Homelessness in Ottawa: **A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE**

Progress Report Review **2014-2017**

ALLIANCE TO END **HOMELESSNESS** OTTAWA

June **2018**

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2014, the City of Ottawa adopted a 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan that committed to ending chronic homelessness by 2024. The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa's Progress Report, published annually, assesses our community's progress against the plan by tracking yearly indicators on the number of people using emergency shelters, average length of shelter stay, housing affordability and new affordable housing units.

This year's Progress Report takes a new approach. It tracks outcomes from 2014 to 2017, since the adoption of the City's 10-Year Plan. It also recognizes the release of the City's '10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Progress Report' detailing shelter use indicators, along with the City's own analysis of investments and outcomes to date.

Despite efforts, what is clear in reviewing the City's 10-Year Plan is that we are not making progress. We need to change our approach.

This report puts forward a Roadmap for Change and call to action to governments, non-profits and community, to co-design real solutions that will make a significant impact towards preventing and ending chronic homelessness in our city.

Looking back from 2014 to 2017 this report asks ...

- **WHO IS BEING IMPACTED BY HOMELESSNESS?**
- **WHAT APPROACHES CAN HELP TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS?**
- **HOW CAN WE IMPROVE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN OTTAWA?**

THE ROAD WE WALK TOGETHER

This is our opportunity to work together as an Alliance, alongside local partners and governments, to actively advance the long-term goal of ending chronic homelessness.

People from all walks of life find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons.

Homelessness is complex, and significantly preventing and reducing homelessness in our city needs a variety of approaches and solutions. Together we can make a difference.

A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

The Roadmap for Change offers a **solutions oriented** framework to address the local issues impacting those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

ROADMAP

Increase funding and supports to prevent homelessness.

Build a variety of housing options affordable for households at different income levels.

Adopt healthy community planning in all neighbourhoods across Ottawa.

Co-design solutions with the community to support better systems-level planning and outcomes.

Despite ongoing investments, Ottawa's emergency shelter system is over capacity. It is not able to respond to emerging issues.

We need to undertake a critical systems analysis and adapt how we direct investments to significantly reduce the number of individual and families experiencing homelessness.

Political leadership in Ottawa will be essential to reach our goal.

THE WAY FORWARD

We need to use all of our resources as a city to address homelessness prevention and housing affordability.

Understanding local priorities is the first step, along with clearly defining targets and outcomes. This includes working to:

- **DEFINE THE NEED**
- **PLAN FOR IT**
- **PRIORITIZE PREVENTION**
- **INNOVATE**

EMERGENCY SHELTER USE

Overall Shelter Use by Unique Clients in Ottawa from 2014-2017

Overall shelter **use**	Increased by 16%
Overall length of **stay**	Increased by 12%
Chronic homelessness	Increased by 21%

Chronic homelessness refers to people who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year - and have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter.

Shelter Use by Individual Populations from 2014-2017

SHELTER USE		AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY
Increased by 6%	SINGLE MEN	Decreased by 11%
Decreased by 2%	SINGLE WOMEN	Increased by 6%
Decreased by 13%	YOUTH 16 TO 25	Increased by 7%
Increased by 33%	FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	Increased by 23%

Data Source: *City of Ottawa*

Social & Economic Pressures Impacting Shelter Use

Mental Health & Addictions

Individuals living with addictions and mental health issues are **over represented** in the shelter system. Supporting this client group also **increases pressures** on front-line shelter staff and resources. According to the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario Annual Report (2016) more than **50%** of Ottawa's homeless population has reported a past diagnosis of mental illness.

Population Growth

Ottawa's population **grew 5.8%** over the last census period from 2011 to 2016. The City of Ottawa projects the population will continue to grow by another **16%** between 2016-2031.

Low Vacancy Rates

The vacancy rate in Ottawa **decreased** to **1.7%** in 2017, down from **2.6%** in 2014, placing increased pressure on the rental housing market.

Collecting the right kind of data to better understand the pathways leading to homelessness is essential. **Real-time data**, **clearly defined targets, outcomes** and **shelter use reduction** goals are needed to ensure the right people are getting into the right housing at the right time.

WHO IS IMPACTED

There are many factors influencing shelter use including economic, social, cultural and systemic. Other populations beyond those profiled below also face unique challenges, such as seniors, single men, Veterans, individuals with disabilities and those living with mental health and addictions challenges.

