

# Alliance to End Homelessness

Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, Jan - Dec 2009



## Time for a change: Targets to end homelessness

### GRADES 2009

#### **D** HOMELESSNESS

**7,445** Individuals stayed in an emergency shelter

**775** families

**1,317** children 16 & under

**411** youth

**974** adult women

**3,570** adult men

#### **E** LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY

**57** days was the average shelter stay

#### **C** HOUSING

**10,235** households on the Social Housing waiting list

**88** new affordable units

#### **C** INCOME

Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefit increases did not keep pace with rent increases

**THIS YEAR:** Grades reflect progress compared to 2008.

**NEXT YEAR:** Grades will be based on targets to check if Ottawa is on track to end homelessness in 10 years.

This is the sixth report card on ending homelessness in Ottawa produced by the *Alliance to End Homelessness*. Despite the dedication of professionals and volunteers in the sector, the millions of dollars spent by government and the many programs involved, we are no closer to ending homelessness.

### TO END HOMELESSNESS IN 10 YEARS

for families, children, youth, single women and single men  
**OTTAWA MUST HAVE A PLAN TO:**

- Reduce to **2,000** the number of individuals using the shelter system in Ottawa
- Reduce to **30 days** the average stay in emergency shelter
- Reduce to **4,000** the number of households on the Social Housing waiting list
- Reach **Canada's housing affordability standard** where people spend less than 30% of pre-tax income on housing.

Emergencies like fire, family breakdown, illness, etc. will continue to displace some people temporarily. With an adequate supply of housing in Ottawa, they could be quickly re-housed. The number of households on the Social Housing waiting list needs to be much lower and their wait much shorter. A person working full time has to be able to rent an average apartment for 30% of their income.

#### **ANNUAL TARGETS:**

- One* **1,000 additional affordable units a year**
- Two* **500 fewer people using emergency shelters yearly**
- Three* **Shorter stays in an emergency shelters**
- Four* **Approach Canada's affordability standard** where people spend less than 30% of pre-tax income on housing.

**The 1,000 units annually** need to be developed for a broad cross section of people with low to modest incomes using a variety of affordable housing options, such as those produced under the Action Ottawa Housing Program:

- **Rent geared-to-income units**
- **Supportive housing units**
- **Units at the lower end of market rents.**

*Housing stimulates the economy. It promotes economic prosperity.  
Every 1,000 units of affordable housing built  
creates between 2,000 and 2,500 person-years of employment.*



Photo: David Vincent

In late 2009, a food bank opened for homeless and other impoverished youth coming to the Youth Services Bureau Downtown Drop-in. 1,500 youth registered and accessed a range of services over 18,000 times in 2009.

Download the full Report Card in English or French at [www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca)

# 2009 vs. 2008: reasons why we need targets to end homelessness

## Housing in 2009 C

- Only **88** new units of affordable housing and supportive housing were created.
- At **1.5%**, the vacancy rate remained very tight. Rents increased by **3.1%** compared to a **1.2%** rise in prices generally.

## Income in 2009 C

- Minimum wages saw a welcome increase but benefit rate increases under Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program did not keep pace with rent increases.

## Emergency shelter use in 2009 D

- A **9.6%** increase in use of shelter beds to **421,500** times
- Less than a 1%** drop in the number of unique individuals using the emergency shelter system compared 2008.
- A **4%** increase in the number of families.
- A **9%** increase in the number of children.
- A **5%** increase in the number of youth.
- A **5%** decrease in the number of single men and a **2%** decrease for single women.

## Length of stay in 2009 E

- A **57 day** was the average length of a shelter stay, **up 12%** from 2008.
- A **4%** increase in men's stay; women's **up 11%**.
- A **64 day** average stay for families, **up 18.5%**.
- A **37 day** average stay for youth, **up 19.4%**.

\*2009 grades reflect year-to-year progress: A = Significant Progress, B = Some Progress; C = No / Slight Progress, D = Some Loss, E = Significant Loss. For the 2010 Report Card, grades will be based on targets to check if Ottawa is on track to end homelessness in 10 years.

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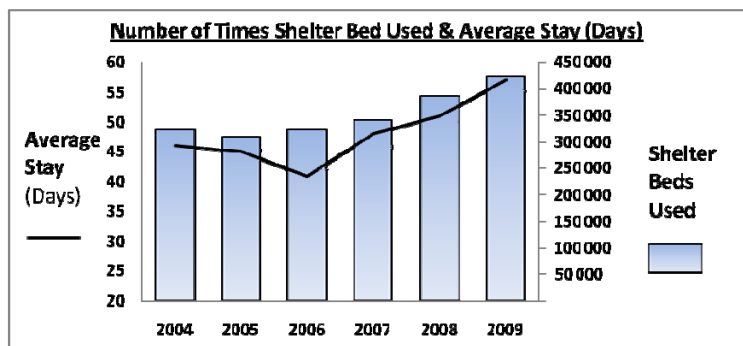
**Report Card Data Sources:** Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, City of Ottawa, including the *Homeless Individuals and Families Information System*, HIFIS3, Aggregate Database, Jan 1, 2010 (2004-2006 indicator shelter use data has been revised to correspond to new 2007-2008 data), Province of Ontario, Social Housing Registry of Ottawa and Statistics Canada.

