

Housing and Homelessness Ten Year Plan Development

Leeds and Grenville Community Consultations- 2013 Community Partners Survey Results Report



INTRODUCTION

This report shares the findings from the Community Partners Survey conducted by the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville to better understand the issues and gaps related to homelessness, those who are at risk of losing their homes and the needs and challenges for affordable housing. The purpose is to use the information to develop an actionable local Housing and Homelessness Plan that will address and determine approaches necessary to ensure that residents are able to maintain a good quality of life along with social sustainability.

The report is intended to reflect the experiences, issues and ideas from the lens of the community partners that were consulted. The findings must be regarded as indicative and directional rather than “statistically” quantifiable.

APPROACH

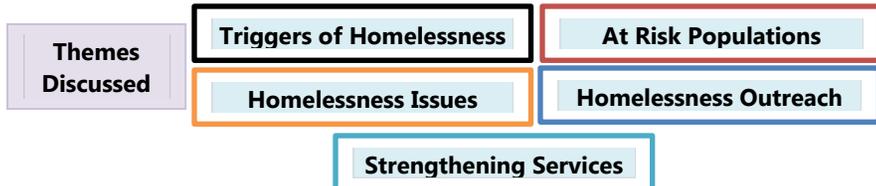
Community partner surveys were conducted through three key informant interview sessions with the following groups:

- Youth representing Connect Youth
- Seniors representing Kemptville and District Home Support; and
- Clients of Operation Harvest Sharing Food Bank

Where appropriate in the report, anonymous quotations are used to give further details on the issues highlighted.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

A total of 22 individuals participated in the survey



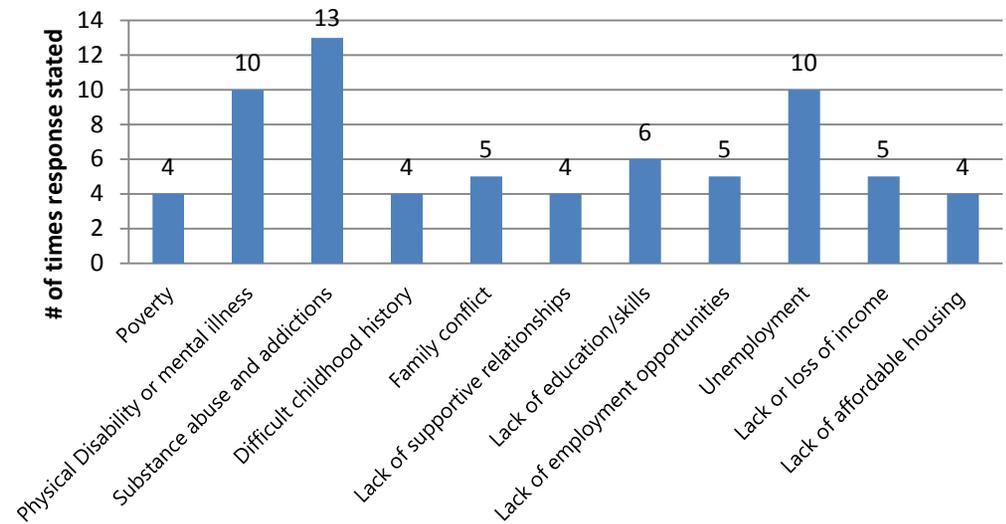
OVERVIEW OF COMMON THEMES

- Issues of homelessness emerged as a growing trend attributed to poverty, financial crisis, family conflict, lack of appropriate and affordable housing, support services, crime, including addictions and mental health services and income.
- The homeless population is diverse; youth, women, seniors, people with mental health and addictions, young families, and people transitioning from the justice system.
- Gaps were identified between the need for and supply for shelter beds, transition and supportive housing, and low-income housing, in addition to a need for homeless outreach services, employment programs and addictions treatment services.
- Improved navigation is required for families and individuals seeking support.
- Improved coordination and navigation is required among providers at both the agency level and system level.
- Consider the “No Wrong Door” approach to address the provision of shelter services and to provide permanent housing solutions as a means of eliminating homelessness.
- Partnerships, agencies and other key government and community funders must play a role toward the development of emergency shelters and supportive housing for the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness.
- Develop approaches and solutions that fit for the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville.

GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS – TRIGGERS OF HOMELESSNESS

TRIGGERS OF HOMELESSNESS:

- Homelessness appears to be the result of a cumulative series of risk factors that increased the probability of homelessness and not one specific reason. For example: a personal tragedy can become a catalyst, triggering a series of bad events, each adding a layer onto a problem.
- Participants were asked to comment on the triggers contributing to homelessness in Leeds and Grenville. Each response articulated a diverse set of factors. A total of 23 different but related reasons were cited. The commonly stated factors contributing to homelessness include:
 - Poverty
 - Physical disability or mental illness
 - Substance abuse and addictions
 - Difficult childhood history
 - Family conflict
 - Lack of supportive relationships
 - Lack of education/skills
 - Lack of employment opportunities
 - Unemployment
 - Lack or loss of income
 - Lack of affordable housing
- Based on the feedback, evident is that none of these factors by themselves or in combination means certain homelessness. However, the high presence of risk factors increased the probability of homelessness when they are met with triggering events. The triggering events can cause the loss of housing. Also stated is that once people lose their housing, they can quickly become trapped in a system of multiple, cumulative barriers that make regaining housing extremely difficult.



Why people are homeless:

Extrapolating further about what community partners said about why people are homeless, the following is an analytical summary of the responses:

POVERTY- The 'working poor' struggle to support their families as the costs of living rise. In particular, the increases in housing have made it more difficult for residents in Leeds and Grenville to afford housing in addition to paying other additional costs, in particular utilities.

1) Poverty, resulting from any combination of a multitude of factors, possibly including any or all of job loss, marital breakup, addiction(s), under-education, illness, unplanned children, etc. 2) Sudden and unplanned dislocation due to traumatic event such as death in family, marital breakup, etc. 3) Inability to care for self, find/hold a job, lack of safety net, due to, for example, mental illness that is just enough to be a disability, yet not enough to fall into the safety net of support from health care resources."

"Lack of or low-income, lack of low-income housing, difficulty managing social and interpersonal relationships (that leads to walking out, being kicked out, having to leave for safety and preservation of emotions), mental health issues, high costs of electricity and home heating and three-month billing periods for water (monthly breakdowns would possibly be more manageable for low-income people). Inclusive rents (utilities and cable inclusive units) are easier for low-income renters to manage."

GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS – TRIGGERS OF HOMELESSNESS

Why people are homeless:

BLOCKED MOBILITY (Residentially, economically, and socially): The vulnerable, low-income and homeless are in a vicious circle: without a permanent address, people can't access income support benefits; without money, they can't get a home. Also indicated, is that getting a job doesn't help either because it doesn't always equate to being enough to afford rent. In addition, also highlighted is that the homeless looking for help must deal with the bureaucracy issues.

"Education. Jobs. Living expenses (i.e. hydro, water); we don't take a holistic approach to this issue. It isn't simply about placing someone in a shelter, community housing or rent-g geared-to-income housing; it is about giving them the tools to better themselves and "get off the system". A social services system should support people through of a difficult time in their life (meaning at the beginning and to the end). There are many in the working / middle class who are living beyond their means. There are also seniors who have being living in their homes for years and could afford to continue living in their homes if the costs for hydro, water, etc. were more affordable or if there were more home supports available. Kids are "couch surfing" because family life is not good."

