


Growing Homes!

End Homelessness St. John's

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Welcome to Front Step: New program will help end homelessness in St. John's

Today, End Homelessness St. John's announced a new, community-based program offering personalized support services and housing for youth and adults who have experienced the longest and most frequent episodes of homelessness. The aim of the program is to help end chronic and episodic homelessness in St. John's by 2019, making ours the first community in Atlantic Canada to do so.

Named Front Step - which signifies arriving home, and a new beginning - the program is part of the 2014-2019 St. John's Community Plan to End Homelessness which will also provide a range of new supportive housing, prevention services, and greater coordination across the community. "Our plan responds to advice we received from homeless persons and stakeholders from all sectors, and is based on 'Housing First' principles", said End Homelessness St. John's Chair Shawn Skinner, "providing immediate access to housing and supports based on consumer choice and the belief that everyone deserves housing - and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery and stability."

The \$1.1 million first phase of the program now getting underway will be assessed for progress in 2017, and extended to 2019 based on lessons learned. Financial and in-kind contributions for the program are provided by the Government of Canada through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador through the Department of Advanced Education & Skills, Eastern Health, the City of St. John's, and the program's community-based delivery organizations Choices for Youth, Iris Kirby House and Stella's Circle.

"The program announced today is another example of the great work that can be achieved when all levels of government, agencies, and local community organizations work together," said The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Canada's Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. "Our collective contribution will help more homeless people find stable housing and improve their quality of life."

"I commend End Homelessness St. John's for leading this initiative, which has brought together a wide range of government and community stakeholders to address chronic homelessness," said the Honourable Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development and Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. "The issues around homelessness are very diverse and require a coordinated approach. I look forward to seeing this program make a difference to individuals and the community."

David Diamond, President and CEO of Eastern Health said, "As part of Eastern Health's vision of *Healthy People, Healthy Communities*, it is important for us to join with our community and government partners to address homelessness and to improve access to affordable and supported housing for individuals in need. To this end, Eastern Health is proud to partner with End Homelessness St. John's through Front Step by providing a case manager and two housing support workers. Eastern Health recognizes the value of partnership in responding to the health needs of the community and, as such, is pleased to support this program."

"Approximately 800 people experienced homelessness in our city this past year," said St. John's Mayor Dennis O'Keefe. "Housing is a fundamental requirement for well-being, and also a human right. When safe, affordable and suitable housing is combined with the right supports - delivered by a caring community - I know we can end homelessness in our City. The City Of St John's currently has an Affordable Housing Business Plan. To ensure its success we must create partnerships such as these. The City supports End Homelessness St. John's which is making a real difference in peoples' lives."

Fundamental to Front Step's design is its responsive, community-based delivery model, which brings together experienced local organizations Choices for Youth and Stella's Circle to lead the program with the support of End Homelessness St. John's and an Advisory Team of partners. In addition to the two lead organizations, Iris Kirby House also hosts program staff.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada's national study of Housing First, *At Home/Chez Soi*, estimates that about \$9,250¹ per person per year is saved when clients received housing and supports compared to those who did not. A study of homelessness responses in four Canadian cities shows that institutional responses to homelessness including prison and psychiatric hospitals can cost as much as \$66,000-\$120,000/person per year, compared to the cost of actually ending homelessness by providing housing with supports (\$13,000-\$18,000/person annually).²

"Not only does Housing First make sense from a human rights perspective, it has well documented economic benefits as well", said Stella's Circle CEO Lisa Browne. Across the US, Europe and Canada, communities have reported significant success using this approach.

End Homelessness St. John's is a 15-member community-led, 'collective impact' Board which brings together all sectors to implement a plan to prevent and end homelessness in our city. "To end homelessness by 2019, our Community Plan will develop the necessary housing and supports to assist over 460 individuals – 160 of whom will be chronically and episodically homeless", said End Homelessness St. John's Vice Chair Sheldon Pollett (Executive Director of Choices for Youth). "This requires the coordinated efforts and resources of government, non-profit and business sectors, as well as the research and faith communities. The total investment required for implementing the Plan is approximately \$9 million."

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Front Step media release & backgrounder are posted online at: <http://www.nlhcn.org/>

¹ This figure is from the Moncton, NB project site.

² Pomeroy, S. (2005) The Cost of Homelessness: Analysis of Alternate Responses in Four Canadian Cities. Ottawa, ON: National Secretariat on Homelessness.