

# SUBMISSION TO MAYOR'S TASKFORCE ON HOUSING



**HomeBaseHousing**  
everyone deserves a place called home

August 2019

Kingston Home Base Non-Profit Housing Inc.

This summary outlines Kingston Home Base Non-Profit Housing (HBH) concerns on the impacts of affordability and availability of housing for homeless, low-income individuals and families.

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# Submission to Mayor's Taskforce on Housing

KINGSTON HOME BASE NON-PROFIT HOUSING INC.

## HOME BASE HOUSING OVERVIEW

**Since 1987, Home Base Housing has been a community leader in providing and advocating for safe, affordable housing and necessary supports for youth, adults, and families at risk of homelessness in the Kingston area.**

### We:

- provide 54 emergency shelter beds each night to single women, men, and families in two emergency shelters;
- assist over 1,300 people yearly to find and maintain housing through our Housing Help Centre;
- provide permanent accommodation with supports to 97 single adults in our Supportive Housing program;
- find permanent solutions to end youth homelessness through our Kingston Youth Services program which provides 30 units of youth housing with on-site supports and an outreach service.

### Our Programs

- Housing Help Centre offers a one-stop centre for all housing-related services: housing listings, Community Voice and Postal Mail and ID (Identification) Bank.
- Our emergency shelters include In From The Cold (men and women, 25+ years, 35-bed capacity) and Lily's Place (families, 19-bed capacity). Individualized support plans assist clients to transition from emergency shelters to permanent housing.
- Prevention Diversion case managers assist those who are housed but are at imminent risk of homelessness and they help divert those who are seeking emergency shelter services.
- Our Housing First case managers work with private sector landlords to assist chronically homeless individuals and families to secure housing.
- Street Outreach Services have staff and volunteers who connect with individuals on the street, living rough or precariously housed.
- Supportive Housing provides rent-geared-to-income housing and supports for single men and women facing a variety of life challenges. Individualized support plans and referrals to other agencies assist clients in achieving their goals.
- Kingston Youth Services provides transitional and permanent housing with intensive support services for 30 at-risk youth (16 to 24 years of age). Our outreach services assist street youth to obtain housing and support in the community. The One Roof – Kingston Youth Hub provides services to youth through partnerships with over 25 youth-serving agencies.

## Impact

### OUR CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

Home Base Housing will not dwell on the statistics of vacancy rates and the need for affordable housing. These have been articulated by the City and others. We trust the Taskforce has been sufficiently briefed.

We will, however, bring your attention to the challenges we face as an organization dedicated to providing support services and housing to the most vulnerable populations in Kingston. These include youth, families and single adults who are homeless and at risk of homelessness which includes the working poor.

**FAMILIES**, many of whom have been left out of the ability to afford a home within reasonable access to central services such as public transportation. A basic two-bedroom apartment requires an income of \$48,000 per year which equates to earning \$23.08 per hour or working 66 hours per week at minimum wage <sup>1</sup> if the supply of those units were available to them.

**We are in a crisis of affordable housing for families. Lily's family shelter reaches capacity regularly and in all of 2018 we turned away 115 Homeless Adults and Children seeking shelter. In 2019 in the period of January through to August turn aways increased to 167 Homeless Adults and Children seeking shelter. If this trend continues we would be looking at 250 Adults and Children being turned away from the emergency shelter due to capacity issues in 2019. This is more than double the previous years total.**

**YOUTH** are one of Kingston's most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Many are underskilled, undereducated, unemployed or earning minimum wage, nutritionally vulnerable, have declining mental health, low school participation rates, criminal victimization including human trafficking often experience chronic housing instability and ageism from landlords.

The average room to rent in Kingston is approximately \$600. Single Youth receiving Ontario Works has a maximum shelter allotment of \$390 which means they must pull money from their basic needs (\$343) in order to pay their rent, which often leaves them with just over \$100 for the month. A Single youth on ODSP receives \$497 for their maximum shelter allotment and a total of \$672 for their basic needs.

