

*Home is where one starts from.* T.S.Eliot

**Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness**  
2009-2014





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## Introduction

There are many barriers that communities face in ending homelessness. These barriers include, but are not limited to, high rates of in-migration, shortage of affordable housing, lack of coordination in systems, and agencies under strain to provide service (Alberta Secretariat, October 2008). These barriers are prevalent within the City of Grande Prairie.

Economic prosperity in resource based industries and related support industries lured large numbers of workers to the Grande Prairie area. Within the last ten years, the city's population has more than doubled<sup>1</sup>. As of 1994, Grande Prairie's highest residential growth rate was over the 2005 to 2007 time period, with an increase of 5,596 residents (2007 Population Analysis, 2007). According to the 2007 Municipal Census, there are now approximately 50,000 city residents.

Prior to the global economic downturn, the strong economic growth in the region caused a significant drop in poverty rates. However, for some workers, earnings did not keep pace with the cost of living. The City of Grande Prairie has the distinction of having the highest combined residential property taxes and utility charges in all of Alberta, (City of Edmonton, Annual Residential Property Taxes and Utility Charges Survey, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007). Grande Prairie market rental rates, grocery costs, and gas prices are also among the highest in the province (Community housing: A stakeholder report on housing and homelessness, 2008).

Lack of coordination in systems is also a challenge when it comes to ending homelessness. Currently, the system is hard to navigate. Many Albertans are uncertain what Government services are available and how to access them. Residents who require assistance face a dizzying array of programs and services from various provincial ministries with separate application forms and different intake points. Accessing services is a daunting process. Clients often find themselves directed to numerous service delivery agents at various locations. At each intake point, they must repeat and re-describe their circumstances and histories to a new service agent in order to access a particular service. The client's journey to secure assistance

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<sup>1</sup>  $((2006 \text{ federal census} - 1996 \text{ federal census}) / 1996 \text{ federal census})$   
 $((47,074 - 31,140) / 31,140) = 51.2 \text{ percent}$



involves commencing a number of separate, disconnected processes as if each was their first encounter with the Alberta government. This is inefficient, cumbersome and exhausting for clients, and not cost-effective for taxpayers.

Not-for-profit social service agencies play a key role in the homeless-serving system. Many not-for-profit agencies are currently under strain, facing increased demand for their services as they struggle with higher operating costs. Salaries, benefits and working conditions are largely uncompetitive in the not-for profit sector, making it difficult for agencies to recruit staff.



## Executive Summary

Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness aims to end homelessness in the community by 2014.

Currently, homeless-making processes are part of our housing and social welfare systems. Our housing system is a mix of public, private, and non-profit actors. Over the past two decades the public and the private actors in the system have left more and more people without housing (Hulchanski & Shapcott, 2004, p. 6). We believe we can end homelessness in our community by using a Housing First approach. The Housing First approach puts the highest priority on moving homeless people into permanent housing with the supports necessary to sustain that housing.

Over the 2005 and 2008 time period there was a 28 percent increase in homelessness. The 2008 Homeless Count estimates that during that year 854 people in Grande Prairie did not have a safe, secure place to call home.

The Alberta Government is committed to ending homelessness in 10 years. Alberta is the first province across the country to develop a province-wide Plan to End Homelessness. More than 300 cities across North America are working to end homelessness. The City of Grande Prairie is incorporating the 10 elements that are common to all successful plans. This ensures that our comprehensive multi-year plan will align with the Alberta Secretariat for Action of Homelessness' *A Plan for Alberta*.

Through an extensive community consultation process, high-level priorities aimed at ending homelessness were developed. These priorities are based on evidence-based practices, community values and guiding principles. The following high-level priorities were used to inform the goals of the Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness.

1. Emergency Prevention
2. Data Management
3. Outreach Support Services
4. Shorten Homelessness
5. Permanent Housing
6. Income (please see Appendix 2, p. 46 for summary of consultation)

The cost benefit of Housing First is widely understood, the cost of managing homelessness far exceeds the cost of ending it. The City of Grande Prairie is committed to ending homelessness. Significant



investment in housing, supports and services is needed to transform this commitment into reality. Predictable and sustainable funding is required to implement this aggressive plan. The Community Based Organization will ensure Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness moves forward. The City has strong relationships with the gpCHASE Advisory Board (refer to p.37), the Ground Zero Task Force, non-profit agencies, and other orders of government.



## The Plan

*Without a Plan, things only get worse: worse on the streets; worse in our neighbourhoods; worse in emergency rooms, police stations, libraries, and in our shelters.*

**Philip F. Mangano**

Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness aims to end homelessness in 5 years. It has **5 goals** and strategies to ensure success. In summary the goals are:

- 1. Facilitate an adequate supply of appropriate permanent housing options for our homeless.**
- 2. Provide enhanced and coordinated services for people who are homeless.**
- 3. Ensure appropriate emergency accommodation is available as needed, but transition people quickly into permanent housing.**
- 4. Prevent people from becoming homeless.**
- 5. Establish an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress.**



## Grande Prairie's Homelessness: the Current Reality

### How Many

The 2006 Homeless Count is notable, because it had the highest annual estimate of homeless individuals, numbered at 1159 people, using a point-in-time (PIT) count<sup>2</sup>. All homeless counts have involved a count of people in emergency shelter beds, as well as a survey of the general public to determine the number of homeless individuals in the community. Point-in-time counts and shelter utilization statistics give only a partial picture. Most people experiencing homelessness do not live on the streets. More than 80 percent of Canada's homeless are improperly housed or on the verge of eviction (Calgary Committee To End Homelessness, 2008, p. 19). They sleep in temporary beds, with friends or relatives, in abandoned buildings, and vehicles, and in other sites away from the public eye.

The 2008 Homeless Count estimates that 854 people in Grande Prairie did not have a home of their own. Over the 2006-2008 time period there was a *46 percent decrease* in homelessness; however, over the 2005-2008 period there was an *overall increase of 28 percent*. Homelessness is episodic, with individuals cycling between having shelter and not.

The demographic characteristics of the homeless population vary significantly from city to city. Detailed information about a representative sample of the homeless population in the City of Grande Prairie will be drawn from a City Report done by Irene Hoffart and Kathleen Cairns of Synergy Research Group. Hoffart and Cairns conducted a comprehensive provincial evaluation of projects funded through the Provincial Outreach Initiative Pilot Project (OIPP)<sup>3</sup>. In Grande Prairie the OIPP fund funded five pilot projects.

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<sup>2</sup> In March 2005, the Corporation for Supportive Housing developed a formula to determine annual estimates of the number of homeless people in a community. The formula utilizes information gathered from a single day, or Point-in-Time (PIT) survey to project an annual estimate.

$$A + ((B * 51) * (1 - C)) = \text{Annual Estimate}$$

**A** – Point-In-Time count, count of currently homeless (CH) people = x

**B** – Number of currently homeless (CH) who became homeless in last 7 days = x

**C** – Proportion (expressed in decimals – i.e. 15% = .15) of currently homeless in A who have had a previous homeless episode within the past 12 months = x% = .x

<sup>3</sup> The OIPP fund supported innovative projects that assisted in moving people experiencing homelessness towards independent living and stable housing. The OIPP fund, valued at \$16 –million over two years, was allocated exclusively to the Seven Cities Group. Grande Prairie's portion was approximately \$1.26- million.



Hoffart and Cairns' City Report contains detailed information about the homeless served by these projects. That information will be used to describe the characteristics of the sub-groups in the City of Grande Prairie who are experiencing homelessness.



## Who is Experiencing Homelessness?

Contrary to common stereotypes, homelessness affects a wide range of people, including families with children.

### Aboriginals

Nearly one in six Aboriginal people in Canada live in Alberta. The province has the third largest Aboriginal population numbered at 188,365 people; of these, 61 percent are off-reserve urban dwellers (Faiz, 2009). According to Statistics Canada 2006 census results, 11 percent of Grande Prairie's residents self-identified as Aboriginal. Hoffart and Cairns reported that 28.5 percent of all clients who accessed the pilot projects self-identified as Aboriginals. The City of Grande Prairie's Aboriginal population is over-represented in the homeless population.

### Addictions

About 55 percent of the overall client group served by the pilot projects reported that they had no addictions, either past or current; 35 percent of clients reported that they had current, active addictions; and 11 percent reported having a past addiction. This dispels the myth, commonly held, that addicts make up the majority of homeless individuals.

Hoffart and Cairns' City Report identifies the need for improved community services in addiction and mental health. Stating that; "Grande Prairie requires additional medical detox and addiction treatment beds to support its work with the chronic homeless population as well as lower acuity clients whose addiction is not accompanied by mental health issues" (2009, p. 32).

### Criminal History

The rates of criminal offence in the 12 months prior to intake varied across pilot projects from a high of 30.6 percent to a low of 7 percent. Homeless individuals sometimes cycle through the criminal justice system, spending time in jail or in police stations for low-level offenses.

The City of Grande Prairie receives its police services from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The RCMP and Mental Health have put forward a funding proposal to implement a program called Police and Crisis Team (PACT). This program would have a police



officer and psychiatric nurse work together with individuals who engage police and are suffering from mental health issues. This program recognizes the interconnectedness of mental health and the criminal justice system. Homelessness is also interconnected.

Offenders face the prospect of homelessness upon release, whether it is from the RCMP jail or from correctional centres. There are two correctional centres in the region; both are located approximately 200 kilometres from Grande Prairie. Grande Cache Institution is a federal penitentiary located 183 kilometres south of Grande Prairie. Peace River Correctional Centre is a provincial penitentiary located 198 kilometres north-west of Grande Prairie. Refusal to participate in discharge planning, reduced availability of health and social services, and a lack of housing all contribute to the possibility of homelessness (Riordan, 2004, p. 10).

### **Disabilities**

People with disabilities face disadvantages related to housing design and accessibility. One third of clients, who accessed the pilot projects funded through OIPP funds, reported having some form of disability. Currently, Hearthstone Manor and Margaret Edgson Manor are the only buildings that have wheelchair accessible units. The former has nine barrier free units; the latter has 16 units. There is a need to develop strategies and incentives that will increase the number of housing options available to people with limited mobility.

### **Families**

The majority of all clients served by the projects were individuals although one of the pilot projects reported 38 percent families. As of June 2009, 524 households representing 1247 people were on the waitlist<sup>4</sup> for low income and affordable housing. Of these 413 were single parent families.

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<sup>4</sup> Waitlist information provided by the Grande Spirit Foundation.