## INDICATORS OF THE ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESS IN OTTAWA

| Progress over one year                               | 2008    | 2009           |
|--|---------|----------------|
| <b>HOUSING*</b>                                      |         |                |
| <b>Affordable Housing</b>                            |         |                |
| Pre-1995 social housing units (total stock)          | 22,400  | <b>22,400</b>  |
| Post-2000 affordable units (total stock)             | 967     | <b>1,055</b>   |
| Rent supplements (City of Ottawa & CMHA)             | 3,200   | <b>3,200</b>   |
| <b>Waiting List</b>                                  |         |                |
| Households on social housing waiting list            | 9,692   | <b>10,235</b>  |
| <b>Housing Market Indicators</b>                     |         |                |
| Rental vacancy rate                                  | 1.4%    | <b>1.5%</b>    |
| Average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment               | \$827   | <b>\$853</b>   |
| <b>INCOME</b>  |         |                |
| Ontario Works for a single person                    | \$572   | <b>\$585</b>   |
| ODSP Assistance for a Single Person                  | \$1,020 | <b>\$1,042</b> |
| Average monthly # of Ontario Works cases             | 14,329  | <b>14, 818</b> |
| Minimum Wage   | \$8.75  | <b>\$9.50</b>  |
| Increase in Consumer Price Index                     | 1.7%    | <b>1.2%</b>    |
| <b>EMERGENCY SHELTER USE**</b>                       |         |                |
| # of times shelter beds were used                    | 384,522 | <b>421,424</b> |
| # of individuals in an emergency shelter             | 7,514   | <b>7,445</b>   |
| # of single men                                      | 3,771   | <b>3,570</b>   |
| # of single women                                    | 994     | <b>974</b>     |
| # of single youth                                    | 391     | <b>411</b>     |
| # of families  | 745     | <b>775</b>     |
| <i>Children under 16 in these families =</i>         | 1,211   | <b>1,317</b>   |
| <i>Adults &amp; children 16+ in these families =</i> | 1,141   | <b>1,167</b>   |
| <b>LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY**</b>                      |         |                |
| Average length of stay in shelters (days)            | 51      | <b>57</b>      |
| Single men stay                                      | 53      | <b>55</b>      |
| Single women stay                                    | 45      | <b>50</b>      |
| Single youth stay                                    | 31      | <b>37</b>      |
| Families stay  | 54      | <b>64</b>      |

\* Supportive housing data (the number of spaces and the waiting list) is not reported on this year as the supportive housing waiting list is being integrated into the Social Housing Registry.

\*\* Beginning in 2009, the City of Ottawa is using a fully electronic system to summarize shelter data to further increase accuracy.



# “Why are doctors concerned about homelessness?”

– The question asked by Dr. Rob Cushman, CEO of Champlain Local Health Integration Network, as he introduced Dr. Turnbull at the Homelessness Forum in November 2009

## Dr. Jeff Turnbull

Excerpts from Keynote Speech

**“If you really want to advocate for health, you have to start to make fundamental changes in the way society is structured and you have to deal with issues of poverty.”**

**Poverty is the greatest predictor of health.**



*As urban poverty grows in North America, one gets the sense that homelessness in Canada is tolerated and even expected. As rates of homelessness continue to rise there is a lack of public outcry. Why is that? This is despite clear evidence of the enormous economic costs associated with homelessness both at the societal and individual levels, for example health costs. However, cost effective solutions exist. How can we be more successful advocates on the issue?*

### **Canadian ‘values’**

*Homelessness is neither historically part of Canadian society nor ingrained in society; research indicates that prejudices and myths persist in the general population about poverty and homelessness.*

*Perhaps the national discussion about what poverty means and how it has evolved needs to be reframed to encompass civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. This would go some way to better align general perceptions with the Canadian values of: equity, the social safety net, and safe and healthy communities. Potentially, this could help overcome the lack of will at the societal and the policy level that is hampering the development of comprehensive homelessness strategies.*

### **Housing is a Human Right**

*There are important consequences of acknowledging that the homeless are faced with violations of a wide range of human rights. Homelessness is much more than a housing issue. Furthermore, all levels of government have the responsibility to recognize the rights of homeless people since a Human Rights framework shifts the perception of the homeless as objects of charity to citizens entitled to protection under law.*

***Moving to a context of Human Rights will change advocacy efforts by increasing the demand for government accountability in the face of this growing problem.”***

## Social Determinants of Health

Public Health Agency of Canada

There is a growing body of evidence about what makes people healthy. In particular, there is mounting evidence that the contribution of medicine and health care is quite limited, and that spending more on health care will not result in significant further improvements in population health.

On the other hand, there are strong and growing indications that other factors such as living and working conditions are crucially important for a healthy population. Each of these factors is important in its own right. At the same time, the factors are interrelated.

The evidence indicates that the key factors which influence population health are:

- income and social status
- social support networks
- education
- employment/ working conditions
- social environments
- physical environments
- personal health practices and coping skills
- healthy child development
- biology and genetic endowment
- health services
- gender and
- culture.

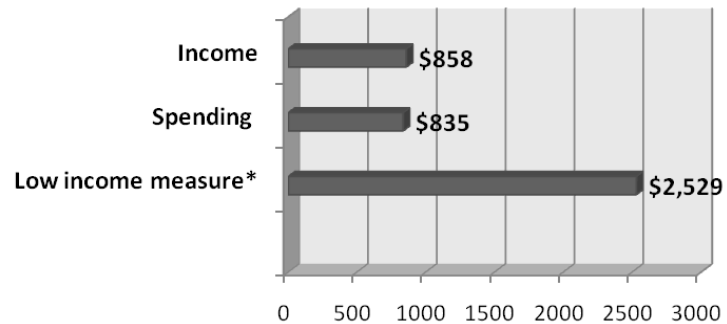
# A portrait of a family living in Ottawa's Emergency Shelter System

## Edward and Elizabeth are an intelligent and articulate couple who are clearly discomfited by their present situation

"Especially now that we live in a shelter, it is very hard to convince an employer to give you a job." For over 3 months they have been living in Ottawa's emergency shelter system with two teenage children.

Highly educated and Canadian citizens, they have worked abroad for the Canadian government and international organizations. Their situation shows that nobody is completely safe from becoming homeless.

This Family's Monthly Financial Reality (Living in Shelter)



"We wanted to provide excellent educational opportunities for our children," and so the family moved back to Canada in 2009. For the first four months, they stayed with friends, occupying a semi-finished basement in a three-bedroom house. The rent along with living expenses and their eldest son's university costs drained their savings. Eventually the relationship with their friends began to deteriorate. Their case-worker arranged for the family to move into a motel while waiting for a place in the family shelter.

"The children find it very hard to adjust to living in a shelter. Having peers and friends know that they are living in a shelter makes them edgy. They won't give their phone number out," says Edward.

