

2ND UPDATE

March 2008



THE YORK REGION

# Community Plan to Address Homelessness

Prepared for York Region's Community Planning Group

The Regional Municipality of York, Community and Health Services Department  
In Partnership with Human Resources Development Canada and the Community Planning Group

Prepared by SHS Inc.

## Executive Summary

The Community Plan to Address Homelessness provides an update to the original Community Plan that was prepared for York Region in 2001 and first updated in 2003. The report was prepared for the purpose of updating the community's priorities in addressing homelessness and giving community service organizations a framework within which to work together to achieve common goals, as well as assisting the community to make the best possible use of scarce resources by reducing overlap and duplication. It was also prepared to develop a common vision for identifying fund matching for the new federal government initiative, Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), which replaces the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI).

The process for updating the Community Plan began with the development of a work plan to which homelessness agencies, the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness (Alliance), and other community members provided input. Next, a community planning working group was formed with members of the community. The Community Planning Group guided the development of the Plan and participated in working sessions to review the work plan, developed key objectives and principles of the Plan, reviewed and confirmed identified assets and areas for improvement, established priorities, target areas, and funding priorities, and reviewed and commented on the draft Update. In addition, stakeholders across York Region, including the Alliance, had opportunities to participate in identifying priority issues and activities to address the priorities and review the draft Update.

To determine what services and supports are available in the community, a survey of agencies serving the homeless and at-risk population was conducted. This information was used to identify where additional resources might be required.

One of the key elements of the Community Plan was to identify priority issues or areas of greatest need for homeless people in York Region. The priorities identified through the update process are shown in the table to the right. Proposed activities, targets and potential partners were then determined based on the identified priorities. These activities provide the framework for joint community action towards addressing homelessness in York Region.

| Community Plan Priorities                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Priority Area: Continuum of Housing and Supports |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #1                                               | There is a serious shortage in the affordable housing supply in York Region, including supportive housing.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| #2                                               | Poverty is one of the root causes of homelessness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| #3                                               | Supports and services for homeless individuals and families, and those who are at risk of becoming homeless, are limited, and don't meet the needs of York Region residents.                                                                                                               |
| #4                                               | Individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless have difficulty accessing health services.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| #5                                               | The services available to some homeless and at risk populations, as may be defined by their age, ethnicity, ability, and/or gender, in particular youth and women, are not sufficient to meet their needs.                                                                                 |
| #6                                               | Homeless youth, families, women, and individuals with mental illness or substance abuse issues have limited access to emergency shelters and transitional housing because shelters are operating at capacity or no appropriate shelters or transitional housing exists for the population. |
| #7                                               | Risk of homelessness is increased with mental health or substance abuse problems and the availability of services is not sufficient to meet the needs of this population group.                                                                                                            |
| Priority Area: Knowledge and Communication       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #1                                               | There is a need for improved knowledge, and increased utilization of knowledge, as well as public education, and advocacy on homelessness in York Region.                                                                                                                                  |
| Priority Area: Community Capacity                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #1                                               | There is a need for community development activities to further the community's ability to reduce homelessness.                                                                                                                                                                            |