

The Alliance to End Homelessness

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POLICY AND APPROACH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSULTATION ON Ontario Government's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

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PREAMBLE

Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) discussed and approved the recommendations in this submission late September 2009 motivated by their respect for and appreciation of this historical opportunity to contribute to significant change in the lives of many Ontario residents.

With close to 70 different agencies as members, ATEH is also motivated by their direct experience of the long standing affordable housing crisis in Ottawa that has contributed to ever growing numbers of homeless Ontarians.

ATEH asks that the Government of Ontario be mindful that there were 7,045 homeless people in Ottawa's shelters in 2008. These were not the same individuals as the 6,572 people homeless in 2007.

Every year **new** people become homeless due to the lack of new affordable housing stock and high market rents combined with low incomes. Last year's homeless total, was the highest in five years in Ottawa (*see Appendix 1 for five-year data and charts*). Each year our member agencies assist three groups of homeless people –

1. Individuals and families who become homeless for the first time.
2. Those who experience repeat episodes of being homeless as their circumstances deteriorate due to job loss, reduced working hours, rent increases, unexpected expenses like long illnesses or funerals.
3. Those who are chronically homeless and need supports to be housed successfully.

79%, or 5,575 individuals, of the 7,045 people who stayed in an Ottawa emergency shelter in 2008, eventually find housing, either on their own or with the assistance of housing support staff, work that the Ontario government is contributing to.

It is important to remember that staying in a shelter is the end point of a difficult and devastating crisis for individuals and all family members – 1,179 children under 16 and 1,149 parents and children over 16 stayed in the family emergency shelters or motels for an average of 53 days, seven days more than in 2007. It is no surprise that returning to stable circumstances is seldom immediately possible when lives have been this disrupted. Finding permanent affordable and appropriate housing remains the biggest challenge of all.

We know that in Ottawa in 2008, some 1,116 renter households were at the final stage in the eviction process when they received help by 'Housing Loss Prevention' workers, efforts also contributed to by the province (these

numbers are in addition to the 7,045 individuals who stayed in an emergency shelter). The final stage eviction numbers are for households so it could be 2,250 to 3,500 individuals at the brink of becoming homeless.

In total 'Housing Loss Prevention' efforts in 2008 assisted almost 11,000 renter households, potentially 33,000 individuals (three people in the average Canadian family). While this valuable work goes on the numbers of homeless people are going up not down so it is important to consider the potential for risk in maintaining the affordable housing status quo or of responding with modest funding and slow growth in new affordable housing stock.

21% or 1,470 people were chronically homeless in 2008 due to insufficient supportive housing in Ottawa, based on the City of Ottawa's criteria of a person spending more than 60 cumulative nights in the past year in an emergency shelter and/or on the street who has reached the point where he/she lacks the physical or mental health, the skills or income to access and maintain housing (1073 adult male, 277 adult female, 52 young men and 68 young women).

In response to obvious need, the stock of new affordable housing increased by only 134 units in 2008. At that rate it will take 72 years to provide affordable, appropriate homes for the 9,692 households on Ottawa's 'Social Housing Registry'. There were no new supportive units to respond to the 2,000 individuals on the 'Supportive Housing Network's' waiting list.

Our members are long past blaming governments or political parties for past policies like the reduction in social assistance or the closing of mental health facilities. The situation our community faces is harsher and more challenging (*see Appendix 2 for data/updates as of Sept. 2009*). The emerging Affordable Housing Strategy has the opportunity to be well-positioned as one of the government's mechanisms to lead Ontario out of its current province-wide economic difficulties.

The Alliance to End Homelessness looks to both the immediate future as well as to the longer term for positive changes and substantive leadership from the Ontario Government and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The following recommendations are in three themes areas: (A) *action to substantially increase the provincial investment in affordable housing;* (B) *action to address the rent crisis in Ottawa and in other communities throughout Ontario;* and (C) *increased treatment and support services to meet the basic demands of chronically homeless people with complex mental health, addiction and healthcare needs.*

ATEH respectfully submits its recommendations for the first Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy to the benefit of homeless individuals and families and those who live on low incomes in our own community and across Ontario.