YOUTH

Youth homelessness is an urgent issue. Single youth make up 11% of Ottawa's homeless population. The limited capacity of youth shelters in Ottawa means that 616 of the 802 youth aged 16 to 25 who used a shelter in 2017 received services in the adult system. Research tells us that youth who are unable to access youth specific services will go to great lengths to avoid using the adult shelter system. To tackle youth homelessness, we must begin by recognizing that youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness in terms of its causes and solutions.

This mean developing targeted strategies to address the specific needs of youth, including school-based prevention, family reconnection, support for youth transitioning from care, employment, education and training. The Alliance-led initiative A Way Home Ottawa is a collaborative of local youth agencies working with the city and province to find solutions that address the specific needs of homeless youth.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The significant over representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit among shelter users has both historical roots and ongoing drivers. The historical trauma, oppression, racism, and discrimination Indigenous Peoples have faced because of Canada's colonial history must be recognized and reconciled. Gaps in housing policy have also lead to the precarious housing of Indigenous Peoples in urban centres and on traditional territories.

Indigenous homelessness cannot only be understood as lacking suitable habitation but must also recognize ongoing intergenerational trauma. In addressing Indigenous homelessness, our work must first begin with a focus on Indigenous-led understandings and solutions to Indigenous homelessness that may include restoring relationships to land, culture, kin, and language in addition to housing needs.

WOMEN

Up to 21% of shelter users in Ottawa are single women. Women experiencing homelessness face unique challenges. For example, women are more likely to be low-wage earners, and are most likely to head single parent households. Intimate partner violence is a common risk factor for women's homelessness, leaving women further vulnerable to income insecurity, and sexual and physical abuse. City of Ottawa shelter data does not include the numbers of women staying at Ottawa's Violence Against Women shelters.

Newcomer women face further challenges such as limited social networks, language barriers, discrimination and difficulties navigating social service systems. In addressing women's homelessness, more work is needed to develop programs and supports that take into account the gender specific experiences faced by women before they are at risk of homelessness.

FAMILIES

The rise in Ottawa's shelter use between 2014 to 2017 is primarily influenced by an increase in overall family use of shelters. Family household shelter use rose by 33% since 2014. There were on average 182 families nightly living in off-site motels in 2017. Shelter use by newcomers is also on the rise. Newcomers represented 20% of all unique shelter users, and 36% of families living in shelters in 2017, compared to 7% and 14% respectively in 2014.

Newcomers living in Ottawa represent roughly one-fifth of the city's population, similar to the national average. Newcomers often face barriers that can lead to social and economic exclusion, including lack of Canadian work experience, the undervaluing of credentials obtained abroad, and discrimination. Newcomers have a positive impact on the development of our local economy and the cultural diversity that characterizes our city. The City of Ottawa needs to work proactively with all levels of government to support those who choose to call Ottawa their home.