Living in a shelter is not easy. "The shelter is noisy at night-time and sharing amenities comes with its own difficulties," adds Elizabeth. Edward and Elizabeth remain optimistic about their outlook. They know that their case-worker and the shelter staff are doing their best in terms of finding suitable housing. As a family they have priority on the Social Housing waiting list.

"But once we do get back on our feet," Elizabeth says, "I want to go into social work to help people."

*Post-Script:*

*This family was placed in housing as of mid-March.*

### MONTHLY BUDGET (of this family while in the family shelter)

| ACTUAL INCOME (Monthly) |                    | ACTUAL SPENDING (Monthly) |              |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Ontario Works           | \$438 <sup>1</sup> | Food & toiletries         | \$500        |
| Child Tax Benefit       | \$420              | Winter clothing           | \$100        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>\$858*</b>      | School activities         | \$100        |
|                         |                    | Bus pass (for one)        | \$85         |
|                         |                    | Telephone costs           | \$25         |
|                         |                    | Kids' entertainment       | \$20         |
|                         |                    | <b>Total</b>              | <b>\$830</b> |

<sup>1</sup> This excludes the "Housing Allowance" portion of Ontario Works (OW) which is \$674 for this family of 2 adults and 2 teens. This amount will be added when they find housing regardless of how much it costs, bringing their income to \$1,532 monthly.

### FINANCIAL BENCHMARKS (Monthly)

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Low Income Measure*                               | \$2,529 |
| Nutritious Food Basket**                          | \$868   |
| Average monthly rent for a 2-bedroom apartment*** | \$1,028 |

\*Low Income Measure (LIM) is a definition of relative poverty that sets the line at 50% of the median household income adjusted for this family  
 \*\* The 'Nutritious Food Basket' measures the basic cost for this family to eat healthily  
 \*\*\* Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

# Building housing is fraught with obstacles

**Editorial by Catherine Boucher**

Each person in our City needs secure and affordable housing. This housing can take many forms. It can be a room at the new "Oaks" residence on Merivale, with a managed alcohol program. It can be a bachelor apartment with Options Bytown where people gain the independent life-skills they need to have successful long-term tenancies. It can be an independent apartment in non-profit housing, one with rent-g geared-to-income or one with supports provided to the tenant by an agency like CMHA or SALUS.

There are too few of these housing solutions and we need to build more. But this is fraught with obstacles. The main one is funding, with governments shying away from

long term engagement in housing. Current "programs" provide some funding from all three levels, but never cover the entire cost of building or managing the housing.

Other stumbling blocks include upwardly spiraling construction costs, NIMBY, lack of affordable land and difficulty in obtaining mortgage financing. Housing "programs" are most often knee-jerk responses to failing economies. They are meant to get "shovels in the ground" and therefore do not address the long term needs for sustainable housing. Housing currently being built will provide some affordability, but will not address the needs of the poorest in our community.

Until Canada adopts a strong national housing policy, governments will continue providing band-aid solutions. We, the citizens of Ottawa, need to remind our politicians that homelessness is everyone's issue. We need to demand a permanent and sustainable solution.



Photo: ATEH

Catherine (centre) with Marion Wright Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness and community advocate Dick Stewart. For over 30 years, Catherine Boucher was Executive Coordinator of Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC), a community-based non-profit housing corporation with over 1,300 units. She has developed and managed social housing under most programs available from federal, provincial and municipal governments.

| <b>Average Rents in Ottawa 2000-2009*</b>  |         |         |                |                         |
|--|---------|---------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 2009 vacancy rate = 1.5% (2008: 1.4%) CMHC |         |         |                |                         |
|  | 2000    | 2008    | 2009           | Yearly income Needed ** |
| <b>Bachelor</b>                            | \$573   | \$671   | <b>\$688</b>   | <b>\$27,520</b>         |
| <b>1-bedrm</b>                             | \$723   | \$827   | <b>\$853</b>   | <b>\$34,120</b>         |
| <b>2-bedrm</b>                             | \$877   | \$995   | <b>\$1,028</b> | <b>\$41,120</b>         |
| <b>3-bedrm</b>                             | \$1,056 | \$1,227 | <b>\$1,257</b> | <b>\$50,280</b>         |

\*Compare this to the rates for a single person on Ontario Works which is \$589/month or on Ontario Disability Benefits which is \$1,042. In 2009, a total of 7,745 people stayed in emergency shelter for an average of 57 days.

\*\* Spending less than 30% of pre-tax income on housing is Canada's affordability standard.

| <b>Annual Income of Renter Households in Ottawa</b> |                      |                      |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2001 & 2006 Census                                  |                      |                      |
| Income range  | # Households in 2000 | # Households in 2005 |
| Under \$5,000                                       | 5,695                | <b>5,295</b>         |
| \$5,000 to \$9,999                                  | 5,255                | <b>5,520</b>         |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999                                | 9,210                | <b>9,280</b>         |
| \$15,000 to \$19,999                                | 8,605                | <b>9,210</b>         |
| \$20,000 to \$24,999                                | 7,770                | <b>8,040</b>         |
| <b>Total households with income under \$25,000</b>  | 36,535               | <b>37,345</b>        |

## What is homelessness?

- Living on the street
- Staying overnight in temporary shelters
- Staying in places not meant for human habitation
- Moving continuously among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family ("couch surfing").

### **Could YOU be at risk of becoming homeless?**

Families and individuals can lose their housing for any number of reasons: losing a job, having an income too low to stay in suitable housing, fleeing abuse.

Some are at risk because of mental illness or substance use problems; others lack the life skills or ability to live on their own.

# Housing with Supports in Ottawa



Photo: HousingPlus

At a recent **HousingPlus** meeting, members examined preliminary ratings in a 3-year study they are conducting with the University of Ottawa. The study shows high or medium to high ratings on a number of scales relating to the quality of housing and the quality of services to individuals in supportive housing. From the left: Lorraine Bentley, Options Bytown; Val Hinsperger, Nepean Housing Corporation; Nancy McKelvey, Bruce House; Javier Jovel, Shepherds of Good Hope; Judy Perley, YMCA-YWCA, NCR; and Anne Chornenky, Cornerstone Housing for Women.