"In my opinion, the main triggers for homelessness would be: 1) the lack of permanent, long-term, full-time work throughout Leeds and Grenville; 2) the constant rise in the cost of living; 3) lack of affordable housing in Leeds Grenville, particularly for those receiving EI or social assistance, as well as for those only earning minimum wage or working part-time hours; and 4) severe issues within the family dynamic (which could include any number of situations, such as addiction or abuse) in which one family member is kicked out of their home. I feel these are four triggers, either individually or any combination thereof, that would contribute, though there may be many others that would result in one becoming homeless"

"Alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment and being on Ontario Works - can't survive and pay the high rents charged here in Brockville. Domestic violence and needing to separate from an unsafe relationship but not having financial ability to pay rent, or even go to work because no child care. Child care costs are not affordable."

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Limited affordable housing stock, rooming houses, long waiting list and not enough emergency shelters result in people struggling to find adequate services.

"Lack of income for housing - lack of support for de-institutionalized members of society, - lack of education and skills that help to keep you in your residence (i.e. knowing what services are necessary and what are luxuries; when to sign or not sign contracts; pet ownership; running from unsafe situations."

"I believe that there is a great waiting list for housing in Leeds and Grenville, and some people have nowhere to go while waiting. Also I have noticed that alcohol and drugs seem to have had an increase in the last few years, could be due to job losses, or with younger people, could be influences and boredom."

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS, MENTAL ILLNESS AND ADDICTIONS:

Substance abuse and mental illness were repeatedly articulated as perpetuating homelessness, which can cause a downward spiral. Some participants noted that they are seeing an increase in the number of people that are homeless with addictions.

"Mental maturity or erratic mental disorders. Limited employment opportunities. Weak reliability history of tenants with landlords or family (bad tenants). Drugs multi-generational lethargy to depend on assistance."

"Substance abuse, job loss, health issues."

"Housing limitations, financial problems, debt, poverty, lack of community support, mental health and substance abuse issues."

"Falling through the social housing gaps. Mental health issues that see someone removed from social housing and not having anywhere else to go. Working poor. Rents are too high in this town for the wages that are paid. Addictions are another reason for homelessness. Do the landlords play any part in this?"

GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS – TRIGGERS OF AND PROMINANCE OF HOMELESSNESS

FAMILY CONFLICT: Inferred is that individuals and families who experience homelessness often have histories of family violence, particularly in the case of children, youth and women. In such instances, individuals are often forced to choose between staying in violent situations or escaping to the relative safety of the streets.

"In regards to youth, not having a supportive family at home, fighting in the home which in turn leads to couch surfing, In regards to adults, lack of jobs in the community or the opportunity to get these jobs. Many individuals would not qualify for the most basic job due to lack of skills."

"Alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment and being on Ontario Works; can't survive and pay the high rents charged here in Brockville Domestic violence and needing to separate from an unsafe relationship but not having financial ability to pay rent, or even go to work because no child care. Child care costs are not affordable."

"In my opinion, triggers for homelessness include family violence (particularly child abuse and woman abuse), violence against women (including sexual assault), mental illness, poverty (inadequate income levels including OW, and employment conditions such as precarious employment status, part-time work, and low wages), and stigma that deters help-seeking behaviours."

"Lack of shelters for any age group. Unable to place transients or youth that have been kicked out of their parents' home. No jobs for youth that have little or no education. Transportation."

PROMINANCE OF HOMELESSNESS IN LEEDS AND GRENVILLE:

Community Partners reflected about the prominence of homelessness.

- Majority of the participant's responses were reflective that homelessness was an issue in their communities. On the other hand, four of the 22 key informants reported that homelessness was 'not a prominent issue', 'not a huge issue', 'awareness is low', and 'not many homeless.'
- The participants that raised the issue of homelessness stated a spectrum of responses. At one end are those individuals and families experiencing absolute homelessness; at the other end are those individuals and families who are not able to meet their housing needs without assistance.
- For analysis purposes, the responses are characterised and described into three categories of homelessness: 1) absolute homelessness; 2) hidden homelessness; and 3) relative homelessness.

ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS:

- As noted previously, the responses acknowledged and illustrated that absolute homelessness may be less visibly prevalent or has a lower detection rate in Leeds and Grenville. As commented by the key informants:

"Homelessness is certainly a prominent issue within every community. It is an issue that all levels of government should be aware of, as it is not one that is localized to any specific area in the country. No one should be living on the street, or in their vehicle, because they have nowhere else to live. How many people just within Leeds and Grenville are homeless right now? And if there is a number available, how accurate would it be? Just one is too many."

GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS – PROMINANCE OF HOMELESSNESS

ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS:

"Personally, I don't know. I don't see visible evidence of it in Brockville like I do in larger centres like Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. If we have people living on the street, either they have good hiding places, or there simply aren't very many."

"We do not have many homeless in the community, but we do not want it to increase. It is an issue if we can't help each other get through the rough patches. Funding provided needs to be used wisely, and the community needs to bond better so we can help those less fortunate."

"I believe it is not as prominent, because I believe people are taken in my neighbours and friends - so there is couch surfing rather than living on the street - thus clouding the reality of homelessness and reducing its prominence."

"I am aware of the need for a co-ed emergency / family shelter, but not so much the issues of homelessness."

"Not huge...but under housed, and at risk of becoming homeless is a growing trend."

"It is an 'underground' issue. While there are many people who are either homeless or on the brink of being homeless it isn't an issue which has been brought to the forefront in the media."

HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS:

- More concerning is that participants referred much more often to hidden homelessness: people who find a temporary couch to sleep on with friends or family while seeking affordable housing. Examples cited by participants included knowing of couch surfers, women and youth continuing to live in abusive relationships, and those living in inadequate abandoned buildings.

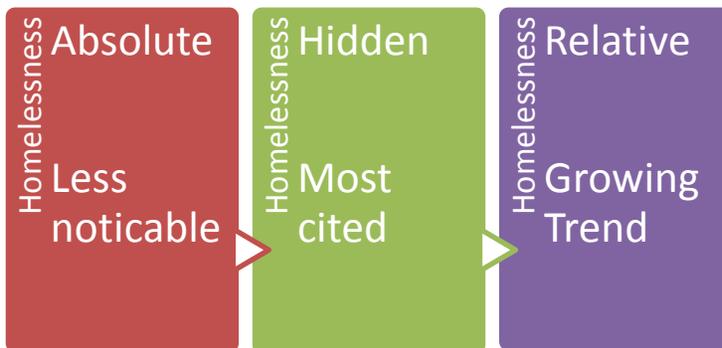
"Homelessness is a hidden issue in Leeds Grenville; it is there but it is not readily seen by average citizens."

"In my understanding, homelessness is fairly prominent as people (especially young people) 'couch surf' with nowhere stable to call home. A more prominent issue, however, might be precarious housing, where large numbers of individuals and families can barely make ends meet and teeter on the edge of homelessness, often living in substandard, inadequate, and inappropriate conditions. Women and youth, in particular, are also likely to continue to live in abusive and sometimes extremely dangerous situations as they see no other options."

"If we count the couch-surfers and people forced to 'room' in crowded housing spaces, I would say it is much more prominent than we think but our awareness is 'low'."

"In Gananoque many youth 'couch surf'. Police do not see the youth however they are aware that youth have no fixed address. Of the age group of 13 to 18 years of age, approximately one in ten are couch surfing. Gananoque has a population of 500 youth in this age group."

"I think it is a hidden issue. Given the non-urban nature, the 'look' of homelessness is not the same. Homelessness may be more about folks who don't have a consistent place to stay (couch surfing) or a place to call their own (bunking in with others/family). To get services may have to go away from support networks/familiar (no shelters in rural areas). Perhaps people are also 'under-housed' living in non-ideal or unsafe housing (i.e. rundown mobile home; they live year round in a cottage or three-season home not meant for cold weather, etc.)"



GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS – POPULATION GROUPS AT MOST RISK

RELATIVE HOMELESSNESS:

- Relative homelessness includes situations where people's homes do not meet the basic housing standards of adequate protection, provide secure tenure and personal safety. Related to this are individuals who are transitioning out of the justice system and unable to return to their pre-incarceration residence. Although not homeless, the prevalence of people living in inadequate housing is a growing issue based on the responses from the key informants:

"At this point, I am more concerned about the number of people who are living in substandard housing situations such as multiple families in one house, living in a small room, many times without kitchen or laundry privileges -people living in their vehicles, etc."

"You must have a stable address in order to collect OW. For many of our clients at the methadone clinic, it's difficult to establish stable/safe housing for many reasons which, in turn, equals no OW cheque which, in turn, equals homelessness which, in turn, equals theft, sex trade work, hitchhiking to more homeless-friendly cities (Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto) or incarceration."

"I see it as an issue when men are released from the Brockville jail. I see it as an issue when there is no shelter for those who have been evicted. There is no shelter for youth who have been asked to leave their parent's homes due to bad behavior or drug use."

POPULATION GROUPS AT MOST RISK:

Youth	Individuals with Substance Abuse and Addictions
Young Adults	Individuals with Mental Illness
Young Families	Individuals Experiencing Domestic Violence
Low-Income Families	
Seniors	

POPULATION GROUPS AT MOST RISK:

- One thing that was evident from the key informant interviews is that people do not plan to be 'homeless'. A few reported that they can't imagine homelessness happening to someone they know.
- In Leeds and Grenville, there is a diverse mix of people at risk or experiencing homelessness. As articulated by the key informants, the most stated population groups were: youth, individuals with mental illness, young adults, seniors, young families, people with substance abuse and addictions, low-income households and those experiences family conflicts in particular domestic violence.

- Seniors were acknowledged to be at risk of homelessness due to a lack of affordable rental units. Being on a fixed income they are unable to pay market rents and need affordable housing dependent on their income.
- Younger cohort of youth, adults, families were repeatedly referred to as the most of in risk. A disconnect between them and the educational system, social services, employment and mental health issues were indicative of a trajectory towards homelessness.

GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS - EMERGING ISSUES AND NEEDS REGARDING HOMELESSNESS

MAIN EMERGING ISSUES REGARDING HOMELESSNESS:

- A total of 14 types of emerging issues were cited regarding homelessness. The responses were interconnected to broader themes related to affordable housing, social services, education, health and the labour market.

Main Emerging Issues	# of times issue referred to in responses
Chronic Unemployment	6
Fixed Income	3
Poverty	3
Energy and Utility Costs	3
Substance Abuse	3
Mental Health	2
Domestic Violence	2
Rents too High	2
Limited/Lack of Affordable Housing	2
Increase in Cost of Living	1
Lack of Shelters	1
Long Social Housing Waiting List	1
Aging Community	1
Managing Housing in a Cost Effective Manner	1

"Rise in cost of living - beyond low incomes and social assistance funding. Increasing minimum wage, just adds to increased cost of living and increases employment standards and expectations which removes the marginally employable out of the workforce."

"Aging community - aging in place in old houses may be difficult (too big to manage, not on a single level, etc.) Aged may also have limited networks for support; isolation; possibility of becoming at-risk or being under-housed. Fixed incomes may also not keep pace with cost of energy/upkeep/taxes, etc."

"Cost of utilities is 200\$+ a month per unit. This can get out of control for the marginal renter/owner."

PRIMARY NEEDS REGARDING HOMELESSNESS:

- A wide-spectrum of needs were articulated by the community partners with regards to what can be done to assist at risk or homeless individuals. Many of the suggested needs reinforce the main emerging issues mentioned by the key informants.



GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS - OPTIONS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO HOMELESS OR AT-RISK HOUSEHOLDS

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO HOMELESS OR AT-RISK HOUSEHOLDS:

- Housing options available varied but for analysis purposes they have been grouped into five key domains: 1) Housing, 2) Health Related, 3) Social Assistance, 4) Faith-based Institutions, and 5) Food Banking
- Despite the responses, some participants inferred 'limited options', 'few options', 'not aware', and 'not many services exist'.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO HOMELESS OR AT-RISK HOUSEHOLDS	# of times referred to in responses
HOUSING	
Subsidized housing	4
Affordable rental apartments	1
Special priority households	1
Rent bank program	1
Rooms from commercial hotels	1
Rooming houses	1
Shelters	7
Emergency housing (i.e. motel/hotel)	5
Jail cell	1
HEALTH RELATED	
Mental health issues	1
Developmental services	1
Counselling support	1
Local health care	1
SOCIAL SERVICES	
Social assistance	4
FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS	
Churches	3
FOOD BANKING	
Food banks	1

What participants also said:

"There is a severe lack of any kind of resources or options for anyone who becomes homeless within Leeds and Grenville. I have experienced being homeless here, and had great difficulty finding any kind of help. There is certainly a lack of shelters within the Counties, the closest ones being Ottawa or Kingston. It seems the homeless within Leeds and Grenville have no options, and have no choice but to leave the Counties if they are able to do so as there is nothing available to them in terms of receiving much needed help."

"United Counties has one emergency shelter unit for families if that is occupied, the police will issue vouchers paid for by local churches for a short stay at a local motel. Other than that no services exist."

"Private mortgage holders like me that will entertain a 10% down payment. Social service support to pay for affordable apartments on tenant's behalf. Affordable rental apartments. More apartments can be brought online with building support for the landlord. There were conversion or new build support programs (like RRAP) that were used to enhance the standards or increase the number of units that are available at 80% the average rent rate with provisions to maintain the units as affordable for 15 years."

"Women and their children may be able to utilize Interval House as a temporary housing option but there are huge limitations to this option including that there are minimal spaces available for housing issues alone and male children over the age of 16 would not be admitted. There may be temporary emergency housing and special priority subsidized housing available through social services; however there are generally long wait lists or often no spots available immediately. In my experience, housing utilized by those with the lowest incomes is often substandard, inadequate, and inappropriate. This is not just an issue of housing but one of poverty."

"Not 100% clear. I heard recently there is a 21-day emergency home available. I believe I heard a rumour several years ago that sometimes in a pinch a jail cell might be made available for overnight crisis. Interval House; if room is available, can offer short-term support if the issue surrounds abuse."

GENERAL SURVEY RESULTS - CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH HOMELESSNESS

ORGANIZATIONS REACHING OUT TO CLIENTS:

- Community partners were asked how they reached out to clients in their area who may be struggling with homelessness.
- A few participants reported that it is not in their mandate or they do not serve 'homeless' clients and therefore were not in a position to respond. Other participants also reported not having the resources to engage with the people at risk of homelessness. Despite this, individuals and their agencies tried various means to assist people and families that were in need; either through referrals or service assistance.

REFERRALS:

- Referrals to community housing
- Referrals shelters (i.e. Interval House)
- Referrals to food banks
- Referrals to community counsellors
- Referrals by and to various agencies
- Provider services to registered clients. Clients self-identify or self-refer.

SERVICE ASSISTANCE:

- Contacting landlords for 'affordable housing'
- Filling out applications for financial assistance
- Outreach and assist with accessing employment through local businesses
- Provider transportation service

LINKING UP WITH AT RISK INDIVIDUALS

- Searching for employment opportunities
- Posting information
- Through front-line workers
- Street outreach
- Through the school system
- Through calls for service

"If we are aware of a family or individual that needs help, we try to do what we can, but this is not anyway near our mandate, so our assistance is limited."

