

Continuing commitment to end homelessness

Lanark County has joined the 20,000 Homes Campaign – making a further commitment to take action to end homelessness – and plans to be part of Reach Out Week and to host a community forum in November.

The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a national movement led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. It aims to bring communities together to permanently house 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2018. The alliance calls homelessness a "national emergency requiring urgent and immediate action."

"Lanark County implemented our 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2014, which declares ending homelessness as one of our priorities," said Emily Hollington, Lanark County Social Housing Caseworker. "The 20,000 Homes Campaign gives us a chance to see how other communities across Canada have tried to address this issue and to work together to eradicate it."

The campaign supports many objectives already identified in the county's 10-year plan, including lobbying for increased supportive and affordable housing, advocating for a National Housing Strategy, gathering data to understand housing needs and service gaps, coordinating with other services, collecting housing and homelessness statistics for public education, and developing materials to provide to provincial and federal governments in order to seek support to end homelessness.

"Lanark County is joining a growing movement of communities taking urgent and immediate action on homelessness," said Tim Richter, president and CEO of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. "Lanark County is also the first rural community in the country to join the campaign, breaking new ground and reminding Canadians that homelessness is not just a big city problem."

During "Reach Out Week" from Nov. 9 to 13, the county plans to engage organizations and community members interested in local housing and homelessness issue to canvass shelters, service providers, drop-in centres, hospitals, etc. to conduct short health and housing surveys with anyone experiencing homelessness who wishes to participate.

"Reach Out Week is a housing intervention," Mr. Richter explained. "It is designed get actionable person-specific information to begin the housing process. The top priority is action and creating a sense of urgency."

The survey questions will relate directly to people's housing stability and will highlight areas where there are high levels of risk to people in our community who are experiencing homelessness. The information will be compiled and brought back to the "Community Solutions to Homelessness" forum on Nov. 17, which is open to anyone interested in learning more about the campaign, the survey results and next steps.

"These activities will help us to understand Lanark County's situation so that we can plan and prioritize resources and educate the community," said Nancy Green, Social Services Director. "We

will use this information to assess whether we are providing the right types of services and supports, to help us improve and to highlight the importance of and need for additional affordable housing.”

The community forum will take place Nov. 17 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (registration from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.) at the Gallipeau Centre in Smiths Falls. The day features the Lanark County 20,000 Homes Campaign results; information about the county’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan; Mike Bulhuis from Ottawa Alliance to End Homelessness; Dr. Tim Aubry, Faculty Research Chair in Community Mental Health and Homelessness at Ottawa University; and an expert panel discussion. There is no cost, and lunch is provided. Space is limited.

Please register by Oct. 27 by emailing housingapplications@lanarkcounty.ca or by calling 1-888-952-6275 ext. 2402. For more information on the 20,000 Homes Campaign please visit www.20khomes.ca.

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