

# Experiencing Homelessness

## Fourth Report Card on ENDING Homelessness in Ottawa

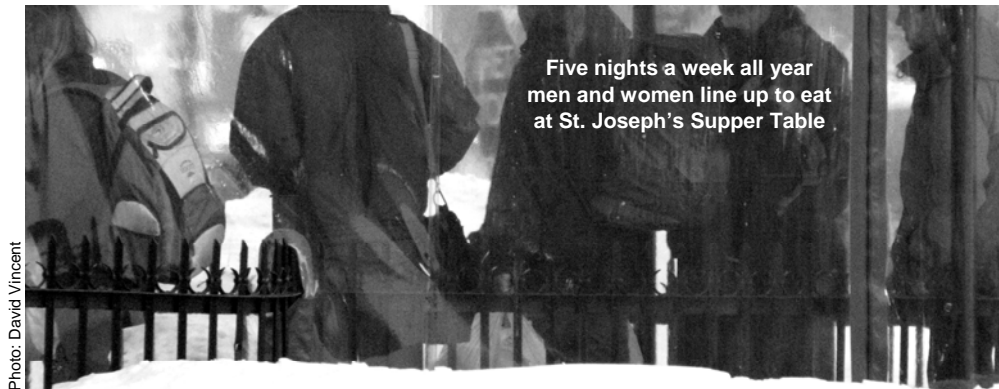


Photo: David Vincent

Jan-Dec **2007**

**Number of times  
shelter beds  
used increased  
by 18,540**

**1,237 children  
stayed in an  
emergency shelter**

**Average length of  
stay in a shelter  
increased by 13.9%  
for 8,915 people**

### 2007 - A step backwards

The number of people using emergency shelters showed a small decline to 8,915 individuals, but shelter beds were filled 18,540 more times in 2007 than in 2006. This 5.7% increase – to 342,165 times that shelter beds were used – is largely a result of longer stays.

Compared to 2006, the average length of stay in an emergency shelter is up 13.9% in 2007. This reflects the difficulty of finding suitable and affordable housing in an expensive housing market.

Modest increases in minimum wage and income support were offset by an increase in rents and other living costs.

Of particular concern is the rise in the number of families using emergency shelters. In 2007, 1,237 children spent time in an emergency shelter, an increase of 6.4% compared to 2006.

Overall, homelessness worsened in 2007 after some progress in 2006. It's time for the Ottawa community to say "Enough is enough! We've got to get moving to end this!"

See page 16 for how you can get involved.

### PROGRESS IN ENDING HOMELESSNESS JAN-DEC 2007

*Compare with last year, pages 2 & 3*

**C- Housing** The average rent for a one bedroom apartment increased 3.1% to \$798 per month.

**C Income** The increase in social assistance only kept pace with the cost of living.

**D Homelessness** The number of times shelter beds were used increased by 5.7%.

**D- Length of shelter stay** Average shelter stay increased by 13.9% to 38.4 days.

**SPECIAL REPORT: Personal stories and housing solutions in *Housing WORKS* – Pages 5-13**

**A PRIMER on Homelessness and Actions Needed – Pages 14-16**

The Alliance to End Homelessness produces this annual Report Card to track our community's progress in ending homelessness.

As a coalition of over 70 community agencies and numerous individuals in Ottawa, we work collaboratively by gaining and promoting a better understanding of homelessness and advocating for strategies to end it. Visit our website for more information.

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



# Indicators of the Alliance to End Homelessness

	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>HOUSING</b>				
<b>Affordable Housing</b>				<b>C-</b>
Pre-1995 social housing units (total stock)	22,400	22,400	22,400	22,400
Post-2000 affordable units (total stock) (i.e., Action Ottawa & NHI units)	509	521	760	833
Rent supplements (City of Ottawa & CMHA)	3,000	3,085	3,198	3,198
Supportive housing spaces	650	863	865	885
<b>Waiting Lists</b>				
Households on social housing waiting list	10,500	9,914	10,055	9,370
Supportive housing waiting list	2,000	2,214	2,630	2,000
<b>Housing Market Indicators</b>				
Rental vacancy rate	3.9%	3.3%	2.3%	2.3%
Average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment	\$771	\$762	\$774	\$798
<b>INCOME</b>				
Ontario Works for a single person	\$520	\$536	\$548	\$560
ODSP Assistance for a Single Person	\$930	\$959	\$979	\$999
Average monthly # of Ontario Works cases	17,879	17,552	16,541	15,296
Minimum Wage	\$7.15	\$7.45	\$7.75	\$8.00
Increase in Consumer Price Index	1.8%	2.3%	1.1%	2.0%
<b>HOMELESSNESS</b>				
<b># of times shelter beds were used</b>	<b>323,612</b>	<b>310,299</b>	<b>323,625</b>	<b>342,165</b>
<b># of individuals in an emergency shelter</b>	<b>8,664</b>	<b>8,853</b>	<b>9,010</b>	<b>8,915</b>
Single men	4,845	4,905	5,007	5,029
Single women	1,221	1,267	1,451	1,337
Youth	509	543	607	515
Families	631	668	615	639
Children	1,092	1,035	1,163	1,237
Adults	997	1,103	782	797
<b>LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY</b>				
<b>Average length of stay in shelters (days)</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>38.4</b>
Single men	39.8	39.1	38.4	39.1
Single women	30.7	31.9	28.1	32.6
Youth	23.0	17.4	16.2	25.0
Families	45.0	36.7	30.9	41.8
<b>SOURCES</b> – City of Ottawa (includes the <i>Homeless Individuals and Families Information System</i> (HIFIS:), National Homelessness Initiative, Canadian Mental Health Association, Ottawa Supportive Housing Coalition, The Housing Registry, Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Province of Ontario & Statistics Canada.				
<b>OUR GRADES</b>				
<b>A = Significant Progress</b> <b>B = Some Progress</b> <b>C = No or Slight Progress</b> <b>D = Some Loss</b> <b>E = Significant Loss</b>				
<b>IN THIS REPORT CARD</b>				
Comparing 2006 & 2007 pg 2 Trends in Homelessness & Housing pg 3 Low Incomes & High Rents pg 4 A PRIMER on Homelessness pg 14 Ottawa Agencies Assist pg 15 Government Action Needed pg 16 <b>Special Report: Housing WORKS</b> Personal stories and housing solutions pg 5-13				

