

Lived Expertise Prototyping Report

The Plan
to End Chronic
Homelessness

Prepared by the Social Development Centre

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Social Development Centre
WATERLOO REGION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
Key Terms	5
Overview of Calls to Action	8
1.0 INTRODUCTION	10
1.1 Background and purpose	10
1.2 The Problem	10
1.3 The Goal	11
2.0 SETTING THE LEGAL CONTEXT	11
2.1 Literature review	11
3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN	12
3.0 RATIONALE FOR CALLS TO ACTION	14
3.1 Centre Community Voices	14
3.2 Focus on Preventing Homelessness	14
3.2 Create Policy and System Accountability	15
3.3 Build System Bridges	16
3.4 Advance Equitable Housing	16
3.5 Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness	16
3.6 Climate and Extreme Weather Planning	17
4.0 DETAILED CALLS TO ACTION	19
REFERENCES	24

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
This document represents over a year of dedicated effort from the prototyping cohort, encompassing research, collective dialogue, and rigorous editing. It is both a significant research output and a formal publication. Should you quote, utilize, or derive any benefit from this document, please ensure proper attribution.

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Key Terms

To support a shared understanding of findings and recommendations, key terms are defined below. We encourage the Region and municipalities to adopt these terms so that we are working from a common language.

-  Definitions that are consistent with the overarching report submitted to the council. These terms reflect a shared vocabulary that underpins the report's findings and recommendations.
-  Terms unique to the Lived Expertise Prototyping Report, which do not appear or are not elaborated upon in the Region's staff report. These terms offer specialized insights from lived experience perspectives and are critical to the nuanced understanding of the chronic homelessness issues at hand.
-  Terms found in both this report and the Region's staff report that are defined differently. These differences highlight the variety of perspectives and the evolving nature of our work with lived expertise. Recognizing these varied definitions helps us understand the issue more fully and work together more effectively.

Accessibility

Specific features incorporated by design with the goal to reduce or remove barriers to participation or enjoyment by all people.

Adequate Housing

Housing that meets the legal standards for security of tenure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, availability of services, location and cultural appropriateness. In the absence of such, the right to housing is not met.

Affordability

The definition of affordability must be geared to income. Ontario has a definition where rent that does not exceed 30% of a household's income is considered affordable. The prototyping cohort

advocates for a definition of affordability as not exceeding 10% of a household's income. In the case of having no income, that means no rent is charged.

Agency

The ability to make decisions and exert willpower in the world. The ability to say no and have it respected. A recognition that individuals and communities have sovereignty over themselves.

Chronic Homelessness and Hidden Homeless

Chronic homelessness refers to individuals living in inadequate housing for more than a year, or experiencing this situation repeatedly over a span of two to three years. It encompasses those who are unsheltered, as well as those in shelter spaces and transitional housing. Additionally, it includes individuals experiencing hidden homelessness—those who may be couch-surfing, living in housing without a lease in their name, or residing in precarious housing situations. This broader definition ensures a comprehensive understanding of homelessness, capturing the varied experiences of individuals who lack secure, permanent, and adequate housing.

Cultural Appropriateness

The needs and expectations of housing vary depending on cultural context and family structure. These must be considered when developing housing options so communities have choices that meet their needs. For example, there is a lack of multi-family homes.

Dignity of Risk

Usually considered when the mind is obscured, injured, dissociative or otherwise not functional in a socially “normal” way, Dignity of Risk is a framework to return dignity to those who have those decisions taken from them. This is done by allowing a person the ability to determine if a risk is personally worth it without impeding on individual agency, through empowering experiential learning, knowledge acquisition and awareness of consequence.

Functional Zero Homelessness

When there are enough adequate housing options so that no one experiences more than a year of inadequate housing, with adequacy defined by international human rights standards (see definition of “adequate housing” above).

Homelessness

Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It

is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.

Housing First

Prioritizing adequate and accessible housing for all people as a first step to remove barriers to participation in society. In an approach to chronic homelessness, people are provided housing first without needing to complete any forms, treatment, programming or participating in any other created barriers to shelter. The Housing First Approach and Human Rights Approach are fundamentally tied to each other. This means that agency and informed consent must be provided alongside housing first.

Human Rights Approach

People experiencing homelessness are treated as rights holders, where their agency is respected, and where the Region has a duty of care for their housing needs. The Region will be compliant with national and international human rights law and ensure it is appropriately prioritized amidst other legal obligations such as those regarding property rights, privacy and liability.

Indigenous Homelessness

“Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships” (Thistle, 2017; see also Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).

Informed Consent

Informed Consent is a pillar of the Human Rights Approach. It means the Housing Stability System educates the people it is serving about the risks, benefits, and alternatives of a given housing offer. It is also a requirement for any encampment relocation.