Submitted by

Marion Wright

Chair, Alliance to End Homelessness

October 2009

THE ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS (ATEH) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND APPROACH IN THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT'S LONG-TERM AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

ATEH recommends four overarching governing principles for the strategy:

1. An overarching, governing principle of the strategy is a coordinated, inter-ministerial approach to ensure affordable, stable, good quality, and equitably accessible homes for all Ontarians; and specifically formalize collaboration and coordination among the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community and Social Services, and Health and Long Term Care to develop housing and support services.
2. An overarching, governing principle of the strategy is partnerships with federal and municipal governments.
3. An overarching, governing principle of the strategy is delivering it in partnership with community-based groups such as non profit-social housing developers, co-operative housing developers and private housing developers and other non-profit organizations as the most effective way to use taxpayers' money to ensure long term housing affordability.
4. An overarching, governing principle of the strategy is the delivery of a sufficient supply of stable, good quality, affordable, adequate housing that is maintained in a good state of repair and is safe and up to property standards, without overcrowding, for all Ontarians.

In addition and relating to 'affordable housing', the Government of Ontario would:

- A-1 Take immediate action to substantially increase the provincial investment in affordable housing in addition to putting a long term strategy in place.
- A-2 Ensure a long-term, sustainable investment in a permanent provincial affordable housing program for urban and rural communities to fund the construction of affordable rental and co-op housing, including supportive housing, recognising that affordable ownership may be more relevant in some communities, and ensure accountability in the delivery of all forms of affordable housing.
- A-3 Continue to provide emergency shelter and services for homeless people; commit to basing both on local needs; and recognise that the necessity to provide these programs will diminish quite gradually until the strategy addresses backlogs in the amount of affordable and supportive housing stock and in the amount of mental health and addictions services.
- A-4 Include in provincial guidelines for affordable housing funding, *including any short-term funding such as the current 'Stimulus' approach*, local community determination of target populations to assist with meeting needs, as determined through local planning processes (i.e. local community action plans), of all people in Ontario who may be homeless or living on very low incomes and at risk of losing their homes.

- A-5 Include in provincial guidelines for affordable housing funding, *including any short-term funding such as the current 'Stimulus' approach*, the provision of adequate resources/support for project development and adequate lead-in and completion timelines for community groups and agencies who cannot rely on having new projects “in the works” until opportunities arise.
- A-6 *In response to Ottawa-specific needs*, provide an immediate infusion of \$204 million to build or acquire 1,700 new affordable units to make up the difference between the target of 500 new units per year and what the City has been able to achieve between 2004 and 2008, followed by \$60 million per year to meet the annual ongoing target of 500 units per year.
- A-7 *In response to Ottawa-specific needs*, provide an immediate \$50 million capital funding over three years to add to the stock of supportive housing.
- A-8 Immediately amend the provincial legislation to modify the Planning Act to explicitly provide municipalities with the discretionary authority to implement Inclusionary Planning for affordable housing.
- A-9 Immediately re-visit the Domiciliary Hostel program to increase the level of funding and to allow support for more flexibility in local communities in the types of models that can be used in creating more supportive housing.
- A-10 Allow in future programs the ability for municipalities to acquire and reposition existing rental housing to meet low-income households' needs.
- A-11 Fast-track and fully upload the municipal share of social housing programs to the Province.
- A-12 Provide resources so that existing affordable housing is maintained with a significant contribution to address outstanding repair and lifecycle requirements; and so that sufficient capital funding for non-profit and co-op providers is in place to address current deferred work and ongoing capital repairs.
- A-13 Ensure the development and implementation of a comprehensive energy conservation strategy for low income households, including protection from rising energy utilities costs with on-going assistance programs.
- A-14 Provide a range of flexible affordable housing models to ensure ability to age in place and long-term affordable security of tenure.
- A-15 Amend legislation to ensure publicly funded non-profit and cooperative housing remains as social housing even after the operating agreements expire, ensuring money is available for maintenance and that RGI supplements remain.
- A-16 Commit to strong advocacy for a national housing strategy without waiting for it to be in place to begin to spend substantially more money on affordable housing in Ontario.
- A-17 Undertake an immediate review of existing government policies and practices in an effort to reduce barriers for chronically homeless individuals, including at-risk or homeless youth and older adults, to access entitlements required to obtain and retain housing.

