



## MEDIA INVITATION

**Standing up to homelessness in Ottawa:  
200 community volunteers survey homeless people in Ottawa  
April 18-23, 2015**

Ottawa, April 13, 2015 - Homelessness in Ottawa remains an urgent issue. [The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa](#) (ATEH) is taking a stand and launching Ottawa's participation in the national 20,000 Homes campaign, led by the [Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness](#).

The Ottawa Campaign kicks off with an Action Week from April 18-23, 2015, featuring teams of skilled professionals and trained volunteers surveying those who are homeless in Ottawa - including those we meet on our streets, in our shelters, at our homeless drop-ins and day programs and among the less visible homeless people couch surfing with friends and family, temporarily renting a room in a hostel or a rooming house but with no security of stay, or living in their cars, garages or other spaces not meant for human habitation. Surveying 30 locations across the city, the volunteer teams will come to know our homeless neighbours by name and will better understand their housing needs. Survey results will provide key information on who needs to be prioritised first and fast for permanent housing and a deeper understanding of the hidden homeless and of those most vulnerable.

### Media is invited to follow:

- The survey teams:** The ATEH invites the media to meet with volunteers as they survey homeless people in various street, drop-in and shelter-based environments to better understand their housing needs. The survey will be using a vulnerability index that will provide a snapshot of homelessness in Ottawa, drawing our attention to the urgent housing needs of our most vulnerable homeless people in our community.
  - **When:** April 18, 20 and 21, 2015. Times and locations to be coordinated between media and the ATEH. The survey will cover 30 locations across the city.
- The Report Back Event:** The ATEH will hold a Report Back Event to present top findings from the survey and launch a community-wide Call to Action to permanently house Ottawa's most vulnerable homeless. The Report Back event is being held courtesy of Downtown Rideau BIA in partnership with the Ottawa Little Theatre. Representatives of the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness will be available for interviews.
  - **When:** April 23, 2015 at 10:00 am
  - **Where:** The Ottawa Little Theatre, 400 King Edward Avenue, Ottawa

*The 20,000 Homes campaign, led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, is bringing together communities across the country to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by 2018.*

*The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa (ATEH) is a non-partisan, provincially incorporated non-profit organization working in partnership to inspire action, to generate knowledge and to inform a community-wide effort to achieve an end to homelessness in Ottawa: [endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://endhomelessnessottawa.ca). The Ottawa campaign is being convened by the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa in partnership with local community, government and business partners.*

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**Facts at a glance on homelessness and housing on pages 3 & 4**

## **At a Glance: An Urgent Housing Issue**

### **The National 20,000 Homes Campaign**

The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a national movement of communities working together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2018. The campaign – convened by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness - supports a grassroots non-partisan effort to build both public support for housing solutions to end homelessness and political support for renewed federal and provincial investment in housing and support services.

### **The 20,000 Homes Campaign in Ottawa**

Ottawa will be the second community in Canada to pilot a local launch of the national campaign. Here, from April 18-23, 200 volunteers will take to our streets, shelters, drop-ins and neighbourhoods across Ottawa to survey our homeless neighbours, to learn their names and better understand their needs – so as to enable us collectively to take the necessary steps to find permanent housing solutions for those most vulnerable in our community. We know that while homeless, none are nameless.

The Ottawa campaign is being convened by the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa in partnership with over 30 local community, government and business partners.

Each of us has a role to play in ensuring our community is successful in achieving the targets of our 10-year plan to end homelessness (by 2024) – providing homes, supports and community belonging. Together, we can end homelessness.

### **Being Homeless in Ottawa**

We see homeless individuals in public parks and on the sidewalk, or staying in emergency overnight shelters and in shelters for victims of domestic violence; there are also less visible homeless people couch surfing with friends and family, temporarily renting a room in a hostel or a rooming house but with no security of stay, or living in their cars, garages or other spaces not meant for human habitation.

### **Housing in Canada**

- According to the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and Homeless Hub, homelessness costs the Canadian economy \$7 billion dollars annually.
- 35,000 Canadians are homeless on any given night, with 235,000 Canadians experiencing homelessness at least once in a year. Across Canada, an estimated 33,000 people are chronically or episodically homeless.
- Nearly half of all renters across Canada are paying more than 30% of their income on housing.
- While Canada's population has increased nearly 30% over the past 25 years, the national investment in housing has decreased by approximately 46%.
- Federal operating agreements, which are responsible for \$1.6 billion towards social housing currently, are set to gradually decline to \$0 in 2020. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association estimates that this expiration of funding will put an additional 360,000 households at risk of economic eviction, and perhaps homelessness.

## Housing in Ottawa

- Individuals who have been homeless for long periods (the chronic homeless population) in Ottawa are in urgent need of permanent housing.
- In 2014, over 6500 individuals accessed an emergency shelter in Ottawa. In 2013, on average, their length of stay within the shelter was 73 days – pointing to a shortage of affordable and supportive housing options into which to move. In 2014, the average length of stay rose further, contributing to further housing challenges. The time for housing is now.
- Ottawa’s 10-year plan to end homelessness, passed by City Council in 2013, commits our community to ending chronic homelessness by 2024. The plan recognizes the importance of immediate access to permanent, safe, appropriate and affordable housing with the support necessary to sustain it; this approach, commonly referred to as Housing First, recognizes that access to housing needs to happen first and fast. Access to housing, with supports, has been proven to be cost-effective – reducing demand on emergency and institutional care – while providing safety, security and dignity to individuals.
- Long-term housing assistance not only successfully reduces homelessness – it is also less expensive than shelter and other institutional care. Canadian research (the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s At Home / Chez Soi study) found that every \$10 spent on housing and supports for chronically homeless individuals results in \$21.72 in savings related to health care, social supports, housing and involvement in the justice system.
- We also need to recognize that over half of those in Ottawa experiencing homelessness are among female, youth or family households – a large number who are also among the ‘hidden homeless.’ As identified within our ten-year plan, it is recognized that “a broad spectrum of housing and support options are needed to help demographic populations such as women and children fleeing abuse, Aboriginals and Inuit people, seniors, youth, people leaving health and correctional facilities to break the cycle of chronic and episodic homelessness.”
- Having somewhere permanent to live is a core component to any person’s ability to exit homelessness. So too is having available the supports necessary to enable individuals to retain their housing, while also integrating into community. There are many opportunities for communities to work together to create these supports. By stabilizing people through shelter, moving them into permanent housing, and offering support programs to keep them in their housing, we can not only reduce homelessness – but together, we can end it.
- Ottawa currently has over 10,000 households on a wait list for affordable housing.