 **Security of Person**

The ability to secure oneself in bodily health and liberty. This includes having an adequate standard of living that allows a person to have access to food, clothing, housing, medical care, necessary social services, and the right to security in circumstances beyond their control.

 **Security of Residence/Tenure**

Legal protection for all persons against forced eviction, harassment, threats and discrimination.

Overview of Calls to Action

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
Centre Community Voice	1 Adopt a Human Rights Approach for consulting people with first-hand experience of homelessness.
	2 Establish a Lived Expertise oversight process for homelessness services funded by the Region of Waterloo.
	3 Develop a common process to obtain informed consent from encampment communities, shelter users, and other unsheltered communities.
Focus on Preventing Homelessness	4 Endorse a tenant protections package and work with area municipalities to adopt subsequent bylaws and policies
	5 Establish a Tenant Rights Hub.
	6 Endorse a licensing process for landlords and work with area municipalities to implement consistently.
	7 Ensure comprehensive rehousing support and integrate preventive measures
	8 Hire an outreach coordinator to evaluate stability of rehousing initiatives and standardize supports for transitional housing.
	9 Update property tax code to encourage development of new and preservation of existing affordable housing options.
Create Policy and System Accountability	10 Adopt the Key Terms defined by the Lived Expertise Prototyping Cohort.
	11 Conduct a review of shelter system providers and transitional housing providers.
	12 Launch a lifelong support worker program to provide continuous support for individuals navigating the housing stability system during and after experiences of homelessness.
	13 Prioritize Community Services funding in budget season until functional zero homelessness is achieved.
Build System Bridges	14 Focus on prioritizing youth homelessness by recognizing their unique rights and needs.
	15 Partner with key stakeholders in the education sector to ensure there are wrap-around services available and accessible in schools and educational institutions.
	16 Acknowledge and formally integrate the contributions of the unhoused in roles such as cleaning, security, construction, property management, harm reduction, and community support into the region's labour strategies.

	17	Implement a peer mentorship program to facilitate transitions from lived experience to employment.
	18	Work to reduce barriers to safe supply in collaboration with harm reduction initiatives.
	19	Update the plans for the transit hub to ensure the continuation of 100 Victoria Street as a sanctioned encampment until functional zero homelessness has been achieved.
Advance Equitable Housing	20	Prioritize a base level ‘floor’ of low barrier options to meet fundamental needs of people falling through gaps.
	21	Design housing options through a relational lens.
Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness	22	Launch a homelessness advocacy office to run public education campaigns.
	23	Facilitate Lived Expertise workshops that allow the public to engage directly with and learn from the experiences of those who have lived through homelessness.
	24	Create a comprehensive Public Housing and Homelessness dashboard.
	25	Collaborate with the coroner’s office to establish a memorializing process for those lost to homelessness.
	26	Fund and implement homelessness prevention education.
	27	Advocate to other levels of government for Universal Basic Income.
	28	Hire an outreach coordinator to liaise with neighbourhood groups and conduct public education initiatives that disrupt stigma
Climate and Extreme Weather Planning	29	Develop a Proactive Extreme Weather Mitigation Protocol (i.e. winter warming packages 3.0)
	30	Draft an extreme weather homelessness response plan (i.e. out of the cold with paid staff)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and purpose

Lived Expertise Prototyping is an ongoing initiative aimed at incorporating the knowledge and insights of those with lived experience into the operations of the Waterloo Region. Facilitated by the Social Development Centre throughout 2023, this process will extend until the end of 2024.

Lived experts are people with lived/living experience of homelessness and housing instability, advocacy experience, and connections to communities. This process was also supported by representatives from advocacy groups, mutual aid groups, front line service agencies and regional staff.

The purpose of this report is to outline the theory of change and recommendations developed by the prototyping cohort for the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. It aims to establish a shared vocabulary and clarify terms, enabling productive discussions and dialogues about the necessary changes. Additionally, it advocates for a human rights-based approach to address chronic homelessness in the Waterloo Region. This document is directed at the Regional Council and the broader community, highlighting the issues and potential for positive transformation as perceived by the lived expertise prototyping cohort. While informing the comprehensive Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, authored by Overlap and its core team, this report also serves as a standalone document. It ensures that the community has direct access to the insights generated by the cohort.

1.2 The Problem

The overarching aim of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness is to achieve a state of “functional zero” homelessness in the region. However, the lived expertise prototyping cohort has pinpointed several obstacles to reaching this objective. Initially, there is a lack of a precise definition for “functional zero.” Similarly, fundamental principles such as the “housing first approach” and the “human rights approach” require clear articulation. It's essential that “functional zero” is defined at the regional level, as these are terms with locally specific

meanings. Despite the absence of a universal definition for functional zero, establishing a clear definition is vital for accurately monitoring progress.

