inclusion: equal access to services
- Access to the basics with opportunities for all to participate in community life
- Safe and healthy communities

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<sup>1</sup> Creating Community Solutions: An Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton, June 1999.

- Focus on prevention
- Access to employment and lifelong learning
- Access to local arts, heritage and cultural programs

The Community Action Plan begins with an analysis of the current homelessness situation in Ottawa and assesses how things have changed since 1999. The plan reviews various environmental factors and the service system itself, and identifies strengths that are in place, opportunities that are presented and areas where improvements are needed. The plan then proposes a vision, mission and principles to guide actions and describes the key results and specific actions, based on priorities identified by the community. The plan closes with a series of conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. Process

In addition to commissioning the Community Action Plan, the CCBT completed five additional tasks that have formed part of the community's response to homelessness. These include:

**Service Inventory:** An inventory of housing and support services for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness was prepared, along with a summary continuum of housing and services.

**Communications Plan:** McKay Communications Consulting developed a communications plan for the CCBT, intended to help stakeholders communicate more effectively with each other and to broaden awareness of the issue of homelessness and its causes.

**Training:** A 2005 – 2006 training schedule was developed to help front line workers and stakeholder leaders strengthen their skills or acquire new ones.

**Organizational Capacity Building grants:** The CCBT approved grants of approximately \$5-7,000 for agencies and partnerships to develop their capacity for service delivery.

**Sector Plans and Studies:** In addition to the Communications Plan, several consultants completed nine separate reviews for the CCBT on various aspects of homelessness. These included a:

- Service Sector Plan for Single Women and a Women's Roundtable on Homelessness (Anne Wright and Associates: Ginger Group)
- Report on Adults with Developmental Disabilities (Anne Wright and Associates: Ginger Group)
- Sector Plan for Newcomers (Anne Wright and Associates: Ginger Group)
- Evaluation of the Housing Loss Prevention Network (Havi Echenberg et al)
- Continuum of Services for Single Men (Social Data Research Ltd.)
- Evaluation of and Recommendations for Services for the Aboriginal Homeless in Ottawa (Social Data Research Ltd.)
- Inuit Environmental Scan (Havi Echenberg et al)
- Review of Rural Homelessness (Social Data Research Ltd.)
- Review of French Language Services for the Homeless (Joyce Potter and Yvon Gauvreau)

Each of the individual sector plans and studies provided valuable input to the development of this Community Action Plan. They involved a range of data collection methods, including focus

groups, interviews, literature and document reviews, data analyses and stakeholder meetings. The reports will be finalized and released by the CCBT in November 2005.

For the Community Action Plan itself, we used several data collection processes:

### **1. Focus groups with street-involved youth and homeless families**

A discussion with 11 street-involved youth took place at the Youth Services Bureau drop-in centre. Participants included four young women and seven young men, about half originally from the Ottawa area, and others who had moved from Montreal, other parts of Ontario, or northern Canada. They included a mix of Anglophones and Francophones, white and Aboriginal youth.

The focus group for homeless families involved discussion with six women at the Carling Avenue Family Shelter. All of the women have children, aged 6 weeks to 17 years and have been staying at the shelter from 2 to 8 months. Some moved to the shelter from a motel or hotel while others moved in directly from homes they felt were unsafe, unhealthy or unaffordable.

### **2. Interviews with Key Informants**

Thirty-two interviews were completed as part of the process to develop the 2006-2008 Community Action Plan on Homelessness.

Fourteen interviews were held with representatives of agencies working with homeless and at-risk singles and families in Ottawa. This set of interviews involved senior staff from agencies serving homeless women, men, youth and families. Interviewees were from organizations providing emergency and longer term support services, including Aboriginal services, organizations working with newcomers, agencies serving clientele with developmental disabilities and services with a predominantly Francophone clientele. These interviews are referred to as the *service provider* interviews.

Eighteen interviews took place with a broader range of stakeholders, referred to as the *broader community* interviews. These interviews involved business people; city councillors; municipal, provincial and federal employees; individuals from the social housing and health sectors; and the faith community.

### **3. Initiatives to Inspire**

Based on information from key informants, as well as a review of documents and website references, several interesting homelessness initiatives were identified from across Canada. A number of these are included in the Community Action Plan. (See Annexes 2 to 9). Their goal is to illustrate a variety of proactive responses to specific homelessness issues and to inspire thinking about directions that the Ottawa community may want to pursue.

### **4. Data Analysis**

Data contained in the CCB Inventory of Housing and Support Services, as well as information gathered from the City's Employment Survey and Official Plan, from the Census and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and from provincial sources were analyzed to provide a scan of the current housing, economic and homelessness situation in Ottawa.

## **5. Community Consultation**

On October 19, 2005, a community consultation was held to review progress to date on developing the Community Action Plan on Homelessness. Over 125 participants, including people from agencies serving the homeless, the broader community, funders, the CCBT and homeless people themselves, came together to provide input to the plan. Specifically, they reviewed a proposed new vision, mission and principles, as well as potential actions, and discussed in depth their opinions of them, as well as ideas for implementation.

Subsequently, a draft of this report was issued to all invitees to the community consultation, along with a request for feedback. All comments were reviewed and provided useful input to the final report.

### **Summary**

The consultations for the Community Action Plan, together with the individual sector plans, involved 21 different focus groups involving 145 people, over 225 interviews with key informants, service providers, the broad community and homeless people, best practices reviewed from 45 organizations in other cities, data analyses, document and literature reviews plus 8 separate stakeholder meetings involving close to 200 people, all of which have been key sources of input for the 2006-2008 plan. We are grateful for the time, energy and wisdom that so many people from the community have contributed to this plan.

*In this report, homelessness is defined as including any person, family or household that has no fixed address or security of housing tenure. The Community Action Plan also addresses those people at risk of homelessness including those whose homes do not meet the basic housing standards of the United Nations (i.e. do not have adequate protection from the elements, access to safe water and sanitation, secure tenure or personal safety, live within easy reach of employment, education, and health care and do not pay more than 50% of total income).*

*Housing options listed in this report are defined as follows:*

*Emergency Shelters: Provide safe and secure emergency overnight accommodation, food services and personal support.*

*Transitional Housing: Housing with on-site client support that is time limited (usually less than 3 years).*

*Supportive Housing: Housing with on-site client support, not time limited.*

*Supported Housing: Private apartments or social housing where portable supports are provided, tied to the individual, not the housing site.*

*Social Housing: Non-profit, co-operative or public (Ottawa Community Housing Corporation) housing where at least a portion of tenants pay rent according to their incomes.*

*Rent Supplements/Housing Allowances: Allowances paid to landlords or tenants to subsidize the difference between a defined percentage of their income (usually 30%) and market rent.*

*Rooming Houses: Residential premises in which rooms are available for occupation (with or without meals, or other facilities or services) and accommodation is available for at least three persons on a commercial basis.*

*Affordable Homeownership: Homeownership that is affordable to people in core housing need, that is people who would have to spend more than 30% of their income for the median rent of a suitable and adequate dwelling in their community. In Ottawa, this would mean homeownership affordable to people with annual incomes of \$40,000- \$45,000*

### **3. Environmental Scan**

To help assess the current situation in Ottawa, we asked key informants their views on the factors that affect homelessness and how these have changed since 1999. We also asked them to summarize the trends affecting homelessness now. We combined their responses with relevant data to develop a picture of the current homelessness situation, the economic circumstances affecting it and the availability of affordable housing and key services.

#### ***3.1 The economy is growing, but circumstances are worse for low-income people***

In 2001, according to the City's Employment Survey, there were 479,000 jobs in Ottawa. The city economy grew by a net 76,000 jobs between 1996 and 2001. The growth was driven by the boom in the high-tech sector of the economy, a boom which tailed off towards the end of that period. The number of high-technology jobs in Ottawa fell between 2000 and 2004 from 78,200 to 47,100. Employment in the government sector, despite a minor freeze by the federal government, stayed strong. Employment outside the private sector as a percentage of all jobs in Ottawa rose from 32.9% of jobs in 1999 to 36.5% in 2004.

Yet, despite this growth in jobs, interview respondents overwhelmingly indicated that economic circumstances for low-income people in Ottawa had become worse or much worse in the past six years. In part, this is due to the fact that minimum

'Rents, utilities and transportation costs are all increasing and inflation is rising faster than minimum wage.'

Broader community interviews

wage jobs and social assistance rates have not kept pace with inflation, while rents have increased at a rate that is 1.5 times the rate of inflation (See Table One). Key informants also reported that lost jobs in the manufacturing sector are being replaced by lower-wage jobs. This suggests that employment growth is unevenly distributed within the local economy.

<b>Table One: Increases in Minimum Wage, OW/ODSP, Inflation and Rent for a Two-Bedroom Apartment, 1999-2004</b>			
Minimum Wage Increase	OW/ODSP Increase	Consumer Price Index Increase	2-BR Rent Increase
4.4 %	3.0%	13.2%	20.1%

Source: Ministry of Labour and MCSS websites, and *Where's Home? 2005*

### ***3.2 The population and homeownership market are growing, but the rental market is shrinking***

The population of the City continues to grow. According to the 2001 Census, the City of Ottawa had a population of 774,072. This is a growth of 7.3% over the 1996 figure.

The growth in Ottawa's population has been mirrored by an expansion of the housing market, overwhelmingly the ownership market. On average in the years from 1995 to the present, between 90 and 95% of newly constructed housing units have been ownership.

Period	Ownership				Rental						All Tenures	
	Freehold		Condominium		Private Rental		Assisted Rental		Total Rental			
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1995-99	2,897	90.1	128	4	99	3.1	90	2.8	189	5.9	3,215	100
2000-05	5,174	85.5	351	5.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	524	8.7	6,049	100

Source: *Where's Home? 2005*, a publication of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Ontario Region

At the same time, there has been a decline in the number of privately owned rental units in the City, not only as a percentage of the housing stock, but in absolute terms.

**Table Three: Decline in Number of Rental Units, Ottawa CMA, 1994 to 2004**

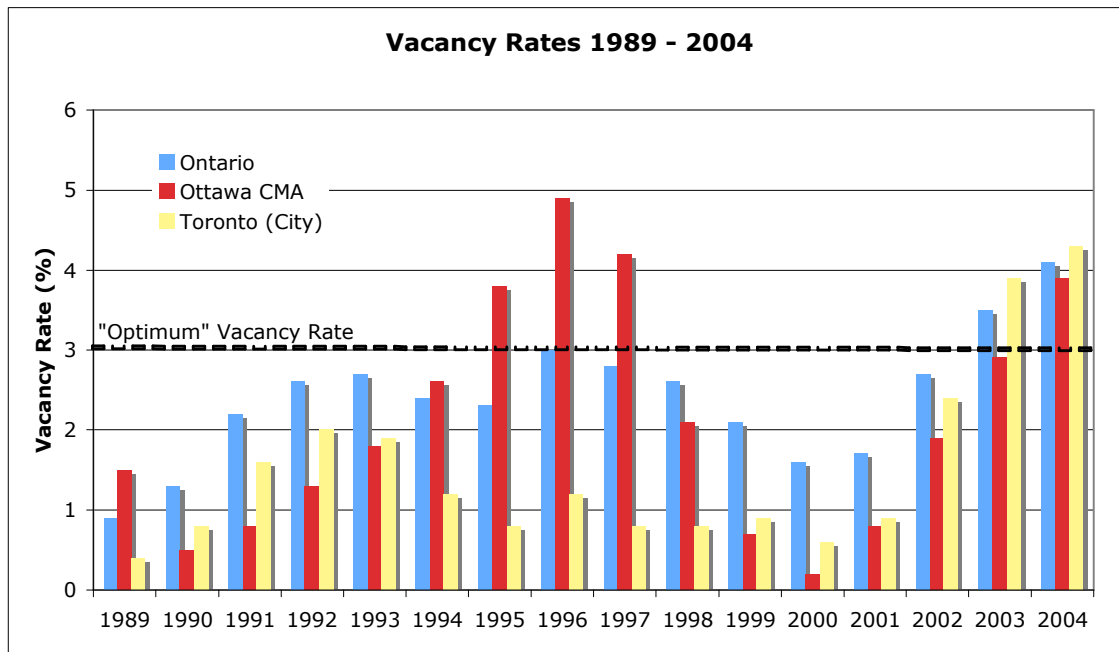
Total of Rental Units - 1994	Total of Rental Units - 2004	Change	Percentage Change
72,372	68,141	-4,231	-6%

Source: *Where's Home? 2005*, a publication of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Ontario Region

### ***3.3 Rental Vacancies are following a cyclical pattern.***

Rental Vacancy Rates in the City of Ottawa have followed a similar pattern as both the Province as a whole and Toronto. An extremely tight market in the early 1990's eased somewhat till mid-decade then tightened up again by 2000. The last four years have seen an easing of the market once more. Ottawa's mid-90's increase in vacancy rates was more pronounced than either Ontario's or Toronto's, and the following tightening was similarly more pronounced, perhaps as a reflection in the then-current boom in the high-technology sector.

Economists generally define a healthy rental market as one that has sufficient vacancies to allow tenants some choice and to force landlords to compete to some extent for business while still permitting high enough occupancy that landlords can expect to earn a profit. For such a market, economists believe that a vacancy rate of 3% is optimum. Ottawa achieved or exceeded that level in only five of the last sixteen years.



Source: *Where's Home? 2005*, a publication of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Ontario Region

### 3.4 Rental Vacancies are not evenly distributed across the market

The rental market is not a single entity. It is a number of discrete sub-markets divided by location and also by price. Thus, there are significant differences in vacancy rates at different prices within the overall market. According to CMHC statistics, the average vacancy rate of 4.2% in 2004 was not consistent at each range.

Rent Range	Vacancy Rate (%)
< \$700	5.1
\$700-799	4.2
\$800-899	4.0
\$900-999	2.9
\$1,000-1,099	3.2
\$1,100-1,199	6.0
\$1,200+	4.4
Total	4.2

Source: *Where's Home? 2005*, a publication of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada – Ontario Region

It is interesting to note there is no direct correlation between price and vacancy rate. If there were, we would expect to see low vacancies for cheaper units and high vacancies in the most expensive ones. However, the tightest market is in the \$900 to \$1,100 range, or the units of reasonable quality that are large enough for families with young children. The relatively high vacancy rates among the more expensive units suggests prospective tenants have choices (including to buy at current low interest rates), while vacancy rates at the low end of the market suggest either that the units are not suitable for families (i.e. they are too small) or that single low-income people can't afford the rents, even at that relatively low level.

### ***3.5 Rental costs are forcing the poor to spend too much on housing***

Ottawa, like most cities in Ontario, has a relatively small, but significant, percentage of its households with incomes low enough that they are defined as being in Core Housing Need. A sub-set of this group actually pays more than 50% of income on housing. In fact, the shelter cost to income ratio (STIR) is over 60 across Ontario municipalities, including Ottawa, where renters in core need typically spend two thirds of their income on housing.

