



Oxford County
Community Health Centre

October 18th, 2023

Oxford County Council
c/o Oxford County Administration Building
21 Reeve Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 7Y3

Dear Council Members;

RE: Fully Support Recommendation to Retain Consultant – Development of Strategy for Pathways Out of Homelessness

On behalf of the Oxford County Community Health Centre (OCCHC), kindly accept our letter of strong support for the Recommendation contained in Report No: HS 2023-14, September 2023, to *retain a consultant for the development of a Strategy for Pathways Out of Homelessness*.

The staff of the OCCHC have experienced notable increases in the complexity of individual circumstances across the County, frequently compounded by precarious housing situations. A pathway for housing options = a pathway for health outcomes. In this post-pandemic era, with lessons learned, the demands on the vital *intersection* between health care, social services, housing, justice, & youth & adult service systems, to name few, have never been greater.

An integrated strategy for Pathways for *Oxford County as a whole* is critical at this time, far beyond the current state of the 24/7 shelter model with a primary location in Woodstock.

Our Housing Stability program focus has shifted dramatically over the past 4 – 5 years, with primary effort now centred on *Eviction Prevention*, which requires considerable time, knowledge, and skill-sets, in partnership with Elgin Oxford Legal Clinic. Furthermore, over the last several years, we have partnered to offer Transitional Housing programs in Woodstock (Huron House) and Tillsonburg (Light House), with demonstrated success in terms of providing wraparound services for individuals – building life-skills, goals, and confidence in reaching next steps in housing. These pathways work. However, we have extremely limited options for individuals with higher acuity needs.

More broadly, the OCCHC participates in a vast number of Oxford Network Tables in order to build the capacity of our community. Discussions rarely take place without a focus on the higher-order need for a strategic housing framework on the part of, for example, Oxford Housing Action Collaborative; Oxford Mental Health & Addictions Action Coalition; Oxford Situation Table; Oxford Ontario Health Team (OHT); Oxford Human Services Justice Coordinating Committee; & Safe & Well Oxford.

In summary, the OCCHC fully supports the Recommendation to retain a Consultant with specialized knowledge, & a project team, to build a framework that provides choices in the housing system, including supports and multiple pathways.

Sincerely,

Randy Peltz
Executive Director, Oxford County Community Health Centre