Ending Homelessness in Ontario Symposium

May 3-4, 2023
Summary of Proceedings

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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to all the individuals who assisted and contributed to the development and delivery of this symposium. In particular, we would like to thank Minister Clark and Associate Minister Tangri for their remarks. We also thank our great speakers. Their presentations and remarks achieved their purpose of stimulating discussion and giving us ideas to think about. And last, but not least, a thank you to the audience. You acted throughout as full participants, asking thoughtful questions, sharing your experiences, perspectives, and thoughts on the way forward.

Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that the work of all of us in this symposium took place on traditional Indigenous territories across Canada. We recognize and respect the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and all Indigenous peoples whose presence continues to enrich our communities.

In the location in Toronto, we acknowledged the land that we met on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

We acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Introduction

Homelessness has reached disastrous proportions in Ontario, with devastating impacts on people, communities and businesses across the province. It is a social, economic, and health crisis felt most by municipalities, but the solutions require collaboration and leadership from all levels of government.

This report details the proceedings of the Ending Homelessness in Ontario Symposium held in Mississauga, Ontario on May 3-4, 2023. A central aim of the symposium was to create a platform for dialogue to share and understand various perspectives and experiences with homelessness across the province, and to move towards building coordinated and strategically aligned solutions.

Given this goal, multiple sessions were held that addressed the various perspectives and facets on the root causes of homelessness – including income insecurity, insufficient supply of deeply affordable housing, insufficient responses to mental health and addictions challenges and potential policy responses required. Since governments, community and healthcare partners as well as the private sector all have a role to play, these sessions brought together these diverse actors.

This report is in two parts. The first provides opening context about the Symposium from AMO President Colin Best, and Symposium co-hosts Waterloo Region Chair Karen Redman and Parry Sound Mayor Jamie McGarvey. Part two presents the sessions that were held during the symposium, key takeaways and in some cases action items and questions raised. Presentation slides from the symposium can be accessed on AMO's website.

Statement by Colin Best

On May 3 and 4th, 2023, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) brought together around 250 people including municipal elected officials and staff, Indigenous organizations, and other sector partners for the Ending Homelessness Symposium. The Symposium emphasized that the time for action is now, and we all have a collective role to play in preventing, reducing, and ultimately ending homelessness in Ontario.

The Symposium clearly demonstrated a way forward to achieving this goal. Sessions emphasized the urgent need to act now. Homelessness has grown right across the province and has become more visible and complex. COVID-19 exposed the extent of the problem. It's a human tragedy and a disaster for our communities. At its core it is a human rights issue.

We also heard from communities across Ontario that have made considerable progress towards achieving "functional zero" chronic and veterans' homelessness. The Built for Zero framework emphasizes that an end to homelessness is possible in all our communities and is a helpful model that can be adopted in municipalities to reach these goals.

The voices of people with lived experience are critical to understanding the role each of us plays in addressing homelessness. Bringing people with lived experience into decision-making spaces and ensuring that their expertise is honoured, valued, listened to, and compensated appropriately is essential for us to end homelessness in the province.

Sessions explored the various intersecting factors that cause and keep people homeless, as well as the collaborative approaches needed to address these underlying factors. This includes ensuring that housing models that meet the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness are in place within communities. In addition, supportive housing approaches that address underlying health needs, including mental health and addictions, must be available to those who need health supports. And finally social services and income security provide the supports needed to address homelessness as an extreme form of poverty.

On the second day of the Symposium, the focus was on innovations and partnerships, including an emphasis on the need to partner responsibly with Indigenous communities. This includes building ongoing relationships with neighbouring First Nations and understanding the legacies of intergenerational trauma that impact Indigenous peoples' experiences of homelessness and housing in urban and rural communities.

Responses to encampments that take a rights-based, person-centred approach are critical and implicate all levels of government. AMO is currently building on this work by developing future encampment guidance and policy work that will be shared with members.