‘Our last place was \$600 for one room – everything shared – and in disgusting condition.’

Youth focus group participant

**Table Five: Renter Households in Core Need and Spending 50% or more of their income on Shelter: Ottawa, Ontario & Selected Comparisons - 2001**

	No of Households	Pct of Rental Households (%)	Annual Income (\$)	Monthly Shelter Cost (\$)	Shelter Cost To Income Ratio (STIR)
Ontario	146,900	11.9	14,587	783	66.2
<b>Ottawa</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>14,490</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>66.5</b>
Kingston	2,400	12.5	12,251	647	65.0
Toronto	64,900	11.9	16,615	903	67.3

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Our key informants’ observations are consistent with the above data. The vast majority of respondents believe the availability of affordable housing is worse or the same as five years ago, with only one-fifth saying it is better. They noted vacancies have increased lately, but low-income households still can’t afford this housing. (The City of Ottawa’s annual report notes that vacancy rates tend to be lower in larger buildings, defined as containing over 100 units. The report speculates this is because the owners of those buildings can afford incentives like free cable or DVD players or some initial rent-free months. These incentives don’t actually reduce the rent levels, meaning they do not improve affordability for low-income households.)

### ***3.6 Emergency Shelter Use Has Stabilized Since 2002***

As housing costs rise, they continue to force many households into the shelter system. In Ottawa, there was significant growth in the use of emergency shelters up until 2002 and there has been some stability since that time. Table Six shows the number of homeless individuals in emergency shelters on a daily basis for comparable time periods in 2001 and 2005. There was a decrease in shelter use for all categories of homeless people, except for single homeless women.

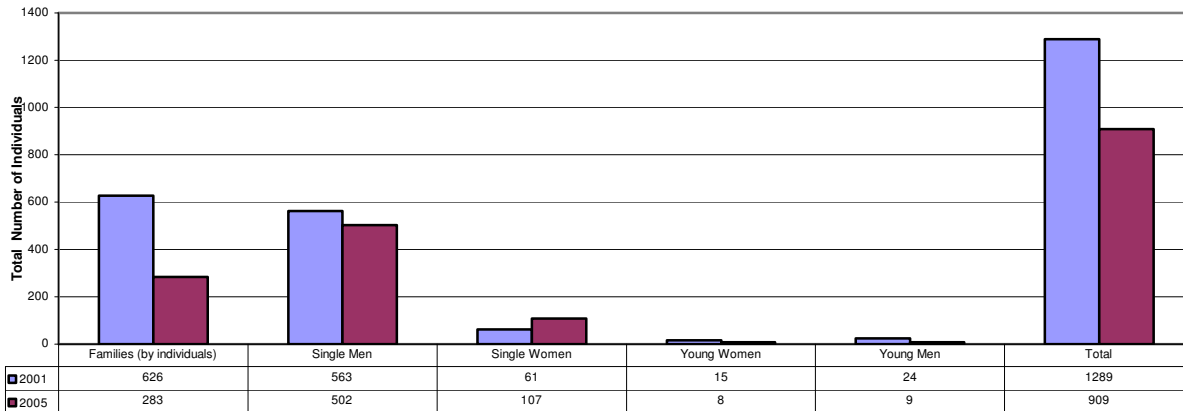


Table Six: Snap Shot Picture of Daily Shelter Use, July/August 2001 and 2005

An alternative way to assess the use of emergency shelters is to examine “bed-nights”, counting the total number of shelter beds (including mats) times the number of nights in the year they were used. The results of this assessment are shown in Table Seven.

Sector	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005*
Females	15,381	15,556	19,881	19,757	20,126	21,549	21,403
Males	87,826	108,701	161,151	189,474	188,380	191,907	187,960
Mixed (motels, 'Y')	-	-	28,199	16,393	17,363	16,078	30,531
Families	76,905	75,737	78,314	81,328	63,096	63,746	52,647
Total	180,112	199,994	287,545	306,952	288,965	293,280	292,540

\* Projected to year-end using linear extrapolation.

NOTE: Data prior to 2001 are incomplete since they do not include individuals and families temporarily housed in motels.

Source: City of Ottawa

Again, these statistics show shelter use in Ottawa peaked in 2002 and is stabilizing now. Particularly for men and families, there was a decrease in use in 2003, although that trend seems to have reversed somewhat in 2004. The numbers of women using emergency shelters, however, has grown steadily over the past eight years – a fact that many key informants remarked upon.

Interestingly, while a majority of respondents in the service provider interviews felt that the overall level of homelessness in Ottawa since 1999 had become worse or much worse, most respondents in the broader community interviews thought the overall level of homelessness was better or the same now as

compared to 1999. Service providers, in addition to identifying an increase, noted how the homeless population has changed over the years, with more individuals who are working poor or

‘The solid core of homelessness is not disappearing. Services for individuals who are chronically homeless are slow to come, especially services to meet their housing needs.’ ‘People are staying in shelters longer: the result is this environment becomes their community and residents can be trapped in their own addiction and mental illness.’

Broader Community Interviews

in school staying in shelters, and individuals with mental health and addictions being more visible among the homeless.

The inventory of available beds in emergency shelters in the City of Ottawa is as follows:

<b>Table Eight: Emergency Shelter Beds by Sector, 2005</b>						
Population Served	Single Adult Male	Single Adult Female	Youth Male	Youth Female	Mixed & Family	Overflow
Number of Beds	510	89	24	12	304	25

Source: City of Ottawa

### ***3.7 Addictions Services for the Homeless are in Short Supply, while Mental Health Services Have Improved But Are Still Insufficient***

The majority of key informants in service provider interviews described the availability of addictions services as “worse” or “much worse” since 1999. Among the broader community respondents, responses were more evenly split but there were few who felt the situation was better. Both agency and broader community respondents noted that wait times for addictions services are long and that there is not only a need for more addictions services, but specifically for a broader range of services that work for homeless people.

‘If you’re on the street, you’re going to have a drug problem. You have a lot of time to do it. You’re not in the best mindset. And the street feels a whole lot better when you’re drunk or high.’

Youth focus group participant

Opinions on the availability of mental health services were split, with about half of respondents indicating

that services were more available in 2005 than in 1999 and about half indicating that they were the same or worse. Respondents did note the investment in mental health services in recent years. More services are available and respondents noted the introduction of ACT teams as a positive feature. However, several respondents said that waiting lists can be long and that there is a greater need for more services specifically directed to the homeless.

‘Seems like shelters have become the new psychiatric facilities: there is a different environment for those who live in shelters now, and there are huge gaps in service for those suffering from mental illness.’

Agency Interview respondent

### ***3.8 There continue to be homeless families with children***

While there have been some reductions in the numbers of families with children in emergency shelters, participants in the community consultation expressed the view that any homelessness of children was unacceptable. As one informant said “these critical days, months and years of a child’s life should not be spent in a shelter.” Interview respondents noted the vulnerability of families and the huge stress they experience in dealing with homelessness and shelters, their need for more permanent housing and the widening gap between rich and poor. Providing increased support to families with children was identified as a “downstream investment” and a necessary step to preventing homelessness in the future.

‘If we’re going to break the chain of poverty, put the money where the kids are.’

Family shelter resident

The Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario<sup>2</sup> recently completed a survey of families and youth at their emergency department to assess their housing conditions. They found that 2.3% of families surveyed had relied on housing shelters and another 6.8% had stayed with relatives or friends, as they had no other place to stay. As is the case with the community generally, the lack of affordable housing was cited as the most critical problem with 32.7% of families identifying that their housing was not affordable. This was particularly true of lone-parent families and families renting their homes. Immigrant families were identified at increased likelihood of living in crowded conditions.

#### **4. Service System for Homelessness**

Ottawa has a strong and effective service system for addressing homelessness that has developed over time. (See Annex One for the full Continuum of Housing and Support Services that comprise this service system.) The starting point for developing a new Community Action Plan is recognition of what is in place currently so as to build on existing strengths and assets.

##### **4.1 Strengths and Accomplishments of Ottawa’s Service System for Homelessness**

Common themes regarding Ottawa’s existing service system for homelessness emerged from individual sector plans, interviews with service providers and broader community representatives, focus groups, and through the Community Consultation Day.

###### **4.1.1 Strengths**

Strengths of Ottawa’s service system for homelessness cited most often are:

- Good coalitions and partnerships: a great spirit of collaboration, and an increase in partnerships to deliver services;
- Competent organizations with excellent leadership among Executive Directors, highly committed, knowledgeable and skilled front line staff and volunteers, and good diversity among staff;
- The number and range of services that exist in the City, including recognition of each agency’s contribution to the system as a whole;
- The strength of the city as a service manager;
- Tremendous interest in incorporating research and evaluation results into practice to improve service;
- Higher profile and awareness of homelessness issues, including higher levels of federal and municipal political support, a politically active community and a community that works well with City Council;
- Outreach programs working together, and increase in outreach workers downtown;
- Recognition of the focus on prevention as a cost saving mechanism;
- Thinking of itself as a system, agencies turning to each other to help; being extremely flexible to deal with new issues or challenges.

‘We have been able to identify an action plan with the City and community buying into it and an inclusive definition of homelessness which is reflected in the continuum of services for the homeless.’

Agency Interviews

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<sup>2</sup> CHEO Housing Check-up, contact Jama Watt, [jwatt@cheo.on.ca](mailto:jwatt@cheo.on.ca).

### **4.1.2 Accomplishments**

At the October 19<sup>th</sup> Community Consultation, participants identified specific accomplishments within the homelessness service system that they felt were particularly noteworthy. Over 180 responses were received, and the comments spanned the entire service system for homelessness. The following is a sampling of the feedback.

#### ***Primary Health Care, Mental Health and Addictions Services***

Participants expressed pride in many health-related initiatives, including the continuation of the Inner City Health Project, more nurses involved in outreach and services for homeless clients, and more people having access to health cards. Other accomplishments included: increasing awareness of concurrent disorders and treatment options, mental health support for rooming house tenants, and leadership and progress in harm reduction services.

‘We have improved the quality and access to health care for the homeless’  
Participant at Oct. 19 Consultation Day

#### ***Outreach Services***

A number of participants noted the increase of outreach services as an accomplishment of the system, including the development of street outreach programs in commercial districts. Services for particular subsets of the homeless and at-risk population were also mentioned, including outreach initiatives for young single parents, Aboriginal and youth outreach services, and outreach to ESL classes.

#### ***Collaboration, Communication and Partnerships***

Participants said they are proud of the collaboration between agencies, with specific mention of the efforts through the Housing Loss Prevention Network, and the Supportive Housing Network. The implementation of HIFIS was noted as an accomplishment as was the increased collaboration between shelters as well as agencies and Ontario Works case coordinators. A number of participants noted the developing relationships between the business community and homeless organizations. One respondent was proud of success in securing a housing support services partnership.

‘Shelters are working together to plan ways of moving beyond a crisis focus to a planning focus’  
Participant at Oct. 19 Consultation Day

#### ***Housing Loss Prevention***

Significant accomplishments that were mentioned included reaching people at an earlier point when their housing is at risk, reducing the number of evictions taking place, successfully using the rent bank and utilities assistance to prevent homelessness, and expanding the housing loss prevention network.

#### ***Housing***

Participants noted accomplishments such as the construction of new affordable housing units, increased rental agreements with private landlords to increase the capacity to house clients, City approval of some affordable home ownership, and an increase in the number of licensed rooming houses.

Specific mention was also made of housing search and placement services being effective in helping to house families.

### ***Income Support and Job Training***

Participants at the consultation day noted that Ontario Works now solves housing problems more quickly. They also mentioned increased liaison between OW and ODSP which helps clients who are applying for ODSP assistance. Mention was also made of the OW committee focused on improving client access to services and reducing barriers to service.

Participants noted new employment training programs starting, including employment programs that focus on rapid placement and on-going time-unlimited supports.

### ***Targeted Initiatives***

Participants named accomplishments within the service system that are initiatives targeted to the needs of particular groups. These examples included: development of an Aboriginal street patrol, Aboriginal intergenerational cultural program, emergency shelter for Aboriginal women; new

‘I’m excited to hear the success stories of youth who have broken the cycle and barriers of homelessness.’

Participant at Oct. 19 Consultation Day

agency partnerships to serve young parents on Rideau Street, expansion of shelter units and transitional housing for youth, and community organizing and research on the homelessness and housing issues of newcomers.

### ***Funding, Research and Training Support***

Participants noted their pride that the City has developed the ability to determine priorities and distribute funds for homelessness, thus ‘making a huge difference in the community.’ Others noted the effort and dollars that the federal government has put into addressing and ending homelessness and the Province’s move to a consolidated funding formula.

Participants also praised the positive impact of research initiatives on the community’s understanding of issues and solutions. The “Community Forum on Homelessness: Linking Ottawa Research with Action and Policy” held November 22, 2004 by the Alliance to End Homelessness provided opportunities to disseminate research and gather suggestions for future research initiatives.

### ***Public Awareness***

Among the list of accomplishments was an increasing public awareness of homelessness. Participants also noted the CCBT’s role in fostering increased awareness of issues and an understanding of the role that each stakeholder can play in finding solutions.

The Report Card on Homelessness prepared by the Alliance to End Homelessness was mentioned as an accomplishment due to its success in bringing some of the complex issues of homelessness to the attention of the broader public.

### **4.1.3 Success of the System**

Interviews conducted with staff of service providers and members of the broader community asked respondents to consider what features of Ottawa’s service system for homelessness contribute most to its success. Respondents reviewed a list of features of the service system and ranked the top three features contributing to its success.

In both the service provider and broader community interviews, ‘solid partnerships forming’ and ‘collaborative community culture’ were among the most frequently cited features of the service system. Respondents in the broader community interviews also noted ‘good relations between the City and homelessness agencies’ as a feature of the service system contributing to its success.

The following features of the service system were also mentioned by four or more respondents as contributing to the success of the system:

- Good quality research;
- Vibrant voluntary sector;
- Many organizations involved;
- Central office at City to address homelessness;
- Ability to get money to people and organizations;
- Better federal/provincial policies; and
- Recognition for each agency’s contribution.

#### **4.1.4 Progress on the 2002-2005 Plan**

The current Community Action Plan is the third such plan to be developed in Ottawa. Each plan builds on the successes and accomplishments, as well as outstanding gaps, of the one before. The Community Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Ottawa adopted for the 2002-2005 period had four main components. Progress in each of these areas is reflected in the accomplishments identified by the community and is summarized below.

**Component #1: Increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing.** The City is in the midst of developing a City Housing Strategy that includes affordable housing, and, through Action Ottawa and SCPI funding, created 318 new low-income units in the past three years. A more regulated rooming house sector now also means greater accuracy in identifying the number of rooming house units (1,930 rooms in 196 confirmed rooming houses).

