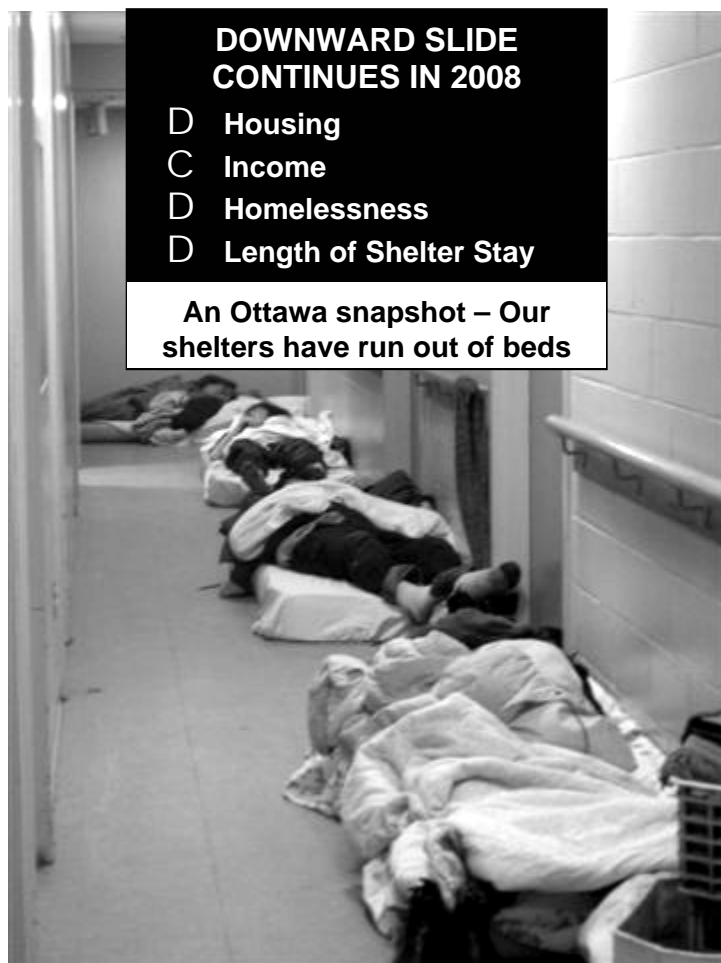


Experiencing Homelessness

Report Card on ENDING Homelessness in Ottawa

Jan-Dec 2008

Photo: ATEH 2008



DOWNWARD SLIDE CONTINUES IN 2008

- D Housing
- C Income
- D Homelessness
- D Length of Shelter Stay

An Ottawa snapshot – Our shelters have run out of beds

7,045 people stayed in emergency shelters in 2008

Billions for banks while Ottawa shelters overflow: children and youth hardest hit

Demand for shelter beds surges as the number of people using Ottawa's emergency shelters shot up to 7,045 in 2008, including 1,179 children, 473 more than in 2007.

By mid-2008, shelters ran out of beds every night. Worse yet, homeless people stayed in shelters an average of 51 days, five days longer than in 2007. This can only get worse as the economic crisis deepens.

After five years of tracking, Ottawa's shelter use continues to grow in spite of nonstop efforts by local agencies and community volunteers.

It's time to hold all tiers of governments to account!

Where will people go when there's no room at the 'inn'?

Indicators of Ottawa's community progress in ending homelessness

2007 2008

HOUSING		D
Affordable Housing		
Pre-1995 social housing units (total stock)	22,400	22,400
Post-2000 affordable units (total stock)	833	967
Rent supplements (City of Ottawa & CMHA)	3,198	3,200
Supportive Housing Network spaces	885	915*
Waiting Lists		
Households on social housing waiting list	9,370	9,692
Supportive Housing Network waiting list	2,000	2,600*
Housing Market Indicators		
Rental vacancy rate	2.3%	1.4%
Average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment	\$798	\$827
INCOME		C
Ontario Works for a single person	\$560	\$572
ODSP Assistance for a Single Person	\$999	\$1,020
Average monthly # of Ontario Works cases	15,296	14,329**
Minimum Wage	\$8.00	\$8.75
Increase in Consumer Price Index	2.0%	1.7%
HOMELESSNESS		D
# of times shelter beds were used	341,212	386,506
# of individuals in an emergency shelter	6,572	7,045
Single men	3,249	3,325
Single women	960	928
Single youth	365	464
Families	643	747
(Children under 16 in families)	907	1,179
(Adults & children 16 and over in families)	1,091	1,149
LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY		D
Average length of stay in shelters (days)	46	51
Single men	48	48
Single women	43	46
Single youth	27	46
Families	46	53

* Increases in the supportive housing spaces and waiting list reflect that more small housing providers participate in the Supportive Housing Network; there are no new units.

** While OW cases decreased by 967 in 2008, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) cases increased by 1,143 to 20,113.

Sources: page 2.



Demand for Shelters Surges in 2008: The story behind the grades and indicators

D Housing

C Income

D Homelessness

D Length of shelter stay

A = Significant Progress
B = Some Progress
C = No / Slight Progress
D = Some Loss
E = Significant Loss

2008 showed a dramatic increase in the use of shelter beds, up to 386,506 times, a 13% increase from 341,212 in 2007.

Although the average length of shelter stay for youth increased the most, the increase in bed use was mainly fuelled by families, as they

are much more numerous, accounting for 68% of the increase in bed nights.

The number of different people using the shelter system increased by 7.2% – 7,045 compared to 6,572, and people stayed an average of five days longer than in 2007.

Single men comprised the largest number of shelter users – 3,325 or 47% of the total shelter population. The number of **women** using shelters decreased to 928 from 960 but their length of stay was longer.

Youth and families used shelters more in 2008. The number of youth jumped 27% to 464 while 747 families stayed in the family shelters, up 15.2% in 2008 compared to 2007.