## Key Points 2007

### Affordable housing remained difficult to access

- Only 73 new affordable housing units were created in 2007 (with City and Federal funding).
- The number of applicants on the social housing waiting list decreased by 6.8%. Fewer new applications for social housing account for half of this decrease.
- The apartment vacancy rate remained unchanged at 2.3%. The average rent for a one bedroom apartment increased 3.1% to \$798 per month.

### Increases in income support offset by the increase in the CPI

- The minimum wage increased by 3.2% to \$8.00/hr while increases in ODSP and OW supports equalled the increase in the Consumer Price Index.

### Fewer youth but more families and more children in shelters

- Overall, the number of times emergency shelter beds were used increased by nearly 5.7%.
- Fewer youth (-15.2 %) used shelter.
- 3.9% more families with 1,237 (6.4% more) children used the shelters.

### Average length of shelter stay increased sharply

- The average emergency shelter stay increased by 13.9 % to 38.4 days. Families, youth, single men and women all spent more time on average in shelters.

### Improvements in data

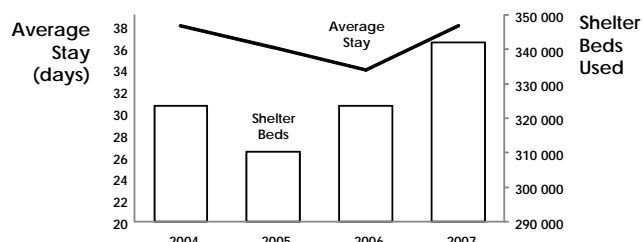
- The Alliance to End Homelessness strives to report accurate data for the purpose of this report card.
- As a result of the use of improved software in emergency shelters, the City of Ottawa is now better able to identify individuals (mainly single men and single women) who use more than one shelter over the year. Beginning next year, the report card will report data based on this new methodology.

# Trends in shelter use and the wait for affordable housing

## Times Shelter Beds Used and Average Stay 2004-2007

- Shelter bed use increased for the third year in a row as a result of longer shelter stays – up by 5.7% to 342,165 (937 people per night) compared to 2006.
- The average length of shelter stay increased in 2007 to its highest level over the four years, after successive decreases from 2004 to 2006.
- 1,800 homeless households moved into housing in 2007 with the help of housing workers at the shelters, compared to 1,550 in 2006 (funded through Ottawa's Housing Branch by the Province and the City).

## Times Shelter Beds Used and Average Stay 2004-2007

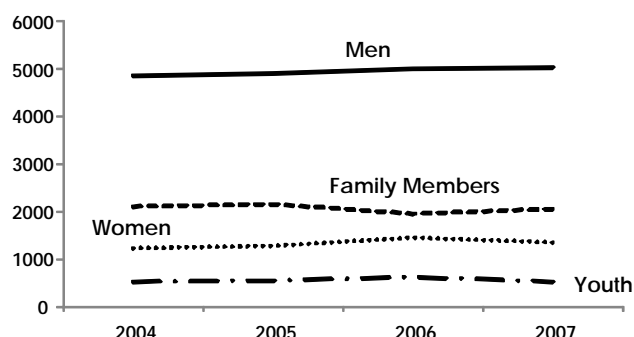


Source: City of Ottawa reporting software – The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System

## Shelter Users 2004-2007

- Overall, the number of individuals using emergency shelters decreased slightly (-1.1%).
- Single men represent over half of the homeless population in Ottawa, a small increase for the fourth consecutive year.
- The number of single women decreased by 8% in 2007, but remained higher than for 2004 or 2005. Family use of shelters in 2007 rose by 3.9% after a notable decrease in 2006 (-7.9%).
- The number of youth in shelters decreased by 15.2% to the lowest level since 2004

## Shelter Users 2004-2007



Source: City of Ottawa reporting software -- The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System

## Waiting for affordable housing: The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa

The Registry maintains the centralized waiting list for access to rent-geared-to-income housing through an Operating Agreement with the City of Ottawa in its role as Service Manager. The Registry is a non-profit organization whose Board is comprised of social housing providers and community housing agencies. [www.housingregistry.ca](http://www.housingregistry.ca) (bilingual site).

