

Progress Report

Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan



Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services

June 29, 2018

Background

In 2011, the Housing Services Act replaced the Social Housing Reform Act. The new legislation required Service Managers to develop a Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan through a community consultation process. The Plan was to reflect local needs and priorities. As support to this process the Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Housing Advisory Committee (PELAHAC) was formed as a subcommittee of Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services (PELASS) Committee to inform and advise PELASS Committee on matters related to affordable housing including housing models, funding, policies and local homelessness issues.

In 2012-13, PELASS as the delegated Service Manager together with PELAHAC drafted the ten year Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan, to be implemented for 2014 – 2024. As part of the legislative requirement annual updates have been provided to the Ministry of Housing (MOH) and the public on the progress of the Plan. A more comprehensive five-year review of the Plan will be undertaken in 2019.

The twenty-nine (29) strategies of the Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan are organized into three overarching strategies with the remaining strategies grouped into four broad themes. The themes are Affordable Housing Strategies, Political and Community Engagement, Emergency Shelters and Resources.

The following summarizes the progress reports of 2014, 2015 and 2016 and provides an update on the progress of 2017. Appendix A provides 2017 progress details for each strategy. Future planning is not specifically referenced, as this will be the primary focus in the more comprehensive five-year review early in 2019.

2014 Summary

The focus of the first year of the Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan was the implementation of the Housing First approach. Housing First is commonly used as an approach to support those with addictions and mental health issues to maintain their housing. At the local level, Housing First was intended to acknowledge that all citizens have the right to safe affordable housing. To support this Housing First approach all municipal councils in the two counties declared themselves Housing First communities.

2015 Summary

In 2015 PELASS included Housing First in the PELASS operational plan and internally this was achieved through a three-pronged approach focused on providing supports for those with housing issues to maintain their accommodation. Firstly, Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) funds were used to expand the PELASS Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance programs. Secondly, PELASS staff participated in various community

committees (i.e. Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG), Housing Action Lennox & Addington (HALA), Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington Youth Homelessness Steering Committee, Prince Edward Resource Group, Lennox & Addington Health and Social Services Coalition and Situation Tables in both Counties) to expand knowledge of the Housing First approach and to build collaborative community solutions for individuals facing housing instability. Thirdly, Community Homelessness and Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funds were employed to address the financial needs of those at risk of homelessness or those who were already homeless. The majority of these funds were used for utility and rental arrears, last month rent and emergency housing supports.

2016 Summary

In 2016, new housing first worker functions or positions were created in several community agencies to work specifically with clients who were precariously housed. Service providers continued to use Housing First concepts in working with clients. As well, a new build, consisting of four new affordable units located in a mixed-use residential area, was confirmed for Prince Edward County and will be built in 2018. The PELAHAC (which includes representation from AHWG and HALA) focused on recommendations allocating funds from the Investment in Affordable (IAH) stream as well as Social Infrastructure Funding (SIF). PELAHAC also informed the Long Term Plan update. Municipal councils provided leadership by including affordable housing as a strategic priority in both counties. PELASS continued to provide emergency housing through local motels as required. Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funds were fully utilized in 2016.

2017 Progress Update

Overarching Strategies

PELASS submitted a proposal to access Home for Good funds to provide supports to maintain stable housing and support a Housing First approach in both counties. The proposal was focused on providing transitional and supportive housing and eviction support. Neither County has transitional or supportive housing and while the numbers may not warrant a bricks and mortar shelter options need to be available to those in crisis.

PELASS was not successful in securing this funding however; some of the facets of the proposal have been explored and implemented as was possible within existing resources. Ontario Works caseworkers are including safe, affordable housing as one area of a holistic approach in working with clients. Updated housing listings and support to secure housing is also provided to those seeking information within the PELASS offices.

Service providers continued to use Housing First concepts in working with clients. The local Situation Tables both include a review of an individual's housing in determining needs.

PELASS continues to support the work of the Affordable Housing Working Group of Prince Edward County (AHWG) and Housing Action Lennox & Addington (HALA) in the County of Lennox & Addington. AHWG continues to monitor progress as related to the Strategic Action Plan for Affordable Housing in Prince Edward County (2010) although it is recognized that the information is now quite dated. Similarly, the Report on Housing and Homelessness in Lennox & Addington (2010) is the most recent community overview of housing and homelessness in the County of Lennox & Addington. Both of these reports are now eight years old and should be updated. PELASS will lead the community planning process as part of the five-year review to update the Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan. This process will support an updated strategy for affordable housing and housing supports within each county. At the same time, PELASS plans to review its own stock, enumeration data and waitlist data to determine next steps towards a more robust affordable housing system.

In 2018, PELASS has applied for new funds through the Innovation, Evidence and Capacity Building Fund. This proposal aims to leverage evidenced-based research and best practices information leading to the development of a scaled, affordable housing model for rural communities in Eastern Ontario. Should PELASS be successful a financial model will be developed to support a viable and sustainable housing solution for rural communities.

Also in 2018, PELASS is working with the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus to submit a proposal to CMHC under the Solutions Labs stream. This proposal seeks to identify essential amenities to support rural housing development and to collect evidence-based best practices about existing affordable housing models to inform adaptation to any rural community building on the IEC proposal. It is anticipated that if successful the outcomes of the Solutions Labs proposal could inform future proposal evaluations from rural communities.

Affordable Housing Strategies

In 2017, a funding agreement with a local developer was signed for four new affordable units. The new build will be located in Prince Edward County in a mixed use, mixed income residential area where both privately owned and rental units exist. It is expected that this will be completed in 2018.

A new request for proposal (RFP) process took place in 2017 for the County of Lennox & Addington for \$685,800 and in Prince Edward for \$97,200, which will be finalized in 2018.