The average length of stay in shelters was up to 51 days from 46 days the year before. Families stayed the longest in shelters for an average of 53 days. Youth had the shortest stay at 46 days but that represented a 70% increase over 2007.

The vacancy rate for rental units in Ottawa decreased to 1.4% in 2008 from a year earlier. The 3.6% increase

in the average rent (\$827) for a one bedroom apartment was considerably more than the 2% increase in Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits. While the number of OW cases decreased by 967 in 2008, ODSP cases increased by 1,143 to 20,113. Centre 454 has a worker dedicated to helping people make this transition.

Even though the **minimum wage** increased 9.4% to \$8.75, it would take an hourly wage of \$15.90 an hour to afford a one bedroom apartment using the government's affordability standard of 30% of income for housing.

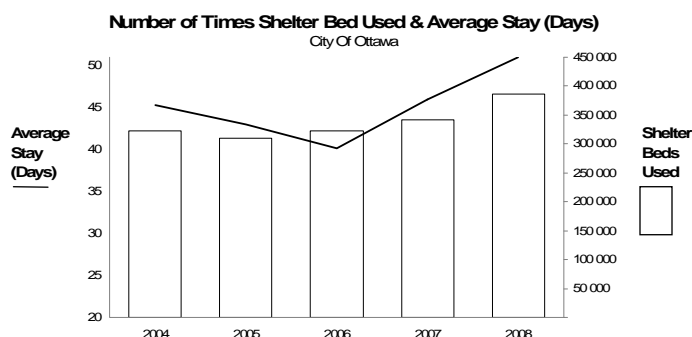
Helping people stay housed – Prevention statistics help to complete a troubling picture of a community without enough affordable housing. Some 1,116 households at imminent risk of losing their housing (at the final point in the eviction process) were helped by Housing Loss Prevention workers. The households near eviction were among the 10,899 households helped in 2008 across the city, up 12% over the year. Prevention programs have grown over the last several years; without them the numbers of homeless people would be expected to increase even more.

The stock of new affordable housing units increased by only 134 units in 2008. At this rate it will take 72 years to help the 9,692 households currently on the Social Housing Registry. The City of Ottawa target to increase affordable housing is 500 units a year. In 2007 only 74 units were created in total so 134 is moving in the right direction, but the small growth does not offer much hope to people who are homeless or struggling to get by on low incomes. The 2008 units include 10 shelter or transitional spots, 98 permanent rental-supportive units and 26 households who took part in the long-term affordable ownership option.

5 Year Homelessness Trend in Ottawa

Shelter use in Ottawa increased over the 2004-2008 period the Report Card has been in existence and indicates that homelessness continues to be a major issue in this community.

Since 2006, the average length of stay in a shelter has been increasing and this indicates the difficulty of finding suitable alternative accommodation. During the time people stay in a shelter they are provided with counselling and other services including employment assistance and housing search.



DATA SOURCES – Indicator table page 1: City of Ottawa (includes the *Homeless Individuals and Families Information System*, HIFIS3, Aggregate Database, Jan 1, 2009), Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Supportive Housing Network, The Housing Registry, Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Province of Ontario and Statistics Canada.

Improvement in data: Beginning this year, we can report two years of data for comparison, using a system that reduces duplication of clients. This had been a significant factor for single men and single women using more than one shelter during the year.

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Three tiers of government	13-15

The Alliance to End Homelessness produces this annual Report Card to track our community's progress in ending homelessness. A non-partisan of over 70 community agencies plus numerous individuals in Ottawa, the coalition works collaboratively to end homelessness. **Visit our website for more information and download English or French PDFs of the Report Card at www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca**

A message from Ottawa's Emergency Shelters

Shelter Executive Directors report that as many as 100 homeless people are sleeping on shelter floors across the city

Since the middle of 2008, Ottawa shelters for men, women, youth and families have run out of beds every night. Sue Garvey has been Director at *Cornerstone Women's Shelter* for 13 years and is proud that they have gone from a short term crisis centre to a transitional healing community, but now she is worried. "These are difficult times; we turn away 10 women every day because there isn't space.



Perry Rowe with Sue Garvey

We renovated in 1994 to take in 36 women, but now we squeeze in at least 52 women each night."

Perry Rowe, the Executive Director at the *Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre* explained that as the number of

homeless and at risk individuals has increased over the last decade, shelters have had to move toward becoming "multi-service facilities" that support not only the needs of the shelter residents, but provide much needed services and supports to a growing number of community-based residents. "However," Rowe adds "we are at the point where the capacity of our agencies to do anything additional is severely limited. Our fear is that some people will fall through the cracks despite the best efforts of our agencies to coordinate and make sure everyone is helped, especially now in a faltering economy."

The Ottawa Mission is also more than a homeless shelter; all of their non-residential programs and services are open to men and women in the larger community. Executive Director Diane Morrison believes that, "The hope that we offer stretches farther than any of us could ever imagine." They find that limited physical space at the shelter makes it challenging to develop programs, but even more difficult is the limited availability of affordable and appropriate housing in Ottawa that makes it hard to help people make the transition from the shelter to independent living.

The ability to meet challenges is second nature to the shelters. *The Shepherds of Good Hope* has over 300 people living in their facilities. Executive Director Paul Soucie explained that in addition to their other heavily used services and programs. "We provide 'Overflow Services' to the community for 50 or so men and women with high needs, the most vulnerable people who are not able to be sheltered in the other shelters.



Marc Provost, Alex Munter, Paul Soucie and Diane Morrison

None of us has enough room now and we expect overcrowding pressures to worsen as we face a severe shortage of supportive housing units in the City of Ottawa."

The City of Ottawa directly operates two emergency family shelters as well as overflow at the YM/YWCA and in motels. These shelters provide case management with streamlined access to *Ontario Works* benefits and assist with housing searches. Like the others, Marc Provost, program manager at the City is pleased that the City is still able to fulfill its commitment to offering shelter to everyone who is homeless. Over this past year there was an increase in the number of families in overflow in motels from July through November. Provost reported that, "Even in the middle of the night, family shelter staff makes sure that people of all ages including families are able to move off the streets and be safe inside. Shelters coordinate among each other, so that when one is full, people can be referred to another and arrangements made to get them there safely."