- A-18 Ensure that jobs created through the affordable housing program equitably benefit historically disadvantaged groups and communities.
- A-19 Ensure that provincial programs provide resources to meet the training needs of agencies that work with those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to build capacity and to improve service delivery.
- A-20 Put in place a provincial revolving mortgage/loan fund to assist the developers of affordable housing.
- A-21 Include the alignment of provincial and municipal bylaws and policies in Ontario to support “new builds” of affordable housing and supportive housing.
- A-22 Begin to explore ways to move towards more home ownership opportunities for those on low incomes, for example by facilitating opportunities to build equity rather than debt or by creating rent-to-own options.

Relating to ‘the rent crisis’, the Government of Ontario would:

- B-1 Include immediate and long-term actions to address the rent crisis in Ottawa and in other communities throughout Ontario.
- B-2 Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to include rent controls on vacant units to prevent unaffordable rent increases.
- B-3 Provide adequate funding to community-based Rent Bank programs to meet demand for assistance and to meet its administrative requirements; the funding amount is currently not matched to the actual demand in the community and the current limit of 10% administrative funding does not come close to covering the positions needed to get the funding out the door.
- B-4 In line with a commitment to a coordinated, inter-ministerial approach, address the affordability gap in housing as a fundamental part of the Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy, and support increases in rent supplement and housing allowance programs and the indexing of the minimum wage and social assistance rates to annual cost of living increases.
- B-5 Provide a Housing Benefit to low income households to make existing rental housing more affordable for tenants. It would be based on rent and income; be indexed annually, using an approach such as the market basket one, and reflect rent differences in Ontario communities; cover those who spend more than 30% of their income on rent, i.e., on social assistance, working for low incomes; and would pay 75% of the difference between actual rent paid, and 30% of income.
- B-6 Provide sufficient program funding for ‘Housing Loss Prevention’ services that help families and individuals remain in suitable and affordable housing.
- B-7 Strengthen tenant protection laws to ensure fairness for low-income tenants.
- B-8 Include funding for the provision of support services to rooming house tenants in the strategy.

Relating to 'treatment and support services', the Government of Ontario would:

- C-1 Include a significant increase in funding for treatment and support services to meet the basic demands of chronically homeless people with complex mental health, addiction and healthcare needs as part of its coordinated, inter-ministerial approach to ensure affordable, stable, good quality, and equitably accessible homes for all Ontarians.
- C-2 Ensure all Ontarians, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have the supports, programs and protections to equitably access a home and then maintain it; and fund and locate programs and services in the communities served through community-based partnerships, including assistance to enable people to understand their rights.
- C-3 Invest in culturally appropriate, age appropriate and linguistically accessible housing with support services to meet the specific needs of high-risk/high-need, vulnerable persons with special needs that may include mental health issues, experience with institutionalization, addictions, HIV/AIDS, or disabilities.
- C-4 In line with a commitment to a coordinated, inter-ministerial approach, require adequately funded discharge plans for all people leaving hospitals, child welfare care, mental health and correctional facilities and that those plans include stable, equitably accessible and adequate affordable housing or housing with supports.

Submitted by

Marion Wright

Chair, Alliance to End Homelessness

October 2009

APPENDICES FOLLOW

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Lynne Browne, ATEH Coordinator at 613-241-7913, ext. 205, lbrowne@ysb.on.ca.

Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa

5 YEAR TREND DATA The Alliance to End Homelessness

HOUSING						
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% diff
Pre-1995 social housing units (total stock)	22,400	22,400	22,400	22,400	22,400	0.0%
Post-2000 affordable units (total stock) (i.e., Action Ottawa & NHI units)	509	521	760	833	967	16.1%
Rent supplements (City of Ottawa & CMHA)	3,000	3,085	3,198	3,200	3,200	0.0%
Supportive housing places	665	863	865	885	915	3.4%
Waiting Lists						
Households on social housing waiting list	10,500	9,914	10,055	9,370	9,692	3.4%
Supportive housing waiting list	2,000	2,214	2,630	2,000	2,660	33.0%
Waiting Lists						
Rental vacancy rate	3.9%	3.3%	2.3%	2.3%	1.4%	n/a
Average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment	\$771	\$762	\$774	\$798	\$827	3.6%
INCOME						
Ontario Works for a single person	\$520	\$536	\$548	\$560	\$572	2.1%
ODSP Assistance for a Single Person	\$930	\$959	\$979	\$999	\$1,020	2.1%
Average monthly # of Ontario Works cases	17,879	17,552	16,541	15,296	14,329	-6.3%
Minimum Wage	\$7.15	\$7.45	\$7.75	\$8.00	\$8.75	9.4%
Increase in Consumer Price Index	1.8%	2.3%	1.1%	2.0%	1.7%	n/a
HOMELESSNESS						
# of times shelter beds were used	322,626	309,353	322,639	341,212	386,506	13.3%
# of individuals in an emergency shelter						
Single men	3,130	3,169	3,235	3,249	3,325	2.3%
Single women	877	910	1,042	960	928	-3.3%
Youth	361	385	430	365	464	27.1%
Families	635	672	619	643	747	16.2%
Children	801	759	853	907	1,179	30.0%
Adults	1,365	1,510	1,070	1,091	1,149	5.3%
LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY						
Average length of stay in shelters (days)						
Single men	45	44	40	46	51	10.9%
Single women	49	48	47	48	48	0.0%
Youth	41	42	37	43	46	7.0%
Families	25	19	17	27	46	70.4%
	49	40	34	46	53	15.2%

Note –

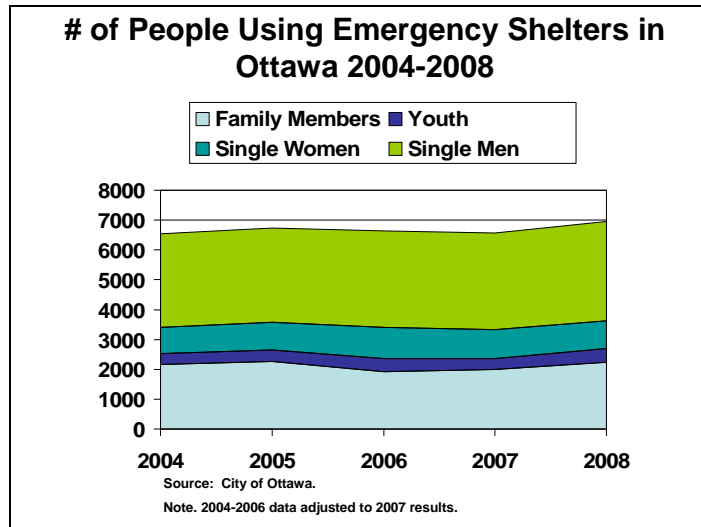
2007 & 2008 data on homelessness indicators, as provided by the City of Ottawa (v.5).

2004-2006 data on homelessness indicators represents adjusted numbers from previous report cards calculated from differences in 2007 numbers provided by the City of Ottawa (v.5).

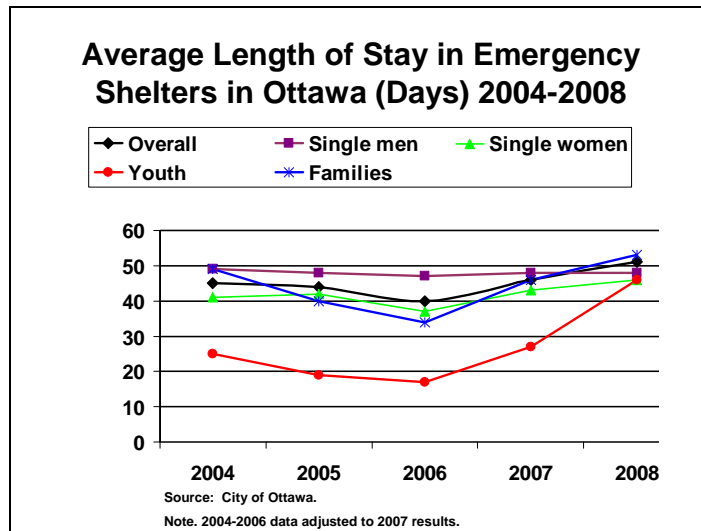
5 Year Trend Graphs: Homelessness in Ottawa, 2004-2008

Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, Alliance to End Homelessness

There has been an increase in number of individuals using shelters from 2007 to 2008 to 7,045, the highest total to date in the five years of collecting data, due especially to families. It was relatively stable from 2004-2007, ranging from 6,500 to just over 6,700.

