



Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Plan

December 2001



Waterloo Region
Community Homelessness
Working Group



Supported by

Canada 

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Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Working Group

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Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Plan, December 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness is a serious problem in Waterloo Region. The community plan was developed by the Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Working Group (“Working Group”), an ad hoc committee comprised of community residents and members of faith groups, non-profit agencies, governments and funders. The Working Group has been operating since 1999 to respond to homelessness in a co-ordinated fashion. Development of the plan was supported financially by Human Resources Development Canada.

Objectives

The objectives of the plan, which are based on the identified community priorities, are intended to address current and future needs in Waterloo Region. The objectives are to:

- Increase the ability of the community to meet the immediate needs of people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and decrease the hardships they face.
- Increase the supply, variety and accessibility of affordable housing stock for the people of Waterloo Region.
- Enhance supports for special needs, increase efforts to prevent homelessness and build the community’s capacity to respond to homelessness.
- Foster knowledge and expertise about homelessness issues in order to increase community awareness and participation.

Priorities

The objectives of the plan are based on four main community priorities, which were identified by the Working Group through its research and community consultations, and confirmed at a community forum on September 12, 2001. Each of these priority areas – which cover the continuum of supports for people who are homeless or at-risk – is seen as equally as important as all the others. Within each priority area, a number of strategic directions were prioritized.

- Meeting immediate needs
- Creating a new supply of housing
- Supports for special needs; prevention; building community capacity
- Information, education and community awareness

Implementation of the Plan

A number of strategic directions relating to these priorities were also reviewed and confirmed at the September 12 forum. Resources to meet the community priorities will come from a number of sources. One very important funding sources is the federal government’s Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). This program is allocating \$305 million across the country to tackle homelessness between 2000 and 2003. The allocation for this area was set at approximately \$1.4 million, about \$450,000 of which has already been allocated through the program’s Urgent Needs process.

Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Plan, December 2001

This plan will allow the community to direct the remaining funds from the SCPI allocation. More importantly, though, this plan will serve as a tool for guiding where funds from other sources are allocated.

The plan will also help to build the Waterloo Region community's capacity to respond to homelessness effectively. Through co-ordinated action and the principled allocation of resources, the people of Waterloo Region can use this plan as a roadmap for action to address the serious problem of homelessness.

It is anticipated that the community plan will be reviewed annually and amended to reflect progress and changing circumstances.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction and Plan Overview.....	1
2	The Waterloo Region Community.....	4
3	Objectives.....	8
4	Community Plan Development Process.....	10
5	Assets and Community Contributions.....	14
6	Findings.....	28
7	Priorities.....	35
8	Sustainability.....	37
9	Evaluation.....	39
10	Communications Strategy.....	40
11	Next Steps.....	41
	References.....	42

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: SCPI Urgent Needs Selections
- Appendix 2: Waterloo Region – Demographics
- Appendix 3: A Timeline of Events, Policies and Processes
- Appendix 4: September 12 Forum – Priorities, Strategic Directions, Etc.
- Appendix 5: The Voices of Community Members
- Appendix 6: The Voices of Service Providers
- Appendix 7: Homelessness and Health – Is There a Connection?
- Appendix 8: The Regional Municipality of Waterloo's Role in Homelessness and Housing
- Appendix 9: Region of Waterloo Youth Homelessness Working Group – Gap Analysis

1 INTRODUCTION AND PLAN OVERVIEW

Many people in Waterloo Region cannot easily find affordable places to live and those who need assistance in everyday living often go without the supports they need to ensure health, safety and quality of life. There is a need to seek solutions to the growing problems of access to affordable and appropriate housing and to reducing the risks of homelessness experienced by many individuals and families in Waterloo Region.

This plan was developed by the Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Working Group (“Working Group”), an ad hoc committee comprised of community residents and members of faith groups, non-profit agencies, governments and funders. The Working Group has been operating since 1999 to respond to homelessness in a co-ordinated fashion.

The state of homelessness in Waterloo Region was summarized in the *Backgrounder Report* published in June 1999 (Dietrich et al., 1999) This study concluded that homelessness was a significant problem in Waterloo Region and also a complex issue. For example, the research showed that an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 different individuals stayed in emergency shelters during the course of one year in Waterloo Region. Historical data from shelters showed that the number of homeless people had been increasing over a five-year period.

Since the *Backgrounder* report was released, there has been considerable attention given to homelessness in Waterloo Region and beyond. Various sectors of the local community have indicated interest in taking action, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo has taken on responsibility for social housing, and both the provincial and federal governments have initiated programs to respond to these issues. There is a desire for effective action to respond to immediate shelter needs, to help people find affordable housing as well as to prevent people from losing their homes in the first place.

Homelessness issues are not solely housing issues. During the 1999 study, the factors found to be related to homelessness included:

- breakdown in close family relationships
- physical and mental health issues
- inadequate income
- inability to find housing
- personal choices

The community plan presented here is part of an ongoing collaborative effort to identify regional priorities, produce effective local responses and engage the community in addressing homelessness. This plan document is not the result of a static process It is an on-going work-in-progress for Waterloo Region. It is a roadmap for future directions. The plan will be continually reviewed and updated.

This document includes:

- a description of the geography and demographics of the Waterloo Region community
- four broad community objectives
- a summary of how the plan was developed
- a report on the findings from our research and community consultations
- community priorities
- a survey of assets – local programs and services
- a discussion of how the plan will be sustained, evaluated and updated

- next steps for the Waterloo Region community

1.1 The Definition of Homelessness

Clarifying what we mean by homelessness is an elusive and critical piece of understanding the issue. Who is defined and included as homeless has profound implications on the size of the population, the needs of those people, the responses that are necessary, and who is responsible to work towards a solution. While a broad definition encompasses the issues more completely and appropriately, a narrow definition of only those people on the street or in shelters is more easily researched. In this plan, we use the following multi-dimensional definition of homelessness.

Homelessness includes people who are:

- **Literally Homeless:** People who sleep in indoor or outdoor public places and/or use emergency shelters.
- **Hidden Homeless:** People who live in illegal or temporary accommodation and/or rely on friends and acquaintances for shelter.
- **At Imminent Risk of Being Homeless (usually referred to as “at risk”):** People are at risk of being homeless if their current housing is considered unsafe, unaffordable, overcrowded, insecure or inappropriate.

It is recognized that the three parts of the definition are not mutually exclusive and one could experience all varieties of homelessness in a few months. Note: Different terminology is sometimes used in other documents. For example, “absolutely homeless” is roughly the same as “literally homeless”, and “relatively homeless” is similar to “at risk”.

1.2 The Role of SCPI

Resources to meet priorities of the community will come from a number of sources. One very important funding source is the federal government’s Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). This program is allocating \$305 million across the country to tackle homelessness between 2000 and 2003. The allocation for this area was set at approximately \$1.4 million, about \$450,000 of which has already been allocated through the program’s Urgent Needs process. (The Urgent Needs process allows work to be taken before a Community Plan is in place for particularly time sensitive projects. For a project to qualify for the Urgent Needs process, it must alleviate the hardship of people facing absolute homelessness and must demonstrate that there would be severe hardships if the project did not commence immediately.) For more information on the Urgent Needs projects, see Appendix 1.

SCPI has five broad, long-term objectives:

- To ensure that no individuals are involuntarily on the streets by providing sufficient shelters and adequate support systems.
- To significantly reduce the number of individuals requiring emergency shelter and transition and supportive housing by providing, for example, sufficient health services, low-cost housing, discharge planning, early intervention and prevention initiatives.
- To help individuals move from homelessness to self-sufficiency.
- To help communities strengthen their capacity to address the needs of their homeless population.
- To improve the social, health and economic well-being of people who are homeless.

1.3 What Can the Plan Accomplish?

Through co-ordinated action and the principled allocation of resources – from programs such as SCPI or from here in the community, the people of Waterloo Region can use this plan as a roadmap for action to address the serious problem of homelessness.

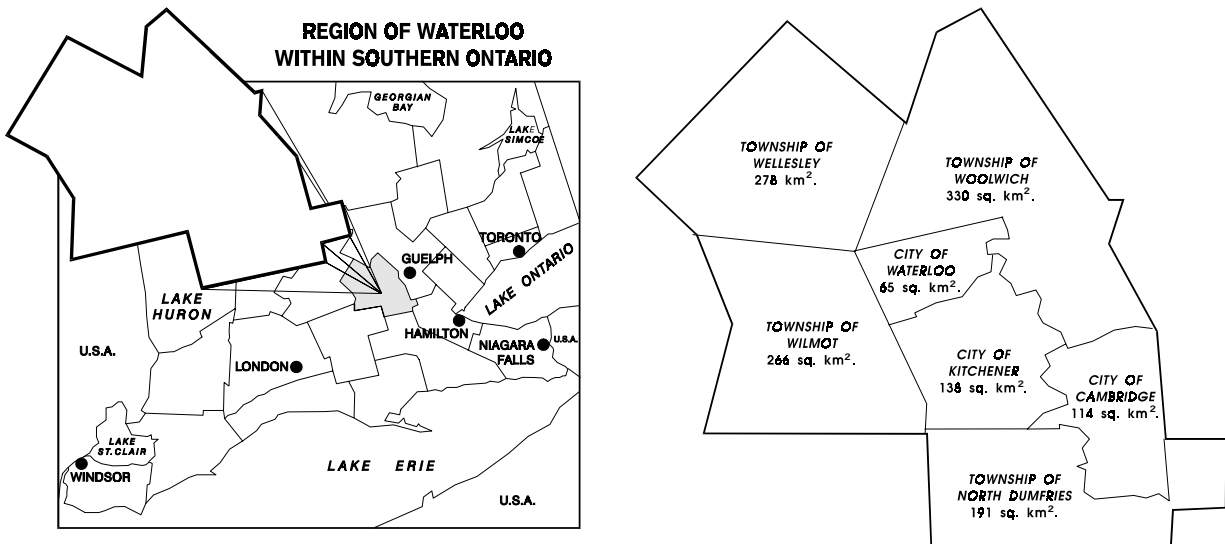
2 THE WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITY

2.1 Geography

The geographic area included in this plan is the entire Region of Waterloo. In February 2000 the Opening Doors homelessness forum, a broad-based community consultation, demonstrated the Region-wide nature of homelessness and a political will to find solutions that will benefit all of Waterloo Region. The Working Group intends for this community plan to be for the entire Waterloo Region community.

By focusing the plan on the broader Waterloo Region community, it will be easier to develop solutions that will work for the people of the whole Region.

The Region of Waterloo, located in the heart of Southern Ontario, has a population of almost half a million people (451,220, estimated, Dec. 31, 2000). It is made up of the cities of Cambridge (110,900), Kitchener (190,100) and Waterloo (98,700), plus the townships of North Dumfries (8,600), Wellesley (9,110), Wilmot (15,410) and Woolwich (18,400) (Region of Waterloo, March 6, 2001).