Ottawa's two youth shelters are also full – sadly forced to turn young people away every month. Alex Munter, Executive Director of *Youth Services Bureau*, says YSB's objective is to stop street-involved youth from becoming homeless adults.

"Youth are staying longer in shelters – a 70% increase from last year. The good news is that means they're connecting to supports, the bad news is that it's a clear indicator there aren't enough viable safe housing options for youth. Our transitional and long-term housing programs are at capacity and we have 27% more individual youth coming to our shelters. Clearly, we need all levels of government working together to invest in the health, housing, crisis support and other services needed by at-risk youth."

Experiencing overflow conditions, shelter directors make it clear: Ottawa needs to develop more safe appropriate and affordable housing; address the severe shortage of supportive housing units; and find funding for transitional services to assist families and others reintegrate into the community.

The shelter directors have good reason to worry about the future for homeless people and others on limited incomes.

A list of Ottawa's emergency shelters, their funding sources and services offered continues on page 9

Living at risk in Ottawa

Large holes in the safety net

Canadians often point to the 'safety net' as a national defence against poverty. During the current recession, some commentators have said it will protect us against a depression like the 1930s. But what does the 'safety net' cover in a high-cost city like Ottawa. Does it protect people against poverty or trap them in it?

- The first column shows the example of a single man on Ontario Works whose total monthly income is \$592.00.
- When the average cost of rent and food are subtracted from his income, he is left with a deficit of \$308.41 and will be unable to cover the rest of his monthly expenses. Other monthly expenses could include: transportation, telephone, utility bills, or health expenditures. Additionally, the table shows that his annual income is significantly lower than the Low-Income Cutoff (LICO) line for Ottawa.

For more information, visit – http://ottawa.ca/residents/health/living/nutrition/services/price_eating_well_en.html

		Ontario Works	Ontario Disability Support Program	E.I. income based on \$30,000 salary	Minimum Wage @ 40 hours/ week
		Single man, age 25	Single mother, age 34 with 13 and 7 year old children	Single woman, age 47	Single man, age 25
+ Incomes	Monthly Income	\$572.00	\$1543.00	\$1,375.00	\$1,516.67
	Additional benefits & Credits	\$20.00	\$698.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
	Total =	\$592.00	\$2,241.00	\$1,395.00	\$1,536.00
– Outgoing expenses	Rent	\$671.00 (Bachelor)	\$995.00 (2 Bedroom)	\$827.00 (1 Bedroom)	\$671.00 (Bachelor)
	Cost of Nutritious Diet	\$229.41	\$473.00	\$229.41	\$229.41
	Total =	\$900.41	\$1,877.00	\$1,056.41	\$900.41
	Amount left over to cover all other monthly expenses	–\$308.41	+\$364.00	+\$338.59	+\$636.26
	The Annual Picture				
Annual Income		\$7,104.00	\$26,892.00	\$16,740.00	\$18,440.00
Low-Income Cutoff		\$21,666.00	\$33,159.00	\$21,660.00	\$21,660.00
Difference (±)		–\$14,562.00	–\$6,267.00	–\$4,926.00	–\$3,226.00

Made-in-Ottawa Solutions

Homeless Services 101

What is homelessness?

- Living on the street
- Staying overnight in temporary shelters
- Staying in places not meant for human habitation
- Moving continuously among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family ("couch surfing").

Who is at risk of homelessness?

- Families and individuals can lose their housing for any number of reasons: fleeing abuse, losing a job, or having an income too low to stay in suitable housing
- Some are at risk because of mental illness or substance use problems; others lack the life skills or ability to live on their own.

While people in Ottawa wait for adequate incomes and the community waits for appropriate and affordable housing . . .

- ✓ Agencies respond to homelessness
- ✓ People across the city respond to homelessness
- ✓ Together we all assist homeless men, women, youth and families with children.

In 2008, a total of 7,045 people stayed in emergency shelter for an average of 51 days: 3,325 men, 928 women, 464 youth and 747 families with 1,179 children.



Housing for youth, provided by The Youth Services Bureau

Photos: Youth Services Bureau



How we operate in Ottawa

- The *City of Ottawa* is the *Service System Manager for Homelessness*, administering the federal, provincial and municipal funding for homelessness services, housing loss prevention, emergency shelter, and supportive housing.
- The *Provincial Ministry of Health* provides funding for supports for housing, addictions, health and mental health.
- *Non-profit agencies* contribute significant amounts of money they have raised themselves to do this work even when they receive government funding.
- *Many charitable and voluntary organizations* work in partnership with the City to greatly extend and enhance the level of public funding.
- *Ottawa-based researchers* contribute by helping service providers continually refine their programs to meet current needs.

Partnership is the key to Ottawa's response to homelessness

- *Service providers* have organized themselves into service networks that share information and resources for more effective services. Examples are: Supportive Housing Network, Street Outreach Network, and Housing Loss Prevention Network.
- *The Alliance to End Homelessness* informs the community about homelessness and advocates for strategies to end it.
- The City through the *Homelessness Community Capacity Building Steering Committee* works with stakeholders, clients and the community to support the development and implementation of an *Action Plan on Homelessness* required for federal funding.

All of this activity takes place in the context of insufficient resources with the service providers constantly stretching their limited resources.

- Insufficient resources mean that efforts must be focused on mitigating the devastating effects of homelessness on individuals instead of working to eliminate the need for emergency shelters.

Housing Response Team

We've all seen them – small groups huddled under a bridge, some women, mostly men, sometimes a dog or two in the background.

These are the visible homeless – to some, the human face of homelessness.

