

Ranch Ehrlo Society

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DE22-92

June 2, 2022

Mayor Masters and Regina City Councillors,

Please accept this submission on behalf of Ranch Ehrlo Society in support of the Motion:
To Fund the Plan to End Homelessness in Regina.

Ranch Ehrlo Society is a multi-service agency delivering a range of accredited mental health and developmental services, including owning and operating three affordable multi-residential housing properties in Regina:

- Lakeshore Village on the corner of 23rd Ave and Hillsdale houses 43 families, many of whom are single parents and is the site of Creative Corners Daycare;
- Chaz Court, on 1700 Block Montreal St. provides eight bachelor style apartments for single youth and;
- McEwen Manor – a 40-unit multi-residential and commercial property at 2035 Osler St, provides housing and supports through a partnership with Phoenix Residential Society.

Ranch Ehrlo has been providing affordable housing in Regina for over 25 years, and we have had many opportunities to work with all three levels of government to help people access housing. Through these experiences we have learned a lot – and is why we support this motion before you today.

1. We have learned that low-income families, particularly female-led single parent families, single youth, and adults with multiple and persistent physical and mental health needs, rely heavily on income assistance programs. These groups have the most difficulty in securing and maintaining safe and affordable housing. The Covid crisis will continue to financially impact more and more people in our community. The 2021 Point in Time Count provides the most current data and continues to show an increase in homeless numbers and acuity level among those that experience it. The pandemic did not cause homelessness in Regina, but it revealed the growing number of people that are chronically homeless in our city and sadly, it will impact more people going forward. It exposed the housing need as more glaringly visible in our community. In fact, it is impossible to move around Regina – in almost any neighborhood, street, park or alley - and not notice.

CMLC+LBEC



Serving Youth Since 1966

We support funding a Regina homelessness initiative that will take the lead in this endeavor. It is imperative to ensure inter-governmental collaboration and coordination of funding, especially at the provincial level. It will be important to consult and include those that are homeless, as well as the non-profit community groups that continue to work tirelessly to help. This will also provide an opportunity to coordinate and leverage dollars through the Federal National Housing Strategy. As a Council, you can seize the opportunity to bring public attention to the issue of homelessness and weave together all the good work being done in the community to collectively create an inclusive, healthy and thriving city environment, that we continue to take pride in.

2. Social isolation, food insecurity and lack of access to mental health supports lead people back to or into unsafe environments where intimate partner violence re-occurs, addictions re-surface, precarious street-life and couch surfing prevails and permanent, safe and affordable housing becomes further out of reach. Camps in parks, make-shift shelters behind businesses, yards, garages, vacant houses and dumpsters prevail as people look for belonging and physical space.

We appreciate the extraordinary steps this City has taken in the past year to shelter our folks out of Pepsi Park. In support of this motion, we now ask you to champion efforts to “Shut the Front Door!”. This requires the need for wrap-around supports to ensure that people have the best chance to remain permanently and safely housed; where there is consistent care and services; where they can build supportive and caring relationships and their needs are met. One clear message coming out of the Mayor’s Housing Summit was the desire and hope that we can do more. The Five-Year Plan has existed for four years and yet, there are more homeless today than in 2018. We urgently need to do more.

3. Dedicated and affordable housing across the continuum is key to ensuring a roof over everyone’s head, but more affordable housing is just not enough. It is only part of the solution, as outlined in Regina’s ‘Home For All’ plan, and in the Mayor’s recent Housing Summit. It is so important that we act now to address the hopelessness that so many feel when they are living with chronic and episodic homelessness.

As part of this motion, we support a call to revisit this plan and fund a city-led task force to implement, collaborate, and operationalize the recommendations based on the acuity and severeness of our current homeless situation in Regina. As outlined in The Plan, implementation will include working with existing community service providers, Indigenous leaders and groups, and citizens to ensure that sustainable and adequate funds are available and consistently allocated as part of a clearly defined and inclusive blueprint.

As citizens, we are paying for the end costs of homelessness through renting space and supporting a temporary emergency shelter, through policing, crisis services, fire and rescue services, alley clean-ups and city parks maintenance; provincially, we pay the costs of emergency health and ambulatory care, and corrections and public safety services. Accordingly, it makes sense to include dedicated funds in the budget so there is a solid plan to collectively address these issues at the front end, instead of scrambling every year in October to get people out of the cold.