**Component #2: Prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and assist people while they are homeless.** Accomplishments related to this component include creation of the community-based Housing Loss Prevention Network and an increase in tenant support workers. Housing search workers are now at every shelter assisting clients to find housing, and local priority rules for social housing give priority to the homeless. The Employment and Financial Assistance (EFA) Branch and Ottawa Community Housing Corporation have established a pilot project for early intervention on eviction to prevent housing loss by OW and ODSP clients. The Provincial Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is now funding the Inner City Health initiative. A review of domiciliary hostels was carried out to develop standards, improve maintenance and link with community resources to better serve clients. There has been increased activity of the outreach/street health network, including the Salvation Army van and an increase in employment initiatives for the homeless.

**Component #3: Achieve legislative and policy changes to end homelessness.** Advocacy on housing has met with some success, since the Province recently announced funding for Action Ottawa and increased funding for affordable housing is also expected from the federal government. Advocacy for affordable housing supply and supports has been done in conjunction with several provincial organizations, as well as the Alliance to End Homelessness. The Province amalgamated provincial homelessness funding programs.

**Component #4: Ensure a coordinated, comprehensive and accountable community response to homelessness.** Within City departments, there has been increased collaboration in working with clients to obtain and maintain appropriate housing, and there is also increased collaboration among community partners to better serve clients. The CCBT for homelessness was created to coordinate planning and training activities. The Alliance to End Homelessness continues to be an important support to the service system.

#### **4.1.5 Conclusion**

Informants both within and outside the homelessness services sector agree that the Ottawa community has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing the full range of needs among homeless individuals and families. It is clear that progress has been made at many points on the continuum of housing and support services.

## **4.2 Areas for Improvement within the Service System for Homelessness**

Wide ranging discussions about weaknesses or areas for improvement in the service system emerged during the interviews and focus groups for both the sector plans and this Community Action Plan. The themes which dominated these discussions can be broadly grouped into the following categories:

- Housing issues;
- Service issues;
- Information about services;
- Training and employment;
- Human and financial resources;
- Community, government and agency relations.

### **4.2.1 System Weaknesses and Areas for Improvement**

Individual sector reports provide significant detail on gaps in the system which are specific to one part of the continuum of housing and supports, or are related to meeting the needs of particular subsets of the population. The following discussion highlights themes which emerge through consideration of the system as a whole.

#### ***Housing Issues***

There is widespread consensus that the biggest need in Ottawa's homelessness service system is a greater supply of adequate and affordable housing available to house homeless and at-risk individuals and families. Of particular concern in Ottawa is:

- the lack of supportive housing and other housing and support options for homeless individuals and families;
- the lack of affordable housing available through rent supplements and social housing;
- inadequate housing options for youth and women;
- rooming houses where female residents feel unsafe and do not receive the level of support needed;
- a lack of capacity and financial commitment to develop affordable housing and the long timelines for developing housing.

‘What are the motivators for developers to build?’  
Agency Interview respondent

#### ***Service Issues***

Sector reports and service provider and community interviews identified a number of gaps in the services that are currently available for homeless clients. Gaps were noted in support services

available for particular segments of the homeless population, such as Aboriginals, families, women, individuals with addictions, and Francophones, including immigrants within the Francophone population. A related issue is that services need to be sensitive to a variety of cultural and linguistic issues, including having services available in French.

A critical issue now is the need for more addictions services, including more medical detox services, along with support for people from the street to obtain treatment and transitional housing. An expansion in addictions services would be within a framework that distinguishes between those who can benefit from treatment options versus those who need a harm reduction environment. Injection drug users also need a safe place to use. Generally speaking, homeless people also need greater access to primary health care.

Concerns about a lack of coordination among services, some duplication in programs and some fragmentation were also noted. Additionally, concern was expressed that faith organizations operating services from a set of religious beliefs can end up excluding segments of the homeless

‘Need to better coordinate the system, especially from the perspective of the homeless person. There are so many organizations involved.’

Broader Community Interviews

population. Reference was specifically made to the way in which lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered individuals can find it difficult to access appropriate services through some faith based emergency services. This group was identified as one that does not always have the same understanding, support or access to homelessness services.

### ***Information about Services***

The sector reports and the interviews revealed some community concerns with a lack of information about services. While some agencies feel very well connected and well known, others do not. Some agencies report not knowing what services are provided where, and others report receiving inappropriate referrals, while others point out that incorrect information is circulating about the services they offer.

### ***Training and Employment***

The need for more employment and training opportunities was raised by homeless individuals themselves as well as agency and community representatives interviewed as part of the Community Action Plan research. Specific mention was made of initiatives such as Rideau Street Youth Enterprises or Operation Go-Home, along with links to education.

‘People need opportunities not just services’

Broader Community interview

### ***Human and Financial Resources***

Various human resources issues were highlighted as weaknesses of the system and areas for improvement. Some agencies are understaffed and poor staff/client ratios are a barrier to providing the desired level of service. Staff turnover can be high in some agencies and can significantly undermine efforts to coordinate services within the sector. For smaller agencies, it can be very expensive to provide training for staff. Training needs include how to

‘The lack of stable funding is outrageous!’

Private sector respondent in  
Broader Community Interviews

‘The challenge is maintaining the system in the context of non-sustainable funding’

Broader Community Interviews

create rapport with clients; crisis intervention; cultural sensitivity; mental health and addictions issues; and a deeper understanding of the target populations being served.

A lack of financial resources was flagged as a system weakness. A lack of funding to increase the supply of affordable permanent housing and inadequate or unstable funding for support services were specifically mentioned. Uncertainty about the sustainability of programs inhibits planning for the future.

### ***Community, Government and Agency Relations***

While cooperation and collaboration within the homelessness system were noted as strengths, linkages with other sectors were raised as areas for improvement. The following are examples of some of the issues raised:

- Housing providers and advocates for the homeless do not always have a common view of success, and do not always work together.
- There is a disconnection and lack of communication between sectors (e.g. between services for the homeless and services for those with developmental disabilities). There are silos of services.
- Not all agencies are collaborating well; the linkages between agencies are too informal, and linkages between agencies and the three levels of government are weak.
  - Data collection on homelessness and shelter usage is uneven between agencies. This makes it impossible to fully understand the magnitude of the homelessness problem.
- People who have experienced homelessness need to have a greater role in creating solutions.
- There is a lack of support from the private sector and the general public.
- No one outside of the sector is championing the issue.
- More advocacy is needed with senior levels of government (e.g. need to lobby the province to fund more mental health and addictions services).

‘Because the City articulated an agenda and got SCPI money, this took the edge off and people no longer see homelessness as a crisis. It really only scratched the surface.’

From Broader Community interviews

### **4.2.2 Conclusion**

The community, through sector reports, interviews, focus groups and a community consultation day, articulated a number of gaps in Ottawa’s service system for the homeless. These gaps help set the context for the key results and actions which are proposed to guide the system over the next three years.

## **5. Vision, Mission and Principles**

Included in interviews with service providers and the broader community were questions designed to gauge reactions to the vision, mission and principles of the existing Community Action Plan on Homelessness. For the most part, these were strongly supported, but many respondents proposed changes to make them stronger, more clear and succinct, with a focus on people and an emphasis on prevention. A revised vision, mission and principles was then discussed at the Community Consultation and was further refined. Below are the proposed vision, mission and principles to guide implementation of the new Community Action Plan on Homelessness for Ottawa:

## **Vision: A City Without Homelessness**

**Mission:** That the community of Ottawa offers a coordinated and complete system of housing options, supports and opportunities, to:

- Prevent people from becoming homeless
- Ensure people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have a full range of affordable housing options and appropriate supports
- Support people when they are homeless
- Create opportunities for people to move out of homelessness
- Advocate for public investment in long-term solutions to homelessness.

### **Principles:**

We believe in:

1. Inclusive and respectful client-centered services.
2. Choice of a full range of housing and support options.
3. Investment in long-term solutions that help people achieve their full potential, while respecting individual diversity.
4. Sustained, predictable system funding.
5. Efficient, effective and responsible use of public funds.
6. Building public support and political will to prevent and end homelessness.
7. Shared ownership of the community action plan, fostered through collaborative planning and transparent and inclusive processes.
8. Involving homeless people in finding solutions to homelessness.
9. Multi-sector partnerships, based on shared understanding of issues, values and goals.
10. Continuous service improvement, through ongoing evaluation, innovation and research.

## **6. Key Results Areas**

For each of the five elements of the Mission Statement proposed for the Community Action Plan, key results and specific actions have been developed. In addition, a sixth key result area identifies actions proposed to cover the service system for homelessness as a whole.

### **6.1 Key Result Area 1: Prevent People from Becoming Homeless**

#### **6.1.1 Current Status**

Since the inception of Ottawa's first Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, prevention has been a key feature. In 1999, the approved Plan identified that "Prevention strategies are required immediately to stop the increase of the number of persons who are homeless."

Prevention strategies can include:

- linking people at risk of homelessness with mainstream programs available (income assistance, subsidized housing, mental health services and addictions treatment),
- providing one-time or short-term rental assistance, legal assistance, direct payment or trusteeship arrangements and housing placement services,
- ensuring people who are discharged from corrections facilities, psychiatric hospitals, foster care or treatment facilities have a place to go other than the street or emergency shelter;
- developing in-school homeless prevention plans and focusing on populations most at risk, including the mentally ill, foster and street-involved youth, substance users and women and children;
- helping people obtain the skills and resources they need to remain in current housing;
- providing early intervention for at-risk populations through enhanced information and ready access to prevention resources;
- providing people with information and legal support or advocacy to ensure their rights are protected in an eviction process.<sup>3</sup>

Prevention initiatives can be very cost-effective ways of addressing homelessness. A research study undertaken for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation<sup>4</sup> examined the cost-effectiveness of eviction prevention programs. It concluded that the costs of eviction are substantial, for landlords, for tenants and for taxpayers and generally, that preventing evictions costs far less than the costs of eviction incurred by tenants and landlords. Key success factors identified in this study for preventing evictions include direct outreach, early intervention and offering multiple and complementary services.

In Ottawa, community agencies have been involved in providing the majority of prevention services. In 2003, the City of Ottawa allocated provincial funding to create a Housing Loss Prevention Network that brings together six separate housing advocacy and community health and resource centres to coordinate housing loss prevention services across the city.

### **6.1.2 Issues Identified**

An evaluation of the Housing Loss Prevention Network (HLPN) was conducted as one of the inputs to this Community Action Plan. The evaluation concluded that the HLPN benefits the clients it serves as well as the City of Ottawa, but that there are opportunities for improvement. Included among those are recommendations to:

- create a broader housing loss prevention network, consisting of all agencies funded to provide services under this rubric
- fund training for housing loss prevention staff
- provide a single access number so residents can find the appropriate service
- improve administrative arrangements
- provide longer-term, more stable funding
- increase outreach to tenants in at-risk communities

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from “Summary Highlights of Other Plans”, Homeless Action Plan, Draft, October 2004, City of Vancouver.

<sup>4</sup> Acacia Consulting, “Cost Effectiveness of Eviction Prevention Programs” prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, March 2005.

- build and maintain linkages between housing loss prevention services, social housing providers and outplacement workers in other institutions
- focus on those at most imminent risk of losing housing.

Key informants through the Community Action Plan consultation identified prevention as a well-functioning aspect of Ottawa’s existing service system for homelessness. Most respondents indicated that more financial counselling, legal and advocacy support and housing search assistance would be beneficial to the system, but these were rarely identified as the highest priority options for this Community Action Plan. A risk identified for the HLPN is that more than 60% of its current funding comes through the federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), which is scheduled to terminate in March 2006.

One specific issue, identified by a number of key informants in the broader community, is the relationship between housing loss prevention agencies and housing providers. Housing loss prevention advocates and social assistance staff of the City work judiciously to prevent tenants from being evicted. Housing providers, including non-profit and cooperative housing groups, as well as private landlords, need to ensure the economic and social viability of their housing communities. These two perspectives occasionally conflict. As one respondent pointed out, “A client incurs rent arrears and welfare pays them off. The client then goes on Rent Direct. After a period of time, the client cancels Rent Direct and goes into arrears again. Welfare then pays off the arrears and the cycle continues.” With this type of pattern, housing providers incur significant costs in rental arrears, bad debts and administrative expenses involved in pursuing evictions. Homeless people themselves become involved in a revolving door without addressing the fundamental causes leading to their tenancy problems.

This situation is not unique to Ottawa. (See Inspiring Initiatives: Homelessness Prevention). Within the City of Ottawa, improved linkages between the Employment and Financial Assistance (EFA) Branch and Ottawa Community Housing Corporation have begun to address the issue. Involvement of the Housing Loss Prevention Network and the Ottawa Social Housing Network, as well as interested private sector landlords, would expand the potential for reducing evictions without creating unlivable housing communities or incurring unreasonable costs associated with the eviction process.

**Inspiring Initiatives: Homelessness Prevention**

In Peel Region, Ontario Works and Peel Living have implemented an eviction prevention program. The goals are:

1. Prevent eviction due to rent arrears or behavioural issues
2. Reduce administrative costs of the housing provider
3. Reduce rent arrears
4. Reduce costs related to eviction proceedings.

*See Annex 2 for more detail.*

A second issue identified in the Newcomers sector report is the need for improved information to prevent homelessness, provided in the right time and place. On arrival, newcomers need information about local services, housing availability and other resources that would assist them in accessing and retaining housing. This information should be available right at the airport, in communities and agencies where newcomers are received and through outreach to informal networks.

Improvements to homelessness prevention were also identified through the community consultation. Specifically, there were several suggestions to improve training and orientation on various topics related to housing and eviction. The need for training and information was identified for staff working in these areas, as well as for tenants themselves.

Finally, early intervention is important for the long-term prevention of homelessness. Participants at the community consultation identified the need for links to the education system and to the public generally through innovative communications vehicles. Participants identified as an example a successful street theatre for HIV awareness produced by the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health. It was proposed that use of innovative communication forms could help reach different audiences and provide information that would ultimately help to prevent homelessness and its precipitating causes.

### **6.1.3 Proposed Actions**

1a. All agencies providing community-based housing loss prevention services and the City of Ottawa Housing Branch develop an action plan to implement the recommendations from the Housing Loss Prevention Network evaluation. This would include:

- Planning for continuation of services after federal funding ends in March 2006;
- Increased coordination with agencies serving newcomers to ensure information is provided on housing and related services in ways that are timely, accessible and culturally and linguistically sensitive;
- Increased coordination of training for frontline workers, managers and tenants about the Tenant Protection Act, the Social Housing Reform Act, eviction procedures, the Housing Registry and other relevant information;
- Development and implementation of training in schools and communities to provide information to populations at risk of homelessness using innovative techniques such as community or street theatre.

1b. All agencies providing on-site housing loss prevention services, through tenant support, work with the City of Ottawa and other stakeholder funders to determine geographical and service priorities.