We—the "Housing Stability System" (another term that lacks clarity)—have not successfully implemented the housing first approach. The Region's strategy for addressing homelessness does not adhere to a human rights framework. Instead, private interests are often prioritized over human rights, as evidenced by the ongoing eviction of encampments in our community, which resulted in a Charter ruling against the Region. Infrastructure Canada has observed that municipalities frequently place greater emphasis on complaints from neighbours than on the human rights of encampment residents.

The term "Chronic Homelessness" also demands clarification. The prototyping cohort defines it as situations where an individual resides in inadequate housing for more than a year or on a recurring basis over several years. Although this might appear to be a straightforward definition, the Region's current measurement tools, such as the Point-in-Time Count (PIT Count) conducted every two to three years and the PATHS List, do not fully capture the extent of hidden homelessness. This oversight is particularly problematic for groups with higher rates of hidden homelessness, such as seniors, newcomers, students, people with disabilities, and women (Schwan et al., 2021).

The prototyping cohort views colonial systems of genocide, slavery, and apartheid as the fundamental causes of homelessness. These systems have evolved in recent decades into de-industrialization, neoliberal economics, austerity, the financialization of housing, and the criminalization of homelessness. To eradicate chronic homelessness, it is imperative to acknowledge these failures and advocate for new economic and housing models that prioritize the perspectives of those most adversely impacted by colonialism.

1.3 The Goal

The prototyping cohort envisions a Region where no one needs to live in an encampment because there are enough adequate housing options available to all. A Region where all people have the ability to choose housing that meets their needs. A Region that embraces a diversity of

persons, especially those currently experiencing dehumanization. A Region where everyone has a home.

The Region of Waterloo will be human rights compliant, and act consistent with domestic and international frameworks on the right to housing. Specifically the Region will maintain compliance with the internationally recognized dimensions of the right to housing including the security of the person, security of residence/tenure, adequacy, dignity of risk, accessibility, affordability, and cultural appropriateness. The Region will incorporate lived expertise knowledge, and recognize the fundamental agency and dignity of risk of all people. The Region will enable the Housing First approach through a diversity of non-market housing options.

2.0 SETTING THE LEGAL CONTEXT

This section sets the legal context for this report, outlining the human rights framework within which the Region and its partners should operate. It examines the intersection of housing with human rights as delineated by various domestic and international laws, and underscores the importance of integrating Indigenous and post-colonial perspectives into these legal standards. This legal context was compiled by one of the prototyping projects called the Human Rights Review. This prototype has been working with Regional Staff to begin integrating a human rights lens into Regional policy and procedure.

2.1 Literature review

The Region and partners must operate, at minimum, in the context of human rights as defined by domestic and international declarations as cited below. Existing human rights declarations and legislation were written largely as part of a colonial system. Therefore, the Region and partners should also be guided by definitions emerging from Indigenous and post-colonial sources. The Region should be compliant with human rights law as a minimum.

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”

Article 3 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [them]self and of [their] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control.”

Article 25.1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.”

Section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982*

“Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them”

Article 23, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2017*

“It is declared to be the housing policy of the Government of Canada to recognize that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law”

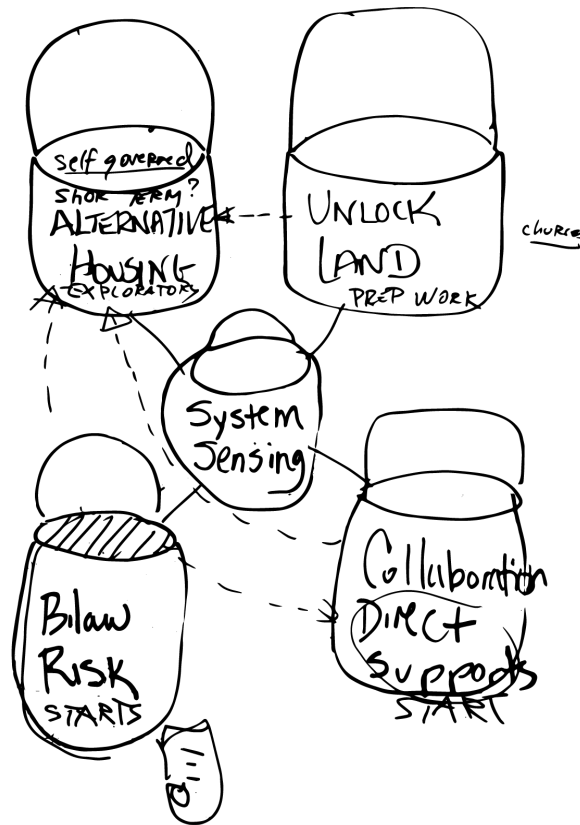
Section 4 (a) of the *National Housing Strategy Act 2019*

3.0 PROTOTYPING APPROACH

The Lived Expertise Prototyping project represents a dynamic partnership, evolving from consultations to integrating the real-world experiences of individuals and communities affected by homelessness into pilot projects. This integration aids in crafting solutions to eradicate chronic homelessness in our community. The group's research utilized the U-Lab Process, based on the methods developed by Otto Scharmer and colleagues at the Presencing Institute. The process was split into two distinct phases.

