



Alliance
to End Homelessness
Ottawa

2015 PROGRESS REPORT

ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN OTTAWA



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INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on 2015, one sees momentum. Senior levels of government are strengthening their engagement on housing and homelessness. Community-level innovations are directing attention to housing in new ways. We are reminded that housing is a solution rather than a challenge – a determinant of social, economic and environmental objectives.

In this evolving context then, with new opportunities, it is important to hold before us a picture of homelessness in Ottawa, to focus our attention on the needs before us, and to most effectively direct much needed investments and interventions. In this light, we are pleased to present the 2015 Progress Report on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa (reflecting data from January to December, 2015).



Apple blossoms grow in front of Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation's 160 Argyle property. (Credit: Jeff Menzies)



Assisted by the Salvation Army, and with furniture from The Furniture Bank (Kanata), a smile upon moving into one's own home in summer 2015. (Credit: The Salvation Army)

PROGRESS MADE

On average, the length of stay in shelter is shorter

In terms of achieving our goals, we do see progress. **For the first time since 2006, the average length of stay (among all clients) in Ottawa's emergency shelters was reduced** by 6.4% (from an average of 78 days in 2014 to 73 days in 2015). With the adoption of Ottawa's housing and homelessness plan in 2013, and a commitment to ending chronic homelessness within ten years, implementation of a number of targeted initiatives began in 2015 to transition individuals with long histories in emergency shelters into permanent housing. While many may have still been homeless for the first half of the year, the opening of new supportive housing in the Fall, and the application of available housing and supports to this population, appears to be reducing the overall length of stay. Targeted interventions are showing success.

Related to this, we see a citywide 3.4% overall reduction in the use of shelter beds among singles (the total number of nights each available shelter bed is used) – driven in particular by fewer single adults, staying for fewer days on average.



Images above & to right:
A team of volunteers and young people install different parts of a play structure with the support of KaBOOM! May 2015. (Credit: Ottawa Community Housing)



CHALLENGES AHEAD

More individuals are using shelters

While the length of stays are being reduced, we also see a 4.9% increase in the overall number of homeless individuals accessing emergency shelter beds. In other words, individuals are there for fewer days, but there are more of them. In 2015, 317 more individuals (a total of 6825, compared to 6508 in 2014) accessed an emergency shelter at some point in the year.

More families are homeless

This increase is nearly completely attributable to a 10.8% increase in the number of families accessing shelter (782 families in 2015, compared to 706 in 2014). Within these families, 1479 individuals were children 17 and under – representing over 1 in 5 shelter clients in Ottawa (1479, out of 6825 overall). While family homelessness may receive less attention, shelter data reminds us of its extent. In fact, 38.6% of all shelter clients in 2015 were members of a homeless family – representing a larger and even more hidden problem of family homelessness, housing instability and poverty.

An aging demographic

While the total number of adult single individuals within Ottawa’s shelters declined, we see an increase in the number of older adults (aged 50+), **reflecting an aging demographic** within Ottawa’s homeless population. In fact, we see a 5.1% increase in the number of older adult men (994 in 2015, compared to 946 in 2014), and a 5.8% increase in the number of older adult women (273 in 2015, compared to 258 in 2014).

The lowest number of new affordable units since 2005

When people become homeless, they need to be returned quickly to housing – and linked to the important services that contribute to stability. In Ottawa, there is a gap in housing that is affordable and available to low-income people, including those currently experiencing homelessness. **Very limited progress was made in 2015, with only 34 new affordable housing units opened (the least since 2005), and 12 other subsidies made available** through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Moving ahead, recognizing that several housing projects are under construction, and new rent subsidies are expected in 2016, we must ensure that the 2015 data stands as an exception.

LOOKING AHEAD

As a community, we can end homelessness. Just as targeted resources and investments can end chronic homelessness, we need to ensure that appropriate interventions and investments support all groups experiencing homelessness. Investments in one area cannot result in reduced support elsewhere. How might we ensure appropriate support to our Indigenous communities, to families, to youth, to veterans, to victims of violence, to arriving refugees and immigrants, to others? Among those at-risk, how might we ensure sufficient attention to services oriented to preventing the loss of housing?



Redevelopment at a Lees Avenue housing complex following a devastating fire in 2013. (Credit: Ottawa Community Housing)



In September, 2015, John Howard Society of Ottawa opened Gardner Street Supportive Housing – a 34 unit apartment building offering intensive medical and social supports to previously chronically homeless men. (Credit: John Howard Society of Ottawa)

Progress depends on us all. Neither the City of Ottawa, nor any single person, organization or sector can end homelessness alone. However, together we can build on promising steps.