1c. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch and the HLPN initiate an outreach program with social housing providers and interested landlords to inform the housing sector about the HLPN's services, and to improve ways to collaborate and clarify roles regarding tenants at risk.

1d. The Employment and Financial Assistance (EFA) Branch of the City of Ottawa work with the Ottawa Social Housing Network to develop a protocol to share information about specific tenants at risk of eviction.

### **6.1.4 Successful Outcomes**

A well-coordinated network prevents people from losing their housing, helps people access housing and promotes cohesive and viable housing communities.

## 6.2 Key Result Area 2: Ensure people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have a full range of affordable housing options and appropriate supports

### 6.2.1. Current Status

Homelessness is not just about housing, but housing is critical to preventing and resolving it. The lack of affordable housing places a wide range of families and individuals at risk of homelessness, where they are required to pay substantial portions of their income for housing costs and have little left over for other necessities. Creating more affordable housing is a key

‘House people and make support services available if needed, but don’t house everyone who needs support in the same building’

Agency interview

solution. In fact, some approaches to homelessness, particularly in the U.S., are based on a “housing first” model to help people exit homelessness by placing them in permanent housing and then linking them to needed services. The housing first approach assumes

that the factors that contributed to homelessness can best be remedied once the individual or family is housed.

Whether it is through a “housing first” approach or ensuring access to a range of housing options, ensuring an adequate supply of affordable and supportive housing is critical to this Community Action Plan.

In Ottawa today, there is a full continuum of housing types, from emergency shelters to private market ownership and rental housing, as shown in the Continuum in Annex One. However, as noted in Section 3, there are serious gaps in the availability of housing that is affordable, and so few options exist for people with limited income or a requirement for specialized support services.

‘If the number of shelter beds stays the same, we need more supportive housing’

Agency interview

In order to access supportive housing or social housing in Ottawa, homeless people have two potential avenues. First, they may apply through the Housing Registry for access to the over 25,000 existing social and affordable housing units in Ottawa that include Ottawa Community Housing Corporation, non-profit and cooperative housing providers, private sector rent supplements and units funded through Action Ottawa. Homeless applicants have priority for every tenth social housing unit that becomes available. Currently on Ottawa’s Social Housing Registry, there are 112 applicants who are identified as homeless.

Second, homeless people who need support services can apply to the Supportive Housing Waiting List. Currently, there are 955 supportive housing units available in Ottawa through a variety of agencies, including some that are provided through block leases in non-profit housing. The waiting list for supportive housing in Ottawa includes 2000 applicants, although this waiting list is not centralized and may include some duplication.

Providing access to new affordable housing, either through building or acquiring new social housing, retaining existing affordable rental housing, providing rent supplements/housing allowances and developing affordable homeownership, also prevents homelessness by increasing options for those people who are on the waiting list or are in core housing need. Currently in

Ottawa there are more than 11,500 households on the social housing waiting list (or 11,000 renter households in core housing need spending more than 50% of their income for shelter—mostly the same people.) These households are at risk of homelessness, particularly if more options for affordable housing are not created.

The Panel Study on Homelessness identified that 56% of the homeless people they interviewed were primarily “economically disadvantaged” and their primary needs were greater access to stable housing and increased income<sup>5</sup>. Many homeless people, however, require extensive support services to enable them to successfully access and retain housing. These services include access to physical and mental health, addictions, life skills, occupational and financial services that can be provided either through on-site supports or through portable support services. Whether people are housed in existing social housing, on the private market or in specially-created supportive or social housing, it is critical that support services be funded in order to ensure that people can retain housing and integrate successfully into the community. (See Inspiring Initiatives: Supportive Housing)

### **Inspiring Initiatives: Supportive Housing**

In Vancouver, the **Portland Hotel Society** with 86 units and onsite services successfully houses and supports individuals with serious mental illness and one or more addictions using a harm reduction approach.

In Hamilton, **Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes** also embraces a harm reduction philosophy, providing 181 units of permanent housing and supports through the HOMES program to individuals with a history of homelessness and mental illness, including those with addictions and or developmental disabilities.

*See Annex 3 for more detail.*

### **6.2.2 Issues Identified**

Key informants to the Community Action Plan process identified the need for more affordable housing as a major priority. Creation of more supportive housing was the highest-ranked priority for the community action plan overall and was the priority ranked highest in the broader community interviews. Creating more social housing was ranked third in importance among the broader community and rent supplements were top-ranked amongst service providers.

Key informants were asked to rate the need for the full range of potential housing options for homeless people: Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing, Supportive Housing, Social Housing, Rooming Houses, Private Market Rent Supplements and Affordable Homeownership. Of all these options, a majority of respondents indicated they would not want to see more emergency shelter beds or more rooming houses created. The primary reason for not wanting more shelter beds was the respondents’ preference for a focus on prevention and on permanent housing. With respect to rooming houses, concerns were cited with safety, inadequacy in terms of space and setting and the lack of support services. For all other housing options, the majority of respondents in interviews expressed the need for more or much more of these facilities. These views are reflected in the actions proposed in the Community Action Plan.

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<sup>5</sup> “Experiencing Homelessness: The First Report Card on Homelessness in Ottawa, 2005”, page 3, available at [www.unitedway@ottawa.ca](http://www.unitedway@ottawa.ca).

Many informants expressed strongly their interest in specific targets for additional new housing units, although there was recognition that responding to the need for more social and supportive housing would require engagement on the part of the federal and provincial governments, in addition to the on-going commitment of the City of Ottawa.

Identifying specific targets for additional housing should take into account need, capacity in the system and available funding sources. Need for housing can

‘Show me the money.’  
‘We need a concrete list of demands for all three levels of government.’  
‘BANG: Get it (housing) out there!’  
Broader Community interviews

be approximated by the numbers of households on the waiting lists for social housing and supportive housing. As described above, the number of households on the social housing waiting list identified as homeless is currently listed as 112. The total waiting list for social housing, including many people at risk of homelessness, numbers over 11,500 households. The number of people on the list for supportive housing is 2000.

All service provider respondents and two-thirds of respondents from the broader community identified “capacity to develop affordable housing” as one of the most effective ways to address homelessness in Ottawa. Some respondents noted that it is not necessary for all agencies to have this capacity, but rather that it be available within the community generally. Several existing social housing providers and a number of private and social housing developers have experience developing housing under capital grant programs that are available now. The creation of partnerships between these housing experts and agencies who have expertise in providing support services to the homeless was identified as an effective way to realize the development of more supportive housing.

‘More affordable housing!’ ‘More rent-geared-to-income housing! It doesn’t matter what form it’s in.’ ‘But don’t make it look like subsidized housing.’  
Youth focus group participants

Key informants also identified that there are potential opportunities for creating more affordable and supportive housing that present themselves in Ottawa now. Federal and provincial housing ministers announced two funding streams as the Wave 1 allocation for Ottawa under the 2005

‘Need tangible targets now that some money might be available.’  
‘Ottawa is well-positioned to take advantage of new federal money.’  
Broader Community interviews

Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement. One component of the funding will provide capital grants for 305 new affordable housing units. A second will make available funding for 400 rent supplements/housing allowances in the private sector. Another potential opportunity will arise, should the federal government extend the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), as has been promised by federal Housing Minister Fontana, or introduce additional capital grants for affordable housing. More

federal funds may provide capital for the creation of additional supportive and transitional housing units.

Rent supplements continue to be a contentious issue in Ottawa. In particular, some key informants expressed concerns with the recent program announcement because it provides funding only for a five-year period. However, others noted that if funding is not used in Ottawa

for these 400 units, it will be re-allocated to other communities. Innovative approaches to ensuring that these rent supplements are used in Ottawa and that they meet the needs of homeless people without creating any long-term liabilities need to be developed. For example, these rent supplements could be specifically targeted to victims of violence or newcomers who may have a short-term need for assistance. Alternatively, they could be made available to people at risk of homelessness who are on the social housing waiting list to provide them with some relief while they are waiting for access to permanent housing. (See Inspiring Initiatives: Rent Supplements).

### **Inspiring Initiatives: Rent Supplements**

Are rent supplements cost effective? Check out the results of the Emergency Homelessness Pilot Project in Toronto.

*See Annex 4.*

With respect to transitional housing, most interview respondents expressed the need for more, although some had reservations about this housing form. Because of its short-term nature, some respondents felt that the real need was for long-term supportive housing and that transitional housing often resulted in people being back in shelters after a period of time. However, others indicated that there is a need for transitional housing in particular circumstances, to assist people in transitioning from abusive situations, incarceration, drug treatment facilities and other temporary situations, to on-going permanent housing. As well, the Newcomers report identified the need for short-term temporary accommodation to help new immigrants and refugees upon their arrival in the country.

### **Inspiring Initiatives: Affordable Homeownership.**

Can homeownership be a viable option for the homeless? See the experience of other communities and an Ottawa development in *Annex 5*

A majority of interview respondents also supported more access to affordable homeownership as an option, although again some doubts were expressed. Some felt that this was not an option for many homeless clients, although others

indicated that it could be a viable solution for some who are at risk of homelessness or for those currently in social housing, thus freeing up an available social housing unit for someone on the social housing waiting list. Generally it was agreed that little public money should be spent on this option. Minimal City support, as was provided for CAHDCO (See Annex 5), would be sufficient to enable some additional affordable homeownership initiatives to be developed and have an indirect impact on alleviating homelessness.

Community stakeholders have emphasized that the provision of capital funding in the absence of on-going operational funding, both for housing and especially for support services, is less than optimal. However, with the potential for creating new housing through additional funding sources identified above, strong petitions should be made to the Province for related operational funding that can ensure appropriate support services are provided and that housing created addresses the needs of the homeless community.

The availability of support services and adequate funding to ensure proper maintenance, safety and security in existing social housing was also identified as a key need through the community consultation. Social housing providers have pointed out that integrating homeless people into existing social housing has not been seamless and has in some instances created significant

problems resulting in the loss of housing for some who were housed through the local priority rules. Without appropriate portable supports for people with specific service needs, integrating them, either in social housing or in private market rental housing with rent supplements, will encounter difficulties. As well, providing adequate funding for physical maintenance, safety and security in social housing is also critical.

### **6.2.3 Proposed Actions**

2a. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch, in conjunction with the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and other housing advocates, vigorously pursue additional, on-going funding for supportive and supported housing, from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), with a goal of creating 200 additional units of supportive or supported housing annually over the next ten years.

2b. Homelessness service agencies that wish to create new supportive or supported housing link with private developers and social housing providers to develop housing proposals in partnership.

2c. The City of Ottawa, through Action Ottawa and the federal-provincial Affordable Housing Initiative, allocate 10% of new non-profit and co-operative housing to meet the needs of those families and individuals on the social housing waiting list who are identified as homeless, with a goal of providing 100 such units annually, along with appropriate portable support services funded by the Province.

2d. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch ensure full use of available provincial funding for housing allowances/rent supplements (400 units in 2005-2006), including implementing a pilot program to house families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in private apartments, with appropriate portable support services for these tenants funded by the Province.

2e. The City of Ottawa, MCSS and MOHLTC fund the creation of 50 units of transitional housing annually, including temporary accommodation for newcomers.

2f. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch support additional affordable homeownership developments (based on the CAHDCO model), targeted to those at risk of homelessness or in social housing.

2g. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch, Ottawa Social Housing Network, MCSS, MOHLTC, mental health and addictions agencies and homelessness service providers determine necessary support services, and MCSS and MOHLTC fund these requirements to better stabilize and integrate homeless individuals and families into existing social housing and in new affordable housing created through Action Ottawa and the Affordable Housing Initiative.

2h. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch fund outreach services that help clients move directly from the street to transitional or long-term housing.

### 6.2.4 Successful Outcomes

Additional housing options for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are funded through on-going commitments by the federal and provincial governments, and adequate support services are provided to stabilize existing social housing communities.

## 6.3 Key Result Area 3: Support people when they are homeless.

### 6.3.1 Current Status

Despite all efforts at prevention and creating housing options, there continue to be people who are chronically homeless and who require appropriate levels of support. The Panel Study on Homelessness identified approximately 25% of homeless people who report high levels of substance use problems and 19% who report high levels of mental health problems and chronic health conditions.

Ottawa has a strong network of service providers who provide shelter, meals and support services, including health care, to those who are chronically homeless. A total of 893 beds are available in emergency shelters, the majority of which are either for mixed use or for single adult males. The Youth Services Bureau has recently been funded to create two new shelter/transitional housing facilities for young men and for young women, each of which would contain 12 shelter beds, 12 transitional housing units and 6 “swing” units that could be used either as additional shelter space or for transitional housing.

### 6.3.2 Issues Identified

Apart from creating additional shelter space for youth, as currently approved, the majority of key informants indicated that more emergency shelter beds are not what is needed in Ottawa. Rather, permanent housing with appropriate support services is the preferred model. Critical, though, to the success of this approach is that necessary support services be funded, that they be readily accessible to the homeless and that they be appropriate.

‘I’ve lived in the motel and then the Y and then here. My kids and I have moved seven times in three months. My daughter says, “Is this my house?” I say, “This is where we’re staying right now.”’  
Family shelter resident

Of all potential housing and support options for the homeless, key informants identified the need for increased mental health services as the number two priority for this Community Action Plan (second only to supportive housing) and the need for increased addictions services as their third priority. At the same time, several respondents indicated that there need to be changes in focus for both mental health and addictions services. Opinions varied on what the new directions in mental health services should be. Community and outreach services, neighbourhood based and culturally sensitive, increased availability of service for newcomers and prevention work with both adults and children, were all mentioned as possible areas for increased focus. With respect to addictions, specific mention was made of the need for different services, especially those with a harm reduction approach, and addiction services for youth were described as “woefully under-resourced”.

The Sector Plans for Single Homeless Men and Single Homeless Women identified needs for improvements in a number of areas. The Women’s Plan referenced the need for strengthened support services to women, including more housing support workers, more female mental health and addiction workers and abuse counselors, and timely access to health care specific to

women's issues. The Men's plan identified the need for more harm reduction approaches for people with addictions or concurrent disorders. As well, it called for improvements to the mental health system to respond to issues identified through agency interviews, including lack of follow-up with clients, inappropriate referrals and limited case management capacity.

The Sector Plan for Single Homeless Men also proposed that a portion of the emergency shelter stock be converted to supportive permanent housing for the chronically homeless, in particular for those chronically homeless men who are unlikely ever to have the resources to live independently. Participants at the community consultation generally supported this idea and noted that shelters are already working towards this goal. Nevertheless participants agreed that a needs assessment and a costing analysis would help to determine if this approach is appropriate. Some also suggested that a review of effectiveness of different approaches should be undertaken to determine if integrating chronically homeless people in the broader community is a preferred option to creating supportive housing in a shelter environment.

