All Roads Lead to Home:

the homelessness to

HOUSING STABILITY

strategy

for Waterloo Region

2012

Housing Stability

Vision for Waterloo Region

Community Inclusion

Sense of Home

Respect

Complementary

Collaboration

Fitting Together

Shared Approach

All Roads Lead to Home:

the homelessness to

HOUSING STABILITY

strategy

for Waterloo Region

2012

This document is the Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy (Strategy 2012). It summarizes information included in both the Policy and Action Frameworks. For further detail, please refer to the full-length documents on the Region of Waterloo's website at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/socialservices

(Search "Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy").

Scan this tag with your mobile phone to access this document on the Region of Waterloo's website.

Homelessness has many personal and societal costs – ending it is both humane and cost-effective. *All Roads Lead to Home: The Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region* (Strategy) was developed as a response to the need for a collective voice, calling for a shift in *thinking* and *doing* to end homelessness in Waterloo Region.

The first Strategy was released in 2007 and implemented with great success: 90 per cent of the 92 actions were either completed or in-progress by the end of the three-year implementation period (2007-2010). However, there is more work to do. To support continued efforts and to capture new learning since 2007, the policy elements and actions of the first Strategy have been updated.

The updated Strategy (2012) summarizes two complementary frameworks of the *All Roads Lead to Home: The Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region (2012)* – the Policy Framework (released January 2012) and the Action Framework (released November 2012);

> **66** The primary goal of the Strategy is to end homelessness in Waterloo Region. **99**

- **The Policy Framework** of the Strategy provides a common point of reference and guidelines for *thinking* about how to end homelessness, including a comprehensive review of the essential elements for ending homelessness and other key concepts, who is working to end homelessness, what resources are available and key policy directions for the future.

- **The Action Framework** of the Strategy supports the whole community to *take action* to end homelessness. It identifies what needs to change, how change should be supported and what measures should be used for evaluating the impact of change over time.

Everyone has a role to play in ending homelessness – all orders of government, businesses, not-for-profits, groups, landlords and residents of Waterloo Region. The local housing stability system, a network of organizations, groups and individuals with a mandate to support people who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss (which includes the Region of Waterloo) has adopted a leadership role in this area. As part of its role as Service Manager for Homelessness, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo (the Region) plays a facilitating role in both the development and implementation of the Strategy. The Region is joined by 28 other local organizations and groups that have endorsed the Strategy Policy Framework as *their* guide for ending homelessness. Information on the essential elements for ending homelessness is included on page four and five.
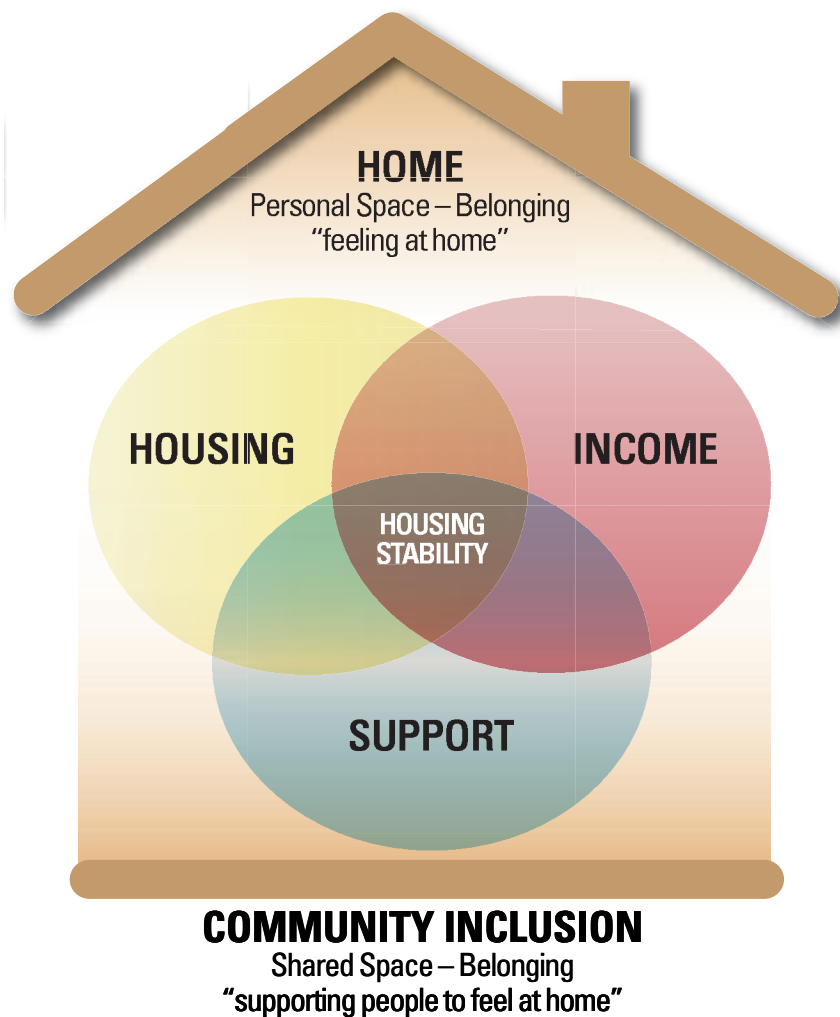
Housing stability for everyone, in a community that is designed to be inclusive, helps to restore dignity, reduce human suffering and create the conditions necessary to ensure Waterloo Region is resilient. Resiliency refers to the ability to cope with and thrive in the presence of challenges and continual change.