Innovative tools and models were also featured. The Housing Assessment Resource Tool (HART) and innovations from other jurisdictions provided practical takeaways for municipalities in addressing homelessness. Likewise, understanding the impacts of social determinants of health, systemic racism, and other forms of marginalization on people experiencing homelessness and the overall costs of

these issues at both a social justice and economic level demonstrates the importance of integrating health and social care.

The Symposium concluded by facilitating open discussion with all the experts in the room. Our popcorn session was a valuable learning, sharing, and reflecting experience for everyone in attendance and I am grateful to all those who attended and generously shared their experiences and knowledge.

This event is just one way in which AMO is continuing to work with municipal governments, partner organizations, people with lived experience, Indigenous peoples, the provincial and federal governments, and other actors within the sector to end homelessness in Ontario. We hope you will stay engaged with our ongoing efforts and we appreciate your collaboration and partnership in making the Ending Homelessness Symposium a success.

Sincerely,
Colin Best
AMO President

Statement by Karen Redman

It was my pleasure to serve as Host for the first day of AMO's Ending Homelessness Symposium. Homelessness has been a significant issue across the province impacting all our communities, including my own, the Region of Waterloo. We need to continue our work with a shift in thinking about homelessness to address the root causes. Tinkering around the edges will not get us where we need to be. Transformative system changes and leadership is critical.

We saw through this Symposium that municipal governments and their community partners are on the frontlines working hard to meet the needs of the people they interact with every day in their communities. Working together we can co-develop a plan to end homelessness in Ontario. This is an effort that must include everyone working together. We have seen through the Symposium that solutions are out there, and we know what we need to do to accomplish this goal.

Our speakers and audience at the Ending Homelessness Symposium freely shared their knowledge, expertise, and recommendations. I look forward to continuing my work as Chair of Waterloo Region, Chair of the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO), an AMO Board Member, and the Chair of AMO's Land Use Planning and Resources Task Force inspired and motivated by the work we all must do to achieve an end to homelessness in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Karen Redman
Chair of Waterloo Region

Statement by Jamie McGarvey

Addressing homelessness and affordable housing is a passion of mine. It is an issue I hold near and dear to my heart. In addition to serving on the AMO Board of Directors as Past President and as the Mayor of the Town of Parry Sound, I am also the Chair of AMO's new Social Policy and Human Services Transformation Task Force. The mandate of this task force is focused on eradicating poverty, and homelessness as its most extreme form.

I am proud of the work done in my home community of Parry Sound and the accomplishments of AMO and others in this room for your work in for drawing critical attention to homelessness. The speakers and delegates at the Symposium are all accomplished champions on this important issue and I learned valuable insights as Host for the second day of the Symposium.

The excellent presentations and lively discussion in our popcorn session have provided necessary food for thought to us all and will be carefully considered by AMO Staff and the Social Policy and Human Services Transformation Task Force. As excited as I am to have taken part in the Symposium, I am even more excited to begin the important work ahead of us to build on all the ideas that have been shared and to continue to take action to end homelessness in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Jamie McGarvey
Mayor of the Town of Parry Sound

The Symposium

Sessions

A central aim of the symposium was to create a platform for dialogue to share and understand various perspectives and experiences with homelessness across the province, and to move towards building coordinated and strategically aligned solutions. Given this aim, multiple sessions were held that addressed the various perspectives and facets on the root causes of homelessness – including income insecurity, insufficient supply of deeply affordable housing, insufficient responses to mental health and addictions challenges and potential policy responses required. Since governments, community and healthcare partners as well as the private sector all have a role to play, these sessions brought together these diverse actors.

➢ May 3, 2023

Session 1: The Importance of Ending Homelessness

This first session highlighted the importance of acting now to end homelessness in Ontario. Opportunities and new ideas about new approaches to address the root causes of homelessness will be explored.

*Host: **Brian Rosborough**, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario*
*Speakers: **Terrilee Kelford**, Co-Chair, National Alliance to End Rural and Remote Homelessness,*
       ***Carolyn Stewart**, Executive Director, Feed Ontario*

Key Takeaways:

- This session shed light on the too often neglected aspects of rural, remote and northern homelessness. Unlike urban homelessness, rural and remote homelessness does not benefit from the same media attention, resources and research investment let alone sustainable funding.