### **Immigrants and Internal Migrants**

According to the 2006 Census, immigrants accounted for approximately one in five (19.8%) of Canada's total population, the highest proportion in 75 years. From 2001 to 2006, 9.3 percent of newcomers to Canada chose to live in Alberta. The 2006 Census enumerated 527,030 immigrants in Alberta representing 16.3% of the total population. Between 2001 and 2006, Alberta's immigrant population increased by 20.2%.

The Athabasca – Grande Prairie – Peace River region reported a decrease in the proportion of immigrants in their population, from 5.3% to 5.2% between 2001 and 2006. However, there was still an absolute gain of 635 new immigrants (Ethnic Diversity and Immigration: Immigrant Population by Economic Region, 2009).

### **Mental Health Conditions**

Hoffart and Cairns reported that 52.8 percent of the total group had no mental health condition. When type of mental health problem was provided, about 78 percent involved a mood disorder, 29 percent involved an anxiety disorder, and about 10 percent had schizophrenia diagnoses.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) –Alberta Northwest Region (ANWR) provides affordable and supported housing to low-income individuals with mental illness. Willow Place has 58 units and Fraser House provides low-income housing for four men.

### **Unemployed**

Recent unemployment also characterizes individuals experiencing homelessness; 69 percent of the overall client group were unemployed and most had been without a job for six months or less. Financial crisis is a trigger or incidence that can lead to the loss of one's home.

The Synergy group collected data over a one year period, from March 2008 until March 2009. Over the intervening six months (March 2008 – August 2009), unemployment has increased in the Athabasca – Grande Prairie economic region, from 6.5 percent in March to 8.3 percent in August. The Athabasca – Grande Prairie economic region currently has the highest unemployment rate in the entire province (Government of Alberta, Office of Statistics and Information, 2009).



Of note, compared to the population served by the pilot projects in other cities, homeless clients of the Grande Prairie pilot projects tended to have higher levels of education.

### **Victims of Violence**

Odyssey House is a women's shelter with 40 emergency beds. The women's shelter provides safe, short-term and supportive accommodations for abused women and their children. Although their primary mandate is for women and children leaving abusive relationships, homeless women and their families are also accommodated as space allows.

The number of women and children who are able to secure safe, affordable housing is limited due to increased vulnerabilities such as lack of income, lack of housing, and lack of supports. For these reasons, many of these women return to their abusive relationships.

### **Youth**

There is no one cause for youth homelessness and therefore no one solution. Some of the causes and consequences of street life include family dysfunction, abuse and trauma, exploitation and alienation, poverty, addiction, and mental health and child welfare inadequacies (Karabanow, 2008, p. 772)

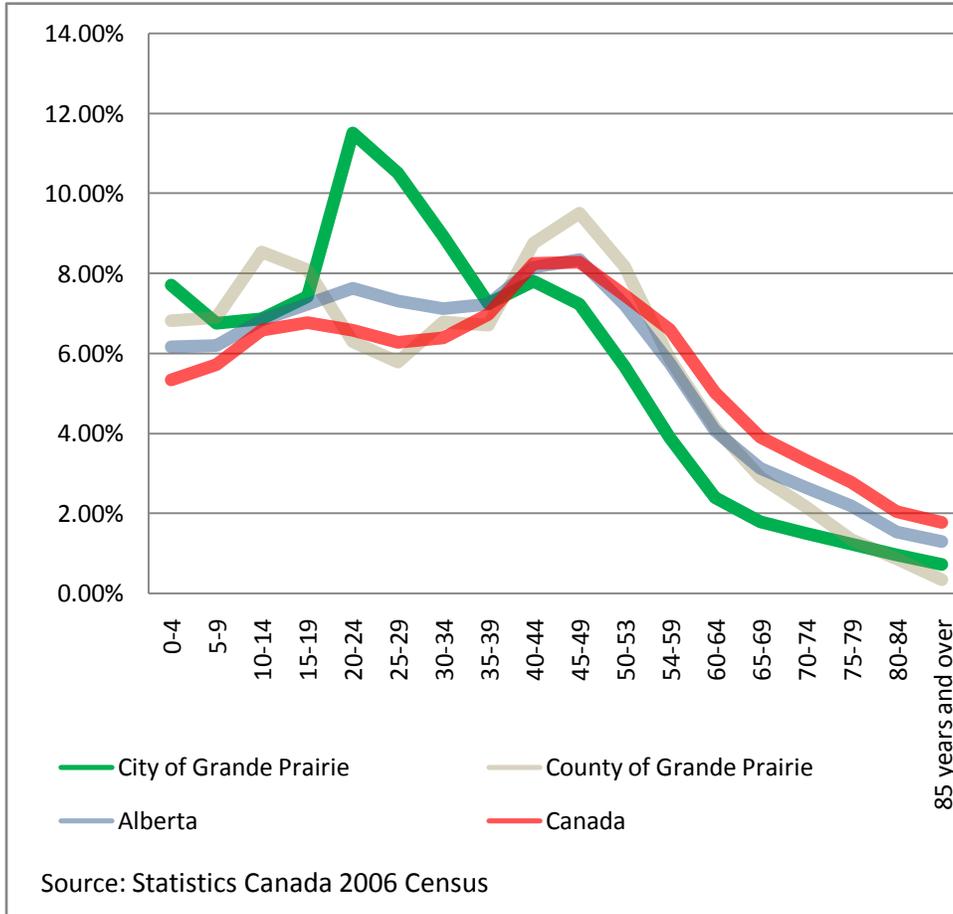
In Grande Prairie, Sunrise House – operated by Grande Prairie Youth Emergency Shelter Society – is the community's Youth Emergency Shelter. It serves youth 12 to 17 years of age. It is open from 9pm to 10am and it accommodates 10 youth a night on a first come, first serve basis. In 2008, the shelter served 282 youth; 38 of these youth were chronically homeless (Grande Prairie Youth Emergency Shelter Society, 2009). According to research sponsored through the National Homelessness Initiative, youth represent one of the fastest growing sub-populations of the homeless in Canada (King, 2007, p. 2). They also represent a growing segment of the homeless population in Grande Prairie.

Looking at the City of Grande Prairie demographics highlights the fact that the City has a young population who need adequate, safe and affordable housing. The median age in the community is 30 years old – ten years younger than the Canadian median (Statistics Canada, 2009). According to the 2006 Canadian census, the largest single age group are those residents aged 20-24; this group accounts for 5,420 residents. Youth face many challenges in the rental market



and in home ownership, such as discrimination and lack of credit history.

**Figure 1- Age Characteristics of Population**



**Seniors**

Hoffart and Cairns reported that 3.6 percent of clients received a pension or senior benefits. Currently, there are 426 seniors’ households that are the waitlist for affordable/social housing. The Elder’s Caring Shelter offers shelter to individuals over the age of 55. Medical needs and meals are provided for residents as they work towards independence.



## Chronic Homelessness

It is estimated that in 2008 the City of Grande Prairie had 233 chronic homeless people. The following formula was used to calculate this number:

$$\begin{aligned} A \times B &= C \\ 854 \times 0.273 &= 233 \end{aligned}$$

**A = 2008 Annual Estimate of Homeless Persons in Grande Prairie**  
(2008 Homeless count: Determining the homeless population in Grande Prairie, 2009)

**B = percentage of chronic homeless in Alberta, 27.3%, identified by the Secretariat for Action on Homelessness.**

**Table 1 – Alberta’s Current Homeless Population**

Group of Homeless	Number Per Group Alberta	% of Homeless Population	# per Group Grande Prairie
Chronic	3,000	27.3%	233
Transient	5,500	50.0%	427
Employable	1,500	13.6%	116
Families	1,000	9.1%	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>854</b>

Source: (The Alberta Secretariat For Action on Homelessness, 2008, p. 11)

**C = 2008 estimate of chronic homeless in Grande Prairie**

The Seven Cities Group<sup>5</sup> is currently working to standardize homeless counts; no further counts will occur until common standards are established.

It is important to highlight that typically single men constitute the largest segment of homeless people in most Canadian cities (Hwang, 2004, p. 169). In Toronto, single men account for 75 percent of chronically homeless individuals (Hwang, p. 169).

<sup>5</sup> The Seven Cities Group includes both municipal members and community-based organizations from the seven major cities in Alberta. The group was established in 2001, originally to share lessons related to administering federal homeless funding. Today, the Seven Cities Group continues to collaborate and network with each other.



## Systemic Causes/Risk Factors

### Poverty

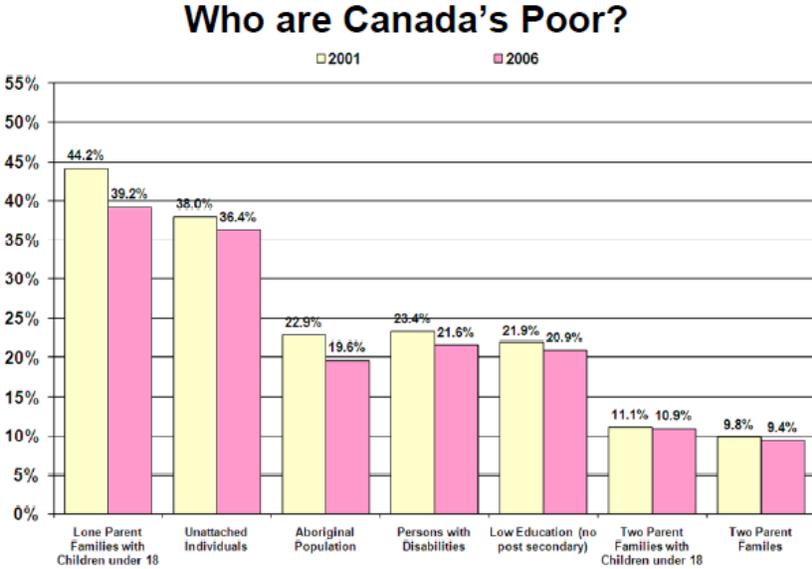
There is no one reason individuals or families become homeless or one pathway into a life on the streets. However, what is common to virtually all homelessness is poverty. Poverty is calculated by measuring low income; this can be done by using either an absolute or a relative approach. The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is an example of an absolute approach to measuring low-income, and it is based on a specific quantity and quality of goods and services. The relative approach calculates the number and proportion of persons and households whose incomes fall below some low household income threshold. The calculations of Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) and Low-income Measures (LIM) are examples of this approach.

Each of these measures has its advantages and disadvantages and can provide different values for the incidence of low income. For example, in 2004, the incidence of low income for all persons in Alberta was 12% when the MBM measure was used, and 10.5% when the LICO after-tax measure was used (Office of Statistics and Information, Employment and Immigration, Government of Alberta, 2008). The MBM approach for measuring low income is the most recent method, and officially released data has only been available for the time period of 2000 to 2004. Low income is a major driver of homelessness.