Phase 1: Co-Initiation, Co-Sensing, and Co-Presencing (March–July 2023)

- **Co-Initiating:** This stage established shared intentions and laid the groundwork. Participants focused on relationship building, exchanging intentions and queries through mutual interviews.
- **Co-Sensing:** This period was dedicated to observation and reflection to define priorities, employing 3D mapping for visualizing current and desired states, and delineating the path for community-led participatory action research.
- **Co-Presencing:** Engaging deeply with the source of inspiration, the phase included holding community dialogues with individuals who have lived experience of unsheltered and hidden homelessness, and initiating conversations with lived experts and front-line workers aiding hidden homeless populations, including immigrants, refugees, and students.



This sketch is a conceptual framework with various 'buckets' identified by the lived expertise group through the prototyping process.

The comprehensive report for this initial phase is available here: [Lived Expertise Prototyping Project - The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness](#).

Phase 2: Co-Creation and Co-Evolution (August 2023–March 2024)

In the latter half of the research, from August 2023 to March 2024, the group entered a phase of Co-Creation and Co-Evolution. This part of the process is set to continue until the year's end and includes regular and emergent meetings with various stakeholders.

During this time, the specific cohort listed at the beginning of this document, encompassing lived experts, mutual aid groups, and advocates, convened over a six-week period. Their discussions produced the content of this report, which will directly inform the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

This Phase will continue to December 2024. In the appendix we have included a summary report written by the SDC and University of Waterloo. This document dives further into the methodology and learnings from Phase 2.

3.0 RATIONALE FOR CALLS TO ACTION

The Lived Expertise prototyping cohort, through an iterative and emergent process, has resulted in **30 calls to action** for the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and its subsequent implementation. We have organized these recommendations into six focus areas, each accompanied by supporting rationale drawn from document reviews and consultations.

3.1 Centre Community Voices

To meaningfully centre community voices, the Region should:

1. Adopt a Human Rights Approach for consulting people with first-hand experience of homelessness.
2. Establish a Lived Expertise oversight process for homelessness services funded by the Region of Waterloo.
3. Develop a common process to obtain informed consent from encampment communities, shelter users, and other unsheltered communities.

This approach involves defining 'Lived Expertise' to encompass a broad range of personal experiences with homelessness, advocating for equitable compensation, and ensuring that participation does not jeopardize individuals' social support. The Oversight Board will ensure that consultations are effectively managed and that micro-grants are provided to support low-income initiatives. Furthermore, informed consent will be integral, ensuring that the rights of

the unsheltered are upheld and that their ability to decline participation is respected, drawing on international human rights standards.

3.2 Focus on Preventing Homelessness

To strengthen tenant rights and enhance housing stability, the Region should:

4. Endorse a tenant protections package and work with area municipalities to adopt subsequent bylaws and policies.
5. Establish a Tenant Rights Hub to support and educate tenants.
6. Endorse a licensing process for landlords and work with area municipalities to implement consistently.
7. Ensure comprehensive rehousing support and integrate preventive measures.
8. Hire an outreach coordinator to evaluate stability of rehousing initiatives and standardize supports for transitional housing.
9. Update property tax code to encourage development of new and preservation of existing affordable housing options.

These recommendations aim to address the full spectrum of housing issues from tenant protection to rehousing and community involvement. They involve adopting bylaws that prevent unfair evictions and define adequate housing, coupled with increased funding for enforcement of tenant protections. A Tenant Rights Hub would provide comprehensive support, from property standards to eviction prevention, with a collaborative framework for service delivery. A consistent landlord licensing process with human rights training aims to enhance rental experiences and follows similar processes that have been implemented in other Ontario municipalities. An outreach coordinator to evaluate the stability of rehousing initiatives and advocate for standardizing support for transitional housing. Finally, tax reform proposals and a targeted land acquisition plan are geared toward increasing the supply of affordable, non-market housing,

drawing on successful models from other cities and tools like the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) initiative.

