



STEERING COMMITTEE

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Alliance to End Homelessness
& Executive Director, The Salvation Army
Ottawa Booth Centre

Marion Wright, Vice-Chair

Alliance to End Homelessness
& Executive Director, Canadian Mental
Health Association, Ottawa Branch

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Senior Researcher, Centre for Research on
Educational and Community Services
University of Ottawa

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Executive Director
Options Bytown Non-Profit Housing Corp.

Michael Coe

Community Representative

Tony Cruickshank

Manager, Homeless Outreach Program,
Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

Jay Fox

Manager, Programs, The Ottawa Mission

Sue Garvey

Director, Cornerstone/LePilier

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& Director, Anglican Social Services, Centre
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Director, Community Impact & Investment

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Executive Director
Action-Logement/Action-Housing

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Ottawa Social Housing Network

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Community Representative

Marilyn Mills

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-Queensway Community Health Centre

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Services, National Capital Region
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Program Manager, Residential Services,
City of Ottawa

Dan Sabourin

Director, Community Programs
Youth Services Bureau

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Executive Director
Shepherds of Good Hope

Trudy Sutton

Executive Director, Housing Help

Paul Wallace

Operations Coordinator, Psychiatric
Outreach Team, Dual Diagnosis Consultation
Outreach Team, Royal Ottawa Mental Health
Centre

Connie Woloschuk, ex officio

Manager, Residential & Support Services
Housing Branch, City of Ottawa

ATEH Coordinator

Lynne Browne

613-241-7913 ext 205, lbrowne@ysb.on.ca
147 Besserer St., Ottawa, ON K1N 6A7

The Alliance to End Homelessness

www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca

MEDIA RELEASE March 30, 2009

Media Conference to release fifth Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, Jan–Dec 2008 **Billions for banks while Ottawa shelters overflow: Children and youth hardest hit**

On March 31st, the Alliance to End Homelessness will release its fifth annual Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, covering Jan.-Dec. 2008. The Report Card evaluates the city's progress in combating the crisis of homelessness by comparing 2008 with 2007 to provide grades in four areas: housing, income, homelessness and length of shelter stay.

HOW DID THE CITY FARE IN 2008?

"The 2008 grades won't be out until tomorrow, but I can tell you these are grades that no parent – or government – would want to see," says Perry Rowe, Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness.

The 2008 Report Card will report that the total number of men, women, youth and children using shelters shot up over the year. Families alone increased by 15.2%. There were 747 homeless families with 1,179 children under 16 years old in 2008.

Perry Rowe is particularly concerned that not only were more people homeless but they stayed in shelters an average of 51 days in 2008, five days longer than in 2007. The average length of stay in an Ottawa shelter has been increasing since 2006.

WHERE WILL PEOPLE GO WHEN THERE'S NO ROOM AT THE 'INN'?

Since mid-2008, the demand for shelter beds has been surging and Ottawa emergency shelters have been running out of beds every night.

"Up to 100 people are sleeping on the floor every night. For instance, we have up to 10 women a night show up at the women's shelter and we're not able to accommodate them there," says Rowe. "Likewise, every month young people go to the youth shelter but we're not able to accommodate them there. We have a severe shortage of supportive housing in the city for those homeless people with the highest needs so they have no place to move to. Our fear is that some people will fall through the cracks, especially now in a faltering economy, despite the best efforts of our agencies to coordinate and make sure everyone is helped."

"The number of times shelter beds were used increased dramatically to 386,506 last year up from 341,212 in 2007. That's an increase of 13%," reports Dr. Tim Aubry of the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services at the University of Ottawa. "The increase in 'bed use' in 2008 was mainly fueled by the larger number of families using shelters and they stayed longer than in 2007. Another factor was that youth stayed in shelters 70% longer than in 2007."

He points to the Report Card's housing market indicators which showed that the vacancy rate for rental units went down to 1.4% in Ottawa in 2008, while the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment went up by 3.6% to \$827 a month. There were only 134 new units of affordable housing in 2008. In 2007 only 74 units were created in total so 134 is moving in the right direction, but the small growth does not offer much hope to the large number of people who are homeless or at risk of losing their housing. The City of Ottawa target to increase affordable housing is 500 units a year.

CALL FOR A FORMAL INVESTIGATION

Dr. Aubry notes that the trend analysis after five years of tracking shows that Ottawa's shelter use has increased over the last three years in spite of nonstop efforts by local agencies and community volunteers.

Perry Rowe agrees, "Homelessness keeps growing and it remains a major issue in this community. It's time to name where the responsibility lies for the failure to end homelessness."

Rowe is calling for a formal investigation at the federal and Ontario level into the lack of progress: “**Shelter use in Ottawa has increased over the 2004-2008 period we’ve issued the Report Card and the five-year homelessness trend makes it clear that now is the time to initiate such an investigation.**”

“It’s an appalling, shameful situation, but so far government responses have failed. Only a major shift in policies on affordable housing, income levels and supports can end homelessness. Last October, the federal government announced plans to buy up to \$25 billion in insured mortgage pools through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation*. If we can find \$25 billion to help our banks, why haven’t we acted more decisively to end homelessness?”

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- The 2008 Report Card’s final grades for housing, income, homelessness and length of shelter stay and additional 2008 findings and data will be announced at the Media Conference.
 - The Report Card will include a section on “Made-in-Ottawa Solutions” with information on a number of innovative housing solutions for homeless people developed in Ottawa.
 - It also includes a section on the role the three tiers of government play in ending homelessness with a breakdown of their share of funding for homelessness and housing.

The Report card is produced by The Alliance to End Homelessness, a non partisan coalition of community agencies and concerned organizations and individuals in Ottawa committed to working collaboratively to end homelessness by gaining and promoting a better understanding of homelessness and advocating for strategies to end it.

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MEDIA CONFERENCE to release *The Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, Jan-Dec 2008*

Date: Tuesday, March 31, 10:00 a.m.

Location: Salvation Army Booth Centre, 171 George Street (at Cumberland), in the multipurpose room (Chapel)

TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS or for more information:

Lynne Browne, Coordinator, Alliance to End Homelessness

Cell 613-513-6647, 613-241-7913 ext 205, lbrowne@ysb.on.ca

The Report Card will be presented by:

Perry Rowe, Chair, Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) and Executive Director, The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre

Tim Aubry, ATEH Research and Evaluation Working Group and Senior Researcher, Centre for Research on Educational & Community Services, University of Ottawa

Sue Garvey, Steering Committee, Alliance to End Homelessness (ATEH) and Director, Cornerstone/Le Pilier, the women’s shelter

Sophia, a formerly homelessness youth

Other members of the ATEH Steering Committee will be available for comment.

An additional community spokesperson affected by homelessness will be available for interviews

Hard copies of the full Report Card and the Highlights from it will be available at the Media Conference.

English and French PDF versions of the Report Card will be posted later in the day on March 31st on the ATEH website at www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca

* <http://www.fin.gc.ca/n08/08-075-eng.asp> “Last October, the federal government took steps to maintain the availability of longer-term credit in Canada by purchasing up to \$25 billion in insured mortgage pools through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to act to address the scarcity of private sector lending to Canadian mortgage markets and lending markets overall in an effort to make loans and mortgages more available and more affordable for ordinary Canadians and businesses.”