



Alliance  
to End Homelessness  
Ottawa

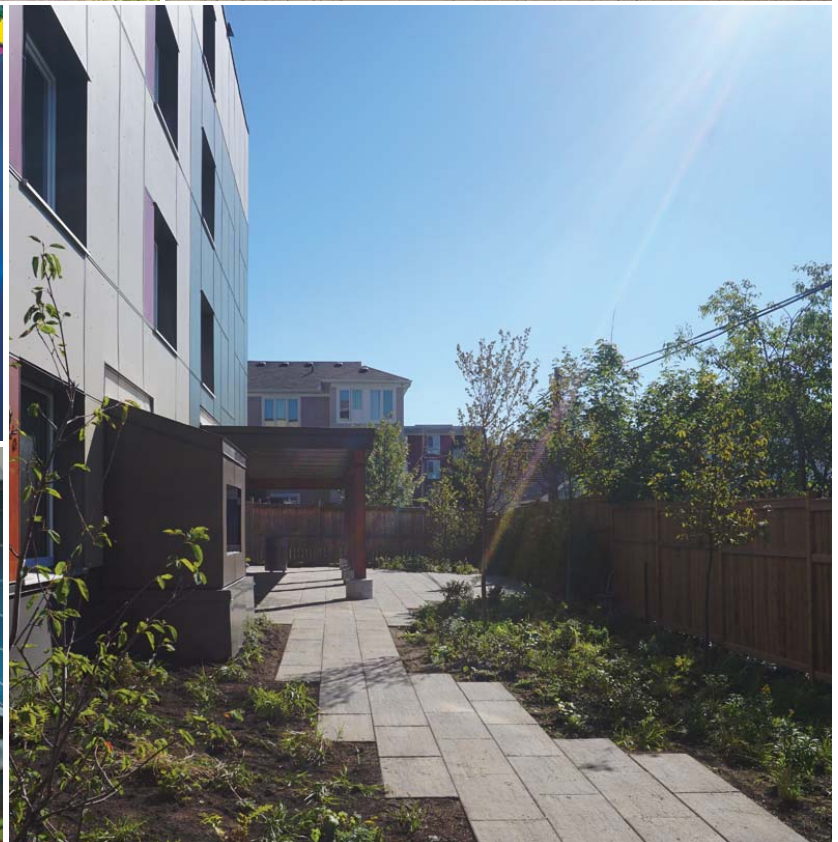
# 2016 PROGRESS REPORT

ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN OTTAWA



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Clockwise from top left: New townhomes by Ottawa Community Housing at Michele Heights opened in 2016 (credit: Ottawa Community Housing); Community BBQ at 395 Somerset Street (credit: Ottawa Community Housing); Outside garden at Ottawa Salus' Karen's Place on Clementine (credit: CSV Architects); A tenant in his own home (credit: Ottawa Salus); The Ottawa Mission Diane Morrison Hospice, a partnership with Ottawa Inner City Health, has 21 beds for men and women dealing with terminal or life-threatening illness (photo by Luther Caverly).



# INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Alliance's Progress Report on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa takes stock – assessing movement towards our goals. With the adoption of Ottawa's Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2013, we committed to ending chronic homelessness by 2024. Emboldened by provincial commitments and the emergence of a National Housing Strategy, we have reason to be hopeful.

In reviewing 2016, we are reminded that priorities require investment. 2016 shows limited progress in some areas, and worsening trends in others.

**Is our Ten-Year Plan responsive to emerging issues? Are we addressing the issues contributing to homelessness?**

It is as important as ever that we evaluate how we are doing, and where investment is needed.



Left: Sustaining affordable homes at 380 Murray Street  
(credit: Ottawa Community Housing);



Right: A Managed Alcohol Program resident in his permanent home  
(credit: CBC and Shepherds of Good Hope).

**BY THE NUMBERS** *Ottawa's Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan (2014–2023) includes a number of commitments and targets to achieve by 2024. By focusing on an increase in affordable housing options and on ensuring people get the support they need, the Plan envisions fewer emergency shelter stays overall – and stays of 30 days or less (an end to chronic homelessness) – by 2024. To ensure progress, the Alliance measures annual change in several areas related to emergency shelters, housing affordability and the number of new affordable housing options created each year. Of course, shelter data is only one indication of homelessness; other individuals in our community are among the 'hidden homeless,' staying with friends and family, or in unsheltered environments. All are without a home of their own.*

For the second consecutive year, 2016 saw a rise in the number of individuals using an emergency shelter: from 6,815 individuals in 2015 to 7,170 in 2016, **an increase of 355 individuals, or 5.2% (Table 1)**. The number of “bed nights” – representing each time a shelter bed is used by an individual – increased from 500,233 to 525,972, an increase of 5.1%.