## **HousingPlus** Ottawa's supportive housing network

### *What is HousingPlus?*

**HousingPlus** is a community-based, person-centered model of providing affordable, permanent accommodation. Housing support staff assist individual tenants in attaining their optimum quality of life and encourage the development of healthy communities.

**HousingPlus** is a proven and cost-effective way to prevent and address homelessness. Unlike shelters and other services, **HousingPlus** combines affordable housing with on-site counselling, training and other services that help people live stable and successful lives.

**HousingPlus** provides services and housing for people who face social isolation and other complex challenges – individuals and families who may have very low incomes and serious, persistent issues such as mental illness, HIV/AIDS or substance use.

**This approach to supports and housing reduces reliance on costly emergency, health and social services and . . . more importantly, helps people to be strong and successful members of the community.**

**HousingPlus** services are provided by the members of the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network, a coalition of housing agencies, housing over 900 people throughout the city. Through this partnership the members listed below have created a single access point for individuals in need of accommodation and support.

**“Despite the community’s success stories in Ottawa, as of December 2009 experts estimate over 2,000 people remain on the supportive housing wait list.”**

Lorraine Bentley, chair of **HousingPlus**:

Bruce House  
Cornerstone  
Daybreak  
Emily Murphy  
Harmony House  
Horizons Renaissance  
John Howard Society  
NCR YMCA-YWCA Ottawa  
Options Bytown  
Ottawa Salus  
Shepherds of Good Hope  
Tewegan Transition House  
Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa  
Youville Centre

*This is my home. A place where I can go and I can leave the rest of the world out there.*

*My home is a place where I can take pride in going to at the end of the day. Where my belongings are safe and where I am safe.*

*I write this to thank you from deep in my heart because today I have a new start.*

**Tenant of Supportive Housing**



# HousingPlus – Exciting news about housing with supports

- 1. A team of researchers from the University of Ottawa is working with the HousingPlus agencies** to gain a better understanding of how supportive housing helps formerly homeless individuals make the transition to stable housing, including ways to improve the effectiveness of its supportive housing. The formal research approach will produce methods that can be applied elsewhere.
- 2. The Social Housing Registry is working with the 14 HousingPlus agencies to develop an integrated waiting list for supportive housing in Ottawa.**
- 3. The City of Ottawa recognises current tenants of supportive housing as a priority for traditional rent-geared-to-income housing when they are ready to move on.** The Social Housing Registry is working with the supportive housing providers to implement and manage this policy to provide a single access point for all people who apply to live in any of Ottawa's 14 supportive housing complexes.
- 4. Six housing-support agencies have partnered with two social housing providers to help 100 chronically homeless people to get and/or keep social housing:**
  - Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa Branch
  - Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation
  - Horizons Renaissance
  - John Howard Society
  - Options Bytown
  - Ottawa Community Housing Corporation
  - Ottawa Salus
  - Royal Ottawa Health Care Group.



Volunteers from Nortel Networks help prepare Thanksgiving dinner at Options Bytown's apartment complex at 380 Cumberland

## GOOD NEWS

**Four projects with 129 supportive housing units are now in development or were completed in 2009**

### 8 units

The John Howard Society of Ottawa has opened a new eight-unit supportive housing building for young women.

### 42 units

The Cornerstone Housing for Women Foundation is constructing a 42-unit four-storey building to provide long-term supportive housing for homeless women.

### 55 units

The Shepherds of Good Hope's new residence, The Oaks, provides 55 self-contained units of supportive housing for chronically homeless adults.

### 24 units

The Ottawa Mission has two new housing programs in the community that provide 24 units to men with varying needs, who are at risk of being homeless.

## Women in custody

Women who have been in conflict with the law and incarcerated at either a provincial or a federal Correctional Facility are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa is devoted to helping women and female youth who are or may be at risk of coming into conflict with the law, offering a variety of programs and services.

### Complex needs

As Bryonie Baxter, Executive Director of Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa explains, for women emerging from incarceration "one can tick all the boxes". Women in this situation have housing needs, vocational or educational training needs, and financial problems.

They may need substance abuse or mental health treatment or have ongoing physical health issues, in addition to child-welfare and family issues. They may have ongoing legal issues and a history of trauma, victimization and abuse, or face systematic disadvantages if they are aboriginal or visible minority women.

### On the road

In order to connect with women and to ease the transition from a federal or provincial institution, Elizabeth Fry provides 'in-reach' services to incarcerated women prior to their release. A full time staff person works locally with women about to be

released from the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. A worker also travels one day a month to meet with women slated to return to Ottawa who have been incarcerated at the Federal Joliette Institution in Joliette, Quebec, Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener, or the Provincial Vanier Centre for Women in Milton.

### Returning Home

Once released, Elizabeth Fry operates *J.F. Norwood House*, a 24-hour supportive living residence for women and their families with 5 beds specifically funded for women on federal parole and 3 beds for women released from provincial institutions.

### Lack of Beds

A major ongoing challenge for *J.F. Norwood House* is responding to the demand. Ms. Baxter knows that over the next 18 months, 25 women in federal prisons are identified for release in Ottawa, many more than there is space for. If no bed is available in Ottawa, they will have to be transferred to any available bed in the Province of Ontario to serve out their probation or parole conditions.

Elizabeth Fry is currently negotiating with Corrections Canada for funding for additional beds to meet the increased federal demand. Until they relocate *J.F. Norwood House* and increase bed space, 8 beds is their absolute maximum capacity.

More at [www.efryottawa.com](http://www.efryottawa.com).

## Women in Custody 101 . . .

- Less than 10% of adults in provincial custody are women
- In Ontario's provincial system, it costs \$138/day to house an adult in prison for 1 day
- The approximate cost of incarcerating a woman in the federal system is \$315/day (\$188/day for men)
- In 2001, of the 385 women in federal institutions, 22% were Aboriginal
- Most incarcerated women are parents
- Most incarcerated women are socially and economically marginalized
- Women are less likely to re-offend and constitute a lower risk to the community than men.

