



September 12, 2017

Re: Statement of Support for The Salvation Army's Public Consultation and Open House

How we choose as a community in Ottawa to engage and take action to alleviate poverty and homelessness in our city today, will determine our success in the years to come.

In the absence of affordable and supportive housing options, shelters have necessarily evolved to offer a range of innovative, cost-effective programs and services that provide care and support to individuals experiencing homelessness.

In the past year, over 7,170 individuals have accessed a shelter in Ottawa. Incredibly, shelter stays among women over 60 increased by over 30% in 2016, which also saw an 8% rise in the average number of nights youth slept in shelters. Families now account for over half of all bed nights used in Ottawa's shelters, a 12.5% increase over 2015.

These trends are troubling, as they should be. There is a need in our city to support and house our low-income families, newcomers, men, women fleeing violence, youth, Indigenous people and individuals with addictions and mental health needs. People from all walks of life find themselves homeless for a variety of reasons. Homelessness is complex, and significantly reducing and ending homelessness in our city will necessarily require a variety of approaches and solutions.

Shelters are one of the service providers that continue to have an essential role to play in supporting the most vulnerable residents in our communities. It is with this role in mind that we offer our support to The Salvation Army for their leadership and proactive work in alleviating homelessness, and in providing needed community programs and services.

Organizations such as The Salvation Army offer so much more than beds and meals. They are a part of a broader solution; they are often the first point of contact for those who have lost their housing or are precariously housed. They offer a number of services that provide the transitional supports, whether housing, employment or addiction treatment, necessary for individuals to recover and map out their next steps in life.

The Salvation Army is an integral member of Ottawa's network of shelters, and provides essential services to a broad range of community members. This includes family supports, a food bank and meal line, along with housing referral, skills training, health care, counselling and emergency disaster relief.

This range of services is made possible by leveraging multiple partnerships, with local shelters, health experts, housing providers and community resource centres, among others. These services take the burden off our emergency rooms, police, and justice systems; the costs of which are offset through the collaborative work of our city's local agencies, with a focus on housing and homelessness prevention.



True to its mission, The Salvation Army continues to work with residents and invest in the community. They will be hosting a *Public Consultation and Open House* on September 13th between 1pm and 8pm to share information on the programs and supportive services they provide to residents in the community. The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa will be in attendance, alongside other community partners, to engage in a constructive and informed dialogue with Ottawa residents, business owners and community leaders.

If we are serious about meeting our commitment to bringing an end to homelessness we cannot simply manage the problem. We must take a community-wide approach to revise local priorities based on community service gaps and needs. We need to constructively review the goals and achievements made to-date by the City in their 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. We need to reassess key priorities moving forward that align with affordable housing and homelessness funding as well as policy commitments made at the provincial and federal levels.

Alliance members share a common goal to ensure shelter stays are short, and transition people from homelessness to safe and affordable housing. Political leadership in Ottawa is essential to reach this goal. Leadership is needed, encompassing a citywide vision that prioritizes policy and funding at the municipal level towards a significant decrease in shelter use in Ottawa.

This is our opportunity to work together, alongside local partners actively advancing the long-term goal of improving our community. Let's take pride in our ability to drive positive change, by sharing the responsibility to help those who need us most.

Kristen Holinsky

Executive Director

Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa

The Alliance to End Homelessness is a member driven coalition of community service providers that work in partnership to inspire action, to generate knowledge and to inform a community-wide effort to achieve an end to homelessness in Ottawa. To learn more about the Salvation Army's Public Consultation and Open House taking place September 13th, please visit www.333montrealroad.ca.