Housing stability (adequate housing, income and support), community inclusion and **sense of home** are the essential elements to ending homelessness because they ensure that people have what they need to *retain adequate housing over the long term*.

The following diagram illustrates how these essential elements fit together:

> 66 Homelessness has many personal and societal costs. 99

HOME
Personal Space – Belonging
"feeling at home"

HOUSING

INCOME

HOUSING STABILITY

SUPPORT

COMMUNITY INCLUSION
Shared Space – Belonging
"supporting people to feel at home"

Ending Homelessness

Definitions

Housing stability refers to *ideal living circumstances* where people with a fixed address are able to retain adequate housing over the long term. To have housing stability, people must have three key resources: adequate housing, income and support. Assessment of adequacy is largely based on personal interpretation.

1. **Adequate housing** provides security of tenure and is desirable, affordable, safe, adequately maintained, accessible and a suitable size.

2. **Adequate income** provides enough financial resources to meet and sustain minimum standards for housing (rent or mortgage expenses and utilities) and other basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, child care, transportation, personal hygiene, health/medical expenses, recreation, communication and education).

3. **Adequate support** (informal and/or formal) provides enough personal support for living as independently and connecting with others as desired.

Additionally, community inclusion and sense of home are powerful influencing factors that serve to amplify people's personal circumstances. Increasing these factors directly support greater long term housing stability.

Community inclusion means that participation in community life is accessible to everyone and that the community is designed to support people in their efforts to be included.

Home, in essence, is feeling a sense of belonging to a personal space. While it is not necessarily tied to a particular space, for most people, having *adequate housing* is fundamental to creating both a sense of *home* and the stability necessary for *full participation in the community*.

> **❝** We are all human beings regardless of what has happened in our past. Even though people have had a hard life, hope can be restored. You can make it out and find housing with good supports in place. I did. **❞**
>
> *Housing Stability program participant*

The policy directions of the Strategy include:

- An overarching **vision** for housing stability in Waterloo Region;
- Core **values** for the housing stability system;
- Five **principles** to guide actions within the Strategy; and
- Three secondary **goals** for the housing stability system which support the community towards the primary goal of ending homelessness and realizing its vision of housing stability.

Each of these is briefly summarized below. For more detail, please see the Policy Framework.

Vision for Waterloo Region:

A vision is a word picture of the future – it is a statement that captures an ideal state. Stakeholders from the housing stability system developed the following vision for Waterloo Region:

> Waterloo Region is an inclusive community where everyone has adequate housing, income and support to make a home.

Values for the Housing Stability System:

The core values of the housing stability system are:

Collaboration: We work together.

Accessibility: We meet people "where they are at."

Respect: We value all people.

Excellence: We are committed to doing our best.

Housing Stability

Vision for Waterloo Region

Community Inclusion

Sense of Home

Principles to Guide Action:

The following five principles inform the Action Framework.

1. **Focus on housing stability to promote the vision for the future.**
   The Strategy intentionally uses the term housing stability rather than homelessness wherever possible because doing so emphasizes the vision for the future and supports thinking and doing in that direction. For example, focusing only on homelessness limits investments to a very narrow range of options (such as basic emergency response measures, which only serve to manage the immediate impact of homelessness). In contrast, focusing on housing stability encourages investment in a wide range of complementary programs to end homelessness.

2. **Promote accessibility to meet people "where they are at".**
   Accessibility in the context of housing stability means that people are able to access the housing, income and support they need in the way that works best for them. People are never judged for their decisions, with the understanding that treating people with respect and meeting them "where they are at" is the only way to create greater housing stability over the long term.

