



Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Value-for-Money Audit:
Homelessness



December 2021

Homelessness

1.0 Summary

Individuals or families experiencing homelessness can have living situations ranging from being at imminent risk of losing housing, couch surfing with friends or family, temporarily staying in shelters, to living on the streets.

Most of the work being done to tackle homelessness is city-specific and, as a result, there exists only a patchwork of data, making it difficult to systematically understand the state of homelessness in Ontario. The first and only province-wide count to collect data on people experiencing homelessness was conducted in 2018 by municipalities (defined in **Section 2.2.1**). This count identified more than 21,000 people experiencing homelessness in Ontario.

A report by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in 2019 noted that, on any given night, approximately 9,600 Ontarians experience “visible” homelessness such as living in shelters. Around 90,000 Ontarians experience this type of homelessness throughout the course of a year. Further, the report estimated that as many as 80% of Ontario’s homeless population experiences “hidden homelessness” such as couch surfing, sleeping in abandoned buildings or camping under bridges and in remote locations.

Using the latest available data on the number of people who are homeless from the 2018 enumeration and the latest population data for 2016 available

from Statistics Canada, we calculated that for every 10,000 people in Ontario, 16 people were homeless. Compared with other cities in North America, Ontario’s larger cities, such as Toronto and Ottawa, have comparatively lower rates of people experiencing homelessness than large cities in the United States. However, other jurisdictions such as Finland have found success in reducing homelessness through increasing its supply of affordable housing and adopting a Housing First approach in 2007, meaning people who are homeless are provided permanent housing and individually tailored support services. According to the Housing First Europe Hub, in recent years Finland has been the only country in the European Union with decreasing numbers of people who are homeless. Between 2008 and 2020, homelessness in Finland decreased 47% from 8,260 people to 4,341 people.

In 2014, the Ontario government announced in its Poverty Reduction Strategy, its commitment to end homelessness. In its 2016 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the province also announced a goal to end chronic homelessness in 10 years by 2025. Chronic homelessness is defined as spending more than 180 cumulative nights in a single year, in a shelter or a place not fit for human habitation. The government’s latest Poverty Reduction Strategy, released on December 16, 2020, does not contain a goal to end homelessness, and only indirectly addresses areas that may help to prevent and reduce

homelessness, such as connecting people to supports and services for issues acting as barriers to employment and references to other government initiatives that could be accessed by people who are homeless.

Over the past 10 years, the province has taken a fractured approach to preventing and reducing homelessness. Five ministries have put forward at least 14 strategies to address factors that are related to homelessness, such as poverty, mental health, addictions and violence against women. However, the province has not produced one co-ordinated, overall implementation plan directly aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness.

Over the last five years, annual funding for homelessness initiatives from all three levels of government has increased. However, as reported to the Ministry by municipalities and the federal government, the largest contributor is still the province. As of 2020/21, the province contributed 68% of all funding, followed by the municipalities (23%) and the federal government (9%).

Over the last five years, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) spent \$1.8 billion in total, or an average of \$356 million annually, on programs related to homelessness for operating purposes, including the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good program and the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program.

The delivery of housing and homelessness-related services is a local responsibility, primarily through municipalities. Additional services for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness are provided through two Indigenous Program Administrators.

The 47 municipalities and two Indigenous Program Administrators provide some services directly, but transfer the majority of provincial funding to third parties to provide services and supports to people who do not have homes or are at risk of losing their housing. We found, however, that the data collected by the Ministry was insufficient to monitor and assess the quality of services and supports delivered by municipalities, the Indigenous Program Administrators and the third parties they contract with.

People experiencing homelessness were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of September 2021, shelters had a cumulative incidence rate of just over 33% for all people residing at a homeless shelter. During the pandemic, regular shelter spaces were reduced in order to accommodate physical distancing. As well, public indoor locations such as drop-in centres, malls and libraries were closed at various times. Municipalities provided temporary shelter spaces in locations such as motels and hotels but some reported an increased number of people living outdoors, often because they were afraid of exposure to COVID-19. The municipalities' management of homeless encampments, which ranged from one or two people to dozens, varied and included dismantling encampments set up in public parks based on concerns for the health and safety of the occupants and for the communities where encampments were located.