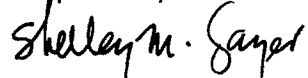
We acknowledge and applaud the City of Regina for the recent agreement signed with the Government of Saskatchewan for an eight unit Indigenous-led Pilot for supportive housing.

It confirms that this City Council is responsive and aware of the current crisis. A sustainable and fully funded city-led task force can actively update the city's 2018 Plan and:

- Continue the necessary collaboration with governments and those in the community providing the physical space across the housing continuum.
- Develop sustainable and targeted strategies in collaboration with support service organizations and individuals with lived experience that have expert knowledge of Regina's homeless population and the services they require to remain safely and humanely housed.
- Work closely with police and crisis services to preventively meet needs, track services and results, and decriminalize persons who are without a home.

This Council can lead the Regina community in this charge with a big heart and the tenacity to become the leaders in this Canadian crisis – a city that other municipalities look to as an example of what we can accomplish when we are fully engaged and work together for permanent solutions.

Respectfully submitted,



Shelley Sayer, BSW, RSW

Director, Ehrlo Housing

Ranch Ehrlo Society

For reference and informational purposes:

- Everyone is Home – A Five-Year Plan to End Chronic and Episodic Homelessness in Regina (referenced in the Motion)
- Copy of Snapshot of Homelessness in Regina – Preliminary Findings for the 2021 Point-In-Time Count
- Copy of February 25, 2022 Mayor's Housing Summit discussion paper

For inspirational consideration:

- Copy of Ending Homelessness – A Proposal for a Collaborative Provincial – Municipal Co-Design and Implementation of a Blueprint to End Homelessness in Ontario



DE22-92



SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESSNESS IN REGINA

Preliminary Findings for the 2021 Point-in-Time Count

Document completed by Addison Docherty (Flow Community Projects) in collaboration with HelpSeeker Technologies

Funded by the Government
of Canada's Reaching Home
Canada's Homelessness Strategy

Canada

BACKGROUND

On September 22nd, 2021, Flow Community Projects (Project Lead) and community partners organized Regina's 3rd Point-in-Time (PiT) Count of Homelessness, finding 488 individuals experiencing homelessness. A Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a strategy to help determine the extent of homelessness in a community on a given night, or at a single point in time. The 2021 Regina PiT-Count is supported through the Government of Canada's Reaching Home program as administered in Regina by Namerind Housing Corporation.

The 2021 PiT-Count was comprised of three components. The first two components, a Street Count and a Sheltered Count, took place on September 22nd, 2021 from 8:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. During the Street Count, over 115 volunteers from the Regina community participated, taking to the streets in Survey Teams of 2-3 individuals, offering an anonymous housing survey to anyone they saw. Along with offering the survey, the Street Count Survey Teams utilized Tally Sheets to enumerate individuals who were experiencing homelessness but were not surveyed (sleeping under benches, encampments, declined to be surveyed but disclosed homelessness, etc.).

For the Sheltered Count, the same survey was offered by staff to individuals staying in their respective facilities. In addition to the survey, participating shelter agencies were asked to provide Administrative Facility Data (capacity, occupancy rates & non-person identifiable demographics) to the PiT-Count Project Lead.

The third component, a Magnet Event, was hosted at the mamaweyatitan Centre from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. the following day, on September 23rd, 2021. The event included a free chili and buns luncheon (food provided and prepared by the Regina Food Bank), a COVID-19 vaccine clinic (SHA, Four Directions), and a services fair (multiple agencies). The same PiT-Count Survey utilized during the Street Count the night before was offered to individuals at the Magnet Event, with one difference being survey participants were asked where they stayed the night before, to align data for the PiT-Count date of September 22nd, 2021.

In order to avoid survey duplication, survey participants were asked to provide a unique identifier of the first initials of their first and last names in addition to the last two digits of their year of birth (Example: John Smith, 1987 = J.S. 87).

PiT-Count Surveys were entered by PiT-Count Advisory Team Members in the weeks that followed the PiT-Count. Once entered, the PiT-Count data (raw survey data, administrative facility data, and tally sheet data) was subsequently sent to a third party, HelpSeeker Technologies, for further data verification and analysis.

From these sources, this document includes preliminary 2021 PiT-Count findings.