Two opportunities to improve the availability of mental health and addictions services for the homeless within the Ottawa environment were identified by key informants. One is the creation of the Local Health Integration Network that is intended to integrate health care at a local level and consolidate planning, system integration and service coordination, funding allocation, and evaluation of performance. The first of these functions that the LHINs will be expected to take on will be integrated health system planning, to help inform and shape the design and execution of the other functions.

A second recent development is that City of Ottawa Council (May 11, 2005) approved a motion brought forward by Councillor Janet Stavinga calling for development of an integrated City of Ottawa drug strategy. Staff of the Community and Protective Services Department are preparing Terms of Reference for a working group that they anticipate will involve multiple partners from the public, private and health and social services sector.

Both Vancouver and Toronto have recently developed comprehensive drug strategies (See Inspiring Initiatives: Four Pillars Drug Strategy). This action on the part of City Council creates an opportunity to ensure that the strategy developed in Ottawa takes into account specific issues for the homeless. In order to do so, it is essential that direct service providers for the homeless, as well as people who have experienced homelessness themselves, are well-represented on the working group to be created. Community stakeholders have also specifically identified that homeless women, street-involved youth and the Aboriginal population need to be appropriately involved with this working group.

**Inspiring Initiatives: Four Pillars Drug Strategy**

Vancouver's drug strategy is about prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement, with the goal of reducing harm in the community.

Who's involved? Health agencies, police, school board, local and provincial government, community college, business community and arts organizations.

*See Annex 6 for more detail.*

**6.3.3 Proposed Actions**

3a. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch and the Alliance to End Homelessness ensure that development of the City of Ottawa's drug strategy includes:

- A focus on homeless individuals and families;
- A full spectrum of responses, including emphasis on prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement;
- Adequate representation on the working group from service providers working with the homeless and from people who have experienced homelessness.

3b. The City of Ottawa, working with the Alliance to End Homelessness, advocate with the Champlain Local Health Integration Network and the MOHLTC for increased funding for mental health and addictions services that:

- respond to the specific needs of homeless people,
- are community-based and client-centred,
- include harm reduction approaches and a focus on permanent housing.

3c. Community addictions and mental health agencies work with service providers for homeless men and women to jointly develop a plan for integrated service delivery to the homeless.

3d. Service providers working with homeless women develop, in conjunction with health care providers, a full spectrum of health care options for homeless women, with special consideration for Aboriginal women and newcomers.

3e. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch, in consultation with emergency shelter operators, conduct a feasibility study for conversion of some existing shelter space to transitional or supportive housing for individuals and families who are chronically homeless.

#### **6.3.4 Successful Outcomes**

Development of a comprehensive drug strategy is appropriate to homeless and at-risk individuals; an accessible range of physical and mental health care services are available for homeless and at-risk populations; and feasibility of converting shelter space to permanent, supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals is assessed.

### **6.4 Key Result Area 4: Create opportunities for people to move out of homelessness**

#### **6.4.1 Current Status**

More affordable housing and increased mental health and addictions services are the most critical issues in Ottawa for addressing homelessness. Yet, for many people who are homeless, creating opportunities for self-sufficiency and independence are desired and attainable objectives. In order for them to realize these choices, they need access to resources that can assist them in confronting issues that may have led to their homelessness in the first place and that can help them move on. Resources can include counselling, life skills training, home management services, return to formal education, employment supports and childcare.

A number of organizations in Ottawa currently provide counselling, training, supports for life skills, employment supports and job placements. These services are provided through the City's Employment and Financial Assistance Centres, and through community-based organizations, including drop-in centres and organizations such as Rideau Street Youth Enterprises (RSYE) and Causeway that specialize in social enterprise. Ottawa has some successful community economic development activities that serve as good examples for how increased opportunities for homeless

people can be developed. For example, Krackers Katering, operating under the auspices of Causeway Work Centre, employs persons with severe and persistent mental illness to operate a full catering service, helping to develop the skills and confidence necessary to break the cycle of isolation, poverty and unemployment. The Roasted Cherry Coffee House is a youth entrepreneurial program of New Beginnings for Youth that employs youth to run and manage the business, developing and enhancing their entrepreneurial skills.

Shelters, housing search agencies and day programs for the homeless also make available services to assist people to move out of homelessness. All shelters have housing support workers to help people find and maintain appropriate housing. Housing search agencies support those who are homeless, but not living in emergency shelters.

### 6.4.2 Issues Identified

Key informants in our interviews made multiple mentions of the need for more employment opportunities similar to those provided by Causeway, RSYE or Operation Go-Home, along with links to education. Most service provider respondents favoured having increased employment and training assistance over the coming three years, and particularly with greater flexibility.

‘You hear of people wanting to train for the trades but there often isn’t support for that. Or sometimes the individual is forced to train when they really aren’t ready and then the client burns bridges so the opportunity is not there when she/he needs it.’

Agency interview

Most respondents in the broader community interviews also favoured increased employment and training assistance to help address homelessness. Respondents noted that some employment and training programs had disappeared, and they also questioned whether existing programs are readily accessible to a homeless person, given the complexity of issues that they face in addition to employment needs.

The vast majority of respondents in both service provider and broader community interviews also supported expanded services in the area of life management and social supports. Respondents noted how many agencies are currently under funded and under staffed for this type of service. Women, newcomers, and disabled individuals were specifically mentioned as needing greater access to this type of service. Respondents mentioned the need for practical daily living supports, services provided on a long-term basis and access to community kitchens.

In both the youth and family focus groups, opportunities for training and jobs were identified as key priorities. Youth participants noted difficulties with short-term subsidized job placements – as soon as the subsidy ends, the job disappears. As well,

‘There’s job training and placement programs, but once the employers are paying your whole salary they fire you.’

Youth focus group participant

‘Some people need things to do. I have no reason to wake up in the morning. No reason at all. There is no place to do anything. I can’t paint. I can’t read. I’m going to school next week and I’m looking forward to going out every day.’

Family Shelter resident

programs such as Operation Go-Home were praised for their “Goals, Empowerment, Training” program that supports lifeskills development and resume building, but youth noted that only 12 people can participate in the program at a time. Included in their ideas for improving the system for the homeless was the creation of a city-sponsored temporary agency

with a wide variety of jobs, or a requirement that every business with more than a certain number of employees reserve at least one spot for temp people.

Residents in the family shelter too identified a lack of training and activities for adults as gaps to be addressed. The children's program was very well received, but suggestions were made to incorporate training in budgeting, parenting or other life skills as activities for adults during the time they were staying at the shelter.

'Put money into apprenticeships, job training and lifeskills training. Work with local businesses. Right now programs are a dead-end because businesses don't hire and keep youth on staff.'

### **Inspiring Initiatives: Social Enterprises**

Be inspired by:

- A courier company in Toronto employing homeless youth in shelters and equipping them to work as bicycle couriers
- A catering and food services company employing at-risk youth and individuals experiencing long term unemployment and training them in cooking and service
- A renovations company in Winnipeg creating jobs in the construction industry for low income inner city residents including some who have been long time recipients of social assistance.

*See Annex 7 for more detail.*

The review of Services for the Aboriginal Homeless in Ottawa specifically recommended that partnerships be created with government, business, labour, academic institutions, and community development entities to increase employment opportunities for the Aboriginal homeless and those at risk of homelessness. In addition, it proposed expanding the Odawa Native Friendship Centre's alternate high school program to increase opportunities for Aboriginal youth in the workplace.

In other communities, significant efforts have been made to link homeless people with

businesses and particularly through community economic development. (See Inspiring Initiatives: Social Enterprises and Inspiring Initiatives : Business Development and Financing).

### **Inspiring Initiatives: Business Development and Financing**

Social Capital Partners nurture the development of social enterprises through assistance with strategy, social mission planning, business development, and finance.

The Toronto Enterprise Fund provides multi-year funding for viable social enterprises.

*See Annex 8 for more detail.*

## **6.4.3 Proposed Actions**

4a. The City of Ottawa continue to support community-based employment creation initiatives for homeless and vulnerable populations and co-ordinate them with existing services.

4b .The EFA Branch of the City of Ottawa work with community homelessness agencies to pilot workshops and an employment supports program that meet the needs of the homeless community.

4c. The City of Ottawa pursue funding opportunities for employment supports through the federal and provincial governments, and particularly to support community economic development initiatives.

4d. Homelessness funders, such as the United Way, the Community Foundation or the City of Ottawa, support an assessment within the homeless community of interest in and need for educational upgrading, skill development, life skills training, apprenticeships and job training.

4e. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch fund more housing support workers to help homeless individuals and families find and maintain appropriate housing, with sensitivity to the particular needs of Aboriginals and newcomers.

#### **6.4.4 Successful Outcomes**

Homeless people interested and able to pursue integration into the community and increased self-sufficiency are given opportunities for permanent housing, additional education, training and employment, supported by the broad community including the business sector.

### **6.5 Key Result Area 5: Advocate for Public Investment in Long-Term Solutions to Homelessness**

#### **6.5.1 Current Status**

Critical to preventing homelessness is the need to address the fundamental causes that have led to its increase over the past decade. While there is no clear one cause, homelessness experts tend to agree that the following key components need to be in place:

- an increased supply of affordable housing
- adequate incomes, through social assistance, disability support and minimum wage policies so that people can pay for necessities such as food, clothing and shelter
- necessary health and social services for people with disabilities or health and addictions issues.

In Ottawa, many of these components require financial, policy or legislative change on the part of senior governments and they all require a commitment of public resources in these areas. Obtaining political commitment is linked intricately to broadening public support and can be assisted through awareness raising and positive media coverage.

‘Do we think the Minister of Finance even cares about us?’ ‘We’re just statistics at the end of the line.’ ‘Why are they making it so hard?’

Family shelter residents

For many years, the Alliance to End Homelessness has been an effective advocate for the homeless in Ottawa. Within the last year, the Alliance’s Report Card on Homelessness in Ottawa and its Community Forum on Homelessness have been particularly successful. The Alliance is a coalition of community stakeholders committed to working collaboratively to eliminate homelessness by gaining a better understanding of homelessness and developing and implementing strategies to end it. The coalition includes the voice of the homeless, service providers and housing providers. Many community stakeholders work actively on the Alliance’s Research and Evaluation Working Group, its Public Awareness Working Group and its

Leadership Training Working Group (for those who are or have been homeless or at risk of homelessness).

Ottawa’s Community Foundation has also played a role in addressing homelessness. The Community Foundation has two funds that have been used for homelessness: One is the Alex Munter Foundation that earmarks its grants to programs and services that help prevent homelessness, supporting front-line agencies that try to stop waiting lists from growing. The second is a Foundation for the Homeless that was established as an endowed fund and for which grants are given twice a year to registered charities, as determined by the Community Foundation Grants Committee.

### 6.5.2 Issues Identified

Discussions with key informants in the broad community identified the need for “high profile champions and leaders” as one strategy for effectively addressing homelessness. In fact, among interview respondents from the community at large, this strategy was mentioned by the majority of respondents and was ranked third among the potential responses given. (Interestingly, among service provider respondents, only one listed this strategy as an effective way to address homelessness.)

The Sector Plan for Single Homeless Men recommended that a local “blue ribbon panel” be created to champion the cause of preventing and reducing homelessness in Ottawa. They propose that membership would include highly influential leaders with representation from politics, business, government, health, poverty groups, Aboriginal community and the media, and that an excellent model for this is the “Success By Six” Council of Partners.

Input from the community consultation supported the need for a “table of champions,” involving high profile people that would serve as key players in advocacy and fundraising. These “champions” would not necessarily be expert in dealing with homelessness, but would be passionate about ending it. Participants identified several practical issues, including how to support and coordinate the group, determine accountability and membership, and define relationships with existing advocates, such as the Alliance to End Homelessness.

Other cities have used high-profile events and community leaders to raise awareness of homelessness, as well as to raise funds that can be used for homelessness responses. (See Inspiring Initiatives: Broader Community Involvement).

Most sector plans identify the need for advocacy in a range of areas:

- The HLPN Evaluation recommends increased advocacy to increase the supply of affordable housing, to amend or remove legislation that contributes to the decline in supply, and to amend policies and programs to contribute to higher incomes for those on assistance or on low wages.

### **Inspiring Initiatives: Broader Community Involvement**

Community mobilizing in Vancouver’s downtown east side since 1999 has focussed on ‘crime prevention through social development.’

High profile leaders in Calgary raise \$1 million a year to provide capital funding for housing.

In Toronto, stakeholders collaborated to provide 400 housing allowances to tenants on the social housing waiting list, some of whom were paying over 50 percent of their income towards housing costs.

*See Annex 9 for more detail.*

- The report on Newcomers identifies the need for a federal-provincial agreement on immigration that provides more and stable funding for newcomer settlement and integration, as well as an active role in policy and program planning for municipalities and non-governmental organizations.
- The study dealing with Adults with Developmental Disabilities recommends that the City of Ottawa facilitate discussions between all levels of government, family members of people with developmental disabilities and developmental service agencies to identify or create opportunities to use family resources to enhance housing solutions for individuals with developmental delays.
- The report on French Language Services for the Homeless recommends that the Province of Ontario be advised of the need for improvements in Francophone services for mental health and addictions.
- The sector plan for Single Homeless Men recommends lobbying the Province for higher shelter allowances and this plan and the Review of Aboriginal Homelessness recommend lobbying the federal government for a commitment for long-term funding for services through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI).

### **6.5.3 Proposed Actions**

5a. The Alliance to End Homelessness continue its critical advocacy role on behalf of the homeless in Ottawa.

5b. Ottawa City Council, advocate with federal and provincial governments for better social housing, immigration, health and income support policies to prevent and resolve homelessness.

5c. The City of Ottawa Community and Protective Services Department support creation of a leadership table to champion the cause of homelessness, involving highly influential leaders from business, funders, the media, the faith community, health, housing and homelessness sectors, and the public at large.

5d. The leadership table annually implement a high-profile initiative to increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness, to raise funds for the Foundation for the Homeless and to review progress on implementing the Community Action Plan.

### **6.5.4. Successful Outcomes**

Pressure for action from federal and provincial governments results in increased, sustained funding and improved policies to address homelessness, and an informed public supports political action and fund-raising for homelessness initiatives.

## **6.6 Key Result Area 6: Strengthen the Service System for Homelessness**

### **6.6.1 Current Status**

For the most part, the service system for homelessness in Ottawa functions effectively. There is a solid core of service providers who specialize in direct housing and support services for the homeless, as well as a vibrant network of health and resource centres who include the homeless among their many client groups. A strong network of social housing providers is a critical component of the service system, as are the many agencies who provide housing support and advocacy services. Street outreach, health services and a range of housing loss prevention

supports are integral elements of the service system. Increasingly over the past few years, the service system for homelessness has begun to see itself as a “system” and operate as one, with increased coordination and linkages between the component parts. Many respondents to the key informant interviews identified “solid partnerships” and “collaborative community culture” as the most highly ranked features of the service system that contribute to its success.

