



? | Why we did this audit

In recent years, Ottawa has faced a variety of crises which have changed the landscape of homelessness. Persons experiencing homelessness are dealing with more complex and challenging issues, and are requiring increased supports related to health, mental health, and substance use to retain and maintain housing.

As supportive housing (defined as affordable housing that provides a range of services and supports based on an individual's needs) is a key mechanism the City of Ottawa leverages to address chronic homelessness, the necessary structures and resources must be in place to deliver this critical service.

Q | What we found

Our audit noted that there is meaningful work ongoing within the City and across the sector, through its partners, to support clients in need of supportive housing. Currently, the City and service providers are spread thin in trying to meet the complex needs and challenges of their clients. The demand for housing and supports is outpacing the current ability to provide this critical care.

The audit noted that supportive housing programs cannot meet the needs of individuals dealing with chronic homelessness without more coordination between capital, operating and health funding – which requires coordination at all three levels of government.

Our audit also noted that baseline standards for the provision of supports within supportive housing facilities have not been established which has led to inconsistencies across service providers the City works with. Lastly, the audit found that the City is limited in their ability to holistically understand and assess whether its investments in supportive housing are “moving the needle” given the lack of established outcomes and measures.

💡 | We made four recommendations to ensure that:

- An overall approach for supportive housing is defined in the City's 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, including establishing expected outcomes;
- Based on the established approach, an integrated workplan to build and operate supportive housing facilities is developed. This would include establishing guidelines to collaborate and coordinate on the supportive housing portfolio, including advocacy with other levels of government and engagement with service providers and other stakeholders;
- Standards to govern supportive housing processes are developed to ensure transparency, equity and consistency; and
- The City is leveraging all available data to support the assessment of progress towards supportive housing outcomes.