Hoffart and Cairns' report identified that 72 percent of clients had incomes under \$15,001 (2009, p. 17). The income source of people experiencing homelessness varies, with 28 percent of the overall client group having no income, 27 percent supporting themselves through employment, 22.6 percent who were on Alberta Works, 10.5 percent on AISH, and 5 percent on Employment Insurance. As previously noted, data was collected from March 2008 –March 2009; since that time the Athabasca – Grande Prairie economic region has seen an increase in unemployment from 6.5 percent in March to 8.3 percent in August. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the number of clients on Employment Insurance has also gone up.



The graph below illustrates the demographics of people experiencing poverty across Canada:



Source: Where Poverty Prevails: A Profile of Urban Poverty in Alberta; prepared by Community Services Consulting Ltd. for the Inter-City Forum on Social Policy, September 2009.

According to the 2006 Canadian Census, 8.7% of the population in Grande Prairie is poverty-stricken. 30.2% of lone parent families, 8% of children, 12.7% of the Aboriginal population and 14.4% of people with disabilities were also found to be living in poverty, all within our city.

**Lack of Affordability**

Typically, the affordability benchmark used in housing analysis is 30 percent of before-tax household income. For renters, shelter costs include rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services. For owners, shelter costs include mortgage payments (principal and interest), property taxes, and any condominium fees, along with payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services. The City of Grande Prairie has the distinction of having the highest combined residential property taxes and utility charges in all of Alberta, (City of Edmonton, Annual Residential Property Taxes and Utility Charges Survey, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007).

The lack of affordable housing is evident when we compare the median income level in the community, with the Core Need Income Threshold, and the average cost of rent. According to Statistics



Canada, in 2005 the median income for residents of the community 15 years and older was \$29,102. When broken down based on gender, males' median income was \$40,953 and females' median income was \$20,255. The median level indicates that half of the specified population earns this income or higher and half earn this income or lower.

Core Need Income Threshold (CNIT) is a calculation to determine the income that a household needs in order to secure adequate private sector accommodation.

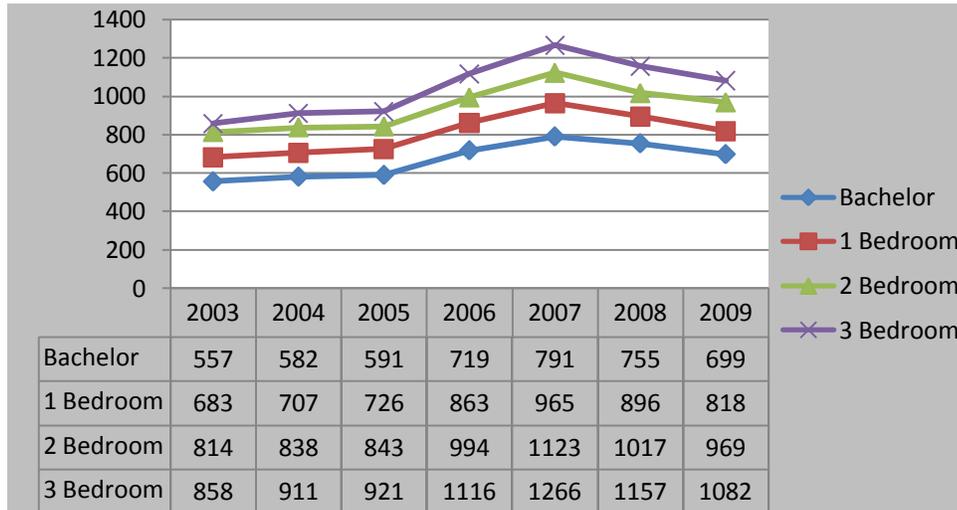
Alberta Housing and Urban Affairs reported that Grande Prairie's Core Need Income Threshold for 2009 is as follows:

Bachelor	\$32,000
1 Bedroom	\$34,000
2 Bedroom	\$42,500
3 Bedroom	\$55,000
4 Bedroom	\$58,500
5 Bedroom	\$61,000

During times of economic boom, counter intuitively, homelessness gets worse. In the past few years, demand for rental housing increased because of high migration levels, youth employment growth, and the large gap between the cost of homeownership and renting. During the recent economic boom, low vacancy rates and demand for rental units kept rents high even among the less desirable units.



Figure 2 - Average Cost of Rent, by Bedroom Type



Source: CMHC Rental Market Report October 2003, 2004, October 2005, December 2006, spring 2008, spring 2009 (adjusted for inflation using the Bank of Canada's online calculator [http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/rates/inflation\\_calc.html](http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/rates/inflation_calc.html))

Table 2 : New Dwelling Construction

Type of dwelling	Year and Number of Units Built									
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Single family dwelling	381	450	332	305	418	510	513	742	886	1,066
Semi-detached	38	34	28	26	62	45	23	59	86	160
Duplex	4	12	6	4	8	2	25	28	45	8
Multi-Family	154	70	301	51	220	201	114	171	349	553
Mobile Home	16	34	10	5	4	12	6	50	65	105
Other (improvements to existing housing)	163	178	216	209	342	400	495	554	716	749

Source: City of Grande Prairie 2007 Population Analysis

Between 1997 and 2006, 2184 multi-family dwellings were completed in Grande Prairie. None of these were affordable. Some are owned by investors who rent them out. Property owners who bought at the peak of the market now have difficulty lowering rents. Very little private-sector rental housing is being built and since 1993, very little new social housing has been created (Hulchanski D. J., 2004, p. 179).

More housing options are a pillar of the Alberta Secretariat's *A Plan for Alberta*. The range of housing options include: greater availability of existing rental units, construction of new rental units, single room



occupancy buildings, room-and-board arrangements, and affordable housing (The Alberta Secretariat For Action on Homelessness, 2008, p. 31).

Any successful efforts to alleviate the problem of insufficient supply of affordable housing will help relieve the growing problem of homelessness.

### **Rental Prejudice/Discrimination**

Anecdotally, evidence suggests that youth, racial minorities, seniors, and people with disabilities all experience discrimination in the rental market. From our community consultation in August of 2009, stakeholders identified the following barriers: inexperienced renters, lack of landlord incentives, and NIMBY (not in my backyard). We are also cognizant of the problem that arises from No home, no job – no job, no home.

### **Family Violence**

Research shows that individuals and families who experience homelessness often have histories of family violence, particularly in the case of women and children (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness, 2009, p. 20). Isolation is a problem; abusers cut off communication with family or community support networks and victims have little or no access to family finances. Limited space in women’s shelters means that victims are often forced to choose between staying in a violent situation, or escaping to the relative safety of the streets.

### **Provincial Ministries Discharge People into Homelessness<sup>6</sup>**

There is a need for population specific stabilization housing programs to transition people leaving programs or places such as hospitals, addictions recovery, foster care, and women’s shelters so they do not experience homelessness or need to return to an abusive environment.

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<sup>6</sup> This systemic cause of homelessness is identified by the Alberta Secretariat under Strategy #9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness.



*The “Risk, Trigger, Trap” Road to Homelessness*

Identified by the Calgary Foundation for Homelessness

People whose life experience include one or more **RISK** factors:

- Poverty
- Mental illness, chronic substance abuse and addictions
- Physical and developmental disabilities
- Abuse, family conflict
- No or few social networks, isolation, lack of supportive relationships
- Lack of education
- Disruptive childhood experiences, such as time spent in foster homes

Encounter a **TRIGGER** event, an incidence that leads to the loss of one’s home:

- Financial crisis
- Moving for economic or social opportunity
- Health crisis
- Family conflict
- Landlord/roommate conflict
- Health crisis
- Crime (either as victim or perpetrator)

The majority of people who lose their homes are able, with the help of family and friends, to get their lives back on track. The most vulnerable – mostly those with the greater combination of risk factors – can get trapped and become chronically homeless.

They’re caught in the homeless **TRAP**, finding themselves up against multiple and cumulative barriers, including:

- No address, no welfare; no welfare, no address
- Getting ‘lost in the system’: navigating all municipal, provincial, and non-profit services for help becomes overwhelming, if not impossible.
- Conditions put on housing: sobriety, no criminal history, good credit history.
- Employment barriers: no permanent address, lack of transportation, health issues, insufficient education, poor hygiene and lack of sleep from living on the streets or in a shelter
- Discrimination, based on race or family circumstance.

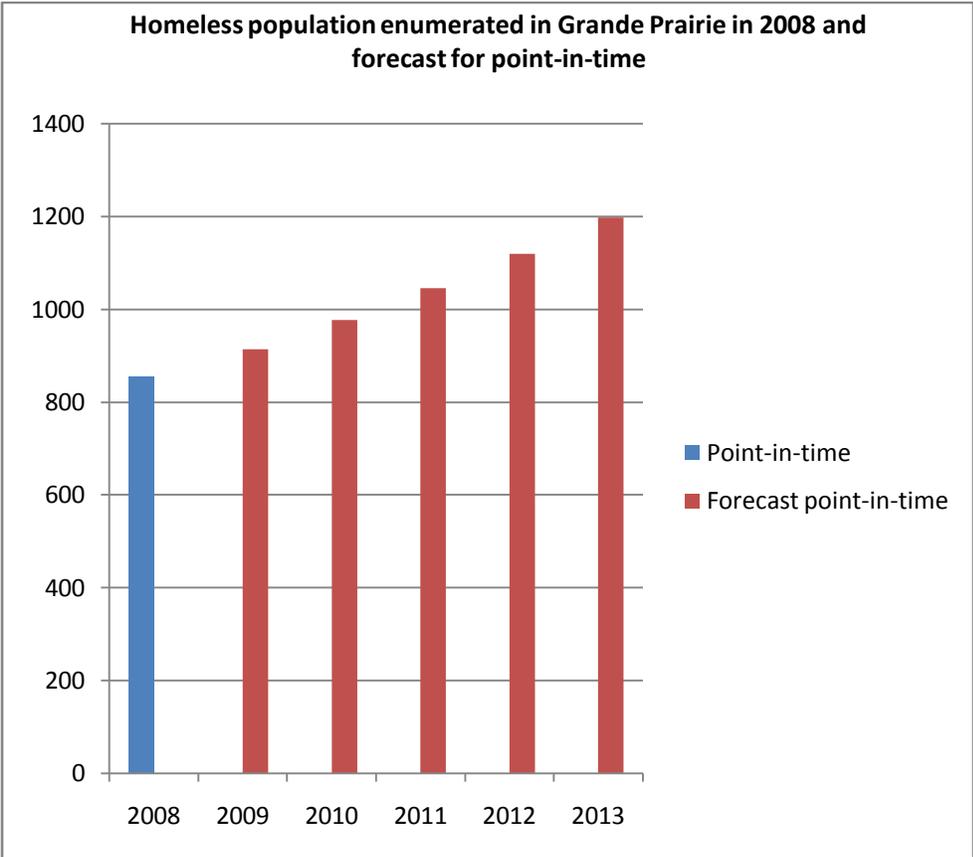
Of this subpopulation of homeless, some will simply not be able to find their way out, and will become chronically homeless.

Source: (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness, 2009, p. 21)



### The Cost

The 2008 Homeless Count estimated that 854 people in Grande Prairie did not have a safe, secure place of their own. If the homeless population continues to grow at a modest seven percent, in 2013 the forecast point-in-time annual count will be 1198 people, an overall increase of 40 percent over five years. The seven percent growth rate is used by the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness and the Homeless Management Model that was prepared for them.



The saving expected from the Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness is based on the 2008 point-in-time annual estimate of 854 homeless population and a annual growth rate of seven percent.



## COST TO MANAGE

Groups of Homeless	Number per group	Average annual cost per person or family	Total cost to manage homelessness in five years	Capital to build new unites	Cost to manage homelessness over the next five years
Chronic	233	\$114,850	\$ 133.8 million	\$0	
Transient	427	\$39,680	\$ 84.7 million	\$0	
Employable	116	\$21,600	\$12.6 million	\$0	
Families	78	\$69,600	\$27.0 million	\$0	
	<b>854</b>		<b>\$258.1 million</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$ 258.1 million</b>

## COST TO END

Groups of Homeless	Number per group	Cost to provide housing and services	Total cost to provide support program*	Capital to build 550 new affordable housing units*	Investment to END homelessness over the next five years
Chronic	233	\$ 34,000	\$ 39.6 million	\$ 34.3 million	
Transient	427	\$ 14,000	\$ 29.9 million	\$36.3 million	
Employable	116	\$ 6000	\$ 3.5 million	\$ 2.0 million	
Families	78	\$17,800	\$ 6.9 million	\$ 13.8 million	
	<b>854</b>		<b>\$ 79.9 million</b>	<b>\$ 86.4 million</b>	<b>\$166.3 million</b>

\*Over 5 years

<b>Cost savings achieved by implementing 5 year plan to end homelessness based on today's homeless population</b>	<b>\$ 91.8 million</b>
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## Potential Saving

### PROJECTED COST AND SAVINGS<sup>7</sup>

Homeless Population	Homeless Population in 2013	Projected Cost to continue to manage homelessness (status quo approach)	Total 5-year savings by implementing the Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness
Future*	1198	\$317.3 million	\$132.6 million

<sup>7</sup> Estimates are based on the Alberta Secretariat's Plan.

\*Estimates based on 7 percent annual growth in the homeless population



## Ending Homelessness: Grande Prairie's Approach

### Housing First

The Housing First approach puts the highest priority on moving homeless people into permanent housing with the supports necessary to sustain that housing. The community is shifting away from managing homelessness and towards ending homelessness. This paradigm shift is informed by the success of U.S. Cities such as Portland and Oregon, which implemented Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in 2005 (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness, 2009, p. 31).

The 'Streets to Homes' program in Toronto, is the model that the City of Grande Prairie is using to inform the development of our successful Housing First model. In April of 2009, Iain De Jong, the Manager of the Streets to Homes program, was in Grande Prairie and presented the program. In four year the Streets to Homes program was able to house 2,431 people. 69 percent are housed in the private market, 17 percent are housed in social housing, and 14 percent are housed in supportive/alternative housing. Between 85-93 percent are still housed on a consistent basis; there is some fluidity because of re-housing.

Housing First is based on the premise that people who are homeless will not achieve self-reliance unless their housing is safe and secure. To achieve this self-reliance:

- Housing is the first step
- Once stabilized in housing, then supports introduced to bring them to health and wholeness
- Job training or other client-identified skills training to bring to self-reliance.

### One Size Doesn't Fit All

People experiencing homelessness in our community have a variety of needs, with a range of complexity. Hoffart and Cairns' City Report identified a need for stronger, high intensity case management, to meet the needs of high acuity clients. They recommended forming an inter-disciplinary, high intensity case management project to reduce the number of chronically homeless, high acuity individuals in its homeless population. The creation of an *Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) type housing*



*first project* would be modelled on successful programs such as the Streets to Homes program.

Housing First is not a model that can be applied across the board. There will always be need for interim housing: for youth, people with persistent mental illness and cognitive disabilities or chronic substance abuse problems.

## Preventing Chronic Homelessness

*Without a focus on prevention, our success in moving people out of homelessness will be compromised by those falling in. We would simply be 'bailing the leaking boat' of homelessness.*

**Philip F. Mangano**

Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

A coordinated plan will need to be developed with health providers, the justice system and child welfare, to ensure that people have a safe place to go upon discharge from institutions<sup>8</sup>. We will work with the Alberta government to ensure people without a home are able to receive eligible income support programs and to enhance our local housing support fund.

A local Housing Support Fund was created following changes to the Homeless and Eviction Prevention (HEP) fund. Currently, Provincial Operating dollars are being used to provide damage deposit and first month's rent; assistance is conditional with the requirement of a case worker. The fund is valued at \$93,025, and currently targeted only at those who are currently homeless. The demonstrated need within our community is far greater, and eviction prevention funds are needed. Under the Homeless and Eviction Prevention (HEP) fund, the local Grande Prairie office administered a total of \$2.4 million. This fund was allocated to prevent eviction, cover rent shortfall, and lastly assist new city residents.

Allocation of HEP Fund	Total	# of persons who access fund
Eviction prevention	\$ 454,000	555
Rent shortfall	\$949,000	2,452
New resident assistance	\$981,000	946

<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with the Alberta Secretariat Strategy #9: Develop approaches to prevent provincial systems from discharging clients into homelessness.



## Learning from the Success of Other Cities

More than 300 cities across North America are working to end homelessness. The National Alliance to End Homelessness developed the following “Ten Essentials for Ending Homelessness in Your Community”:

**PLAN** – a set of strategies focused on ending homelessness

**DATA** – a homeless management information system

**EMERGENCY PREVENTION** – strategies to prevent homelessness

**SYSTEMS PREVENTION** – remove impediments

**OUTREACH** – engage homeless persons and help them find appropriate housing and services

**SHORTEN HOMELESSNESS** – reduce the length of time people experience homelessness

**RAPID RE-HOUSING** – move people out of shelters and in to permanent housing

**SERVICES** – once re-housed ensure that people have access to services to retain their housing

**PERMANENT HOUSING** – a sufficient supply of permanent supportive and supported housing

**INCOME** – assist people to secure adequate income to retain their housing

The Secretariat for Action on Homelessness used these ten essentials during the August community consultation to help the community develop its Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness



## The Plan: Goals and Strategies

Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness will be executed in three phases. In **Phase One**, we aim to create rapid, visible and meaningful change by focusing on chronic homelessness and families. **Phase Two** will be focused on the deeper systemic changes and additional homeless sub-groups. **Phase Three** is the fine tuning phase where the final adjustments necessary to complete and sustain achievements.

The Community Housing Stakeholder report identified two priorities in the community (1) adequate emergency shelter<sup>9</sup> with outreach support services, and (2) affordable housing with outreach support services – including population specific stabilization housing (Olson-Lepchuk, Rogers, & Laing, Community housing: A stakeholder report on housing and homelessness, 2008).

Outreach Support Services are a critical factor in the success of community housing. This includes living skills, eviction prevention, employment assistance, transportation, and many other supports that keep clients in appropriate housing. It is essential that these supports be offered where the clients are, in-house, to be most effective (Community housing: A stakeholder report on housing and homelessness, 2008).

Specific needs for outreach support services that are required for individuals and families moving into affordable or stabilization housing, include life skills, counselling, childcare, transportation, eviction prevention, and employment training, and assistance.

The Plan to End Homelessness Community Consultation contributed to setting the high-level priorities of the community's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness (see page 46). The Plan to End Homelessness is a living document that will be reviewed as needed to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community.

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<sup>9</sup> At the time of the consultation, the need for adequate emergency shelter was still an ongoing concern and priority in community. In late 2008, the City of Grande Prairie re-directed \$7 million of its Affordable Housing funding for the creation of Rotary House, which replaces the existing Wapiti Community Dorm emergency shelter. Rotary House is slated to be open in December 2009.



## Grande Prairie’s Multi-year Plan has 5 main goals:

1. Facilitate an adequate supply of appropriate permanent housing options for our homeless.
2. Provide enhanced and coordinated services for people who are homeless.
3. Ensure appropriate emergency accommodation is available as needed, but transition people quickly into permanent housing.
4. Prevent people from becoming homeless.
5. Establish an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress.

These goals are further broken down into a series of strategies.

## **GOAL 1**—Facilitate an adequate supply of appropriate permanent housing options for our homeless.

### **Strategy 1**

Develop 550 units of affordable housing, including 75 units of supportive housing.

Grande Prairie has set an overall target of 550 new affordable housing units to be developed within the parameters of our Multi-year Plan. At mid-term we expect to see 250 new units created.

Affordability in our housing programs is created through a combination of building form, size and finishing, low cost land, incentives and financing.

<b>Affordable Housing Program</b>	<b>Projected Units</b>
Affordable housing homeownership program	125 units
Private sector affordable rental program	125 units
Public and non-profit sector affordable rental housing program	125 units
Density bonusing and inclusionary zoning for multi-residential development	100 units
Specialized and single-room occupancy housing	75 units



Based on the needs and resources of Grande Prairie as identified in this document, the above combination of housing programs is proposed. These programs will complement existing efforts while allowing space for new ideas to emerge. It is our intent to monitor and evaluate the success of each type of housing program, and make changes to our housing plan, as necessary, in order to accommodate the lowest-cost, most successful, and therefore most effective, housing solutions over our Multi-year Plan.

#### **Affordable housing homeownership program**

Our affordable housing homeownership program recognizes that homeownership plays an integral role in the development of permanent affordable housing in Grande Prairie. The proposed affordable housing homeownership program in our Multi-Year Plan includes two components: downpayment grants for homebuyers and incentives for builders. These two venues will allow low-middle income individuals to enter the housing market while making a variety of housing options affordable.

#### **Private sector affordable housing rental program**

The private sector affordable housing rental program will increase the number of affordable housing units available for rent through both land contribution and partial funding for the development of new rental properties. By utilizing both public land resources and offering incentives to private sector developers, we will be able to increase the supply of affordable rental units in numerous areas around Grande Prairie.