The full PiT-Count Report is scheduled to be released in late January/early February, 2022.

SNAPSHOT OF FINDINGS

Among the 488 individuals enumerated on September 22nd 2021:

- 78 were observed to be experiencing homelessness through the street count, but did not complete a survey
- 99 were identified to be experiencing sheltered homelessness. This information was retrieved from observable facility data captured through enumeration forms completed by housing facilities within the community
- 171 indicated that they were provisionally accommodated (85 survey respondents noting they were staying at someone else's place, and 86 individuals accounted for through transitional shelter/housing facility enumeration forms)
- 71 reported to be experiencing unsheltered homelessness, with the large majority staying in a public space while a few individuals reported to be staying in a vehicle.
- 20 individuals were enumerated through public systems data (e.g., hospital, detox, jail)
- 3 individuals were reported to be staying in a hotel/motel
- 46 were unsure of where they were staying the night of the Count

Table 1. Where did people stay?

Where did People Stay?	(2018) Number of People	2018 (%)	(2021) Number of People	2021 (%)
Homeless Shelter (Emergency, Family, Domestic Violence, Violence Against Women Shelter)	91	31.8%	99	20.3%
Transitional Shelter / Housing	81	28.3%	86	17.6%
Someone Else's Place	85	29.7%	85	17.4%
Unsheltered in a Public Space (e.g. Street, Park, Bus Shelter, Forest or Abandoned Building)	6	2.1%	68	13.9%
Unsure	19	6.6%	46	9.4%
Public Systems (Hospital, Detox, Jail, Prison, etc.)	3	1.0%	20	4.1%
Vehicle (Car, Van, RV, Truck, Boat)	0	0%	3	0.6%
Motel / Hotel	1	0.3%	3	0.6%
Observed Experiencing Homelessness (Tally Sheet)	N/A	N/A	78	16.0%
Total	286	100.0%	488	100.0%

Table 2. Key Demographics.

Key Demographics	(2018) Number of Respondents	2018 % (n = # of responses)	(2021) Number of Respondents	2021 % (n = # of responses)
Male	71	47.3% (n = 150)	142	51.4% (n=276)
Female	76	50.7% (n = 150)	124	44.9% (n=276)
Canadian Military	7	4.7% (n=149)	8	3.4% (n=233)
Indigenous	118	80% (n= 148)	191	81.3% (n=235)
Immigrant/Refugee	6	4.3% (n = 141)	5	2.3% (n=217)
Youth (24 and Under)*	43	27.7% (n=155)	78	27.1% (n=288)
Adults (25-64)	112	72.3% (n=155)	205	71.2% (n=288)
Seniors (65+)	0	0% (n=155)	5	1.7% (n=288)
Non Surveyed Dependent Children				
<i>Male</i>	27	50.9% (n= 53)	18	37.5% (n=48)
<i>Female</i>	26	49.1% (n= 53)	25	52.1% (n=48)
First Experienced Homelessness (24 and Under)	119	76.8% (n=155)	138	56.8% (n=243)
Experienced Homelessness for 6+ Months in Past Year	61	47.3% (n= 129)	138	63.3% (n=218)
Respondents Reporting Barriers to Finding Permanent Housing	125	80% (n = 155)	202	98.5% (n=205)

*Includes the 48 non-surveyed dependent children (37 of whom are under the age of 15, and 11 from ages 15-24)

Insights:

- Proportions for majority of demographics listed in the Table 2 remain fairly similar across 2018 and 2021
- Higher percentage of males enumerated than females during this Count
- We also observe a greater percentage of female dependents than male dependents
- Decrease in proportion of individuals who reported first experiencing homelessness at the age of 24 or younger (76.8% in 2018 compared to 56.8% in 2021)
- An increase in the proportion of people who have experienced homelessness for 6 or more months in the past year (47.3% in 2018 compared to 63.3% in 2021)

Table 3. Top 5 Reasons for Most Recent Housing Loss.

