

ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS OTTAWA

ANNUAL REPORT

2021/2022
Prepared for the 2022 AGM
September 22, 2022
9 -10AM on Zoom

Alliance to
End Homelessness
Ottawa
endhomelessnessottawa.ca

@OttawaAlliance

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Ottawa is located 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.

Indigenous people represent 4% of the population in Ottawa. In Ottawa's 2021 Point-in-Time Count, 32% of people experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous and of 428 Indigenous respondents 42% had been in foster care. The true number is likely higher, as many Indigenous people do not self-identify for fear of racist stereotyping and discriminatory responses.

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.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

What a joy and honour it's been to be a part of the Alliance to End Homelessness during the past 8 years, including 4 years as Chair. In that time, the Alliance has gone through many changes and, I think, quite an evolution. We've been through so much in our community, our province, our country and the world, especially during the past two and a half years.

Here at home, we've faced many challenges – the most daunting of which has been the opiate crisis and current toxic drug supply on the streets. They are robbing the lives and livelihoods of our friends, families, neighbours, co-workers and the most marginalized among us who are living with trauma, declining mental health and who are experiencing homelessness. The on-going housing crisis and the effects of the global pandemic have forced us to think and act differently, yet people in our community are still chronically homeless, precariously housed, poverty stricken and so tired of not being able get a hand up.

We know that increasing the housing stock in every community will help us to reach our goal of ending chronic homelessness. We have been losing housing stock and although many of our organizations are constantly building, we can't build fast enough to replace what has been lost, leaving more people unhoused or precariously housed.

We also know that effecting significant policy changes at all levels of government is crucial. The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa has undertaken a significant role in leading systems change in our city.

We are witnessing deep divisions among us, resulting in fractured democracies, a widespread loss of faith in public institutions and concerns about our abilities as a society to care for everyone among us. Growing awareness of the Colonial history of Canada and the need for reconciliation weighs heavily on us.

However – there is always hope. As staff, volunteers and citizens, we've been called to embrace these challenges. It's tough work but there are so many exceptional people with compassion, empathy, commitment and skills who want to contribute to the betterment of our communities. The toll on our collective mental health and wellbeing has been high. For our unhoused neighbours, the trauma that they have experienced and continue to experience cannot be overstated. For those without a home, not only do they lack the buffer of four walls and a roof over their heads, there seems to be no reprieve from these ongoing crises.

In the face of all of this, our collective work as Board members and organizational members of the Alliance has been energizing. Focusing on removing systemic barriers for people to obtain housing has brought a new enthusiasm for the tough work that all members of ATEH are doing. Collectively and cohesively developing plans that focus on public education and advocacy, systems planning and coordination, and community mobilization is not only energizing, but heartening. Our Starts With Home campaign offers a positive, hopeful message that change is possible and that there are solutions.

I'd like to extend sincere gratitude to every Board member with whom I've had the honour of serving during the past 8 years. A special shoutout to my friend, colleague and Vice Chair, Catharine Vandelinde, who stepped up many times when I couldn't – we have made a great team.

To the Executive Committee of the Board, you have been pillars and your contributions are too many to count. To Kaite Burkholder Harris, Meg McCallum and the ATEH team; your commitment to our community and to those who need us most is inspiring. To the City staff and municipal Councillors, we may not always agree on how we get there, but we all share the same goal of ending chronic homelessness and I thank you for your commitment to community service. And to the members of the Alliance and all of our community partners, a huge thank you .

Together we can end chronic homelessness in Ottawa. Let's do it.



Deirdre Freiheit
Board Chair

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Alliance has a vision of a future without homelessness. Inspired by the dedication and tireless work of member agencies, funders, and partners, we have faith in our collective potential to achieve this vision. We centre our work in hope, possibility, and practical solutions, and are guided by people with lived experience at the centre of everything we do. We know that achieving our vision will be hard work, because systems-level change is hard. It requires a willingness to learn and grow, to take risks and let go of old ways, and to forge new partnerships and deeper collaborations.

This year's annual report shows what system-level change looks like in action within the Alliance itself. Two years ago, after Ottawa City Council declared a housing and homelessness emergency, at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the midst of the opiate crisis, the Alliance's Board of Directors chose to embark on a new strategic path: to evolve the Alliance to grow our impact and push us further toward our goal of preventing, reducing, and ending homelessness.