Maps © 2001, Region Municipality of Waterloo, Planning, Housing and Community Services Department. Used by permission.

2.2 People Who Are Experiencing Homelessness in Our Region

Based on the multifaceted research methodology implemented in order to create *Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region: A Backgrounder* (June 1999) the following key observation can be offered here:

Based on the survey of emergency shelters there are estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,000 people who experience homelessness at some point in any

given year in Waterloo Region (annual prevalence).¹ This refers to people who are literally homeless, not those who are at risk of homelessness as per the definition above. Since the Region has a total population of almost 418,500, this is between 3 and 5 out of every 1,000 people in the community (0.35%-0.48%).

The 1999 research showed that people using emergency shelters in the Region of Waterloo have the following characteristics:

- Residents range in age from 13 - 79, with an average age of 32, and the most frequent age being 22.
- There is an over-representation of Aboriginal and Black people in shelters, compared to the population of Waterloo Region.
- The majority (83%) are single with no dependants.
- The majority (63%) have lived in the Region for more than 4 years during their life, although one-quarter (25%) reported they are staying in a shelter because they are new to the Region.
- 14% of residents are employed.
- Shelter residents have a wide range of levels of education: 63% have less than grade 12, and 11% have a university degree or other post-secondary certificate.
- Almost one-half (45%) self-reported mental health issues.
- 13% self-reported that they use drugs daily, 66% say they never use drugs.
- 12% self-reported that they use alcohol daily, 37% say they never drink alcohol.
- Almost one-half (46%) reported that some kind of family relationship difficulties are the primary reason they are in shelters.

Given that these demographics more accurately reflect the realities of life for men than for women, questions persist about the demographics of women and children in shelters.

In the *Backgrounder* (June 1999), both individuals with experience of being at-risk-of or literally homeless and agency staff agreed on the same triggers that lead individuals to homelessness. Individuals with experience with homelessness strongly emphasized different factors from agency staff. All emphasized that one event leads to another event so that the events are bound together in a downward cycle. Five triggering events were identified as causal influences leading to homelessness in Waterloo Region: breakdown in close relationships, physical and mental health issues, inadequate income, insufficient housing, and personal choices.

It also appears from the research that produced the *Backgrounder* (June 1999) that:

- An average of 172 people used emergency shelters each night during our study period in March and April of 1999. This point prevalence ranged from a low of 147 per night to a high of 193 per night in Waterloo Region.
- The two primary emergency shelters in the Region (Mary's Place for women and House of Friendship Men's Hostel), as well as some of the other shelters, continually shelter more people than they have beds for, and manage by allowing people to sleep on cots and couches in the shelter common areas.
- Both of the two primary emergency shelters in the Region are located in downtown Kitchener, and both always have people from Cambridge and the rural areas in the Region staying there.

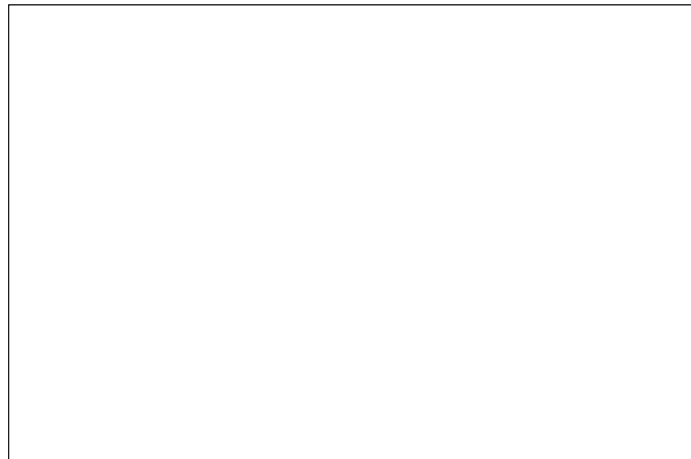
¹ The estimate of 1500-2000 people who experience homelessness in one year is a calculated number based on the number of different residents and the length of their stay in the two month period of the survey, extended for the entire year. This figure accounts for some, but not all, people returning to the shelters later in the year. For further details about the method of calculation refer to appendix F of the *Backgrounder*.

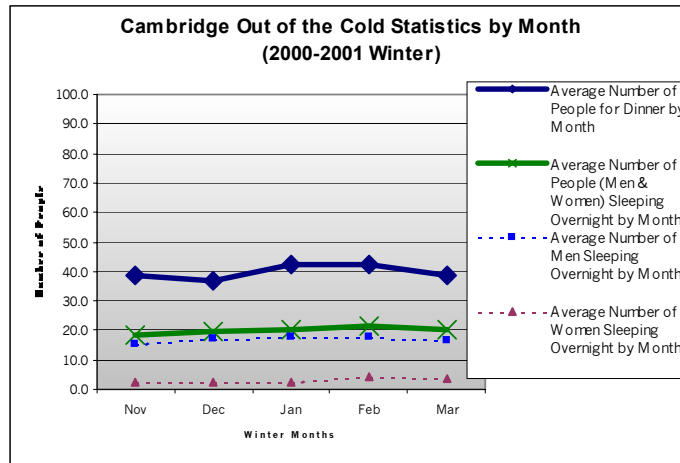
- The number of people using a variety of shelters has generally increased over the last five years. Most shelters for which information was provided recorded an increase of between 13% and 89% in the number of people using their service between 1994 and 1998.
- People are also staying at shelters for longer periods of time, putting even more pressure on a number of shelters. Residents stayed at several shelters for up to 15% to 50% longer in 1998 than in 1994. Those who stay for more than two weeks in shelters account for 80% of the beds used in one year.
- It is extremely difficult to estimate the number of people who sleep on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in other public places. Estimates for Waterloo Region range from only a few each night to almost 100 or higher each year.
- It is just as difficult to estimate the number of people who are at imminent risk of homelessness. Based on indicators such as the number of people who pay more than 30% of their income on rent, there are 22,000 tenant households with unaffordable housing in Waterloo Region.

Disparities between men and women are apparent in the number of shelter beds in the Region, the number of bed nights used in one year in the Region, and in our survey responses. There are one-third more shelter beds for women than for men, yet women's beds are full beyond capacity more often than are beds for men. More than half of the residents of emergency shelters in Waterloo Region are women, which seems to be significantly higher than other Canadian cities. The response rate to the survey was significantly higher for men (73%) than for women (42%), resulting in probable disparities between men and women in our findings on the profile of shelter users.

More research is required to complete the profiles for vulnerable populations identified during early planning: mental health, addictions, women (particularly those with children), immigrants and refugees, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, people released from correctional institutes and people discharged from hospitals. More information is also needed regarding local geographic communities, particularly the rural areas of Waterloo Region. For some preliminary demographic information on our community, please see Appendix 2.

Since the *Backgrounder* was published, emergency shelters were established by churches in Cambridge and Kitchener. The following graphs provide a glimpse of the winter of 2000-2001 regarding the numbers of people who rely on warm meals, mattresses on the floor for sleeping, and opportunity for friendship. Both graphs show an increase in numbers over the winter months with a slight drop in numbers in March.





3 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this plan, which are based on the identified community priorities, are intended to address current and future needs in Waterloo Region. The objectives are to:

- Increase the ability of the community to meet the immediate needs of people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and decrease the hardships they face.
- Increase the supply, variety and accessibility of affordable housing stock for the people of Waterloo Region.
- Enhance supports for special needs, increase efforts to prevent homelessness and build the community's capacity to respond to homelessness.
- Foster knowledge and expertise about homelessness issues in order to increase community awareness and participation.

3.1 How the Objectives Were Developed

In developing this plan, the Working Group stated a vision for our community:

1. Every person is a valued member of our community, having adequate housing and access to responsive supports.
2. The Working Group is committed to a healthy community in which all members in all of their roles work and learn together to create a community environment to enable every person and family to live with dignity, safety and respect.

In order to achieve this vision, the Working Group set out the following goals (not ranked in order of priority):

1. To increase awareness in the broader community about issues of homelessness.
2. To foster community ownership of the Community Plan.
 - a) To mobilize the broader community in positive ways to achieve the Community Plan and address homelessness issues.
 - b) To foster commitment, co-ordination and contributions, monetary and otherwise, from all levels of government and the community.
 - c) To maximize public and private long-term commitment to addressing homelessness in the community.
3. To advocate for government policies that:
 - a) Produce effective short-term actions as part of long-term strategies that consider impacts on the economy, the physical health and social health of individuals, families and communities.
 - b) Address intervention and prevention of homelessness by focusing on systemic issues in the continuum of housing and supports (eg. housing, employment, day care, long-term counselling, education) and advocate for social inclusion.
4. To include people who have experience with homelessness in the planning process and solutions.
5. To work collaboratively with housing stakeholders to create a continuum of affordable housing in order to move people who are homeless from the streets to long-term housing.
6. To encourage the allocation of resources and commitment to develop informal and formal supports for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

7. To ensure available resources are directed to the most significant needs and gaps in system.
8. To establish evaluation, strategic planning, sustainability and communication strategies so the Working Group can operate effectively.

These goals are the foundation for the work that has been done to develop the community plan. The objectives of this community plan are in line with the Working Group goals and will serve to improve the quality of life for people facing homelessness in Waterloo Region.

4 COMMUNITY PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

4.1 Historical Context

The current state of homelessness in Waterloo Region is the product of a number of events, decisions, and occurrences. While it is no doubt true that homelessness can result from poor and ill-informed personal choice, more often than not it stems from happenings well beyond individual control or influence. Noteworthy, in this regard, are the decisions made and actions taken by various levels of government. Whether it be federal policy changes or municipal program amendments, all can and often do have a significant impact on those most in need. Appendix 3 provides a partial listing of the more significant events, decisions, and occurrences that have transpired over an approximately 50-year period and which have contributed to the homelessness situation now at hand. While it is acknowledged that this timeline is simplified and missing a lot of detail, it does capture the more salient items which, together, have given rise to the present need for a community plan on homelessness.

4.2 Methodology

This plan was prepared by way of a collaborative, community-based process spanning approximately 11 months (November 2000 – September 2001). However, much of the background research and secondary information that went into the plan, as briefly summarized below, had already been completed and compiled long before the writing actually began.

4.2.1 Background Research and Secondary Information

In the fall of 1998, the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo (SPCKW) and the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries (SPC of C/ND) partnered with the Waterloo Region – Wellington/Dufferin District Health Council. This partnership was formed in order to undertake an exploratory research project to better understand the scope and nature of homelessness in Waterloo Region. After approximately nine months of research and writing, the final report, entitled *Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region: A Background*, was launched in June 1999. This report served as the foundation upon which the current plan was founded. For while the report contained a host of information on the local homelessness situation, it offered no recommendations on how to solve the problems identified.

