

Saskatoon's Homelessness Action Plan

Executive Summary

A message from the Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan Steering Committee

Over the past three decades, homelessness has increased in Saskatoon. Government and non-profit organizations have developed emergency services to ensure immediate safety, but a systematic response has been missing. The community has demanded that we do better. We listened and we have acted.

In late 2014, the United Way Plan to End Homelessness (P2EH) Leadership Committee, the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), and the Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness (CAB-SH) formed a Steering Committee to discuss the best way to create a coordinated approach to addressing homelessness in Saskatoon. It was agreed that an updated plan, based on recent community consultations and lessons learned from new initiatives would be developed, and that a leadership model focusing on results and community impact be established.

Since the consultations, many new efforts are already underway and are having an impact on homelessness in Saskatoon. But there is much more to do. With this in mind, we have integrated the community's recommendations to create an ambitious five-year plan that will turn vision into action. The responsibility of leading the Homelessness Action Plan will be undertaken by the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP). To implement the Action Plan, SHIP will review its mandate, its bylaws, and expand its Board in 2016 to be more representative of a community committed to addressing homelessness. SHIP's functions and activities will also expand. As a lead agency, they will facilitate meetings, provide staff support to committees and action teams, help develop new and enhance existing programs, research solutions, evaluate and report on progress, foster collective action and ensure that the actions set out in this plan are undertaken.

This Action Plan is the result of a concerted effort to honour the passion and voice of the community. Based on multiple consultations over the past three years and building upon the existing collaborative efforts already underway, we are confident this plan will create positive change. This will be achieved by improving coordination, ensuring the service and housing infrastructure is meeting the needs of people at-risk or experiencing homelessness, and evaluating progress to make continuous improvements to our homeless serving system.

It is essential that we coordinate and co-operate effectively to meet the needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

Together, we will make sure that homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.

Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan Steering Committee

CeCe Baptiste <i>United Way P2EH Committee</i>	Grant McGrath <i>United Way P2EH Committee</i>	Judy Shum <i>United Way Dir. Community Impact</i>
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Shaun Dyck* <i>SHIP Executive Director</i>	Ray Neale <i>CAB-SH Board Member</i>	Lesley Anderson / Alan Wallace <i>City of Saskatoon</i>
Paul Gauthier <i>United Way P2EH Committee</i>	Myra Potter <i>United Way Exec. Director (ret.)</i>	Don Windels <i>SHIP Board Member</i>

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The Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan focuses on four key areas with specific actions and goals to help reach our vision that homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.

1. System Coordination and Innovation

Improving service coordination will result in access to the right support at the right time. By promoting collaboration, service providers will benefit from knowing that the services they cannot provide may be provided by a partnering agency. Communicating challenges will expose service gaps that require innovative solutions to help end homelessness individuals and families.

Goal: Provide individuals with appropriate service regardless of where they enter the system of care.

Year 1

- Review availability of housing and support services to assess system capacity, ease of access and service gaps baseline
- Expand the mandate of the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership as the agency leading the coordination, collaboration, research and evaluation efforts detailed in this Action Plan
- Develop and regularly engage Collective Action Teams supporting solutions to homelessness
- Evaluate city-wide data gathering ability and facilitate adoption of tools to improve decision making and performance for clients
- Develop a Communications Plan that
 - facilitates discussions that develop solutions
 - spreads knowledge on the state of and solutions to homelessness
 - celebrates achievements in Saskatoon

Year 2 – 5

- Develop a cost analysis and investment plan driven by results of system capacity evaluation
- Release a report card that charts progress
- Work with service and housing providers to analyze and improve information gathering and performance evaluation
- System and Capacity Evaluation (Year 3)

2. Strengthening Housing Placement and Support Programs

Addressing homelessness will be achieved by expanding housing placement and support programs such as Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, and Housing Location programs. Providing access to training and data collection assistance for these programs will also enhance local organizations' capacity to serve their clients.

Goal: Moving people who are chronically and episodically homeless as fast as possible from the street or emergency shelters into permanent housing with supports.