**While more men are accessing shelter, their stays are becoming shorter.**

149 more single men accessed shelter in 2016 (3,113 individuals) compared to 2015 (2,964 individuals). Yet, the total number of bed nights within this group fell by 1.3%, with a cumulative decline of 4.2% since 2014.

Is this significant? Yes. **The average length of stay for single men in Ottawa's shelters declined from 65 nights in 2014 to 61 nights in 2016 (Table 2)** – representing some success in finding housing solutions, with services and supports, for some of the shelters' longest-term single male residents, and diverting others from becoming chronically homeless.

<div><b>Table 1: NUMBER OF PERSONS USING OVERNIGHT MEN'S, WOMEN'S, YOUTH AND FAMILY EMERGENCY SHELTERS AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR</b></div> <div><b>Alliance Goal:</b> To reduce the number by 500 each year</div> <div>Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa</div>			
	2015	2016	Change
Total	6815	7170	+355 (5.2%)
Single Men	2964	3113	+149 (5.0%)
Single Women	916	967	+51 (5.6%)
Single Youth (in youth shelters)	387	287	-100 (-25.8%)
Families	781	879	+98 (12.5%)
Dependents (17 and under)	1480	1577	+97 (6.5%)
Individuals within Families	2634	2861	+227 (8.6%)
Total Bed Nights	500,233	525,972	+25,739 (5.1%)

<div><b>Table 2: AVERAGE LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY (NIGHTS)</b></div> <div><b>Alliance Goal:</b> To reduce the average length of stay by 3 nights per year</div> <div>Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa</div>			
	2015	2016	Change
Average (all clients)	73	73	-
Single Men	64	61	-3
Single Women	59	59	-
Single Youth (in youth shelters)	32	47	+15
Families	92	93	+1

## Without alternatives, a growing number of older women are residing in shelters for longer periods of time.

As was true for men, more single women accessed shelter in 2016.

967 single women slept in an Ottawa shelter in 2016, 51 more than 2015 – an increase of 5.6%. Bed nights are also increasing and the average length of stay – though holding steady – is not declining as it is among men. In particular, a growing number of older women are staying for longer periods in shelter due to a lack of alternative options to meet their health and housing needs.

From 2015 to 2016, shelters saw a **20.1% increase in the number of women over 50 and a 31.2% increase among those over 60**. For women over 60, their average length of stay increased from 76 days in 2014, to 82 days in 2015, to 86 days in 2016.

It is clear that more needs to be done to address the housing precarity of our aging population, and to address the needs of older women, specifically.

## Individuals in families now account for over half of all bed nights used within Ottawa's shelters.

In 2015, data showed an increase in families accessing shelter. This trend continues. A total of 879 families accessed emergency shelter in 2016, a 12.5% increase from 2015 (781 families), and a **24.5% increase from 2014** (706 families). **Ottawa's family shelters are full.**

As a result in 2016, an average of **347 individuals per night, equating to 91 family and couple households, were placed in off-site motels**. The cost of providing safe shelter for all of these households in motels was nearly \$4.5 million over the year. They provide an emergency response, but funds could be better invested in housing solutions to address the long-term needs of families.

Despite the increase in the number of families experiencing homelessness, a family's average length of stay rose only slightly (from 92 days in 2015 to 93 days in 2016). Organizations supporting homeless families transitioning to housing report numerous successes: many of those who were housed were among those prioritized for social housing on the Centralized Waiting List. Others accessed units through the private market with the assistance of 45 new rent supplements and 13 new Housing Allowances (see page 7). These investments – less than the cost of motels – are helping families to become stably and permanently re-housed.



Construction of Multifaith Housing Initiative's The Haven, opening 2017 (credit: MHI)



Right: New Horizons for Seniors Tenant Group (credit: Ottawa Community Housing)



**Table 3: NUMBER OF SINGLE YOUTH, AGED 16-25, USING ANY EMERGENCY SHELTER AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR**

// with Average Length of Shelter Stay (nights) = Avg LOS

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2015	2016	Change
Total	901	844	-57 (-6.3%)
Male Youth	550 // Avg LOS: 41	519 // Avg LOS: 36	-31 (-5.6%)
Female Youth	351 // Avg LOS: 37	325 // Avg LOS: 44	-26 (-7.4%)

### Youth are staying longer in shelter.

The number of youth staying within Ottawa's youth shelters (Tables 1 and 2) declined significantly (from 387 youth in 2015 to 287 in 2016) while the use of shelter beds actually increased by 8.4% -- as the average length of stay increased from 32 to 47 nights.