Shortly thereafter, the Community Homelessness Working Group, an offshoot of the Housing Coalition, was formed to start tackling some of the challenges identified in the *Background* document.

The Working Group's mandate is to complete this community plan and to take on a leadership role in carrying out the plan objectives in collaboration with other stakeholders, as well as updating the community plan as community needs evolve.

In February 2000, the Working Group hosted a two-day public workshop, entitled *Opening Doors*, which generated a number of suggestions on how to alleviate the local homelessness situation. Grouped under six themes, 53 recommendations were subsequently advanced in a report, launched July 2000, called *Opening Doors: A Call to Action on Homelessness in the Region of Waterloo*.

4.2.2 *Primary Data Collection and Writing*

Building on the work already completed, representatives from approximately 40 human service organizations and governmental bodies gathered in October 2000 to begin prioritizing the action items previously developed. While this group made a great deal of progress, it was clear that much work still needed to be done in order to close some of the gaps that were identified. Not only did the priorities have to be assigned and given deadlines, but many of the SCPI requirements and other plan components, including the issues of evaluation and accountability, had to be defined and articulated. Over the following two to three months, members of the Working Group went through a process of defining the required sections of the plan and assigning accountabilities. To aid in this process, a research and writing team was formed to help compile and organize the secondary data submitted by the various members of the Working Group. By December 2000, a draft plan had been assembled, although a number of sections needed to be completed.

Between January 2001 and July 2001 efforts were squarely focused on collecting the necessary information on the missing sections of the plan. Using key informant interviews with area service/shelter providers² and self-identified homeless individuals³, the SPC of C/ND was able to close many of these gaps. Other sections of the draft plan were assigned to and completed by Working Group members.

Through deliberations of the Working Group, it was identified that a number of tasks were required:

- An updated survey of the assets – the community's services and programs pertaining to homelessness
- Literature reviews of best practices, the link between homelessness and health and other homelessness research projects

In addition, ten categories/groups of people were identified by the Working Group as gap areas. Three service providers familiar with issues of homelessness in each of those following categories were selected and contacted:

- People with mental health issues
- People with addictions

² Service providers that were already active members of the Waterloo Region Homelessness Working Group were selected initially due to their great interest in homelessness and issues surrounding it. These service providers were from the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. A snowball technique was then used to reach out to other service providers in the broader communities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge and also to people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Service provider interviews focussed on an initial conversation with interviewees, whereby they were asked to share thoughts, concerns, or ideas that seemed to come up repeatedly in their minds about the issue of homelessness in this region and what they would most like to say about it or have noted in the report. This conversation was then followed up by a set of questions developed by the research team that were used as a guide to fill in missing pieces and to round out the information shared in the conversation with the service provider. The questions were used as prompts to fill in gaps rather than to direct the interview itself. Interviews were then typed up and emailed back to them for verification of information, at which time they could add, delete or change any part of it before it was incorporated into the next draft of the plan.

³ An attempt was made using a snowball technique to connect with three people who have experience with homelessness within the past five years in Waterloo Region from each of the ten categories. Service providers were asked for key people they knew who were dealing with the issue of homelessness directly. They were also asked for help in contacting these individuals to see if they would be willing to be interviewed. These interviews lasted anywhere from one to two hours. Each interviewee signed a consent form. Each interviewee was also given a definition of homelessness as per the Golden Report. They were asked to talk about their personal experiences and to share the questions, thoughts, ideas that had come to them during their experiences that they would like to have included in any report they were participating in. Additional gap areas were noted. When the interview was completed, the researcher then went over her notes with the person who has experience with homelessness and had them verify or change anything that was not as they had stated it. Interviews were not emailed back as for service providers because homeless people do not have computers.

- People coming out of the corrections system
- Immigrants/refugees
- People with physical disabilities
- Aboriginal people
- Women with dependent children
- Seniors
- Youth
- People discharged from hospital

In May 2001, co-ordinating and research staff were hired, via planning dollars made available through the SCPI program, to help to finalize the plan. A researcher filled in the missing research pieces of the plan and the co-ordinating staff helped to keep the project on-track and moving forward. A series of community consultations were then undertaken in August and September 2001.

4.3 Community Consultations

Several community consultation meetings were held throughout the summer of 2001 to try to build partnerships and capacities within communities. The meetings provided opportunities for people to talk about their ideas and experiences concerning homelessness, and to find out about what had been done and learned so far in the planning process. A consultation document was distributed at these meetings. The document presented a summary of some of the key points that would be included in the plan. It was intended to be a starting point for discussion and input.

4.3.1 Initial Community Meetings, August 2001

Three initial community meetings were held:

- August 1 – Cambridge – Wesley United Church, Cambridge
- August 2 – Kitchener-Waterloo – St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Kitchener
- August 9 – Rural communities – Trinity Lutheran Church, New Hamburg

More than 80 community members – people from non-profit organizations, faith groups, government, as well as people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk – attended these meetings. The participants reviewed the material in the consultation document and discussed areas that were of particular concern to their communities.

4.3.2 Additional Community Meetings, August and September 2001

Two additional community meetings were held, at the request of participants at the two initial meetings in Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo:

- August 21 – Cambridge – Welcome Aboard Community Drop-In Centre, Cambridge
- September 5 – Kitchener-Waterloo – St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Kitchener

For these meetings, there was a concerted effort to include people who are or have experience with homelessness, as well as those who are at risk. The agendas for the meetings were developed by a homelessness advisory group (made up of people with experience).

The Cambridge meeting was attended by over 60 people who are experiencing homelessness, at-risk people, service providers, government representatives, and members of faith groups. Participants developed a list of priorities by consensus for the Cambridge community. (These

are set out in the Findings section below.)

The second Kitchener-Waterloo community meeting took place after a dinner held weekly for people who are homeless or at risk at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Kitchener. Over 40 people who are homeless or at risk, as well as service providers, faith group members and government representatives attended this meeting. Participants developed a list of priorities for the Kitchener-Waterloo community. (These are set out in the Findings section below.)

4.4 Community Homelessness Forum, September 12, 2001

On September 12, an all-day, Region-wide forum was held at St. John's Lutheran Church in Waterloo to review all of the input gathered and prioritize the strategic directions. More than 100 people - members of the public, homeless and at-risk people, and representatives of service providers, business, education, faith groups, governments and health services – participated.

Four priority areas were confirmed by the community as equally important at this meeting:

- Meeting immediate needs
- Creating a new supply of housing
- Supports for special needs; prevention; building community capacity
- Information, education, and community awareness

Participants broke into groups to prioritize possible strategic directions within each priority area. At the end of the day, the entire group prioritized strategic directions over all of the four priority areas. (See the Priorities section and Appendix 4 for more details.)

5 ASSETS AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

This section provides a current (as of September 2001) survey of services and programs that exist in Waterloo Region to assist people homeless and at-risk persons. It seeks to identify the services that exist on the “continuum of supports” – that is, the range of resources that are appropriate for people facing whatever types of homelessness problems.⁴ Also included is a detailing of the level of resources that have been and are being contributed towards homelessness within the Region.

This listing is not intended as a directory of services. Rather, it is meant to provide the reader with a broad scope of the programs and services that exist, and to act as a guide to determine the extent of the continuum of supports in Waterloo Region. It will also assist in the identification of service gaps.

The services and programs are divided into three categories:

- Immediate-need housing
- Finding and maintaining housing
- Support programs and services

5.1 Immediate-Need Housing

5.1.1 Emergency Shelter Services

Emergency shelters are often, although not always, the first line of action to meet the needs of people who are homeless. In Waterloo Region there are seven emergency shelters (serving particular groups of people), as highlighted in the following table, providing approximately 160 beds.

Table 1: Emergency Shelter Services in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Age (Yrs)	Sex	Location
Argus Residence for Young People (female)	10 beds 1 cot	16-24	Females	Cambridge
Argus Residence for Young People (male)	9 beds 1 cot	16-24	Males	Cambridge
Salvation Army: Family Services (Cambridge)	Emergency overnight accommodation			Cambridge
Mary's Place	53 beds, up to 17 cots/couches as needed, some hotel use as nec.	16+ 0-10 (boys)	Females, their children	Kitchener
House of Friendship Men's Hostel	39 beds 12 cots	16+	Males	Kitchener
Salvation Army Men's Hostel	10 beds for transient men	16+	Males	Kitchener
Betty Thompson Youth Centre Shelter: Safe Haven	7 beds	12-15	Males Females	Kitchener

⁴ For more information on programs and policies of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, please see Appendix 8.

5.1.2 Temporary Special-Needs Housing

The four facilities listed in the following table offer temporary housing to specific groups of people with special needs.

Table 2: Temporary Special-Needs Housing in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Age (Yrs)	Sex	Location
Women's Crisis Services: Haven House*	Shelter for women fleeing domestic violence 18 beds (11 funded)	16+ 0-15	Females, their children	Cambridge
Anselma House*	Shelter for women fleeing domestic violence 20 beds	16+ 0-16	Females, their children	Kitchener
Grand River Hospital: Withdrawal Management Services	18 beds (men) 10 beds (women) 2 beds (flex.)	16+	Males Females	Kitchener
K-W Reception Centre	Initial accommodation (3-6 weeks) for 27 refugees			Location Confidential

5.1.3 Transitional and Supportive Housing

Transitional housing is defined as a combination of housing and services intended to facilitate self-reliance and self-sufficiency. This housing is intended for an individual's use for up to three years. Supportive housing programs offer housing and support services such as case management counselling and assistance with daily activities to people who otherwise would be unable to maintain housing within the community. For people with mental, cognitive, developmental or physical disabilities, supportive housing offers long-term housing in the community. The following table lists the transitional and supportive housing programs that serve Waterloo Region:

Table 3: Transitional and Supportive Housing in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Age & Sex	Location
Cambridge Association for the Mentally Handicapped	Various housing accommodations for individuals with developmental challenges	Males Females	Cambridge
Saint Monica House Inc. (Monica-Ainslie Place)	Priority to single adolescent mothers with pre-school children, up to 2 years	Females	Cambridge
Elmira and District Association for Community Living	Residences for individuals with developmental challenges	Males Females 18+	Elmira
AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area	Supportive housing assistance for HIV/AIDS community	Males Females	Kitchener
Anna Kaljas Homes	Boarding houses for individuals who have experienced mental health problems	Males Females	Kitchener
Christian Horizons	Individuals with developmental challenges, individuals who qualify for disability benefits	Males Females	Kitchener
Extend-A-Family Association (Family Home Program)	Matches individuals with developmental challenges with families willing to share their home	Males Females 18+	Kitchener

Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Plan, December 2001

Name	Description	Age & Sex	Location
House of Friendship Kitchener (Kiwans House)	Residential program for young men who are socially disadvantaged	Males 16-21	Kitchener
House of Friendship of Kitchener (Cramer House)	Long-term housing with support services for men needing social, emotional and mental health support	Males	Kitchener
Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region (Mooregate Apartment Project)	Adults with physical challenges	Males Females 18+	Kitchener
Participation House Project (Highpoint Apartment Program)	Accommodation for 30 adults with physical or multiple challenges, and adults with brain injuries	Males Females	Kitchener
Participation House Project (Shared Living For Adults with Acquired Brain Injury)	Individuals with acquired brain injuries	Males Females	Kitchener
Participation House Project (Union Lane Apartment Program)	Accommodation for 15 adults with physical or multiple challenges	Males Females	Kitchener
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre	Individuals with developmental and physical challenges	Males Females	Kitchener
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Breckwood Group Home)	Adults with developmental and physical challenges	Males Females	Kitchener
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Rainbow Group Homes)	Adults with developmental, physical and emotional challenges	Males Females 18+	Kitchener
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Rothsay Group Home)	Residential group home for adults with developmental and physical challenges	Males Females	Kitchener
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Tradewinds Group Home)	Adults with developmental and physical challenges	Males 16-21	Kitchener
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Zeller Group Home)	Adults with development and physical challenges	Males Females	Kitchener
Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health Inc.	Individuals who have mental health issues	Males Females 16+	Kitchener
Tri-County Mennonite Homes (Aldaview Services)	Individuals with developmental challenges	Males Females 16+	New Hamburg
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (St. Jacobs' Group Home)	Adults with developmental and physical challenges	Males Females	St. Jacobs
Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region (Albert Street Apartment Project)	Adults with physical challenges	Males Females 16+	Waterloo
Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region (Shamrock Co-op Project)	Adults with physical challenges	Males Females 16+	Waterloo
Saint Monica House, Inc.	Single adolescent women who are pregnant	Females	Waterloo
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Cornridge Group Home)	Residential group home for adults with developmental and physical challenges	Males Females	Waterloo
Sunbeam Residential Development Centre (Paradise Group Home)	Residential group home for adults with developmental and physical challenges	Males Females 18+	Waterloo

5.1.4 Domiciliary Hostels

Domiciliary hostels are permanent residences for people with special needs. The hostels are

owned by private operators who enter into agreements with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo and receive a per diem to provide residents with permanent accommodation and some supports to daily living. Some of these hostels are provided with a subsidy of up to \$40.00 per diem per person, which is set by the province and administered by the Region's Social Planning Division. Some tenants pay their own rent. Younger residents have some form of disability, either mental or physical which qualifies them for care. The following table lists domiciliary hostels in the Waterloo Region.

Table 4: Domiciliary Hostels Subsidized Residents (January to June 2001)

Domiciliary Hostel Name	Subsidized male residents average per month (Jan. to June 2001)	Subsidized female residents average per month (Jan. to June 2001)	Total subsidized residents av. per month. (Jan. to June 2001)	Location
Victoria Retirement Home	12.67	0	12.67	Ayr
Grand River Retirement Home	9.67	3	12.67	Cambridge
Marsdale Retirement Residence	6.17	16.67	21.17	Cambridge
Riverside Manor	11.33	0	11.33	Cambridge
St. Ann's Retirement Villa	0.17	2	2.17	Cambridge
St. James Place	18	1.67	19.67	Cambridge
Waring Estates	17.83	3	20.83	Cambridge
Martin's Rest Home	1	1	2	Elmira
Pilgrim's Provident Retirement Home	9	1	10	Elmira
Doon Valley Manor	11	5	16	Kitchener
Kitchener-Waterloo YWCA	0	8.5	8.5	Kitchener
Meadowcroft Place (Fergus Street)	11	24.67	35.67	Kitchener
Meadowcroft Place (Fieldgate)	11	37.67	48.67	Kitchener
Millwood Manor	26.33	27.17	53.5	Kitchener
Pandora Lodge	5.17	5.67	10.83	Kitchener
Underhill Residential Home	11.83	1	12.83	Waterloo

Note: These numbers refer only to subsidized residents, not residents who pay their own way.

5.2 Finding and Maintaining Housing

5.2.1 Finding Housing

Organizations throughout the Region assist people to find housing. The table below gives an overview of those organizations that provide a structured service to assist people to find housing:

Table 5: Finding Housing in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Location
John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington – Cambridge Career Connections	Housing search education and assistance and housing registry	Cambridge
AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area	Supportive Housing Assistance for HIV/AIDS community	Kitchener
Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre	Housing search assistance	Kitchener
K-W Urban Native Wigwam Project	Housing for Native people	Kitchener
Lutherwood CODA – The Youth Housing Centre	Housing search education and assistance and housing registry	Kitchener
Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health	Housing provision and support co-ordination services	Kitchener
Gay and Lesbians of Waterloo	Housing Registry of accommodation, both available and wanted in Kitchener and Waterloo	Waterloo

A variety of other organizations, such as the Community Information Centre of Waterloo Region, assist their clients to find housing informally through newspapers, word-of-mouth, etc.

5.2.2 Non-Profit Housing Stock (Assisted Housing Inventory)

Assisted housing accounts for approximately 16% of the rental units in the Region of Waterloo. Assisted housing covers units that receive a government subsidy to help keep rents geared towards low to moderate income households. The majority of assisted housing units have their rents set at 25% of a household's income level.

There are a number of different types of assisted housing, including private non-profit, municipal non-profit, co-operative and public housing. Private non-profit housing is owned and operated by non-profit corporations often affiliated with church and ethnic groups. Municipal non-profits are initiated by municipalities but are often independently owned and operated by separate corporations. Co-operatives are owned, managed and maintained by their respective members. Public housing in our community has been transferred from the Ontario Housing Corporation to the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

Any of the above social housing types may include units with support services that allow tenants to live independently within the community. This supportive housing may be directly offered by the housing provider or the housing provider may dedicate units to a support service group clientele, such as the Independent Living Centre. In the case of dedicated supportive housing, all of the tenants in a housing development require support services.

The funding and administration of assisted housing is currently undergoing changes. Both the provincial and federal governments announced they were "getting out of the housing business." As of January 1, 1998, the funding of social housing became a municipal responsibility with administration to follow. The devolution of social housing affects most provincial social housing providers, including those cost-shared with the federal government, and most federal unilaterally funded sites. The province is retaining the responsibility for dedicated supportive housing and the federal government is retaining the responsibility for federally funded co-operative housing.

In the Region of Waterloo, there are more than 60 social housing providers, representing a total of 8,792 units. (Please refer to the table below.)

Table 6: Social Housing Inventory, Region of Waterloo, April 2001

Social Housing Devolution Anticipated⁵		
Provider Type	Number of Providers	Number of Units
Co-operative (Provincial) ⁶	12	860
Local Housing Authority	2	2,557
Municipal Non-Profit	3	1,038
Private Non-Profit (Provincial) ⁶		
Supportive	2	110
Other	14	1,350
Private Non-Profit (Federal) ⁶	26	1,519
Private Non-Profit Beds	3	70
Subtotal	61	7,504
Private Rent Supplement Units	36	428
TOTAL	97	7,932
Social Housing Devolution Not Anticipated		
Provincial Private Non-Profit	7	127
Federal Co-operative	14	733
TOTAL	21	860
TOTAL	118	8,792

Note: Devolution involves the transfer of the funding and administration of social housing from the province to the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager – the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

In June 2001, there were 3,899 people waiting for subsidized housing in Waterloo Region according to statistics released by the Co-ordinated Access System .

5.2.3 Help with Eviction/Legal Problems

Waterloo Region Community Legal Services offers legal services to people with low incomes throughout the Region for eviction notices and/or other legal problems regarding housing. Its main office is located in Kitchener but also has regular office times two half-days per week at a new office in Cambridge. Other times are available by appointment. In addition, the YWCA of Kitchener-Waterloo offers 30 minutes of free legal counsel to women through its Wellness Centre – on eviction/housing matters as well as other legal issues.

⁵ The above totals include approximately 835 rent supplement units of which the administration and funding of 617 units are proposed for devolution. Waterloo Region Housing manages approximately 428 rent supplement agreements as shown above with private landlords. Under these agreements, private market units are provided to tenants with Waterloo Region Housing paying a rent-geared-to-income supplement to the landlord. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing administers approximately 407 rent supplement units in unilaterally funded federal sites. One hundred and forty three (143) rent supplement units are in federal, private non-profits and 264 of the rent supplement units are included in the federal co-operative unit total. The 264 federal co-operative rent supplement units are not being devolved.

⁶ The reference to provincial and federal in parentheses refers to the original source of funding and administration, and not ownership or management.

5.3 Support Programs and Services

5.3.1 Drop-In Centres

Drop-ins provide a place of support and practical assistance (i.e. washrooms, showers, laundry facilities, information) for people who are homeless to access during the day or evening when shelters may not be open. Some serve specific populations while others are open to anyone. The following table highlights the drop-in centres in the Waterloo Region.

Table 7: Drop-in Centres in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Age (Yrs)	Sex	Location
Out of the Cold (Cambridge)	Provides a safe place for city's poor and homeless to eat and sleep (Operates Nov.-Mar.)	All	Males Females	Cambridge
Welcome Aboard Community Drop-In Centre	Social and recreational opportunities	All	Males Females	Cambridge
The Vineyard		All	Males Females	Cambridge
Cambridge Active Self-Help	Individuals who have experienced mental health problems	All	Males Females	Cambridge
Out of the Cold (Kitchener)	Provides a safe place for city's poor and homeless to eat and sleep (Operates Nov.-Mar.)	All	Males Females	Kitchener
Ray of Hope, Inc. Oasis Drop in Centre	For street kids and others in need	All	Males Females	Kitchener
Reaching our Outdoor Friends (ROOF)	Street youth and youth in transition	12-25	Males Females	Kitchener
The Working Centre: Job Search Resource Centre	Unemployed or at risk, work related issues	Adults	Males Females	Kitchener
Weejeendimin Native Resource Centre	Drop-in centre for Native people	All	Males Females	Kitchener
Salvation Army (K-W) Booth Centre, Alley Door	No restriction; geared to youth		Males Females	Kitchener
House of Friendship of Kitchener	Drop in available to non-residents	All	Males	Kitchener

* The Cambridge Out of the Cold Drop-in Centre opened for sleeping on Oct. 30, 2000. On that night they had 12 sleep over. By Nov. 15, .2000 the range was 19-39 people.

In most of the urban areas in Waterloo Region, there are community and neighbourhood centres that offer drop-in programs for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There are so many that could fall into this category that we have not listed them here.

5.3.2 Emergency Food/Grocery Programs

Food banks and meal programs provide a basic necessity in the battle for survival for vulnerable people. When housing costs account for the largest portion of an individual's expenses, food becomes a basic necessity that people who are very poor cannot afford. In some cases food banks and meal programs assist people to maintain housing that they would not otherwise be able to afford to. The following table lists the emergency food programs within Waterloo Region.

Table 8: Emergency Food Programs (i.e. Food Banks, etc.)