To those trying to improve the lives of those that are homeless, they are the “absolute homeless”. No child starts out with the ambition of living on the streets. Many negative experiences will have gone into the journey to that place – poor home lives, ill health or disability, little education, etc.

The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre realized that helping those on the street requires a team with skill and commitment. They now have a team of four case managers and a coordinator to engage people on the streets and in parks throughout the city. By reaching out and engaging those on the street, trust can be established. Needs can then be assessed and an individualized plan developed to help people make the move from the street to permanent housing.

The Housing Response Team comes armed with information on the availability of suitable housing and related services. A contract is established – the person agrees to accept the service and the worker commits to maintaining the support for a year, which can be important to a landlord or housing provider.

By the end of December 2008, after its first six months, *The Housing Response Team* had successfully engaged 55 clients living on the street and housed 14. Housing options include rooming houses, bachelors and one bedroom apartments. The team has been able to provide a level of support that has enabled people to remain in their housing – including 24/7 crisis response.



Photo: Salvation Army Booth Centre

The Housing Response Team reaches out to a visibly homeless couple living near the O-Train tracks.



Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health Outreach Program

The *Mobile Health and Addictions Outreach Team's* primary focus is to assist and provide medical care to Aboriginal people who are at risk of homelessness.

Within the cultural approach to health and wellness at *Wabano*, the outreach team focuses on the traditional concept of holistic healing. This includes providing services that encourage healing involving the whole person: emotional, spiritual, mental, physical. We believe that our range of services demonstrates this philosophy.

The Mobile Health and Addictions Outreach Team consists of the following personnel: Housing/Homeless Manager, Senior Addictions Outreach Worker, Street Outreach Worker, Mental Health Worker, Youth Outreach Worker, Ontario Works Addictions Worker, Housing Worker, Cultural Grandmother and Outreach Nurse. The culturally appropriate services offered include:

Mobile Health Services – Treatment for common illnesses, diseases and injuries, STD treatment, Hep C and HIV treatment, medical referrals.

Outreach Services – Personal support, clothing distribution, Biindaghen lunch program at Sandy Hill Health Community Health Centre, referrals to shelters and treatment centres, relapse prevention, Wilderness (on the land) treatment and Healing circles.

Aboriginal people helped in 2008

722 Individuals served:

- 120 Youth Outreach clients
- 141 Outreach Housing clients
- 112 Mental Health clients
- 240 Addictions clients
- 109 Cultural Grandmother clients

1,274 Outreach Mobile Health (medical) clients

In total, there were 8,408 outreach services and referrals on the street.

Hostels to Homes

Hostels to Homes is a housing support pilot project that helps individuals who frequently stay in emergency shelters to obtain housing, skills, and employment.

Participants have spent at least thirty nights in one of the men's emergency shelters in the past year. Also they need to be eligible for *Ontario Works* benefits, to be motivated to be housed, and to be employed or participating in skills training.

Caseworkers at *The Ottawa Mission* help participants find housing, work, and obtain services, sometimes accompanying them to appointments. They also host a monthly meeting at which participants have a communal meal and listen to a guest speaker.

Participants in *Hostels to Homes* may have longstanding addictions and mental health challenges that have previously made it difficult to maintain employment and housing. *Hostels to Homes* caseworkers work closely with participants to help them maintain housing and meet goals.

In Phase 1, caseworkers helped 55 men with housing and phase 2 is currently helping another 45 men.

Ben's Story . . .

One participant, Ben, had experienced alcohol addiction and depression for many years. He subsequently lost his job, housing, and was staying at the Ottawa Mission. Ben later secured subsidized housing, but he felt that he needed additional help. Ben participated in Hostels to Homes and program staff helped him set up direct rent deposits.

Although Ben relapsed four times during the 18 month program, Hostels to Homes staff continued to encourage him to achieve goals. Ben later enrolled in an addiction treatment program and anxiety disorder clinic to help regain control over his life. He currently lives in a second stage housing facility, works part-time, and attends regular Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Ben admits that he feels better than he has in many years and is hopeful for the future.



Photo: The Ottawa Mission

Hostels to Homes staff at The Ottawa Mission

Hostels to Homes

- **Helped to house 55 men during Phase 1.**
- **Even though 14 participants lost housing during this phase, *Hostels to Homes* staff helped them to obtain new housing immediately.**
- **34 participants secured employment (16 full-time, 18 part-time).**
- **An additional 13 participants participated in a skills training or education program.**

Helping people live in rooming houses

In the spring of 2008, the *Rooming House Pilot Project* began as a unique collaboration of two of Ottawa's drop-in centres, *Centre 507* and *The Well/La Source*. Each drop-in balances the provision of services between those living on the street or in shelters and those with housing. This Pilot allows a staff member at each location to help vulnerable tenants living in rooming houses to maintain their housing. A rooming house may be the only viable option for tenants on a low income and others without a strong housing history.

Funding from the *Federal Homelessness Partnership Initiative* allows staff in the two drop-ins to work with tenants in an individualized case management approach that supports clients through tenant/landlord negotiation and advocacy, rental arrears crises, referrals to mental health and addiction services, and life skills and personal development. They work closely with landlords to provide information and support to resolve problems, and also support clients in their desire to move to another housing option such as subsidized, supportive and market rent single units.

In the first nine months, 30 men and 19 women have taken part in the project, all of whom have retained permanent housing without having to resort to an emergency shelter (18 of the 49 clients had done so in the previous year). All of the participants identified an increase in constructive coping skills, a sense of hope for the future, and an overall positive outlook since joining the project.



Co-Director, Janet McInnes, and Supportive Services Coordinator, Darlene Carew, at *The Well / La Source* drop-in for women

***The Well* staff finds that rooming houses are the only viable choice for women living on Ontario Works in Ottawa's housing market where most rents exceed their total income.** They also see that it is critical that people are connected to community resources for basic needs such as food, clothing, laundry, etc.