It is important to note that **the proportion of young people aged 16-17 within youth shelters is increasing**; without safe, alternative housing options for these "younger youth," shelters are offering enhanced supports and retaining youth for longer periods of time until appropriate housing becomes available, including the possibility of family reconnection.

Recognizing this trend, it's important to ask: With fewer youth staying longer, how many older, transitional-aged youth (18-25) are unable to access youth-oriented emergency shelter space, and are left needing space within our adult-oriented shelters?

**Table 4: NUMBER OF OLDER ADULTS, AGED 50+, USING AN EMERGENCY SHELTER AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR**

// with Average Length of Shelter Stay (nights) = Avg LOS

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2015	2016	Change
Total	1264	1352	+88 (7.0%)
Males	991 // Avg LOS: 88	1024 // Avg LOS: 85	+33 (3.3%)
Females	273 // Avg LOS: 79	328 // Avg LOS: 87	+55 (20.1%)

**Table 5: NUMBER OF CHRONICALLY AND/OR EPISODICALLY HOMELESS CLIENTS IN A GIVEN YEAR**

(with Average Length of Shelter Stay (nights) = Avg LOS)

**Ten-Year Plan Goal:** By 2024, there will be no chronic homelessness in Ottawa.

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2015	2016	Change
Single Men // Chronically Homeless	362 // Avg LOS: 277	351 // Avg LOS: 273	-11 (-3.0%)
Single Men // Episodically Homeless	61 // Avg LOS: 56	76 // Avg LOS: 59	+15 (24.6%)
Single Women // Chronically Homeless	86 // Avg LOS: 276	91 // Avg LOS: 266	+5 (5.8%)
Single Women // Episodically Homeless	18 // Avg LOS: 66	13 // Avg LOS: 50	-5 (-27.8%)
Family Units // Chronically Homeless	78 // Avg LOS: 252	87 // Avg LOS: 252	+9 (11.5%)
Family Units // Episodically Homeless	0	0	0

**Chronically homeless** refers to people who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e., have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter). **Episodically homeless** refers to people who have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year (of note, episodes are defined as periods when a person stays in a shelter, leaves for at least 30 days, and then returns to stay at the shelter again). Some clients may be both chronic and episodic. As a result, they would be included in both categories.

## More affordable housing options were created than in 2015. Many more are needed.

After a record low number of new affordable housing in 2015, **320 new affordable housing options were created in 2016 (Table 6).**

Among these, 42 new supportive rental homes by Ottawa Salus and 6 new town homes by Ottawa Community Housing opened. A combination of federal, provincial and municipal dollars helped to create 100 new rent supplements and 132 new Housing Allowances – supporting 58 families and 174 individuals. Through the provincial Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, another 36 new rent supplements were created as part of the Mental Health and Addictions Initiative. Finally, Habitat for Humanity opened 4 new homes.

**Table 6: NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS**

**Ten-Year Plan Goal:** To create new affordable housing options, using a combination of newly built housing units and newly administered housing subsidies

Source: City of Ottawa

	2015	2016
New Affordable Units	34	48
Newly administered Rent Supplements	0	100
Newly administered Housing Allowances	0	132
Other subsidies (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care)	12	36
New Affordable Homes created through Habitat for Humanity	1	4
Total	47	320

### RENT SUPPLEMENTS

- Rent subsidized to 30% of income
- Paid to landlord
- Contract with landlord
- Subsidy is attached to the unit
- Client removed from the Centralized Waiting List (CWL)

The Rent Supplement Program provides rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance to qualifying households selected from the CWL for social housing. The City contracts with private landlords for a specific unit(s) who are willing to participate in the program. The household, in receipt of a rent supplement, pays approximately 30% of their gross monthly income as rent to the landlord and the remaining portion of the total monthly rent is paid directly to the landlord by the City as a rent supplement in not-for-profit, co-operative or privately owned buildings. The subsidy is attached to the unit and therefore cannot be transferred if the tenant wishes to move to another location/dwelling.