3.2 Create Policy and System Accountability

To advance housing stability and system accountability, the Region should:

10. Adopt the Key Terms defined by the Lived Expertise Prototyping Cohort.
11. Conduct a review of shelter system providers and transitional housing providers.
12. Launch a lifelong support worker program to provide continuous support for individuals navigating the housing stability system during and after experiences of homelessness.
13. Prioritize Community Services funding in budget season until functional zero homelessness is achieved.

These steps include adopting terminology developed by those with lived experience to ensure consistency and clarity across services. An integrated approach emphasizes the necessity of housing as a foundation for stability while respecting individual autonomy and choices. Reviews and audits of housing services aim to identify areas for improvement and ensure transitions from temporary to stable housing are effectively planned and executed. Implementing a lifelong support worker program acknowledges the need for ongoing support beyond housing placement, ensuring individuals remain housed and stable. Finally, reallocating funding towards Community Services and evaluating administrative expenses against social service benchmarks emphasizes a commitment to addressing homelessness through sustainable investment in services that directly support individuals experiencing and at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness.

3.3 Build System Bridges

To address and bridge systemic gaps in the housing stability system, the Region should:

14. Focus on prioritizing youth homelessness by recognizing their unique rights and needs.

15. Partner with key stakeholders in the education sector to ensure there are wrap-around services available and accessible in schools and educational institutions.
16. Acknowledge and formally integrate the contributions of the unhoused in roles such as cleaning, security, construction, property management, harm reduction, and community support into the region's labour strategies.
17. Implement a peer mentorship program to facilitate transitions from lived experience to employment.
18. Work to reduce barriers to safe supply in collaboration with harm reduction initiatives.
19. Update the plans for the transit hub to ensure the continuation of 100 Victoria Street as a sanctioned encampment until functional zero homelessness has been achieved.

Youth homelessness requires a tailored approach that respects their human rights and provides platforms for their voices and leadership, ensuring access to services without barriers.

Collaborations with educational sectors aim to create a supportive network around housing, addiction, and family services within schools. Recognizing the contributions of the unhoused in community services can redefine engagement and provide meaningful opportunities for involvement and employment. A peer mentorship program, inspired by successful models, offers a pathway to professional development and empowerment for those with lived experience. Efforts to ensure a safe supply address critical health concerns, with input from those most affected by housing instability. Lastly, updating the plans for the transit hub highlights the importance of maintaining supportive spaces for the unhoused during transitional periods towards achieving functional zero homelessness.

3.4 Advance Equitable Housing

To effectively end chronic homelessness, the lived expertise group suggest the following best practices for the Region:

20. Prioritize a base level of low barrier options to meet fundamental needs of people falling through gaps.

21. Design housing options through a relational lens.

Insights highlight the significance of initiatives like 24-hour barrier-free drop-ins, which can serve multiple functions including emergency shelter and climate respite centres. These recommendations are born out of a collaborative effort to recognize and amplify the work of impactful community projects such as A Better Tent City.

3.5 Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness

To shift societal perspectives and enhance support systems for homelessness, stakeholders recommend the following best practices:

22. Launch a homelessness advocacy office to run public education campaigns. This office would focus on reducing stigma, highlighting the rights of tenants and the unsheltered, and advocating for housing and homelessness to become central issues in political discourse.

23. Facilitate Lived Expertise workshops that allow the public to engage directly with and learn from the experiences of those who have lived through homelessness, fostering understanding, empathy, and community connections.

24. Create a comprehensive Public Housing and Homelessness dashboard displaying key data points such as inflow/outflow, eviction statistics, Point-In-Time (PIT) count, shelter usage, rehousing figures, and mortality rates related to homelessness.

25. Collaborate with the coroner's office to establish a memorializing process for those lost to homelessness, ensuring there is space for both private and public mourning and story sharing.
26. Fund and implement homelessness prevention education. Partner with educational institutions to integrate prevention education into curricula, covering tenant rights, navigating the Housing Stability System, and practical life skills.
27. Advocate for Universal Basic Income (UBI): Push for UBI as a fundamental policy change at all government levels, supported by public education campaigns to address misconceptions and advocate for adjustments in social welfare programs to match the cost of living.
28. Hire an outreach coordinator to liaise with neighbourhood groups and conduct public education initiatives that disrupt stigma.

These recommendations aim to change the narrative around homelessness through education, advocacy, and public engagement. By establishing a dedicated advocacy office and leveraging direct experiences from lived expertise, the Region can foster a more compassionate and informed public discourse. Creating accessible data points and memorials acknowledges the reality and humanizes the issue, while prevention education and a push for UBI address systemic causes and potential solutions. Finally, an outreach coordinator whose focus is on public education and challenging stigma would be central to fostering inclusive neighbourhoods. This multifaceted approach encourages a societal shift towards understanding, empathy, and action in addressing homelessness.