### Little growth in affordable units, 2004-2007

- The Registry is the access point to the 22,400 social housing units operated by non-profit organizations, built under a number of Federal and Provincial programs that were cancelled in the mid 1990s.
- The very modest increase in affordable units since the 1990s is the result of Federal and Provincial funding through the City of Ottawa to non-profit organizations.
- Given the length of the waiting list, and the almost fixed supply, obtaining affordable housing is a significant challenge for many residents.

## THE REGISTRY WAITING LIST IN 2007

### 2,101 households housed in 2007 (2,165 in 2006)

- 4,738 household applications received in 2007, down from 5,160 in 2006

### 9,370 households on waiting list in 2007

- 3,689 households with children
- 3,633 single adult households
- 1,530 senior households
- 518 adult-only family household

## Services help families and individuals remain in suitable and affordable housing

'Housing Loss Prevention' is the term used for early intervention, advocacy and support to help people remain housed.

- 16 agencies provide on-site or community-based services with City, Provincial and Federal funding.

## In 2007, 9,567 households were helped to remain housed in Ottawa

- 864 of the 9,567 households helped were at imminent risk of losing their housing. There was an 84% success rate – 722 households stayed housed, up 9% over 2006.
- In 2006, a total of 9,143 households were helped. Of these, 1,773 households were one month from losing their housing and 74.6% stayed housed.

# Do the math . . .

## Average monthly rents in the Ottawa area\*

Unit Size	Average Monthly Rent 2000	Average Monthly Rent 2006	Average Monthly Rent 2007	% Increase
Bachelor	\$573	\$633	\$643	1.6%
One Bedroom	\$723	\$774	\$798	3.1%
Two Bedrooms	\$877	\$941	\$961	2.1%
Three or More Bedrooms	\$1,056	\$1,146	\$1,144	-0.2%

The 2007 vacancy rate is 2.3%, unchanged from 2006.

\* The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Rental Market Report Nov 2007

## Between a rock and a hard place

- Rent a place to call home?
- Pay hydro?
- Take a bus (look for work, take kids to the doctor, etc.)?
- Have a phone?
- Get a haircut, buy a toothbrush?
- Eat every day?

## Hourly income required to pay Ottawa's 2007 rents

### The MINIMUM HOUSING WAGE

Unit Size	Rent		Minimum Housing Wage	
	2006	2007	2006	2007
Room	\$ 450	\$ 450	\$ 8.65	\$ 8.65
Bachelor	\$ 633	\$ 643	\$ 12.17	\$ 12.37
1-bedroom	\$ 774	\$ 798	\$ 14.88	\$ 15.35
2-bedroom	\$ 941	\$ 961	\$ 18.10	\$ 18.48
3-bedroom	\$ 1,146	\$ 1,144	\$ 22.04	\$ 22.00

In 2007, the Ontario Minimum Wage was \$8.00/hr (set Feb 2007).

**The rate rose to only \$8.75 in March 2008.**

SOURCE: Calculation based on wages of a full time worker, 40 hours a week for 52 weeks, paying Ottawa's 2007 Average Rents, and using CMHC's definition of affordable housing as costing less than 30% of pre-tax income.

## Incomes to pay rent in 2007

Accommodation	Income by Sources for One Adult*				
Unit size & average cost in Ottawa, 2007 (monthly)	Employment Insurance based on \$30,000 salary (monthly)	Senior on average CPP, & old age benefits, monthly	Minimum Wage** @ 40 hours/wk, monthly	Ontario Works *** (OW), monthly	Ontario Disability Support *** (ODSP), monthly
Room \$450	\$1,375	\$1,219	\$1,386	\$560	\$999
Bachelor \$643	\$1,375	\$1,219	\$1,386	\$560	\$999
1-bedroom \$798	\$1,375	\$1,219	\$1,386	\$1,294** (1 parent, 1 child)	\$1,788** (1 parent, 1 child)
2-bedroom \$961	\$1,375	\$2,008 (2 seniors)	\$1,386	\$1,678** (1 parent, 2 kids)	\$2,108** (1 parent, 2 kids)

\* Income for one adult except as noted. \*\* Including the National Child Benefit Supplement and the Universal Child Benefit \*\* Minimum wage rate as of February 2007 \*\*\* OW / ODSP rate of November 2007

## *Giving voice to the crisis*

### **8 people talk** about how they found a place to live after being homeless

People who have been homeless generously share their experiences in this Special Report to help in the important work of preventing and ending homelessness.

### **12 housing solutions** are helping community members who are homeless

Over the next 8 pages, read about our community's affordable housing successes developed here in Ottawa. Statistics show there is not enough affordable and appropriate housing! *How can community organizations, governments and people in the community work together to end homelessness?* Researchers at the University of Ottawa, Carleton University and Saint Paul University, in partnership with the City of Ottawa's Housing Branch and the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa, are answering these questions.

## *We all need housing!*

### **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").

### **Who is at risk of homelessness?**

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

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

*Lining up at  
St. Joseph's  
Supper Table*

Photo: David Vincent

## **Listen and watch our website in June 2008**

Hear the full audio visual interviews with community members who have experienced homelessness.

Hear the researchers describe key findings from their study. [www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca)



*Matt...*

"Homelessness is the hardest thing you ever go through, because you feel constantly judged. I wasn't in control of my life anymore,

I didn't have an income. The people I was hanging around with were abusing drugs and alcohol too. Once you're in that lifestyle, it's so hard to get out.