Top 5 Reasons for Most Recent Housing Loss (2018)	N (2018)	2018 % (Out of 139)	Top 5 Reasons for Most Recent Housing Loss (2021)	N (2021)	2021 % (Out of 201)
Addiction or Substance Abuse	41	29.4%	Not Enough Income For Housing	92	45.8%
Family Conflict: Spouse or Partner	30	21.5%	Conflict: Spouse/Partner	40	19.9%
Unable to Pay Rent or Mortgage	29	20.8%	Substance Use issue	37	18.4%
Experienced Abuse: Spouse or Partner	27	19.4%	Unsafe Housing Conditions	34	16.9%
Job Loss	21	15.1%	Landlord Tenant Conflict	26	12.9%

Insights:

- Substance Use issues, financial issues, and conflict with a spouse or partner continue to remain among the top 5 reasons for most recent housing loss
- New reasons among the top 5 in the 2021 Count include *Unsafe Housing Conditions* as well as *Landlord Tenant Conflict*.

Table 4. Top 5 Barriers to Finding Permanent Housing

Top 5 Barriers to Finding Permanent Housing (2018)	N (2018)	2018 % (Out of 125)	Top 5 Barriers to Finding Permanent Housing (2021)	N (2021)	2021 % (Out of 202)
Rents Too High	77	61.6%	Rents Too High	106	52.5%
Low Income	74	59.2%	Low Income	98	48.5%
Addiction or Substance Abuse	48	38.4%	No Income Assistance	84	41.6%
No Income Assistance	43	34.4%	Addiction	73	36.1%
Poor Housing Conditions	39	31.2%	Poor Housing Conditions	65	32.2%

Insights:

- The top 5 barriers to finding permanent housing remain unchanged from the 2018 Count compared to the 2021 Count. Financial barriers are still the most cited barrier to finding permanent housing, alongside struggles with addiction and poor housing conditions.

Table 5. Housing Loss Due to Pandemic.

Housing Loss Due to Pandemic	N	% (Out of 218)
No	164	75.2%
Yes	54	24.8%

Insight:

- Majority of survey respondents to this question reported that they did not lose their housing due to the pandemic, although about 25% (n=54) did report that their housing loss was due to the pandemic. That is almost the equivalent to every 1 in 4 survey respondents.

Table 6. Top 5 Sources of Income.

Top 5 Sources of Income	N	% (Out of 174)
Welfare/ Social Assistance	93	53.4%
Informal Sources of Income (bottle returns, etc.)	53	30.5%
Disability benefit	20	11.5%
GST/HST Refund	14	11.5%
Part-Time Employment	10	8.0%

Insights:

- The majority of respondents who reported having a source of income, indicated that they receive welfare/social assistance.
 - Among the 93 respondents who indicated receiving social assistance, 81 further reported the type of social assistance received:
 - 63% reported receiving Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS), while 37% reported receiving Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID).
- Among those with a reported answer, 17.5% (n=37) of survey respondents indicated that they receive no income whatsoever.

Additional Insights:

- Top source of income for survey respondents was **Welfare/Social Assistance**, the top Reason for most recent housing loss was **Not Enough Income for Housing**, and the biggest barrier to finding permanent housing for survey respondents was **Rents Too High**, followed by **Low Income**.

What's Next?

A full pit-count report, with more in-depth data analysis and insights along with contextual research, will be released in early 2022.

**HOUSING SUMMIT
FEBRUARY 25, 2022**

ATTENDEES

- Mayor Sandra Masters
- Councilor Cheryl
- City of Regina
- All Nations Hope Network
- Carmichael Outreach
- Data For Good
- Eagle Heart Centre
- Eden Care
- Flow Community Projects
- Four Directions
- Landlord Association
- Mobile Crisis Services
- Namerind
- North Central Family Centre
- Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan
- Ranch Erhlo
- Regina Downtown Community Support Program
- Regina Fire
- Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board
- Regina Housing Authority
- Regina Immigrant Women's Centre
- Regina Needle Recovery
- Regina Police Service
- Regina Public Library
- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership
- Silver Sage Housing
- Social Services Ministry/Saskatchewan Housing Authority
- South Sask Independent Living Centre
- Street Culture Project
- SWAP
- YWCA

DISCUSSION

What are the current challenges and/or barriers organizations are facing?

- Issues with evictions due to social assistance changes and e-filing
- Community's understanding of homelessness is varied and sometimes ill-informed - need to shift the language and utilize the housing continuum
- More immigrants are arriving, needing assistance and navigation support – don't have residence when arriving, unable to obtain employment or documents
- Lack of spaces accepting single men with children or single mothers with children over the age of 12
- Individuals do not have identification and the high difficulty for them to obtain it
- Rental rates are rising
- Lack of housing and housing policies that support multigenerational households.
- Insufficient shelter spaces and beds
- Lack of funding available - funding is distributed in a piecemeal fashion and need to look at better funding distribution models
- Navigating the system is very complex and needs to be improved
- Type of housing stock that is available - the same solution isn't the right solution for everyone
- Lack of resources, communication, proprietors, knowledge, and experience of homelessness

- Lack of low barrier spaces to access – particular in the daytime
- Wrap around support for high acuity clients - we don't have the right mix of supports and to help people transition. Permanent supportive housing is needed.
- Adjusting to the impacts of Covid on spaces and beds
- Income assistance doesn't provide an adequate quality of life
- Access to funding is difficult
- Lack of coordination to support individuals – we pass them to other organizations. There are overlapping services, silos, and a lack of information sharing.
- No cold weather or extreme weather strategy is available
- Barriers that organizations have for individuals – need to be sober, need identification, etc.
- Front line staff – keeping and retaining them for high acuity individuals
- Need for cultural training for staff
- Need for better communication between partners – knowing that people experiencing homelessness interact with many organizations
- Shortage of addictions and mental health treatment options
- People who are coming out of incarceration are not delivered appropriate supports
- Change in social assistance has created a barrier by ways of increasing debt
- Resources and capacity are limited for organizations

What are some solutions to the challenges/barriers we've identified?

- Increasing accessibility by developing a simple system that is streamlined
- Having designated emergency workers
- Centralized emergency hub for housing
- Expansion of supportive housing and other options across the spectrum
- Develop more safe spaces that are low barrier when people are transitioning and have immediate services
- Additional permanent supportive housing
- Returning direct payment to the landlord
- Make policy decisions with people who have lived experiences
- Comprehensive service review of supports and services to help reduce duplication of services
- Identifying more private sector landlords that will work with community-based organizations
- Have a mentoring program for clients - walking and journeying with the people (i.e., coach people to go pay their rent on rent day)
- Enhancing funding models to ensure organizations are properly resourced
- Preventative measures to catch people as early as possible
- Develop a framework that all organizations can work from to support individuals
- Develop communication tools between systems
- Ensuring enhanced communication at all levels of government and the committees that exist
- Using primary health care model where all of the services can be in one place
- Supports for people that come out of corrections - have identification ready or earlier
- Having supports and services provided at night
- Additional treatment options for mental health and addictions
- Training for frontline workers to deal with burnout and how the system is evolving (i.e. changes in drug use)
- Having all organizations declare what they do and how they help
- Use experiences and resources from other cities on how they address
- Raising more awareness in the community and getting the public to understand the housing continuum – utilize SPADAT

- Talk about the success stories that are happening in our community
- Harm reduction model
- Explore new partnership model with all levels of government and increase communications
- Increase intensive case management
- Permanent support housing
- Data sharing with client consent
- Having elders and knowledge keepers be part of the housing continuum
- Increase communication between all levels of government and agents
- Interagency or interdisciplinary team or group - access multiple resources in same location to triage

Objectives

Based on the barriers and challenges discussion there are three themes identified:

1. Capacity
2. Streamlining
3. Coordination

Capacity

- Grow and diversify low barrier supportive housing options
- Increase the range of housing services to meet the needs of a diverse demographic focused on mid to high acuity clients
- Increase the number of hours of training for homelessness programming - build staff capacity in skillset and knowledge
- Increase permanent supportive housing units by effectively aligning resources
- Build permanent supportive agency that takes on higher acuity
- Grow the number of supportive housing spaces year over year to take high acuity individuals

Streamline

- Decrease the duplication of services to prevent shopping around
- Establish a shared information system
- Develop a common plan between all levels of government, Indigenous communities, and community-based organizations that maximizes service delivery
- Decrease the number of steps to become housed
- Utilize a common intake assessment tool that is accepted by service providers and funders
- Streamline access to support and resources so no one has to tell their story twice
- Establish a process or a place to triage people who need rapid housing

Coordination

- Identify what top two or 3 things an organization or system is good at - focus on strengths
- To broaden the spectrum of services to match client needs
- To serve clients faster that ensures client success
- Increasing collaboration between housing and homelessness organizations
- Reduce duplication by creating a centralized hub that provides all services and supports
- Increase service coordination amongst housing providers
- Increase participation and coordinated access to services through service agency engagement (government + community-based organizations)
- Increasing partnerships and buy-in with acceptance of built for zero

