

4. ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS AND END HOMELESSNESS
IN OTTAWA-CARLETON

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AS AMENDED

1. That Council approve the Community Action Plan for further development and implementation, as amended by the following:

(a) Amend Recommendation 8 of the Action Plan to read:

“That the Region prepare a report to establish a “housing first” property policy for surplus property by the end of September, 1999;

FURTHER THAT Regional Housing, Social Services and Property Services staff be directed to prepare an inventory of regionally-owned property that is surplus to RMOC needs and that could be used for affordable rental housing;

FURTHER THAT this inventory include criteria under which the Region would sell such parcels for one dollar to non-profit housing providers”.

(b) Amend Recommendation 10 of the Action Plan to read:

“That the Region request that the Province of Ontario raise the amount of the shelter allowance under the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Plan to reflect actual market housing costs”.

2. That the Region recognize and address the special needs of people with physical disabilities and Acquired Brain Injury as it implements the Action Plan on Homelessness.

3. That the Region work with the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, the housing sector and private landlords to develop a “Code of Fair and Equitable Tenant Selection” to deal with barriers to accessing rental accommodation faced by low-income families.

4. That Council allocate \$1 million from the 1998 Social Housing budget surplus towards the implementation of the Community Action Plan

recommendations, and that specific expenditures be subject to Committee and Council approval.

DOCUMENTATION:

1. Commissioner, Social Services Department, Medical Officer of Health and Special Advisor, Social Housing report dated 1 June 99 is immediately attached.
2. Extract of Draft Minute, Community Services Committee of 17 June 99 follows the report, and includes a record of all votes.

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
 Your File/V/Réf.

DATE	1 June 1999
TO/DEST.	Co-ordinator Community Services Committee
FROM/EXP.	Commissioner Social Service Department Medical Officer of Health Special Advisor on Social Housing
SUBJECT/OBJET	ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS AND END HOMELESSNESS IN OTTAWA-CARLETON

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That the Community Services Committee recommend Council approve the Community Action Plan for further development and implementation.**
- 2. That the Community Services Committee recommend Council allocate \$1 million from the 1998 Social Housing budget surplus towards the implementation of the Community Action Plan recommendations, and that specific expenditures be subject to Committee and Council approval.**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the recommendations of a Community Action Plan to reduce and end homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton. This report follows the November 14, 1998 Council motion requesting that the Federal Government declare homelessness a national disaster. It also follows the release of the Environmental Scan as the second phase of a Community Consultation process. The Community Action Plan will form the foundation for taking action to end homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton.

On April 15, 1999 Community Services Committee received the Environmental Scan and approved the recommendation that the Region assume the role of a local service system manager for homelessness. An important part of that role was the production of the attached Community Action Plan to end homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton.

Although Ottawa-Carleton, at the level of both the community and municipal government has taken steps to deal with homelessness in the past, the problem persists. Patterns in systemic level factors have contributed to the growing problem. Since October 1995, the 21.6% cuts to social assistance benefits have resulted in less income for individuals and families, consequently affecting their ability to compete in the rental housing market. Even for persons who do not receive social assistance, there is a marked increase in poverty in Ottawa-Carleton. At particular risk are single-parent families and children. As noted in the Environmental Scan, almost 50,000 renters in the Region spend more than 30% of their income on shelter.

The introduction of the Tenant Protection Act in June 1998 amended rent control measures and removed the right to appeal applications for eviction in the Ontario Court. From 1996-1998 there was a 16% increase in the number of formal evictions in Ottawa-Carleton. Furthermore, 20% of families using the Region's Family Shelters report eviction as their reason for need. The average length of stay in family shelters is 50 days in 1998. This reflects a family's inability to compete for the scarce amount of affordable private market housing.

The allocation of resources to reduce homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton needs to be balanced between intervention and prevention strategies. This balance is necessary in order to achieve both the goals of assisting persons on the street and in shelters to find permanent accommodation and support people in maintaining their housing.

If all available resources are used for emergency-based solutions (such as emergency shelters) then a temporary solution can be reached for a smaller percentage of the overall population in need. For example, in 1998, this would have assisted some of the 5,000 individuals who used emergency shelters, of which 872 were children.

A comparative estimate of the number of persons currently at risk of becoming homeless is reflected in 15,000 outstanding applications for social housing and over 20,000 persons using housing help services in 1998. It is unknown when those currently "at risk" will become homeless, adding to the population currently using emergency services. What is known is that the factors that place individuals at risk of becoming homeless will not be removed by inaction or the passage of time.