### HOUSING ALLOWANCES

- \$250 for an individual, \$50 for additional member
- Paid to tenant
- Contract with the tenant
- Subsidy is portable within the City
- Client remains on Centralized Waiting List (CWL)

A Housing Allowance is a subsidy that can be paid directly to a qualifying tenant in need of assistance to cover housing rental costs. This benefit is \$250 for a single person and \$50 for each additional family member and could be paid directly to the landlord. It is portable anywhere in the City and does not necessarily involve the participation of the landlord. A household in receipt of a Housing Allowance may choose to remain on the CWL for social housing as it normally provides a greater subsidy.

## Table 7: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Alliance Goal:** To make housing more affordable by improving peoples' incomes

Sources: Statistics Canada, CMHC, Province of Ontario

	2015	2016	Change
Average Market Rent (bachelor apartment)	\$801	\$812	+ \$11
Ontario Works (OW) per single individual / per month	\$681	\$706	+ \$25*
% required for average rent	117.6%	115.0%	- 2.6%
Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) per single individual/per month	\$1,110	\$1,128	+ \$18*
% required for average rent	72.2%	72.0%	- 0.2%
Minimum wage	\$11.25 / hr	\$11.40 / hr	+ \$0.15
% required for average rent	41%	41%	-

\* Within changes to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program from 2015 to 2016 (like from 2014 to 2015), Maximum Shelter Amounts were unchanged for single individuals; the increases reflect increases within the Basic Needs component.



## CENTRALIZED WAITING LIST

**Table 8a: Active Households on the Central Waiting List for Affordable Housing: December 31, 2016**

Household Type	2015	2016
Seniors (60+)	2,137	2,263
Families	3,552	3,421
Single Adults	3,776	3,756
2+ Adults	634	612
Total number of active households	10,099	10,052

**Table 8b: Active Households on the Central Waiting List, Primary Applicant Age 16-24**

Household Type	2015	2016
Families	217	156
Single Adults	435	375
2+ Adults	27	30



# LOOKING AHEAD: THREE KEY MESSAGES

Ottawa's Ten-Year Plan is a long-term commitment to reducing shelter stays to less than 30 days. In making this commitment, the Plan envisions a 40% savings in funding to emergency shelters.

**Are we on track?** Into the fourth year of a 10-year plan, we've seen progress in some areas, but several numbers are clearly trending in the wrong direction.

But we can get back on track. We need to build on current and new investments to achieve success. Three key messages emerge.

## 1. WE NEED A STRONG FOCUS ON PREVENTION.

Too many poor households are falling into long periods of homelessness. Ottawa's Centralized Waiting List (for subsidized housing) includes over 10,000 households (Table 8). In 2016, 1,769 households from this list were moved into permanent, affordable housing. Less than 1/3 of these households were those whose primary concern was affordability. Others who were housed were individuals experiencing crisis – whether due to homelessness, health concerns exacerbated by housing, or family violence. With fewer resources, those who are “simply poor” (e.g., low-income individuals and families) are offered fewer and fewer opportunities. And, we know that across our city – downtown and in our suburban and rural communities – nearly 22,000 renter households are spending in excess of 50% of their income on rent and utilities. They remain at serious risk of losing their home.

How many families, who were once supported by the community's Housing Loss Prevention Network, are no longer able to access support before they lose their housing? How many young people are unable to access the supports they need, left “couch surfing” during a critical period of adolescent development? How many Indigenous, Inuit and Métis members of our community are left without critical supports?

Prevention – reducing the risk of needing emergency shelter – needs to be a key principle guiding a strong, robust strategy to reduce shelter dependency. Implementing several initiatives intended to support housing affordability and to prevent housing loss could make the difference:

- ▶ The Government of Canada has launched consultations towards development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- ▶ The Province of Ontario's Income Security Reform Working Group is expected to release recommendations in summer 2017 – a roadmap for social assistance reform, income security and supports for housing, health and employment.

- ▶ The Province has also committed to introduce a Basic Income Pilot in spring 2017, with expressed goals of lifting more residents out of poverty in order to achieve long-term improvements in health and housing.
- ▶ Provincial Parliamentary Secretary Ted McMeekin is to report on rural poverty in Ontario in summer, 2017, making policy recommendations to inform provincial poverty reduction efforts.

Recognizing the need for renewed attention to prevention, an evaluation of the impact of removing funding in 2015 for Ottawa's Housing Loss Prevention Network is also needed.

## 2. THERE AREN'T ENOUGH APPROPRIATE HOUSING OPTIONS. SHELTERS ARE MEETING A CRUCIAL NEED.

We all believe a shelter is not a permanent home. However, in the absence of sufficient appropriate, affordable, safe and supportive housing options within the community, shelters have necessarily evolved to offer a range of innovative, cost-effective solutions to an interim crisis. During this period, shelters are working to support individuals, preparing them for successful housing interventions.