**Kingston does not have sufficient supportive and transitional housing for youth to meet demand. The Kingston Youth Shelter provides two shared-housing programs, which are staffed 24 hours and can accommodate a total of 15 youth. Home Base Housing offers a 21-unit apartment building that is staffed 16 hours/day and two shared houses for another 8 beds of housing for youth (29 in total). These programs are currently full.**

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<sup>1</sup> Unaccommodating: Rental Housing Wage in Canada, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, David Macdonald June 2019, pg 12

**SINGLES** face additional challenges with a one-bedroom apartment requiring a fulltime wage of \$19.38 per hour or 55 hours per week at minimum wage.<sup>2</sup>

Our Supportive Housing Case management strives to stabilize housing with tenants who require ongoing assistance to manage their tenancies, most commonly tenants are referred and housed through the Housing First program. The Adult Housing First team is currently working with 62 homeless individuals in the Housing and Homelessness system, 46 of those are chronically homeless. Our Street Outreach team worked with 51 unique adult individuals who were homeless in the month of July and our system continues to work with our most vulnerable and challenging community members to find these individuals' housing.

Housing First Case Management focuses on moving people who are chronically or episodically homeless from the street or emergency shelters into permanent housing with supports that are individualized to client needs. Case managers or case management teams are quickly assigned in order to serve as the main point of contact for the client from assessment to housing and follow up. This process is completed as seamlessly as possible so clients have every opportunity to be successful in their housing searches to find safe and affordable housing.

**The average monthly market rent for a 1 bedroom apartment is \$1,012.00. Single clients on Ontario works receive \$384.00 for shelter allowance and ODSP receives 489.00. The waitlist for a 1-bedroom unit with the Social Housing Registry Geared to Income is 936 individuals and growing. Where do we turn for affordable housing?**

## IMPACT OF STUDENTS ON HOUSING COSTS AND AVAILABILITY

Kingston is privileged to have both a University with an international reputation as a top tier institution and a Community College offering a wide range of programs. These two institutions have enriched the cultural and business community in Kingston for many years. There has however been, a major negative impact on the housing sector and the poor.

**The working poor, singles and families have been pushed out of the ability to rent homes and apartments by Post Secondary students who are paying \$700-\$1150 per bedroom plus utilities. Four bedroom homes are renting for \$3200 month and \$1600 a month for a two-bedroom apartment. These rents are just simply unaffordable to the majority of youth, singles, and families.**

Queen's, St. Lawrence and to a lesser extent the Royal Military College have placed significant pressure on the availability and affordability of housing in Kingston. The growth in student populations for Queen's

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

University and St. Lawrence College (Kingston Campus) has had a direct impact on the availability of affordable housing and vacancy rates.

We believe that post-secondary student growth and the current need for an increase in profitable foreign student growth and program expansion to serve local, national and international demand that both Queens, and St. Lawrence to be the single largest contributors to the negative impact on vacancy rates and rental affordability. These educational institutions must be responsible for the provision of student housing to bring back affordable levels of home and apartment rentals through a significant increase in purpose-built student housing supply.

**Our Post Secondary Sector has failed in its social responsibility to ensure sufficient housing is available for their student populations and growth over the last ten years.**

**Queen's and St. Lawrence's enrollment growth is the single largest contributor to the housing crisis we face and responsible for displacing families and singles, and the working poor from putting an affordable roof over their heads.**

There will be an argument made that the private sector's renewal in construction has begun to provide purpose-built student housing specifically in the Williamsville corridor along Princess Street to meet demand. The private sector is profit-driven and interested in their return on investment as are their lenders. Are private sector rental housing providers motivated to bring down vacancy rates? Current landlords enjoy the ability to charge students an average of \$800 per month per bedroom. To suggest that the private sector will help resolve the impact of students on the housing market with purpose-built student housing is unrealistic. They may in the interim consume some of the student housing growth only as long as the demand with low vacancy rates is maintained. Private sector landlords are not providing lower priced rental units and rents of \$800 per bedroom are not affordable.

What we need is an oversupply of purpose-built student housing to move students out of existing converted family homes and apartments. These new units of student housing should be located on or near campus.

## Queen's University

Queen's success has led to a student enrollment increase of 15% over a ten year period. In 2009, enrollment was at 22,351 students<sup>3</sup> and in the 2018/2019 school year is at 25,779<sup>4</sup>. This growth alone has had the impact of requiring the consumption of 3,428 beds or an equivalent of 857 four-bedroom homes or 1,714 two-bedroom apartments over the last ten years. Queen's plans an enrollment of 26,878 students<sup>5</sup> for the 2021-2022 school year representing an increase of 4% in the next three years. This is an increase of 1,099 students. The impact of this growth alone requires an additional occupation of 275 four-bedroom homes or 550 two-bedroom apartments.

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<sup>3</sup> Queen's University, Report to the Senate, November 2009 Enrollment Report Executive Summary, appendix D, page 30

<sup>4</sup> Enrollment Report to the Senate Committee on Academic Development, March 7, 2019 Table 2: Enrollment Summary, page 8

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

We understand Queen's is looking to build additional 300-bed units of housing on a site off of Albert Street. However, this is insufficient to match the dislocation of family and singles for affordable homes and apartments over the last ten years, let alone meet the needs of their expected student population growth.

The current expansion of Queen's students has now impacted beyond Sydenham district, consuming Williamsville, King's Town and Portsmouth districts with intrusions into Kingscourt/Rideau district. What were once affordable homes and apartments are disappearing as investors and students need to go further afield to find housing beyond the Queen's neighborhood.

**Conversion of single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments to student rentals is at an alarming state devouring modest and affordable rental properties in historically lower-cost neighborhoods.**

Queen's recently sold its property at 40 Sir John A. Macdonald Blvd. instead of utilizing the vacant land on the site for additional student housing. A lost opportunity to help resolve the housing crisis.

Queen's acquisition of St. Mary on the Lake, Province Care site on Mary street has the capacity to add 250,000 sq. ft. of additional program space and enrollment growth without a single additional housing unit being built. **Queen's should be required to build an additional 5,000 units of student housing on the St. Mary's site which would have the impact of returning and preserving the equivalent of 1,250 four-bedroom houses, or 2,500 two-bedroom apartments for families to live in.**

This would assist in the absorption of anticipated growth in enrollment and have a significant impact on increasing the vacancy rate and returning to affordable levels.

## St. Lawrence College

St. Lawrence College Kingston campus has grown with an increase from 4,543 students in 2011/12<sup>6</sup> to 6,889 in the 2018/2019 school year<sup>7</sup>, representing an increase of 51% to date. This represents an additional 2,346 students who have seriously affected the community of Portsmouth District. The 2,346 students could consume and displace families from 586 four-bedroom homes or 1,173 two-bedroom apartments. Not taking into account those who are able to live with family.

St. Lawrence College likewise should be required to build additional housing on its Kingston campus site for any growth in student enrollment for that campus. We do acknowledge that additional housing has been built in recent years on the Kingston St. Lawrence site, however, it is still insufficient to deal with the demand created by enrollment growth.

**St. Lawrence should not be permitted to create a downtown campus site without adding the equivalent number of College-owned student housing beds for the total number of students who will be enrolled in courses held directly on and at that site.** Any expansion of the College downtown would only exacerbate the already desperate housing affordability and availability in Kingston.

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<sup>6</sup> St. Lawrence College, Annual Report 2010-2011, page 15

<sup>7</sup> St. Lawrence College, Annual Report 2018-2019, page 12

## MUNICIPAL ACTION IS REQUIRED

Understanding the City's budgetary restraints and the current allocation of up to \$18 Million for affordable housing, it is incumbent on the City to ensure they leverage those funds to create the greatest amount of affordable units possible.

### **The City of Kingston and Council should take bold action by:**

- Immediately place a two-year interim control bylaw freezing any development and building permits on property owned and controlled by Queen's and St. Lawrence until completion of a Student Housing Study on the impacts of off-campus housing with a view to creating housing options within their campuses.
- Utilizing their powers of persuasion, the moral authority of the offices they hold and the levers of the powers they have, to take all necessary steps to cause both Queens and St. Lawrence College to build additional student housing.
- The City of Kingston should ensure that any redevelopment of the Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute school site be only repurposed for student housing.
- Encourage all and any redevelopment in and around the campuses of Queen's and St. Lawrence to become student housing through municipal planning bylaws.
- Refuse "in lieu of" payments from private sector developers and assemble land on their properties to landbank where ever possible for the use of affordable housing.
- Change the Official Plan to require the building/development of 20% permanently affordable housing units in all developments.
- Allow Private Sector for-profit builders/developers to transfer their 20% affordable housing unit requirement to local Non-Profit housing providers, by paying the Non-Profits the cost of building those new permanent affordable housing units as part of the Non-Profit's building portfolio.
- Ensure that future affordable housing grants to developers are conditional on the affordable housing to be maintained as such for a minimum of 20 years.