Prevention strategies are required immediately to stop the increase of the number of persons who are homeless. The scope of homelessness is not just the number of persons on the streets or in the shelter, but the growing population precariously perched at the edge of homelessness. Therefore there is an urgency to direct resources towards implementing the recommendations of the Community Action Plan.

The recommendations are presented in five categories: regional ownership; provincial and federal ownership; housing supply and support; enable access to housing; and provision of support services. For each of the 21 recommendations, the rationale, actions and timeframes and outcomes are detailed. In addition, supporting research or initiatives for each recommendation are presented. The recommendations presented vary according to the immediacy of the action to be taken and the steps involved in implementation; however, taken together, they form the basis of initial actions to address and end homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This Community Action Plan represents a process of Community Consultation during which a broad range of stakeholders came together to develop recommendations to end and prevent homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton.

The community consultation process was fundamental in building the Community Action Plan. The methodology for the Community Consultation process included: Key Informant Interviews, a Community Forum, an Inventory of Services and the development of recommendations. Stakeholder groups involved in the community consultation process involved representatives from: front-line staff, program managers, community agency directors, federal, provincial and municipal elected officials, federal, provincial and municipal representatives, private housing developers, persons from the business sector and persons previously homeless.

Key Informant Interviews were conducted with 40 stakeholders who helped identify solutions and strategies to end homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton. On April 8th 1999, a Community Forum was attended by 100+ community participants who identified strategies needed to implement solutions to end homelessness. These solutions were used by five community-based work groups who developed the recommendations that formed the foundation of the community action plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No new funding is being requested at this time to fund the Community Action Plan. Rather, funding may be available from three different sources: \$733,000 comes from the Provincial Government's allocation of the Homelessness Initiative Fund; approximately \$1 M from the budget surplus from social housing, and future reinvestment of up to 15% of per diem funding from emergency hostel funding.

The Homelessness Initiative Fund should be allocated in Fall 1999 to fund local initiatives to end homelessness. This fund is now annualized in the Social Services Department base budget.

There is a budget surplus from 1998 Social Housing expenditures. It is recommended that \$1 M of surplus money be allocated for implementation of recommendations in the Community Action Plan. Due to the source of those funds, it will be necessary to focus on one-time initiatives.

As investments in the community, from the above funding sources, result in decreases in the need for emergency shelters, a further \$500,000 to \$800,000 could be reinvested in the Community Action Plan implementation in future years through a reallocation process.

CONCLUSIONS

This Report represents the second stage of a community consultation process designed to have a broad range of community stakeholders involved in developing recommendations to end homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton. From the release of the Environmental Scan in the first stage of the process, it has been noted that homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton is a problem that is large in both its scope and magnitude. In addressing this problem, a commitment by all levels of government, service providers, funders, the private sector, and citizens of Ottawa-Carleton needs to be made to work together. The production of this Community Action Plan represents a collaborative process of working together and outlines further actions required for continued partnerships to end homelessness.

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*

*Approved by
Dr Robert Cushman*

*Approved by
Joyce Potter*

FINANCE DEPARTMENT COMMENT

The 1998 Report of Operations will be tabled with Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee on 6 July 99. This report recommends a \$1.5 million contribution to a new Social Housing Reserve Fund. These funds represent the unspent funds in the 1998 Social Housing Program. The report before the Community Services Committee recommends that \$1 million from the Social Housing Reserve Fund be allocated for the implementation of the Community Action Plan recommendations.

*Approved by T. Fedec
on behalf of the Finance Commissioner*

ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS AND END HOMELESSNESS
IN OTTAWA-CARLETON

- Social Services Commissioner's report dated 1 Jun 99
- Report, "Creating Community Solutions", dated June 1999, issued separately

Mr. Luc Legault, Director, Area Operations Central presented the report. It makes a number of recommendations in five key areas: (1) regional ownership and responsibilities; (2) provincial and federal ownership and responsibilities; (3) housing supply and support; (4) enabling access to housing; (5) provision of support services. Some of the specific measures under each area would include:

- (1) providing leadership to address homelessness; coordinating the diverse community services and stakeholders working to end homelessness and implement the recommendations of the Community Action Plan;
- (2) overall accountability for homelessness and for the development of affordable housing: contribute land to build housing;
- (3) renewed federal and provincial housing for additional social and supportive housing; create a task force of public/private partnerships to encourage the development of affordable housing; support increased use of social housing units for homeless persons; assess the use of publicly-owned land and regulatory measures to promote the development of affordable housing;
- (4) request the Province raise the amount of shelter allowance under the Ontario Works Act to reflect actual housing costs; promote the wider use of Direct Payments and Trustee Agreements;
- (5) re-allocated up to 15% of emergency hostel funding for innovative approaches to service delivery; petition the Province to restore cost-sharing for Day Programs to 1995 levels; facilitate the development of an inter-agency/hospital network and a partnership between the Community Care Access Centre and community agencies.