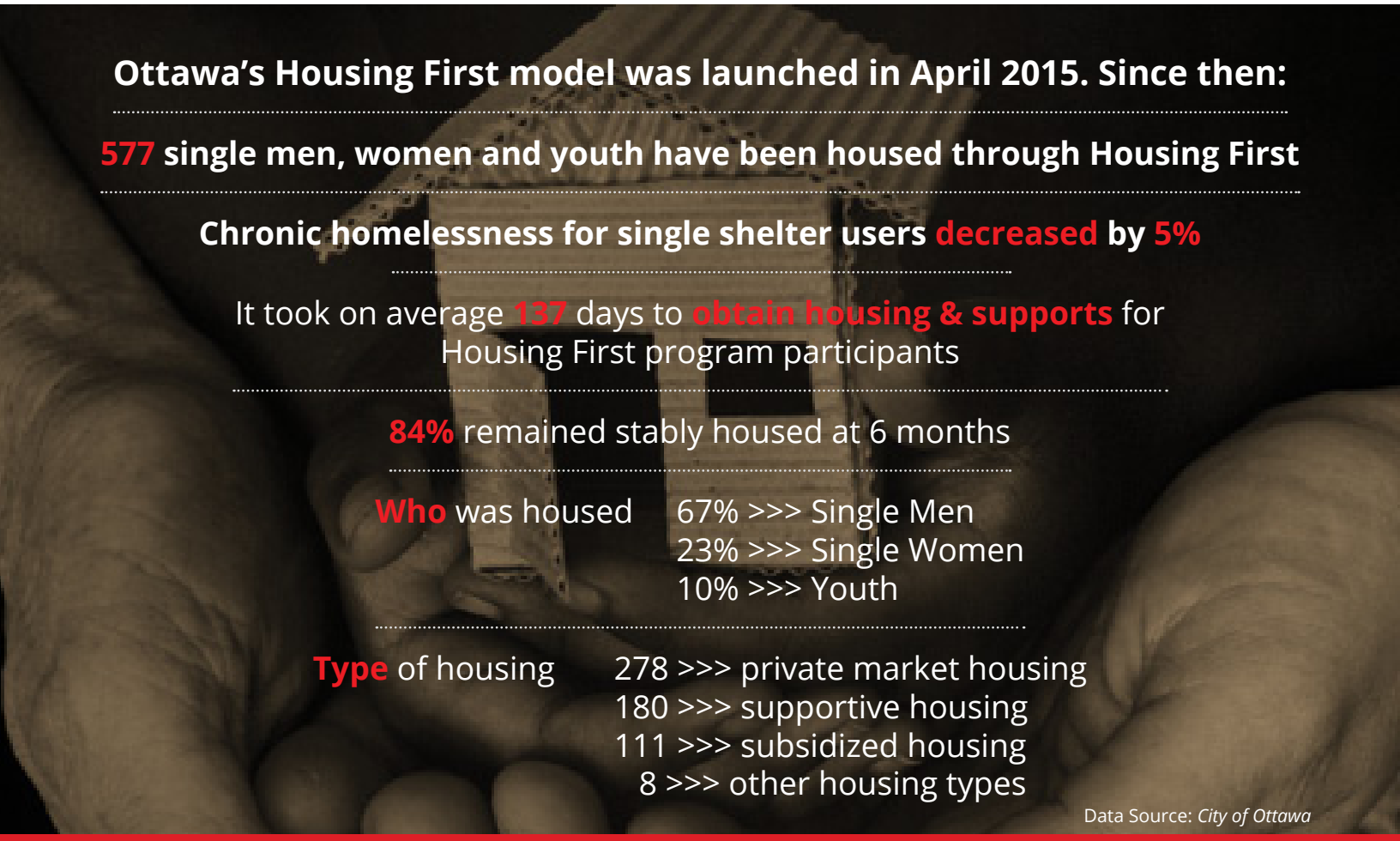
Sources: *The State of Homelessness in Canada. (COH) 2016; An Affordable Housing Plan for Ontario. (ONPHA & CHF Canada) 2018; Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada. (COH) 2017. Data Source: City of Ottawa.*

HOUSING FIRST

Housing First is a client-driven approach that provides immediate access to permanent housing, in addition to flexible, community-based services and supports for people who have experienced homelessness. These supports may address housing stability, income supports, health and mental health needs, education and employment training, substance use recovery programs and community connections.

Once housed, many people will need ongoing supports. Others, whose health and mental health needs are acute and chronic, may require more permanent supportive housing, a model of housing that integrates supports and services.

- Adapted from The Homeless Hub



Ottawa's Housing First model was launched in April 2015. Since then:

577 single men, women and youth have been housed through Housing First

Chronic homelessness for single shelter users decreased by 5%

It took on average 137 days to obtain housing & supports for Housing First program participants

84% remained stably housed at 6 months

Who was housed
67% >>> Single Men
23% >>> Single Women
10% >>> Youth

Type of housing
278 >>> private market housing
180 >>> supportive housing
111 >>> subsidized housing
8 >>> other housing types

Data Source: *City of Ottawa*

Overall Chronic Homelessness Continues to Increase

Priority for Housing First is given to chronically homeless individuals who have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter. Ottawa has seen some success in stably housing individuals through this program, assisting 577 individuals in total. At the same time, the number of single chronic individuals decreased marginally by 5%, indicating the program is not keeping pace with the number of people accessing shelters and unable to find affordable housing.

We must prioritize access to housing and supports as soon as possible, rather than waiting for individuals to become chronically homeless to address their housing needs.

The Housing First model has had proven success in other regions in shifting resources from relying on an emergency response to prevention and supports. To find success in Ottawa, we must ensure the model's parameters are truly being met.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Homelessness prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that someone will experience homelessness in the first place. These include:

Early Intervention
Support to individuals and families who are at risk of becoming homeless or recently became homeless.

This includes shelter diversion, rapid re-housing and eviction prevention.

Systems Prevention
Planning and supports for individuals transitioning from public systems.

This includes discharge planning from hospitals, correctional facilities and child protective services, along with eliminating barriers to accessing programs and services.

Housing Stability
Strategies and supports to obtain and retain housing.