Specifically, our audit found the following:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

- **Ontario does not have an overarching and co-ordinated provincial strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness.** The Ministry views its roles as investing in the protection of vulnerable Ontarians experiencing or at risk of homelessness, supporting housing needs for Ontarians, and contributing to the financial sustainability of municipalities in this respect. Over the last decade, the government of Ontario has released numerous strategies aimed at expanding access and supports for affordable and supportive housing, and addressing factors that may be the root causes for homelessness, such as domestic violence, mental illness and substance use. However, the province has not established an overarching and co-ordinated strategy directed specifically at addressing homelessness.
- **The province's lack of action to support people transitioning from correctional facilities, health-care facilities and the child welfare system is a contributing factor to the number of people who are homeless.** According to data

provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General, over the last three fiscal years ending 2020/21, an average of almost 3,900 individuals with no stable housing were released from custody each year. In the health-care system, over 5,000 people experiencing homelessness were discharged from hospital after receiving inpatient care in 2019/20. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services had limited information or data on how many teenagers are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness when they leave the child welfare system at age 18; however, the Ministry has determined there is a strong link between involvement with child welfare and homelessness. Various working groups and studies conducted in the last five years by the Ministry, in conjunction with other responsible ministries, have outlined the need to have co-ordinated processes to prevent homelessness for people transitioning out of provincial institutions such as corrections, health care and child welfare. However, no formalized plans, processes or procedures have been put in place. This has resulted in people leaving these facilities and systems with no stable housing to go to.

- **Lack of housing affordability is a roadblock to reducing homelessness.** According to Statistics Canada, housing is considered affordable when it does not exceed 30% of an individual's pre-tax income. Social assistance is the primary source of income for people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness and is offered through Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Social assistance generally does not cover the average market rent of a one-bedroom apartment in the province. According to data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the provincial average rental cost of a one-bedroom apartment in October 2020 was \$1,241 per month. That was \$72 more than the maximum Ontario Disability Support Program monthly payment for a single person and \$508 above the top monthly support payment

to an eligible Ontario Works recipient. As of December 2020, municipalities cumulatively reported there were 211,419 households waiting for social housing in Ontario, with average wait times ranging from two months to almost 12 years across the 47 municipalities.

- **The Ministry does not evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services provided with provincial funding to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.** To continue receiving provincial funding under the Ministry's three funding programs—Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good, and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program—municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators are required to provide the Ministry with an annual report containing service levels achieved during the year. We found that the data collected by the Ministry was insufficient to monitor and assess the quality of services and supports provided by individual municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators because all reporting is output based; the service levels are not tracked on a unique household basis, resulting in people being counted multiple times for the same service in the data; reporting service levels was inconsistent and fluctuated significantly from year-to-year; and targets or baseline levels of planned service for funds provided do not exist.
- **Since 2013, the Ministry's funding methodology for its largest homelessness program (the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative) has been primarily based on historical spending, rather than local need.** Since the inception of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative in 2013—which on average over the last five years ending 2020/21 has accounted for 84% of the Ministry's homelessness funding to municipalities for operating purposes—the Ministry has allocated at least 50% of this funding based on historical amounts. Moreover, the variables used in the funding model are out of date as they are primarily based on Statistics Canada data that is at least a decade old. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21 only

three of the 47 municipalities had their proportional share of funding changed by more than 1%.

- **In 2017 five municipalities were not selected by the Ministry to receive Home for Good funding despite having overall higher scores than others that did receive funding.** Despite submission of a business case by municipalities that was scored under a selection process, five municipalities—Kingston, Windsor, Wellington, County of Grey and London—were not selected by the Ministry to receive Home for Good funding for homelessness, despite having overall higher scores than others that did receive funding. Decisions by senior ministry officials for the final funding selections were not documented and they could not provide us with an explanation. This approach is not in accordance with the Transfer Payment Accountability Directive, which requires that funding decisions be documented.

Municipalities

- **The Ministry requires that all municipalities begin maintaining a list of people experiencing homelessness and their related needs (By-Name List) by the end of 2021, but this new list does not guarantee that the people most in need will receive housing first.** People added to the By-Name List by municipalities are not guaranteed any specific support, program or service. Based on our review of the processes at the four municipalities we met with, we found that their processes do not lend themselves to determining whether people most in need of housing placements are the first to receive them. For example, in Toronto, a person's level of need, such as the type, frequency, and intensity of supports required, is not a factor that is considered in comparison to others needing housing.
- **Municipalities do not have sufficient consolidated information confirming whether people who are homeless are provided needed supports and services.** At all municipalities we met with, the only information on whether an individual had been referred to and received needed supports is in case notes kept by shelter staff. However, municipalities we contacted could not provide us with system-level health and housing information about individuals, such as the nature of their mental health and addiction issues, or medical condition/physical disability, whether these individuals had received the appropriate services and supports to help them manage or overcome their challenges, or if they had been placed in permanent housing with support services to address their needs. Average wait times for residential mental health and addiction programs had increased by 52% from 67 days in 2018/19 to 102 days in 2020/21.
- **Some municipalities have not established standards for shelter operations and none are sufficiently performing inspections of shelters to ensure that where standards have been set, they are being met for the health and safety of residents.** The Ministry has not developed provincial shelter standards or service directives that must be adhered to by all municipalities and third-party shelter operators. It is important to have standards in place and to assess whether shelter operators are adhering to them to provide consistent service delivery across the shelter system and to confirm that services are of sufficient safety and quality to better the lives of people experiencing homelessness. Of the four municipalities we met with, only two (Ottawa and Toronto) had put in place shelter standards, and only one (Ottawa) had conducted regular inspections of all its emergency shelter sites, in accordance with a defined inspection schedule and process it had developed. However, over the three-year period, 2018 to 2020, reports were not provided to shelter operators until 99 to 471 days after the inspections took place.
- **Homeless encampments were prevalent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.** Some people who are homeless chose to live in encampments rather than emergency shelters. This impacted other members of the community who wanted to use the parks but were unable to due