One woman living in a rooming house was pregnant, struggling with a bedbug problem, and feeling frustrated. Margaret, the rooming house support worker, helped her with cleaning supplies, a new set of sheets, a bed cover and laundry chits. She introduced her to the Centretown Community Health Centre nurse who visits *The Well* to deal with her pregnancy concerns, spent time talking with her about her frustrations, and invited her to spend time with *The Well's* community of women.

Another woman, who survived a serious car accident that left her with many disabilities including a brain injury, lived on the top floor of a rooming house with no elevator. Margaret quickly realized that this woman had somehow slipped through the cracks. The first thing Margaret did was help her find a family doctor who was amazed that no one was following this woman's health concerns and immediately set her up for many tests, and organized physiotherapy sessions. Margaret worked with *The Social Housing Registry* to find the woman more suitable housing and also helped her obtain ODSP, get some furniture and household items and set her up with *Para-Transpo*. **This woman's whole life has changed.**



Centre Manager, Caroline Ann Giekes and Susan Alcott, the Rooming House Support Worker at *Centre 507*

***Centre 507* is on Bank Street downtown where there are numerous rooming houses.** Many people who come to the drop-in live in those rooming houses and they share stories of sub-standard living conditions, the sense of isolation that comes from leaving one's street-life community, frustrations with neighbours and landlords, and the challenges of sharing bath and kitchen facilities. This pilot allows *Centre 507* to provide ongoing support so people can make a successful and permanent transition from homelessness and street life.

From emergency shelter to a future with hope: a 28 year old man first tried to move from an emergency shelter to a sub-par rooming house. The front doors to the building had no locks, the smoke detector had been taken apart by another tenant, the stove was not operational, and the hallway was filled with piles of garbage. After a few long months he grew quite tired of the drug addicted and alcoholic neighbours asking for money and soon stopped taking his medications. He left town but a few months later he called *Centre 507*.

The Pilot Project meant they were able to immediately arrange a room in a rooming house owned by a social housing provider. Within two months of settling in he was offered a job at a local fast food chain, was back on his medication, and participating in group activities at *Centre 507*.

The right to 'regular' housing Housing First Solutions for CMHA

The *Housing First* philosophy promotes supporting individuals to move directly from a state of homelessness into permanent housing.

Since 2001, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Ottawa Branch has secured federal homelessness funding and Ministry of Health funding to support people in 250 rent-supplemented units and 32 condominium units. Rents are low because there are no mortgage payments to make. Residents sign a regular lease and stay as long as they desire.

"Purchasing condos is more economical because in the rental market both rent and rent supplements keep getting more expensive," says CMHA's Executive Director Marion Wright. "When we use rent supplements in private housing, it means that more of the existing, private housing stock becomes available to our clientele."

Clients must be homeless when they move in, must have 'severe and persistent mental illness', and possibly addictions. Preference is given to women.

The residents are all recipients of intensive case management and have either a case manager or outreach worker. When they no longer need ongoing support, they may keep their units, along with their access to CMHA's crisis support.

"The condos are our innovative and economical approach to having units across the city. It means clients who have been homeless can live in the community without stigma and integrate more easily," says Ms. Wright.

About Julia . . . *Julia has lived in a CMHA unit for 18 months. Before moving into the apartment she had been battling with addictions, had been a victim of abusive relationships and was suffering from depression. She was evicted from her previous apartment after her ex-boyfriend left without paying his share of the rent. Having a stable place to live has given Julia the opportunity she needed to move on.*

"I was at a real low point: two close family members had recently passed away, I was out on the street and had nowhere to go.

Luckily, Housing Help connected me with CMHA who found me this apartment. Now, I can't think of a more wonderful place to live.

The apartment is the number one factor in my life. It gave me my chance to get cleaned up and now I have a space that is truly mine where I can paint and write." *Julia*



Photo: CMHA Ottawa Branch

CMHA's Executive Director Marion Wright reviews the latest condo properties with Housing Program Coordinator Paddy York

Message from Emergency Shelters, *continued from Page 3*

Emergency Shelters in Ottawa

Cornerstone/Le Pillier (women)
The Ottawa Mission (men)
Salvation Army Booth Centre (men)
Shepherds of Good Hope (men & women)
Evelyn Horne Young Women's Shelter &
Young Men's Shelter (Youth Services Bureau)
Family Shelters (2), City of Ottawa
Reception House, Catholic Immigration Centre
(newcomers)
YMCA-YWCA and Motel Rooms

Their Funding Sources

Organizations providing shelter and other services are supported by a combination of community and government resources.

40 to 80% Government

20 to 60% Raised by people in the community as donations or in-kind assistance

These organizations step up to the plate to help in variety of ways

All provide emergency shelter and basic needs, case management and housing search assistance. Other services depend on the people they serve – streets to homes housing – transitional and supportive housing – addictions support – food banks – Hospice – Primary Care Medical Clinic – Dental Clinic – Street Outreach Van – Special Care Units – Job Training – Winter Warmth . . . and the list goes on.

John Howard Society's Housing Initiative

The John Howard Society (JHS) has a pilot project in Ottawa that provides housing support for individuals who have been released from prison. Having served their sentences, many are released with no concrete living plans in place.

These clients are homeless or at a risk of being homeless; they are in crisis with no place to live, nothing to eat, and sometimes without their medications.



Photo: The John Howard Society

Dan Power, above, provides reintegration support at *The John Howard Society*, and says,

“Our clients are people without a home and without a plan, forced to be on the streets because of a lack of coordinated processes.

They depend on *The John Howard Society* to help them sort through the bureaucracy and stabilize them in their crises, including housing and finances. They are people in need, just like anyone else struggling to survive.”

Often these services are developed through partnerships with other community-based agencies including: *Action Logement/Action Housing*; *Housing Help*; *Options Bytown*; *The Rooming House Network*, and *Centre 507*.

Through this pilot, Dan, and *The John Howard Society* team helped 150 people last year.