- As 2015 ended, we saw increased attention by the Government of Canada to affordable, rental housing – with a long-sought commitment to a national housing strategy. Within the mandates of numerous federal departments and agencies, there is a recognition that housing is a determinant of positive results. Now is the time for action.
- Upon the completion of work by the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness, the Province of Ontario not only confirmed its goal to eliminate chronic homelessness, but also articulated its intention to focus on three other groups among those who are homeless, including youth, Aboriginals and individuals exiting provincially-funded institutions and service systems.

With a solutions-driven, community-wide approach, the Alliance and its members continue to share their insight and experience in moving forward. We are convening partners in the development of a plan to prevent and end youth homelessness – known as A Way Home Ottawa. We are supporting the innovative approaches for new affordable housing being tested through Broadening the Base. We are committed to dialogue with new partners, and to research-based advocacy and solutions to ending homelessness. Together, we will work towards our vision of an inclusive community where everyone has an affordable, appropriate home.

BY THE NUMBERS

To ensure progress towards our community's goal of ending homelessness, the Alliance to End Homelessness measures annual change in several areas, including use of emergency shelters, housing affordability and the number of new affordable housing options created each year. It is important to note that emergency shelter data only represents the experience of individuals who access emergency shelters. Additionally, a small number of individuals are unsheltered, while others may be among the 'hidden homeless,' staying with friends or family. All are without a home of their own.

NUMBER OF PERSONS USING OVERNIGHT MEN'S, WOMEN'S, YOUTH AND FAMILY EMERGENCY SHELTERS AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR

Goal: To reduce the number by 500 each year

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2014	2015	Change
Total	6508	6825	+317 (4.9%)
Single Men	3046	2972	-74 (-2.4%)
Single Women	913	915	+2 (0%)
Single Youth (in youth shelters)	379	387	+8 (2.1%)
Families	706	782	+76 (10.8%)
Dependents (17 and under)	1322	1479	+157 (11.9%)
Individuals within Families	2278	2635	+357 (15.7%)
Total Bed Nights	504,546	500,191	-4,355 (-0.9%)

AVERAGE LENGTH OF SHELTER STAY (NIGHTS)

Goal: To reduce the average length of stay by 3 nights per year

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2014	2015	Change
Average (all clients)	78	73	-5
Single Men	65	64	-1
Single Women	60	59	-1
Single Youth (in youth shelters)	39	32	-7
Families	105	92	-13

NUMBER OF SINGLE YOUTH, AGED 16-25, USING ANY EMERGENCY SHELTER AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR

// with Average Length of Shelter Stay (nights) = Avg LOS

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2014	2015	Change
Total	924	903	-21 (-2.3%)
Male Youth	577 // Avg LOS: 37	552 // Avg LOS: 41	-25 (-4.3%)
Female Youth	347 // Avg LOS: 43	351 // Avg LOS: 37	+4 (1.2%)

NUMBER OF OLDER ADULTS, AGED 50+, USING AN EMERGENCY SHELTER AT ANY POINT DURING THE YEAR

// with Average Length of Shelter Stay (nights) = Avg LOS

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2014	2015	Change
Total	1204	1267	+63 (5.2%)
Males	946 // Avg LOS: 90	994 // Avg LOS: 88	+48 (5.1%)
Females	258 // Avg LOS: 91	273 // Avg LOS: 79	+15 (5.8%)

NUMBER OF CHRONICALLY AND/OR EPISODICALLY HOMELESS CLIENTS IN A GIVEN YEAR

(with Average Length of Shelter Stay (nights) = Avg LOS)

Goal: By 2024, there will be no chronic homelessness in Ottawa.

Source: Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, City of Ottawa

	2014	2015	Change
Single Men	358	362	+4 (1.1%)
Chronically Homeless	Avg LOS: 280	Avg LOS: 276	
Single Men	73	62	-11 (-15.1%)
Episodically Homeless	Avg LOS: 63	Avg LOS: 56	
Single Women	82	86	+4 (4.9%)
Chronically Homeless	Avg LOS: 270	Avg LOS: 276	
Single Women	13	18	+5 (38.5%)
Episodically Homeless	Avg LOS: 66	Avg LOS: 66	
Family Units	97	78	-19 (-19.6%)
Chronically Homeless	Avg LOS: 255	Avg LOS: 252	
Family Units	0	0	0
Episodically Homeless			

No single youth staying within the youth designated shelters were chronically or episodically homeless as reported within the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System

Chronically homeless refers to individuals who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the calendar year (i.e., have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter).