Name	Description	Age & Sex	Location
Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank	In return for food, recipients perform tasks	Everyone	Cambridge
Salvation Army (Cambridge North)	Food to those in need (Serves Hespeler and Preston)	Everyone	Cambridge
Salvation Army Family Services	Emergency relief for food (Serves Cambridge and Township of North Dumfries)	Everyone	Cambridge
Growing Together	Adults with low income	Everyone	Elmira
Woolwich Community Services	Emergency food hampers for short term. (Serves Woolwich)	Everyone	Elmira
House of Friendship of Kitchener	Food hampers for individuals and families with low income	Everyone	Kitchener
Reaching our Outdoor Friends Inc.	Food hampers for street youth and youth in transition	Males, Females, 12-25 years	Kitchener
Salvation Army (K-W) Community and Family Services	Emergency relief for food (Serves Kitchener and Waterloo)	Everyone	Kitchener
St. Mark's Community Ministry	Food hampers	Everyone	Kitchener
Church of God	Food hampers	Everyone	Kitchener
Glencairn Church Bridges Centre	Food hampers	Everyone	Kitchener
Food Bank of Waterloo Region	Mon.-Fri. 8:30-4:30 Obtains food for distribution to member agencies	Not applicable	Kitchener with distribution throughout Region
Weejeendimin Native Resource Centre	Distributes food vouchers for Native people	Everyone	Kitchener
Wilmot Family Resource Centre Food Bank	Collects and distributes food hampers to individuals and families (Serves Wellesley and Wilmot)	Everyone	New Hamburg
St. Vincent de Paul Society	Food hampers	Everyone	Various locations

5.3.3 Emergency Meal Programs

Throughout Waterloo Region, non-profit organizations, community groups and faith communities provide hot meals and/or bag lunches to people who are homeless or who live in forms of housing that does not permit them to cook their own meals (e.g., rooming houses). There are a number of such programs in Waterloo Region. The following list only offers a few examples:

Table 9: Emergency Meal Programs in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Location
Trinity Community Table	Hot Lunch to people on Monday, Wednesday and Friday throughout the year	Cambridge
Reaching Our Outdoor Friends	Emergency meal program	Kitchener
St. John's Kitchen	Nutritious lunch time meal	Kitchener
Salvation Army Booth Centre	Community meal program	Kitchener

In addition, a number of other churches and schools provide meal programs.

5.3.4 Emergency Clothing Programs

There are many clothing distribution centres in Waterloo Region. Some services charge a minimal fee for clothing, while some services provide clothing free of charge. The following are some examples:

Table 10: Emergency Clothing Programs in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
Birthright of Cambridge	Free clothing for mother and baby	Waterloo Region	Cambridge
Greenway-Chaplin Community Group	Clothing exchange	City of Cambridge (Greenway-Chaplin Neighbourhood)	Cambridge
Salvation Army (Cambridge Family Thrift Stores)	Clothing available	Waterloo Region	Cambridge
Salvation Army Family Services in Cambridge	Emergency clothing available	City of Cambridge, Township of North Dumfries	Cambridge
United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries, Operation Coverup	Distributes donated winter coats to low-income families	City of Cambridge, Township of North Dumfries	Cambridge
Woolwich Information Thrift Shop	Sells used clothing	Waterloo Region	Elmira
Birthright	Free clothing for mother and baby	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
The Blessing Centre	Thrift store provides donated clothing	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Children's Needs Distribution Centre	Collects and distributes donated children's clothing (Free)	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Clothes Closet	Used clothing at minimum cost. Free in specific cases of need by referral from community agencies	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
El Shaddai Outreach Ministries	Free clothing	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Highland-Stirling Community Group	Clothing exchange	City of Kitchener	Kitchener
House of Friendship of Kitchener	Some clothing available in emergency situations	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
House of Friendship of Kitchener, Chandler-Mowat Community Program	Clothing exchange	City of Kitchener (Chandler-Mowat Neighbourhood)	Kitchener
Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre	Work related clothing	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich	Kitchener
Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Shop	Used clothing sold at reasonable prices	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Oasis Drop-in Centre	Free clothing	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Reaching Our Outdoor Friends Inc.	Clothing for street youth and youth in transition 12-25 years	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Rockway Thrift Shop	Sells used clothing	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Low cost clothing at minimal prices for those in need	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Salvation Army (K-W) Community and Family Services	Emergency clothing available	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo	Kitchener
Salvation Army (K-W) Share the Warmth	Distributes donated adult and children's winter clothing	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich	Kitchener
St. Vincent De Paul, Valu-Centre	Sells used clothing at reasonable prices	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Weejeendimin Native Resource Centre	Free Clothing for Native people	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Wilmot Family Resource Centre	Supports available for clothing	Township of Wilmot, Township of Wellesley	New Hamburg
K-W Crisis Pregnancy Centre	Maternity clothes and baby clothes available	Waterloo Region	Waterloo
Mennonite Central Committee – Waterloo Generations	Used clothing sold at reasonable prices	Waterloo Region	Waterloo

A variety of neighbourhood associations and community centres also offer free clothing to those who may need it.

5.3.5 Outreach

There are a number of outreach programs operating throughout the Region. The following table is a list of these outreach programs.

Table 11: Outreach Programs in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
Cambridge Out Of The Cold	Part-time outreach worker and volunteers who assist people who are homeless to access medical care, housing, and income assistance	Cambridge	Cambridge
Anishnabeg Outreach	Provides information on and referral to education, training and employment services to Native people	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Townships of Wellesley, Woolwich, Wilmot	Kitchener
El Shaddai Outreach Ministries	Community relief	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Kitchener-Waterloo Counselling Services, Youth Outreach Program	Counselling for youth 12-24 years and their families	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Reaching Our Outdoors Friends	Front line support, counselling, outreach for street youth and youth in transition 12-25 years	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre	Medical services every Tuesday at St. John's Kitchen; Nurse Practitioners provide medical services to women and children at Mary's Place and Anselma House, etc.	City of Kitchener, downtown area, City of Waterloo	Kitchener
Wilmot Family Resource Centre, Outreach Worker	Supports available for food, clothing, shelter, counselling, childcare, recreation, transportation	Township of Wilmot and Wellesley	New Hamburg

5.3.6 Community Health Services

Organizations exist in Kitchener and Cambridge to deliver health care to people who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre offers medical services to people who are homeless or living in unsafe/inappropriate housing. In Cambridge, Out of the Cold and Welcome Aboard Drop-in are working in partnership with Langs Farm Community Health Centre to provide medical services one afternoon per week in the downtown Galt area of Cambridge.

5.3.7 Broader Health and Addictions Services

Because of the strong correlation between homelessness and health issues, particularly mental health problems and addictions, it is useful to identify those programs and services that can provide valuable assistance to homeless and at-risk individuals. The following table outlines these resources.

Table 12: Broader Health and Addiction Services in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
Alcohol and Drug Recovery	Association of recovery houses, treatment centres, detoxification centres and daycare centres for chemical dependency	Waterloo Region	Cambridge
Alcoholics Anonymous	Confidential fellowship provides ongoing support for recovery through shared experience, daily meetings throughout the Region	Waterloo Region	Cambridge

Waterloo Region Community Homelessness Plan, December 2001

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept. – Communicable Disease, Dental & Sexuality Resource Division	A needle exchange program is set up with Out of the Cold volunteers at Welcome Aboard Community Drop-In Centre and Wesley United Church in Cambridge	Waterloo Region	Cambridge
Canadian Mental Health Association – Community Support Services	Information, referral and support in areas of housing, education, leisure, employment, treatment and all mental health concerns for individuals with mental health issues, and their families	City of Cambridge and surrounding	Cambridge
		City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo and surrounding area	Kitchener
		Township of North Dumfries	Ayr
Grand River Hospital, Withdrawal Management Services	Non medical detoxification, observation, care and referral for individuals abusing alcohol, prescription drugs, illicit drugs and solvents, or in withdrawal from the same	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Regional Addiction and Family Counselling	Therapeutic counselling specializing in addictions of drug, alcohol, gambling for individuals, couples and families	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Seniors and Medication Program	Therapeutic counselling specializing in addictions of drug, alcohol, gambling for individuals, couples and families	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
The Wellness Network	Information and education on mental health issues	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept. – Communicable Disease, Dental & Sexuality Resource Division	Provide a comprehensive STD and Sexual Health Clinic at Reaching Our Outdoor Friends Inc (ROOF)	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept. – Communicable Disease, Dental & Sexuality Resource Division	Provide an anonymous HIV outreach clinic where clients can also access free immunization at AIDS Committee of Cambridge Kitchener Waterloo and Area (ACCKWA)	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept. – Communicable Disease, Dental & Sexuality Resource Division	Sexually Transmitted Disease Program brokers free medications needed for treatment at the Urgent Care and Walk-in Clinics, and Cambridge and Kitchener Community Health Centres	Waterloo Region	Locations throughout the Region
Narcotics Anonymous	Self-help group for individuals with drug or alcohol dependencies	Waterloo Region	Meetings held at locations throughout Waterloo Region
Waterloo Region Prenatal Nutrition Program	Provides grocery store vouchers or free prenatal vitamins as well as counselling and education to women who are financially disadvantaged, socially isolated, new to Canada, or adolescent	Waterloo Region	Sites throughout Waterloo region
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept. – Community Health Resource Centre	Health promotion resource centre	Waterloo Region	Waterloo
Waterloo Region Community Health Dept. – Communicable Disease, Dental & Sexuality Resource Division	Dental program provides information on how to access various government funded programs available, including a “local needs” dental clinic for children under 19 yrs	Waterloo Region	Waterloo
House of Friendship	Residential treatment program for adult women with alcohol or drug dependencies	Waterloo Region	Waterloo
House of Friendship, 174 King Street North: Alcoholism Recovery Home	Community based, residential, rehabilitation facility for adult males with alcohol or dual dependencies	Waterloo Region	Waterloo

5.3.8 Programs to Reduce Homelessness with/for Aboriginal Peoples

The following table outlines programs to prevent and reduce homelessness with/for Aboriginal people in Waterloo Region.

Table 13: Programs For Aboriginal Peoples in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
K-W Urban-Native Wigwam Project	Various housing accommodations for individuals of aboriginal origin	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Anishnabeg Outreach	Provides information on and referral to education, training and employment services to Native people	City of Cambridge, Township of North Dumfries	Cambridge
Anishnabeg Outreach	Provides information on and referral to education, training and employment services to Native people	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich	Kitchener
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre	Provides primary medical care, allied health including nutrition, social work, health promotion, advocacy to individual living in downtown Kitchener or are newcomers from different ethnocultural groups or native people	City of Kitchener, downtown area, City of Waterloo	Kitchener
Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre, Community Health Helpers Program	Assists individual and families with health related issues	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo	Kitchener
Weejeendimin Native Resource Centre	Referrals to community agencies for employment and housing	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
White Owl Native Ancestry Association	Provides support and information	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Waterloo Public Interest Research Group	Resource centre includes information on Native people	Waterloo Region	Waterloo

5.3.9 Programs to Reduce Homelessness with/for Youth

The following table lists programs and services for youth.