- There were discussions about the intersection of food insecurity and homelessness. Good public policy aimed at ending food insecurity also plays a preventative role in addressing homelessness. Demand for foodbank services will outpace supply, leading to more unhoused people.

- There is a consensus that action needs to be taken but this requires system change and continued pressure to build momentum.

- There was acknowledgement of underfunding for government programs for housing and homelessness and the need to push the conversation which is starting to happen as the housing crisis affects more people with middle incomes.

- Speakers called on the federal government to provide a fair share of housing funding. In addition, there was expressed hope in seeing AMO continue to support this cause and advocate for a fair deal.

- The speakers would like attendees to consider adopting Housing First projects in their communities and make effective use of by-name lists.
- National solutions include increasing the Rapid Housing Initiative, implementing a data strategy and dedicated capital funding streams.

- There is a cost to inaction. The cost of poverty has increased significantly, according to Feed Ontario's 2019 report. In examining the relationship between poverty, poor health, the justice system, and lost productivity, Feed Ontario concluded that poverty costs Ontario up to $33 billion annually. Evidently, a tremendous amount of money would be saved if we increased the income of the lowest quintile. Investing in people by reducing poverty is not only socially responsible, but it is also a smart investment.

- The cost of housing is the biggest concern and there is a need for acquisitions to keep housing affordable. More supply is not the only answer; there needs to be the right mix of supply.
- Feed Ontario's 2022 Hunger Report can be accessed on their [website](#).

Session 2: The State of Homelessness in Ontario

This session provided an overview of the current state of homelessness in Ontario and the possibilities and actions that arise through working with community.

Speakers: Angela Cooke, *Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*
       Cathy Cousins, *President, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association*
       Daphna Nussbaum, *co-Chair, Ontario Alliance to End Homelessness*

Key Takeaways:

- There are several ongoing provincial government initiatives by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing underway across the housing continuum to support municipal service managers to help Ontarians achieve housing stability. Examples provided included the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and implementation of By-Name Lists. In addition, through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program (ISHP), Ontario is also partnering with Indigenous Program Administrators to provide culturally appropriate housing assistance and support services to Indigenous people facing, or at risk of homelessness.
- The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) plays a role representing municipal service system managers to fulfill their role to address homelessness in Ontario's communities. here was discussion on the funding challenges of ending homelessness. Municipal Service Managers are especially challenged as they only collect a small share of tax dollars, as opposed to the federal and provincial governments. governments.
- There were also discussions on the considerations for service delivery in the post-pandemic context, particularly considering the expiry of emergency federal and provincial benefits, inflation and the rising cost of food, and the increased visibility of homelessness. Key solutions to reducing homelessness include the partnering of all governments with community partners and a better collaboration with health, justice and corrections systems. This was echoed by all speakers.
- Emergency shelter is becoming like housing for people which was never intended. There is a need for permanent housing solutions.
- It is important to work with people with lived experience of homelessness in finding solutions to end homelessness.
- The Ontario Alliance to End Homelessness has a ten-point plan found on their [website](#).

Session 3: What it Means to End Homelessness

This session showcased Ontario communities that have made progress on their journey to prevent and reduce homelessness on the path to achieving functional zero homelessness. They provide advice about the foundational steps to start or accelerate the process.

Moderator: Marie Morrison, *Director, Built for Zero*
Speakers: Mike Nadeau, *CEO, District of Sault Ste Marie Social Service Administration Board*
       Anna McGregor, *Director of Community Services, Dufferin County*
       Luisa Artuso, *Social Services Administrator, Wellington County*

Key Takeaways:

- "We need to change the system to solve the problem." Built for Zero appreciates that there is no one single actor that will end homelessness, indeed an integrated, coordinated team is needed. (see these additional short videos for further information on Solving Homelessness with Built for Zero, and Homelessness is a Solvable System Problem, and Building an Operating System to End Homelessness). It also understands the importance of comprehensive-real time, by name data that paints a dynamic and ever-changing picture of the state of homelessness, rather than sticking to once-a-year counts (see the BFZ-C By-Name List website page for further information).

- Panellists spoke to the need to change the narrative to build and design housing solutions using a people-centred, empathetic and holistic approach. There should be no wrong doors to access services.

- "Change comes at the speed of trust;" need to listen to people with lived experience.

- There is a need for the federal government to invest significantly in First Nations communities to prevent migration leading to homelessness.

- Panellists spoke to the importance of working with local businesses as partners. This included understanding the role of main streets as places where people experiencing homelessness might access services or facilities such as restrooms. This was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic and has presented new challenges, which working with local businesses could help to address.

- In this session, the following question was posed: does the panel have any advice for council, staff, and communities for ensuring success with addressing homelessness? The importance of investing in mental health, and addictions was stressed, as well as employing a holistic approach to homelessness. It was suggested to tailor services to the needs of individuals, rather than basing it solely on the capacity of agencies. Also, it is important for leaders to trust and support the subject matter experts to come up with innovative solutions.

- Built for Zero provides timely and public reporting on the progress of participating campaign communities through progress tables and dashboards.

Session 4: Understanding the Lived Experience of Homelessness

This session presented the work of the Members of the Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network's Principles Task Force in supporting meaningful engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness.

Moderator: **Alex Nelson**, *Co-Chair, Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network*
Speakers: **Daniela Mergaten**
       Sam Blondeau
       Veronica Snooks

Key Takeaways:

- In this session, a standalone point was the importance of lived experience in advocacy work as a potential driver of a client-centric approach. Often, the people making policy decisions do not have personal experience with homelessness. There is a risk of exacerbating the issue and creating even further barriers inadvertently. Lived experience holders can be leaders in forging systematic and transformative changes, and there is not only a need to engage with people with lived experiences, but to do so meaningfully, including by compensating them for their expertise.

- Decision makers are encouraged to include people with lived experience at their tables, and to engage with them meaningfully to create better policies aimed at ending homelessness.

Session 5: Exploring Housing Solutions for Ending Homelessness

This session provided input on how housing affordability solutions can be incorporated into AMO's advocacy along with the presentation of a case study of an integrated housing and health service model that provides a path to housing.

Speakers: **Bahar Shadpour***, Director of Policy and Communications, Canadian Centre for Housing Rights*
Kevin Dickins*, Deputy City Manager, Social Health and Development, London*

Key Takeaways:

- This session proposed a people-centric approach to homelessness. This allows to place the needs of those most impacted at the center of solutions.

- Municipalities can adopt eviction prevention policies as one of the most effective ways to prevent homelessness in the first place.

- Further, by adopting a rights-based approach, we can consider the importance of wrap-around services, or a network of hubs "with multiple referral doors."

- Wrap-around services would also minimize the impact on emergency services and prevent cyclical homelessness from happening.

- Steps need to be taken to realize the right to housing and to ensure long-term solutions are adopted.

- Engagement with community and people with lived experience is critical to the success of designing program models. A whole of government approach across multiple ministries is essential to supporting municipal responses on the ground in communities.

Session 6: Exploring Health Solutions for Ending Homelessness

This session highlights successful approaches and factors that governments should consider when addressing the health of people experiencing homelessness.

Speakers: **Camille Quenneville***, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association – Ontario Division*
Jim Dunn*, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Social Sciences, McMaster University*
Dr. Stephen Hwang*, Chair in Homelessness, Housing and Health, St. Michael's Hospital*

Key Takeaways:

- "Your client is my client." Most of the people experiencing homelessness also deal with mental health issues. This session stressed the importance of taking a coordinated approach to tackling homelessness. Healthcare clients are a good demographic to engage with on the issue of homelessness as they tend to be the ones with the greatest needs, and for whom, these policies would have the greatest benefits.

- This session invited us to consider that housing first approaches work best with supports to maintain successful tenancies, and that research studies such as At Home Chez Soi have clearly demonstrated the efficacy and the benefits of doing so. Yet there are limits for people with severe mental health needs who have complex needs to address through treatment and services. In choosing models that provide direct permanent housing, it must be factored in if they do not address the needs of mental health support, and other wrap-around services. There is a need for community-based mental health services, free of stigma.

- Effective approaches include community mobilization including anchor institutions working with government on solutions.

- Research and evaluation are critical for evidence informed approaches.

- There is too much reliance on private market housing to solve the problem. A multi-pronged approach is needed including new non-profit and co-operative housing stock, acquisitions and protecting existing community housing beyond the end of mortgages expiry.
- Housing is the solution for homelessness, but health services can contribute to successful housing outcomes. Research supports that rent subsidies with supports are an effective intervention.

Session 7: Exploring Social Services and Income Security Solutions for Ending Homelessness

This session highlighted the importance of income security and social services in addressing the root causes of homelessness and supporting individuals experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.

Speakers: Garima Talwar, Kapoor, Director, Policy and Research, Maytree Foundation
        Brian Marks, CAO, Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board

Key Takeaways:
- Poverty reduction through a human rights approach is critical, starting with recognizing the right to housing. Structurally, we have failed people and not set them up for success with current government approaches.
- There is an inherent paradox between the lowest unemployment rates and highest rates of people accessing food banks, shelters and the number of homeless people. The reduction in unemployment rates, does not equate to a reduction in need. Further, for people in deepest needs, who have little in terms of assets and income, there are great structural barriers preventing them from being able to live a life of dignity. Some solutions include adopting a human rights approach, but equally as important, improving income supports. Increasing rent control and vacancy control are also crucial to complement the demand-side solutions.
- This session called on social service case managers to move from being officers of legislation to doing the social work and building relationships of trust in an integrated way.
- There was also a call on AMO to continue to carry the conversation and create future opportunities for front line staff to convene and learn about each other and the programs available.
- Municipal councils act in a role as system level case managers and can contribute in important ways by providing appropriate resources and compelling other municipal entities to act in a supportive manner including the police and public health.
- Upstream interventions are critical to prevent homelessness, starting with the education system.

➢ May 4, 2023

Session 8: Partnering with Local First Nations Communities on Homelessness

This session served as a conversation highlighting the importance of collaboration and partnership between municipal governments and First Nations communities, as well as lessons learned from their experience.

Host: Jamie McGarvey, Mayor, Parry Sound
Speakers: Henry Wall, CAO, Kenora District Services Board
        Jennifer Dreaver, Executive Director, Kenora Chiefs Advisory

Key Takeaways:

- "We have not seen this many elected officials in one room at one time, gathered around one issue." This great momentum in tackling homelessness provides a window of opportunity for action and change. During this session, speakers shed light on the uniqueness of Indigenous homelessness. Unlike the colonial definition of homelessness that is understood as a lack of stable, and affordable housing, Indigenous homelessness, rather, is a human condition that is characterized as an individual being isolated from their relationships to land, water, families, cultures and identity. In this state of homelessness, the individual cannot physically reconnect with their Indigeneity.

- Partnerships between First Nations communities with municipalities and District Social Service Administration Boards are critical as "poverty and homelessness do not care about jurisdictional boundaries."

- "Partnerships make actors stronger and better." This session also explored the benefits of allyship with First Nations communities. Since Indigenous Peoples experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate, it is important to build relationships with First Nations communities to develop Indigenous-specific policy. To add, Indigenous leadership and participation is a key component of successful policymaking and programming aimed at ending homelessness.

- During this session, the following question was posed: while we can appreciate the importance of a people-centered approach to finding *solutions* to homelessness, how do we ensure people don't become homeless in the first place?
  - » The upstream approach to homelessness should be adopted to prevent, rather than respond to homelessness in Canada.
- The following question was also raised: what is the impact of moving to a solely remote service?
  - » The lack of internet access poses an important infrastructural barrier to the ability for individuals to stay connected. This is one of the fundamental reasons we cannot just switch to virtual care. This would limit access to the very people we are here to serve. Instead, we should preserve in-person service delivery, and this needs to be done very deliberately. Advocacy is of colossal importance as well as supporting people with lived experiences even if they are far removed.

Session 9: Addressing Urban and Rural Indigenous Homelessness

This session explored how municipal governments can partner with and support the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services to provide housing opportunities for urban and rural Indigenous residents.

*Speaker: **Jaimee Gaunce**, Director of Policy, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services*

Key Takeaways:

- This session emphasized the importance of understanding and sensitivity for meaningful engagement with Indigenous partners. Indeed, powerful allyship rests on understanding your partners. The Medicine Wheel is important when talking about homelessness; it represents four directions, four elements and four stages of well-being – physical health, mental health, emotional health and spiritual health.

- This session encouraged us to ponder on whether the housing continuum makes sense to Indigenous peoples. The medicine wheel provides a more culturally appropriate alternative.

Session 10: Strategies and Considerations in Responding to Encampments in Ontario

In the context of the recent Ontario Superior Court of Justice decision regarding encampments and the provided considerations for appropriate municipal responses to encampments, this session explores practices for a human-rights based response approach.

Speakers: Kelly-Anne Salerno, *Assistant Director of Housing and Homelessness, Region of Waterloo*
Emily Paradis, *Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, Canadian Human Rights Commission*

Key Takeaways:

- There are innovative ways that municipal service managers can respond to encampments. In Waterloo, this includes a sanctioned encampment location. However, this is on tool in a toolbox and part of a larger effort to draft a plan to end chronic homelessness.

- "Adequate housing is a precondition for other human rights such as the right to dignity." This session further stressed the importance of connecting with residents of the encampments, and to apply a trauma-informed lens in responding to their needs. Municipalities have a dual role: they are duty bearers; but they do not necessarily have the funding.

- Provincial resourcing and targeted action are required to end homelessness and address encampments.

- Through the National Housing Strategy Act, Canada commits all governments to this Legislation.

- Since the majority of encampment residents are Indigenous, it is important to recognize them as right holders on the land on which they stay.

- The Federal Housing Advocate has launched a review of homeless encampments as a violation of human rights in Canada. There is an opportunity for anyone who has experienced living in an encampment, or for organizations who advocate on their behalf to contribute to this review. Submissions were due by May 26, 2023.

- AMO was encouraged to look into providing trauma-informed training.

Session 11: Municipal Policy Tools for Ending Homelessness

This session showcased the work of the Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART), and different jurisdictional approaches to homelessness.

Speaker: Dr. Carolyn Whitzman, *Expert Advisor, Housing Assessment Resource Tools Project*

Key Takeaways:

- "You can't have Housing First without housing, FIRST."

- Since there was no real standardized way to measure progress of programs aimed at ending homelessness, and few resources to survey how many homeless people there are in Canada, this session presented 3 tools to do just that. HART provides evidence-driven analysis of housing need. With these tools, governments will be better able to track the progress of their programs.

- These tools are:
  - » Housing Needs Assessment Tool: A census-based tool that measures core housing need and affordable shelter costs by income category, household size, and priority populations. The tool allows governments to set effective housing targets that will lift Canadians out of chronic housing need and homelessness.

» Land Assessment Tool: A mapping tool that assesses suitable public land for non-profit affordable housing, based on proximity to key services and amenities. It allows governments to effectively use land, including housing on top (of libraries, health centres, etc.) to maximize deeply affordable homes.

» Property Acquisitions Tool: A policy-based tool that help prevent the loss of affordable housing through property acquisition by governments, non-profit housing providers and Community Land Trusts.

Session 12: Health, Homelessness, and Multisectoral Partnerships

This session by Dr Andrew Boozary, showcased the innovative models of working with municipalities, hospitals, and community partners to improve health outcomes for marginalized populations and support people experiencing homelessness.

Speaker: **Dr. Boozary**, *Executive Director – Social Medicine and Population Health, University Health Network*

Key Takeaways:

- "In 2023, a postal code is a better predictor of health outcomes than a genetic code". Investment in health care is crucial but so is social spending.

- There is no universal health care without the human right to housing. If people are housed, they are less likely to use emergency rooms and it is easier to treat other health conditions.

- Housing is a matter of social justice and sound health economics.

- The opportunity cost that is facing people is truly a societal opportunity cost. Failing on human dignity is expensive.

- Ending homelessness is about political choices and political will.

- University Health Network (UHN) is currently constructing the Social Medicine Supportive Housing project in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto. The project is being delivered in partnership between UHN's Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine, United Way Greater Toronto, the City of Toronto and the community. It is being supported by all orders of government. The four-storey modular building at 150 Dunn Avenue will provide 51 people from historically marginalized groups who are frequent users of hospital services with accessible, safe, secure and affordable housing. Doors will open for this housing project in Fall 2023.

Popcorn Session

Moderator: Jamie McGarvey

In addition to the sessions, another central aim of the conference was the open the floor to questions. The popcorn session allowed audience members to raise particular questions or to share any of their thoughts/experiences. The questions for this popcorn session are as follows:

1. What has been done in your community that has made a positive impact on preventing, reducing, and ending homelessness?

2. What stands out to you as a key take-away from the sessions during the symposium?

3. Where should AMO focus our policy development, membership education and advocacy over the next year?

4. How and who should AMO collaborate with to end homelessness in Ontario?

5. How can we contribute to meaningful truth and reconciliation with Indigenous People by ending homelessness?

Key Takeaways:

- There is a need for funding from other orders of government to end homelessness; there is a lack of fiscal capacity given the downloading of social housing.

- There is a need for a broad movement partnering with unusual suspects to make homelessness the top issue for the public.

- There is a need for political will and an understanding of the broad powers of municipal governments to address the situation.

- There is the need for a provincial strategy for the allocation of health resources.

- There is a need for more resources in rural communities to avoid capacity issues so that people do not leave their home communities to move to larger urban centres to access services.

- Mixed income housing design should be a priority for municipalities.

- Chronic addiction funding is needed alongside the housing funding.

- Funding for homelessness prevention and housing should be treated as an investment, not a cost, as there are net benefits to other sectors from ending homelessness (e.g., health, justice).

- Job creation alone will not solve homeless as there are full-time working residents experiencing poverty and homelessness in our communities.

- There needs to be advocacy for the federal government to replenish the National Co-Investment fund.

- Lower tier municipalities need to have tools and resources for housing. AMO should create a roundtable for them.

- Some municipalities could use reserve funds for housing as a low-risk, flexible and creative tactic.
- AMO should bring data-driven sessions to the August Annual Conference on land disbursements.

- There is a need for more trauma-informed policies/ lenses on addressing homelessness.

- Since funding is often based on census data, small rural communities suffer. AMO could help advocate for small rural communities to receive more equitable funding.

- Ending homelessness is essential for meaningful truth and reconciliation with Indigenous People.

- Not all housing needs to be a new build, a government funded acquisition fund of existing buildings to keep them affordable or convert them would be helpful. Adaptation and reuse of buildings should be done where feasible.

- Municipal service managers need to work with housing providers in partnership t keep them sustainable beyond the expiry of mortgages.

- There is a need to address the financialization of housing to keep the situation from getting worse.

- Vacancy control would help the housing situation to make rents more affordable. The digital divide and tenant access barriers to the Landlord and Tenant Board needs to be addressed.

- There are barriers to accessing federal housing programs in northern Ontario which needs to be fixed (e.g., Rapid Housing Initiative).

- Multi-sector partnerships are key to addressing health needs and all sector representatives must continue to come to the table to work on solutions.

- There is much more awareness of the problem and willingness to act. We need key players to agree on joint targets and an action plan where all are held accountable for their contribution.

- Data-driven approaches worked for some municipalities. Valuable resources and contacts are being made with other municipalities.

- An approach is needed similar to all board responses to the pandemic and empowering communities and engaging the public.

- We should advocate to the government to remove the debt incurred by municipalities for social housing, as part of their debt limits, so they aren't having to make decisions on new assets like new fire halls, roads.

- Municipal tools, municipal courage, provincial funding, health and economic arguments, forecasting social infrastructure and qualifying them are all needed to strengthen the business case for investment.

- All levels of government including municipal governments must address NIMBYism.