Episodically homeless refers to individuals who have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the calendar year (of note, episodes are defined as periods when a person would be in a shelter, and after at least 30 days, would be back in the shelter).

Some clients may be both chronic and episodic. As a result, they would be included in both categories.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

Goal: To create new affordable housing options, using a combination of newly built housing units and newly administered housing subsidies

Source: City of Ottawa

	2014	2015
New Affordable Units	136	34
Newly administered Rent Supplements	0	0
Newly administered Housing Allowances	5	0
Other subsidies (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care)	0	12
Total	141	46

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Goal: To make housing more affordable by improving peoples' incomes

Sources: Statistics Canada, CMHC, Province of Ontario

	2014	2015	Change
Average Market Rent (bachelor apartment)	\$780	\$801	+ \$21
Ontario Works (OW) per single individual / per month	\$656	\$681	+ \$25*
% required for average rent	118.9%	117.6%	- 1.3%
Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) per single individual / per month	\$1,098	\$1,110	+ \$12*
% required for average rent	71.0%	72.3%	+ 1.3%
Minimum wage	\$11.00 / hr	\$11.25 / hr	+ \$0.25
% required for average rent	41%	41%	-

* Within changes to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program from 2014 to 2015, Maximum Shelter Amounts were unchanged; the increase reflects an increase within the Basic Needs component.

While few new units of affordable housing were created in 2015, various indicators demonstrate the breadth of affordability challenges experienced by tens of thousands of Ottawa households.

According to the Canadian Rental Housing Index, released in September 2015, and drawing on Statistics Canada census data, 39 per cent of all renter households in Ottawa (representing over 44,000 households) are spending in excess of 30 per cent of their gross income on rent and utilities. In fact, 19 per cent of all renter households (nearly 22,000 households) are spending in excess of 50 per cent – leaving inadequate resources to meet other basic needs.

Another indicator of the affordable housing challenge in Ottawa is the number of people who have applied and are waiting for subsidized housing – through the Centralized Waiting List. In subsidized homes, rent is made affordable, based upon household income. As of December 2015, 10,099 households had their names registered on the waiting list, a slight decline from 2014. Positively, throughout 2015, a total of 1,789 households were housed after placing their names on the list – an increase from 1,555 in 2014. Even so, these numbers suggest average wait times of nearly five years.

Active Households on the Central Waiting List for Affordable Housing: December 31, 2015

Household Type	2014	2015
Seniors (60+)	2,139	2,137
Families	3,676	3,552
Single Adults	3,701	3,776
2+ Adults	708	634
Total number of active households	10,224	10,099

Active Households on the Central Waiting List, Primary Applicant Age 16–24

Household Type	2014	2015
Families	228	217
Single Adults	403	435
2+ Adults	34	27

Download the full Progress Report in English or French: www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca

ALLIANCE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Action-Logement / Action-Housing
Bruce House
Canadian Mental Health Association – Ottawa
Carlington Community Health Centre
Catholic Immigration Centre
Centre 454
Centre 507 Drop-In
Centre des services communautaires / Vanier Community Service Centre
Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, University of Ottawa
Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation
Centretown Community Health Centre
City of Ottawa, Housing Services Branch
Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre
Cooperative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario
Cornerstone Housing for Women/Le Pilier
Daybreak Non-Profit Shelter
Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa
Gloucester Housing Corporation
Housing Help
Jericho Road Christian Ministries
John Howard Society of Ottawa
Lowertown Community Resource Centre
Minwaashin Lodge / Oshki Kizis Healing Lodge
Montfort Renaissance
Multifaith Housing Initiative
Nepean Housing Corporation

Nepean, Rideau, Osgoode Community Resource Centre
Operation Come Home
Options Bytown Non-Profit Housing Corporation
Ottawa Community Housing Corporation
Ottawa Inner City Health Inc.
Ottawa Inner City Ministries
Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre
Ottawa Salus Corporation
Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre
Royal Ottawa Health Care Group
Sandy Hill Community Health Centre
Shepherds of Good Hope
Somerset West Community Health Centre
South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre
St. Joe's Women's Centre
St. Luke's Lunch Club
The Ottawa Mission
The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre
The Well / La Source
Tungasuvvingat Inuit
Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health
Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre
Wigwamen Incorporated
YMCA-YWCA, National Capital Region
Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa



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#WeCanEndIt

Cover: (top) The Ottawa Mission's Housing Case Manager Ali Beshir helps his client Joe move into his new apartment (Credit: The Ottawa Mission)
(bottom) Plants grow on the rooftop of Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation's Percy School property (Credit: CCOC)