ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS OTTAWA

Annual Report

2020/2021

Prepared for the 2021 AGM



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Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa

Land Acknowledgement



Ottawa is located on unceded Algonquin, Anishnabek territory. Put simply, these lands were stolen from the traditional keepers for the purposes of settlers. Dispossession of land is just one form of ongoing colonization that has led to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people disproportionately experiencing homelessness. Research shows that Indigenous Peoples account for 20-50% of the total homeless population in cities like Ottawa.

To truly have an impact on homelessness in our community, we must lead with this knowledge. Embracing Indigenous leadership and collaboration is crucial to ensuring the prevention, reduction, and ultimate end of homelessness. We support the call for a fully-funded Indigenous Housing Strategy with an Indigenous-led governance structure.

This land acknowledgment is a reminder of the responsibility we have to Indigenous Peoples and a commitment to reconciliation.

Executive Director Report

It goes without saying that this has been a year like no other. We are incredibly proud of and grateful for the work of our members, serving our vulnerable communities throughout the pandemic. Even while working tirelessly, our members are leading innovation in the city, with new partnerships forming and a growing public awareness of the homelessness and housing crisis we all face. The impact you all have in our communities is truly incredible.

In the midst of this changing landscape, the Alliance has been evolving. While we have long been well-respected as a coalition because of the strength and dedication of our members, our work has been limited by our modest resources. This year, we've focused our lens on system-level change to grow our impact, pushing us further towards our goal of preventing, reducing, and ending homelessness.

In part, this has looked like shifting the way we talk about people experiencing homelessness and the way we advocate for change. We're working to center people with lived experiences of homelessness in everything we do: research, advocacy, policy positions, governance, and coordination of the sector. To help us meet our goals, we have hired seven people with lived expertise to form our Expert Steering Team.

Renewed branding with hope-filled messaging and creating a data-forward website have been part of the quiet work our staff has implemented to support these changes. Whether in media, campaigns, direct advocacy, or conversations with politicians and community members, we're centering hope, possibility, and practical solutions.

And, it's working. Our membership is growing consistently, our partnerships are blossoming with creative collaboration, and our relationships are strengthening. We've started working directly with the City of Ottawa on projects that have a direct impact on our communities: finding housing through the Blitz, creating better terms of affordability, and now partnering to support implementing the 10 Year Plan.

We couldn't do this work without you. We're grateful to be doing this critical work with the support of our members, Board, funders, and community partners. Thank you for your commitment to ending homelessness in Ottawa.

Kaite Burkholder Harris,
Executive Director

The Year in Review

Inside the Alliance

Organizational sustainability has become a key priority for the Alliance over the last year and a half.

With our team growing, creating strong internal policies for our staff, committees, volunteers, and members have become an important part of our quiet work to ensure the Alliance can create an even bigger impact.

Similarly, the implementation of a new database and website empowers us to grow our supporters and volunteer base while using our resources wisely. These new tools increase our effectiveness for members by helping us better harness the power of everyone who wants to help reduce, prevent, and end homelessness.

22%

growth in membership

The Alliance gained 14 members this year

7

Community Liaisons

Seven people with lived experience were hired for the Expert Steering Team.

4

community events

15

public presentations

8

deputations

25

media engagements

Advocacy

Solutions-based advocacy remains a key pillar of the Alliance's work for our members and communities. Whether we're collaborating on campaigns or meeting with City staff on priority issues, we're focused on bringing concrete solutions to the table.

Deputations

This year we've seen the impact Alliance public deputations can have in pushing forward our advocacy efforts. Using deputations as a way to engage with stakeholders has proven to be an effective strategy for advancing our conversations with the City and the wider community. Following deputations, we've seen spikes in public engagement, media requests, and invitations to meet with key stakeholders.

+ Advocating for the City to **invest in concrete solutions for immediate and long-term impact on family homelessness** amongst other key housing issues.

+ Advocating to the Province on long-term actions to **make the eviction moratorium sustainable** for renters and landlords, as a strategy to prevent more people from losing their homes.



+ Asking the Planning Committee **to listen to the Herongate community and create a stronger agreement** with the developer to strengthen the commitment to affordable housing.

+ Pushing the Community Protective Services Committee to **prioritize funding a prevention-based housing-focused response to homelessness.**

+ Advising the Transportation Committee **against the demolition of the Manor Village community** for the creation of Light Rail Transit.

#VoteHousing Federal Election Campaign

With skyrocketing costs of housing leaving hundreds of thousands of people without affordable options, this year has been a critical time for advocacy. Led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa was one of the hundreds of organizations from across the country that came together to ensure housing became one of the top issues in the federal election.

The main goals of the non-partisan campaign were to ensure housing became the hot button issue and to rally voters to prioritize affordable housing and ending homelessness at the polls.

To bolster local support, the team hosted a local Vote Housing town hall with Ottawa's Housing and Homelessness Liaison Councillor Catherine McKenney in the days leading up to the election. Kaite and Catherine discussed the impact federal housing policy has in our neighbourhoods, what real affordability means, and the solutions to the housing and homelessness crisis.





COVID-19 Eviction Prevention



While prevention has always been a key part of our mission, the last year has demonstrated just how important preventing evictions is to safe, healthy communities.

Eviction prevention became a dominant part of our advocacy when at least 90,000 households in Ontario were at risk of losing their homes due to not being able to afford rent during the pandemic.



Working with organizations across Ontario, we supported the #StopUnsafeEvictions campaign and lobbied the Province to protect tenants facing eviction.

Locally, we used the Housing Emergency to highlight the way COVID-19 impacted renters in Ottawa and shared information on how residents could access municipal funds to pay their rent arrears. This pandemic made it more clear than ever that housing is a piece of public health.