Table 14: Residences For Youth in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
Argus Residence for Young People (females)	Emergency or transitional shelters for youth and young adults 16-24 years	City of Cambridge, Township of North Dumfries	Cambridge
Argus Residence for Young People (males)	Emergency or transitional shelters for youth and young adults 16-24 years	City of Cambridge, Township of North Dumfries	Cambridge
Saint Monica House, Monica-Ainslie Place	Temporary, supportive housing for up to 2 years. Priority is given to single adolescent mothers with pre-school children	Waterloo Region	Cambridge
Betty Thompson Youth Centre – Safe Haven	Emergency Shelter for Youth 12-15 years	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
House of Friendship – Kiwanis House	Residential Program for Males 16-21 years who are socially disadvantaged	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
House of Friendship – Men's Hostel	Short-term sleeping accommodation and meals for homelessness 16 years and over	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Marillac Place	Housing and support services for up to 1 year for pre- and post-natal women 15-25 years whose child/children are under 3 years	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
YWCA – Mary's Place	Supportive, temporary shelter and long-term residence for women 16 year and over and their children (boys up to 10 years)	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Saint Monica House	Residential living for single adolescent women who are pregnant	Waterloo Region	Waterloo

The following support programs exist (e.g., counselling, life skills, housing education):

Table 15: Support Programs and Services for Youth in Waterloo Region

Name	Description	Area Served	Location
John Howard Society of Waterloo-Wellington, Cambridge Youth Services	Employment resource centre, registry of affordable housing for individuals 16-24 years	City of Cambridge, Township of North Dumfries	Cambridge
Lutherwood Youth Employment Centre	Provides information on local job market, career planning and occupations, computer and internet access, job search techniques, interview skills, resume development, bus tickets, work-related clothing. For youth 16-24 years	City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich	Kitchener
Ray of Hope, Oasis Drop In Centre	Drop-in centre offering practical service, and interdenominational spiritual ministry	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
ROOF	Support, counselling and outreach for street youth and youth in transition 12-25 years	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
SOLO – Preparation for Independent Living	Prepares youth for independent living by teaching and maintaining basic living skills	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
Waterloo Region District School Board	Independent learning in classroom setting for youth 16-24 years who are not enrolled in regular day school	Waterloo Region	Kitchener
St. Mary's Counselling	Individual and group behavioural therapy for individuals with alcohol, drug and gambling concerns and their families	Waterloo Region	Kitchener

For further discussion of resources for youth, see Appendix 9.

5.4 Community Contributions

The Working Group is a coalition of partners with shared values and common goals. As the Working Group continues its work, there will continue to be many more people and organizations involved in this community plan. The growing list of people who want to stay informed and involved attests to this. During the development of the plan, contacts were made with more than 1,000 individuals and groups, and many have requested to be part of the ongoing communication for this community process.

This interest is expected to grow and be instrumental in the implementation of strategies to address the general priorities of the plan. Community residents, service providers, housing providers, planners, and funders will all be encouraged to play active roles as more detailed actions strategies are clarified and targeted. Solutions will be realized through the establishment of partnerships, with contributions of monetary resources and in-kind services. The types of players that have been involved to this point include:

- Community residents who are homeless or at risk of being homeless
- Service providers
- Housing providers – public and private non-profit housing providers, emergency shelter providers, landlords, etc.
- Planners – Social Planning Councils, District Health Council, Regional Municipality of Waterloo
- Funders – Human Resources Development Canada, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Regional Municipality of Waterloo, local governments, United Ways, private corporations

Some of these contributions have tallied to date. An initial partial survey of area funders and service providers indicated a level of resources just under \$7 million for the April 1999 to March 2001 period. In September 2001, a request was made of Working Group members and local funders to submit updated information about resources allocated to homelessness. Not many organizations were able to provide the requested information in the short turn around time for the update but the information that was obtained is striking. Information provided by only five Working Group member organizations and eight funders is summarized in the table below. Note that information collected in the update request is based on the organizations own fiscal year.

Table 16: September 2001 Update Survey of Community Contributions to Homelessness

Sponsor	2000	2001
United Way	420,000	Not yet totalled
1st Echo	25,000	Not yet totalled
Trillium	99,000	129,000
K-W Community Foundation	44,200	Not yet totalled
City of Kitchener	59,215	43,474
2 Rural Townships	2,000	2,000
Region of Waterloo	4,440,000	6,060,000
5 Community Agencies	6,252,380	6,670,467
Totals	\$11,343,795	\$12,775,941

The information presented in the above two tables shows a solid and increasing investment in support of homelessness in the Waterloo Region community. Much of this increased investment is through a strong commitment to these issues by the Regional Municipality, which is taking on a range of responsibilities for housing and homelessness-related service delivery. Regional Council has made a strong commitment to develop solutions to poverty and related issues such as homelessness, and staff from three Regional departments have been active contributors to the process through which this community plan was developed.

More information must be collected to determine the full scope of contributions throughout Waterloo Region. This is needed to determine where resource gaps exist and where opportunities can be found. Specific action proposals that respond to the strategic priorities set out in this community plan will add further to our tally of local contributions.

6 FINDINGS

6.1 Context

6.1.1 The Backgrounder

Key sources of data for the *Backgrounder* study were interviews and/or surveys from a total of 398 service providers and people who have experienced homelessness. Although the *Backgrounder* report did not make recommendations, key issues and next steps were identified in the final section of the report. These were summarized into five general categories for the purpose of this community plan. From this summary the main issues can be described as:

1. Public education
2. Values of caring and inclusion
3. Sufficient incomes/reduce financial barriers
4. Accessible, respectful and helpful services
5. Information
6. Expand shelter services for specific needs
7. More affordable housing

6.1.2 Opening Doors Forum

As a result of interest expressed by the Waterloo Region Housing Coalition and the community as a whole, the Opening Doors Forum was held in February 2000 to further explore how to take action for issues related to homelessness. The attendance at the workshop portion of this forum was 170 people from various sectors of the community, including those who have experienced homelessness. The report produced from the forum discussion summarized the forum input into 53 suggestions for action, which were categorized into the following six main themes:

1. Creating a new supply of affordable housing
2. Information, education and community awareness
3. Support services for special needs
4. Building capacity through community outreach
5. Meeting immediate needs
6. Inventories and co-ordination of services

On October 19, 2000, the Working Group hosted a broader community meeting in which 40 participants, primarily non-profit community based agency representatives, municipal staff and community activists took part. The purpose of that meeting was to review the 53 suggested actions which had been summarized from the forum discussions and begin the work to synthesize and set priorities on action to respond to homelessness. Participants were asked to vote on their top choices of the original 53 suggestions. The exercise provided an initial ranking of the top nine suggestions:

1. Create a rent bank that could address needs such as first and last months' rent and utility hook-up costs for those who have the ability to pay monthly rent but have no savings to make the initial up-front payments.
2. Develop discharge protocols with institutional facilities to ensure individuals are not released into the community without support and shelter.
3. Develop a permanent shelter facility in Cambridge.
4. Create a shelter facility where families can be temporarily housed as a family unit.
5. Create new affordable rental units by piggy backing the various incentives, grants and loans provided by all three levels of government.

6. Advocate for core funding for emergency shelters not tied to Ontario Works or the current per diem formula.
7. Request local area municipalities and the Region of Waterloo to develop a "housing first" policy for municipally owned surplus lands and properties acquired through tax sales, public works projects or redundant, obsolete buildings.
8. Seek out the homeless and either bring aid to them or bring them to aid.
9. Educate governments on the high degree of service required to adequately care for the homeless, the linkages between shelter providers and support services.

6.2 Interviews (May – July 2001)

6.2.1 The Voices of People Who Are, Have Been, or Are at Risk of Homelessness; Interviewed in May-July 2001⁷

As already noted, the Working Group believed that it is essential to include the opinions, thoughts, and suggestions of people who have been homeless, are currently homeless and/or are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. This section provides a summary of the voices of 21 people who are, have been, or are at risk of homelessness. It includes both men and women, a variety of age groups, abilities and cultural backgrounds. This section is placed before the service providers' information because we believe the community plan should be understood and shaped through these people's eyes first. A listing of their comments is presented in Appendix 5. Because the number of interviews was small (N=21), all input was summarized together to find general and special need categories of issues and gaps from individuals.

The suggestions/recommendations from these community members were categorized into general themes as follows:

- People have a right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- The public needs to understand the complexity of homelessness.
- Rents are too high, and social assistance is inadequate.
- Current programs and services are limited – there are not enough services, they are not offered in the right places or they are not flexible enough to meet people's special needs.
- Homeless and at-risk people need options.
- More affordable and accessible housing units are needed.

6.2.2 The Voices of Service Providers Who Were Surveyed in May-July 2001

Representatives of service provider organizations (N=20) that work with the identified vulnerable groups provided key information about gaps in service and other issues. A listing of their comments is presented in Appendix 6. It is noteworthy that all interviewees believe there has been an increase in the numbers of people who are homelessness over the past few years.

The comments from these service providers were categorized into general themes as follows:

- Stress, health issues and lack of choice are major factors affecting homeless and at-risk people.
- Financial needs are crucial; too many people cannot afford rent.
- People need access to places for personal care and health care.
- We need more information about specially vulnerable populations (such as persons with

⁷ We intentionally set out to talk with people who were connected to social and health services as well as those who may not been connected. We understand that most people do not compartmentalize people the way the health and social service system does.

mental health/addictions; persons with physical disabilities; youth; women (particularly those with dependent children); immigrants and refugees; Aboriginals; seniors; the working poor).

- There is an urgent need for more affordable, appropriate housing.
- There needs to be more emergency and transition housing.
- Housing must be located in appropriate places throughout the Region.

6.3 Homelessness And Health – Is There A Connection?

It has been long been observed by service providers that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have poorer health than the general population. The Working Group determined that this apparent link merited further study. A literature review was undertaken to explore the connection between homelessness and health and to examine best practices in responding to homelessness and health issues.

6.3.1 Examining the Connection

A home is the foundation where families live and grow. It provides shelter from rain, snow and the hot summer sun. It's where we rest and sleep, as well as a place where we can relax and be ourselves. The home is where our earliest memories form. It plays an important role in early child development and our physical and emotional health. Having a safe and healthy home is a basic human need. Without having that need met, the health of individuals, families and communities is put at risk. Finding solutions to homelessness and taking action to prevent it are key to building healthier, stronger communities.

