



OFIFC

Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres

Submission on the Homelessness Partnering
Strategy

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About the OFIFC

Founded in 1971, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) works to support, advocate for, and build the capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario.

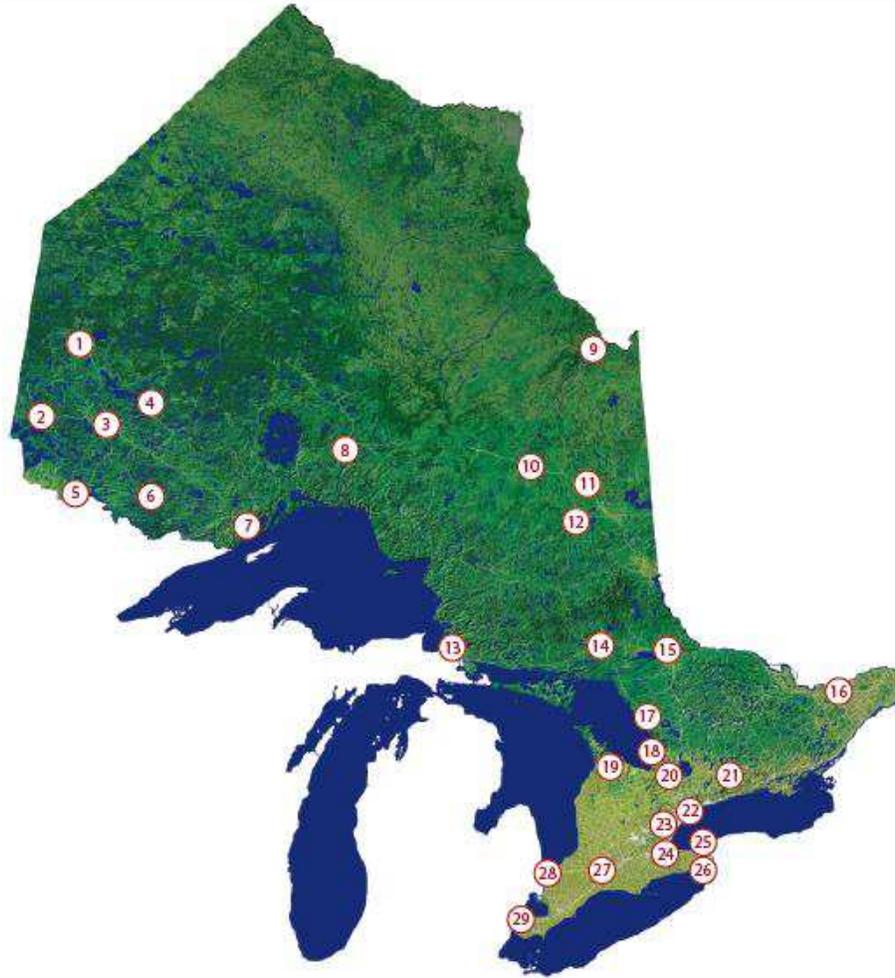
Emerging from a nation-wide, grass-roots movement dating back to the 1950's, Friendship Centres are community hubs where Indigenous people living in towns, cities, and urban centres can access culturally-based and culturally-appropriate programs and services every day. Today, Friendship Centres are dynamic hubs of economic and social convergence that create space for Indigenous communities to thrive. Friendship Centres are idea incubators for young Indigenous people attaining their education and employment goals, they are sites of cultural resurgence for Indigenous families who want to raise their children to be proud of who they are, and they are safe havens for Indigenous community members requiring supports.

In Ontario more than 84 per cent of Indigenous people live in urban communities. The OFIFC is the largest urban Indigenous service network in the province supporting this vibrant, diverse, and quickly-growing population through programs and initiatives that span justice, health, family support, long-term care, healing and wellness, employment and training, education, research, and more.

Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities, and they are inclusive of all Indigenous people – First Nation, Status/Non-Status, Métis, Inuit, and those who self-identify as Indigenous.

Learn more about the work the OFIFC does to support Friendship Centres at www.ofifc.org.

Map of Friendship Centres



1 Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre **2** Ne-Chee Friendship Centre (Kenora) **3** Dryden Native Friendship Centre **4** Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre (Sioux Lookout) **5** United Native Friendship Centre (Fort Frances) **6** Atikokan Native Friendship Centre **7** Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre **8** Thunderbird Friendship Centre (Geraldton) **9** Timmins Native Friendship Centre Satellite Office (Moosonee) **10** Kapuskasing Friendship Centre **11** Ininew Friendship Centre (Cochrane) **12** Timmins Native Friendship Centre **13** Indian Friendship Centre (Sault Ste. Marie) **14** N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre (Sudbury) **15** North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre **16** Odawa Native Friendship Centre (Ottawa) **17** Parry Sound Friendship Centre **18** Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre (Midland) **19** M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre (Owen Sound) **20** Barrie Native Friendship Centre **21** Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre (Peterborough) **22** Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre **23** Peel Aboriginal Network (Mississauga) **24** Hamilton Regional Indian Centre **25** Niagara Regional Native Centre (Niagara-on-the-Lake) **26** Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre **27** N'Amerind Friendship Centre (London) **28** Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre **29** Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre of Windsor

Definitions

Recognising that people experience homelessness in different ways, and because a process for having a more nuanced conversation on urban Indigenous homelessness has yet to be established, references to “homelessness” in this submission are inclusive of the following categories for ease of terminology:

- Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation.
- Emergency Sheltered, including those staying overnight in shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by violence.
- Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure.
- At-Risk-of-Homelessness, refers to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious and does not meet public health or safety standards.¹

Introduction

Friendship Centre communities have identified that prosperity exists when community members have access to resources and supports that are based on culturally-relevant and community-defined determinants of health. Self-determination must be a foundational aspect of the development of homelessness programs and strategies that are aimed at meaningfully engaging and improving outcomes in Indigenous communities. While the needs of Indigenous people who are homeless are not commonly understood within a prosperity framework, the presence or lack of core elements of urban Indigenous community prosperity have urgent implications for homeless community members.

Core elements of prosperity that feed into a wider taxonomy of community-defined health measures include:

- Housing for all that is affordable, safe, and close to the community;
- Traditional food that fills you physically and spiritually;
- Cultural ways of living including supports, and resources;
- Urban Indigenous community self-determination;
- Access to opportunities including education, training, and community-based learning;
- Clean water and healthy lands;
- Urban Indigenous community infrastructure; and,
- Personal and community safety.²

¹ Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (2015). *A Place to Call Home: Report of the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness*. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario. (30).

² Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centre (2017). *Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy Submission*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. (4-8).

Our submission presents insights from Friendship Centres and delivery sites regarding the Homelessness Partnering Strategy in urban Indigenous communities, provides responses to the questions posed in the Federal government’s online survey, and makes recommendations with regards to engaging in a meaningful co-development process to renew and expand the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS).

Background

The OFIFC has administered federal homelessness programming since 1999. Phase I (1999-2003) of the Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Initiative (UAHI) operated in twelve designated urban Indigenous communities and allowed for capital acquisitions such as shelters and transitional homes. During Phase II of the UAHI (2004-2007), the designated communities were changed and capital expenditures were no longer eligible for funding; the focus of UAHI became solely program-based.

In 2007 the federal initiative became HPS and the OFIFC became the Community Entity (CE) for two Aboriginal HPS contracts:

- 1) Overseeing the eight communities funded under Phase II (“Eight Communities”); and,
- 2) Administering five Indigenous HPS projects in Ottawa (“Ottawa”).

Through these agreements, the HPS is delivered in seven Friendship Centres and six delivery sites (see chart below for UAHI and HPS community locations).

Table I:

Homelessness Programming Community Locations 1999-Present		
1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-Present
UAHI Phase I Communities	UAHI Phase II Communities	HPS Projects
1. Barrie	1. Cochrane	1. Cochrane
2. Red Lake	2. Moosonee	2. Moosonee
3. North Bay	3. Sault Ste. Marie	3. Sault Ste. Marie
4. Kingston	4. Brantford	4. Brantford Native Housing
5. London	5. Niagara	5. Niagara
6. Kenora	6. Sudbury	6. Sudbury
7. Thunder Bay	7. Fort Frances	7. Fort Frances
8. Windsor	8. Midland	8. Midland
9. Kapuskasing		9. Ottawa – Odawa
10. Timmins		10. Ottawa – Tewegan
11. St. Catherines		11. Ottawa – Minwaashin
12. Sioux Lookout		12. Ottawa – Tungasuvvingat Inuit
		13. Ottawa – Wabano

HPS projects are allocated to cities/communities as opposed to directly to community-based organisations. Local Community Advisory Boards or Aboriginal Coalitions (CABs) determine the location, placement, and priorities of the project. This is an effort to ensure local service coordination with input from the broader Indigenous community.

Friendship Centres that offer the HPS where the OFIFC is not the CE include:

- Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre (Aboriginal Labour Force Development Corporation);
- The Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (General Manager of Community Services); and,
- The Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre is a CE and administers HPS to the Ontario Native Women’s Association.

Rates of Indigenous Homelessness in Ontario

As a result of historic and ongoing trauma, including anti-Indigenous racism in the private rental market and high-rates of child-welfare and justice system involvement, Indigenous people are overrepresented in homeless populations across Ontario. A snapshot is provided below details rates of Indigenous homelessness in urban communities where recent homelessness enumerations have taken place:

Table II:

<i>Community</i>	<i>Rate of Indigenous Homelessness</i>	<i>Indigenous identity group as percentage of total population³</i>	<i>Methodology</i>
Sioux Lookout⁴	99%	35%	Point-in-Time (PiT)
Thunder Bay⁵	87%	12%	PiT
Brantford⁶	40%	6%	PiT
Toronto⁷	16%	1%	PiT
Hamilton⁸	28%	2%	PiT
Kingston⁹	9%	3%	PiT

³ StatsCan (2011). *National Housing Survey*. Community Profile. Retrieved: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

⁴ Sioux Lookout Homelessness Committee (2002). As cited: Snider, Deb. *A Sociological Analysis of Aboriginal Homelessness in Sioux Lookout, Ontario*, (The Canadian Race Relations Foundation), 2005

⁵ City of Thunder Bay (2016). *Thunder Bay Point in Time Count Data 2016*. Thunder Bay, ON: Lakehead Social Planning Council, Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Lakehead University, Government of Canada. Retrieved: <http://www.thunderbay.ca/Assets/Thunder+Bay+Point+In+Time+Data.pdf>

⁶ City of Brantford (July 1, 2016). *Results of the Point in Time Count (PiT) of Homeless People*. Brantford, ON: City of Brantford. Retrieved: <http://www.brantford.ca/pdfs/6.1.1%20PHSSS2016-72%20Point%20in%20Time%20Count%20Results.pdf>

⁷ City of Toronto (2013). *Toronto Street Needs Assessment*. Toronto, ON: City of Toronto. Retrieved: <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-61365.pdf>

⁸ City of Hamilton (2016). *20,000 Homes, Point in Time Count*. Hamilton, ON: City of Hamilton. Retrieved: <https://www.hamilton.ca/social-services/housing/20000-homes-campaign>

⁹ City of Kingston (2013). *The State of Homelessness in Kingston*. Kingston, ON: United Way, Kingston. Retrieved: https://www.unitedwaykfla.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HomelessnessReport_PointInTime.pdf

Point-in-Time counts have been widely criticised for not accurately capturing Indigenous homelessness. The Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness reported that PiT counts do not accurately capture rates of Indigenous homelessness as Indigenous people are more likely to be among those who experience hidden homelessness. In fact the City of Kingston estimates that Indigenous homelessness is closer to 25 per cent¹⁰ of the total homeless population, whereas results of the PiT count showed it to be around 9 per cent. A renewed and expanded HPS should continue to closely coordinate with Provinces on enumeration efforts and ensure that urban Indigenous organisations like Friendship Centres are resourced and engaged in the planning and implementation of enumeration activities.