3.6 Climate and Extreme Weather Planning

This focus area is unique to the prototyping cohort. It was added to reflect the ongoing work of the broader prototyping process on climate and extreme weather planning. Since the fall of 2023, there has been a prototyping project called the Continuum of Care that has been learning from current climate and extreme weather planning to develop calls to action as well as more immediate interventions for 2024 and beyond.

To effectively address the challenges posed by extreme weather conditions for vulnerable populations, it is recommended that the Region

29. Implement a comprehensive Extreme Weather Mitigation and Response Strategy. This strategy should include the development of proactive protocols for both summer cooling and winter warming, leveraging flexible outreach funding and engaging in quarterly planning to ensure preparedness year-round.

Additionally, the strategy should incorporate insights from emergency response experts, such as the Red Cross and military, to enhance the efficacy of homelessness response plans. This would involve establishing frameworks for the rapid mobilization of temporary shelters and ensuring that staff and volunteers receive adequate training. The unified approach aims to streamline efforts, foster cross-sector collaboration, and adapt to emerging needs, ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events.

4.0 DETAILED CALLS TO ACTION

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
Centre Community Voices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="317 375 1936 797"> 1 Adopt a Human Rights Approach for consulting people with first-hand experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="443 423 1936 586"> ● Define 'Lived Expertise' as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="527 456 1936 488">○ Having personal experience with homelessness (including situations where people aren't visibly homeless). <li data-bbox="527 488 1936 521">○ Ensuring those most impacted are heard. <li data-bbox="527 521 1936 553">○ Including people with experience in advocating for change. <li data-bbox="527 553 1936 586">○ Having people who are chosen by their community to speak on its behalf. <li data-bbox="443 586 1936 651"> ● Set a Standard Payment for Consultations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="527 618 1936 651">○ Agree on a payment rate for those providing their lived expertise, previously \$50/hour. <li data-bbox="443 651 1936 797"> ● Sign an Agreement to Change Payment Rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="527 683 1936 797">○ Work with the province to change the rules so money given for this work doesn't count against income for social support programs like ODSP/OW. Make sure it's clear this money is for community service and doesn't need to be reported for taxes. <li data-bbox="317 797 1936 1310"> 2 Establish a Lived Expertise oversight process for homelessness services funded by the Region of Waterloo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="443 829 1936 1105"> ● Create a Central Lived Expertise Oversight Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="527 862 1936 927">○ Approve the processes agencies use to consult with people who have personal experience of homelessness and address any conflicts of interest. <li data-bbox="527 927 1936 992">○ Manage a special fund to provide small amounts of money (micro-grants) to people without shelter and support low-income initiatives. <li data-bbox="527 992 1936 1024">○ Guide staff on the best ways to involve people with lived experience in consultations. <li data-bbox="527 1024 1936 1057">○ Monitor how the Region is doing in getting agreement from people without shelter to be represented. <li data-bbox="527 1057 1936 1105">○ Learn from existing groups like PAG, StepHome, LEWG, and other advisory processes to improve our methods. <li data-bbox="443 1105 1936 1310"> ● Encourage Each Region Funded Agency to Have an Advisory Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="527 1138 1936 1203">○ Allocate more funds to programs that are guided by people with lived experience, especially when funding is above a set level. Make sure an oversight process by people with lived experience is part of this. <li data-bbox="527 1203 1936 1310">○ Advisory Board's Role: Look at each agency from the perspective of those using services to find and address shortcomings.

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
	<p>3 Develop a common process to obtain informed consent from encampment communities, shelter users, and other unsheltered communities. For example, regional staff and partners would have to use this process if they wanted to move or interfere with an encampment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consent = Free, prior and informed ● The ability to say no is respected ● Formally acknowledge all unsheltered (and under-sheltered i.e., hidden homeless) as rights holders ● Learn from UN approach to human rights
<p>Focus on Preventing Homelessness</p>	<p>4 Endorse a tenant protections package and work with area municipalities to adopt subsequent bylaws and policies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A rental replacement bylaw ● A renovations bylaw and renovations licensing process ● A common definition of adequate housing ● Expanded funding for property standards enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fund an analysis of bias and barriers that are preventing property standards teams from enabling adequate housing. ○ Protections and a pathway forward for tenants in illegal housing situations. ● Human rights approach to evictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Banning from a shelter is an eviction ○ Winnowing is a chronic issue through the housing stability system <p>5 Establish a Tenant Rights Hub to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A third party property standards assistance team ● An eviction prevention team ● A tenant organizing team ● A landlord and tenant board assistance team ● A rent bank that is flexible and not dependent on sheriffs order or eviction order to be accessed. ● Recommendation is that RFP requires collaboration between at least two non-profit organizations and at least one grassroots organization. <p>6 Endorse a licensing process for landlords and work with area municipalities to implement consistently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set up training for landlords on their responsibilities through a human rights lens.

