



October 18, 2023

To the Oxford County Council,

On behalf of Social Planning Council Oxford, we are writing to provide our support for the motion outlined in Report HS 2023-17 regarding the hiring of an objective expert consultant to complete a Homelessness Response Strategy.

As an organization of committed volunteers and staff, we are working towards a community where every resident experiences well being and a sense of belonging and this includes the community's most vulnerable. In our role as a researcher, educator, partner and convenor, we facilitate collaborative action on community issues and are currently the co-chair of the Oxford Housing Action Collaborative. The framework proposed in the report, would build off of the work that has been completed to date on Understanding Homelessness, the Shelter Reflection completed in 2021 and align with the housing collaborative's priority areas.

As noted in the report, homelessness is a complex issue with no single solution. We agree that our community requires a comprehensive strategy that looks at prevention and pathways out of homelessness, including but not limited to supportive housing. We applaud your efforts related to the By Name List and Coordinated Access as steps forward to reducing homelessness and working towards the Strategic Plan Goal 1.1 of 100% Housed. In addition to these actions, our community has seen successful solutions such as the creation of transitional housing units for individuals that require short term life skills to be able to move into housing and the expansion of emergency shelter services to 24/7 access.

However, the solutions required must go beyond short-term emergency shelter spaces and include eviction prevention, supportive housing, advocacy for rent control and funds for additional affordable housing. The report outlines that through the Homelessness Response Strategy pathways out of homelessness will be identified which is imperative but also homelessness prevention will be included which is critical as the longer one experiences homelessness the more difficult it is for them to become stably housed. Immediate supports with a housing first lens for someone when they become homeless is necessary but also an adequate supply of safe, affordable and appropriate housing with supports to help people maintain their housing is a prerequisite to truly ending homelessness in the long term.

We are in support of evidence informed decision-making. Communities that have ended or reduced homelessness learned that solutions had to be driven by current data and trends. Use of the By Name List data to determine type of housing and support that is needed or particular supports for certain age groups was effective in coming up with community solutions. Having an evidence-informed strategy that is endorsed with a commitment to action the plan and framework is absolutely necessary to see change.

The Social Planning Council Oxford illuminates the realities of poverty and marginalization to shift understanding and inspire collaborative action for positive change



Social Planning Council Oxford

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Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue in our community. We are offering our expertise and support in providing data, convening or assistance in the project steering team. Please connect with me if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Ellens-Clark". The script is fluid and cursive.

Stephanie Ellens-Clark

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