Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy

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Homelessness in Canada

- Approximately 129,000 Canadians used an emergency shelter in 2016, down 17% from 2005.
  - However, according to the 2016 National Shelter Study, those using shelters are using them for longer, and demand for shelter beds remains high.

- About 70% of emergency shelter users were male, and 30% female.
  - The number of women experiencing homelessness is likely underestimated due to the lack of data from domestic violence shelters.

- Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in shelter data (31% of shelter users identified as Indigenous while they account for 5% of the population).

- An estimated 27,000 emergency shelter users were considered to be chronically homeless in 2016.
  - “Chronically homeless” is defined as having been homeless for a cumulative 180+ days in the past year OR having presented at a homeless shelter in each of the last three years.

- Experiences of homelessness go beyond shelter use (e.g., rough sleeping and couch surfing).
  - 25% of respondents to the 2018 Point-in-Time count had not used a shelter in the past year.

ESDC collects homelessness data in two ways: Emergency shelter data for the National Shelter Study is collected through the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and data sharing agreements with partners that use other information management systems. The Department also coordinates national Point-in-Time Counts of homelessness, which provide information on people experiencing homelessness inside and outside of shelters.
Canadian Federal response to homelessness

- The first dedicated federal response to homelessness, the National Homelessness Initiative, was introduced in 1999 followed by the Homelessness Partnering Strategy in 2007 and Reaching Home in 2019.

- While the Government of Canada does not have sole jurisdiction over homelessness, nor is it the primary funder of homelessness programming in many communities across the country, it plays a leadership role setting national policy objectives and bringing together wide range of key players for a collaborative approach.

- The specific goals of federal homelessness programming have evolved over time shifting from emergency responses towards investments in prevention and longer-term supports to help individuals move out of homelessness.

- Recognizing that communities are best placed to determine and address local needs, overtime the program has maintained a community-based approach, whereby funding is provided for urban, Indigenous and rural and remote communities.
Redesigned federal homelessness program

**Reaching Home:** Canada’s Homelessness Strategy was launched on April 1, 2019.

- Main objectives and approach of **Reaching Home**:
  - Supports the goals of the National Housing Strategy, in particular to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2027-28;
  - Focuses on Indigenous solutions through increased dedicated funding;
  - Maintains a the community-based approach and expands the program’s reach including more communities; and,
  - Bolsters investment in the territories.

**Housing Continuum**

- Unsheltered
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Community Housing
- Affordable Housing
- Market Housing

**Reaching Home ($2.1 billion)**
## Reaching Home
supports communities through funding

### Regional

1. **Designated Communities**: Funds projects in Designated Communities, primarily major urban centres, identified as having a significant problem with homelessness.

2. **Rural and Remote Homelessness**: funds projects in non-designated communities in rural and remote areas of the country.

3. **Indigenous Homelessness**: funds primarily Indigenous service providers to address the specific needs of Indigenous peoples living off-reserve who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

4. **Territorial Homelessness**: funds projects in communities located in the territories. Regional delivery through contribution agreements with Community Entities

### National

1. **Community Capacity and Innovation**: intended to support the implementation of coordinated access as well as support funding for innovative solutions to homelessness.

2. **Distinctions-based funding**: dedicated funding for addressing Indigenous homelessness to better meet the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.
Success Factors: Community-based approach

- Each Designated Community has a Community Advisory Board (CAB), which develops the community plan, recommends projects for funding, and supports the response to homelessness at the community level.

- An Indigenous CAB exists in some communities to set the direction for Indigenous Homelessness funding as well as Regional Advisory Boards (RAB) to determine priorities and recommend projects for Rural and Remote area.

- The CAB and/or RAB is composed of stakeholders municipality, provincial or territorial government, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit enterprises.

- Funding is delivered through the Community Entity (CE) model. The CE, normally an incorporated organization (i.e. community’s municipal government or an established not-for-profit organization), implements the community plan and is responsible for the selection, approval and management of projects.
Measuring Success: Outcomes-based approach

• Reaching Home supports Designated Communities to achieve the community outcomes:
  – Chronic homelessness in the community reduced;
  – Homelessness in the community is reduced overall and for specific populations (targets to reduce Indigenous homelessness are mandatory);
  – New inflows into homelessness are reduced; and,
  – Returns to homelessness are reduced.

• Designated Communities will demonstrate progress made toward achieving their outcomes by reporting publicly in an annual Community Progress Report beginning in 2020-21. With the exception of a reduction of 50% in chronic homelessness by 2027-28, communities will set their own targets for each outcome.

• By using community-level data to assess outcomes and evaluate the community-wide performance of the homelessness system, over time, Designated Communities will be able to assess the performance of their local homelessness systems, leading to better coordination of services and efficient targeting of investments.

• The Communities will need data to be coordinated across homelessness service providers to report on community outcomes. Communities will implement coordinated access systems to prioritize those individuals most in need of housing and support services utilizing a common HIFIS (or another system if already in place).
Government of Canada consulted extensively on the redesign of the new program. It also continues to consult with the implementation of the program as well as to enhance HIFIS through committees and working groups.

### Lessons Learned

**Stakeholders engagements are instrumental**

The committees and working groups are composed of experts and stakeholders in the field of homelessness and those with lived experience of homelessness.

- **Advisory Committee on Homelessness**
  - *Advisory Committee on Homelessness’ Final Report*
  - *Homelessness Partnering Strategy—What We Heard Report*

- **National HIFIS working group**

- **National Data Advisory Committee**
Looking Ahead

Coordinated Access: Shift toward a more coordinated, systems-based and data-driven approach to preventing and reducing homelessness.

Support Communities through culture change

- Provide funding using the Community Capacity and Innovation funding stream to support the set up of Coordinated Access systems
- Partner with key stakeholders to provide Technical and Training Assistance
- Offer an information management system (HIFIS) and training workshops and forum of discussions
Coordinated Access

1: Access
First point of contact with a trained worker.

2A. Triage
Ensure safety AND help with preventing homelessness (eviction prevention)
OR
Connecting with other services and informal/natural supports to avoid a shelter stay (shelter diversion).

2B. Assessment
Worker gathers more information about housing-related strengths, needs, and preferences.

3. Prioritization
Eligible and interested households are prioritized for housing resources that are centrally managed, based on desired community outcomes.

4. Vacancy Matching & Referral
Households are matched and referred to vacancies.

Vacancies trigger next steps.

Next steps focus on referrals to community resources and a housing plan.

Individual or family is supported to stay housed OR access other services and informal/natural supports to resolve housing issue.

No next steps.

Triage cannot immediately resolve a housing issue – individual or family is homeless and needs additional help.

Basic needs are met as part of next steps.

People Experiencing or At-Risk of Homelessness

Housing Resources

Coordinated Access Annex A
Data that Inform Program Design

These data inform the design of the program:
- They help to identify priority populations (e.g. chronically homeless, Indigenous Peoples)
- They can identify opportunities for upstream prevention (e.g. people exiting systems)
- They can help to anticipate the impact of program changes on program outcomes

Data collected through the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and other information management systems

- Data used to develop national estimates on:
  - Numbers of people who access shelters
  - Shelter stay statistics (e.g. stay length)
  - Chronic and episodic shelter use
  - Basic demographics
  - Changes over time

Data collected through the Nationally-coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Counts, conducted in 2016 and 2018, with the next count in 2020.

- Data give community and cross-community snapshots:
  - Number of people in shelter and rough sleeping
  - Demographics
  - Reported experience of homelessness
  - Reasons for housing loss
  - Access to income

Outcomes reported for federally funded projects, including housing and other projects aiming to prevent and reduce homelessness.

- Data demonstrate impact of program funding:
  - Numbers of people who are placed in housing
  - Number of people receiving prevention interventions
  - Number of people connected to employment or job training
  - Target demographics

Data collected through the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and other information management systems.