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
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| 7 | <p>Ensure comprehensive rehousing support and integrate preventive measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct a review to make visible how stable or unstable rehousing is (i.e. are people falling back into inadequate housing in 3, 6, 12 months?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More options for rehousing based on population segments i.e. options for seniors, options for couples/families ○ Metrics of success for rehousing need to be tied to metrics around evictions ● Set thresholds for caseloads for transition/supportive housing partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish standards for supportive housing to ensure stability |
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| 8 | <p>Hire an outreach coordinator to evaluate stability of rehousing initiatives and standardize supports for transitional housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage tenant involvement in neighbourhood groups. Make considerations for minorities not represented by neighbourhood groups to be heard. ● Address complaint overuse through education and guidelines. |
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| 9 | <p>Update property tax code to encourage development of new and preservation of existing affordable housing options. This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vacant lot tax; Use it or lose it bylaw; Multiple property tax; Speculation tax ● Develop an affordable housing fund that would collect revenue from these taxes to fund non market housing development. ● That the Region conduct a regular survey of vacant housing, to make visible how inefficient and inequitable space use contributes to homelessness (i.e. understand how many people are overhoused, how much surplus land is available) ● Develop a land acquisition plan to best facilitate the construction of affordable non-market housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learn from Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) tools: https://hart.ubc.ca/ |
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Create Policy and System Accountability	10	<p>Adopt the Key Terms defined by the Lived Expertise Prototyping Cohort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt an integrated Housing First and Human Rights Approach for Housing Stability System. ● Adopt processes for informed consent and dignity of risk (disability justice). All people should have the ability to determine their risks and choices in their lives.
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FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
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11 Conduct a review of shelter system providers and transitional housing providers.

- Launch a pilot audit of University Ave transitional housing to understand how to gather user feedback and unpack what qualitative and quantitative data is needed for broader review.
 - Ensure the transitional housing on University Ave is effectively temporary by establishing and enacting a clear exit strategy for residents, which includes subsequent, sustainable housing solutions.
 - Identify and incorporate the demographics of shelter populations currently not recognized in official statistics (?) to ensure all individuals receive appropriate support and resources.
 - Set standards for outflow data collection (i.e. bans, evictions, and deaths are not considered outflow)
- Set up an Independent body to review the Housing Stability System (such as an auditor or ombudsman)
 - Intersects with lived expertise advisory process
 - User experiences are considered a factor in service standards
 - Inflow/outflow analysis is undertaken to understand why is experiences of homelessness recurrence are occurring
 - Focus on racism and transphobia within the shelter system
- Remove punitive review models that discourage agencies from giving accurate data.
 - There is a need for provisions for people who are not housing ready
 - All metrics need to reference PIT count and bigger picture of homelessness\Name barriers to housing to turn into advocacy

12 Launch a lifelong support worker program to provide continuous support for individuals navigating the housing stability system during and after experiences of homelessness.

- Create a common framework for social support workers that allows them to support people through the Housing Stability System.
 - Create service connectivity between street outreach, shelter supports, and transitional/supportive housing
 - Support would continue for at least one year after placement in adequate housing.

13 Prioritize Community Services funding in budget season until functional zero homelessness is achieved.

- Strategically redirect a portion of the policing budget to enhance community services.
 - Review admin salaries and spending in comparison to key metrics like:
 - OW and ODSP rates
 - Outreach worker salary
 - Cost of Living
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FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
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Build System Bridges

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| 14 | <p>Focus on prioritizing youth homelessness by recognizing their unique rights and needs. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize the human rights of youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocate for the rights of children to be codified ○ Homeless children and youth need specific rights ● Support the creation of youth drop in centres, particularly in areas lacking dedicated youth programs and services (i.e. low-resourced neighbourhoods, rural townships, etc). ● Dedicate funding for a Youth advocacy table to provide a platform for youth lived expertise to be developed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide mentorship opportunities between youth advocacy table and lived expertise advisory process. |
| 15 | <p>Partner with key stakeholders in the education sector to ensure there are wrap-around services available and accessible in schools and educational institution, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing supports and tenant supports ● Addiction supports ● Family supports and alternatives to Family and Child Services |
| 16 | <p>Acknowledge and formally integrate the contributions of the unhoused in roles such as cleaning, security, construction, property management, harm reduction, and community support into the region's labour strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Require lived expertise in the contracts for security, cleaning and outreach services. ● Mandate encampment resident involvement in cleaning and property management to ensure stuff is not lost or stolen. ● Provide lockable lockers and storage units on site at encampments with five or more people. ● Set up a stipend fund to compensate residents fairly and equitably for their labour. |
| 17 | <p>Implement a peer mentorship program to facilitate transitions from lived experience to employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have lived expert's shadow HSS staff as a paid mentorship that transition into full employment. ● Professionalized staff mentoring themselves out of a job to empower and educate those most impacted by current failure state. ● Based on Inuvik model 2010. |
| 18 | <p>Work to reduce barriers to safe supply in collaboration with harm reduction initiatives, including partnering with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harm reduction partners to develop a steady safe supply to remove toxicity risks. ● Lived experts to identify and remove dealers who are poisoning people. |