Over the past two years we have hired a strong team: three full-time and seven part-time team members, developed the Starts With Home coalition, and created and strengthened our partnerships and collaborations. We've added new tools to push our public, media and government engagement to new levels. We've embarked on shared research projects and systems-level governance planning. And our increased capacity is reflected in everything we've accomplished this year: the advocacy, education and mobilization, systems planning and member engagement.

The exciting news is that we are continuing to evolve. We are grateful to our members, Board and volunteers, funders, and community partners for working with us. We can't wait to see what comes next.

Meg McCallum
Interim Executive Director

ADVOCACY

Whether we're making delegations to Ottawa City Council, attending meetings with City staff, doing media interviews or issuing media statements or op eds, the Alliance is focused on bringing concrete solutions to the table.



DEPUTATIONS

In 2021-2022, the Alliance presented many deputations to City Council and its Committees. Here are some highlights of what was expressed:

CITY COUNCIL, 14 October 2021

Official Plan

"People's Official Plan coalition requests delay until community-driven amendments can be made. The Official Plan doesn't mention addressing the housing and homelessness emergency."

PLANNING COMMITTEE, 29 November 2021

Budget 2022

"An increase in this budget to $38.5 million in capital funding for non-profit housing is more than simply the creation of more affordable housing. It signals a change in thinking - a recognition that we must invest in permanent solutions rather than maintaining a crisis."

CPS COMMITTEE, 24 August 2021

Herongate Official Plan Amendment

"This agreement will set precedents - it's important to get it right. We need to create stronger, deeper, affordability in perpetuity for this community and a commitment to family-sized and accessible units."

CPS COMMITTEE, 18 November 2021

Community Agency Funding for prevention and housing stabilization work

"For $25 million, this budget could boost prevention and housing stabilization efforts to support almost 2000 households. That's roughly the number of people staying in an emergency shelter every night."

FEDCO & CPS, 2 March 2022

Residential Vacancies Tax

"We have all of the data, examples and models needed to prevent, reduce and end homelessness in Canada, because other communities are already doing it. Ottawa is behind the rest of the country in reducing homelessness and there is no reason that we should be. We have the same resources, talent and skills as communities seeing reductions. We lack urgency."

DEPUTATIONS

PLANNING COMMITTEE, March 2022

Ontario Housing Affordability Report

"The Provincial report fundamentally mis-diagnoses a core challenge that faces the housing sector: the housing market is not driven solely by supply and demand - it is driven by the financialization of housing. The report does not address the need for or the mechanisms to support affordable housing – that is, housing units provided at below market rates, usually with government support - or meaningfully account for other legislative tools like inclusionary zoning, interjurisdictional partnerships, or public-private partnerships that could also support affordable housing development".



MEDIA RELEASES & OP-EDS

OTTAWA CITIZEN, Op-Ed, 7 October 2021

World Homeless Day

Written by: Expert Steering Team

"In honour of World Homeless Day on Oct. 10, we ask you to re-think how you look at the people in your community experiencing homelessness. Know they are your neighbours, deserving of kindness, dignity, care and a home."

13 September 2021

Herongate Official Plan Amendment response

"We cannot leave the future of our city up to private developers who can threaten to simply walk away from the needs of our communities. We have the power to create stronger plans with regulations that have teeth to give us real bargaining power and ensure all developers building in Ottawa create truly affordable housing. Even with this agreement, Herongate remains one of the largest mass evictions in North America. We have the power to ensure this doesn't happen again in our city. Let's use it."

9 February 2022

Alliance Statement on Convoy Occupation

"Today, we call for an immediate and peaceful end to the occupation. Our unhoused neighbours are in deep distress from the occupation in our streets. One of the challenges of experiencing homelessness is the lack of public space available to a person. Oftentimes, people sleeping on the streets or staying at shelters spend their days walking, from service to service, trying to access basic needs. Having to deal with the occupation as they try to go about their lives has been exhausting, and has made daily life even more challenging."

16 February 2022

100 Organizations Endorse New Campaign to Vote for Affordable Housing

"Two years following Ottawa's declaration as the first Canadian city to have a housing and homelessness emergency, the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa has launched the "Starts With Home" campaign. The non-partisan campaign aims to rally residents together to support affordable housing with their vote in October's municipal election. At launch, the total list of supporting organizations, non-profits, and businesses is at 100."