Many clients are provided with assistance to overcome challenges to adjust to life after incarceration. For example, when applying for *Ontario Works (OW)* - the process can be started before their release, but cannot be completed until the client is available to present himself to the OW office. *JHS* also provides lessons in life-skills and anger management as well as literacy programs. There is even role-playing practice to address scenarios with potential landlords.

These services play a part in finding and keeping shelter. These efforts are also an integral part in rendering the broader community safer by reducing recidivism to previous lifestyles.

Over 100 individuals have been housed and nearly half of them have sustained their housing for over three months. There is much optimism that this number will increase substantially in the coming months.

The team at *JHS* provides intensive case management and service coordination through four phases.

- 1. Pre-discharge housing assessment and release planning;**
- 2. Post-release housing and support services;**
- 3. Community stabilization; and**
- 4. Community reintegration.**

Lighting candles – not cursing the darkness

Multifaith Housing Initiative

While awaiting a coordinated plan to eliminate homelessness, local groups have stepped into the breach and shown how energy, imagination and commitment can make a difference.

MHI Board Members, with patron Anne Squire (front row, third from right), pose proudly at the Somerset Gardens site in June 2006



Photo: Multifaith Housing Initiative

The *Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI)* of Ottawa is an example of one such group. It started in 2002 in recognition of the lack of affordable housing and the growing problem of homelessness and the desire of different faith traditions to tackle the problem together.

MHI now includes members of the Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Unitarian faiths.

MHI's first project was Kent House, purchased in 2005. It contains two bachelor and three one bedroom apartments.

Somerset Gardens, a 10 storey, 119 unit condominium developed on land purchased from St. John's Anglican Church, received a 2008 a CMHC "Best Practices Award" in Affordable Housing.

For 'Sandra' living in Somerset Gardens has meant a huge drop in stress. . . **"It's clean, new, safe . . . I know what my housing costs are . . . half of what I was paying before . . . I feel very lucky to have found MHI."**

MHI purchased ten of the units in the building, six of which are rented at much below market rents (\$460 per month) to persons qualified by the *City of Ottawa* as requiring rental assistance. The remaining four are rented at \$793 per month.

It took the combined efforts of many people and organizations to make the Somerset Gardens project happen:

- *Teron Inc* sold the units at a preferential rate;
- The *City of Ottawa* provided a capital grant of \$300,000 as well as deferring other fees and charges;
- The *Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing* provided a grant of \$600,000 through the *Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program Agreement*;
- CMHC waived the mortgage insurance fee; and
- *MHI* supporters provided \$200 000 in loans and donations.

In October 2008 *MHI* purchased Blake House, a 27 unit apartment building in Vanier, with a mixture of bachelor, one- and very large two-bedroom units, helped by a federal/provincial grant of \$840,000.

Twelve two-bedroom units will be converted to much needed three-bedroom units.

As a unique way of involving the public in the project, *MHI* has asked people to "*Buy a Brick for Blake*" at a cost of \$27 per brick, eligible for a tax receipt.

See www.multifaithhousing.ca for more details.

Affordable housing builds healthy communities!

Great neighbours



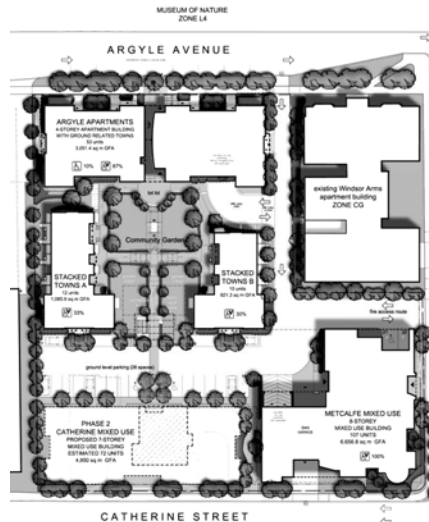
Photos on this page - Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC): above left, McLeod Street rowhouse; bottom left, Gilmour/MacLaren townhouse; top right, excavation at the award winning Richmond Road development; middle right, 145 Clarence Street; and bottom right, rendering of 424 Metcalfe beginning construction in 2009.

CCOC provides housing to low and moderate income households in over 1,300 units. In 2008, one in four households was occupied by families with children, while over 50% of units were occupied by singles. 29% of tenants were members of a visible minority. CCOC has agreements with 6 community agencies that provide support services to tenants in more than 100 units.



- ✓ **A stable, affordable home** allows people to find and keep a job; seniors and disabled people to live with dignity; and kids to make friends, do well in school and grow up healthy.
- ✓ **Tenants in affordable housing get involved** – they vote, voice their concerns about community issues like traffic, noise and crime, participate in community events and volunteer for local charities.
- ✓ **Development is a catalyst for neighbourhood revitalization.** Affordable housing gives new life to vacant areas. The entire neighbourhood benefits from community programs that often accompany housing.
- ✓ While low income tenants don't have a lot of spending power, they provide a **steady economic base for local shops and services.**
- ✓ **Affordable housing** contributes to local employment. Businesses can't attract employees without affordable homes for them to live in.
- ✓ **Investment in affordable housing saves government money.** It is cheaper than running shelters and hostels and is a cost-effective long term solution to homelessness. As mortgages are paid down, Ottawa's stock of affordable housing can be leveraged to build more housing.
- ✓ **Housing is a permanent asset.** From the mid-1960's until 1995, forward looking governments invested in non profit housing. That housing provides over 24,500 homes for people across all wards of Ottawa, managed by over 80 organizations including municipal and private non-profits, co-operatives, faith-based and service organizations.

Great buildings



Ending homelessness at the LOCAL level

Municipal Government response

Municipal decisions and policies affect the availability of affordable housing, financial assistance, community programs and services and homelessness services, such as emergency shelter, housing loss prevention and supportive housing. Local decisions also affect the ability of people to be included in community life.