This includes Housing First, rent supplements, health and well-being supports, education and employment training, and enhancing social inclusion.

A Working System
Developing healthy coordinated social systems designed to prevent homelessness.

This includes effective outreach, coordinated intake and assessment, client centred case-management, and policy, resource and service alignment

Building Assets
Creating a vibrant community that reduces the risk of homelessness.

This includes affordable housing, poverty reduction strategies, anti-discrimination policies and reconciliation efforts.

Source: *A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention. (COH) 2017.*

"Investing in prevention must include targeting the structural drivers of homelessness, which will require collaboration across multiple sectors. Homelessness cannot be prevented by the homelessness sector alone; ministries and departments in health, education, child protection, criminal justice, housing, employment and training, etc. have a role to play."

Stephen Gaetz and Erin Dej. A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention. 2017.

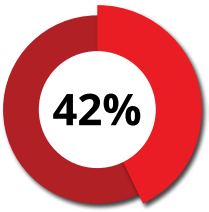
We have begun to see a shift in how communities across Canada are responding to homelessness through prevention based approaches.

The Alliance works alongside and champions our local and national partners with a shared goal of advocating for a greater emphasis on homelessness prevention, and in better understanding how to work upstream to eliminate the risks of homelessness in the first place.

Prioritizing early intervention strategies focused on **prevention** and **long-term housing solutions** will necessitate working with **provincial** and **federal partners** to ensure **flexible** and innovative use of program funds to meet the needs of the local community.

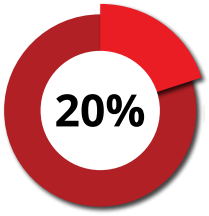
RENTAL HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Ottawa Rental Household Overspending



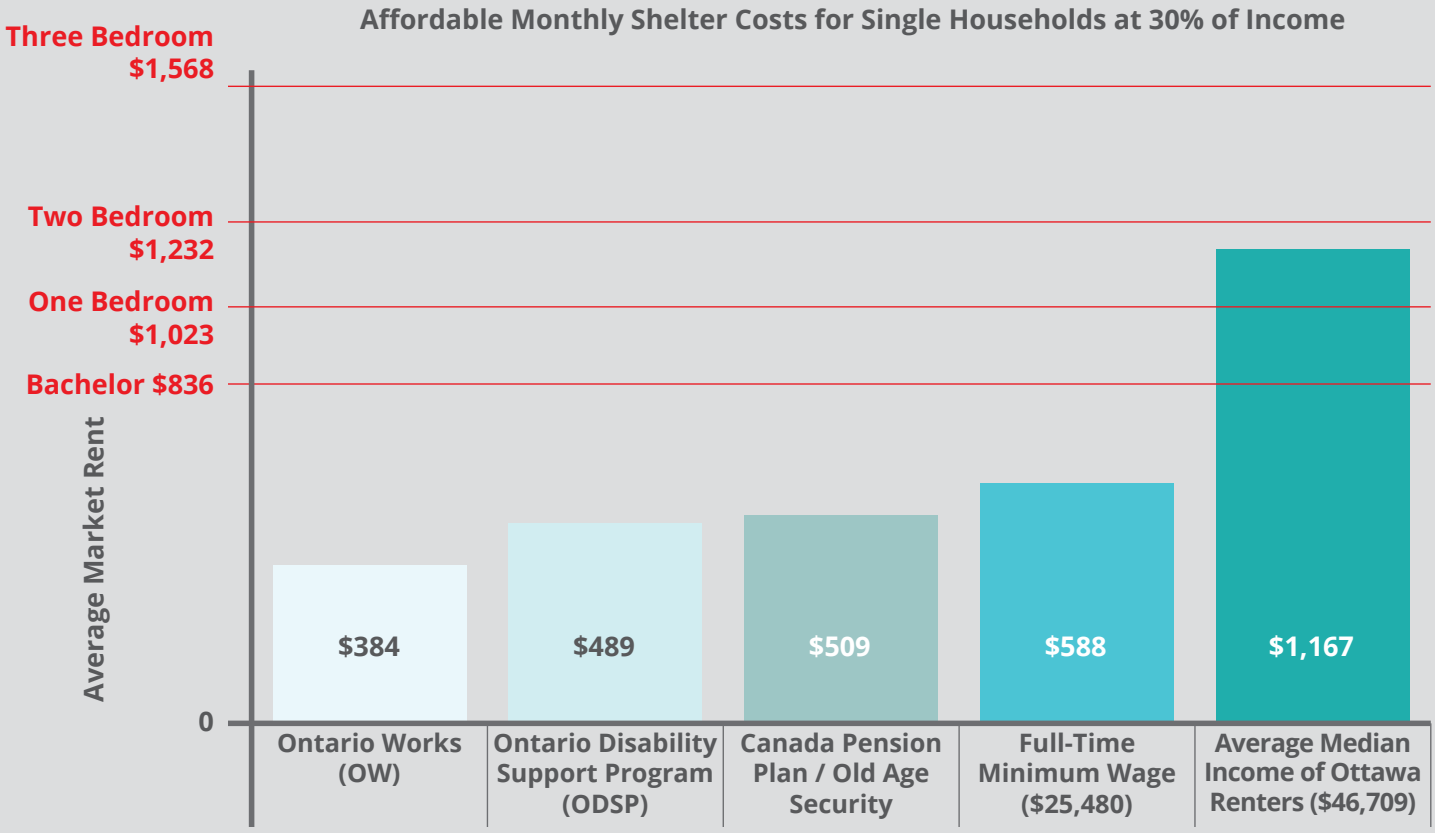
42% OF OTTAWA HOUSEHOLDS ARE SPENDING OVER
30% OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT AND UTILITIES

20% OF OTTAWA HOUSEHOLDS ARE SPENDING OVER
50% OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT AND UTILITIES



"Housing is considered affordable if shelter costs account for less than 30% of before-tax household income."
- Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation

SNAPSHOT: Monthly Affordable Shelter Costs



For OW & ODSP = Maximum Monthly Shelter Allowance

Data Sources: City of Ottawa, Canadian Rental Housing Index, Income Security Advocacy Centre

Living on a Fixed Income
For those **living on a fixed income**, spending at the monthly affordable shelter rate of 30% of income is not always enough to meet affordable market rents.

Spending on monthly shelter costs does **not include** additional income needed for food, transit, childcare, health care, education, personal and other monthly expenses.

Building a variety of affordable housing options that meet the diverse needs of individuals and families **living across a range of household incomes** is crucial to reducing pathways into homelessness.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Understanding Ottawa's Neighbourhood Planning Priorities

Low-Income Rate
13% of Ottawa residents live on low-income. That's more than **55,000** households with insufficient income to meet basic needs such as housing, food, child care and health care, etc.

Affordable Housing Supply
The City has built on average an additional **100** new units of affordable housing a year over the last four years. That's a total of **364** new affordable and supporting housing units built since 2014.

Affordable Housing Demand
An additional **14,310** bedrooms are needed to house all renters suitably for the size and makeup of Ottawa's households.

There is not enough affordable housing supply in Ottawa to meet demand.

Data Sources: City of Ottawa; Canadian Rental Housing Index

To maintain an affordable housing market in Ottawa, political and community support is needed to build a range of mixed-income and supportive housing in all neighbourhoods across the city.

Opportunities currently exist to use all of our resources as a city to address housing affordability. These include:

Make full use of provincial and municipal planning and Inclusionary Zoning tools.

Make available municipal lands on which to build affordable housing.

Prioritize affordable housing development close to transit hubs.

Define a city-wide strategy for the inclusion of affordable housing across all neighbourhoods.

Ottawa's Official Plan identifies affordable housing as key to urban livability, and establishes annual targets for affordability in new development.

The priority assigned to affordable housing must be significantly strengthened to achieve much more meaningful progress towards achieving these targets. It can also go further to define housing affordability and development targets across a range of income thresholds, and neighbourhoods, across Ottawa.

Identifying community development goals across transit, planning and housing departments will provide better City planning outcomes for all.

Define opportunities within the **City's jurisdiction** to **increase** affordable housing options, such as in **working across departments** responsible for **land use planning, transit** and **housing.**

A SYSTEMS LEVEL APPROACH

To support the work of preventing and reducing homelessness, the Alliance is working with our members on a **Systems Mapping** project.

Systems Mapping is a well established process used across Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States and other regions.

The goal of Systems Mapping is to identify the gaps, overlaps and bottlenecks in the current housing and homelessness system in order to:

- align services
- improve information sharing
- increase efficiencies
- provide a seamless care experience for individuals and families within Ottawa's homeless serving system.

The Alliance is leading Ottawa's Systems Mapping project to promote the integration of services to reduce pathways into homelessness that are placing individuals and families at increased risk.

Improving service delivery is one step to impacting results. Another is to provide the ongoing supports tenants need to remain housed.