This approach has three significant benefits that have already been tested in communities:

- 1) It ensures enumerations are conducted in a way that protects the wellbeing of vulnerable community members being asked questions about their poverty; and,
- 2) It is useful in terms of locating homeless and housing-insecure community members that do not access mainstream services;
- 3) Enumeration activities that are culture-based (community feasts, giveaways, magnet events) directly benefit community members in a wholistic way.

When Friendship Centres choose to contribute to local enumeration efforts, it leads to more meaningful and accurate data collection that benefits the Federal government in terms of understanding the dynamics of Indigenous homelessness and enabling decision making that accurately reflects community need.

Friendship Centres that have provided leadership on local homelessness enumeration efforts (note: not all of these were PiT counts), include: Ininew Friendship Centre, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Toronto Council Fire, and Timmins Native Friendship Centre.

A few of the wise practices arising from these communities include:

- Volunteers from within the Indigenous community are involved in enumerations;
- Magnet event with cultural programming and Indigenous food enable participation and support reciprocity;
- Door-to-door canvassing to ensure inclusion of hidden homeless population;
- Providing small gifts (i.e. \$2 Tim Hortons gift cards)
- Providing at least a full day (or greater) of volunteer training; AND
- Collecting data over several days in several locations or points of service.

¹⁰ City of Kingston (2013). *10-Year Municipal Housing and Homelessness Plan*. Kingston, ON: City of Kingston. Retrieved: https://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/13880/10Year_HousingHomelessness_Plan.pdf/2498b02e-6832-4250-95fc-6372b2bfc490

The common elements between the practices listed above that led to successful outcomes are relationships and inclusion – building relationships with community members being enumerated and taking steps to connect with community members who are less visible within the homeless population.

Homelessness Programming in Friendship Centres

Nine Friendship Centres offer HPS through the Indigenous Stream, and all twenty-eight Friendship Centres across Ontario offer services to community members who are homeless. Enhancing Indigenous people's prosperity includes supporting access to safe, affordable housing – a core and necessary activity of Friendship Centres following Indigenous people's migration to urban communities in the 1950s. While six Friendship Centres (with no HPS) have secured access to mainstream municipal funding through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), more frequently, services for homeless community members are offered through other OFIFC-administered programs not specifically mandated to address this issue. Despite high rates of Indigenous homelessness in urban communities in Ontario, 14 Friendship Centres across Ontario have no dedicated homelessness program.

In some places (Sioux Lookout, North Bay) the Friendship Centre is the only place where homeless community members can go during the day without expectation of an appointment. This is especially vital in wintertime when temperatures plummet and local shelters require that guests/residents leave the premises early in the morning. Friendship Centres use emergency food programs, clothing-banks, meal programs, and other “one-time” services to meet immediate needs and build trust with homeless community members who have undoubtedly experienced trauma. Of the [over] one million Indigenous people living in Canada, over one-third have been affected either directly by residential school experiences or indirectly as family or community members linked to survivors¹¹.

For some homeless community members “one-time” services may be a lower-stakes entry point into more intensive supports. While these types of services, such as emergency food cupboards, referrals, and access to transportation, need to be balanced with other project objectives, a renewed HPS should not discount the importance of these types of activities. Culturally relevant social service practices, such as never turning people away and working to build trust over time, are not demonstrably valued by the current iteration of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

That said, Friendship Centres are recognized in Ontario as Indigenous community hubs¹² that are highly effective at service coordination and enhance the social, cultural, and economic prosperity of individuals, families, and communities. Friendship Centres in Ontario work closely with their local and provincial partners to offer supportive housing and shelter services in order to address unmet need and fulfill critical gaps in social infrastructure. Indigenous people comprise six per cent of the population in

¹¹ Canadian Mental Health Association, “Aboriginal People/First Nations,” CMHA, http://www.ontario.cmha.ca/about_mental_health.asp?cID=23053

¹² Wynne, Kathleen (May 1, 2017). Keynote Address. *Community Hubs Summit*. Toronto, ON.

Canada, are the fastest growing demographic, yet only have access to one per cent of dedicated housing stock.¹³ This lack of equitability has implications for the ongoing implementation of housing first policy priorities that are discussed later in this submission.

Over the past 18 year, changes to federal homelessness program mandates (such as one-time services becoming “ineligible”, the shift to Housing First, the closure of drop in locations and transitional housing) present additional challenges in terms of project reporting and comparative analysis. As the Wellesley Institute noted in its research paper, *Housing and Health, Examining the Links*, “there are substantive methodological challenges in the existing body of research on housing interventions, ranging from a lack of shared and standardized definitions, to inconsistency in study designs and measures of meaningful health outcomes”.¹⁴ Based on the OFIFC’s ongoing work in partnership with Friendship Centre communities, developing prosperity metrics and culture-based program evaluation through our USAI Framework and Evaluation Path¹⁵, the OFIFC is positioned to advise the ESDC on effective Indigenous research methodologies that will result in more accurate quantitative and qualitative data and support evidence-based decision-making.

Current Issues

Despite current challenges with consistent data collection and analysis, based on the most current HPS reporting (Q1 2016/17 vs. Q1 2017/18) many projects are showing a reduction in the number of community members accessing HPS in both the Eight Communities (-5%) and Ottawa (-25%). However, the intensity and volume of services accessed per client has increased (15% and 22% respectively)¹⁶ and Friendship Centres report no real reduction in demand for services. These findings are congruent with narrative reporting that indicate that homeless community members are increasingly faced with complex challenges exacerbated by lack of affordable housing and mental health and addictions supports, food insecurity, child welfare involvement, and justice involvement¹⁷.

The following examples highlight challenges faced by HPS projects and participants:

Issue: Mental Health and Addictions

Niagara Regional Native Centre: During this past quarter a challenge that has presented itself through every intake is a high number of both mental health, addiction issues with clients and lack appropriate funds for addiction and mental health training to address these concerns. The wait list for services is long, and there is no interim service in place.

¹³ McBain, Don. *National Housing Strategy Expert Roundtable* (Correspondence).

¹⁴ Gardner, Bob, Aziza Mahamoud, Brenda Roche, Michael Shapcott. *Housing and Health, Examining the Links*. (Wellesley Institute, Toronto: 2013), 1.

¹⁵ USAI Principles are “Utility, Self-voicing, Access, and Inter-relationality”

¹⁶ OFIFC (2017). *Reporting Summary: HPS Year-Year Comparison, Q1 Statistics*. Toronto, ON.

¹⁷ OFIFC (2017). *Reporting Summary: HPS Year-Year Comparison, Q1 Narratives*. Toronto, ON.

N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre: This quarter we are dealing with clients who have a lot of issues with Mental Health and Addictions. One challenge with working with mental health clients is not having access to Aboriginal Mental Health services in our city, which only leaves the clients to access mainstream services and clients do not seem to be doing well with this.

Innnew Friendship Centre: We also find that there is massive shortages in mental health and addictions resources within the Cochrane area. Although we have the Detox Centre in Smooth Rock Falls along with small Mental Health and Addictions resources that are utilized to their max, there isn't much day-to-day supports out there such as meetings, or drop in centres where someone could just talk with somebody without having to make appointments that are usually quite lengthy in wait times.

Issue: Lack of Affordable Housing

United Native Friendship Centre: The Homelessness Outreach Worker continues to face challenges pertaining to not only assisting clients to obtain affordable housing, but also finding housing period. Long wait lists to get into subsidized housing or geared to income housing leads to individuals not being able to secure housing for extended periods of time.

As Indigenous community hubs, Friendship Centres are doing their part to maximize resources in ways that benefit the community, becoming supportive housing providers and working effectively with local partners to deliver trauma-informed services. Friendship Centres across Ontario should be adequately resourced in order to meet the growing crisis through an expanded HPS program delivered in all 28 Friendship Centres. Furthermore, if the Federal government is to achieve the goal of the National Housing Strategy – that every Canadian has a home that meets their needs which they can afford – culture and community-based strategies to address homelessness, which enable local best practices and flexibility, must be implemented alongside increased investments in the areas of youth transitioning out of care, mental health and addictions services, and social and affordable housing.

Housing First

Housing First is not an approach, policy, or directive arising out of meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities making it difficult to answer the HPS survey question, “how can HPS Housing First approach be adapted to different sub-populations?” As such, it should be removed as an overarching directive applied to Indigenous communities that offer HPS. Drawing from the eight communities agreement, a comparison of statistics from the 2013-14 (pre Housing First approach) and the first quarter of 2015-16, one year after the implementation of Housing First, shows a decline in service provision by 43 per cent:

Table III

	2013-14 Quarterly Average	2015-16 1 st Quarter	Difference
Total served	4,275*	2,423	-43%
Homeless	1,261	239	
At risk	2,932	390	
At imminent risk	n/a	1,049	
One time/transient	n/a	179	
Services:			
Food and basic needs	5,963	2,218	-63%
Addictions	2,893	453	-84%
Life skills	2,851	255	-81%
Cultural/traditional	2,573	1934	-25%
Mental health	1,870	510	-73%
Housing related	1,376	464	-66%
Healthcare	712	231	-68%
Education and Employment	413	94	-77%
Income	207	249	+20%
Eviction and legal services	192	118	-39%

Also of significance, services that support wholistic wellbeing – mental health, addictions, and healthcare – were reduced by an average of 75 per cent, with addictions services and referrals most significantly reduced at 84 percent.¹⁸ The shift to Housing First continues to have unintended negative consequences for urban Indigenous communities as the following example from Georgian Bay (Q1, 2017/18) illustrates:

Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre: In Simcoe County the Housing First (HF) initiative is gaining more momentum with the County officially rolling out their HF program during the 1st quarter of the 2017/18 fiscal year. It has been very difficult for the Urban Aboriginal Outreach Worker to stay relevant with mainstream counter parts as the Indigenous population has not been included in a meaningful way. No HF resources has been identified to specifically serve the population based on [proportionally high rates of Indigenous homelessness from the] 2015 PIT count.

A Housing First approach cannot replace human rights based approach to housing access and adequacy. A human rights based approach challenges systems and markets that exclude people based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, social status, or sexual orientation, etc. Seventeen per cent of Indigenous respondents to the Urban

¹⁸ OFIFC (2017). *Reporting Summary: HPS Year-Year Comparison, Q1 Narratives*. Toronto, ON.

Aboriginal Task Force survey identified having experienced racism in the private rental market. One respondent stated, “It is extremely hard to find apartments for Aboriginal people; there is a lot of discrimination by landlords against native people”¹⁹. As portable benefits become a more common tool of government to hedge against the high cost of rental housing, anti-Indigenous racism in the rental market continues to go broadly unaddressed.