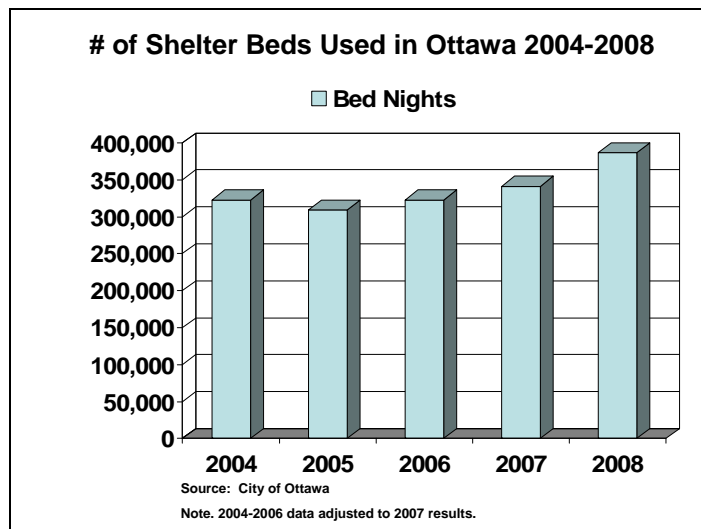


The average length of stay in shelters from 2004 to 2008 shows initial decreases from 2004 to 2006 followed by increases from 2006 to 2008 to the point that the shelter stay in 2008 is the highest of the five-year period on which we have data.



The total number of shelter beds used reflects a combination of the number of different individuals using shelter and the average length of stay. From 2004-2006 there was relative stability followed by increases in 2007 and 2008.

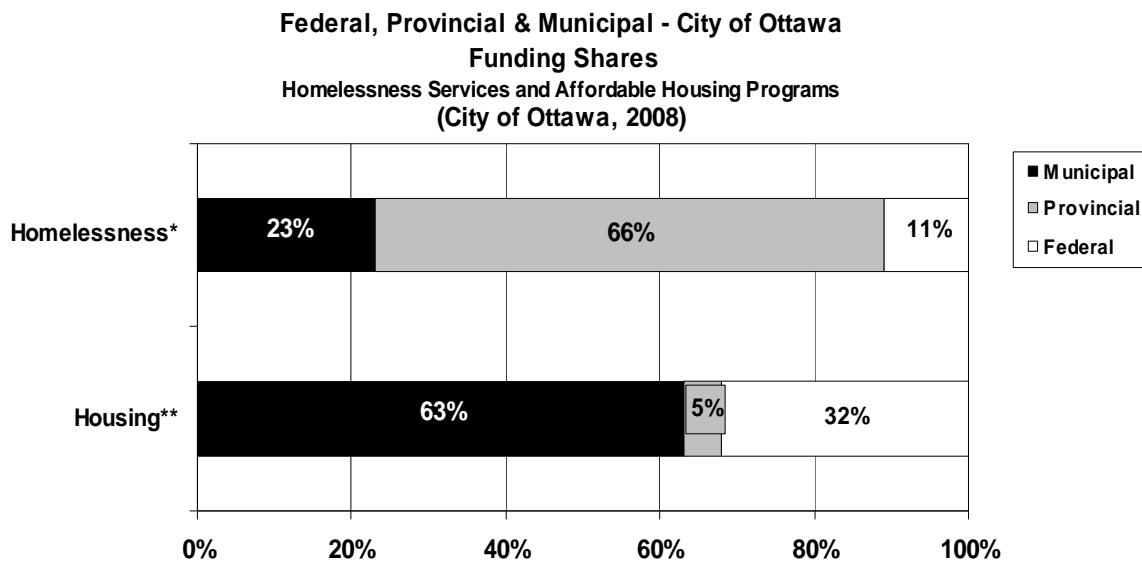
Over the five year period the greatest use was in 2008, reflecting the need for more than 1000 beds per night (only 966 beds are available).



BACKGROUND: Affordable Housing in Ottawa and Ontario Sept. 2009 Update

Prepared for Ottawa Branch of the Housing Network of Ontario by Lynne Browne, Alliance to End Homelessness

In 2008, only 5% of the money spent on affordable housing in Ottawa came from the Province. The Federal government contributed 32%, and the City 63% via incentives to non profit and other groups. These funds covered new affordable housing, the homeownership down payment program and operating subsidies for 56 housing providers, including rent subsidies. People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness often cannot afford housing on the open market; they may be dependent on income support programs such as Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or work at low or minimum wage jobs that are often not full-time.