Without a clear understanding of how local service delivery works, efforts to reduce homelessness risk being one-offs.

Co-designing systems level **solutions** with **governments**, the **homelessness sector**, and **community** is crucial to ensuring homelessness and housing outcomes are aligned, and inform improvements to policy, program and funding delivery.

SNAPSHOT: Systems Level Best Practices

There are many communities in Canada and countries across the world that have implemented systems level models as a key step to ending homelessness. In fact the only way to truly eradicate homelessness is to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Here are some examples from other jurisdictions.

Lethbridge, AB

The City of Lethbridge is using its role as both a Municipal Governance Authority and Land Development Agency to support the City's strategic plan to end homelessness by:

- Ensuring the City sets aside land for affordable housing in its development projects.
- Enabling use of density bonuses, inclusionary zoning and infill housing to create incentives for private market developers to build more affordable rental and homeownership housing.
- Requiring affordable housing components in City redevelopment projects as appropriate.

Waterloo, ON

In 2013 the Waterloo Region piloted a 'Housing Ready Framework' with the approach that anyone walking into a shelter was ready to be housed. The results of the pilot diverted 350 families from shelter use and also:

- Supported the shift at a regional level to a prevention based approach to housing and homelessness.
- Commitment to implementing a coordinated system of care using real time data, common assessment protocols and clear access to social services.
- Worked to create new service delivery standards and a more positive, client centred service approach.

Wales, UK

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to help anyone that is homeless, or on the verge of losing their home, within the next 56 days. Local jurisdictions work with partners to help people keep their homes, or secure new housing such as through:

- Family and landlord mediation.
- Support to manage household debt.
- Legal advice.
- Support to maintain current tenancies.
- Help for people moving into private rental market tenancies.

THE WAY FORWARD

Building on the Alliance's Roadmap for Change, we have outlined collaborative, actionable solutions to strengthen Ottawa's response to homelessness.

DEFINE THE NEED

- Clearly define targets and outcomes towards ending homelessness in Ottawa to be reported on an annual basis, including shelter use reduction goals.
- Enhance City homelessness data collection to better inform city-wide policy, program and funding priorities.
- Utilize systems level data on the gaps, overlaps and bottlenecks in the homeless serving system to inform improvements to policy, program and funding delivery.

PLAN FOR IT

- Cost out and allocate the needed resources, financial and other, to effectively meet the targets assigned to the next five years of our city's 10-Year Plan.
- Work with federal and provincial partners to ensure flexible use of program funding in new and innovative ways to respond to the needs of our community.

PRIORITIZE PREVENTION

- Prioritize early intervention and supports for homeless individuals and families focused on long-term housing solutions.
- Define opportunities within the City's jurisdiction to increase housing loss prevention for low to moderate income households.
- Build more housing across all of Ottawa's neighbourhoods that is affordable to individuals and families living across a range of household incomes.

INNOVATE

- Make full use of provincial and municipal planning and Inclusionary Zoning tools.
- Make available municipal surplus lands on which to build affordable housing.
- Prioritize affordable housing in all transit oriented development.
- Define a city-wide strategy for the inclusion of affordable housing across all Ottawa neighbourhoods.
- Address planning priorities across city transit, planning and housing departments to support the integration of community needs in these areas.

Opportunities are available to the City of Ottawa to increase homelessness prevention. Now is the time to ensure Ottawa's plan is on track if we are to meet our goals of significantly preventing and reducing the number of homeless individuals and families in our city.

Working together, we can make a difference.

ALLIANCE MEMBERSHIP

Action-Logement / Action-Housing
Bruce House
Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Branch
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 Eastern Ontario
Cornerstone Housing for Women/LePilier
Daybreak Non-Profit Housing
Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa
Gloucester Housing Corporation
Housing Help
John Howard Society of Ottawa
Lowertown Community Resource Centre
Minwaashin Lodge / Oshki Kizis Healing Lodge
Montfort Renaissance
Multifaith Housing Initiative
Nepean Housing Corporation
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
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 Table
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

Thank you as well to our many individual members!

OUR PARTNERS

LOCAL PARTNERS

Broadening the Base
Cooperative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario
Healthy Transit Coalition
Making Voices Count
Ottawa Social Housing Network
Ottawa Supportive Housing Network
Refugee613
Ottawa Social Housing Registry

PROVINCIAL PARTNERS

Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association

NATIONAL PARTNERS

A Way Home Canada
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
Canadian Observatory on Homelessness
Canada Without Poverty

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