## Joanne's story at

[www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca)



Photo: Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa



# YIMBY – YES, in my back yard!



Photo: Shepherds of Good Hope

Shepherds of Good Hope in Ottawa began developing supportive housing at The Oaks in the west end of the city in mid-2009. All 55 units will be occupied by June 2010

**The term ‘NIMBY’ (Not In My Back Yard)** describes the opposition of residents to the nearby location of something they consider undesirable, even if it is generally considered a benefit for many.

The NIMBY phenomenon can, and often does occur when supportive and/or affordable housing is proposed in a particular neighbourhood. In these cases local residents usually express concern about three things: safety, neighbourhood cohesion and property values.

## Are people’s concerns valid?

*“We are Neighbours: The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community Social, Economic and Attitude Changes”* is a community-based research study that explored the impact of two supportive housing buildings on the surrounding neighbourhood.

Conducted in Toronto in 2008 by the Dream Team\* and the University of Toronto. The Dream Team is a group of psychiatric consumer/survivors who advocate for more supportive housing in Ontario. They used public data to show that supportive housing does not hurt property values or increase crime.\*\*

**In fact, property values increased and criminal activity decreased during the study period.** Only two of the 54 immediate neighbours and business people who were interviewed believed the housing had a negative impact.

**The opposition that had originally existed was gone “with virtually no expression of negative attitudes found among immediate neighbours”.** Not only do these new neighbours need and deserve safe and affordable housing, **supportive housing residents make for good neighbours!**

## Combating NIMBY:

### Lessons Learned

Advice for new housing providers

- 1 Be prepared.
- 2 Announce your plans as soon as possible.
- 3 Make sure you know (or get to know) the community, local residents and both formal and informal leaders.
- 4 Make friends and build alliances (and let those friends support your effort!)
- 5 Develop a public relations plan and media strategy. Be transparent, prepare for tough questions and provide the community with updates on a regular basis.
- 6 Develop an educational presentation that provides the facts and dispels myths for concerned citizens.
- 7 Involve tenants who are interested in helping the cause. They have an important role to play when it comes to NIMBY-busting!
- 8 If things get ugly at a community meeting (and sometimes they do), do not lash out or take it personally. *Take the high road.*
- 9 Be a good neighbour! Host a BBQ or contribute to a community clean-up day for example.
- 10 **DON'T GIVE UP!**

Paul Soucie, Executive Director  
Shepherds of Good Hope in Ottawa

\* [www.thedreamteam.ca](http://www.thedreamteam.ca)

\*\* Wellesley Institute (2008). *We are Neighbours: The Impact of Supportive Housing on Community, Social, Economic and Attitude Changes*. Toronto, Wellesley Institute.

# Hepatitis C and Treatment

## VIRUS: Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C (HCV) is an infection caused by a virus that attacks the liver. The virus is transmitted through the blood.

The greatest risk of infection among the homeless in Ottawa comes from sharing drug injection equipment and unsafe tattooing practices.

Often people are unaware of the infection and may have no symptoms until lasting damage has been done to their liver, which could be in the form of cirrhosis, liver cancer and complete liver failure. In Ottawa, 76% of people who inject drugs have been found to be infected with Hepatitis C compared with a 10% infection rate for HIV.

Harm reduction strategies have proven to be the most effective way to prevent the spread of Hepatitis C infection as they focus on the reduction of immediate harm to the individual and the community.

Harm reduction strategies also focus on helping the individual take control of the risks associated with drug use so they can modify exposure without requiring the person to stop using drugs if they are unable to do so.

Treating Hepatitis C is very expensive – \$30,000 for a 48 week regimen of ribavirin / interferon.

The annual cost to Canada is estimated at \$500 million. People who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness are exposed on a daily basis to stresses and deprivations unimaginable to the comfortably housed; this puts them at high risk to contract Hepatitis C and at the same time imposes barriers to accessing treatment.

Providing effective medical care to the insecurely housed or homeless is difficult but not impossible with adequate supports. Because of the instability and daily survival issues in their lives, people who are homeless may not be able to access health care or follow medication regimes.

The health care system is not designed to reach out to this population.

However, as the rate of infection increases, the health care system faces the crippling cost of dealing with people with major liver damage.

## Surprising Study Results

### *Patients are not the obstacle*

**A major study by Ottawa Inner City Health, The Ottawa Hospital and Oasis examined barriers to effective Hepatitis C (HCV) treatment faced by the homeless and people who use drugs.**

The study covered 124 homeless or unstably housed adults and youth who either had or were at risk of having Hepatitis C. They were interviewed regarding their understanding of disease, their lifestyle, health status, barriers to medical care, etc.

- 55 women and 69 men responded to the survey; they represented a broad range of ages. Most respondents were white although aboriginal people were disproportionately represented.
- Although women reported having more supports than men, it was troubling that most sources of support were from health and social services staff and that family support was generally absent.
- About 1/3 of the study group knew they were HCV positive; the majority of respondents did not know their status despite the high risk of infection.
- Almost 2/3 of the participants had other medical conditions, such as infections or pain-associated illnesses. Most of those included in the study had a history of substance use including injection drug use.
- 2/3 of those in the study were on prescription medications which presents a challenge to maintain without stable housing (*where is your medicine cabinet today?*).
- Many managed to stay on their medications with assistance.

**The individuals in this Ottawa study identified transportation to medical appointments and the lack of housing as the most significant barriers to Hepatitis C (HCV) treatment.**

None of the usual barriers to HCV treatment were significant from the perspective of the person infected with HCV, such as being unwilling to see specialists, go to hospital visits, have a liver biopsy, change their lifestyle for successful treatment, take medications or tolerate the side effects of treatment.

- In fact, 80% of those surveyed would accept treatment. The study showed that the patients were not the obstacle to care that had been assumed in the past; they are motivated and willing to be treated and this would include modifying their behaviour.