The City of Ottawa has been identified by the Province as the Service System Manager for Homelessness, as well as the Community Entity for delivery of federal SCPI funding. These roles encompass responsibility for system planning, allocation of federal, provincial and municipal funding for homelessness and review and monitoring of effectiveness. In addition, the City is a direct service provider for homeless families through operation of the family shelters.

### **6.6.2 Issues Identified**

Key informants, especially those in the broader community identified that there is opportunity to improve linkages of the homelessness service system with other sectors and with the community as a whole. For example, with the importance of mental health and addictions services, many commented on the need to establish closer links with the health sector. Some respondents identified strains in the linkages between the homelessness service system and social housing providers, so enhanced collaboration there would be beneficial. Key informants indicated that, in addition to continuing good working relationships with the Housing Branch, closer ties of the homelessness service system with other city departments, including EFA, Police, and Public Health, as well as with the private sector and the broader community would be desirable improvements.

Individual sector plans also noted a great need for expanded networks of service providers for the homeless working in specific domains. For example, new or enhanced networks were recommended for newcomers, Francophones, Aboriginals, family members of the developmentally disabled, supportive and transitional housing and women’s services.

Additional service system management issues were also identified in many sector plans. For example, a number of sector plans called for improvements to data collection systems in order to facilitate planning for homelessness services and better identify the need for French language services. Improvements in French language services were also identified as a requirement across a number of sectors. Training in a wide variety of operational issues, as well as generic issues of awareness, communication and sensitivity was called for in most sector plans.

Many sector plans identified the need for improved communications among agencies, as well as for homeless people themselves in order to ensure they are informed of all available resources. Implementation of the communications strategy prepared for the CCBT will go a long way to enhancing communications within the service system, as well as with the broader community.

Finally, the importance of research and evaluation to the success of the Ottawa service system was noted by a number of key informants and in the sector plans. Numerous areas for additional research were identified through the sector plans, including research on supportive housing models; housing needs for homeless women; newcomers; the developmentally delayed; rural youth, rural seniors and rural housing issues. The ongoing need to disseminate research findings is being met in part through the efforts of the Research and Evaluation Working Group of the

Alliance to End Homelessness. Identifying research priorities and seeking funding for research are key service system management roles.

All of these system-wide issues suggest the need for an on-going operational coordinating group that would facilitate broader linkages beyond the homelessness sector itself and that would play the following roles:

- On-going monitoring of the implementation of the Community Action Plan and individual sector plans.
- Coordination of funding initiatives of various elements of the service system, notably of capital funding for housing with operational funding for support services, especially in mental health and addictions.
- Support and coordination of the creation of specific networks within the service system.
- Oversight of planning and evaluation of the service system, using the results of improved data collection.
- Establishment of standards, where necessary, for example in the provision of French language services.
- Support and coordination of training on system-wide issues.
- Development of research priorities and identification of potential research funding sources.

In addition, should the community agree to the creation of a Leadership Table for Homelessness, on-going support for this body would be a key role for an operational coordinating group.

The operational coordinating group would require representatives from all funders, including the federal government, the Province (MCSS and MOHLTC), key branches of the City (Housing, Health, EFA) and the United Way, from service provider agencies, social housing providers, and homelessness advocates and from the homeless themselves. The group would require adequate administrative and financial support in order to carry out the roles identified above.

### **6.6.3 Proposed Actions**

6a. The CCBT, which includes representation from the Alliance to End Homelessness, the United Way, and other key Ottawa stakeholders, create an operational coordinating group (OCG) to engage and link all sectors involved in homelessness, including funders, service providers, social housing providers, homelessness advocates and homeless or formerly homeless individuals.

6b. The role of the OCG would include:

- on-going monitoring of the Community Action Plan,
- identifying research priorities and funding sources;
- overseeing planning and evaluation, based on strengthened data collection systems;
- establishing bilingual standards and related accountability mechanisms;
- supporting new or enhanced networks of service providers;
- promoting training throughout the service system; and
- implementing a communications strategy to coordinate front-line services and to promote broad-based support for solutions to homelessness.

6c. Improvements to the service system increase the involvement of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in planning, decision-making and implementation.

#### **6.6.4 Successful Outcomes**

All sectors of the community are fully engaged in addressing homelessness, with close coordination of planning, funding and service delivery, and homeless people are involved in service improvements.

### **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Six years after the first Community Action Plan on Homelessness was developed, Ottawa has made many positive strides in addressing the issue. A good range of qualified and dedicated staff and volunteers in many community agencies are supported through funding from all levels of government, coordinated through the City to offer a continuum of housing options and services to prevent and address homelessness.

At the same time, homelessness has not disappeared. The vision of a “City without homelessness” continues to be the goal and yet is still out of reach. Serious issues of increased drug use, particularly among youth, major shortages of affordable housing, growing homelessness among single adult women, insufficient mental health and addictions services and worsening economic circumstances for low-income people are among the major trends in homelessness in Ottawa.

Clear priorities from the community for this Community Action Plan are for:

- More supportive housing
- Increased mental health services
- More addictions services appropriate for the homeless community
- More social housing and rent supplements.

At the same time, there is strong endorsement on the part of the community for continuing a focus on prevention and advocating for long-term solutions to homelessness. Reaching out to the broader community is seen as an important step in building long-term political support for addressing homelessness and for creating more collective responsibility for providing increased opportunities to homeless people.

Major outcomes envisaged for this action plan include the following:

1. A well-coordinated network prevents people from losing their housing, helps people access housing and promotes cohesive and viable housing communities.
2. Additional housing options for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are funded through on-going commitments by the federal and provincial governments, and adequate support services provided to stabilize existing social housing communities.
3. Development of a comprehensive drug strategy is appropriate to homeless and at-risk individuals; an accessible range of physical and mental health care services are available for homeless and at-risk populations; and feasibility of converting shelter space to permanent, supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals is assessed.

4. Homeless people interested and able to pursue integration into the community and increased self-sufficiency are given opportunities for permanent housing, additional education, training and employment, supported by the broad community including the business sector.
5. Pressure for action from federal and provincial governments results in increased, sustained funding and improved policies to address homelessness, and an informed public supports political action and fund-raising for homelessness initiatives.
6. All sectors of the community are fully engaged in addressing homelessness, with close coordination of planning, funding and service delivery, and homeless people are involved in service improvements.

**Specifically, it is recommended that the Community:**

1. Support the Vision of “A City Without Homelessness,” as well as the proposed Mission and Principles to guide implementation of the Community Action Plan on Homelessness.
2. Endorse the following actions:

**KRA 1: To Prevent people from becoming homeless:**

- 1a. All agencies providing community-based housing loss prevention services and the City of Ottawa Housing Branch develop an action plan to implement the recommendations from the Housing Loss Prevention Network evaluation. This would include:
  - Planning for continuation of services after federal funding ends in March 2006;
  - Increased coordination with agencies serving newcomers to ensure information is provided on housing and related services in ways that are timely, accessible and culturally and linguistically sensitive;
  - Increased coordination of training for frontline workers, managers and tenants about the Tenant Protection Act, the Social Housing Reform Act, eviction procedures, the Housing Registry and other relevant information;
  - Development and implementation of training in schools and communities to provide information to populations at risk of homelessness using innovative techniques such as community or street theatre.
- 1b. All agencies providing on-site housing loss prevention services, through tenant support, work with the City of Ottawa and other stakeholder funders to determine geographical and service priorities.
- 1c. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch and the HLPN initiate an outreach program with social housing providers and interested landlords to inform the housing sector about the HLPN’s services, and to improve ways to collaborate and clarify roles regarding tenants at risk.
- 1d. The Employment and Financial Assistance (EFA) Branch of the City of Ottawa work with the Ottawa Social Housing Network to develop a protocol to share information about specific tenants at risk of eviction.

**KRA 2: To ensure people who are homeless and those at risk of homelessness have a full range of affordable housing options and appropriate supports:**

2a. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch, in conjunction with the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and other housing advocates, vigorously pursue additional, on-going funding for supportive and supported housing, from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), with a goal of creating 200 additional units of supportive or supported housing annually over the next ten years.

2b. Homelessness service agencies that wish to create new supportive or supported housing link with private developers and social housing providers to develop housing proposals in partnership.

2c. The City of Ottawa, through Action Ottawa and the federal-provincial Affordable Housing Initiative, allocate 10% of new non-profit and co-operative housing to meet the needs of those families and individuals on the social housing waiting list who are identified as homeless, with a goal of providing 100 such units annually, along with appropriate portable support services funded by the Province.

2d. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch ensure full use of available provincial funding for housing allowances/rent supplements (400 units in 2005-2006), including implementing a pilot program to house families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in private apartments, with appropriate portable support services for these tenants funded by the Province.

2e. The City of Ottawa, MCSS and MOHLTC fund the creation of 50 units of transitional housing annually, including temporary accommodation for newcomers.

2f. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch support additional affordable homeownership developments (based on the CAHDCO model), targeted to those at risk of homelessness or in social housing.

2g. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch, Ottawa Social Housing Network, MCSS, MOHLTC, mental health and addictions agencies and homelessness service providers determine necessary support services, and MCSS and MOHLTC fund these requirements to better stabilize and integrate homeless individuals and families into existing social housing and in new affordable housing created through Action Ottawa and the Affordable Housing Initiative.

2h. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch fund outreach services that help clients move directly from the street to transitional or long-term housing.

**KRA 3: To support people when they are homeless:**

3a. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch and the Alliance to End Homelessness ensure that development of the City of Ottawa's drug strategy includes:

- A focus on homeless individuals and families;
- A full spectrum of responses, including emphasis on prevention, harm reduction, treatment and enforcement;

- Adequate representation on the working group from service providers working with the homeless and from people who have experienced homelessness.

3b. The City of Ottawa, working with the Alliance to End Homelessness, advocate with the Champlain Local Health Integration Network and the MOHLTC for increased funding for mental health and addictions services that:

- respond to the specific needs of homeless people,
- are community-based and client-centred,
- include harm reduction approaches and a focus on permanent housing.

3c. Community addictions and mental health agencies work with service providers for homeless men and women to jointly develop a plan for integrated service delivery to the homeless.

3d. Service providers working with homeless women develop, in conjunction with health care providers, a full spectrum of health care options for homeless women, with special consideration for Aboriginal women and newcomers.

3e. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch, in consultation with emergency shelter operators, conduct a feasibility study for conversion of some existing shelter space to transitional or supportive housing for individuals and families who are chronically homeless.

**KRA 4: To provide opportunities for people to move out of homelessness:**

4a. The City of Ottawa continue to support community-based employment creation initiatives for homeless and vulnerable populations and co-ordinate them with existing services.

4b. The EFA Branch of the City of Ottawa work with community homelessness agencies to pilot workshops and an employment supports program that meet the needs of the homeless community.

4c. The City of Ottawa pursue funding opportunities for employment supports through the federal and provincial governments, and particularly to support community economic development initiatives.

4d. Homelessness funders, such as the United Way, the Community Foundation or the City of Ottawa, support an assessment within the homeless community of interest in and need for educational upgrading, skill development, life skills training, apprenticeships and job training.

4e. The City of Ottawa Housing Branch fund more housing support workers to help homeless individuals and families find and maintain appropriate housing, with sensitivity to the particular needs of Aboriginals and newcomers.

**KRA 5: To advocate for public investment in long-term solutions to homelessness:**

5a. The Alliance to End Homelessness continue its critical advocacy role on behalf of the homeless in Ottawa.

5b. Ottawa City Council, advocate with federal and provincial governments for better social

housing, immigration, health and income support policies to prevent and resolve homelessness.

5c. The City of Ottawa Community and Protective Services Department support creation of a leadership table to champion the cause of homelessness, involving highly influential leaders from business, funders, the media, the faith community, health, housing and homelessness sectors, and the public at large.

5d. The leadership table annually implement a high-profile initiative to increase public awareness and understanding of homelessness, to raise funds for the Foundation for the Homeless and to review progress on implementing the Community Action Plan.

**KRA 6: To strengthen the service system for homelessness:**

6a. The CCBT, which includes representation from the City of Ottawa, the Alliance to End Homelessness, the United Way, and other key Ottawa stakeholders, create an operational coordinating group (OCG) to engage and link all sectors involved in homelessness, including funders, service providers, social housing providers, homelessness advocates and homeless or formerly homeless individuals.

6b. The role of the OCG would include:

- on-going monitoring of the Community Action Plan,
- identifying research priorities and funding sources;
- overseeing planning and evaluation, based on strengthened data collection systems;
- establishing bilingual standards and related accountability mechanisms;
- supporting new or enhanced networks of service providers;
- promoting training throughout the service system; and
- implementing a communications strategy to coordinate front-line services and to promote broad-based support for solutions to homelessness.

6c. Improvements to the service system increase the involvement of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in planning, decision-making and implementation.

# ANNEX 1 Continuum of Housing and Support Services

City of Ottawa – Housing Branch

## Continuum of Housing and Support Services

Housing

### STREET

### EMERGENCY SHELTERS

964 contracted beds  
Plus overflow

### TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

E.g.: Harmony House,  
Salvation Army,  
Tewegan

### SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

E.g.: Domiciliary  
Hostels, Salus,  
Options Bytown

### SOCIAL HOUSING

OCHC  
Non Profits  
Co-ops

### PRIVATE MARKET HOUSING

Including RGI and 200  
Rooming Houses

### OUTREACH

- health
- housing
- counselling

#### Street

Salvation Army Van  
Centre 507  
Operation Go Home  
Odawa Friendship  
Centre  
Wabano Health  
Centre\*  
Jewish Family Services  
Ottawa Innercity  
Ministries

#### Drop-in

Centre 454  
The Well  
Centre 507  
St. Joe's  
Centre Espoir Sophie  
St. Luke's  
Shepherds of Good  
Hope  
Odawa Drop-in\*

### HOUSING SEARCH AND STABILIZATION

- housing assistance
- referrals to community resources
- health services: physical, mental, addictions

#### Onsite in shelter

The Shepherds of Good Hope  
The Mission, The Salvation Army  
Cornerstone, Oshki Kizis, Reception House, PQ  
CRS and SWCHC in Family Shelters, Youth  
Services Bureau  
Ottawa Inner City Health, Royal Ottawa Hospital,  
Public Health Department, CMHA  
E. Fry\*, Harmony House\*, Tungasavvingat Inuit\*

#### Community-based

Housing Help  
Action Logement  
CMHA  
The Well  
Minwaashin Lodge\*  
The Mission\*  
Rideau Street Youth Enterprise\*  
Catholic Immigration Centre\*

### HOUSING LOSS PREVENTION

- life management / social supports
- financial assistance
- health: physical, mental, addictions
- employment / training
- legal / advocacy

#### On-site

Bruce House, Salus, Options Bytown, Daybreak, Cornerstone  
Shepherds of Good Hope, OCHC (through Options), Evelyn  
Home,  
Tewegan\*, CMHA (youth)\*

#### Community-based

Pinecrest-Queensway CRS and 6 other agencies (Housing Loss  
Prevention Network), The Salvation Army, Catholic Immigration  
Services, Housing Help (rooming houses), Centre 507\*, Catholic  
Immigration Centre\*,  
City of Ottawa Rooming House Services

\* SCPI service funding to March 2006

Support Services

## **ANNEX 2 Inspiring Initiatives: Homelessness Prevention**

### **Ontario Works and Peel Living: Partners in Eviction Prevention**

The Region of Peel has taken steps to create a partnership between Ontario Works and Peel Living, the Region's housing corporation. This partnership is aimed at preventing eviction due to rent arrears or behavioural issues, while reducing administrative, rent arrears and other costs that the housing corporation has to bear when tenants are being evicted. This partnership is workable given that both OW and Peel Living are parts of the Regional Municipality of Peel which makes information sharing possible.

