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### ATEH Coordinator and Contact

**Lynne Browne**

lbrowne@ysb.on.ca  
613-241-7913 ext 205  
147 Besserer St.,  
Ottawa, ON K1N 6A7

# The Alliance to End Homelessness

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## “IGNORE HOUSING AT YOUR PERIL”

**Can Ottawa voters expect a greater commitment to new affordable housing and ending homelessness over 2011-2014?**

Homeless alliance releases local provincial candidates' answers

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## MEDIA CONFERENCE

*Date: Monday, Sept. 26, 2011 at 10:30 a.m.*

Location: Cornerstone's Housing for Women  
314 Booth St., Ottawa ON K1R 7K2

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The Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) will release candidate responses to its **Provincial Candidate Questionnaire** on housing and homelessness issues on Monday, Sept. 26 at 10:30 a.m. The media conference will be held at Cornerstone's Housing for Women, 314 Booth St., newly-opened housing for homeless or precariously housed women.

“We reminded candidates that 33% or 110,585 of Ottawa's households rent. That's a pretty significant number of voters,” says Marion Wright, chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) in Ottawa. “What the candidates have to say about housing is important because it's usually the single biggest expense for everyone. The provincial government plays an essential role Ottawa's ability to address affordable housing and homelessness.”

It's estimated that the Ontario government spent only \$64 per capital on affordable housing between 2005 and 2009 compared to the average of \$115 per capita paid by the provinces overall.

Dan Sabourin, vice chair of ATEH asks, “What might have happened here in Ottawa if the province had increased its spending to the national average? Or if Ontario had amended the provincial Planning Act to give municipalities authority to require inclusionary housing in new residential development including rental development that lower income households can afford?”

“We've just seen, nationally and here in Ontario, that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 3.1% in the 12 months to August. In today's economic climate it'll be harder than ever for people to cover housing expenses as the cost of other essentials like food and energy go up, especially for those on low incomes.”

STATS CAN reports that nationally, food prices went up 4.4% in August, following a 4.3% increase in the previous month. Consumers paid 5.0% more for food purchased from stores and 2.7% more for food purchased from restaurants. Food and energy prices rose 7.2% in August, following a 7.1% increase in July and shelter costs increased 1.8% in the 12 months

Data released by the ATEH last week indicated that 26.9% – more than 86,000 of Ottawa households – have incomes under \$40,000; the vast majority of these households are renters. Yet out of 70,078 housing starts in the city between 2000 and 2011, 94% were ownership and only 5.8% were rental units.

“This is a shocking imbalance,” says Wright. “Private housing developers effectively ignore one-third of the community, while non-profit developers struggle to create affordable housing with inadequate funding. That’s why we wanted to know what Ottawa candidates would fight for and what their parties would do to complement the additional \$14 million in new funds pledged annually by the City of Ottawa for homelessness and poverty reduction.”

Earlier this week Wright said that candidates “ignore housing at their peril”, and that affordable housing is looking like a “wedge” issue, especially in Ottawa area ridings with close races.

“With more than one voter in many of the 110,585 renting households, candidates and their leaders should not underestimate the dangers of ignoring an issue that matters to such a high percentage of voters.”

Last year in Ottawa alone, there were 7,156 individuals or approximately 5,836 households in Ottawa that had to stay in a homeless shelter, on average for 62 days. The average family stay was 72 days.

Candidates were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. *Will you put significant funding for affordable housing in each provincial budget – enough to create 8,000 to 10,000 new units annually – to meet the needs of Ontarians?*
2. *Will you fund the maintenance and repair of existing social housing stock?*
3. *Will you ensure that Ministries work together to develop long-term sustainable funding programs that include both housing and support dollars?*
4. *Will you invest in an Ontario Housing Benefit to provide a monthly payment to low income tenants to help bridge the gap between rent and 30% of income?*
5. *Will you amend Ontario’s Planning Act to give municipalities the authority to require the inclusion of housing at prices lower income households can afford in the development and redevelopment of land?*

**Ontario Data** – The Housing Network of Ontario (HNO) recently reported that:

- 152,000 Ontario households are on waitlists for affordable housing.
- 13% of Ontario households live in poverty - the rate is higher for people from racialized, immigrant, and Aboriginal communities, women, seniors, youth and people with disabilities.
- 627,530 Ontario households are unable to afford shelter that meets adequacy, suitability and affordability norms, placing them in core housing need.
- Last year in Toronto, Ottawa and Waterloo Region alone 32,291 people stayed in homeless shelters.

ATEH participates in HNO; during the provincial election it is calling for: funding of a housing program that creates a minimum of 10,000 universally accessible affordable non-profit and co-op developed housing units annually with at least 50% of these units should be funded to provide “rent geared to income” assistance, and an annualized fund to repair and maintain existing and new affordable housing units should also be created.

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**For more information contact:**

**Lynne Browne, Coordinator, Alliance to End Homelessness**

**Cell (613) 513-6647, Office: 613-241-7913, ext. 205**