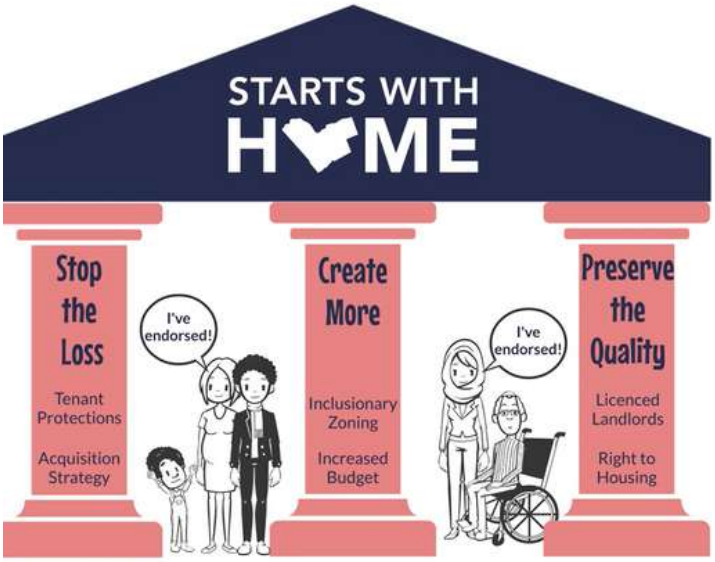
EDUCATION & MOBILIZATION



The Alliance calls on people and organizations from the private, public and nonprofit sectors to join together to advocate for change, and we work with everyone we can to build public and political support on our common goal of ending homelessness.

STARTS WITH HOME

In 2021 the Alliance's Housing Advocacy Working Group set a bold goal to become the lead voice for housing and homelessness advocacy in Ottawa.



We brought together over 40 housing experts and community partners in a facilitated session to develop the foundations of the Starts With Home campaign to educate and mobilize citizens, community leaders and candidates in the 2022 municipal election. A small working group distilled their ideas into a simple platform: Stop the Loss, Create More, Preserve the Quality. The Starts With Home Communications working group led the next steps to develop the engagement strategy and the roll-out plan, and the campaign launched in February 2022 with the endorsements of over 100 organizations.

SWH working group members:
Marie-Josee Houle, Joyce Potter, Ashley Reyns, Valerie Stam, Ray Sullivan, Kaeli Van Regan, Tong Zhao-Ansari

SWH communications working group members:
Bronwyn Bradley, Amber Bramer, Tara Hall, Alicia Martinez, Jake Naylor, Bethany Wollin

THE POVERTY CHALLENGE

In 2021 the Alliance received a grant from the Ottawa Community Foundation to build and organize an Ottawa Poverty Challenge event.

The Poverty Challenge is an experiential event to educate participants on the challenges faced by people living in poverty in accessing the system to meet their needs. The Alliance's event is being developed with the Expert Steering Team. We plan to host the event this winter for the incoming City Council as part of their orientation on the housing and homelessness system.



Thanks to the generous support of:

OTTAWA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

HOUSING LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

The Alliance partnered with Ottawa ACORN on a 3 year project from 2019 to 2021 with funding from the Ottawa Community Foundation. Together we developed and delivered a digital leadership school on housing policy, housing advocacy and tenants rights.

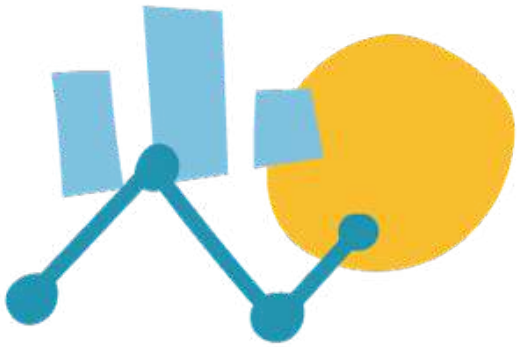
For the final year of the grant, the Alliance produced videos and research packets from the online workshops which will be posted to ACORN Canada's website and promoted by both ACORN and the Alliance.







SYSTEMS PLANNING



The Alliance is recognized across the sector as a leader in working at a systems-level with a data driven approach, centring the voices of people with lived experience. We bring together people, organizations and funding partners to collect data, conduct research and develop solutions.