The Eviction prevention strategy includes the following components:

#### **1. Preventing Evictions Due to Rent Arrears**

On a monthly basis, Peel Living provides the OW Eviction Prevention Workers with a list of tenants who are on OW or ODSP and who have fallen into arrears for the second or third time (referred to as the N4 list). The eviction prevention workers work with the OW case workers to clarify who is or is not receiving social assistance, to determine the household situation and to liaise with the tenant/client in difficulty.

OW pays the arrears accrued by a client, and then the household goes on rent direct or a trusteeship. If a household later wants to cancel their participation in Rent Direct, they are questioned, and monitored closely for signs of arrears beginning again. Rarely though does a tenant on Rent Direct go off the program.

Benefits for Peel Living:

- The housing provider receives the arrears money
- Caseworkers follow-up with the household to determine their situation
- One of the eviction prevention workers specializes in cases where the tenant was housed under the provisions for Victims of Family Violence, and can arrange for supports and interventions that are appropriate to the situation.
- The tenant is assisted in paying her/his future rent on time through Rent Direct or a trusteeship;
- The process for Peel Living is streamlined, taking place on a monthly basis and triggered by their N4 list. The housing provider only liaises with two eviction prevention workers in OW, and does not have to liaise with all the individual caseworkers.
- Peel Living avoids the administrative costs of proceeding with eviction

#### **2. Preventing Evictions Resulting from Behavioural Issues**

OW has established an eviction prevention mailbox, which Peel Living (and other housing providers) can use to notify the department about specific situations where an eviction may result due to behavioural issues. When the OW eviction prevention workers receive an email about a case, they work with the relevant caseworker, do an assessment within 24 to 48 hours, and identify ways to overcome the problems that are emerging. In some cases, this may mean finding more suitable housing for a tenant (e.g. a tenant who needs supportive housing yet is in an independent unit) or arranging for additional supports for the household.

### **ANNEX 3 Inspiring Initiatives: Supportive Housing**

Across Canada there are inspiring examples of appropriate and affordable permanent and transitional housing for homeless individuals with complex mental health and addictions issues.

#### **Portland Hotel Society (Vancouver)**

The Portland Hotel provides permanent accommodation and individualized supports for adults with concurrent disorders-- those with a serious mental illness with one or more addictions. Many are intravenous drug users who are also HIV-positive or at-risk.

The Portland Hotel is one of four housing facilities operated by Vancouver's Portland Hotel Society, a non-profit organization created in 1993. The Portland Hotel itself was initiated in 1991 by Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA). The Association converted a local hotel into long term accommodation for the homeless and transferred the facility to the Portland Hotel Society upon completion.

The Portland Hotel has 86 single-occupancy units, each with its own toilet and shower. While 17 of these units have full kitchens, most of the units have minimal facilities for food. Each floor has a common kitchen, laundry facility and a lounge. On the entry level, a café run by a non-profit agency provides one free meal a day to residents and three free meals a day for residents who are HIV positive. A television lounge is located at the front entrance, and there is a large multi-purpose room and a number of small rooms used by service providers. Rents correspond with the shelter allowance portion of pension or welfare assistance.

Eight mental health workers provide round-the-clock support to residents, with two workers always on site in 12-hour shifts. A doctor and a nurse are on site four half-days each week and serve the residents of all four of the Society's housing facilities. The program also arranges for other services, including: home support services, nutritional counselling, general counselling, massage and acupuncture, podiatry, hair styling, art and poetry groups facilitated by local artists and poets, and regular communal events.

Apart from guiding criteria outlining who the program serves, the Portland Hotel has no formal intake or admissions process. Similarly, it has few rules and regulations. Emphasis is placed on accepting residents where they are at, and being flexible, responsive and creative in working with them to remain housed and as healthy as possible. All supports and interventions with residents are made on a case-by-case basis, from a starting point of accepting residents as they understand themselves and their needs and desires. A no-evictions policy underscores the program's commitment to acceptance and finding creative solutions to problems. Staff members employ a harm-reduction response to residents' misuse of substances, in accordance with the program's philosophy and the characteristics and choices of its target group.

The Portland Hotel has succeeded in providing long term housing for people with mental illness and addictions while reducing their susceptibility to harm. While a stay of 4 to 6 years is typical among residents, approximately 40 percent of residents stay at the Portland Hotel for up to 10 years. This contrasts dramatically with the prior history of residents, who typically registered 6 to 8 addresses – or none at all – in the year before moving to the Portland Hotel.

## **HOMES Program: Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes (Hamilton)**

Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes Inc. opened its first housing project in 1993. This social housing provider has its origins with Good Shepherd Centres, a faith-based organization operating in Hamilton for over 40 years and offering emergency assistance (food, clothing, and shelter) to individuals in need on a year round basis.

In 2000, Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes, together with community partners, launched HOMES – Housing with Outreach, Mobile and Engagement Services. The purpose is to provide safe, affordable and supportive housing for those with a history of homelessness and mental illness. The program was developed in response to changes in services provided by hospitals and a lack of new initiatives for people living with mental illness in the community. In developing HOMES, Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes knew that the challenge would be to house and support the ‘hardest-to-house,’ including individuals with concurrent disorders.

As of September 2004, 191 individuals had received housing and supports through HOMES. All participants in the program have a mental health diagnosis and half have both mental health and substance use issues. Almost nine percent have a dual diagnosis (developmental disability and mental illness.) Approximately 74 percent of HOMES tenants also report having at least one significant physical illness.

HOMES provides 181 units of permanent housing with individualized supports. All of the units are subsidized. Some units are owned by the housing provider, and others are managed through a head lease. The units within buildings owned by Good Shepherd range from bed-sitting rooms with own bathroom and fridge and common facilities such as lounges, dining room and kitchen to bachelor or one bedroom apartments with a community room shared with other tenants. The scattered units are bachelor, one, two, and three bedroom apartments.

HOMES embraces psycho-social rehabilitation and a recovery based model in housing and supporting individuals with concurrent disorders. The focus is on the strengths of the individual and what challenges he or she wants to work on. With respect to substance use, the focus is on harm reduction: working with tenants to minimize harm to their physical health; minimizing risks to the tenants’ safety; educating about the supports that are available; and helping individuals make their own decisions.

The nature of the support provided by HOMES staff is intensive case management. Tenants can access different levels of service depending on their individual needs. Those who need 24 hour a day onsite support are housed in buildings owned by Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes. Those requiring a lower level of support are housed in scattered units and are supported by a mobile team. Tenants also have access to a mental health nurse and psychiatrists who work both on and off site. The psychiatrists linked to the program have particular training in concurrent disorders and talk openly about what substances have fewer negative consequences for specific psychiatric conditions. Pastoral support and a trusteeship program are available through linkages with the Good Shepherd Centre.

## **ANNEX 4 Inspiring Initiatives: Rent Supplements**

### **Toronto Emergency Homelessness Pilot Project**

In September 2002, “Tent City” a major squatter settlement on a waterfront property owned by Home Depot was evacuated, dwellings demolished and the site razed. In order to address the needs of those evicted from Tent City, the City of Toronto initiated the Emergency Homelessness Pilot Project (EHPP) which involves providing rent supplements to Tent City occupants and assisting them in finding and maintaining housing.

The program was administered through the Toronto Community Housing Corporation and housing support services were provided by Woodgreen Community Centre. Tent City residents were given a “Letter of Guarantee” that stipulated that TCHC would pay first and last month’s rent, guarantee 100% of the rent for the second and third months and subsequently pay the difference between what the tenant could afford and the monthly market rent. Housing Support Workers would identify units, contact and negotiate with landlords, assist tenants to obtain shelter funds through Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Payments (ODSP), attend the lease signing, review the tenant’s responsibilities, and assist the tenant with budgeting and other related skills. The Rent Supplement in this program differs from most in that the supplement is attached to the individual rather than to the apartment unit.

An evaluation of the program identified some problems but many favourable results:

- Generally buildings were in good condition and well maintained but some were poor quality.
- Over 90% of tenants reported that their housing met their needs more appropriately than did their former dwellings at Tent City.
- Initially there were problems in some buildings (maintenance, drug dealing, violence) but generally these reduced over time. Housing support workers noted that there continued to be difficulties between landlords and tenants.
- Nearly half of the respondents indicated that their health had improved since being housed. Improvements in mental health and substance use were also reported.
- 93% of tenants stressed the importance of the support provided by the Housing Support Workers. This support has permitted tenants to take on greater responsibility in many areas of their lives.

The EHPP is cost effective relative to housing people in shelters. The evaluation also compared the cost with the Habitat Program which houses individuals with severe mental health issues in private rooming houses. EHPP was less costly than the Habitat program but the cost difference was due to a lower cost of support services (and likely a lower level of support).

### **Cost-Effectiveness of Rent Supplements**

There is mixed evidence on the cost-effectiveness of Rent Supplements compared with Non-Profit or Co-operative Social Housing developments.

Michael Shapcott (*Ontario Housing Backgrounder*, August 23, 2005) argues that Rent Supplements cost more and deliver less than social housing. He points to evidence from the United States where private sector rent supplements (housing vouchers) have been used for

several decades and quotes from an article by New York University Professor Scott Sussin published in the *Journal of Public Economics* in 2002:

“The main finding is that low-income households in metropolitan areas with more vouchers have experienced faster rent increases than those where vouchers are less abundant. In the 90 biggest metropolitan areas, vouchers have raised rents by 16 percent on average, a large effect consistent with a low supply elasticity in the low quality rental housing market.”

Michael Shapcott also does an analysis of the long-term costs of rent supplements versus the long-term costs of social housing and concludes that social housing is less costly and also creates a long-term public asset and improves communities. His analysis compares the projected 30-year cost of 500 private sector rent supplements for low and moderate income households with the projected 30-year cost of 750 mixed income social housing units (of which 500 units would be for low and moderate income households). In his analysis the rent supplement cost over 30 years would be just over \$200 million while the social housing cost would be \$176 million.

Steve Pomeroy (*Comparison of Operating Subsidies and Capital Investment in Affordable Housing in Ottawa 1978-2004*, June 2005) recently completed a cost comparison of non-profit housing with rent supplements. His review is based on actual project operating costs for non-profit properties and actual market rents for units with rent supplement contracts. This analysis, based on four specific case comparisons, shows that in terms of subsidy flow, the cumulative expenditures over 25 years on market based rent supplements are lower than that on non-profit housing.

However, Steve Pomeroy points out that a comparison of subsidy costs alone ignores a key difference between the two options:

In addition to helping low-income households to pay their rent, the non-profit subsidy is contributing to a community owned asset...The rent supplement on the market rental unit achieves the same objective in terms of assisting affordability, but does not accumulate any public or community owned asset and there is no obligation or motivation for the landlord to provide affordable rents once the subsidy agreement expires.

Both Shapcott and Pomeroy identify other factors that should be considered when determining the appropriateness of rent supplements or social housing development:

- The availability of rental units (vacancy rates) and the related interest of landlords in participating in rent supplement programs.
- Desire to regenerate and ensure mixed-income neighbourhoods.
- Ensuring special needs are met, for example, for people with mental illness.
- Degree to which the need for assistance may be short-term, for example for young singles and families still acquiring employment skills.

## **ANNEX 5: Inspiring Initiatives: Affordable Homeownership**

### **CAHDCO**

One of the best examples of a homeownership initiative targeted to households in core housing need is right here in Ottawa. The Centretown Affordable Housing Development Corporation (CAHDCO) has developed a model for providing homeownership opportunities to low and moderate-income households using a “not-for-profit” condo approach. This model provides low-cost ownership housing targeted to families and individuals living in social housing or on social housing waiting lists and gives them the opportunity to realize some equity gain at modest monthly payments.

The Clarence Gate development on Clarence at King Edward is an example of this tenure form. It is a 30-unit condominium project, with 19 of those units selling at very affordable rates for the Ottawa market (one-bedroom units for \$99,000-104,000, for example). Costs were kept low through modest design and low profit and they will be kept low over time because owners are only allowed to sell the units for the 2003 purchase price plus any increase or decrease in the Consumer Price Index. This particular project would be affordable for households with annual incomes of \$31,500 (single person) to \$48,500 (household with three or more persons).

The Clarence Gate development received little government financial support. The City of Ottawa provided relief from construction permit, parkland levy and encroachment fees and the project was exempt from development charges, as are all residential construction projects in downtown Ottawa. HRDC provided a job creation grant and CMHC provided insurance for the bridge financing.

### **Quint Affordable Homeownership**

Quint Development Corporation is a not for profit, community economic development corporation that has helped housing co-ops acquire and renovate homes in core neighbourhoods in Saskatoon. Single-family homes are organized into cooperatives of about ten families each. The co-op owns each unit for the first five years, and then families have the option of assuming the mortgage and taking title to their home. The program is targeted to families with at least one child under 18, who have a combined household income of less than \$30,000.

Municipal and provincial governments provide funds for down payments, usually in the range of \$15,000 (shared about 80/20 provincial/municipal). These down payments are forgiven if residents take ownership of their unit. To date, no controls have been introduced to restrict any equity gain on the part of the owners.

Quint also helped establish the Bent Nail Tool Cooperative that provides:

- Access to proper tools for interior and exterior home improvements.
- Access to basic equipment for yard maintenance and landscaping.
- Development and coordination of a series of workshops in plumbing, electrical, roofing, cement, basic carpentry, flooring, landscaping and interior renovations.

The Bent Nail Tool Co-op is open to individuals already involved in Quint projects, other low-income community homeowners who have little experience or access to equipment to improve

their living conditions and to tenants who, in partnership with their landlords, would like to make improvements in their living conditions.

Quint's trades training program is partially funded by The Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Centre and various other funders. It helps keep renovation costs down and enables Quint to hire and train local labour. Participants receive six months training and on the job experience renovating the houses.

House prices in Saskatoon are considerably less than in Ottawa (overall average of \$145,000 compared with \$250,000). Quint has noted that this type of program would be more challenging to replicate in a city with high housing prices.