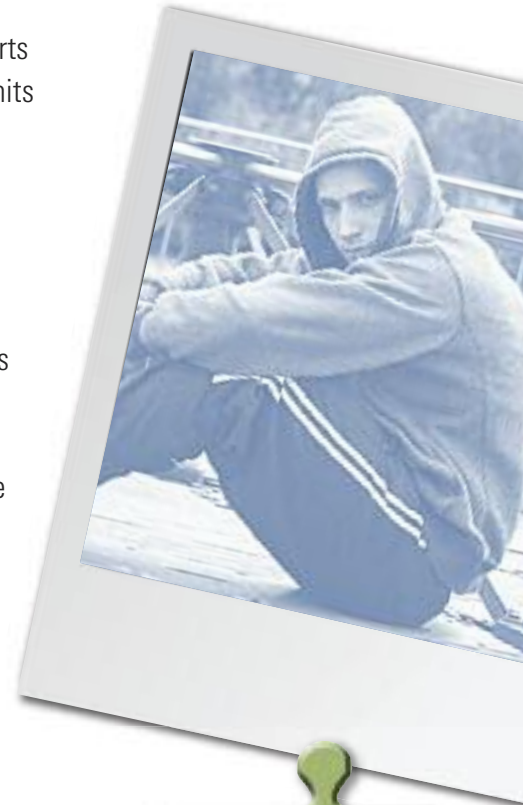3. **See adequate housing as a right.**
   According to the United Nations, having adequate housing is a human right. Ensuring that people are living in adequate housing is generally the first step toward supporting greater housing stability and community inclusion. This approach (often referred to as "Housing First") is supported by a large body of evidence illustrating that community programs in general are more effective when provided to people who have adequate housing.

4. **Tailor approaches according to people's strength of "association with homelessness".**
   Organizations that consider strength of "association with homelessness" in their program planning are likely to be more effective in their service delivery because the programs and approaches will be tailored to meet the needs of people who are experiencing similar circumstances (i.e., the needs of people experiencing transitional versus persistent homelessness can be very distinct).

5. **Promote strategic investments to end homelessness in Waterloo Region.**
   In order to prevent public resources from being diverted to expensive emergency responses unnecessarily and to support people with greater respect, it is important that people have access to appropriate levels of support to meet their needs. Stakeholders in the housing stability system have a vital role to play in reducing the personal and community impacts of housing instability. Housing retention and rapid re-housing are two approaches used by housing stability programs to fulfill this role.

Respect

Goals for the Housing Stability System:

The primary goal of the Strategy is to end homelessness in Waterloo Region.
Stakeholders in the housing stability system play a key role in supporting the community to reach this goal. As such, three secondary goals have been identified for the housing stability system.

1. **Support a Shared Approach to Ending Homelessness.**
   A full range of partners take action to implement *All Roads Lead to Home: The Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region.*

2. **Support People Experiencing Homelessness or At-Risk of Housing Loss to Increase Housing Stability.**

   a) **Increase Housing Retention.**
      People who are at-risk of housing loss are supported to retain their current adequate housing and/or to find and/or establish more adequate housing *without experiencing homelessness.*

   b) **Reduce the Length of Time People Experience Transitional Homelessness.**
      People living without a fixed address are supported to find and/or establish adequate housing as *quickly as possible* and to access additional income and support as needed and desired.

   c) **End Persistent Homelessness.**
      People approaching or experiencing persistent homelessness are supported to increase housing stability.

   d) **Increase Community Inclusion.**
      People are supported to participate in community life as fully as desired.

3. **Strengthen the Housing Stability System.**
   People have access to high quality, accessible housing stability programs and initiatives designed to end homelessness.

Actions within the Strategy are organized by the following four focus areas:

1. Supporting Community Systems to End Homelessness
2. Supporting Community Members to End Homelessness
3. Supporting the Housing Stability System to End Homelessness
4. Supporting People to Feel "At Home"

FOCUS AREA #1: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY SYSTEMS TO END HOMELESSNESS

Strategic Direction # 1	Actions
Promote a shared approach to ending homelessness with **community systems serving people with disabilities.*** **Recognizing people accessing these services are often at a higher risk of housing loss.*	*Support the following community systems to assist people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss:* 1. Addictions and Mental Health 2. Developmental Disability 3. Physical Disability and Acquired Brain Injury 4. Concurrent disorders, dual diagnosis, and other complex issues

Strategic Direction # 2	Actions
Promote a shared approach to ending homelessness with **community systems that serve specific population groups.*** **With a focus on people within these groups who may be at a higher risk of housing loss.*	*Support the following community systems to assist people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss:* 5. Aboriginal 6. Families 7. Immigration 8. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and/or Queer (LGBTQ) 9. Older Adults/Seniors 10. Rural 11. Sex Trade Worker 12. Veterans 13. Violence Against Women 14. Youth

Strategic Direction # 3	Actions
Promote a shared approach to ending homelessness with **community systems that provide key resources related to housing stability.**	*Support the following community systems to assist people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss:* 15. Education 16. Income Assistance 17. Employment Support 18. Emergency Social Services 19. Health Care 20. Justice

FOCUS AREA #2: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY MEMEBERS TO END HOMELESSNESS

Strategic Direction # 4	Actions
Promote a shared approach to ending homelessness with the **support of individuals, groups, and other sectors.**	*Support the following individuals, groups, and other sectors to end homelessness:* 21. Businesses 22. Funders/investors 23. General public 24. Media 25. Private market landlords; and 26. Support a coordinated approach to engagement with community partners

Highlights

Under these four focus areas are eight strategic directions and 40 actions. The focus areas, strategic directions and actions are outlined below. For more detail, such as the issues and activities associated with each action, please refer to the Action Framework on the Region of Waterloo's website at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/socialservices.