Ending homelessness involves commitment and resources from all three tiers of government. These vary considerably and are often subject to change due to the budget or government of the day. Federal and provincial decisions support or constrain local efforts.

In 2008 in Ottawa there were only:

- 134 new affordable housing units for 9,692 families and individuals on the waiting list; *the City's target was 500 units.*
- 915 supportive housing units compared to 6,864 people using the emergency shelter system.

The majority of homeless people are coping with economic factors that are at the root of the problem: the lack of affordable housing and very low incomes. They need affordable, appropriate housing.

For some people health issues must be addressed to help them move out of homelessness. Others will need skill development for employment, etc. Supportive housing is a good transitional solution to help some homeless people adjust to independent living.

What does our community need from the local government?

1. **More determination, innovation and effective effort is required at the City to meet its own annual target of 500 units of affordable and appropriate housing.** Currently the number of new affordable housing units is miniscule.
2. **All decisions at the City level (i.e., budget allocations, Bylaws, development approvals, use of public space) must meet the needs of the whole community including those who have low incomes.**
3. **The City must also assertively engage the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada in meeting Ottawa's housing needs by bringing enough resources to the table.**

The City's share of the operating subsidy for our 56 housing providers is funded on the property tax base and is not sustainable. The City does not have the financial capacity to keep the housing stock in good repair, nor to provide sufficient resources for health, addictions and mental health services to ensure homelessness is not the result of poor health.

Local community response

In addition to *The Alliance to End Homelessness'* advocacy work directed at the three levels of government and its local public education and research activities, people across the city act to help homeless people.

1. Private Sector Volunteers and Donors

Many thousands of people in our community donate food and other material goods so that homeless people have something to eat and wear. People also get directly involved. Over 700,000 hours of service a year are provided by volunteers in agencies supporting homeless people. *Cornerstone/Le Pilier*, the women's shelter, is a good illustration:

- 17% of its funding is from community donations.
- 85 people and 35 groups from across the community volunteer their time.
- Others give in-kind assistance (sheets, linens, self care products, feminine products, food and clothing and gifts at special times).

2. Civic Leaders and Groups

One good example is *Dharma Developments*, an Ottawa home builder. They work with other Ottawa business sponsors to host URBANA, an annual fundraiser to support community programs with the goal of preventing homelessness in Ottawa.

Another is *The Ottawa Leadership Table on Homelessness*, a group of business, community and government leaders, which has set a goal to annually create 100 units of supported housing for people who are chronically homeless.

3. Community Action Plan on Homelessness

The *City of Ottawa*, as the *Service System Manager for Homelessness*, is guided by the *Community Action Plan on Homelessness* which recommends:

- 50 units of affordable rental housing per year be developed through the private sector for capital funding and private-public-non-profit partnerships;
- 50 units of transitional housing be created annually and 100 units new supportive housing annually;
- Implementation of the *Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program* (the 2008 goal was 205).

**"Big problems require big ideas!
We'll make real gains
in ending homelessness
when communities have enough
affordable housing."**

Perry Rowe
Chair, Alliance to End Homelessness

Ending homelessness at the PROVINCIAL level

Provincial Government response

The present government commitment at all levels is just nibbling at the edges of homelessness. Ontario's response plays out across several policy areas: rental, affordable and social housing; income benefits and wages; and mental health, addiction and healthcare services.

Provincial policies fall short of obvious need:

- A single mother with two children on Ontario Works gets 60% of Statistics Canada Low-Income Cutoff (LICO) line for Ottawa.
- A single person on a disability pension gets less than 60% of the low income line.
- A full-time job (40 hour week) at \$15.35 an hour is required to pay for a one bedroom apartment compared to the minimum wage of \$8.75 (using the government's affordability standard of 30% of income for housing).
- Only 134 affordable housing units were created in Ottawa in 2008 with federal/provincial/municipal funds.
- Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has an "official" affordable housing waiting list of 124,032. Since 2002, it has funded an average of only 1,237 new affordable homes annually. At this rate, it will take 100 years just to provide homes for households currently on the provincial waiting lists.

Homelessness is the extreme indication of poverty. As Ontario begins to act on poverty reduction, it is critical to recognise that harsh reality. When 7,045 individuals and family members had to stay in an emergency shelter in 2008 in Ottawa, it is a profound signal that the province needs to spend more on affordable housing and income supports.

Stable housing is a precondition for economic stability. All other poverty reduction measures will not be effective if individuals and families are not in stable housing. It is time to insist that Ontario stop counting on emergency shelters to be the last-resort solution to the province's housing problems and the shortage of addictions and mental health services.

Everyone's role

Personal income taxes underwrite the provincial contribution to ending homelessness. Homelessness is not free and people in Ottawa are entitled to question provincial choices.

Right now Ontario is spending relatively little on affordable housing. The province and our politicians have a choice:

- Ontario could be using taxes to pay for the creation of affordable housing in combination with other poverty reduction measures, or Ontario can keep making decisions that result in people becoming homeless and continue paying for hospitals or jails for homeless people.

Voters need to be very direct with their MPPs

- If we want the province to spend more on affordable housing, local Members of Provincial Parliament will need to hear it from constituents.

Creating new housing takes time, so there will be still be a need for funding for homeless shelters and support services during that time.

What does our community need from the provincial government?