- Implement coordinated access across every agency serving the homeless population
- Establish a triage approach to increase collaboration within housing and homelessness organizations
- Align the goals of the intergovernmental homelessness committee with community objectives
- Sharing access to known vacancies in the rental market

Key Results**Capacity**

- Build permanent supportive housing for mid to high acuity clients
- Create 25 permanent spots per year annually for 5 years
- Acquire 275 supportive housing spaces within 3 years
- Increase acuity up serving by 10 percent per year
- Within 18 months of implementation - 85% of clients are successfully housed for at last 12 months
- Determine scope and structure of the agency by June of 2022

Streamlining

- Establish a shared information system
- All agencies are utilizing HIFIS 4 within 3 years

Coordination

- Refining intake assessment, matching and referral service within 1 year
- Within two years develop a measurement tool or framework to measure the quality of service delivered over quantity
- Commitment from all organizations that organizations sign on in 2 years

Ending Homelessness

A Proposal for a Collaborative Provincial-Municipal Co-
Design and Implementation of a Blueprint to End
Homelessness in Ontario

December 8, 2021

A Message from the AMO President and the Chair of AMO's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Task Force

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) is a non-partisan, non-profit association representing municipal governments across the province. Municipal governments work through AMO to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges. One such challenge of increasing concern is homelessness that exists amidst a housing affordability crisis. Homelessness in Ontario is persistent, growing, and becoming more complex to address. It is taking a devastating toll on individuals and communities.

Therefore, AMO is inviting the provincial government to collaborate with municipal human service system managers to jointly co-design and implement a Blueprint of actions to end homelessness in Ontario. This is an achievable goal with time and there is a moral and economic imperative to act now. It is in the interest of all people in the province.

The goal of our proposal is to advance a conversation beyond the existing initiatives on how to comprehensively address the homelessness crisis in Ontario and support healthy and prosperous communities. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of increased cooperation among different levels of government and of governance structures that enhance intergovernmental coordination so that residents' needs are effectively addressed.

It is our hope that this proposal will be embraced by government given the shared interest in a successful outcome. I would like to thank AMO's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Task Force and the municipal service managers who provided valuable input, as well as the AMO Board of Directors, for renewing their call to end homelessness. AMO is not alone. We are joined with the chorus of voices in a growing movement. Many have advocated for years, and we hope to leverage their good work and momentum to take concrete action.

Jamie McGarvey
AMO President and Mayor of Parry Sound
Chair, AMO's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Task Force

Introduction

While much has been done by all orders of government to mitigate the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on homeless people, more is needed to address the issue once and for all and to ultimately end homelessness. There is an opportunity to seize on the inter-governmental collaboration and public attention to the issue that now exists. The proposal is designed to build on this momentum and to develop a comprehensive approach with all governments and partners engaged, including homeless people themselves.

Finding solutions to address the housing affordability and concurrent homelessness crisis is a priority for AMO's Board. The association's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Task Force is actively working to provide ongoing advice. The task force is comprised of municipal elected officials, senior staff, and sector association representatives involved in housing and homelessness prevention from across Ontario. AMO regularly seeks advice from key organizations on the front lines of housing and homelessness services. This includes the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers' Association (NOSDA), the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA), the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada - Ontario Region (CHF-ON), the Housing Services Corporation (HSC), the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), and Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS). The task force has also benefited from regular touch points with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) on housing and homelessness matters.

This proposal on homelessness builds upon AMO's housing affordability position paper: Fixing the Housing Affordability Crisis: Municipal Recommendations for Housing in Ontario (2019).

Addressing the Problem

The housing and homelessness crisis in Ontario was serious and widespread before COVID-19. The emergency brought on by the pandemic has intensified in most communities, shining a light on weaknesses in the system and highlighting the need for collective action to build back better with an inclusive economic and social recovery.

In Ontario, homelessness is experienced across the province whether urban, rural, small town, or in northern Ontario. Homelessness is visible in many instances, and less so in other cases. Some are in shelters that are filled to their capacity. Others sleep outdoors on the street, tents, cars, and abandoned buildings and farmhouses. Many are so-called couch surfing or living in other people's homes often in overcrowded conditions.

