

Report Card on ENDING Homelessness in Ottawa, Jan-Dec 2008

Experiencing Homelessness

HIGHLIGHTS

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES USING EMERGENCY SHELTERS IN 2008

- There was an increase of 473 individuals in the number of homeless people using emergency shelters to **7,045** in 2008 compared to 6,572 in 2007.
- Beginning this year, we can report two years of data for comparison, using a system that reduces duplication of clients. This was a significant factor with single men and single women using more than one shelter during the year.
- There was a **13% increase in the times shelter beds were used in 2008 to 386,506 from 341,212 in 2007.**
- **More families and more children** stayed in shelters – 747 families in 2008 compared to 643 in 2007 and 1,179 children under 16 in 2008 compared to 907 in 2007.
- **The average length of stay in a shelter increased by over 10% in 2008 to 51 days** (46 in 2007).
 - The average length of stay for youth rose 70% to 46 days
 - The average length of stay for families rose 15% to 53 days
 - The average stay for single women rose 7% to 46 days
 - The average length of stay for single men remained at 48 days
- The increase in shelter stay meant a **higher average daily occupancy in the shelters** – an average of **1059 people a day in 2008** compared to 935 in 2007.

The Five-Year Homelessness Trend

- The length of shelter stay and the times shelter beds are used in Ottawa increased over the 2004-2008 period the Report Card has been in existence and indicates that homelessness continues to be a major issue in this community.

Emergency shelter beds

- There are **966** shelter beds in Ottawa – **525** for single men, **95** for single women, **36** for youth, **260** for families, **55** for mixed gender, and **140** for overflow.

Housing assistance for people at risk of becoming homelessness

- **10,899** households at risk of losing their housing were helped in Ottawa in 2008. Among those households, 1,116 were at the final stage of eviction.

TYPES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AVAILABLE AND NEEDED IN 2008

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. Affordable housing options include:

- **Social Housing** units in projects built prior to 1995 through a variety of housing programs total **22,400** units, operated by public and private non-profit organizations and housing cooperatives.
- In **Rent Supplement** units in private buildings or non-profit projects, the government pays the difference between the market rent and 30% of the tenants' income. There are **3,200** Rent Supplement units in the Ottawa area.
- **Since 2001, only 967 additional units for people on low incomes** have been built through the **Action Ottawa** program as part of the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program:
 - **134** units were built during 2008 (74 units in 2007) The City of Ottawa provides incentives to non-profit and other groups to build affordable housing; its annual target is new 500 units.
- **Access to social housing** is controlled via an integrated **Housing Registry**. The number of households waiting for units in 2008 was **9,692** compared to 9,370 in 2007.
- **The Supportive Housing Network has 915 spaces.** More small housing providers now participate in this Network to bring the total up from 885; there are no new spaces. This housing includes the provision of on-site services. The combined waiting list totalled **2,600 households** at the end of 2008, compared to 2,000 a year earlier. These are in addition to the Registry list.

ECONOMIC FACTORS IN 2008

- **Average rents in Ottawa increased by 3.6%** during 2008, while the **vacancy rate decreased from 2.3% to 1.4%**, its lowest since 2001. Average rents – bachelor: \$671 (+\$28); 1-bedroom: \$827 (+\$29); 2-bedroom: \$995 (+\$34); and 3-bedroom: \$1,227 (+\$83). *CMHC*
- The **minimum wage** increased by **75 cents** in February 2008.
- There was a 2% increase in the benefits for Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Programs (ODSP).
- The Consumer Price Index increased **by 1.7% in 2008** compared to 2.0% a year earlier (*Statistics Canada*).

The Alliance to End Homelessness

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