**Given the study's results, the next step would be a pilot program with an interdisciplinary health care team.**

The assembled team would reach out to this group to provide support and access to housing so that people living with Hepatitis C could be successfully treated for their condition.

# Physical and mental health while homeless

## Ottawa's Youth Health Clinic



**FOR AGES  
16 TO 24  
Monday to Friday  
12:30–5:30 pm  
147 Besserer Street  
Youth Services  
Bureau  
Drop in to talk  
about emotions,  
addictions, your  
body, your health**

Street-involved youth experience higher levels of substance abuse and Hepatitis C than youth who are stably housed. The Youth Health Clinic, partnering with the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, is geared to street-involved youth and is designed to decrease barriers by integrating primary care, mental health and addictions. Youth do not need a health card to access services and can:

- Drop in for testing or to access contraception and harm reduction supplies
- Get help with minor injuries, infections, pains and burns
- Talk to someone about their feelings or ask questions about sexuality, drugs, depression and anxiety
- Get information about services in the city.

## 'Living on the Street'

### **Moving from the streets to a permanent home is the most desired solution.**

At the end of December 2009, as many as 100 individuals were 'living on the streets' in Ottawa, reports Michael White, Director of Program at *The Salvation Army*.

Over the year their *Outreach Team* found, in order:

- Males, over 20 years of age
- Females, over 20 years of age
- Young males, under 20 years of age
- Young females, under 20 years of age (although, in the period July to November females outnumbered males in the younger age group)

It was not uncommon to note mental health and possible addiction issues in those living on the streets. Along with the desire to remain independent, individuals on the streets also avoided the shelters because of fears for personal safety, theft and drugs.

**White noted that 60 individuals have moved into housing as part of the *Housing Response Team*\* program.** Of that number, 53 were newly housed and the others were re-housed. The last count reported 150 people living on the streets of Ottawa.

\*The Salvation Army operates the Outreach Team and Housing Response Team programs with funding from the City of Ottawa and the Province of Ontario

## Deaths of street-involved people



### **Raymond Lambert, better known as 'Frenchy', died in October 2009 at the age of 43 from complications of Hepatitis C**

Frenchy was one of the first people to be treated through Ottawa's integrated concurrent disorders treatment program. The program is offered at the Special Care Unit for Men by the Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa Branch, Ottawa Inner City Health and the Salvation Army Booth Centre. His success was inspiring and he had been expected to be the first recipient of supported housing through a partnership between the three agencies above.

**Typically, there are 45-50 deaths of street-involved people each year in Ottawa.** Research shows death rates are higher and life expectancy shorter for street-involved or marginally-housed people than they for those with stable housing.\*

**Ottawa is known nationally and internationally for its leadership and vision around the issue of death and dying for homeless people:**

- Generally in Ottawa, death is expected, care is provided and the statistics measuring a 'good death', i.e., with control of pain and symptoms, connection to family or friends etc., are excellent.
- Nurses who work in the shelters find people when they are sick and help them access services.
- The Hospice at the Mission has made a huge impact on the dying process for people who have experienced homelessness.

\* S. W. Hwang, 2009: Mortality among residents of shelters, rooming houses, and hotels in Canada: 11 year follow-up study, [www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com)

# MILESTONES

**Community agencies and thousands of community volunteers are taking action**

## HELPING PEOPLE KEEP THEIR HOUSING

- 14,755 households received assistance with their housing** (housing search, stabilization and housing loss prevention) with City of Ottawa, Ontario and Federal funding. In 2008, 14,746 households received assistance.
- 1,138 of the total households assisted were within one month of losing their homes;** 88% of these remained housed through their crisis.
- 3,509 additional individuals received assistance from street outreach workers**

## HELPING PEOPLE FIND HOUSING

- 2,663 households found housing** with City of Ottawa, Provincial and Federal funding:
  - 2,162 moved from emergency shelter to permanent housing
  - 174 went from street to permanent housing
  - 28 went from incarceration to housing
  - 299 moved from street to emergency shelter

## 88 NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS IN 2009

- 7** Live Work Play (housing for people with intellectual disabilities)
- 8** John Howard Society (Transitional housing)
- 10** Tungasuvvingat Inuit (Transitional housing)
- 63** Assistance with Long-term Home Ownership (individuals)

*There were 134 units in 2008.*

## SOCIAL HOUSING REGISTRY

- 1,842 households were housed in 2009**
- 10,235 households remain on the waiting list:**
  - 3,903 households with children
  - 3,969 single adult households
  - 1,733 senior households
  - 807 households under the age of 24
  - 630 households with 2 or more adults

## IN ADDITION

- Two new residential youth drug treatment centres** are underway, one Anglophone and one Francophone
- Health services and Drop-in programs** continue to provide assistance for people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes.
- 751 units to be constructed or retrofitted over 2010/2011**, including Gignul Housing, Crichton Street, The Oaks, Cornerstone, Beaver Barracks, and others.

## Centre 454



Photo: Centre 454

Centre 454's Program Advisory Committee at a recent meeting (one of the three members of the Centre's community is missing in the photo as is the representative from the neighbourhood community association).

*Centre 454* has been serving the Ottawa community for 56 years and has grown into a multi-service centre serving people who are homeless and living in poverty. The Centre's vision is *"a community where all live to their optimum"*. Their core mission is *"to advocate for change to create opportunities for all to be more fully engaged in society"*. *Centre 454* is a Community Ministry of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

As a result of this combined vision and mission the Centre has engaged in activities that draw people together to explore issues and work together to create solutions. For example, the Centre's community members recently developed a successful solution to the intensification of the neighbourhood drug trade.

As well, the composition of the Centre's Program Advisory Committee currently includes three people from the Centre community, as well as a representative from the neighbourhood community association adding important information and insights to the decision-making process.

The creative juices at Centre 454 have been charged by the presentation by PARC\* at the Homelessness Forum in November 2009 and the Centre's community is beginning to explore new ways to build on neighbourhood relations.

\* The PARC Ambassador project in Toronto successfully engaged in community consultation to combat NIMBYism over the development of an affordable housing project for persons with mental health & addictions histories in the Parkdale community.