SYSTEMS INVENTORY PROJECT

In its Youth Housing Strategy, developed in partnership with A Way Home Ottawa, the City's 10 Year Plan on Housing and Homelessness identified the need to conduct a system inventory to define our current capacity as a baseline for system change. In 2021 the Alliance started this work by working with Algonquin College student placements. In 2022 the Alliance received a United Way grant and retained a consultant to complete the project and prepare a final report.



Ottawa

United Way East Ontario

RESEARCH ON COVID-19 AND SYSTEM RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS

The Alliance partnered with Algonquin College through an NSERC grant on pandemic research to assess the impact of Covid-19 on homelessness. Working with the Alliance's Expert Steering Team, the project collected perspectives from service providers and people with lived experience, and is finalizing research journal articles, public reports and an online infographic.



REPORT YOUR RENOVICTION

The Alliance launched a survey in fall 2021 for tenants to report their renovictions. Data will be collected over the course of a year to use in advocacy with organizations across the province who are undertaking similar projects.



COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The Alliance is a member of the Community Advisory Board, the local organizing committee responsible for setting direction for addressing homelessness in Ottawa under the federal Reaching Home program. In early 2022, the Alliance was named as the convenor of a Governance Subcommittee to build an appropriate governance operating model for the planning, implementation and ongoing management of the Coordinated Access system. The Alliance's Expert Steering Team participates on this committee.



CENTRING LIVED EXPERIENCE

The Alliance's Expert Steering Team began work in the spring of 2021 with seven part-time team members overseen by a project coordinator. The Alliance received a Covid relief grant from the United Way that supported team development and training.



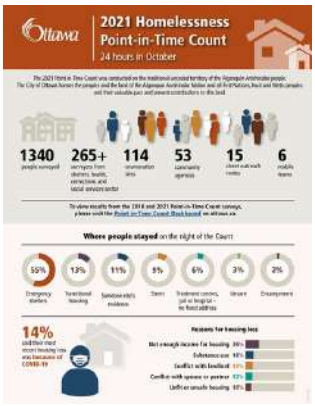
This team is dedicated to bringing their strengths, skills, and experience to the homelessness sector to help prevent, reduce and end homelessness. They have each been personally impacted by homelessness and poverty and share what they have learned to make meaningful change in Ottawa. They work within the Alliance and throughout the housing and homelessness sector on co-designing governance, policy and program development.

In addition to the critical role the EST has played in the development of the Poverty Challenge, the realization of communications and press materials, and the Algonquin College research project (all mentioned above), the team has also developed and piloted an external consulting model, to be further developed into 2023. Consultations in 2021/22 include:

Ottawa Food Bank



City of Ottawa PiT Count



Options Bytown



Testimonial

"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 Expert Steering Team 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. We look forward to working with them again as we move into the next phase of this process."

- Ottawa Food Bank

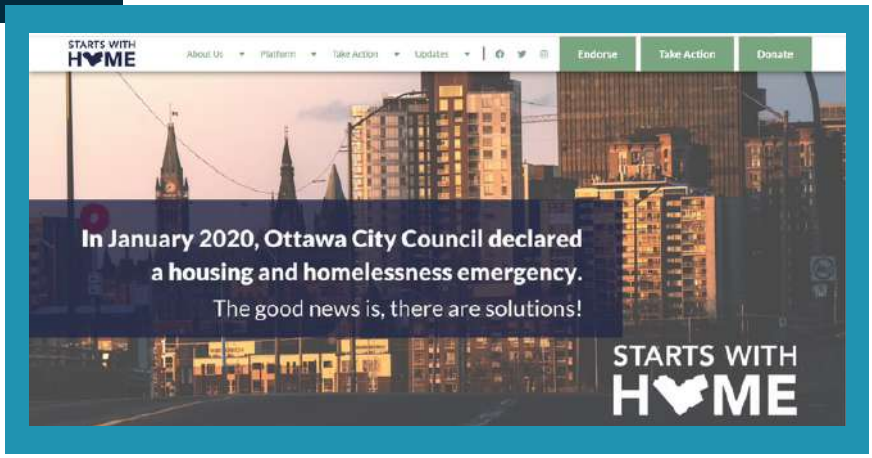
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The Alliance is a member-driven coalition working together to prevent, reduce and end homelessness centred in equity, collaboration and systems level impact. We work to inform and engage our members and create opportunities for members to share their experience and expertise.

WEBSITES

In addition to the Alliance website endhomelessnessottawa.ca we launched startswithhome.ca as the platform for our public education and mobilization brand in 2022.