"Assistance with application for financial assistance if eligible. Contacts with some landlords who have some "somewhat more affordable" housing, which may also not be the "best" housing. Encourage shared living arrangements. New Case Manager role may assist with this, however, this is very new and in development phase."

"When any of our clients find themselves in this situation, we do our best to line them up with shelters out of town but many times they don't go for this as they like to stay in their home town. Usually they end up incarcerated for things like petty theft (stealing to make money for shelter)."

"They may be referred to us through another service provider or self-referral. They can contact us or we can contact them directly and work together to find out what can be done."

"We would refer the individuals to agencies that may be able to assist them with their situation; we would assist with transportation if necessary."

"Sometimes through the schools, through calls for service or meeting them on the street."

"We serve clients in our Resource Centre who self identify that they are "couch surfing" or sleeping in their cars. We always ensure that they know where to get a hot meal, provide vouchers for Loaves and Fishes, contact the churches in some cases, or OW when necessary. We provide assistance with accessing employment quickly when we are able to by calling local businesses we have established relationships with. We also provide hygiene kits and in some cases bus tickets, or taxi chits if they are registered as clients. Difficult sometimes to reach by phone or e-mail, so invite to use RC as their "office" and help set up e-mail account, if none."

STRENGTHENING SERVICES OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

Without affordable rental being available, people cannot move up the continuum resulting in a backlog of people at the emergency shelter and transitional housing level. Participants mentioned increased funding for subsidized housing and supports to decrease energy costs.

Expected is that the demand of supplemented affordable housing will increase 50%. Any conversion options or otherwise new units within existing buildings of private landlords should be supported and encouraged as these will be the most rapid and cost effective new unit additions. For longer term, small basic durable units should be established. *“Recommended if four-plex style that can be sprinkled among the community within regular residential service lots.”*

Private landlords/developers should be enticed with build cost support. Identifying derelict lots or cheap properties that can be replaced with affordable four-plex units can be encouraged. The benefit of this approach is ease of gradual phase in. *“The social benefit is that it breaks the cycle of ghetto generations and lethargic attitude of breaking the cycle. When children grow up where every neighbor and friend accepts that they will naturally continue on assisted living it is difficult to change that attitude. With 4-plexes scattered throughout, the children are raised in neighborhoods that expose them to working families and friends and the attitudes society should encourage. The space and standards should be basic to encourage change”.*

INCREASE NUMBER OF FAMILY EMERGENCY AND TRANSITIONAL FACILITIES:

With the increases in the number of working poor, families need to be treated as a whole unit rather than broken up between shelters. The need for the development of more shelters and units and in particular those that take in whole families (including men) was expressed. Participants also commented for the need to allow more rooming houses.

“In my opinion, huge changes need to occur to provide subsidies to people so that they can obtain safe, affordable, adequate and appropriate housing; to create emergency shelters and transition houses; to de-stigmatize help-seeking; to widely educate the public about issues including child abuse, violence against women, and mental illness; and to advocate for social change that encourages people to support rather than judge one another, and to redistribute our financial resources through taxation policy and social programs.”

WRAP-AROUND SERVICES:

Participants felt that a ‘No Wrong Door’ approach should be considered. Wrap-around services should be provided that will enable people to stay in homes and to deal with any issues that might lead to problems with housing.

Services should also be specific to enable housing retention (either getting people into permanent housing as quickly as possible or staying in their existing housing) and bring supports to them to deal with any issues they are facing (e.g. addictions, mental health, etc.).