When the United Nations designated 1987 as the International Year of Shelter, it identified that several levels of homelessness exist. People with no homes were described as experiencing absolute homelessness, while those people with substandard housing experienced relative homelessness. There is strong evidence that both types of homelessness lead to adverse health effects. Recently, the Canadian Public Health Association has identified that homelessness has emerged as a fundamental health issue for Canadians. "Substantial evidence of the health consequences, including increased mortality and morbidity and diminished quality of life, is available" (Canadian Public Health Association, CPHA, 1997)

The Working Group's research into the relationship between health and homelessness has raised a number of important issues:

- What is the status of health as it relates to absolute homelessness?
- What is the status of health as it relates to relative homelessness?
- What is the relationship between homelessness and the determinants of health?
- What affect does homelessness have on child development?
- How can health care delivery systems meet the needs of homeless people?
- What role does a "healthy cities, healthy communities" model play in improving the health of the homeless?
- How can communities address the determinants of health?
- What role does healthy public policy play?

Although housing is considered a fundamental prerequisite for health around the world, homelessness is emerging as a crucial health issue for all Canadians. The health consequences of absolute and relative homelessness include increased mortality, morbidity and diminished quality of life. Homeless people experience more illness, suffer more violence and die earlier than the housed population. The health of a community is affected by homelessness as well. Communities with higher inequalities present experience higher rates of illness and

death. Communities, also, lose when their children grow up without sufficient housing and the opportunity to reach their full potential. Fortunately, each community in Canada can work together to ensure that disparities are minimal, that all people have access to available, affordable and safe housing, safe and secure food, education and an adequate income, social networks, and co-ordinated health care.

The community of Waterloo Region has an opportunity to reduce some of these disparities and improve the overall health of its residents by building its capacity to alleviate and prevent absolute and relative homelessness. The community can accomplish this goal by:

- Involving and building on the capacity of homeless people each step of the way.
- Forming a task group of key people who can develop a co-ordinated health care delivery system for homeless people at all levels along the health continuum.
- Providing housing that is adequate and affordable.
- Ensuring food security and safety by fostering connections with "FoodLink", addressing special dietary needs of homeless people, and educating people about safe food handling.
- Encouraging social re-integration through the development of supportive community networks.
- Changing community attitudes toward the homeless by using social marketing techniques.
- Integrating education, life and job skills with supportive counselling to prepare homeless people for the workforce through the formation of a task group of key people who can make it happen.
- Using community economic development strategies to supplement the incomes of homeless people and providing business mentorship and education programs which build on the skills and talents of homeless people.
- Keeping homelessness on the political agenda.

This research is consistent with all other information that we have gathered, and it articulates important systemic issues that affect people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These points are elaborated upon in Appendix 7.

6.3.2 Summary of Best Practices

The results of this research are also included in Appendix 7. It is anticipated this material will provide an invaluable resource when action strategies are planned and projects ideas are developed. The literature review suggests that:

- There is a need for increased community awareness on the impact absolute homelessness has on health of the homeless people and the health of communities where large income gaps exist.
- Homeless people have key health issues that require treatment. People need access, provision of culturally sensitive services and resources for obtaining prescribed treatment.
- Health issues that need to be addressed:
 - Depression, hopelessness & suicide
 - Substance abuse and addictions
 - Mental health interventions from crisis to long term care
 - Provision of special needs diets (pregnancy, ethnic, medical)
 - Dental care
 - Emergency care treatment of frostbite, hypothermia and hyperthermia
 - Treatment of long-term illnesses associated with homelessness i.e., tuberculosis,

- hepatitis, AIDS, arthritis
- Palliative care hospices that respect and understand street culture
- Access to appropriate health care and supportive services is an issue (travel, identification, keeping appointments, etc.).
- There should be a co-ordinated, seamless health care delivery system for homeless people along the health continuum (prevention to palliative care) and re-orientation of Waterloo Region's health system to meet the needs of the homeless.
- Preventative health measures are needed:
 - Increase awareness and education of homeless and frontline workers
 - Harm reduction strategies ranging from needle exchange, prevention & treatment of sexually transmitted diseases to provision of addiction programs i.e. methadone clinics.
 - Shelter inspections, food handling inspections and education
 - Birth control intervention and pregnancy supports
- The community should adopt a holistic approach such as "Healthy Cities, Healthy Communities" to address social issues that impact health by using the best practices of other communities:
 - Income support, opportunities for entrepreneurship, store front shops, odd jobs, job bulletin boards, provision of loans and grants through a local homelessness fund
 - Skill-building opportunities through job readiness programs, educational programs, mentorship programs (involve business and retired community) tailored to homeless persons
 - Supply of goods and services such as "Barter Works", sweat equity etc.
 - Ensure food security, suitability and safety by fostering connections to foodlink, hamper programs, etc.
 - Ensure clothing is available through depots, extend coat exchange programs to homeless, create awareness & opportunity for public to donate clothing for homeless
 - Mobilize the community to provide both informal and formal support circles to homeless individuals: befriending, self-help, wrap-around programs, etc.
 - Provide housing/shelter environments conducive to healthy child development
 - Provide housing that meets UN basic recommendations: affordable, within reach of employment, education and health care, providing safe tenure and personal safety, protecting from the elements and providing safe water and sanitation – strategies could include tenant eviction prevention, training and employing homeless people to restore old housing stock and in creating new housing stock, community land trusts
 - Advocating to all levels of government to change legislation contributing to homeless and loss of available housing stock and to build healthy public policy on housing
 - Encourage all levels of government to legislate and enforce adequate property standards that will prevent substandard rental housing
 - Encourage all levels of government to create housing affordability policies

6.4 Community Consultations, August and September 2001

As stated in the Community Plan Development Process section above, two additional community meetings were held, at the request of participants at the two initial meetings in Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo, in order to engage as many homeless and at-risk people as possible to gather input into the development of the community plan. The meetings were held

on August 21 in Cambridge and on September 5 in Kitchener-Waterloo.

The overwhelming majority of the participants at the Cambridge meeting were clients of the Welcome Aboard Drop-In Centre, where the Cambridge gathering developed priorities by consensus. At the Kitchener-Waterloo meeting, only the homeless and at-risk participants voted on priorities generated by the discussion. The Working Group believes it is quite important to include those priorities here.

6.4.1 Cambridge Community Meeting Priorities, August 21, 2001

(Priorities developed by consensus)

1. Shelter
 - More emergency shelter – year-round shelter for adults women with no children
2. Spaces for personal care & storage
 - Places to shower
 - Places to store possessions
3. Affordable housing
 - More affordable accessible housing, especially one-bedroom units
4. Jobs / income
 - More income for adults – low wages aren't enough
 - Increase minimum wage
 - More realistic shelter allowance
 - Buses to go where people need to go to work
 - Homeless temp agency
5. Better transportation
6. Co-ordination of services/supports
 - To help people with continual year round support to help people get off the roller coaster

6.4.2 Kitchener-Waterloo Community Meeting Priorities, September 5, 2001

(Priorities determined by “dotmocracy” vote)

Priority	No. of votes
▪ More access for food hampers and healthier foods	12
▪ More subsidized affordable housing - turn abandoned buildings into housing	8
▪ Rent bank - first and last month; eviction prevention, renovations into apartments, upgrading, barter and sweat equity	8
▪ International inventory of best practices including examples from multicultural members of our community	7
▪ Put rent controls back in	6
▪ Safe place to talk, get support, reduce stress, moral support	5
▪ 24-hr drop-in centre	4
▪ Service like habitat for humanity for multiples/apartments and repairs	4
▪ Permanent free emergency shelter primarily for families and couples	4

- Reduce services and increase natural supports 3
- Increase Ontario Disabilities Support Program / Ontario Works benefits 3
- More corporate involvement in solutions 2
- Support network for elderly, people with small children, anyone who is isolated 1
- Need to cap administrative costs for homelessness services 1
- Low cost temporary/transitional housing 1
- Clean public showers and laundry 1
- Accessible health care 1
- Non-medical support 2-3 day stays for people who feel unsafe/distress 1
- More community kitchens (24 hours per day) throughout city - community places with total involvement of people – can make 3 meals 7 days a week and holidays 1

6.5 Tying Together the Threads

The Working Group set about in August and September 2001 to bring together all of the inputs from these various sources and identify key areas of activity and general strategic directions. This was a multi-stage exercise, in which Working Group members examined the findings to look for common concerns and potential initiatives. Two constant benchmarks were used in sorting through the material: the goals of the Working Group (which had been established through numerous strategic planning sessions) and the themes of the Opening Doors Forum, which are known to have a broad degree of sanction in the community.

As a result, the Working Group was able to identify four priority areas and a number of strategic directions. These were then reviewed and confirmed at the forum on September 12, 2001. The four priority areas, listed below, are explored further in the Priorities section.

- Creating a new supply of housing
- Meeting immediate needs
- Supports for special needs; prevention; building community capacity
- Information, education and community awareness

7 PRIORITIES

(As Established at the September 12, 2001 Community Homelessness Forum)

Based on all of the community inputs and findings, the Working Group embarked on a collective process of sorting through all the information to identify common themes. Four broad community priorities were identified by the Working Group. These were confirmed by the community at the forum on September 12, 2001. Each of these priority areas – which cover the continuum of supports for people who are homeless or at-risk – is seen as equally as important as all the others. Within each priority area, a number of strategic directions have been prioritized, according to the community deliberations at the September 12 forum.

It is understood that these priorities are based on community input at a certain point in time and that they will evolve as time goes on and as the implementation of the community plan unfolds. It is also understood that there will always be a need for on-going, current research regarding service levels and resources in order to demonstrate the feasibility of specific projects.

For a more detailed list of the topics discussed at the September 12 forum, please see Appendix 4.

Community Priority: Meeting Immediate Needs

1. Provide more emergency shelter.
 2. Provide direct financial support to assist with housing/shelter costs.
 3. Provide 24-hour basic need services to homeless people.
 4. Provide integrated and co-ordinated supports.
- There are many measures that could be taken immediately to reduce the suffering and hardship of people who are homeless or at risk. This can include provision of more shelter spaces, increased financial assistance or improved access to resources such as drop-in centres and food banks.

Community Priority: Creating a New Supply of Housing

1. Develop funding options for affordable housing development.
 2. Create different types of units in appropriate locations.
 3. Advocate for housing and shelter policy changes.
 4. Build housing with supports.
 5. Identify property that is available and suitable for housing development.
 6. Create and use incentives for affordable housing development and renovation.
 7. More research, planning and co-ordination.
 8. Find creative options for building and renovations.
 9. Involve those needing affordable housing in the planning and design of housing.
- Increasing the supply of affordable, appropriate housing is key to eliminating homelessness in Waterloo Region. The Region is experiencing a severe shortage of affordable housing, which makes it especially hard to locate shelter for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is acknowledged that the days of comprehensive senior government housing programs that covered all costs of construction and operations of new rental housing are not going to return in the near future. The solutions to address new supply

therefore call for partnerships, philanthropy and the leveraging of financial support through joint-venture incentives from all levels of government.