#### **Public and non-profit sector affordable rental housing program**

Under the proposed public and non-profit sector affordable housing rental program, public and non-profit housing agencies will receive public funding for the land and construction costs associated with the development of new rental units. With the exception of the amount that can be financed from the project's net operating income, public sector grants will cover costs for these new rental housing units in full.



### **Density bonusing and inclusionary zoning for multi-residential development**

The use of density bonusing and inclusionary zoning is also a key component to Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan. Inclusionary zoning ensures that affordable housing be created in newly developing areas of the city, and combination of density bonusing, zoning variances, expedited permits, and tax incentives can be used to offset the economic loss to multi-residential developers and owners.

### **Specialized and single-room occupancy housing**

The final component of our housing plan is the development of a number of single-room occupancy suites as well as specialized housing. This will include addictions treatment beds, permanent supportive housing for people with mental illness, youth transitional beds, supportive housing for people with severe addictions, and second stage housing for women and children. These types of housing are meant to assist in the reduction of time spent homeless, streamline the process of re-housing, and to provide permanent supports to those in need.

## **GOAL 2—Provide enhanced and coordinated services for people who are homeless.**

### **Strategy 1**

Strengthen coordination and avoid fragmentation of services.

Grande Prairie currently has many community agencies serving and meeting the needs of the homeless population. In order to ensure that each client is given the service and supports best suited to his or her individual needs, coordination and communication among agencies, the City, and secondary services must be a priority. Additionally, by fostering the relationships and systems between groups, accessibility of all services will improve, making it easier for the homeless to obtain assistance. A coordinated plan must be developed in order to prevent systems from discharging clients into homelessness.



## Strategy 2

Continue to implement, expand and educate on a Grande Prairie based “Housing First” approach.

Communicating the Grande Prairie based “Housing First” approach is imperative on many levels. Essentially, the switch to “Housing First” has meant a change from managing homelessness to ending it, and as such, has resulted in challenges associated with not only altering task processes, but also thought processes. Continuing to educate and expand on the “Housing First” approach in Grande Prairie will increase the effectiveness of community agencies and front line staff, enhance relationships between agencies, tenants and landlords, and reduce NIMBY all through improved understanding and community communication.

Overall, this will allow for new opportunities and ideas that serve the Housing First philosophy, and assist in achieving the ultimate goal of the Multi-year Plan: to end homelessness in Grande Prairie.

## Strategy 3

Enhance the local Housing Support Fund.

To support the use of the Housing Support Fund, we will streamline the process and parameters under which it operates and ensure that its purpose and availability is communicated to community agencies. A portion of the funds in the Housing Support Fund will be dedicated to prevention services; that is, to ensure that people are not evicted into homelessness.

## Strategy 4

Advocate for all levels of government to take a more systemic approach to addressing homelessness.

Grande Prairie is committed to working with other municipalities, as well as the provincial and federal governments in order to effectively implement the Multi-Year Plan, and make changes as necessary to address homelessness.



**GOAL 3**—Ensure appropriate emergency accommodation is available as needed, but transition people quickly into permanent housing. *Reduce the length of time homeless.*

### **Strategy 1**

Improve the capacity of programs to rapidly house and re-house people.

Through the development of rapid re-housing programs for emergency shelter providers, we will minimize periods of time spent homeless. These programs will set minimum performance expectations including a maximum time spent in shelter for individuals and families. We also seek to create an ACT-type Housing First program, which will provide an additional form of supports for homeless clients.

### **Strategy 2**

Advocate for adequate and appropriate resources to help agencies address the challenges and pressures they face.

In order to expand the capacity of agencies, we will seek funding to allow for smaller case loads, competitive salaries and benefits for all of Grande Prairie’s funded homeless-serving agencies.

### **Strategy 3**

Establish Second Stage Housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

A portion of developed supportive housing will be Second Stage Housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence. This will address the current need for housing for women and children leaving emergency shelters.

### **Strategy 4**

Support the youth shelter and agencies that deliver services to homeless youth.



The youth shelter has played an important role in helping transition youth from the streets back to supportive and permanent housing. However, homeless youth is a growing problem in our community. Grande Prairie is committed to improving the coordination of youth services, and enhancing case management strategies to address mental health, addictions treatment and physical needs specific to youth.

## **GOAL 4**—Prevent people from becoming homeless.

### **Strategy 1**

Continue to take preventative measures when addressing homelessness.

To successfully end homelessness, preventative measures must be taken in order to stop it from occurring in the first place. Part of this includes having programs in place that will keep clients from being discharged onto the streets. Grande Prairie will also work with landlords and agencies to identify families or individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless, and provide them with rent, utility payments or support services that will keep them housed.

## **GOAL 5**—Establish an implementation process for the Plan that builds on the strengths of the community; develops capacity; promotes collaboration, innovation and cost-effectiveness; and measures progress.

### **Strategy 1**

Committee formed to establish implementation process and action plan for the Plan.



A cross-section of perspectives, strengths and knowledge will ensure an implementation process that is tailored specifically for Grande Prairie, and will allow for the best use of our resources.

### **Strategy 2**

Implement a data management system

A data management system is essential to properly serve Grande Prairie's homeless clients, but is also required for the success of the Multi-Year Plan. We will collect data surrounding the needs and demographics of clients, the efficiency of our services and the effectiveness of our action items once implemented. With a system in place to manage this information, we will be better able to prevent homelessness, recognize gaps in our processes, and improve our services and communication overall, on all levels.

### **Strategy 3**

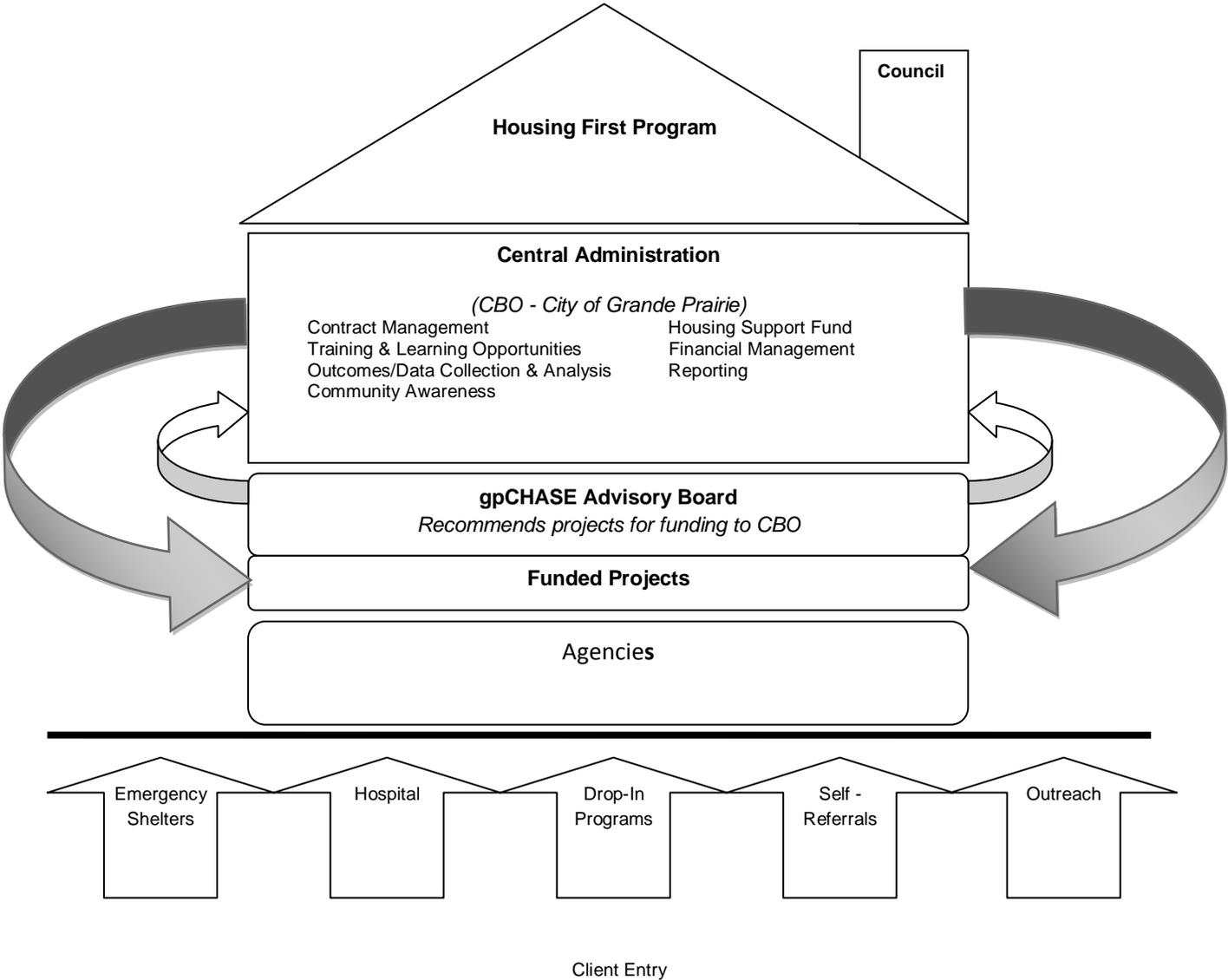
Development of annual reports and communications to keep community and agencies informed.

The need for consistent messaging around the Housing First program is paramount. Effective communication tools will provide the stage to increase knowledge around Housing First, increase community awareness of our homeless population, and allow the public (including clients) to gain an understanding of how to 'navigate' the homeless serving agency systems.



# Implementing the Plan

## Governance



## **Role of the Central Administration**

### **Contract Management**

The City of Grande Prairie will work in partnership with community agencies to implement the Housing First Program at the local level. Funding from the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada will determine the scale of the program, and therefore the number of clients housed, rent supplements (through the Housing Support Fund), and the number of agencies funded to implement Housing First. The relationship between Central Administration (Community Based Organization) and the funded projects is critical to ensure positive outcomes for our homeless population.

### **Training and Learning Opportunities**

As one of the priority areas in the Housing First program, a component of community capacity building involves a commitment to provide training and learning opportunities for all front line Housing First service providers and community members involved in serving the homeless population in the City of Grande Prairie. Training and educational opportunities will be provided in, but not limited to, the following areas:

- Principles and policy framework of the Housing First program
- Components of a client-centered approach to working with the homeless
- Roles and responsibilities of involved parties
- Principles of best practice in case management
- Data collection
- Eviction prevention
- Mental health and addictions



## Data Collection and Reporting

Data collection and analysis is an integral piece of the Housing First program. The City of Grande Prairie will be using an evidence-based approach to inform the success of Housing First projects in the community. Therefore, the City will be acquiring Efforts to Outcomes (ETO), a web-based performance management software. This software is secure, comprehensive, and flexible; and it will allow agencies to quickly transform data into knowledge. Furthermore, there are a multitude of reports that can easily be generated to monitor, measure, and maximize impact (Social Solutions, 2009).