## MUNICIPAL ELECTION YEAR!



Photo: David Vincent

### ASK YOUR CANDIDATES IF THEY WILL ACT TO:

- 1. Increase affordable housing by 1,000 units each year and invest more municipal resources.**
- 2. Reinvest the nearly \$80 million dollars being removed from the property tax base by 2018 in new affordable housing and other social services.** Some financial responsibility for social services infrastructure is being uploaded back to the province.
- 3. Reduce the number of individuals in emergency shelters by 500 each year.**
- 4. Actively abide by Human Rights Policy on Rental Housing and NIMBYism.**
- 5. Ensure the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy is successfully implemented with appropriate funding.**

### Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on HUMAN RIGHTS AND RENTAL HOUSING

As of July 2009, a new policy on human rights and rental housing means city councils, developers and neighborhood associations cannot apply different rules and regulations to those living in affordable or supportive housing.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission protects Ontarians from discrimination in the workplace and other areas on the basis of gender, ethnicity, etc. This protection is now extended into the areas of zoning to protect people from discrimination based on NIMBYism.

#### This protection prohibits:

- Designing rules that are applied only to affordable housing such as:
  - fences or walls to separate the project from the neighborhood
  - limits on the number of residents
  - removing balconies so residents cannot oversee their neighbors, and
  - requiring tenants to sign contracts with their neighbours.
- Adding additional requirements for neighbourhood consultation and input
- Restricting such projects in neighbourhoods where other similar size projects are allowed
- Defining dwellings based on the characteristics of residents
- Basing by-laws based on the relationships between the occupants.

More information at <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/housing>

**In the news** – In January 2010, two new by-laws in Kitchener were overturned on human rights grounds on appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board because they stopped new non-profit and supportive housing from being built in a downtown neighbourhood in Kitchener.

**Did you know that the City of Ottawa's Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw specifically limits the number of emergency shelters in Ward 12?**

*“Our Mayor and Councillors have a responsibility to everyone in Ottawa to make sure this city has a range of housing stock. The 2006 Census showed 37,000 renter households with incomes under \$25,000 in Ottawa; they need a safe and affordable place to live. As volunteers, agency staff, people who've experienced homelessness, as concerned community members, we need to use our votes effectively!”*

Marion Wright, Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness

# More Affordable Housing for Ontario

## The road to a revitalized and fair economy starts here. . .

. . . at Premier Dalton McGuinty's office as MPP for Ottawa South. Contact local and other Members of Provincial Parliament at [www.ontla.on.ca](http://www.ontla.on.ca)

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

An essential foundation for individuals and for communities and a necessity in a fair and strong economy –

### Ask MPPs to Spend in Order to Save

- **Ensure that all housing measures** in the budget and policies and taxes are equitable and benefit Ontarians at all income levels.
- **Enhance investments** by the public, non-profit and private sector in affordable housing and **eliminate barriers** to non-profit housing development (i.e., provide pre-construction development costs).
- **Continue to improve funding** of services for homeless people and programs to prevent homelessness.
- **Significantly increase funding** for treatment, support services and health care to meet the basic needs of chronically homeless people with complex needs – the “moral thing” to do and cost effective too!
- **Tie benefit rates to average rents across the province** for recipients of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program and remove disincentives to work.

### Non-Monetary Solutions for Ontario

- **Immediately amend Ontario's Planning Act** to direct municipalities to require the inclusion of housing at prices affordable to lower income households in the development or redevelopment of land to quickly and fairly create stable, equitably accessible, and affordable housing.
- **Amend the Residential Tenancies Act** to include rent controls on vacant units to help to address the crisis of unaffordable rents in Ottawa and other communities.

### The Alliance to End Homelessness recommends four governing principles for Ontario's new Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy:

1. **A coordinated, inter-ministerial approach, especially between the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Community and Social Services, and Health and Long Term Care.**
2. **Proceed in partnership with community-based groups such as non-profit, social housing, co-operative housing and private housing developers and other non-profit organizations as the most effective way to use taxpayers' money to ensure long-term housing affordability.**
3. **Proceed in partnership with federal and municipal governments.**
4. **Delivery of a sufficient supply of stable, good quality, affordable, adequate housing for all Ontarians that is maintained in a good state of repair and is safe and up to property standards, without overcrowding.**





# A HOUSING STRATEGY FOR CANADA

**To federal politicians: It's time to act now!**

## Homelessness did not take a break!

Private Member Bill C-304, authored by MP Libby Davies, survived prorogation.

**BILL C-304 – An Act to Establish a National Housing Strategy** to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing passed its Second Reading Fall 2009.

### How did Ottawa area MPs vote?

**YEAS** Mauril Bélanger, Paul Dewar, David McGuinty, Richard Nadeau, Marcel Proulx

**NAYS** John Baird, Pierre Poilievre, Lawrence Cannon, Guy Lauzon, Pierre Lemieux, Gordon O'Connor

*Royal Galipeau did not vote.* **Contact MPs at [webinfo.parl.gc.ca](http://webinfo.parl.gc.ca)**

Photo: David Vincent

## Three messages for federal politicians –

### 1. Act on a National Housing Strategy

The Alliance to End Homelessness asks for federal action on a National Housing Strategy that enshrines housing as a human right for everyone. The consequences of Canada's lack of a national strategy is borne out by Ottawa's increasing homeless rate even while Statistics Canada shows a 10.4% increase in the combined housing investments by all orders of government. Only a strong and direct federal role can ensure equal access to affordable housing for all people in Canada.

### 2. Reinvest money from expiring social housing operating agreements

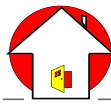
These operating agreements amount to over \$30 billion over the next 30 years. The Alliance to End Homelessness asks that this money be kept in the Canadian Housing Mortgage Corporation (CMHC) to protect our public investment in the stock of existing affordable housing; maintain service levels in existing housing; and provide CMHC with the capacity to support development of new affordable housing for those on low or moderate incomes.