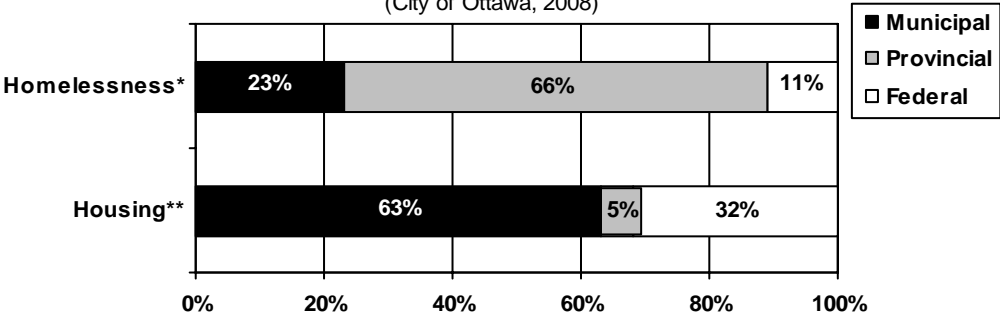
1. **Urgent action to substantially increase the provincial investment in affordable housing.**
2. **A significant increase in funding for treatment and support services to meet the basic demands of chronically homeless people with complex mental health, addiction and healthcare needs.**
3. **Action on the rent crisis in Ottawa to help prevent homelessness.**

Federal, Provincial & Municipal Funding Shares

Homelessness Services and Affordable Housing Programs
(City of Ottawa, 2008)

* **Homelessness** includes:
emergency shelter per diems,
homelessness services (incl.
drop-ins and housing loss
prevention), Rent Bank, and
domiciliary hostels.

** **Housing** includes:
new affordable housing,
homeownership down payment
program, and operating
subsidies for 56 housing
providers (incl. rent subsidies).



Ending homelessness at the FEDERAL level

Federal Government response

Three programs are currently at the heart of federal response to homelessness: the *Affordable Housing Initiative*, the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, and the *Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program*.

Right now Canada is spending relatively little on affordable housing and homelessness compared to the demonstrated need in communities.

Many people do not know that:

- Homelessness and housing funding has been frozen at \$135 million annually for the entire country for the past 10 years.
- The Federal portion of the social housing budget will be gradually eliminated over the next 25 years as existing social housing operating agreements expire and create surplus funds. Communities need the federal government to re-invest these surpluses in the development of new affordable housing.

Everyone's role

Personal income taxes underwrite the federal contribution to ending homelessness.

Homelessness is not free

- Taxes support the federal *Affordable Housing Initiative*, the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, and the *Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program*.
- Most people were glad to see the federal government extend these programs for five years starting April 2009. In fact, many people joined the Alliance to End homelessness in its efforts to help bring this about.

Now MPs need to hear it from constituents

- You can ask that the Canadian Government take direct action and spend significantly more on affordable housing and on homelessness services and supports.

The UN Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing

A Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living and On the Right to Non-discrimination

Released in February 2009, the Report addresses homelessness and inadequate housing in Canada.

- It **“strongly recommends that the right to adequate housing be recognized in federal and provincial legislations as an inherent part of the Canadian legal system.”**

Other recommendations:

- “Adopt a comprehensive and coordinated national housing policy based on indivisibility of human rights and the protection of the most vulnerable. This national strategy should include measurable goals and timetables, consultation and collaboration with affected communities, complaints procedures, and transparent accountability mechanisms.”
- “Reinstating or increasing, where necessary, social housing programmes for those in need, improving and properly enforcing anti-discrimination legislation in the field of housing, increasing shelter allowances and social assistance rates to realistic levels, and providing adequate support services for persons with disabilities.”
- “In order to design efficient policies and programmes, federal, provincial and territorial authorities should work in close collaboration and coordination and they should commit stable and long-term funding to a comprehensive national housing strategy.

Federal, provincial and territorial authorities should also collaborate with authorities that are the closest to the need of the population such as municipal authorities, service providers and civil society organization.”

What does our community need from the federal government?

1. **Action to put in place a National Housing Strategy that enshrines housing as a human right for everyone.**
How many people need to be homeless before the federal government gets back into the affordable housing business?
2. **Increased – and ongoing – funding to enable communities to help people when they are homeless and provide the supports some need to stay housed.**
3. **Improvements in access to and rates of national income support programs.**

Tell our politicians that homelessness is unacceptable!

Detach the letter below or download an electronic copy at www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca

Send the letter to the Prime Minister and copy the Premier of Ontario and the Mayor of Ottawa (addresses below).

Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Office of the Prime Minister

80 Wellington Street

Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

RE: Action Needed By Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Governments to End Homelessness

The Alliance to End Homelessness, a non-partisan coalition of community stakeholders committed to ending homelessness, is deeply concerned about the homelessness crisis in Ottawa and across Canada.

7,045 people spent the night in Ottawa emergency shelters in 2008, including 1,179 children. More than 300,000 Canadians will experience homelessness in 2009. As of 2006, nearly 1.5 million households in Canada live in housing that is unaffordable, inadequate or unsuitable.

We are particularly concerned that Government of Canada funding programs aimed at helping community agencies combat homelessness have been frozen since 1999 despite the increasing number of homeless persons and the complexity of their service needs. The 2009 Federal Budget promised \$2 billion for housing but will do little to help those in greatest need of housing. None of this money will be spent unless the provinces and territories agree to share costs. This funding arrangement has previously prevented money allocated for housing from being spent. A more effective relationship among the three tiers is imperative.

The Alliance to End Homelessness and concerned Canadians urgently call upon the Government of Canada to invest in affordable housing and homelessness initiatives. We ask that the Government of Canada:

- **Establish a National Housing Strategy that enshrines housing as a human right for everyone;**
- **Increase funding to help communities address homelessness and make it ongoing; and**
- **Improve access to and the rates of national income support programs so people can afford housing.**

Print Name: _____ Signature and Date: _____

Address: _____

Cc: Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Email: dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Premier McGuinty, we urgently call upon the Government of Ontario to increase funding for affordable housing.

Cc: Mayor Larry O'Brien, City of Ottawa, 110 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, ON K1P 1J1

Email: larry.obrien@ottawa.ca

Mayor O'Brien, we call upon the City of Ottawa to take action to end homelessness by addressing the needs of all persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



The **Alliance to End Homelessness** produces *The Report Card on ENDING Homelessness in Ottawa, Dec-Jan 2008* with funding from its agency members and by United Way/Centraide Ottawa. We thank the many contributors to the fifth edition. Editor: Lynne Browne. **More information at www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca**