**Backgrounder - Ottawa’s Stitching Our Social Safety Net project**

This fall there will be a municipal election. So often, poverty issues are missed, ignored or minimized by our elected officials. This year, we want to give candidates an opportunity to listen to our concerns and let us know their thoughts and ideas on poverty issues such as housing, transit, food security, employment and mental health, and bring together the voices of the unheard, unknown or dismissed.

In order to do this, we have spearheaded an exciting community project that has engaged residents and community groups. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), along with the Poverty Elimination Mental Health Advocates (PEMHA) group has been working all summer long to create quilt pieces. We are adding to the quilt that Houselink/The Dream Team in Toronto used in the lead up to the last provincial election to make a statement on the eroding safety net. Their quilt is comprised of 14 sections that measure 15 feet by 3 feet.

Over the summer, we held Art n’ Action sections and completed some squares at a client picnic. Community groups contributed squares and some even completed entire sections. The unveiling of the entire quilt will happen at 12:00 p.m. on September 29th, 2014. We will attempt to surround City Hall with all of these voices. Mayor Jim Watson, Councillor Diane Holmes, and several incumbent Councillors and candidates will be there.

*The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Poverty Elimination Mental Health Advocates (PEMHA) group*

For more information please visit the following links:

**Stitching Our Social Safety Net project in Toronto**: <http://thedreamteam.ca/stitching/>

**Photos of individual quilt squares:**

<http://stitchingoursocialsafetynet.webs.com/apps/photos/album?albumid=14665732>

**Photos of Toronto’s the four-city-block giant quilt that the Ottawa squares are being added to:**

<http://stitchingoursocialsafetynet.webs.com/apps/photos/album?albumid=15563029> **and below**

**City for all Women (Ottawa) brochure for Municipal Election**: <http://www.cawi-ivtf.org/creating-city-all>
**Coalition of Community Health and Resources Centres of Ottawa Poverty Reduction Strategy:**

[*http://www.coalitionottawa.ca/en/advocacy/poverty-reduction.aspx*](http://www.coalitionottawa.ca/en/advocacy/poverty-reduction.aspx)