Our web platform is designed for grassroots engagement and advocacy, with robust database and engagement infrastructure. It helps us connect more effectively with all of our audiences.



SOCIAL MEDIA



The Alliance runs active Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts as our main public engagement and mobilization vehicles. Our messaging is data-focused and filled with hope, focusing on possibility and practical solutions.

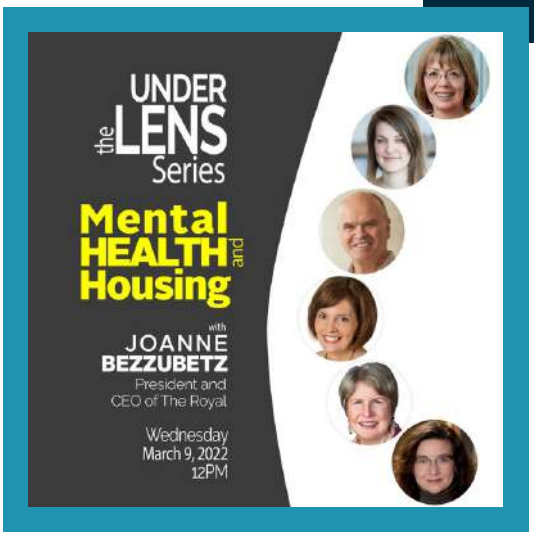
We harness our collective voice by working directly with member agency and endorser communications staff to boost and amplify our shared advocacy goals.

NEWSLETTERS & E-BLASTS

The Alliance sends a monthly newsletter to all members and provides a listserv for subscribers across the housing and homelessness sector. New this year, a Starts With Home endorser email is sent monthly with campaign updates.



COMMUNITY FORUM & EVENTS



Unfortunately we were unable to host the annual Community Forum for a second year running due to Covid. In lieu of live events, we gave presentations at virtual workshops, roundtables, and forums. While some were public events like the Under the Lens series, others were private events held for schools, faith groups, health centres, community associations, businesses, non-profits, politicians, City staff, funders and member organizations.

MEMBER FEES & DONATIONS

In 2021 the Board made the strategic decision to increase member fees to create consistency across different agencies and work toward sustainable revenue. Membership has remained steady and feedback about the value of the Alliance's work has been very positive. Project-based grant funding and private donations make up the rest of our funding.



We are grateful for your support and for the work we do together.

TOGETHER, WE CAN END IT.

Alliance Board of Directors 2021 - 2022

Executive:

Deirdre Freiheit - Shepherds of Good Hope - Chair
Catharine Vandelinde - Options Bytown - Vice-Chair
Joyce Potter - Community Member - Secretary
Tyler Fainstat - John Howard Society - Treasurer

Directors:

Melany Chrétien - Ottawa Community Housing
Pete Cranston - Community Member
Darren Graham - Youth Services Bureau
Donna Pettey - Canadian Mental Health Association
Cathy Robinson - Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa
Sarah Davis - Cornerstone Housing for Women
Kesha Mukobelwa - Community Member

Current Members 2021-2022

Action-Logement / Action-Housing | Anglican Diocese of Ottawa - Community Ministries | Bruce House | Caldwell Family Centre | Canadian Mental Health Association - Ottawa Branch | Capital City Mission | Capital Rainbow Refuge/Arc-en-ciel de la capitale | Carlington Community Health Centre | Carty House | Catholic Centre for Immigrants | Causeway Work Centre | Catholic Centre for Immigrants | Centre 454 | Centre 507 | Centre des services communautaires/Vanier Community Service Centre | Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa | Centretown Churches Social Action Committee | Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation | Centretown Community Health Centre | Community Legal Services Ottawa (Centre & West) | Cornerstone Housing for Women / Le Pilier | Daybreak Non-Profit Shelter | Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa | FAM Network | Gloucester Housing Corporation | Housing Help/Aide-Logement | Interval Housing | iSisters Technology Mentoring | Jericho Road Ministries | Jewish Family Services | 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 | OMRA | 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 | Refugee Ministry Office (ADO) | Restoring Hope | 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 | YMCA-YWCA, National Capital Region | Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa

Thank you as well to our many individual members!

Funders:
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), Ottawa Community Foundation, private donors, United Way Ottawa.

Partners:
ACORN Ottawa, Algonquin College, City of Ottawa, City for All Women Initiative, Ottawa Social Housing Network