

Subject: Receiving the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition's Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Strategy

File Number: ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0092

Report to Planning and Housing Committee on 23 October 2024

Submitted on October 11, 2024 by Kelly Crozier, Committee Coordinator, Council and Committee Services, Office of the City Clerk

Contact Person: Councillor J. Leiper, Kitchissippi (15)

613-580-2485, Jeff.Leiper@ottawa.ca

Ward: Citywide

Objet : Dépôt de la Stratégie autochtone sur le logement et l'itinérance de la Coalition autochtone d'Ottawa

Numéro de dossier : ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0092

Rapport présenté au Comité de la planification et du logement

Rapport soumis le 23 octobre 2024

Soumis le 11 octobre 2024 par Kelly Crozier, Coordonnatrice du Comité, Services aux comités et au conseil, Bureau du greffier municipal

Personne-ressource : Conseiller J. Leiper

613-580-2485, Jeff.Leiper@ottawa.ca

Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Planning and Housing Committee receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité de la planification et du logement prenne connaissance de ce rapport.

BACKGROUND

In many large urban communities, including in Ottawa, Indigenous people are overrepresented in the homelessness sector. In the 2021 Point-in-Time Count, 32 per cent of people experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous; however, the true percentage of people experiencing homelessness who identify as Indigenous is likely higher. Many Indigenous people do not self-identify as such even if they do access shelters for fear of racial stereotyping and discriminatory responses, or due to a mistrust of mainstream institutions and agencies, which is rooted in the legacy of colonial practices and harm done to Indigenous peoples.

The Indigenous population that experiences homelessness is unique in that their experience is influenced by the interconnectivity of colonization, residential school abuse, intergenerational trauma, and structural policy and practices. With the Indigenous population in Ottawa growing, the demand on culturally appropriate services related to housing and homelessness continues to grow as well. Responding to the needs of Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness in Ottawa involves supporting them on their life journey, which includes securing and sustaining safe and affordable housing in the context of Indigenous ideas of home, which are rooted in relationships to family, community, and land, and not only to a permanent building.

Mental health distress profoundly disrupts the ability to obtain and maintain a home. Research conducted by the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC) found that Indigenous community members in Ottawa experience a strong connection between increased mental health issues and housing needs. 92 per cent of the community members that indicated a need for permanent housing also identified a need for other supports: mental health (39 per cent) support around addictions/substance use (36 per cent), or support for ongoing medical conditions (21 per cent), among other needs.

In recognition of the unique and culturally relevant considerations to supporting the Indigenous population in Ottawa, the City's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan commits to the creation of an Indigenous-specific housing strategy. In September 2022, the City and the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (OAC) entered into an agreement for the allocation of \$80,000 in federal Reaching Home funding for the development of an urban Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Strategy. Since then, Housing and Homelessness Services staff have been accompanying the OAC and their partners as they develop the plan.

The OAC consists of a coalition of 10 First Nation, Inuit, and Métis organizations that support 20,000 of the 44,000 urban Indigenous community members in Ottawa. The OAC advocate at the community, municipal, provincial, and federal levels on Indigenous issues and the unique circumstances of Indigenous people and their interests in Ottawa. Ultimately, the OAC seeks to increase the positive and healthy choices available to Indigenous community members and their families across a wide and diverse range of considerations, including, but not limited to, health, housing, education, employment and training, or access to cultural activities.

Through the development of their strategy, the OAC has identified key projects that are needed in Ottawa, including:

Transitional housing for Inuit women and their children;

Family Healing Centre;

Aging Out Initiative for youth aging out of Children's Aid Society care; and

Indigenous hub

The OAC has indicated that being able to access municipally owned land is key to the success of their strategy and the key initiatives they have identified.

In May 2024, Council approved the transfer of the municipally owned parcel at 250 Forestglade Crescent to the OAC for the purpose of developing transitional housing for Inuit women and their children ([ACS2024-CSS-GEN-007](#)). This project is an important step in responding to the growth of the Inuit population in Ottawa and the demand for services from the Inuit community, one quarter of which are women. The current Indigenous women's shelter turns away 300 women a year so there is a demonstrated need for additional housing and homelessness resources for Indigenous women. Ottawa will be the first city south of Inuit Nunagat to have transitional housing for Inuit women.

Funding for the project will be provided by Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation and Indigenous Services Canada. Housing and Homelessness staff are currently working with staff in Planning Services, as well as the OAC and their project team to undertake a rezoning for the site to permit the intended use. It is anticipated the rezoning will go to Council in early 2025, after which the property will officially be transferred to the OAC.

As the OAC continues to advance their strategy, staff will provide any necessary support, including identifying additional municipally owned land that can be made

available to the OAC and the Indigenous community to help advance their priority initiatives.

One of the 2022-2026 Term of Council Priorities is “a city that has affordable housing and is more livable for all.” This report will further inform that goal.

DISCUSSION

Planning and Housing Committee is asked to receive a presentation “Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Strategy” at its meeting on October 23, 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the report recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving the information in this report.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

This is a City-wide report.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS

This has not been considered by Advisory Committees.

CONSULTATION

Consultation was undertaken as outlined in the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition’s presentation.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

Any developments undertaken as part of the OAC’s Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Strategy will be required to comply with applicable accessibility requirements under the *Ontario Building Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

INDIGENOUS, GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

Indigenous Policy Considerations

The implementation of the Indigenous Housing and Homelessness Strategy will directly support the Indigenous community in Ottawa.

Gender and Equity Implications

The priority projects identified by the OAC through the development of their strategy will provide Indigenous women with safe and culturally appropriate housing and supports.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no rural implications associated with this report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

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DISPOSITION

This report is for information purposes.