FOCUS AREA #3: SUPPORTING THE HOUSING STABILITY SYSTEM TO END HOMELESSNESS	
Strategic Direction # 5	*Actions*
Provide housing stability services to end homelessness.	*Provide the following programs:* 27. Emergency Shelters 30. Time Limited Residence 28. Street Outreach 31. Supportive Housing 29. Housing Retention and Re-Housing
Strategic Direction # 6	*Actions*
Tailor approaches according to people's strength of "association with homelessness".	32. Explore strategies to reduce the length of time people experience transitional homelessness. 33. Explore strategies to end persistent homelessness.
Strategic Direction # 7	*Actions*
Support housing stability system-level initiatives designed to end homelessness.	34. Increase access to information about resources to support system navigation. 35. Participate in national, provincial and local initiatives and networking opportunities. 36. Increase housing stability program staff capacity (including peer capacity) to end homelessness. 37. Support the Region's role as Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness. 38. Support the Region's role as Community Entity for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). 39. Support the Region's role as Community Coordinator for the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).
FOCUS AREA #4: SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO FEEL "AT HOME"	
Strategic Direction # 8	*Actions*
Promote community inclusion to support long term housing stability.	40. Increase community inclusion.

Next Steps

Following release and distribution of the Strategy (2012), work will begin to identify local leadership for each action. In addition, progress in implementing the Strategy will be documented.

It will be important to understand both what we did (progress with each of the 40 actions) as well as what difference it made (outcomes related to the goals of the Strategy). For more detail regarding plans and potential indicators for measuring progress, please see the Action Framework on the Region of Waterloo's website at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/socialservices.

Finally, part of the implementation of the Provincial Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (2010) and the new Housing Services Act, 2011 includes the requirement for submission of ten year housing and homelessness plans by January 1, 2014. The Region will submit the Strategy (2012) (including both frameworks) and the updated Community Action Plan for Low to Moderate Level Housing (expected to be released in 2013) to the Province to meet this deliverable.

Want to Know More About Homelessness and Housing Stability in Waterloo Region?

Over the last number of years, a great deal of information has been gathered locally to better understand the issues of homelessness and housing stability. Local statistics have been captured and analyzed, available programs and services have been inventoried, impacting policy has been identified, and promising practices have been compiled. If you are interested in further information, please visit the Region's website (www.regionofwaterloo.ca/socialservices) for:

- The Strategy Policy Framework and Action Framework

- The 18 background reports that have informed the Strategy

How to get involved

Everyone has a role to play in ending homelessness. Consider the following important activities that you can do to help:

- Educate yourself about homelessness and housing stability.

- Examine your attitudes and language towards people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss. Social stigma and stereotypes are serious barriers for people in terms of finding and retaining adequate housing as well as fully participating in community life.

- Talk to people who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss about their experience.

- Talk with your friends and family about homelessness and housing stability and encourage a respectful attitude.

- Advocate for more resources in the areas of housing, income and support for people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss. Encourage long-term solutions.

- Volunteer your time to directly support people who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of housing loss.

- Donate money or other resources to organizations that work to end homelessness and promote housing stability.

- Join a local committee or coalition that works to promote housing stability in Waterloo Region.

- Be inclusive and promote inclusive communities throughout Waterloo Region.

> 66 Everyone has a role to play in ending homelessness. 99

- Brochures and booklets about programs in the housing stability system

- Summary sheets for different populations/issues (e.g., older adults, rural populations, mental health)

- Detailed list of services (i.e., housing stability programs in Waterloo Region, Regional initiatives to support people living with low income)

A helpful local resource for both information and training in the area of housing stability is the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (www.hhug.ca).

Homelessness & Housing Umbrella Group

You may also be interested in visiting the Homeless Hub (www.homelesshub.ca), Canada's national clearinghouse for research, events, resources, information, groups and stories.

the homeless hub

All Roads Lead to Home:
the homelessness to
HOUSING STABILITY
strategy
for Waterloo Region

2012

Should you have any questions
about this report please contact:

Regional Municipality of Waterloo Social Services

99 Regina Street South, 5th Floor,
Waterloo ON N2J 4G6

Tel.: 519-883-2117
TTY: 519-575-4608
Fax: 519-883-2234

Accessibility

Flexibilty

Thinking and Doing

Excellence

Complexity

Resilience