Community Priority: Supports for Special Needs; Prevention; Building Community Capacity

1. Develop informal and formal supports for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.
 2. Develop discharge protocols with institutional facilities to ensure individuals are not released into the community without support and shelter.
 3. Provide appropriate and co-ordinated supports for special needs.
 4. Put eviction-prevention plan in place for people held in hospitals for extended periods of time so that when they are discharged they will have a home to go back to.
 5. Develop a team of housing advocates and develop interventions for people with disabilities, mental illness and/or addictions.
- Many people, because of their personal circumstances, need supports and interventions so that they can find and maintain accommodation. Such supports may take a variety of forms. In the larger picture, there need to be homelessness prevention strategies in place. More successful supports and prevention strategies can be put in place if we can increase the capacity of our community – by harnessing the social infrastructure that already exists in the community in terms of facilities, agencies, clubs, programs and services – to respond to homelessness.

Community Priority: Information, Education and Community Awareness

1. Advocate for all homeless populations, particularly the mentally ill, youth, women and children, and the relatively homeless.
 2. Develop an information campaign to raise public awareness around the scope of, causes of and solutions to the homelessness crisis in Waterloo Region.
 3. Use social marketing techniques to change attitudes toward people who are homeless.
 4. Promote collaborative processes and broad-based partnerships among all stakeholders — i.e. private, non-profit and voluntary sectors, labour organizations and all levels of government.
 5. Get the community involved in finding solutions.
 6. Develop a base of knowledge, expertise and data about homelessness and share it among all the concerned parties and the general public.
- There are frequent stories in the news about the desperate conditions faced by people who are homeless, yet the issue suffers from media exhaustion and a sense that the problem is an outcome of uncontrollable events. As a community we need a persistent information campaign to demonstrate the relationship between homelessness and higher-profiled government policy in areas such as health care, children's issues, the environment and education.

8 SUSTAINABILITY

For the needs of this community plan, there are at least three levels where sustainability questions need to be addressed:

1. Ensuring there are sufficient resources to implement the four overall priority objectives in this plan (sustaining community priorities)
2. Sustaining specific initiatives, and actions related to each of the priority directions set by the community in this plan (project and program sustainability)
3. Planning for action and keeping track of what is being done and whether or not it is effective (planning and evaluation)

8.1 Sustaining Community Priorities

The current urgency for action on homelessness has arisen because homelessness is increasing. Many people in Waterloo Region cannot easily find affordable places to live; many who need assistance in everyday living often go without the supports they need. Homelessness has been with us for a long time and will continue to be an important issue for individuals and for our community as a whole. Finding solutions to homelessness is not a short-term, quick-fix agenda.

We must develop and sustain an appropriate continuum of housing and supports. This includes: direct resources for specific actions; maintaining an effective and integrated social and health services system; broad community and agency awareness and commitment; and effective government policies and resource commitment. Ultimately, this community plan is one step in a long-term, comprehensive approach to homelessness.

One of the purposes of the plan is to increase the capacity of the Waterloo Region community to respond to homelessness with appropriate local solutions. Another is to co-ordinate the use of resources so that the community can maximize the effectiveness of programs and services. That said, the senior levels of government are and must be key partners in homelessness solutions. Sustainability is a critical issue and a major concern of all stakeholders. It is necessary to have a long-term commitment to tackling the systemic issues of homelessness, including continued, targeted funding from senior levels of government.

In concentrating on the continuum of supports to respond to homelessness instead of responding only to emergencies, all stakeholders must develop strategies so that people who experience homelessness can obtain and maintain adequate housing and access to responsive supports.

Several specific strategies ideas for sustainability that been discussed thus far in the planning process:

- Formation of a Waterloo Region Homelessness Foundation, to encourage targeted fund-raising and collaboration
- Continuing co-ordinated community planning processes
- Securing commitments from various levels of government for core funding of essential programs
- Identifying homelessness as a priority for funding by organizations such as the United Way, community foundations, Trillium Foundation etc.
- Prioritizing programs that focus on the prevention of homelessness

8.2 Project and Program Sustainability

Any strategy or proposal for expanding existing services or creating new programs or services must have sufficient resources. Developing a clear rationale for an initiative, based on an objective understanding of local needs and what resources are required, is the first step in securing the resources to initiate a project/program and for sustaining it over the longer term. Funds can come from a variety of sources, such as core agency budgets, funding programs, and fund-raising.

But there is another facet that must be considered. We need to examine the potential for community development as we consider specific projects or programs. Ensuring local commitment of resources (direct funds, partnerships and in-kind contributions) increases the likelihood we will have a stronger infrastructure over the longer term not just for specific projects/programs but for the local social safety net as a whole. Through the creation of partnerships, innovative fund-raising strategies and other creative ways of working together, we can maximize the community capacity to support projects.

8.3 Sustaining Planning and Evaluation

We need to maintain a community planning process that can support and guide continued action and analysis. “All talk and no action” is often how planning work is perceived, making this perhaps the least understood and supported aspect of community work. However, basing local work on solid objective information is essential when dealing with complex community issues such as homelessness when there are limited resources available. Solid planning provides a better framework for local action. Evaluation of outcomes of individual projects and of the community plan itself – learning from successes and mistakes – allows us to plan better for the future.

Just as important, however, is that further planning continue to use a community-based process. This is imperative to engage community participation and buy-in. There is a community development potential in participatory planning and evaluation. The more the community as a whole is involved in developing, implementing and assessing strategies to achieve the strategic priorities in this plan, the greater the likelihood that local community efforts to respond to homelessness issues will be successful and sustainable. This, in turn, will contribute to the development and sustainability of the broader infrastructure.

9 EVALUATION

For this community plan to continue to be effective as needs change in Waterloo Region, it is essential to have a comprehensive evaluation process for both projects and the plan itself. We must be able to examine the level of success of projects and ascertain their impact on members of the community.

The Working Group has requested that the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Region take on the role of Community Entity in relation to this plan. The Region is evolving an important role for responding to community issues such as homelessness. In the capacity as Community Entity, the Region will be a key member of the Working Group and lead partner in implementing and evaluating this plan.

9.1 Project Evaluation

In any call for proposals for projects, proponents will be required to address the issue of evaluation. They must provide an evaluation plan that includes clear, measurable outcomes, questions and indicators and a data collection plan. The Working Group will also develop a set of evaluation criteria for project evaluation so that there will be an independent means of evaluating projects at timely intervals. This will also allow for an assessment of the evaluations provided by project managers.

The Working Group will gather benchmark information from the funded programs on an on-going basis in order to monitor their progress. An annual report will be published for the benefit of the community to report on the progress of plan projects.

9.2 Plan Evaluation

In order to ensure that the community plan evolves to meet changing circumstances in Waterloo Region, the plan itself must be assessed and revisited continually. This ensures that programs and services fulfil their purposes, that resources are allocated effectively, and informs future plans actions.

On-going evaluation tools:

- Annual review process of the community plan, including resources being allocated to carry out further research and planning to update information and issues in the plan
- Annual community forum to revisit the community plan
- Homeless Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS)

The format of on-going evaluation strategy should indicate what particular objectives are being examined, what performance measures will be scrutinized and what evaluation tools will be used.

It will also be necessary to monitor and report on the development, implementation and success of the community plan, including the expenditures incurred, the number and type of initiatives funded, and the success in filling gaps in services, new partnerships forged, etc. This will be instructive for future planning.

10 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The following steps will be taken to inform all community members the content of the plan and the procedure to apply for funding:

- A number of venues will be set up to distribute information concerning the community plan.
- An email address has been put in place to for inquiries: homelessness@canada.com
- A web site – www.waterlooregion.org/homelessness – has been created to allow community members to download copies of the plan. In addition, an electronic mailing list has been set up. People may subscribe to it from the web site.
- A contact database of agencies and groups involved in homelessness initiatives as well as concerned community members, stakeholders and government is being set up for community use.
- There are resources available to provide a limited number of copies of the plan to those individuals who do not have access to the electronic version, as well as a number of promotional copies to distribute at public events.
- A public launch of the plan is being planned, with efforts to maximize media coverage.
- Efforts will be made to work with all levels of government and community stakeholders and to co-ordinate announcements of the plan, proposals and events.
- To increase public awareness of the homelessness crisis and communicate the main priorities/recommendations of the plan, articles will appear in various newspapers across the region, and other print materials (such as newsletters).
- Annual community consultations will examine the progress of the plan and revisit the gaps and priorities.
- Annual updates of the community plan will be distributed broadly to community members for review.
- A Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued to invite proposals that will meet the prioritized needs of the homeless. The RFP will be announced through the media (newspapers, etc.) and online. Information sessions will be held to describe SCPI requirements for the applications. The dates for the information sessions will be announced on the web site and publicized through local media.
- Projects will be announced in concert with government funders and then will be publicized through various venues (web site, newspaper articles, etc).

11 NEXT STEPS

The completion of the development of this community plan is not the final step. This is an ongoing, evolving process. The work that was incorporated into this community plan is part of an ongoing process – a journey in a dynamic community. It has only been recently that communities across Canada have realized the extent and seriousness of the homelessness problem. This plan is a work in process because, as a community, we are learning as we go.

What we have accomplished so far is come together as a community and affirm our common priorities. We are certain now about the direction we need to go to respond to local needs, but there is still a lot of work to do in identifying the specific needs and resources and carrying out strategies to achieve these broad objectives. The Working Group and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo as a key partner will work together to ensure that the community is engaged to participate in the implementation of the community plan.

The following have been identified as next steps to guide the implementation of the plan:

- Call for proposals for projects to fulfil the community priorities and strategic directions
- Continue community-based research to:
 - Complete profiles for vulnerable populations identified during early planning: mental health, addictions, women (particularly those with children), immigrants and refugees, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, Aboriginals, people released from correctional institutes, people discharged from hospitals, and local geographic communities, particularly rural areas
 - Ensure the current asset list is complete and comprehensive for services and supports available to people in Waterloo Region, and expand it to include capacity building supports such as economic development initiatives and community investments
- Continue a community dialogue to integrate and analyze what is known about the local community so as to:
 - Understand the patterns and issues in local communities and support systems - for example are emergency shelters functioning as transitional housing and are transitional units being used to meet long term housing needs?
 - Match assets to the community's priority directions to determine feasibility of specific actions, to find links for achieving actions and identify gaps in local supports
- Develop the evaluation component for measuring the community impact of actions undertaken in relation to this continued community process.

In taking these next steps, the Working Group expects to:

- Maintain a process linked to, grounded in and responsive to the community and all of its members including:
 - Those experiencing and at risk of homelessness
 - Service providers working with and supporting them
 - Anyone whose resources, actions and attitudes influence the plan
- Balance the need for short-term planning and longer-term monitoring with meaningful community engagement and a focus on action

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