Federal action is required that prioritizes urban Indigenous housing needs and drives provincial and municipal incentives for the development of urban Indigenous housing over the short-term and must include commitments to end generation- long wait lists for adequate housing. Additionally, a fiscal commitment is needed, beyond staying the expiry of Urban Native Housing operating agreements, to end homelessness nationally through coordination efforts with provinces and municipalities.

Homelessness as a Project

At the community level, HPS is a project-based initiative requiring annual proposals focussed on achieving year-to-year, short term outcomes. This is not an appropriate model for addressing Indigenous homelessness in urban centres, which began as Indigenous people’s forcible removal and displacement from traditional territories, and today is one of the many outcomes of historic trauma. The requirement to develop annual proposals creates a substantial administrative burden made more complex by the CE and city allocation structure.

Given Indigenous people’s overrepresentation in homeless populations across the province, the Indigenous stream of HPS should be:

- 1) Separated from the mainstream allocation/CE structure and redeveloped ;
- 2) Redeveloped through a meaningful engagement and co-development process;
- 3) Implemented through Indigenous umbrella organisations, such as the OFIFC, with capacity to deliver province-wide training and support to front line workers and implement culture-based program evaluation; and,
- 4) Made an evergreen program as opposed to a project.

The crisis of Indigenous homelessness requires both short-term responses and a long-term federal strategy based on rights and reconciliation. In the OFIFC’s submission on the National Housing Strategy Consultations (November, 2016) we called upon the Federal government to harmonize its housing and homelessness policy and legislation in accordance with Article 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People²⁰: to co-develop an Indigenous-specific housing strategy that actively

¹⁹ OFIFC, Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association, Ontario Native Women’s Association (2007). *Urban Aboriginal Task Force: Final Report*. Toronto, ON: OFIFC. (141).

²⁰ “...indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.”

involves and reflects the unique needs of urban Indigenous people through meaningful and transparent engagement.

In practical terms, steps towards meaningful engagement can include: advance notice and communication with organizations and communities prior to the beginning of any engagement process; multiple check-ins and points of contact with the established organization/community representative; developing protocols for how information gathered from the community/organization will be used; and, planning time in the process for community verification, validation and any necessary follow up.

Finally, best practices for policy engagement across ministries (such as coordination between the National Indigenous Housing Strategy and HPS) can include: aligning engagement on similar initiatives or issues; ensuring the timely distribution of materials, administration and summary report assistance, sector and project- or engagement-specific capacity/support, proactive communication, central storage for sharing and compiling information; and, clear timelines regarding approvals and decision-making processes.

Conclusion

A reconciliation-based paradigm shift is required in the renewal and expansion of HPS. In order to achieve prosperity, Indigenous communities and organisations like Friendship Centres must be able to self-determine the priorities and parameters of specific services within HPS. Failure to ensure that development processes incorporate, reflect and respect the voices and diversity of urban Indigenous communities, sets the Employment and Service Development Canada on an older, failed path that the Federal government has stated is no longer the way government operates with Indigenous partners. This is not only about ensuring meaningful and effective engagement: it is also about ensuring that the outcome is informed with the expertise from relevant stakeholders to achieve its goals. The OFIFC views the online survey as a beneficial pre-consultation tool that will be useful in establishing areas for future engagement.

Recommendations

That the Federal government:

- Begin a meaningful reconciliation-based co-development process for an Indigenous HPS program in partnership with Indigenous communities, based on best practices for engagement outlined in this submission;
- Simplify the administration and allocation structure of HPS;
- Expand HPS to all member Friendship Centres across Ontario;
- Recognize and value Indigenous approaches to addressing and preventing Indigenous homelessness through a renewed HPS;
- Work with Indigenous organisations, like the OFIFC, to establish a culturally-relevant evaluation strategy for Indigenous HPS programs;
- Ensure Indigenous communities and organisations are resourced to lead and support local enumeration activities whenever possible; and,
- Harmonize the HPS with the National Housing Strategy and National Indigenous housing strategy in order to prioritize urban Indigenous housing needs.