Many shelter-based services could be situated within appropriate housing – if it was to be available – where they may deliver better outcomes. For example, residents of The Oaks supportive housing residence – once long-term shelter clients – are living healthier and longer lives with the support of the residential Managed Alcohol Program, delivered by Shepherds of Good Hope and Ottawa Inner City Health Inc. Additional shelter residents need this program, but without additional housing units, are instead enrolled in a shelter-based version – an example of one program that could offer better outcomes if delivered within a supportive housing model.

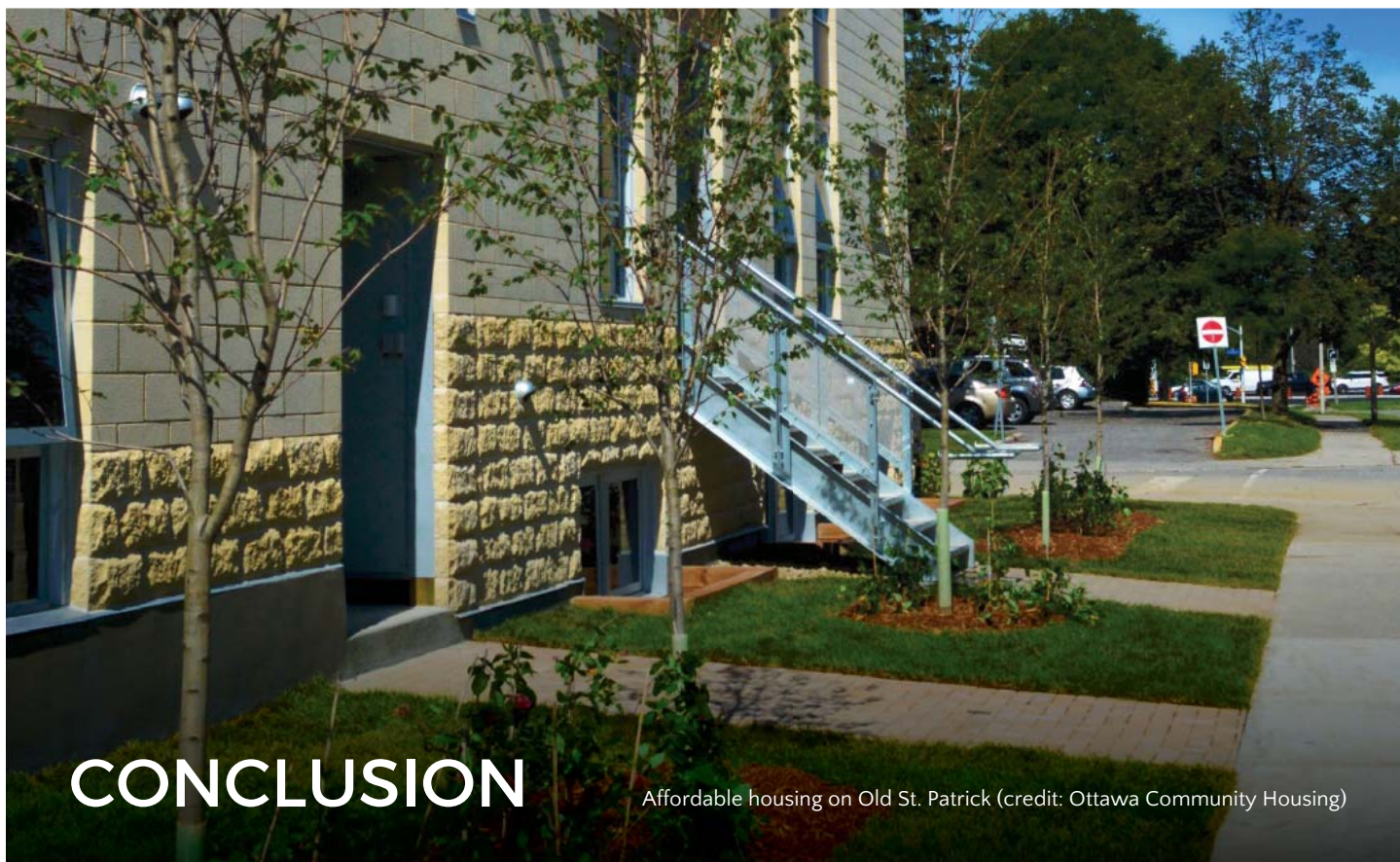
The demand for affordable housing remains high, and the supply is low – an imbalance that needs to be addressed within our Ten-Year Plan. A number of opportunities to expand availability of housing options need to be fully embraced and acted upon, including:

- ▶ As they move towards a National Housing Strategy, the Government of Canada's 2017 Budget introduced \$11.2 billion in spending over 11 years in a variety of initiatives designed to build, renew and repair Canada's stock of affordable housing and help ensure that Canadians have affordable housing that meets their needs. While the Government recognized many Canadians see housing as a right, the Government's own intentions need further clarification when a funding and policy framework are implemented.
- ▶ Additional Provincial investments in supportive housing – some scheduled to begin in 2019 – are needed now.
- ▶ The City of Ottawa removed \$4 million of its own discretionary spending – previously allocated to development of new affordable housing – in 2015. Now is the time to reinstate this envelope.
- ▶ In December 2016, the Province of Ontario passed legislation enabling the City of Ottawa to implement inclusionary zoning guidelines. Along with updated Guidelines for the implementation of Section 37 benefits (wherein community benefits, including affordable housing, can be required as part of larger projects), and

through the Building Better Revitalized Neighbourhoods initiative, the City has several opportunities to work in partnership with developers and affordable housing providers to expand the availability of affordable housing in mixed-income projects throughout the city.

### 3. ATTENTION IS NEEDED TO ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TENANCIES.

Guided by our Ten-Year Plan, and by a focus on Housing First, our community's housing system is adapting – prioritizing housing solutions for those who are experiencing chronic homelessness. The creation of new Housing Allowances is a welcome investment, but it is important that we assess the long-term stability of those who are housed. Are the Housing Allowances sufficient to afford quality housing options? Are the supports appropriate and available? Are individuals who are housed able to remain connected to community, protected from isolation or loneliness? Are social assistance benefits sufficient to incentivize housing over a return to shelter, where important needs are addressed?



## CONCLUSION

Affordable housing on Old St. Patrick (credit: Ottawa Community Housing)

Next year, we enter the fifth year of our Ten-Year Plan. As in 2015, the 2016 year showed some progress towards our shared goals. At the same time, other challenges – including increasing family homelessness, aging singles within our shelters, and a younger homeless youth community – appear to be deepening. Is our Plan responsive to emerging challenges? New investments from the federal and provincial governments are scheduled to take effect. New opportunities are in front of the City. To borrow a common expression, now is the time to ensure our community's plan is on track.



## ALLIANCE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Action-Logement / Action-Housing  
Bruce House  
Canadian Mental Health Association – Ottawa  
Carlington Community Health Centre  
Catholic Immigration Centre  
Centre 454  
Centre 507 Drop-In  
Centre des services communautaires / Vanier Community Service Centre  
Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa  
Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation  
Centretown Community Health Centre  
City of Ottawa, Housing Services Branch  
Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre  
Cooperative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario  
Cornerstone Housing for Women/Le Pilier  
Daybreak Non-Profit Shelter  
Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa  
Gloucester Housing Corporation  
Housing Help  
Jericho Road Christian Ministries  
John Howard Society of Ottawa  
Lowertown Community Resource Centre  
Minwaashin Lodge / Oshki Kizis Healing Lodge  
Montfort Renaissance  
Multifaith Housing Initiative  
Nepean Housing Corporation  
Nepean, Rideau, Osgoode Community Resource Centre

Operation Come Home  
Options Bytown Non-Profit Housing Corporation  
Ottawa Community Housing Corporation  
Ottawa Inner City Health Inc.  
Ottawa Inner City Ministries  
Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre  
Ottawa Salus Corporation  
PAL Ottawa  
Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre  
Restoring Hope  
Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre  
Royal Ottawa Health Care Group  
Sandy Hill Community Health Centre  
Shepherds of Good Hope  
Somerset West Community Health Centre  
South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre  
St. Joe's Women's Centre  
St. Luke's Lunch Club  
The Ottawa Mission  
The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre  
The Well / La Source  
Tungasuvvingat Inuit  
Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health  
Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre  
Wigwamen Incorporated  
YMCA-YWCA, National Capital Region  
Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa



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#WeCanEndIt

Cover: (top) Volunteers preparing Christmas meal (credit: CBC and Shepherds of Good Hope)  
(bottom) Ottawa Salus' Karen's Place on Clementine opened in 2016 (credit: CSV Architects)