* **Homelessness:** includes emergency shelter per diems, homelessness services (incl. drop-ins and housing loss prevention), Rent Bank, and domiciliary hostels.

0% ** **Housing:** includes new affordable housing, homeownership down payment program, and operating subsidies for 56 housing providers (incl. rent subsidies).

growth in apartment starts in Ottawa CMA (Aug 2009 compared to Aug 2008, CMHC)

CMHC Housing Starts for Ottawa CMA Released Sept. 9, 2009						
	Aug-08	Aug-09	% Change	YTD 08	YTD 09	% Change
Single-Detached	288	222	-22.9%	1,922	1,406	-26.8%
Multi-Family	351	200	-43.0%	2,643	1,703	-35.6%
Semi-Detached	14	20	42.9%	122	151	23.8%
Row House	196	180	-8.2%	1,452	985	-32.2%
Apartment	141	0	-100.0%	1,069	567	-47.0%
Total	639	422	-34.0%	4,565	3,109	-31.9%

Breakdown by owner occupied and rental

	Homeowner				Rental			Condo		Total
	Single	Semi	Row	Apt	Semi	Row	Apt	Row	Apt	
Aug-08	288	14	196				9		132	639
Aug-09	222	20	180							422
2008 YTD	1922	122	1452	16	0	0	142	0	911	4565
2009 YTD	1406	149	982	18	2	3	65	0	484	3109

NB: The latest CMHC Rental Market Report for Ottawa (2008, table 4.3.2) shows that rental condominium apartments in Ottawa are about 19.1% of the total universe.”

Average Apartment Rents in Ottawa, April 2009 (CMHC Rental Market Survey)

Apartment unit size	Average apt. rent April 2008	Average apt. rent April 2009	# Vacant private apartments April 2009	Total # apartments in Ottawa is 60,841
Bachelor	666	669	143	5,940
One bedroom	819	817	764	30,383
Two Bedroom	957	995	633	22,178
Three bedroom	1,116	1,213	Data not available	2,339

MORE on housing:

- **75.2% of Ottawa’s low-income renters in 2005 were in core housing need* – the worst record of any Census Metropolitan Areas in Canada (Toronto = 74.3%, Vancouver = 69.7%, Calgary = Gatineau = 49.3%, 43.7%)** (Living in housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and households spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards. (CMHC Research Highlight: *Low-income Urban Household Not In Core Housing Need, March 2009, Socio-economic Series 09-001*)
- **Ottawa has seen only 967 additional units since 2001**, for people on low incomes built through programs such as the Action Ottawa program and the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. **134 units were built during 2008 and 74 units were built in 2007.** The City of Ottawa’s target is 500 new units annually.
- **There were 9,692 households on the social housing registry in 2008 and in 2007 9,370 households.** *22,400 units of Social Housing in projects were built prior to 1995.*
- **There are 915 spaces of supportive housing** provided by members of the Supportive Housing Network and **2,600 households** are on the supportive housing waiting list at the end of 2008
- **Children and Youth** – In the spring of 2005, the results of a housing checkup demonstrated that over 50% of the families who participated lived in housing need. This survey into the housing needs of children and youth accessing emergency health services at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) conducted in 2005 made clear that families need access to affordable, suitable, adequate housing to optimize the health and wellbeing of children and youth.
 - **10,899 households at risk of losing their housing** received housing loss prevention assistance in 2008, among those, **1,116 households were at the final stage of eviction**
- **LEBRETON FLATS –LeBreton Flats land was expropriated by the National Capital Commission in the 1960s. 35 years later, not one single unit of affordable housing has been built on the expropriated land.** In 2006, the NCC contracted with Claridge Homes to re-develop LeBreton Flats first phase and LeBreton Flats Housing Task Force determined that the plan would not result units that would be truly affordable for those on very limited incomes.

- **Stable housing is a precondition for economic stability in Ottawa. The province must move faster on the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Ontario**, recognizing that homelessness is the extreme indication of poverty and that access to affordable housing is fundamental to the success of other poverty measures (income & supports).