Community agencies who receive funding for projects under the Housing First program will track both outputs and outcomes, as per grant requirements. Central Administration in turn will report to the province on program activities and services through established reporting mechanisms. It is anticipated that this report will be provided monthly and will continue to be refined during its first year of implementation.

At a minimum, measured outcomes will include:

- Increased number of homeless attaining and retaining permanent housing, with a simultaneous reduction in the number of shelter visits, and reduction in the length of time spent homeless
- Improved supports and services for residents of housing accommodations
- Improved quality of life for resident's demonstrated by improved self-sufficiency, standard of living and social inclusion

## Community Awareness

The need to educate community about housing, homelessness and efforts at the local level is critical to the support of the Housing First model as set out in A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years. All levels of government need to be informed and kept up-to-date about what is happening at the local level in the context of Housing First.

Dissemination of research and information pertaining to homelessness and permanent housing solutions is critical to our agencies and community. The City of Grande Prairie is committed



to generating awareness in the community through various means including: brochures, newsletters, media opportunities, and utilization of the gpCHASE Advisory Board website. The City is dedicated to creating more opportunities for stakeholder involvement and increasing public profiles of community agencies that align with the Housing First model.



## Role of the gpCHASE Advisory Board

The gpCHASE Advisory Board has been in existence since the federal funding for the National Homelessness Initiative agreement was confirmed with Grande Prairie in 2000. The Advisory Board complies with contractual agreements between the Government of Canada and the City of Grande Prairie, as well as the Province of Alberta and the City of Grande Prairie. The role of gpCHASE is to:

- Develop terms of reference for soliciting, reviewing and recommending projects to the CBO
- Review project proposals to ensure compliance with program eligibility and alignment to the Housing First program, make funding recommendations to the CBO
- Determine feasibility, value for money, and sustainability.
- Support projects which provide housing and/or housing support services to alleviate homelessness in Grande Prairie.
- The Advisory Board is currently comprised of fifteen (15) voting and non-voting members (or resource members) representing the broader community of Grande Prairie. The membership of the committee has become fluid over time, with consistent representation from diverse sectors of the community, including but not limited to the public and private sector, not for profit organizations and the Aboriginal community. All three levels of government are represented – municipal, provincial, and federal - and act as resource members.

## Role of the Funded Projects

### Direct Project Delivery

The Streets to Homes model provides two distinct services. The first is outreach workers who engage clients and access housing for them. Once the client secures adequate housing, the outreach worker transfers the client to a follow-up or case management worker for ongoing follow –up supports for a minimum of one year.

In Grande Prairie, it will be the role of the funded project to engage clients through outreach, find appropriate housing for clients (and re-house if necessary), and to provide a minimum of



one-year case management for the client to help them maintain their housing. For our local context, this model is reflective of the size of community, amount of funding available, number of chronic homeless individuals in the community, and the belief in the capacity of our agencies to deliver a seamless service delivery model.

The role of the contracted agencies is to deliver and manage projects and services within the City of Grande Prairie's Housing First program. The funded projects will receive assistance and support from the CBO for their work in the community. It is an expectation of agencies who receive funding to abide by the criteria, goals, and objectives established in the Secretariat's Ten Year Ending Homelessness Plan.

Funded projects do not work specifically with pre-established client groups. Housing First presupposes a client-centered approach: it is the clients' choice as to which service provider they access. This may be based on established rapport, culturally specific services, or availability of immediate assistance (i.e. no waiting lists).

### **Landlord Relations Management**

The contracted agencies are responsible for landlord relation management. It is also the responsibility of the agency to ensure that both the landlord and tenant rights are upheld in a client-centered approach within the philosophy of the Housing First program. Agencies will however, be provided support and assistance from the CBO including related training and educational elements.

The Housing First workers are a key component in achieving effective landlord-agency relationships that encourage long-term stability and community integration. In all instances, agencies will provide landlords with information on the Housing First program, the role of each person in the relationship, and be given pertinent contact information should any potential problems arise.



## Role of the Federal Government

After peaking in the 1980s, federal funding for housing assistance began to decline, and in 1993 the federal government withdrew funding for new assisted housing. The federal government did continue to provide approximately \$2 billion per year in interest subsidies for the existing stock (Drummond, Burleton, & Manning, 2004, p. 27). The federal withdrawal resulted in the loss of a social housing supply program that once built 20,000 to 25,000 units per year (Hulchanski D. J., 2004, p. 185). Hulchanski asserts that dismantling the social housing supply program resulted in the provinces and municipalities bearing the indirect costs of inadequate housing and homelessness (2004, p. 187). These include the costs of physical and mental health care, emergency shelters and services, and policing.

In 1999, the federal government introduced a three year \$753-million strategy to combat homelessness, the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). The program was meant to stem homelessness and provide support to all existing housing types, from owner-occupied to rooming houses. After seven years of federal homelessness funding that began in 2000, the Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS) was approved by the Government of Canada for two years, replacing the former Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative – Designated (HPI – Designated ), and replacing Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH) with Homelessness Partnership Initiative – Aboriginal Community (HPI – Aboriginal). In Grande Prairie the two federal funding streams “HPI Designated” and “HPI Aboriginal” are combined for allocation to projects. Both streams are limited in the funding amount; therefore, combining them allows for greater use of funds with significantly reduced administrative costs.

The federal government also needs to adopt the Housing First model for its homelessness-related programs and services.



## Role of the Provincial Government

Since 2000 the Government of Canada and the Province of Alberta through the Homeless Initiative have invested in a strategy to help reduce and prevent homelessness in Grande Prairie. The terms and conditions of this funding are identical to those of the federal program, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

The Provincial Outreach Initiative Pilot Project (OIPP) fund, valued at \$16-million over 2007-2009, supported innovative projects that assisted in moving people experiencing homelessness towards independent living and stable housing. The OIPP fund was allocated exclusively to the Seven Cities Group. Grande Prairie's portion was approximately \$1.26 million.

In response to the increasing environmental and situational challenges facing Albertans, the Government of Alberta established the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness in 2008. In March 2009, the Secretariat published "A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 Years". This ten year provincial strategic plan outlines a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable approach to ending homelessness and includes detailed strategies, and identification of immediate short and long term priorities. The philosophy of the plan uses a Housing First model as the focus and solution to ending homelessness throughout Alberta.

The 2009 Alberta provincial budget provides a level of resources available for implementation of strategic plans using the Housing First philosophy. On April 7, 2009, the Minister of Finance announced the following:

- \$100 million<sup>10</sup> in **capital grants** to support implementation of the 10 year plan to end homelessness in Alberta. With a total capital grant of \$400 million over three years, 2,700 housing units specifically for the homeless.
- \$106.5 million in **operating funding** for homeless programs, including \$40.5 million for emergency/transitional shelters and \$32 million<sup>11</sup> for outreach support services

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<sup>10</sup> \$100 million for 2009/2010

<sup>11</sup> \$32 million for 2009/2010



- \$56 million<sup>12</sup> for the **rental supplement** program.

The City is currently receiving Provincial Operating funding. Completing a Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness will make the City eligible for future provincial funding.



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<sup>12</sup> \$56 million for 2009/2010

## Cost of Implementation

### Capital

In the 2009 provincial budget, the Minister of Finance announced \$100 million in **capital grants** to support implementation of the 10 year plan to end homelessness in Alberta. There will be a total of \$400 million available over three years, 2,700 housing unit specifically for the homeless.

Despite a current 8.5 percent vacancy rate, we anticipate the need to build 550 units for our homeless population. This is based on the number of family households that are currently on the Grande Spirit waitlist for affordable/social housing. Once the current slowdown turns around, then high rates of in-migration are again expected. It will not take long for vacancy rates to decrease and rents to increase.

Groups of Homeless	Capital Needed
Chronic	\$ 34.3 million
Transient	\$36.3 million
Employable	\$ 2.0 million
Families	\$ 13.8 million
	<b>\$ 86.4 million</b>

### Operating

The 2009 provincial budget set aside \$106.5 million in **operating funding** for homeless programs, including \$40.5 million for emergency/transitional shelters and \$32 million for outreach support services.

Our Provincial Homelessness Operational funding is valued at \$969,971 from April 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010, and provides funding to four programs. We are currently seven months into our year and our outreach support workers are extremely strained and cannot keep up with demand. We require at a minimum \$2 million of the \$32 million available for outreach support services.



## Rental Supplements

The 2009 budget set aside \$56 million for the **rental supplement** program. Under the Homeless and Eviction Prevention (HEP) fund, the local Grande Prairie office administered a total of 2.4 million. Approximately \$949,000 went to rent shortfall, with 2,452 people accessing these funds.

## Home Ownership

Between 1997 and 2006, approximately 5,600 single family dwellings were constructed (City of Grande Prairie, 2007). That is more than double the multi-family dwellings. Since the local market tends towards this housing type, future programs should look at supporting home ownership.

The Off-Reserve Aboriginal Home Ownership Assistance Program (ABHOAP) could be the model for a larger home ownership program. The ABHOAP program has had great success. The assistance is in the form of a grant which does not have to be repaid, provided the successful recipient adhered to the condition of the program. The maximum grant available toward a down payment for a home is \$20,000<sup>13</sup> per household. The ABHOAP Selection Committee, who reviews and approves all grant applications, has six years to allocate the funding and it is anticipated that all of the funding will be distributed within a year.

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<sup>13</sup> The City of Grande Prairie received funding from the Province of Alberta to provide 24 grants valued up to \$20,000 to eligible Aboriginal households to assist with the downpayment towards their first home.



## Top 10 Ways You Can Make a Difference

Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness can only be implemented with the participation of all residents, as volunteers, as advocates and as leaders. The following list was identified by the Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness.

### LEARN

There is no single cause of homelessness; it results from a combination of personal experiences and systemic issues. Find out more about what these are and learn more about solutions. Recognize that homelessness lurks just around the corner from people you probably know; at work, at school, in your neighbourhood. Understand how critical it is to end it.

### SEEING IS BELIEVING

Spend time at a social agency; meet some of its clients. Talk to people who are affected by homelessness, find out what they need. Make an emotional connection; put a human face on homelessness.

### TALK

Help debunk the myths of homelessness, such as 'some people choose to live this way'. Bring up the topic at town hall meetings, at work, at your place of worship, in schools, in your service club. Talk to local businesses about how they can become involved, providing job opportunities or even just a place to meet. Discuss new approaches being taken in other communities and talk about how your group can be part of the solution.

### TAKE ACTION

The range of opportunity is broad when it comes to volunteering time and expertise, or making a financial donation. Plan a fundraising event, tutor a child experiencing homelessness, connect with an individual or family without a permanent home.

### INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITY

Be innovative. Throw a party and have everyone bring a household item for a Housing First client's new home. Invite speakers on homelessness to meetings of your community league, school council, labour union or religious group.

### LOBBY FOR CHANGE

Write or call your elected officials; let them know you want more affordable housing in your neighbourhood and a high priority put on ending homelessness. Push for students in schools to learn about homelessness.

### CULTIVATE YOUR CORPORATE CONSCIENCE

From large to small, Grande Prairie businesses have a role to play in ending homelessness. They can offer financial support for initiatives, at a neighbourhood or city-wide level. There's a vast amount of expertise in the corporate world that can be tapped into, in areas such as finance, legal and human relations. Staff can be encouraged to volunteer, or to come up with other creative ways to make a difference. Even the basic provision of storage space can make a big difference.

### CULTIVATE YOUR CORPORATE CONNECTIONS

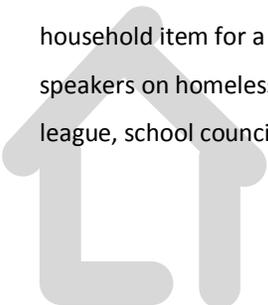
Network, network and network again. Advocate new initiatives to other stakeholders, in the private and public sectors. Let them know why it makes sense to get involved.

### SPREAD THE CORPORATE WORD

Taking action to end homelessness isn't just about civic duty; it's about good business strategy. Getting involved can provide new market opportunities, such as providing goods for a particular sector in the city. It can help deepen community trust in your business. It can re-invigorate employees and open up a new labour pool. In the long-term, ending homelessness will mean a more stable community, a place where people will want to shop, work and live.

### SAY YES TO Y!IMBY

NIMBY – or Not In My Back Yard – stands in the way of our goal. The more people understand about the causes, the cost and the solutions for ending homelessness, the sooner we'll transform NIMBY to Y!IMBY – Yes! In My Back Yard.



## Appendices

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### Appendix 1

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#### How We Got Here: Methodology and Developing the Plan

Like many municipalities across the province, in July 2007 the City of Grande Prairie adopted the Housing First philosophy to End Homelessness. This was followed by an examination of the reality of housing and homelessness in the community.

In November of 2008 the *Community Housing: A Stakeholder Report on Housing and Homelessness* report was published. This report provides a summary of the housing situation in Grande Prairie. Unprecedented levels of participation from residents, service providers, and clients ensured that the report accurately captured the reality of community housing and its desired future.

The development of a successful Housing First model in Grande Prairie is grounded in Toronto's Streets to Homes program. Iain De Jong, Manger of Streets to Homes, facilitated a presentation on the Streets to Homes Program on April 23, 2009. Community agencies, and members of the public were in attendance and learned about the way that Housing First works on the ground.

On June 24, 2009 the community agencies met with the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness to review *A Plan for Alberta: Ending Homelessness in 10 years*, and its funding implications.

On August 11, 2009 the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness facilitated a community consultation to develop the high level priorities of the City of Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness.

The City of Grande Prairie Plan to End Homelessness Committee was inaugurated at the City Council Meeting on Tuesday, September 8, 2009, with Committee membership being appointed by the City Manger on October 1, 2009.



## Appendix 2

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### Summary of Plan to End Homelessness Community Consultation

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The Plan to End Homelessness Community Consultation was facilitated by the Alberta Secretariat on Tuesday, August 11, 2009. The consultation took place at the Grande Prairie Inn and there were roughly 50 people in attendance. The information collected at this consultation will help shape the community's priorities for the City of Grande Prairie's Multi-year Plan to End Homelessness.

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## CURRENT REALITY

### WHO IS HOMELESS?

- Single parents
- People with mental health
- Immigrants
- Addictions
- Aboriginal/First Nations/ Métis/Inuit
- Out of province
- Developmental disabled
- Recently Unemployed
- Seniors
- Youth
- Chronic homeless
- Poor people

### WHY?

- Job loss (economic impact)
- Cost of living
- Administrative barriers to access housing
- Affordability
- Lack of funding coordination
- Inexperienced renters
- NIMBY
- Rental prejudice/discrimination
- Lack of credit
- Low literacy
- ESL
- Lack of ongoing funding
- Immaturity of youth
- Lack of general community support people trying to change
- Property owners who have difficulty lowering rents
- Lack of supportive employment opportunity
- Cycles of abuse ⇒homeless (solid foundation)
- Lack of access to free emergency shelter
- Lack of intensive case management and follow through, follow up
- Cost of daycare
- Lack of flexibility regarding financial institutions (mortgage, etc), foreclosures
- Lack of safety in emergency housing
- Lack of landlord incentives
- Lack of prevention programs
- Service gaps
- Lack of support for young men
- Lack of community awareness (awareness of visible minorities).
- Some homeless chose to stay homeless

### WHAT DO WE NEED?

- Common access points
- Tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities
- Employment
- Transportation (to jobs)
- Risk management/guarantees for property owners
- mentorship
- Better coordination among levels of government, churches, etc.
- Access to on-site support at street level
- More housing options, cultural sensitive
- Discharge planning coordination (corrections, CFSA, AADAC, etc.)



## WHAT'S WORKING TRÈS BIEN?

1. History
2. NIMBY 2005/2006
3. Starting to understand case management
4. Rent subsidies
5. GREAT success stories!
6. Housing First Initiative
7. New housing coming on board
8. Vacancy
9. Community commitment
10. Increase level of commitment between agencies
11. Ground Zero
12. Women's Shelter, New Dorm (Rotary House), WER in winter
13. Emergency Fund/Response
14. Free showers and washing machines
15. Advisory Board

## SUMMARY OF DESIRED FUTURE

1. Co-ordinated non-stove pipe systems
2. Address root cause of homelessness
  - Poverty
3. Holistic approaches
  - Housing with onsite outreach and support services (housing first, supports includes financial and programs for landlord support)
4. Coordinated discharge planning
5. Prevention programs
6. Sustained support for ongoing programs
7. Coordinated data
8. Empowerment of clients
9. Co-ordinated service delivery system
10. Budget to follow multi-year plan

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Human beings first
  - Right to housing
  - Home of choice
2. Housing first with supports
  - continuum
  - Training for the paradigm shift
3. Sufficient Income to move to self sufficiency (living wage)
4. Strategic FUNDING
  - Flexible
  - Sustainable
5. Security and safety
6. Harm reduction



## SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

1. Emergency prevention
  - Increase supports to those in shelters
  - Funding – ongoing plus training
2. Data
  - Shared database of services and clients
  - Case management system
3. Outreach
  - Listen to the needs of the homeless
    - Assertive engagement (philosophical approach)
4. Shorten homeless
  - One point of entry into system
  - Timely access to services when needed
5. Rapid Re-housing
  - Continuum of housing options for various groups
  - Discharge planning to prevent homelessness
6. Permanent Housing
  - Targeted to low-income groups
  - Need strong partnership
7. Income
  - Rapid link to resources
    - Employment
    - Healthcare
    - Housing
    - Income
    - Support Services
  - Help with Financial Administration
    - Need third party to administer, ensure accountability and limit liability
    - Provide incentives to third party/volunteer (time in the work day to serve)
    - Information safeguard, information of client and of community volunteers
    - Database of who to contact, and who is willing to take on responsibility as third party

## PARKING LOT – WHAT HAVE WE MISSED?

1. Staff/agency retention
2. Training
3. Wage equity
4. Immediate priorities
  - Intensive case management
  - Where do we find the rent money?



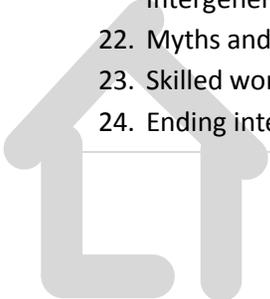
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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX ONE: DETAILED COMMENTS ON DESIRED FUTURE

1. Access to MAT program
2. Coordinated centre
  - Systemic barriers
  - One stop
  - 24 hours
3. Everyone buy in (public/private/service NFP/ Church)
4. Continued support to independence
5. No Homeless
6. Prevention programs and measures
  - Education (intergenerational)
7. No systemic barriers
  - ESL/Addictions/new to GP
8. Effective Infrastructure (hospitals, rehab)
9. Multidisciplinary teams
10. Needs to be
  - Community driven
  - Allow for creativity/flexibility
  - Accessible services 24/7
  - Gaps closed
11. Community healing that is inclusive of everyone: Aboriginal issues
12. Support for new people to the community that is coordinated and consistent “point of entry”.
  - Aboriginal, immigrants, interprovincial migrants, people with disabilities, seniors, etc.
13. Investigate models from other communities
14. In order for a consistent plan to be created, funds can no longer pit agencies against each other
15. Immediate services to address root causes
  - Addictions, mental health
16. Support for borderline people to prevent homelessness
  - Recent job loss etc.
17. The Alberta advantage (disadvantage)
18. Inclusive communities
19. Educated service providers and agencies
20. Organized activities for children/youth, so they are engaged.
21. The community and agencies seeing homelessness as the outcome not the issue. Addressing the root causes, intergeneration affects of residential schools.
22. Myths and barriers of aboriginal people address with healing support built into the community as a whole.
23. Skilled works in addressing trauma
24. Ending intergenerational homelessness



25. Prevention – intervention – intensive case management. A coordinated and cohesive approach
26. Holistic approach that addresses emotional, physical, mental and spiritual needs
27. Honestly ask people what they want and set up the plan around that
28. Educational programs on how to have a home, what that means, and the responsibilities
29. System reform: linkage of programs that have the same philosophy
30. Strong and active advocacy group for children and youth.
31. Support for kids in schools
32. Supportive families – preventing family breakdown
33. Inventory of appropriate housing options.
  - Pet owners, singles, single parents, bigger dwellings (accessibility)
34. A choice of units that provide supports
  - Services, life skills, transportation.
  - Supports coming on-site, AADAC, AHS – addictions and mental health services, doctor, nurse
35. Coordinated discharge planning.
  - N.A.C
  - 5 South
  - Regional Hospitals
  - Prison-corrections
36. Funded wrap around services.
  - No time limits – affordable unites
37. Street level outreach – community resource
38. Long term supports to maintain housing
39. One knowledgeable entry point
  - Listen to you and then provide idea where best place to be is
40. Landlord/tenant day/info sessions
  - Info/education about what is expected/responsibilities
41. Continued support for successful programming and implementation
42. 10 year budget to follow 10 year plan
43. Large apartment style housing
  - Support services on lower floors, housing on upper floors so support is on site
44. Make a plan and follow through even if not everyone is happy with the plan
45. Accessible transportation that covers a large area
46. Support money goes directly to landlords
47. More long term support to individuals (realistic supports)
48. Better coordination between agencies
49. Goals for people to work towards (homeless)
50. Ongoing financial support
51. Warming centre
52. Free shelter
53. Education programs (maintain housing) Budgeting



54. Coordinated communication (agencies, landlords, clients)
55. Education/relationships with landlords! Entire city.
56. Many support workers with ongoing funding for agency client funding.
57. Decrease cost of utilities, fuel, taxes
58. Simplify process for accessing support
59. Everyone has access to safe, affordable housing, with supports to help them stay housed
60. A variety of affordable housing (1bdr, studio).
61. Units should be spread out throughout the community
62. Established preventative programs
63. Flexibility with E.I. qualifications in tough economic times
64. Great community communication (agency-agency, agency-landlord, etc).
65. Landlord education + ongoing support
66. Early education and awareness (in school)
  - Regarding life skills, hygiene, etc.
67. Increase in community outreach
  - Less blind referrals, increase likelihood to keep apartments, etc.
68. Enable clients to become self sufficient, self-supportive, and allow them to grow to independence
69. Increased “family” supports – support for mom, dad, and kids to end bad cycles.
70. Bridge between organized government and landowner to facilitate property availability. “The system”
71. Income support on board – fast track for clients working with agencies/or in a supported situation.
72. Common access –point + community awareness about it
73. Centralized database/website to keep agencies up-to-date
74. Sharing of resources
75. Government role should be responsible for coordination of information, services, and disbursement (eliminate the silos)
76. Barrier free housing
  - Counselling on-site
  - Mentoring development
77. Clear cut understanding for homeless individuals, meet basic needs
78. Understanding for homelessness individuals, meet basic needs.
79. Understand homelessness is a health care issue as well as a human rights issue (currently we are working backwards).
80. Be aware of the investment; relationships must be strong and flexible
81. Promotion/support self-sustaining facilitation



## APPENDIX TWO: DETAILED PRIORITIES

### Data

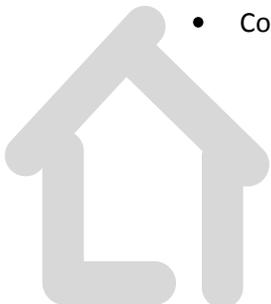
- A literacy document with all agencies input of stories/past success, challenges, dreams
- More community conversation cafes about what people are seeing, wanting, and dreaming
- Talk to the homeless, see how they want their story shared in the community
- Digital story telling
- Use the media and the community to gain support, both humanitarian and financial

### Emergency prevention

- Keep people who are currently housed in their homes
  - Sufficient funding
  - Landlord support
  - Education (life-skills, rights and responsibilities)
- Accurate prediction of those at risk
- Increased personal support (person centered) for those who are currently in the shelter system
- Ongoing funding for the support workers and programs
- Buy in from the community
  - Lawyers, agencies, landlords, contractors, employers, churches
- Community Awareness
  - Radio, newspapers
- Strategies
  - Provide ongoing funding and training to current programs/contracts that have a proven track record
  - Emergency prevention fund and housing support fund continues to have financial backing
  - Community capacity funding is available for promotion/awareness/landlord relations
    - Connecting agencies with community, churches, employers, etc.
  - Increase the number of street outreach workers

### Systems prevention

- Shared main database
  - 211 services for individuals (online/telephone)
  - Maintained by FCSS
- Shared case management
  - Agency to maintain system
  - Online
- Individual (long term) case management
- Funding support services to be in place
- Community plan needs to be a living document
  - Progress
  - Trends/changes



- Evaluation of what is working and what is not

### Outreach

- Go to where the homeless are
- Listen to their need
- Take person to agency/service needed
- Outreach workers supplied with basic need items (food, clothing, information) to give out to homeless
- Inform community of need
- Mentorship to involvement in the solution

### Shorten homelessness

- Shelter immediately and house within one week.
- Eliminate red tape
- One point of entry – awareness by all
- Accessing information about the person
- Access to affordable housing/available shelter
- Eliminate repetition of information collection
- Accessible addiction services/timely (matched as they are)
- Funding to follow the person/to the agency providing services
- Address transportation issues
- Connect to support worker, treat them as a person
- Keep track/evaluation via follow up

### Rapid re-housing

- Available facilities
  - Scattered
  - Landlord relationship
  - Community awareness and support
  - Low income builders requirement
- Continuum of housing options (short and long term)
- Supports to move through housing options (set up for success)
- Money in place to make it happen quickly
- Timely discharge planning that prevents homelessness (treatment for addictions, hospital, corrections, mental health hospital).
- Follow up supports for ongoing success so re-housing need is minimal – long term
- Collaborative services delivery model – point of entry

### Services

- Rapid access to funding services and mainstream programs
- What needs to happen?
  - Rapid assessment of need



- Community database (utilized) to manage case management
  - Clients
  - Agencies
  - Intake commonality, informed consent
- Create long term stability through long term funding
- Intensive case management to ensure people move through the system
  - Street level knowledge of where to start, people seeking them out
- Increase interagency co-operation
- Increase education and networking

## Permanent housing

Youth

Adults

Adults with children

Seniors

- Spectrum of care and needs
  - Medical
  - Addictions
  - Mental health
  - Violence/cycle of abuse
- Taking “transitional” housing out of the picture
- Low-income affordable permanent housing
  - New retro-fitted
  - Fits a number of budgets
  - Integrated into the community
- Can be anything a person wants
  - RV, apartment, houses
  - Rent to own
- Flexibility in type
  - Multifamily, lodges, communed living, “co-op housing”
- Security and sustainable
  - In length of time and choice
- Based on community needs assessment
- Continually assess for needs
- Easily accessible (no waitlist)
- Begin renovations now for future needs
- Strong partnership with builders, landowners, non-profits, levels of government in building and operating units
- More agreements with existing properties to set aside low-income units
- Continue with builder incentives, homeownership programs/incentives/grants for low-income people.



## Income

### Linking People to Income and Employment through Housing First

- Emergency Income Access 24/7
  - With supports
- Financial Assistance Administration Process Gap
- Information Hotline-posted and advertized
  - Rapid link
    - Employment
    - Health Care
    - Housing/Shelter
    - Income
    - Support Services
  - Shorten
    - Process to access
      - Provincial database
      - Digital storage for personal info for application including photo
- Income (support) sufficient
  - To cost of living in Grande Prairie
  - To obtain/sustain employment or occupation (principal)
  - Fast Track Income Assistance
    - AISH, EI, AIFM (Aboriginal Inuit, First Nation, Métis)
- Help with Financial Administration
  - Need third party to administer, ensure accountability and limit liability
  - Provide incentives to third party/volunteer (time in the work day to serve)
  - Information safe, information of client and of community volunteers
  - Database of who to contact, and who is willing
- Coordination of services
- More person focused skill building and supportive/mentorship employment
  - Occupation matched to individual capacity



## Glossary

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**Affordability** is not defined as a specific income or rent, affordability refers to a relative situation in which income is deemed insufficient to pay for rent. Typically, the affordability benchmark used in housing analysis is 30 percent of income spent on shelter.

**Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)** is a team treatment approach designed to provide comprehensive, community based psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation, and support to persons with serious and persistent mental illness such as schizophrenia. The ACT model of care evolved out of the work of Arnold Marx, M.D., Leonard Stein, and Mary Ann Test, Ph D in the late 1960s. ACT has been widely implemented in the United States, Canada, and England. The Department of Veteran Affairs has also implement ACT across the United States. A team of professionals whose backgrounds and training include social work, rehabilitation, counselling, nursing and psychiatry provide Assertive Community Treatment Service. ACT services are available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

**Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation (CHMC)** is the federal housing agency that implements federal housing policy and programs.

**Chronic Homeless** – A person or family is considered chronically homeless if they have either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and/or in an emergency homeless shelter.

**Condominium** a form of ownership tenure associated with a multiple unit building (apartment or town home). The occupant owns the individual unit and share common space such as foyer, halls and outdoor space.

A household is in **Core Housing Need** if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards.

**Transient Homeless** a person who is homeless for less than a year and has fewer that four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

**Employable Homeless** – Those who do not suffer from any major barriers to employment (such as serious psychiatric, medical, or substance abuse problem, criminal histories, limited



education, or lack of work experience), but who require assistance to find permanent housing and move to self-reliance.

**Homeless families** – those who are homeless are: parent with minor children; adults with legal custody of children; a couple in which one person is pregnant; multi-generational families. Many members of this group are women fleeing abusive domestic situations and struggling to re-establish independent homes for themselves and their children.

**Housing First** is a client centered approach to ending homelessness that provides access to safe and permanent housing with few requirements while offering support services to maintain housing stability.

***The basic criterion of an Alberta Housing First approach includes:***

1. Move people into housing directly from streets and shelters without preconditions of treatment acceptance or compliance.
2. A service provider is contracted to make available robust support services which must be available to the client. These services are predicated on assertive engagement, not coercion.
3. Embraces a harm reduction approach to addictions rather than mandating abstinence. At the same time, the provider must be prepared to support client commitments to recovery.
4. Continued tenancy is dependent on fulfilling a landlord-tenant agreement and clients have protection under the law.
5. Implementation is either a project-based or scattered site housing model.
6. Long range goal is to move clients toward the highest level of self-reliance as possible, such that support services are not intended to continue indefinitely.

**Rent-geared-to-income** is usually based on 25-30 percent of gross income, as verified by the administering agency.

**Rent Supplement:** a form of assistance paid to a landlord to provide units to low-income tenants usually over a contracted term. Payments to landlord is based on the difference between actual negotiated market rent and a rent geared to income (RGI) paid directly by tenant.

The **Seven Cities Group** includes both municipal members and community-based organizations from the seven major cities in Alberta. The group was established in 2001, originally to share lessons related to administering federal homeless funding. Today, the Seven Cities Group continues to collaborate and network with each other.



**Vacancy Rate:** A measure of the availability of rental units. The vacancy rate measures the percentage of units that are vacant and available for rent as of a specific date.



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