Mr. Legault said an Implementation Team will plan and oversee implementation of the various recommendations on a project basis. This will involve all stakeholders and the Committee will be kept informed through progress reports. He concluded his presentation by quoting Ann Golden, the author of the Mayor of Toronto's Task Force on Homelessness, who said: "Homelessness is fixable if we all work at it".

Councillor W. Byrne pointed out that Ottawa-Carleton Housing (OCH) has applied to the Trillium Foundation for funding, and she asked whether there can be any interaction in this

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regard. Mr. Legault agreed this would be a good initiative if it was determined to be a key priority. Councillor L. Davis asked for a comment about OCH taking over some of the seniors' buildings to help with homelessness. L. Legault indicated the Community Action Plan supports this approach. Responding to a further question from Councillor Davis about seniors' buildings remaining as they are versus being converted to mixed use, the Special Advisor on Social Housing, Joyce Potter, said the intent would be for residential support workers to deliver service in a mixed use building to stabilize the environment in that building. If they were successful, there may be opportunities to provide additional units in the buildings for homeless persons. Ms. Potter indicated there are a number of vacancies in seniors' buildings while at the same time 15,000 people are on a waiting list for housing

Councillor D. Holmes asked whether the report about the Region assessing the use of publicly-owned land for a "housing first" policy might be ready by the end of August. Joyce Potter replied this would be available at the end of September and will include a list of addresses.

Trudy Sutton, Co-Chair, Alliance to End Homelessness

Ms. Sutton commended regional staff for their work on the Community Action Plan, and she expressed her willingness to continue to work with the Region towards the implementations of the recommendations.

Joanne Lowe, Executive Director, Ottawa-Carleton Branch,
Canadian Mental Health Association

Ms. Lowe said CMHA are committed to seeing a community-wide strategy developed to end homeless and this is an overriding concern. She stressed the importance of Council working with community agencies, groups and individuals to prevent and end homelessness and to be seen as a leader in the Province.

Rosine Kealy, Action Logement

Ms. Kealy began by saying the homelessness crisis was expected and provoked by significant reductions in social assistance rates, in minimum salaries and through significant cost increases to education. The agency she represents lost 30% in provincial funding while at the same time seeing an increase in the number of homeless persons requiring its services. She called for increases to social assistance rates and to the minimum wage, and for the an increase in supportive housing units. Ms. Kealy voiced her support for the collaborative efforts culminating in the Community Action Plan and she thanked all those involved in preparing this document.

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John Marracle, Outreach Worker Pinganodin Lodge

Mr. Marracle made reference to a recommendation calling for enhanced working relationships with the aboriginal community. He posited there is also a need for a strengthening of relationships between inter-faith communities and Aboriginal Elders in Ottawa-Carleton. Mr. Marracle spoke of these as opportunities with immense spiritual and partnership potential. He called for expanded outreach worker programs, aboriginal shelters, a clinical detoxification centre and closer liaison between the communities, in an effort to “care for each other selflessly”.

Councillor Davis asked if the speaker could comment on the tremendous gains made with respect to aboriginal homes through the Association of Friendship Centres in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mr. Marracle said he was in the process of making contacts outside Ottawa to gain ideas for program development. He indicated, in response to a further question from the Councillor, that the Social Services Department was his sole source of funding.

Kimberly MacKenzie, Co-Chair, Street Health Coalition

Ms. MacKenzie said the Coalition is committed to improving the health of homeless people and assisting them in accessing and benefiting from health care services; recommendations 17, 18 and 19 speak directly to these issues. The homeless in the community have excellent access to primary care services for mental and physical health in comparison to other regions, but they have greater difficulty accessing more specialized services despite the fact they are among the sickest in the community. Shelters have become repositories for the sick and often there are no services for those who are very ill. The Coalition applauds the Region for recognizing that emergency and day programs cannot and should not be asked to provide care which only a few years ago was provided in hospital or palliative care settings.