While there are not up to date figures on the extent of homelessness in Ontario in 2021, there are many people at-risk of homelessness which is an indicator of the seriousness of the issue. By 2025, there will be an estimated 159,800 'high housing need' households in Ontario that are at an elevated risk of losing their housing and experiencing homelessness (Financial Accountability Office, 2021). It is highly probable that homelessness will increase further in future years as the financial impact to households because of the pandemic is felt.

There are specific actions that can help to break the cycle of homelessness and prevent it in the first place through upstream work. There is a need to understand the root causes of homelessness, what interventions work, and what changes and contributions are needed by municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Funding for new affordable housing is critical, but there are also non-financial interventions that can be part of the solution to break the cycle of homelessness. This can include legislative, regulatory, and policy change. All necessary actions must be considered.

Ending Homelessness: How Do we Measure Success

Completely eliminating all homelessness is a bold call with an ambitious goal. However, we can strive toward the achievement of a “functional zero” standard. It is defined in the case of chronic homelessness as “a community has ended chronic homelessness when the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness is zero, or if not zero, then either 3 or .1% of the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness, whichever is greater” (Built for Zero Canada).

Further, “ending homelessness does not mean that no one will ever experience homelessness again. Rather it means that systems are in place to ensure that any experience of homelessness is brief and permanently resolved, and rare overall. As an analogy, a well-functioning health care system will not necessarily prevent people from getting sick. But it will ensure that people who fall ill are triaged appropriately and receive the services they need so their illness does not become a crisis” (Built for Zero Canada).

Ending homelessness requires both housing solutions and prevention activities. Actions can be taken to stop the inflow of new homelessness as much as possible (i.e., eliminating system-based homelessness).

The Proposal: Collaboratively Co-Developing a Blueprint to End Homelessness

There is an opportunity for AMO and municipal service managers to work together with the government on a co-design process that is collaborative and solution-focused emphasizing the potential for ‘all government’ and ‘whole of government’ integrative approaches that break down silos between orders of government, ministries, departments, and agencies. The process must leverage existing intergovernmental collaboration mechanisms using the National Housing Strategy as a platform (i.e., federal government commitment to end chronic homelessness), but producing a “made in Ontario” solution.

Indigenous People are currently overrepresented in the homeless population. The reasons are complex and specific housing interventions are necessary. Indigenous communities and Indigenous service providers must be engaged by all governments to determine what is needed to address the unique housing challenges facing Indigenous People.

The first, foundational steps to start the process for co-design and develop a blueprint to end homelessness, which ideally will be completed in 2022, are:

1. The provincial government to work with AMO and municipal service managers as equal partners to collaboratively co-design a blueprint to end homelessness, starting with chronic homelessness by 2028.
2. The provincial government and municipal service managers jointly commit to undertake an ‘all government’ and ‘whole of government’ approach to ending homelessness.
3. The provincial government appoints an executive to co-lead the development and implementation of the actions that will be identified in the Blueprint, reporting to the Premier of Ontario and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, working closely with the Chair of AMO’s Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Task Force to monitor progress.
4. The provincial government and municipal service managers jointly commit to engage and consult partners, the private sector, stakeholders, and people with lived experience and expertise to inform the development of the Blueprint.
5. The provincial government and municipal service managers jointly commit to ongoing partnership with Indigenous organizations to ensure that actions in the Blueprint address Indigenous homelessness in municipal settings through culturally relevant, safe, and appropriate ways. Further, the blueprint must include joint advocacy to the federal government for specific national action to end Indigenous homelessness.

First and foremost, the process must be driven by ethical considerations but also consider the economic and municipal and provincial fiscal impact of inaction, of which there is a cost. The Blueprint must be developed immediately with short, mid-, and long-term actions identified and committed to by municipal governments, provincial ministries, federal departments, and agencies. The proposal is about establishing a process for co-design identifying initial, foundational steps with suggestions for further work to be undertaken and added to the Blueprint in time.

It is not an immediate funding ask, though there are actions that can help build the case for future government investments and support advocacy to the federal government. This proposal also is not a replacement for ongoing funding calls or ongoing pandemic responses. The process will benefit if guided by a social determinants of health approach and be informed by participation of Public Health Units. Indigenous people in urban and rural municipal settings must have their own voice in the process. Efforts should be made to engage the non-profit, co-operative, and private sectors for their respective contribution to solutions, in addition to government, along with input of people with lived experience of homelessness.

AMO is coming to the table with some ideas to start the conversation. These are outlined in Appendix A to this report. It is not an exhaustive list by any means, and the ideas will need to be prioritized. This can be accomplished through the co-design process.

Next Steps

We have an opportunity before us all to collectively end homelessness in Ontario. AMO is proposing this course of action to focus the leadership of all governments and to steer whole of government approaches. Together we can achieve this goal by working together. AMO is ready to work with the government and looks forward to starting this process as soon as possible in 2022.

Appendix A – Potential Actions for the Blueprint to End Homelessness

Examples of potential actions pursuing an integrated systems approach that could be considered in the development of the Blueprint could include, but not be limited to:

1. Develop a joint vision statement with agreed upon definitions and outcomes identified and an accountability framework.
2. Review recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel of the Homelessness in the report, A Place to Call Home (Ontario 2017), and further research on what other sector actors have called for to add to the list of actions as appropriate.
3. Province-wide roll-up and analysis of municipal Housing and Homelessness Plans, Enumerations, and By-Name Lists to set priorities, targets, measure, and track progress.
4. Development of a province-wide coordinated data, research, and evaluation strategy to inform evidence-based decisions that are aligned with other data collection and reporting, including consistent methodology and knowledge translation that includes the perspectives of people with lived experience.
5. Collection and dissemination of leading practices for homelessness prevention from Ontario and other jurisdictions.
6. Risk avoidance/return on investment (ROI) study to quantify savings to other provincial and municipal service systems from housing and homelessness prevention programs to build the case for future investments by provincial, municipal, and federal governments (e.g., health care, justice, social assistance).
7. Collect consolidated information on the demand for supportive housing to quantify the actual need.
8. Assess and quantify the actual need for deeply affordable community housing units that should be available to the homeless and people at-risk of homelessness.
9. Build on the synergies of housing co-development opportunities with the long-term care sector (e.g., campuses of care, adapting LTC homes slated for redevelopment for supportive housing rather than demolition).
10. Develop strategies to ensure discharges from provincial institutions are into housing, not homelessness (e.g., prisons, hospitals, treatment facilities).
11. Develop strategies for supports to ensure that exits for youth from the child welfare system lead into housing stability, not homelessness.
12. Develop Ontario priorities for advocacy to the federal government on their contribution to end chronic homelessness (e.g., enhance and expanding Reaching Home funding to more communities, especially rural and northern ones, and providing capital funding).

13. Reconvene the National Housing Strategy Tri-lateral Coordinating Table and prioritize inter-governmental collaboration on ending homelessness through prevention and growing community housing supply by partnering with the non-profit, cooperative, and private development sectors.
14. Develop a proposal for multi-governmental arrangements with the federal government taking a localized, place-based approach to ending homelessness.
15. Advocate for the accelerated development and implementation of a national Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy by the federal government, with funding attached.
16. Develop a provincial strategy aligned with the national strategy for specific housing and homelessness prevention initiatives for Indigenous people in consultation with Indigenous communities and service providers.
17. Examine the root causes of migration from First Nations communities to regional hub centres for services (e.g., health, justice) that result in temporary, episodic homelessness and determine what interventions and supports are needed to prevent this occurrence.
18. Ensure alignment of provincial transformation initiatives with the goal of helping people to afford their housing and maintain successful tenancies (e.g., Social Assistance, Employment Services, Ontario Health Teams).
19. Identify the respective contributions of all relevant provincial ministries and agencies to ending homelessness including service delivery integration, legislative, policy, and funding decision changes (e.g., Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, Solicitor General, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Long-Term Care).
20. Commit the necessary support to resource the development and implementation of the actions outlined in the Blueprint (i.e., new and maintained funding, in-kind contributions, land donations).
21. Work with the private development sector and landlords to determine and encourage their respective contribution to help end homelessness with appropriate housing solutions both in existing stock and increased purpose-built rental housing.
22. Develop a plan to engage people with lived experience and expertise of housing need and homelessness in ongoing policy development and evaluation of the progress of the initiative to end homelessness.
23. Report out publicly on progress toward the goal of ending homelessness on an annual basis.