*Consider this: \$30B would be the equivalent of 200,000 new units.*

### 3. Continue and increase Homelessness Partnership Initiative Funding

The Alliance to End Homelessness asks that a National Housing Strategy include increased and ongoing funding of the federal homelessness and housing programs. While more housing is being created, this strategy enables communities to quickly help people when they are homeless or in need of assistance to stay housed, whether they need ongoing supports or not.





# Alliance to End Homelessness

A letter about our 6<sup>th</sup> Report Card on Ending Homelessness

## ATEH AGENCY MEMBERS

Action-Logement / Action-Housing  
 Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa  
 Bronson Centre  
 Bruce House  
 Canadian Mental Health Association,  
 Ottawa Branch  
 Canadian Red Cross  
 Carlington Community and Health  
 Services  
 Catholic Immigration Centre  
 Causeway Work Centre  
 Centre 454  
 Centre 507 Drop-In  
 Centre Espoir Sophie  
 Centre for Research on Educational  
 and Community Services,  
 University of Ottawa  
 Centretown Citizens Ottawa  
 Corporation  
 Centretown Community Health Centre  
 Christmas Exchange of Ottawa  
 City of Ottawa, Housing Branch  
 Cooperative Housing Association of  
 Eastern Ontario  
 Cornerstone Housing for Women  
 Daybreak Non-Profit Shelter  
 Debra Dynes Family House  
 Elizabeth Fry Society  
 Emily Murphy Non-Profit Housing  
 Corporation  
 Family Services Ottawa  
 First Baptist Church  
 Good Day Workshop  
 Harvest House Ministries  
 Horizons Renaissance Inc.  
 Housing Help  
 Jewish Family Services  
 John Howard Society of Ottawa  
 Knights of Columbus St. George  
 Council  
 Ministry of Community & Social  
 Services, Eastern Region Office  
 Minwaashin Lodge/Oshki Kizis Healing  
 Lodge  
 Multifaith Housing Initiative  
 Nelson House of Ottawa-Carleton  
 Nepean, Rideau, Osgoode Community  
 Resource Centre  
 Nursing Students of Ontario  
 Oasis Program at Sandy Hill  
 Community Health Centre  
 Odawa Native Friendship Centre  
 Ontario Association of Social Workers,  
 Eastern Branch  
 Ontario Public Interest Research  
 Group, Carleton University  
 Operation Come Home  
 Options Bytown Non-Profit Housing  
 Corporation  
 Ottawa Action on Poverty / Action  
 Pauvreté Ottawa  
 Ottawa Community Immigrant Services  
 Organization  
 Ottawa East Churches for Affordable  
 Housing  
 Ottawa Inner City Health Inc.  
 Ottawa Inner City Ministries  
 Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre  
 Ottawa Salus Corporation  
 Pinecrest-Queensway Community  
 Health Centre  
 Pinganodin Lodge Inc  
 Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa  
 Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre  
 Salvation Army Booth Centre  
 Sandy Hill Community Health Centre  
 Shepherds of Good Hope  
 Social Planning Council of Ottawa  
 Somali Center for Youth, Women &  
 Community Development  
 Somerset West Community Health  
 Centre  
 South-East Ottawa Community Health  
 Centre  
 St. Joe's Women's Centre  
 Stewart and Associates  
 The Ottawa Food Bank  
 The Ottawa Mission  
 The Well/La Source  
 Tungasuvvingat Inuit  
 United Way/Centraide Ottawa  
 Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health  
 West End Legal Services  
 Western Ottawa Community Resource  
 Centre  
 YMCA-YWCA, National Capital Region  
 Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa  
 Youville Centre

## Some of us have homes, some of us don't

### What should we do about that?

Dear fellow Ottawans,

The Alliance to End Homelessness believes in setting a target of 1,000 new affordable housing units a year for Ottawa and we intend to hold our politicians accountable. We ask you to join us. In 10 years, we could have a community where only 2,000 families and individuals would have to use the shelter system each year because of personal emergencies like illness, job loss or fires. They'd be able to find a safe and affordable home within an average of 30 days. And the social housing waiting list could be reduced to 4,000 households.

Agency staff and thousands of volunteers have had to pick up the slack because of insufficient housing for people in need. Sometimes efforts to help homeless people are labeled 'enabling'. This is an insult to the people in Ottawa who reach out to help people in crisis – and the people they help – every day. Not one of our governments has provided enough funding for affordable housing to make a dent in the problem. It is not 'enabling' to provide emergency shelter, help someone find a home, provide medical care or assist in finding supports and services, all while working to end homelessness. The community is picking up the slack for politicians.

Social infrastructure is shockingly under-funded in Canada's social safety net. Of necessity, Ottawa agencies are excellent collaborators in meeting needs effectively and without duplication. We have a central health registry, networks on Street Health Outreach, Rooming House Information Exchange, Social Housing, Housing Loss Prevention and Supportive Housing, and our shelters work closely together. Since 2004, our Report Card has shown politicians that affordable housing is the solution. Indeed, nine other Canadian communities issued their own report cards based on our model in 2009. We all struggle to help homeless people.

Our community wants decisive action. Being homeless is traumatic for anyone, whether a child, youth, man or woman. A safe, stable and affordable home is the foundation of Canadian life, a human right and a moral obligation of the state. *Politicians need to hear this from their constituents!* They find money for serious crises like H1N1, SARS and the financial crisis.

*Being homeless is no less a crisis!*

What can you do? Spread the word about the 1,000 affordable housing units we need each year. Use your vote. Use your social media contacts. Help keep the issue front and centre.

Let politicians know you are serious about everyone having a home. Ask your elected representatives to invest in 1,000 affordable housing units a year in our community.

Thank you for all your efforts!

*Marion Wright*

Marion Wright, Chair  
Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH)



Marion Wright, ATEH Chair, with Jeff Horne, Industrial Media's CEO and recipient of ATEH's first Community Contribution Award and Dan Sabourin, ATEH Vice Chair

The Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) produced *The Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, Dec-Jan 2009* with funding from its Agency Members and the United Way/Centraide Ottawa. We thank the many contributors to the sixth edition. Editor: Lynne Browne

More information at  
[www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca)