**Ottawa Community Action Response to United Way Ottawa Investment and Impact Review Panel Report, May 2012**

Thank you to United Way Ottawa, and, in particular, thank you to Chair Jamie McCracken and all members of the Panel for the considerable time and effort you put into this Report. The United Way Ottawa (UWO) Investment and Impact Review Panel (IIRP) Report speaks to a number of concerns raised by Ottawa Community Action (OCA) at the UWO 2011 AGM. Other issues remain unaddressed.

The Report notes the need for in-depth consultation with community service providers in the identification of social service needs and collaboration with other funders to address capacity building in the community service sector. It speaks to the need for greater transparency and accountability around the Call For Proposals process, the Community Wide Initiatives and other UWO revenue streams and funding programs. What the Report does not clearly discuss, however, is the role that both community organizations and UWO will have with respect to the identification and implementation of future Community Wide Initiatives.

Discussion of the IIRP Report must take place in the context of the larger, fundamental issues surrounding the Canadian United Way movement in general. The movement of United Ways from a confederated funder role to that of *community builder*  and *impact player* , has resulted in new dynamics that have diminished the capacity and voice of the community service sector as follows:

* Competition between United Ways and community service agencies for government and private funds as United Ways initiate their own impact programs such as UWO’s Community Wide Initiatives;
* A greater imbalance of power between large, well-resourced United Way corporations who control donor dollars and smaller community agencies;
* Less opportunity for a plurality of voices in the discussion and identification of community needs and the “root causes” of those needs (for example, discussion of social justice, economic inequality, existing government policy)

Our initial questions about the Report relate to implementation of the recommendations:

* Which Report recommendations has the UWO Board approved and which (if any) have they not approved?
* What are the timelines for implementation? How will implementation be monitored and evaluated? What are the mechanisms for reporting back to the community?

Our goal is to continue discussion about the role of Community Wide Initiatives and how they can play a more effective role in building community capacity.