I'm not working right now. I was working ... February to October in 2007 doing data entry, telemarketing, landscaping.

Before my fiancée passed away we were splitting rent on a bachelor, but then I couldn't afford rent. I was staying in a shelter and I was just trying to deal with what had happened [to her]...I was sober for a year and we both ended up relapsing. I ended up calling the social [housing] registry and they offered me a place.

Having a home is good... I've got a place to put possessions, a place to rest my head...when you feel safe, it's better.

Affordable housing is needed, because the prices are just crazy."

*Note: not his real name.*

## ***In Ottawa . . .***

### **Breaking the cycle of homelessness**

#### **The Condominium Program**

The Condominium Program puts 'housing first' for those who are homeless and living with a mental illness. The program combines rent supplements and condominiums owned by the Canadian Mental Health Association to offer 'Housing First' opportunities in a variety of apartment and townhouse units. Five more condos will be purchased in 2008 to bring the total portfolio to 32 units.

CMHA houses over 250 people. This highly innovative program has had great success in turning condos into high quality housing for people living in shelters or on the street. Outreach and Case Management supports play a key role in helping people maintain their housing.

For more information on CMHA programs, visit: [www.cmhaottawa.ca](http://www.cmhaottawa.ca)



CMHA Condominium Program

Photo: CMHA

**Hostels to Homes** is an 18-month pilot project to support 41 chronically homeless men in staying housed.

Caseworkers help the men learn skills to be good tenants, access addictions, health and employment services, and connect with others for healthy social activities such as movie or card nights. Reducing shelter usage is the stated objective of the pilot, but another major benefit has been an improvement in these men's quality of life. The program is funded by the Province of Ontario and the City of Ottawa, and operated by The Ottawa Mission.

**The Housing Impact Team**, an exciting one-year demonstration project, will help chronically homeless people move into and keep their housing. Clients will receive the supports they need from the moment The Housing Registry offers them priority access to a social housing unit. A Transitional Support Worker from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) will help participants to move in, learn skills needed to live as independently as possible, set goals and work towards them.



*Joe...*

"The last time I was incarcerated, I decided that I couldn't continue to live the life I had been living for twenty-six odd years.

I approached my lawyer about getting in contact with an organization here in Ottawa called the drug treatment court. I applied there and I applied to John Howard's, and thankfully everything worked. I successfully completed the drug treatment court program; I've been a client at Rideauwood Addictions and Family Services for 15 months now.

I've been residing in the same residence for 15 months. I can't remember the last time I was able to keep an address for 15 months.

The term homeless includes staying with friends on couches, staying in motels - and that's basically what I did for four years, float from address to address...I spent a lot of time in crack houses, a lot of time in flop houses...none of it was pleasant, none of it would I want to do again. I keep a firm memory of what I've done and where I've been, and I don't want to go back.

The biggest difference being housed has made is it has giving me the ability to sleep and think. I feel safe. I live in a fully furnished bachelor apartment, provided by the John Howard's Society. I pay my own rent...It's not just an apartment, I've made it my home."

## ***In Ottawa . . .***

### **Transition House (Salvation Army)**

This program offers transitional housing for up to 12 months to homeless single adult men and a chance to make a smooth transition towards permanent housing. It combines independent style living along with some structure to assist in developing healthy habits.

Residents are provided with a safe living environment and counseling and are required to be active in employment, job training or educational upgrading. Referrals to community agencies, links to appropriate recreational activities, access to frontline workers and general day to day support is also offered.

Transition House emphasizes the idea of personal growth through five major concepts – promoting independent living, building a sense of "community", emphasising taking pride and ownership of the home, emphasising problem and conflict resolution and learning to change negative ways of thinking.

**For information**, please contact The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre at 613-241-1573



Transition House Staff Michael Henry

Photo: David Vincent

### **Rooming Houses**

Rooming houses provide an essential housing option for low-income singles in Ottawa. There are currently 733 rooms in 54 licensed properties, and a similar number pending approval. City staff inspect licensed properties regularly. Most rooming houses are older, converted properties that are costly to maintain. CMHC provides some grants but the amounts are inadequate to meet the growing need. Many residents of rooming houses are vulnerable and need flexible supports. Rooming houses are a vital part of the housing sector.

**For information on finding a room**, please contact: Housing Help at 613-563-4532 or Action-Logement/Action Housing at 613-562-8219.

***"It's not just an apartment, I've made it my home."***





## **Shelley...**

"It was very scary being homeless...I didn't know I had schizophrenia ...but the pain I felt psychologically for being homeless, and not having a job, and not being in school,

and not getting along with and not knowing my friends any longer, I just masked it with alcohol and drugs, and denied that anything was going on.

Living on the street...there was sexual abuse. I was quite young and had no idea that there would be help.

I'm on medication now for my schizophrenia; I'm in therapy with a psychiatrist. I have so much support here [through Cornerstone women's supportive housing], the social workers, the people that work here,"

Since living here I've been eating three meals a day...I get help for my physical disabilities too which I've had since I had a triple-bypass in 1990. I've recuperated from that for the past sixteen years while being here. So now I'm feeling self-confident in my physical abilities to go out and take on jobs again part-time.

I want to stay in this area of Centretown...I can walk almost anywhere. This is what I call home now."

*Note: not her real name.*

## **In Ottawa . . .**

### **Ottawa Salus**

Ottawa Salus provides supportive housing for over 200 adults with mental health problems. Millennium House is a Salus building with 19 tenants who live independently in their own apartments with support from their case managers from Salus, the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Assertive Community Treatment Team.

Barb Syzmanski is the on-site Salus community development worker at Millenium House; her role is to foster independence - supporting people's innate motivation to make positive changes in their lives. Barb supports tenants in developing independent living skills such as how to budget, buy groceries, maintain their apartments, and she frequently works to connect tenants with the larger community network of resources. One tenant credits the on-site worker with helping to figure out a method 'that works' to reduce smoking.

*"When I get stressed out, and especially if I start towards doing my compulsive behaviours, I can talk to her. She helps me calm down".*



Photo: David Vincent

Ottawa Salus' Barb Syzmanski in the warm and welcoming Millenium House lounge, where community gatherings often take place. Tenants organize group events such as barbeques, festive meals, and outings.

**For more information:** [www.salus.on.ca](http://www.salus.on.ca);  
tel: 613-729-0123 or [email@salus.on.ca](mailto:email@salus.on.ca)

### **The Domiciliary Hostel Program**

The City of Ottawa subsidizes the cost of lodging and some care for adults with special needs and for frail elderly people residing in (mostly) privately-run domiciliary hostels with up to 900 subsidized beds at 27 facilities. Residents qualify for this permanent supportive housing based on an assessment of their finances and of their needs for supports for daily living.

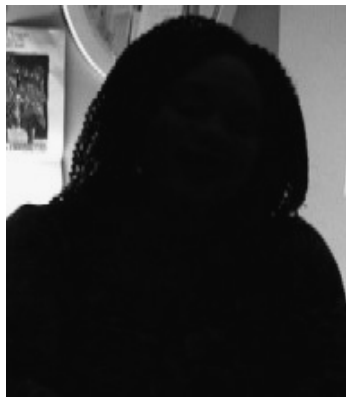
**More information** at: [www.ottawa.ca/housing](http://www.ottawa.ca/housing)



Photo: David Vincent

Salvation Army Domiciliary Hostel





### *Ego...*

“Maybe the officers in the airport should know about the services, because I stayed at the airport for a long time before I got information that I

should go to the shelter.

Because I was a refugee claimant and I didn't know much about Canada, I didn't know what to ask. I didn't even know where the [women's] shelter was.

I think at the airport they should have at least a room available for shelter, some accommodation for new comers and help with information.

I lived in the YMCA for two days, then I went to the shelter... for six months. After that I came to this rooming house [women's supportive housing at Cornerstone's McPhail House], which has six women living in it. There shouldn't be a reason for people to be on the street in a developed country like Canada. I was really surprised to see that.

I have a degree in computer science from Nigeria. I also just graduated from Algonquin with a certificate in Oracle administration. In the past, I've worked with FedEx as an operations agent.

I've also worked in a hospital as a clerk, but I haven't had any job experience in Canada yet. I would like to get a job in Oracle administration. Once I get a job and some money I would like to do a masters degree in computer science or women's studies.”

*Note: not her real name.*

## ***In Ottawa . . .***

### **Bruce House Supportive Housing** for People Living with HIV/AIDS

Bruce House offers two programs providing supportive independent living for men, women and families living with HIV/AIDS and struggling to cope with their illness. They both aim at improving quality of life and strengthening the capacity to live more independently.

**The transitional home** houses up to seven individuals requiring 24-hour physical and psychological supports who learn to better manage their health and increase their capacity to achieve independent living.

**The apartment program** provides supportive independent housing units for up to 35 households using leasing arrangements with not-for-profit housing providers. Since many tenants may also be affected by additional factors such as low-income and homelessness, units are rent-geared-to-income and services are adapted to meet each individual's distinct needs.

Housing units are scattered throughout the city ensuring that residents are living within and fully integrated into the community while being closely linked to community resources.

**For more information:** [www.brucehouse.org](http://www.brucehouse.org),  
Telephone: 613-729-0911, Fax: 613-729-0959  
or Email: [admin@brucehouse.org](mailto:admin@brucehouse.org)



Photos: David Vincent

Bruce House Supportive Housing  
Common Rooms



## **Katie...**

"I left home about three years ago...My father was pretty abusive. I was brought to CHEO because ...I was trying to hang myself ...

They assessed me for about a month and a half and found out the root cause was my father and I left because he lived in the same home environment I did.

If I could describe being homeless in one word, well, I'd swear. It's cold, it's hard to find a place to sleep.

I got my apartment through getting help from Operation Go Home. I would not be housed if it were not for the help I got from there.

Nobody wants to rent to somebody who's homeless because they think they have bad credit, or they'll wreck the place. That's my experience.

If I could go back home, I would. Being on the streets is not something you want to do with your life."

*Note: not her real name.*

## **In Ottawa . . .**

### **The Apartment Program at Youth Services Bureau**

The Youth Services Bureau (YSB) understands that homeless youth have experienced significant difficulties through no fault of their own. Their homelessness is connected to experiencing childhood tragedies. Often youth entering the YSB Housing Program find themselves alone and without the resources, adequate supports or life experiences that many of us take for granted. In addition, youth may have experienced abuse, neglect, torture or have spent years in refugee camps.

Healing from childhood issues is paramount to youth moving forward and becoming successful and independent and so is a home to do it in. The YSB Housing Program has a total of 65 apartments/units (45 1-bedroom units, 13 2-bedroom units, and 7 bachelor units) in three small low-rise buildings. These buildings work well for youth; it is easier to develop a sense of community and a sense of responsibility for one's own space.

The program includes 43 rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) units which provide the opportunity for independent living in a ready-made housing community of peers where youth can speak with staff if they need to. There are 22 transitional housing units where other youth receive supports on-site to help them prepare for independent living in one of the apartments.



YSB Staff and Tenants

The YSB Housing Program is for youth age 16-21 upon entry and aims toward a flexible 5 year tenancy maximum. Often youth identify personal goals (for education or employment). They understand how having affordable, safe housing will help them reach their goals.

**For more information**, please call Ruth Dulmage 613-288-1515 or visit [www.ysb.on.ca](http://www.ysb.on.ca)



## **Mary. . .**

“Here at Tewegan, they’re really supportive.

When you first get clean, it’s really hard to go to Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous

meetings and meet people.

They’re all women in this house, which is comfortable for me. All the staff and the director here are really helpful. I could just focus on not using drugs, white knuckling it, for the first couple months. I managed to stay sober; I relapsed for a bit, but I managed to get sober again and I would say it was a direct result of the support inside the house.

I learned what it’s like to do chores all the time and have some responsibilities...I mean, since being here I’ve gained my high school diploma. I went to treatment. I’m getting along with my family.

But it’s not like you can live in a place like this for a long time. But because I pay rent here, I’m not considered homeless, so I don’t qualify for [priority on the social housing] registry list.

If there were more recovery homes [for women] in Ottawa, that would be really good for me. I mean renting a room somewhere, it’s okay, but I’ll have to screen the environment. Do they drink? Do they smoke pot? It’s hard enough renting a room when someone knows when you’re on welfare.

I’ve been working really hard, but I haven’t found a place, which is really disappointing for me.”

*Note: not her real name.*

## **In Ottawa . . .**

### **Tewegan Transition House** Aboriginal Youth Home

Tewegan Transition House is the only Aboriginal-specific short-term housing facility for young Aboriginal women in Ottawa.

It provides safe accommodation for up to one year for twelve young Inuit, Métis and First Nation women between the ages of 16-29 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

This facility provides residents on-site support services in a culture-based environment in which young Aboriginal women feel safe to reclaim pride and respect of their heritage by learning about their culture and celebrating their traditions.

Residents are connected with a full range of confidential and supportive counseling, day treatment programs, education, employment opportunities, advocacy and referrals that will assist young women move on to permanent housing.

The programs and services at Tewegan Transition House include life skills, budgeting, personal development, career enhancement, home management skills, cooking and nutritional information so clients can maintain permanent housing once they leave.

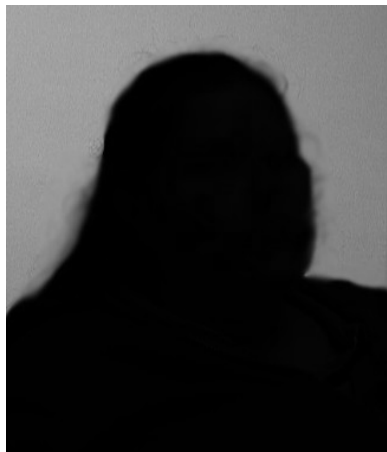


Photo: David Vincent

Tewegan Transition House

The young women can also work on strengthening their networks of peer and community supports.

**For more information**, please contact Tewegan at (613) 233-0672 or by email at [abyouthhousing@bellmnet.ca](mailto:abyouthhousing@bellmnet.ca).



## ***Diane...***

“When I was homeless I was lonely and I didn’t really want to do anything...I’ve come a long way in a year, from street life to where I am now.

About a year ago I was really messed up with drugs and the alcohol and [that] caused me to go from one place to another place.

Finally last November, I was very depressed and I ended up in the hospital for a few days plus I was going through bad withdrawal. That’s when I’d had enough and decided I was going to change in my life. I didn’t want to do drugs anymore.

In this last year my life has really improved. I find I see my kids more often. My partner was a great help, I mean I did the work, but I’m grateful that I have him because he also helped me to change my life.

Homelessness has a lot to do with the rent market out there today. I find the rent market is too high for the amount social assistance gives us. I don’t like it, and I don’t think anybody likes it in this city when they put the rent up every year. You know, if you’re paying \$800, to add \$25 every year...is just ridiculous.

I always think about last year – from where I was and where I am now. When you have your own place, you know you have your own space. I intend to keep my own place for as long as I can.”

*Note: not her real name.*

## ***In Ottawa . . .***

### **Housing Loss Prevention**

Housing Loss Prevention workers help resolve complicated, sometimes overwhelming housing problems. They assist tenants in social and private market units to access services and supports to retain their housing. Families and individuals faced with a crisis can struggle to pay rent and avoid eviction. Living with a chronic and debilitating physical disability, coping with a job or income loss or the death of a partner, struggling with inadequate social assistance, health problems, social isolation or family violence can lead to precarious situations where the risk of homeless is real.

**Ordinary families and individuals are behind Ottawa’s Housing Loss Prevention statistics on page 3** – people waiting for social housing, low income earners, victims of violence, and people in arrears for rent or utilities struggling to feed themselves and their children.

- One 32-year-old woman and her child called for help when she was two months late with her rent. She suffered from depression and had had no income for two months. The Housing Loss Prevention worker helped her get her benefits reinstated and contact her landlord to avoid eviction. Referrals were made for a mental health outreach worker and for her child to take part in social and homework programs. Now she is working part-time and has retained not only her housing but also her dignity and her belief in life.
- An older couple, both over 50, (one had worked for a housing developer, one had been a teacher), was near eviction because Long Term Disability payments stopped abruptly. The Housing Loss Prevention worker advocated for and with them. They were very pleased to find that people in crisis can receive help and not be judged by their difficulties.

**For more information on these services**, contact your local Community Health or Resource Centre, Action Logement/Action Housing at 613-562-8219 or Housing Help at 613-563-4532.



Photo: David Vincent

Carlington Community and Health Services



## *Jennifer...*

“I have two little boys. One is 4 months and one is 16 months and they’re really cute!

I have custody of my second one.

My first one, no,

because of my experience with homelessness.

Being in a shelter was hard, I was depressed, but at the same time it was good. I wasn’t going to have to go through the physical and emotional abuse that happened in my home. But I got into a fight in the shelter with another girl, so we both got kicked out. I need help to find my own apartment.

For Ottawa housing, the waiting list is six years, but a lot of people can’t wait six years.

I’ve been getting help from people here at Youville Centre, and from my Ontario Works worker, and I’ve been looking online for apartments that I can afford.

But some people that rent apartments won’t rent to people that are on social assistance or who are young...They think we’re young, we’re not going to pay our rent or because we’re on Ontario Works we can’t pay or we’re going to mess up the apartment.

Here at Youville there are services for young mothers. They have a swap room where we can get clothes for the little ones - bottles and toys too. My little one comes to daycare here and he loves it...the food bank is here.

More Ottawa housing apartments for young mothers and people that are staying on the streets are needed; and for the shelter not to turn away anybody.”

*Note: not her real name.*

## ***In Ottawa . . .***

### **Pallister Court in Centreponte**

new social housing units

This exciting new 62-unit affordable housing community in Centreponte, Nepean, is Nepean Housing Corporation’s third new community since 2002.

Pallister Court was officially opened during 2007 and contains a mix of one-bedroom apartments, two to four bedrooms townhouses, three accessible units and a five-bedroom group home for people with multiple disabilities operated by Ottawa Foyers Partage. The project was funded under Action Ottawa and the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program.

Being “mixed housing”, these 62 units include 41 that receive tenants from The Registry’s (social housing) coordinated access waiting list and the remainder are rented at an affordable market rent.

Nepean Housing is a private non-profit corporation governed by a volunteer community-based Board of Directors. They have been providing affordable housing for 20 years, and have a total of 560 units.

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



Photo: Nepean Housing Corporation

Pallister Court in Centreponte,  
Nepean Housing Corporation

# A Primer on Homelessness

## The Right to Housing

Canada helped to draft the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights that includes a right to access to housing.

**ARTICLE 25** – *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for...housing...*

In 1976, Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It includes:

**ARTICLE 11** – *The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including... housing.*

## Canada has NOT recognized these rights in legislation or in the Charter of Rights.

In October 2007, Miloon Kothari, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, provided a preliminary a report on Canada.

He noted the discrepancy between the principles of access to housing that Canada espouses and the lack of budgetary commitment from all levels of government and the particular challenges faced by “women, Aboriginal people, elders, youth, members of racialized communities, immigrants and others”.

### Homelessness is not confined to any demographic group

- It is experienced by families, single adults of all ages, and young people.
- Some will be homeless only once, while for others, it can be recurring or even chronic.
- The level of homelessness is affected by market conditions such as changing employment trends, the loss of affordable housing stock, the closing of institutional care beds, and inadequate income support programs.
- A variety of programs and services and different types of housing, including some with supports, must be available to fit diverse circumstances.

### Insufficient private and public funding

- Local organizations (listed on page 15) that provide programs and services to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, are under-funded.
- The service providers, as members of the Alliance to End Homelessness, work cooperatively and innovatively to respond to their clients' needs.
- Our community also benefits from research partnerships with Ottawa's universities that provide continuing insight into what works and lessons learned locally and from elsewhere in Canada.
- At the same time, for instance, federal spending on mortgage and operating agreements for social housing are expiring and tenant subsidies are ending, and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy is ending March 2009.

## Services Help People Get and Keep Housing



## These agencies assist families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and other people in need, through public and charitable funding \*

**IF YOU SEE** a homeless person needing help or you need help yourself, please  
**PHONE # 311**

### Outreach services for homeless people on the street

Centre 507 Outreach Services  
Elizabeth Fry  
Jewish Family Services  
Operation Go Home  
Ottawa Innercity Ministries  
Salvation Army Outreach Van  
Shepherds of Good Hope, Outreach Team  
Somerset West Community Health Centre  
Street Ambassador Program  
Youth Services Bureau Outreach  
Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre

### Day programs and drop-in services

Anglican Social Services - Centre 454  
Capital City Mission  
Causeway Work Centre  
Centre 507  
Centre Espoir Sophie, women & children  
Operation Go Home, youth  
Shepherds of Good Hope  
St. Luke's Lunch Club  
St. Joe's Women's Centre  
Shawenjeagamik Aboriginal Drop in Centre  
The Well/La Source, women & children  
Youth Downtown Drop-in, YSB Bureau

### Housing services

Action-Logement/Housing Action  
Housing Help  
The Registry (Social Housing Registry)

### Emergency shelters – single people

Cornerstone/Le Pilier, adult women  
The Ottawa Mission, adult men  
Salvation Army Booth Centre, adult men  
Shepherds of Good Hope, men & women  
Evelyn Horne Young Women's Shelter, YSB  
Young Men's Shelter, YSB

### Emergency shelters – families

City of Ottawa, two Family Shelters  
Reception House, Catholic Immigration  
Centre, newcomers to Canada  
YMCA-YWCA and motel rooms, if needed

### Shelters for women & children fleeing abuse

Chrysalis House  
Interval House  
La Présence  
Maison D'Amitié  
Nelson House  
Oshki Kizis

### Aboriginal and Inuit centres

Minwaashin Lodge  
Odawa Native Friendship Centre  
Tungasuvvingat Inuit

### Transitional housing

Elizabeth Fry Society  
John Howard Society  
Harmony House  
Salvation Army  
St. Mary's Home  
Tewegan  
Youth Services Bureau

### Supportive housing

Bruce House  
Cornerstone  
Daybreak  
Emily Murphy Non-Profit Housing  
Horizon Renaissance, Inc  
Options Bytown  
Ottawa Salus Corporation  
Project Upstream  
Shepherds of Good Hope  
YMCA-YWCA  
Youth Services Bureau

### Health organizations

Coalition of Community Health and  
Resource Centres (*14 across the city –  
housing crisis intervention, referrals,  
prevention, individual & systemic advocacy*)  
Ottawa Inner City Health  
Ottawa Public Health  
University of Ottawa Health Services  
Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre

### Mental health services

Canadian Mental Health Association  
Horizon Renaissance Inc  
Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team,  
Ottawa Hospital  
Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre

### Addictions services

Addiction & Problem Gambling, Sandy Hill CHC  
Amethyst Women's Treatment  
Maison Fraternité  
Rideauwood Addictions & Family Services  
The Ottawa Mission

\* List may not be exhaustive. For more, go to the Community Information Centre of Ottawa Database: <http://ottawa.cioc.ca>

## What does that mean. . . ?

## DEFINITIONS

**Outreach Services** engage homeless and at-risk individuals on the street or at drop-in centres and refer them to community services.

An **Emergency Shelter** is a residential facility providing temporary accommodation, meals and personal support to homeless individuals and families.

**The Registry** (The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa) maintains the central waiting list for people applying for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing.

**Community-based affordable housing** is permanent, safe and appropriate housing including private non-profit housing providers, social housing, co-ops.

**Housing Loss Prevention** services help families and individuals remain in suitable and affordable housing.

**Transitional Housing** is time-limited supportive or supported housing where people at risk of homelessness prepare for independent living.

**Supportive Housing** is permanent housing with on-site supports, for individuals who need assistance to stay housed.

**Supported Housing** is housing provided to individuals at risk of housing loss where they benefit from housing support that is not tied to any particular housing location.

**Domiciliary Hostels** are residential care facilities (generally private) where adults with special needs and frail elderly people receive subsidized lodging and assistance with daily living.

**Harm Reduction** is a service approach that aims to prevent or reduce negative consequences of potentially dangerous lifestyle choices.

**Housing First** is a service model for helping homeless people by providing immediate access to stable housing and the income and supports needed to keep it.



# Why hasn't homelessness ended yet?

The Alliance to End Homelessness responds...

**Governments need to commit to policies that will end homelessness!**

## **FEDERAL**

1. Create a National Housing Strategy that clearly defines direct federal responsibility for funding affordable housing and supportive and supported housing.
2. Put in place long-term and sustained funding to support our community's capacity to end homelessness.
3. Increase significantly the rates of and access to federal income support programs: Employment Insurance, Canadian Pension Plan, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

## **PROVINCIAL**

1. Increase the amount of and the annual provincial commitment to funding for affordable housing and supportive and supported housing.
2. Increase mental health and addictions services to meet the current need.
3. Increase Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits, tying the rates to average rents.
4. Increase the Minimum Wage at a faster rate.

## **MUNICIPAL**

1. Ensure development of 500 appropriate housing units each year that people on low incomes can afford.
2. Continue to manage and coordinate the service system that is working to end homelessness.
3. Give priority to aggressive lobbying of the federal and provincial governments to do their part.

**Each government needs to act on its own  
AND work together to End Homelessness!**

You can help

Photo: CMHA Ottawa Branch



**WELCOME** all types of housing to your neighbourhood – affordable, social, supportive and supported.

**CONTACT** your MP, MPP and Councillor about what needs to be done: phone, email or send them letters.

**CONTINUE** your generous donations of time, skills, energy and money.

**VISIT US @** [www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca) for other ways to help.



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