### **Home Ownership Affordability Partnership in Hamilton**

Hamilton, Ontario launched a Home Ownership Affordability Partnership (HOAP) designed to help social housing tenants move into home ownership. HOAP is a partnership between the City of Hamilton, the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington, the Hamilton-Halton Home Builders' Association and the Threshold School of Building. (The Threshold School of Building is a not-for-profit and registered charity offering practical house-building instruction to the general public).

The goals of HOAP are to promote affordable homeownership, enhance the quality of the existing housing stock and build technology skills for youth at risk. Individual families select and purchase a run-down or neglected home, which can be bought in Hamilton for \$65,000 to \$75,000. Families then receive funding for renovations through the CMHC Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and the house is used to train youth in building trades. Costs are kept low by donations of cash and building materials.

Unofficial partners in the Hamilton program are Scotiabank and CMHC, both of whom provide financing to the homebuyers for purchases and renovations. While HOAP applicants do not receive special allowances from Scotiabank, they would be assessed for eligibility for the bank's zero down payment mortgage plan.

## **ANNEX 6 Inspiring Initiatives: Four Pillars Drug Strategy**

The City of Vancouver has developed a four-part policy and plan for reducing drug-related harm in their community. This strategy involves Health, Police, School Boards, Housing, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, the Centre for Addiction Research, non-profit organizations, the City Social Planning Department, local businesses and business associations, community colleges, and arts organizations in varying ways to address all aspects of drug use and misuse. The four pillars of the policy are prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement.

### **Prevention**

Prevention strategies are used to help people understand substance misuse, and the negative health impacts and legal risks associated with substance use and abuse, to encourage people to make healthy choices and to provide opportunities to help reduce the likelihood of substance abuse, including affordable housing, employment training and jobs, recreation and long-term economic development.

Examples of the kinds of initiatives undertaken to promote prevention include:

- The Justice for Girls Project, a three-year initiative to identify key issues and barriers that street-involved young women and girls face in accessing safe, supportive and stable housing.
- A harm reduction education campaign and peer training program, professional training and resource website for front-line workers and a youth-led theatre and film project.
- The Youth Engagement Strategy to train youth in facilitation so that they can hold sessions on preventing harmful substance use.
- The Stars for Success project providing employment opportunities in downtown Vancouver hotels for youth living on the street.
- An award winning train the trainers course run by the Vancouver Police Department for sex workers to learn ways to protect and defend themselves using safe, effective and legally acceptable guidelines.

### **Harm Reduction**

Harm reduction approaches are used to reduce the spread of deadly communicable diseases, prevent drug overdose deaths, increase substance users' contact with health care services and drug treatment programs, and reduce consumption of drugs on the street.

Specific initiatives include:

- Opening of a supervised injection site, the first of its kind in North America, including a health education package and a comprehensive policing plan to ensure order and safety.
- Housing and short-term shelter options for active drug users living on the street. (602 new non-market housing units created between 2001 and 2004 and 754 units in process or under construction; 289 special needs units completed in 2004 and a further 354 under construction; 200 units to be created in the old Woodward's site).
- An overdose prevention campaign, the first of its kind in Canada.
- A pilot project to distribute crack pipe mouthpieces to reduce the spread of disease related to increased crack cocaine use.

## **Treatment**

Services are offered to help people come to terms with substance misuse and lead healthier lives, including outpatient and peer-based counselling, methadone programs, daytime and residential treatment, housing support and ongoing medical care.

Treatment initiatives include:

- Increasing the availability of methadone.
- Supportive housing to stabilize those who misuse drugs and alcohol and drug and alcohol-free housing for individuals in recovery.
- Specific programs for women with addictions, including reserved detox beds, stabilization and pre-treatment programming and treatment programs, including healing from trauma.
- Residential treatment programs for youth, including withdrawal management and support services for families.
- Needle exchange services, counselling, home detox support, prevention services and methadone maintenance in all community health centres.
- Culturally appropriate strategies and services for Aboriginals with priority on services for Aboriginal women with addictions and youth at risk.

## **Enforcement**

Recognizing the need for peace and quiet, public order and safety, these services target organized crime, drug dealing, drug houses, and problem businesses involved in the drug trade and improve coordination with health services and other agencies that link drug users to withdrawal.

Enforcement initiatives have included:

- Increased police presence in targeted locations to reduce the public consumption of drugs.
- Database system to allow police to identify and track those associated with the youth sex trade, including pimps, recruiters, johns and workers.
- Coordinated enforcement strategy to disrupt exchanges of drugs and stolen property, resulting in closure of some premises involved in these activities.
- Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams established to tackle drug-related issues at the neighbourhood level.
- Increased response to criminal activity, in particular drug trafficking and possession for the purpose of trafficking.

Four Pillars was introduced through a 2001 Framework for Action: A Four-Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver. In May 2005, the City of Vancouver compiled an informal progress report from partners involved with the strategy.

## **ANNEX 7 Inspiring Initiatives: Social Enterprises and Community Economic Development**

Various cities in Canada, including Ottawa, have community economic development initiatives underway, and some of these focus on employing individuals who have been marginalized in the workforce or who have experienced homelessness. The following are examples of businesses that are viable or are working towards financial viability while employing individuals who may lack job skills, stable employment or housing.

### **TurnAround Courier (Toronto)**

Begun in 2002, and providing service to over 350 clients, this bicycle courier company employs youth from shelters and service agencies and trains them as couriers and for back office functions. At-risk youth gain experience, confidence and the financial means to stabilize their housing and enter the job market. The goal is to provide an employment opportunity for vulnerable youth while operating a successful courier company. A company policy is to donate 50 percent of their profits to charity.

To help the youth get started, the business loans the couriers money to buy bikes, locks, helmets and other gear, and the employees pay it back over time. TurnAround works with agencies that carefully screen the youth for job readiness. The youth employed by TurnAround are screened more than the average employee: they need to be suited for the job to be able to sustain the pace.

The employment with TurnAround is transitional work experience that helps the youth develop job skills and become more employable in the mainstream job market. They develop a resume and a support network, and work towards stabilizing their life, exiting homelessness and the shelter system and beginning a career. While not a charity and very much a business, TurnAround offers a supportive management environment and assists youth with planning and taking steps to secure housing and their next job.

*...the big benefit is watching youth do a great job here, and then go on to do other things People who work at TurnAround can put a dark side of their life behind them and move on. They get other jobs because employers think, hey, if this kid pedaled his ass off for six months, he can work in a restaurant or in a mailroom, or whatever. Over 50 youth have moved on from TurnAround in the past two years, a substantial percentage of whom have moved on to other jobs and stable housing.*

([www.turnaroundcouriers.com](http://www.turnaroundcouriers.com))

### **Cook Studio Food Services (Vancouver)**

A recent initiative of Vancouver's Food and Service Resource Group is the development of Cook Studio Food Services, in partnership with a local employment/training agency. Located in the city's Downtown East Side, Cook Studio Food Services operates a café, catering business and a production kitchen. Employing at-risk youth and individuals who have experienced long term unemployment, this business focuses on job creation and teaching valuable professional skills related to cooking and service while remaining competitive in the market place. This is a successful training initiative supported by the BC Ministry of Human Resources that leads directly to long term employment for the participants due to industry partnerships.

The Cook Studio Café seats 45 and includes a deli and bake shop. It is the training facility for the Youth Internship Program that is open to at risk and street involved youth. This program, funded by HRSDC, runs for 26 weeks and provides training and experience in café operations, team building, and entrepreneurial skills. There is a focus on gaining work experience, personal growth, and enhancing lifeskills. Workshops on wellness, nutrition and cooking are also offered for local residents and groups.

As a social enterprise, Cook Studio Food Services contributes to the revitalization of the Downtown East Side by generating economic activity, creating employment, offering training, and providing community services.

*As a business, our social aim is to train and hire employees in an environment that is designed to support their professional and personal development, the "whole" person. At the same time we will provide the private sector or the "customer" with a quality service.*

([www.foodandservice.net](http://www.foodandservice.net))

### **Inner City Renovations (Winnipeg)**

This professional renovations company is the first project of Community Ownership Solutions, a non-profit incubator of for-profit social enterprises. Inner City Renovations (ICR) is the result of a partnership with four non-profit housing providers in Winnipeg and Social Capital Partners (see below.) All partners are committed to inner city renewal through employment opportunities and improving the housing stock. ICR focuses on residential and commercial renovations. Many of the renovation projects have been for non-profit groups, with perhaps the most impressive being a \$1.5 million dollar project to convert an abandoned department store into an Aboriginal training facility accommodating 20 staff and hundreds of students.

ICR has created quality jobs for low income residents in Winnipeg. Many have been on social assistance for long periods and had difficulty securing employment with traditional employers in the construction industry, and many workers are Aboriginal.

ICR is now able to move into new house construction which offers employees additional skill development opportunities. The focus will initially be on inner city lots that are slated for redevelopment as part of Winnipeg's affordable housing strategy.

This social enterprise offers a supportive work environment, a chance to learn on the job, access to a social worker from the Aboriginal community, opportunities for enhanced self-esteem and pride, and skills to enable employees to obtain jobs in the mainstream market.

## **ANNEX 8 Inspiring Initiatives: Business Development and Financing**

### **Social Capital Partners**

Formed in 2001, Social Capital Partners (SCP) has nurtured the development of social enterprises in a number of Canadian cities. Typically SCP provides support to social enterprises in the areas of strategy, social mission planning, business development and finance (arranging for loans for the start up or early growth phase of a business, near equity financing for the growth phase of operations, and arranging grants for some start-up enterprises operating within a registered charity).

SCP invests in businesses that hire the majority of their employees from a community that is economically disadvantaged or outside of mainstream society. Other characteristics of social enterprises funded by SCP include:

- Demonstrating the competitive spirit of a private company while striving for notable social outcomes for their employees;
- Providing skills and experience to promote long term employment;
- Recognizing the multiple needs of the population they employ (e.g. housing, supportive counselling); and
- Having a plan to break even or return a profit within 3 years.

*Our belief is that by providing paid employment for disadvantaged groups in appropriate environments we can help these individuals lead more self-sufficient, productive, and fulfilling lives. At the same time, by ensuring that the business reaches break-even or better, we can accomplish these social goals at a lower societal cost... We consider it a success when both the target employee and the social enterprise become self-sufficient.*

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

### **Toronto Enterprise Fund**

Begun in 2000 for a three year commitment, the Toronto Enterprise Fund provides viable social enterprises with multi-year funding. The focus is on enterprises working with homeless or at-risk individuals that create both community connections and real economic opportunities for these populations. The expectation is that being mindful of the need for certain financial outcomes, that the enterprise will help individuals develop life skills and higher self-esteem, have better connections to the labour force, and gain additional income. With increased opportunities to earn income and a reduction in poverty, the social enterprise is seen as helping to prevent or reduce homelessness.

Partners in this fund include the City of Toronto, Ontario Disability Support Program, HRDSC, SCPI, the United Way of Greater Toronto, Counsel Corporation, and the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program.

The program currently funds and supports the growth of 10 Toronto-based social enterprises, and is committed to doing so for the period 2003 to 2006. Key activities are:

- Grants for funding start-up and operational costs during the development phase
- Supports for business development
- Evaluation and research, including documenting the short and long term results of social enterprises and sharing the results to promote community capacity building.

## **ANNEX 9 Inspiring Initiatives: Broader Community Involvement**

Some cities have actively engaged a broad segment of their community in addressing issues of homelessness.

### **Downtown Eastside, Vancouver**

The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is reportedly the poorest district in Canada, with 65% of its residents below the poverty line and a host of problems with crime, substance misuse and economic blight. The Downtown Eastside Revitalization Project brings together residents, businesses, service organizations, three levels of government, the Health Authority, Housing, Police Department and Park Board to focus on restoring the area. There is a strong community development focus to this project that was aided by funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre for a five-year Community Development Project (1999-2004) as a demonstration of “crime prevention through social development” The goals of the community development project were to:

- strengthen the participation of residents, agencies and businesses in community decision-making,
- build community leadership,
- promote community cohesion,
- improve socio-economic conditions,
- influence the implementation of public policy that addressed risk factors associated with crime and victimization; and
- promote...recognition of the strengths and capacities of the Downtown Eastside low-income community.

An extensive process of mobilizing and organizing the community was undertaken and included setting up structures for community participation, the development of grassroots leadership and establishing mechanisms by which plans are to be developed and implemented.

Today there continues to be broad community involvement with a focus on the following goals:

- reduce crime and drug addiction (see Four Pillars Drug Strategy)
- provide effective community services to addicts
- achieve a balance of types of housing
- promote economic development.

Some specific economic development outcomes have included:

- Cook Studio Market conducting a feasibility study and business plan for its café to provide training and employment programs for at-risk youth in food services.
- The Potluck Café Society providing long-term employment for local residents in the Downtown Eastside, as well as healthy, affordable meals for the community.
- A City of Vancouver initiative to ensure that Edgewater Casino hires 100 people from the Downtown Eastside.

### **Calgary Homeless Foundation**

Calgary has created a foundation to raise money and provide capital funding for housing. Each year the Foundation raises \$1 million through a variety of fundraising activities and special

events. Included in these events are:

- An annual “roast” of Premier Ralph Klein.
- A gala event “Diamonds are Forever – but Homelessness shouldn’t be”, organized in partnership with the Calgary Home Builders Foundation.
- Calgary Home and Garden Show.

The Foundation partners include the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Home Builders Foundation, Alberta Real Estate Foundation, private sector corporations, all three levels of government and many volunteers.

The Foundation now has a charitable tax number to receive donations from the private sector and the community at large. In the year that it took to receive this number, the City of Calgary acted as the agency to receive donations, provided a tax receipt for donations as a municipal government and then passed the money to the Foundation.

The Calgary initiative was spearheaded by Art Smith, a businessman who was concerned about the City’s homelessness situation at a time of economic boom. This kind of leadership, in particular an energetic, credible person, preferably from the business community, has been identified as a critical success factor for engaging the broad community in homelessness.

### **Toronto Community Foundation Housing Allowances**

In Toronto, the “Strong Communities Housing Allowance Program” was introduced as a pilot program involving a partnership between government, the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, landlords and the Toronto Community Foundation. Through the pilot program, 400 housing allowances are being provided to tenants on social housing waiting lists, some of whom pay more than 50 percent of their household income on housing. Tenants in this program receive housing allowances to reduce their rent but they do not pay rent on the basis of their income. They are entitled to remain on the social housing waiting list and move into social housing if their name rises to the top of the list.

In order to participate in the program, tenants move to vacant apartments whose landlords are participating. They receive housing allowances of approximately \$300 per month, which are made up of equal contributions by the Province of Ontario and participating Toronto landlords. This program is a pilot initiative that will last for five years.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation administers the program. The Toronto Community Foundation, while it has no ongoing role, was instrumental in bringing all of the partners together and funding the initial study to support the pilot concept.