Year 1

- Invest in expansion of housing placement programs and the systems that support its implementation
- Evaluate current housing placement and support programs to promote sustainability and potential areas of expansion
- Create training and expansion plan with service providers

Year 2 – 5

- Ongoing evaluation of programs to identify success, impact and gaps
- Develop a funding and resource assessment to ensure critical needs are met in the long-term, and to promote new investment that prevent and end homelessness
- Coordinate training and professional development programs
- Develop projects that are long-term solutions to system gaps

3. Prevention

Stabilizing people by ensuring that they remain in their home prevents homelessness and the trauma that comes with it. Saskatoon is home to several of the most effective prevention programs in Canada, meeting people where they are at and seeing incredible results. However, some people are still falling through the cracks into homelessness and need short-term support, financial or otherwise, to remain housed. For others, it will require encouraging a targeted response during times in their life when they may be particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Goal: Reduce the prevalence and incidence of homelessness

Year 1

- Engage with hospitals, child and family services, and correctional facilities to document current policy and practice with respect to discharge/release planning and to identify housing-related barriers to successful transition
- Interview front-line workers and those with lived experience to understand homelessness prevention needs in Saskatoon
- Develop a service provider recognition program

Year 2 – 5

- Consult Aboriginal service providers and those with lived experience on how to improve access to culturally appropriate counselling and healing practices
- Develop standard discharge planning protocols with hospitals, child and family services, and correctional facilities
- Release a recommendation report and facilitate actions that improve access to culturally appropriate counselling and healing practices
- Create a framework for a local rent bank and a matched savings program
- Report on activities that will promote prevention of homelessness in Saskatoon
- Identify gaps in service for children and youth

4. The Solution to Homelessness is Housing

An adequate supply of appropriate housing is essential to success of the Plan, and critical to any effort to prevent and end homelessness. This Action Plan will work to ensure a wide range of units are available, including supported living, affordable market, rent-geared-to-income housing and alternatives for those who need something different to meet their housing and social needs. Creating new affordable housing units is a necessary investment to ensure everyone can escape life on the street.

Goal: Increase the amount and type of housing rental and homeownership options provided by the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, ensuring safe, appropriate and affordable housing is available to all citizens

Year 1

- Conduct a baseline for need centred on existing housing inventory, waiting lists, and current and future demographics of the community
- Look at exceptional needs and best practices in harm reduction models

Year 2 – 5

- Develop ten year targets for investment in appropriate housing solutions based on current inventory and established need
- Increase the supply of housing with support services
- Establish new housing units with supported housing programs that address the needs of the hardest to house in Saskatoon

What Will Success Look Like?

Increases in the number of individuals and families supported

- 150 people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness will be housed by 2019
- Expansion of case management services will provide housing support for an additional 45 people by 2019

Preventing Homelessness

- A decrease in the number of unique individuals needing emergency shelter, short term stays and for crisis situations only
- Establishment of a rent or utility bank
- Widespread knowledge of tenant rights and landlord responsibilities

Increased amount of affordable housing alternatives

- A decrease in waiting lists, and an expansion in the number of appropriate and affordable rental and ownership housing alternatives that keeps pace with population growth at minimum.

Improved quality of life for those served by the system

- A survey of those who have lived experience of homelessness shows they have choices and alternatives to homelessness and report (according to their own definition) improvement in their well-being;

Improved teamwork between all parts of the homeless service system

- A survey of service providers will report satisfaction in their work and acknowledge that they are working together effectively to support actions to reduce homelessness.
- A data sharing agreement to improve service coordination

Improved reporting and evaluation

- Creation of a credible registry with a street needs evaluation to guide decision making
- Development of a Homelessness Report Card for Saskatoon

It's Time to Act!

As the journey proceeds, there will need to be ways to reflect on the efforts and record outcomes and goal achievements. A report card charting our progress will be produced annually, as well as regular profiles of our amazing agencies and people of Saskatoon. It is important to speak to a wider audience – our community at large – about how the Plan is going and what is being achieved.

This purpose of this Action Plan is to enable all stakeholders including those who are homeless, direct service providers, Aboriginal leaders, allies and local, provincial, federal governments to work together sharing an agenda for change. It will maximize the strengths and innovation that characterize our community and will help us achieve our vision that homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.

A right to housing is currently not a recognized human right in Canada, but it should be.

As we approach solutions to homelessness, we will not only see each person as an individual, but also look at the bigger picture. Our job as a community is to find innovative solutions together. Everyone is included and participates in making Saskatoon a better place to live.

More information is available at
www.saskatoonhomelessness.ca