As noted, PELASS submitted a proposal in 2017 to access Home for Good funds to provide supports to maintain stable housing. Eviction support is a necessary resource to ensure those with housing are able to maintain their housing. While the proposal was not approved partnerships have been furthered that will provide residents with supports to remain affordably housed. As noted, PELASS has also worked to implement parts of the proposed project within existing resources.

To that end, PELASS met with Senior's Outreach Services (SOS) and agreed to a process when senior tenants need support beyond staff expertise and capacity. Without resources seniors risk eviction when in fact, they are in need of supports and services. PELASS also created a project team to support landlord engagement and began the development of a tenant handbook for landlords. PELASS also has initiated a plan for ongoing tenant outreach with a view to fewer evictions and more positive tenant relations. Ultimately, these efforts work together to prevent eviction and to allow residents to remain affordably housed. PELASS also participates in the Situation Table of each county.

A rent supplement agreement was entered into with Napanee Seniors Non-Profit Housing Corporation for lower income tenants paying market rent. This resulted in improved financial viability for the Housing Corporation and provides rental support for five (5) low-income households.

The Ontario Renovates program was implemented at PELASS in mid-2017 with funds being fully utilized. Approved projects include replacing windows, furnaces and roofs. Ontario Renovates funding allows homeowners to remain affordably and safely housed in their own homes.

During 2017 affordable housing funding through the IAH was allocated towards secondary suite development, Habitat for Humanity builds, rent supplements, housing allowances and Ontario Renovates.

The framework for an ongoing Portable Housing Program was released after the provincial Portable Housing pilot concluded. PELASS did not participate in the pilot but will be participating in the ongoing program and will be implementing the program in 2018. The program is intended for victims of domestic violence and will provide funds to the household directly that can be used for accessing rental homes anywhere in the province.

In 2017 PELASS undertook initial steps towards a comprehensive study of PELASS and nonprofit stock to determine next steps in revitalizing and potentially regenerating housing stock to more effectively meet the needs of the community. Building condition assessments were completed and internal and community data reviewed in the context of the community need and the current stock. Enumeration data will also inform the process and PELASS will be engaging a consultant to provide recommendations for 'shovel ready' housing and more effective uses of current housing in 2018.

Political and Community Engagement Strategies

PELASS formally meet OPP in L&A and PE Counties on a regular basis to discuss healthy communities and to ensure a collaborative approach. Calls for service are routinely discussed and communication between staff and the police is frequent. As previously noted PELASS staff participate in Situation Tables in both counties and participate in action plans that come from Table discussions.

In 2017, PELASS collaborated with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and presented a Housing Forum - "Building Resilient Communities" that included developers, landlords, municipal, provincial and federal staff and real estate agents.

PELASS also established in 2017, an enumeration committee to prepare for the mandated provincial enumeration taking place in 2018. The committee identified appropriate partners in both counties, to collaborate with, in the delivery of the enumeration for PELASS.

Emergency Shelter Strategies

As noted, in 2017 PELASS applied to the Home for Good fund to address emergency shelter needs in the two counties. Neither Prince Edward County nor the County of Lennox & Addington have emergency shelters and yet there is a need for solutions for homeless individuals and households.

Since Home for Good funds were not allocated to PELASS, late in 2017 an emergency shelter pilot project was developed to allow for a temporary solution within existing resources. Four social housing units (2 in Prince Edward County and 2 in Lennox & Addington) were approved to be used as emergency shelter in order to address the lack of emergency and transitional housing. Units will be furnished with basic requirements and those in crisis can stay up to 21 days. The pilot project will be evaluated in the fall of 2018.

Discussions have taken place amongst eastern Ontario service managers about shared emergency shelter services. It remains preferable to provide services within local communities so that homeless individuals do not need to be relocated.

Resource Strategies

As mentioned, PELASS submitted a proposal to the Home for Good stream but was not successful. Follow up actions undertaken within existing resources include confirming housing when working with Ontario Works clients, working with community partners to build more effective referral processes and developing a means to provide more support for rent supplement landlords.

In 2017, PELASS held a Housing Forum that included developers, landlords, real estate agents and municipal, federal and provincial staff members. The Housing Forum provided an opportunity to hear from successful project leads in other communities and discuss as a community ideas that might work locally. As part of the Forum an education evening, which included consulting with, and listening to issues related specifically to landlords was also held in partnership with Housing Action Lennox & Addington. A landlord engagement group is being planned.

PELASS fully utilized Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding assisting households with last month rent payments, hydro, water and utility arrears and other shelter costs that impact a households ability to remain housed.

PELASS continues to explore additional funding opportunities and, as noted previously, will be submitting additional proposals in 2018. One proposal was submitted in April 2018 to the Innovation, Evidence and Capacity Building Fund.

The second proposal was submitted, in June 2018, in partnership with the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus to CMHC under the Solutions Labs stream through the National Housing Strategy.

NEXT STEPS

In 2018, the comprehensive review of the Long Term Housing and Homelessness Plan will be planned and the work will be undertaken through 2019. Specifically, the actual strategies will be reviewed and potentially re drafted. The first five years of the plan have shown the challenges with having 29 strategies especially when some are similar in nature. In addition, outcomes are not specific and difficult to evaluate. The intention for the five-year review is to ensure the community is consulted, strategies are reviewed, potentially re drafted, and outcomes are determined. As well potential outcomes will be determined as part of an evaluation process.

In 2018 PELASS anticipates confirmation of both the Solutions Labs funding in partnership with the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus and the Innovation, Evidence and Capacity Building Fund.