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
Advance Equitable Housing	<p>19 Update the plans for the transit hub to ensure the continuation of 100 Victoria Street as a sanctioned encampment until functional zero homelessness has been achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set aside land/funding for a transition fund through conversation with Metrolinx and the Province. ● Ensure residents are provided with comparable land and supports
	<p>20 That the Region prioritize a base level ‘floor’ of low barrier options to meet fundamental needs of people falling through gaps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specialized housing is important but it fundamentally creates barriers ● Need a full spectrum of housing options especially low barrier options ● Lack of low barrier options undermines specialized housing ● Need a place for people we currently banned ● Flexibility to move between specialized to low barrier housing to meet needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ That the Region set up multiple 24hr barrier free drop ins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognize extra work of A Better Tent City (ABTC) ■ Can double as emergency shelters and warming/cooling centres in extreme weather
	<p>21 Design housing options through a relational lens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have housing options that accommodate families, found families and community bonds. ● Community bonds need to be respected.
Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness	<p>22 Launch a homelessness advocacy office to run public education campaigns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus on changing public perceptions to free up system, minimize criminalization, and expand window of possibilities. ● Key areas of focus: tackling stigma, rights of tenants, rights of the unsheltered, challenging dehumanization and criminalization ● Pressure other levels of government to make housing and homelessness the top election issue.
	<p>23 Facilitate Lived Expertise workshops that allow the public to engage directly with and learn from the experiences of those who have lived through homelessness.</p> <hr/> <p>24 Create a comprehensive Public Housing and Homelessness dashboard that includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inflow and outflow data ● Eviction data ● PIT Count data ● Shelter data ● Rehousing data ● Deaths

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
	<p>25 Collaborate with the coroner’s office to establish a memorializing process for those lost to homelessness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updated monthly ● Public location with list of names ● Opportunities for private and public grieving and story sharing
	<p>26 Fund and implement homelessness prevention education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner with the school boards and universities to develop prevention education for students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include topics around tenant rights, lived expertise, navigating Housing Stability System. ○ Challenge streamlining of students where life skills are taught only to those identified as non-worker. ● Fund training for users of Housing Stability System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include topics such as tenant rights, lived expertise, navigating Housing Stability System, literacy, how to stay safe on streets for folks who are new, consent, relationships.
	<p>27 Advocate to other levels of government for Universal Basic Income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fund dedicated advocacy staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Liaise with lived experts and grassroots groups. ○ Advocacy paired with advocacy on OW and ODSP geared to cost of living. ● Pair advocacy with a public education campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to counter neoliberal austerity culture that will turn UBI into the failure state that OW and ODSP currently are.
	<p>28 Hire an outreach coordinator to liaise with neighbourhood groups and conduct public education initiatives that disrupt stigma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide workshops on human rights, tenant rights, extreme weather planning (supporting warming and cooling centres) ● Liaise with Neighbourhood Associations, BIAs, condo boards, tenant groups, community connectors, Facebook groups and NextDoor. ● Develop a toolkit to address participation barriers (transportation, childcare, accessibility) to encourage more inclusive and diverse participation in neighbourhood conversations.
<p>Climate and Extreme Weather Planning</p>	<p>29 Develop a Proactive Extreme Weather Mitigation Protocol (ii.e. winter warming packages 3.0)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summer cooling and winter warming ● Flexible outreach materials funding (with big lead) ● Quarterly planning (i.e. winter planning starts in spring and summer planning starts in fall) ● Coordinate between formal and informal outreach embedded with continuum of care learnings so protocol adapts to emerging needs.

FOCUS AREA	CALLS TO ACTION
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| | <p>30 Draft an extreme weather homelessness response plan (i.e. out of the cold with paid staff)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult with the Red Cross, military, and other emergency response groups to identify learnings that can be translated to homelessness response.• Develop a framework to mobilize temporary shelters quickly (i.e. churches account for in kind accounting)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provide training framework to ensure adequate staff and volunteers |
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