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RATES:

Another area of concern is the level of social assistance paid to cover shelter and other necessities. Community partners suggested that mechanisms should be explored to ensure that shelter allowances and rental housing supplement keep pace with housing cost increases.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH SOCIAL SERVICES:

It was also mentioned that more resources should be provided for individuals to increase the number of case management and social workers available. It was mentioned during the tenant consultations that social workers are difficult to get a hold of in a timely manner. This was a concern among the homeless and service providers.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SECOND UNIT POLICIES:

There is a need for real implementation of second unit policies by municipalities to increase housing stock/options.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING WITH SUPPORTS:

The issues homeless people are facing are complex and multiple. There is a need for increased counselling supports in a variety of areas including addictions, prior abuse/physical assaults, family breakdown, as well as increasing knowledge and training on the basic social and life skills (including budgeting, nutrition, cooking skills, parenting skills, responsibilities of being a good tenant, financial literacy; and finding employment).

"Over the next three years, more resources and options need to become available for those who are either at risk to become homeless, or those are already homeless. Shelters and housing should be a priority for those who so desperately need it, as should availability of meals (such as through soup kitchens). As the homeless may also suffer a great deal both mentally and/or emotionally because of their situation, and how they ended up becoming homeless, these people should be able to have access to counselors if they decide they need to discuss what they are going through. More education and/or job opportunities should be provided as well, as these will give the homeless the opportunities to provide themselves with better lives."

"Education, education, education. To encourage families to take care of themselves and band together rather than depend on the system. Supports to help decrease energy costs. Increased level of clinical social work with the clients from the community housing department."

INCREASED HEALTH RELATED SERVICES:

Mental health and/or addiction issues were raised as common to many of those who are homeless. Community partners inferred that mental health and addiction services tend to be inadequate and need significantly increased resources.

INCREASE SERVICES FOR YOUTH AT RISK:

Repeatedly mentioned is that there are more youth that are becoming or at risk of being homeless for other reasons (i.e. family breakdown). To assist youth, emphasis was placed on literacy, employment assistance, emotional support, addictions, to prevent homelessness among this age group.

INCREASE PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT AGING IN PLACE:

Expressed is the increasing programming need to help the elderly population to age in place and also to plan for long-term costs and issues. Aligned with this is tax exemption for accessibility improvements.

EMERGENCY CENTERS AND HOUSING SUPPORT FOR MEN:

Several participants mentioned that the population of homelessness is changing and they are seeing an increasing number of men with children. Emphasis has been in prior years to ensure that emergency spaces were available for women and children. Expressed was the need for shelters where fathers can stay with their own children.

In addition, committing to funding for a house that will be a transitional house for men being released from jail.

POLICY:

Articulated were process perspectives: these revolved around bureaucracy and who should be responsible for homelessness. In addition,

"We need to grow the economic prosperity of Eastern Ontario so that there are more funds available to sustain and strengthen social support networks of all types, from counseling to housing. That means we need to be investing in things that create economic prosperity, whether from industry, services, tourism or commerce. In concert with that, we need to be investing in making Brockville and surrounding areas more attractive to new businesses and residents. If we can do all that, then the tax base will grow and we'll be better positioned to strengthen social supports."

INCREASED INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION:

Apparent from the responses is that there are a lot of passionate people and organizations ready to assist on the issue of homelessness. However, there is a need for more information among all agencies involved in housing and assisting the homeless (or at risk of homelessness) to better understand efforts being made by the community. It was also evident that those involved in the sector did not have a complete understanding of what each other was doing. This is less prevalent among many of the shelter organizations as they regularly communicate and refer clients. However advocacy groups and some involved at the emergency and transitional housing levels may not always be aware of initiatives underway or being considered. Suggested is that it would be beneficial to have agencies better understand where the community as a whole is heading on ending homelessness.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND RESEARCH:

Some participants stressed that knowledge sharing and research need to be an easy, unintimidating way to access information and resources for those that are homeless or at risk of being homeless. What is required is a listing of support services available to people facing homelessness (and this could include those services that supply essentials such as food, showers, etc.)

"Lobbying appropriate political agencies with well supported research and predictions of financial outcomes if the services are NOT strengthened. In other words, research that demonstrates that the cost of NOT doing something will possibly be greater than the expense of strengthening services."