Sue Garvey, Executive Director, Cornerstone (Anglican Social Services)

Ms. Garvey began by saying there is a dangerous lack of affordable and supportive housing, and support services for vulnerable persons in Ottawa-Carleton. The community believes solutions are possible if the political will exists at all levels. She made reference to Recommendation 4, which calls for renewed federal and provincial funding for supportive housing units, noting that some of the funding for this purpose has been transferred to the provincial Ministry of Housing. Ms. Garvey said the preference would be that 100% of those costs would be assumed by the Province but it is unlikely this will happen. Supportive housing is also a successful model for building communities of people living together and supporting one another on a day-to-day basis. It keeps people out of

hospitals, off the street and in increasing good health and independence. Many people who were in supportive housing a few years ago now live Ms. Garvey said Recommendations 17 and 18 are crucial as an increasing number of persons are living with multiple physical and mental health issues, addictions, dementia and/or Alzheimer's syndrome. There is a desperate need for greater convalescent care, palliative/long term care and addiction services to meet the increasing chronic needs.

Councillor Holmes asked if women had been turned away from the shelters and whether another facility is required. Ms. Garvey said 995 women had been turned away due to the lack of beds; currently there are 43 beds which are always full. As to whether another shelter is needed, Ms. Garvey expressed a preference for focusing resources on long-term, supportive housing.

Sherri Tingley, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA)

Ms. Tingley said CERA was formed in 1987 by a provincial coalition of low income families who had successfully advocated for major changes to the Human Rights Code, to protect them from discrimination in housing. Because of discrimination and systemic barriers, access to affordable housing is extremely difficult for the most vulnerable groups in society. It is not uncommon for families with good credit histories and good landlord references being turned down by several landlords in their search for affordable housing. For young families and newcomers to Ontario, accessing affordable housing is particularly difficult because they lack credit or landlord references. Ms. Tingley said it was important that the Region recognize and encourage the private sector's responsibility to improve access to the existing stock of affordable rental housing. Eighty-four percent (84%) of persons on social assistance rent from the private market. For over a decade, CERA has actively encouraged tenant selection practices that provide equal and fair opportunities for access to affordable rental housing in the private rental market.

Ms. Tingley indicated many landlords continue to use income criteria to disqualify applicants who would be paying more than 30% of their income for rent. The Region should provide leadership in encouraging private sector landlords to adopt fair and equitable tenant selection practices. CERA supports recommendation 7, which calls for the use of social housing units for persons who are homeless. The Region needs to discourage social housing providers from restricting low income households from accessing market rent units. CERA also supports Recommendation 11, which calls for broader use of direct payment and trusteeship agreements.

Margaret Nelson, The Rehabilitation Centre¹

¹ The complete text of this submission is on file with the Committee Co-ordinator

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Ms. Nelson proposed an amendment to incorporate specific references to the special needs of people with physical disabilities or Acquired Brain Injury. The Rehabilitation Centre provides specialized in patient and out patient rehabilitation services to adults with physical disabilities. The goal of discharge is to a safe, accessible environment with adequate supports, however, this is often difficult to secure. In many instances, people must accept housing that is not adapted to their needs or is not appropriate for their age and stage in life: this restrict their activities in their homes and in the community. The Rehabilitation Centre calls for an expansion of the definition of homelessness to include being inappropriately housed because of lack of accessible housing supports to meet the special needs of people with physical disabilities.

Ms. Nelson suggested that any examination of the needs for housing and supports for vulnerable people will take into account the special features required to make such services accessible to people with physical disabilities. These include:

- physical accessibility
- funding for equipment
- attendant care
- home support
- adapted transportation

She requested that clauses be added to the appropriate sections of the report to reflect the special needs of citizens with physical disabilities and ABI as described in her submission.

Linda Kinsella

Mrs. Kinsella said those who prepared the report did not consult the whole world, nor did they speak directly to homeless persons on the street. She challenged Committee members to do this to find out what they need. While the issue of additional public housing was addressed, nothing addresses the need of the physically disabled. She asked that, in assessing current and future needs for social and supportive housing, the needs of the physically disabled not be forgotten.

Mrs. Kinsella suggested that the Region also request the Province to raise the amount of the shelter allowance for Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP) recipients. If more money was available for housing, other needs such as medication could be addressed. Recommendation 10 should read “that the shelter component maximum for social assistance, including ODSP, be 100% of the median market rent for housing.

Kevin Kinsella

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Mr. Kinsella said the only mention of persons with physical disabilities appears in Recommendations 11 and 12, and the report should contain more references to physically-disabled persons deserving adequate housing.

Catherine Boucher, Centretown Citizens' Ottawa Corporation (CCOC)

Ms. Boucher spoke about providing more affordable housing and the role the Region can play, through its Official Plan, to encourage local municipalities to use land and regulatory measures to develop more affordable housing. She posited that the new City of Ottawa Zoning By-law will make it more difficult to build affordable housing.

Margaret Singleton, City Living Non-Profit Housing

Ms. Singleton expressed her support for both Items 3 and 4, and she agreed the Region can and should play a more significant role to address local housing needs. The Action Plan to End Homelessness should focus on the balance between prevention and long term solutions and deal with the immediate consequences of homelessness. City Living now has 800 family units which offer affordable housing to tenants on social assistance. The two reports are a good starting point and reflect the balance that will be needed as the Region gets more involved in social housing.

Mary Martha Hale, Centre 454 Day Program Committee

Ms. Hale said the Day Program Committee was pleased to see the continued inclusion of Day Programs in the Region's overall plan to prevent and end homelessness. She expressed her support for Recommendation 16 which holds the Province accountable for its share of funding for day programs. Ms. Hale pointed out that Centre 454 will have to find new premises by April 2000 and would look to the Region for assistance in finding a suitable location: in this regard, Councillor Holmes' suggestion of selling/leasing regionally-owned land to groups serving homeless persons would be relevant.

Diane Morrison, The Union Mission

Ms. Morrison said she represents the largest, single group of homeless people in Ottawa-Carleton, 3300 different men who used the shelter in 1998; the average occupancy rate at the Mission is 110%. She indicated that the shelter has now become a repository for the hospitals and staff have to provide more convalescent and palliative care, with no training. For this reason, there is strong support for Recommendation 17, which calls for the Ministry of Health, and other stakeholders, to provide funding to increase the capacity for

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convalescent, palliative and long-term care for persons who are homeless or are at risk of being homeless.

Ms. Morrison asked Commissioner Stewart to clarify Recommendation 14 which allows municipalities to redirect up to 15% of the shelter allowance. The Union Mission would like to invest in activities to take the pressure off the 110% occupancy rate by re-directing unspent monies to other initiatives. Commissioner Stewart said this Recommendation comes from the Provincial Task Force on Homelessness, and the directives received by the Department allow the re-direction of funds against proposed future expenditures. The Department would want to build a business case that says that investing in services that keep people out of shelters and places them in more permanent accommodation will allow staff to arrive at a full re-direction of the 15%. This would represent an amount of \$1.2 million, but it cannot be done in any manner that would jeopardize the shelter system.

Moved by W. Byrne

That the Region recognize and address the special needs of people with physical disabilities and Acquired Brain Injury as it implements the Action Plan on Homelessness.

CARRIED

Moved by W. Byrne

That the Region work with the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, the housing sector and private landlords to develop a “Code of Fair and Equitable Tenant Selection” to deal with barriers to accessing rental accommodation faced by low-income families.

CARRIED

Moved by D. Holmes

That Recommendation 10 of the Action Plan be amended to read:

“That the Region request that the Province of Ontario raise the amount of the shelter allowance under the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Plan to reflect actual market housing costs”.

CARRIED

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Moved by D. Holmes

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“That the Region prepare a report to establish a “housing first” property policy for surplus property by the end of September, 1999;

FURTHER THAT Regional Housing, Social Services and Property Services staff be directed to prepare an inventory of regionally-owned property that is surplus to RMOC needs and that could be used for affordable rental housing;

FURTHER THAT this inventory include criteria under which the Region would sell such parcels for one dollar to non-profit housing providers”.

CARRIED, as amended

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Moved by A. Loney

1. **That the Community Services Committee recommend Council approve the Community Action Plan for further development and implementation, as amended by the foregoing.**
2. **That the Community Services Committee recommend Council allocate \$1 million from the 1998 Social Housing budget surplus towards the implementation of the Community Action Plan recommendations, and that specific expenditures be subject to Committee and Council approval.**

CARRIED, as amended

Chair Munter thanked the community and staff for their collaborative efforts in preparing the report, and he noted that the real work begins now.