Projects in Partnership

Collaborating with partners on concrete solutions strengthens our relationships and our capacity.

Housing Blitz

Wrapping up at the end of 2020, the Housing Blitz was a community-wide effort to get people housed quickly and learn more about the barriers to affordable housing in our city. The Blitz was a strong, coordinated effort to have an immediate impact in our communities, and marked our first formal partnership with the City of Ottawa. This partnership marked the beginning of our growing relationship with the City and demonstrates a willingness to work together on community-based solutions. Although the Blitz was a one-time initiative, discussions on how to further this procurement strategy continue with the City.

30

households experiencing homelessness were stably housed

33%

of those housed were from Indigenous communities

Ottawa Giving Project

Although many organizations rely on donations for clients experiencing homelessness, the pandemic left many agencies unable to accept donations due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Ottawa Giving Project was a short-term collaborative effort to make donating personal items easier during the pandemic. The project connected donors to volunteers who stored and cleaned donations before passing them on to local organizations working with people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. The project was inspired by highschool student Avery Parkinson.

Family homelessness strategy

Working with community partners, the Alliance held a series of design labs to explore building a community-based program to address growing family homelessness in the city. The initiative is being modelled after highly successful refugee volunteer resettlement programs, which leverage volunteer teams to provide wrap-around support and built-in community in partnership with agencies.

Although funding for the project is still being pursued, if successful, this model has the potential for community-wide impact to support agencies working with families exiting homelessness.

Housing Advocacy Leadership Schools

Working with ACORN Ottawa, we produced three free virtual education sessions to equip renters with the information they need to understand housing policy, advocate in their communities, and be fully informed of tenant rights.

These one-time sessions will be paired with an interactive resource website for tenants.



The Expert Steering Team

To truly create system-level change, we need the expertise of people who have experienced homelessness. In Spring 2021, we hired a team of seven Community Liaisons who make up our Expert Steering Team. Using a robust recruitment strategy, we were able to ensure many populations disproportionately impacted by homelessness are represented on the team. Their diverse experiences in different parts of the system are an asset to all of the work we do.

The team can speak to various aspects of the system based on their collective experiences: youth homelessness, shelters, violence against women's shelters, motel shelters, sleeping rough, couch hopping, the immigration/refugee system, drop-ins, the mental health system, substance use support, the Children's Aid Society, the criminal justice system, Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program, social housing, and supportive housing. With liaisons who have experience in research, policy development, peer support, public speaking, and group facilitation, the team is poised to have an incredible impact on all of our members' work.

Already, the team has advised Algonquin College on how to conduct research with people experiencing homelessness.
In their consultation with the Ottawa Food Bank, the team's expertise helped shape the community co-design process for the food bank's priorities over the next five years.

"The Expert Steering Team was a key contributor to the Ottawa Food Bank's community co-design process. The Team's contributions were thoughtful and insightful and laid a solid foundation for our network development plan.

The model provided an avenue for us to engage people with lived experience in a way that honours the invaluable expertise its members bring to the table, with the added advantage of simplifying the engagement process on our end. "

Ottawa Food Bank

Media

The Alliance is proud to be the go-to source for issues related to homelessness in the city. We were in print, online articles, radio, and tv outlets over 25 times representing our members and the needs of our communities.



Yes, remnants of discriminatory urban planning remain

From zoning bylaws to public housing, city policies can exacerbate racism. But advocates across the country are working for change

The Globe and Mail / May 25



Affordable housing: City to study leasing of private units — but some say the time to act is now

Staff are scheduled to review and make recommendations on the feasibility of a head-lease program by the second quarter of 2022.

ottawacitizen / Taylor Blewett

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Together, we can end it.

Together, we can make a difference in our city to create an inclusive community where everyone has an affordable and appropriate place to call home. The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa is proud to champion our collective efforts. Thank you to our members and ongoing sponsors for your generous support!

Current members: Action-Logement / Action-Housing | Anglican Diocese of Ottawa - Community Ministries | Bruce House | Caldwell Family Centre | Canadian Mental Health Association - Ottawa Branch | Carlington Community Health Centre | Carty House | Causeway Work Centre | Catholic Centre for Immigrants | Centre 454 | Centre 507 | Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa | Centre des services communautaires Vanier / Vanier Community Service Centre | Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation | Centretown Community Health Centre | Centretown Churches Social Action Committee | Community Legal Services Ottawa (Centre & West) | Cornerstone Housing for Women / Le Pilier | Daybreak Non-Profit Shelter | Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa | Gloucester Housing Corporation | Haven Too | Housing Help | Interval Housing | iSisters Technology Mentoring | Jericho Road Ministries | John Howard Society of Ottawa | Just Food | LiveWorkPlay | Lowertown Community Resource Centre | Matthew House Ottawa | Minwaashin Lodge / Oshki Kizis Healing Lodge | Montfort Renaissance Inc. | Multifaith Housing Initiative | Nepean Housing Corporation | Operation Come Home | Options Bytown Non-Profit Housing Corporation | Ottawa Community Housing | Ottawa Food Bank | Ottawa Inner City Health Inc. | Ottawa Innercity Ministries | The Ottawa Mission | Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre | Ottawa Salus Corporation | PAL Ottawa | Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health | Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre | Royal Ottawa Health Care Group | The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre | Sandy Hill Community Health Centre | Shepherds of Good Hope | Social Housing Registry of Ottawa | Somerset West Community Health Centre | South-East Ottawa Community Health | Stepstone House | St. Joe's Women's Centre / St. Joe's Catholic Church | St. Luke's Table | Tungasuvvingat Inuit | Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health | The Well / La Source | Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre | Wigwamen | YMCA-YWCA, National Capital Region | Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa | **Thank you as well to our many individual members!**

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