2008 HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES IN OTTAWA

- **7,045 homeless people stayed in an emergency shelters at some time in 2008** (473 more than 2007)
 - **1,179 children under 16 in 2008 in 747 families stayed in shelters** in 2008 (compared to 907 children in 643 families in 2007); **464 youth, 928 single women and 3,325 single men**
 - **The average length of stay in a shelter was 51 days in 2008** (10% increase over 46 days in 2007).
 - **Families stayed an average of 53 days** (15% increase over 2007)
 - Youth stayed an average of 46 days (70% increase over 2007)
 - Single women stayed an average 46 days (7% increase over 2007)
 - Single men stayed an average 48 days (same rate as 2007)
- **An average of 1059 people daily stayed Ottawa shelters in 2008** compared to 935 in 2007. There was a **13% increase** in the times shelter beds were used in 2008 to 386,506 from 341,212 in 2007. *(There are 966 shelter beds in Ottawa – 525 beds for single men, 95 beds for single women, 36 for youth, 260 beds for families, 55 beds for mixed gender, and 140 beds for overflow.)*
- **79% or 5,575 people were homeless for less than 60 days in 2008.** Many of these individuals and families in Ottawa did eventually find housing, either on their own or with the assistance of housing support staff. The problem our community faces is that **each year new people become homeless** due to the lack of new affordable housing stock and high market rents combined with low incomes. Others experience homelessness episodically as their circumstances deteriorate due to job loss, reduced working hours, rent increases, unexpected expenses like long illnesses or funerals. **21%, or 1,470 people were chronically homeless (stayed over 60 days and need supports to be successfully housed)**
- **The Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa trend after 5 years shows current policies assist communities to maintain efforts to assist homeless people but do not end homelessness.** The length of shelter stay and the times shelter beds are used in Ottawa increased over the 2004-2008 period. Last year's homeless total, the highest in five years in Ottawa, was due especially to increased homelessness among families.

AUGUST 2009 – UPDATE ON OTTAWA SHELTER DATA

All Clients in Ottawa Emergency Shelters	TOTALS
August 4 – 10, 2009	1308
August 11 – 17, 2009	1327
August 18 – 24, 2009	1300
August 25 – 31, 2009	1320
3 Months Ago (May 26 – June 1, 2009)	1078
6 Months Ago (Feb 24 – Mar 2, 2009)	1033
1 Year Ago (Aug 26 – Sept 1, 2008)	1111

ONTARIO – THREE KEY HOUSING FACTS

Ontario has: highest housing costs, lowest provincial housing investment, worst municipal downloading

As the Ontario government's province-wide consultations for a comprehensive provincial housing plan open the first of three sessions in Toronto this evening, here are three housing facts to consider:

Lowest provincial investment: Ontario has the worst record among all the provinces in terms of affordable housing investments. **In the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, about half the provincial average of \$115 per person** (source: Wellesley Institute calculation based on Statistics Canada Government Revenue and Expenditures database). At the head of the provincial pack are Saskatchewan (\$214 per capita – almost three and one-half times greater than Ontario), Nova Scotia (\$175) and Alberta (\$154). On March 12, 2009, the Alberta government announced a \$3.2 billion, 10-year housing plan. Ontario's housing plan is not expected until late 2010 or 2011.

Highest housing costs: Ontario has the highest housing costs of any province (**median household shelter costs of \$10,878, according to Statistics Canada**). High housing costs for low, moderate and middle-income households means less money for other necessities such as food, medicine, energy, childcare, transportation, clothing, education... High housing costs are the single biggest reason why more than one million people were forced to line-up at Toronto's food banks last year (Source: Daily Bread Food Bank).

Biggest municipal downloading: Ontario, more than any other Canadian province, downloaded the cost of affordable housing to local government. **In the most recent fiscal year, the provincial government invested \$829 million in affordable housing – only two-thirds of the \$1.3 billion invested by municipalities** (source: Statistics Canada Government Revenue and Expenditures database). Cash-strapped Ontario municipalities have limited revenues sources (mostly property taxes, grants from senior governments and fees), which means that there's little ability on the part of municipal governments to grow housing investments to meet the growing housing needs across the province.

Ontario data provided by: Michael Shapcott Director, Affordable Housing and Social Innovation, Wellesley Institute, 45 Charles St E, Suite 101, Tel: 416.972.1010 ext 231, E-mail: michael@wellesleyinstitute.com