to open drug use and trafficking, increased litter and general social disorder. Safety for the encampment occupants was also at risk. Toronto noted that in 2020, the fire department responded to 253 fires in encampments—a 250% increase over the same period in 2019. Although encampments contravene municipal law, municipalities told us they chose to clear encampments as a last resort, noting that encampments were only cleared once everyone had been offered safer inside space and notice had been provided.

This report contains 12 recommendations, with 30 action items, to address our audit findings.

All recommendations have been directed toward the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as it is responsible for oversight of program spending. We encourage all municipalities to read the report and apply the recommendations to their operations.

Overall Conclusion

Our audit concluded that the Ministry does not have an overarching strategy that effectively co-ordinates actions for the reduction of homelessness with other provincial ministries, municipalities, and other third-party service providers. The Ministry also does not collect sufficient province-wide information or perform required analysis to determine whether program goals have been met, and whether it has made any progress in preventing and reducing homelessness, particularly against its 2016 goal to eliminate chronic homelessness by 2025. When it did attempt to collect province-wide information on homelessness through an enumeration in 2018, the methodology used resulted in inconsistent data that limited its usefulness.

Further, the Ministry has not taken a lead in co-ordinating policy, guidance and implementation of programs to help people leaving provincial institutions, including correctional institutions, health-care facilities, and the child welfare system, to avoid entering homelessness, despite acknowledging that many people will be homeless when they leave these institutions.

The Ministry's method for allocating funding through its largest homelessness program, the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, is not based on population need, but rather follows historical funding levels and is also based on outdated Statistics Canada data. This has created unfairness in amounts provided to the 47 municipalities across the province. Further, where funding was intended to be provided based on business cases submitted by the municipalities in 2017 for the Home for Good program, there was no justification for why five municipalities (Kingston, Windsor, Wellington, County of Grey, and London) were not selected to receive funding since 2017 despite scoring higher on the established criteria than others that did receive funding.

The Ministry lacks information about whether funding is used by municipalities for its intended purposes, what programming is delivered, and how effective the programming has been in contributing to positive housing outcomes for people receiving services and supports.

Municipalities did not have processes in place to determine whether people most in need of housing placements are the first to receive them. In general, municipalities also did not have effective processes to monitor third-party service providers and did not have sufficient consolidated information confirming whether people who are homeless are provided needed supports and services. We also found that some municipalities did not have established standards for shelter operations and were not sufficiently performing inspections of shelters to ensure health and safety standards were being met.

Our audit also found that municipalities' and Indigenous Program Administrators' management of contracts with third parties did not always adhere to provincial practices as outlined in the Transfer Payment Accountability Directive, such as establishing and monitoring service targets for programs delivered by third parties.

OVERALL MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing thanks the Auditor General for this report and looks forward to working with other ministries and municipal partners to implement the audit recommendations and make further progress in preventing and reducing homelessness.

As the primary funder of homelessness programs in Ontario, the provincial government plays a central role in preventing and reducing homelessness across Ontario. The Ministry takes this role seriously, and is working closely with municipal partners and with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness to better understand the issues that contribute to homelessness and to better connect people with local housing and supports that respond to their needs. This includes:

- improving data collection through the 2021 point-in-time counts and By-Name Lists to better understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness and connect them to services and supports that address their needs; and
- working closely with partner ministries on a comprehensive multi-ministry review to identify improvements to Ontario's supportive housing systems.

We look forward to building on this work in partnership with service managers to strengthen local Housing and Homelessness Plans and continue to make further progress in addressing, preventing and reducing homelessness.

include mental illness and substance abuse; family breakdown and a history of abusive relationships; transitions out of institutionalized care; poverty and housing affordability problems; reduced availability of social assistance and social housing; and broader economic conditions.

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness describes in its 2016 report, *The State of Homelessness in Canada*, that homelessness became a bigger problem across Canada starting in the late 1980s as a result of divestment in affordable housing, a decline of permanent well-paying jobs, and reduced spending on social and health supports. Since then, homelessness across Canada has grown from a relatively small number of mostly single men to at least 235,000 people, representing a diverse population.

Homelessness impacts all of society, whether experienced personally or not, including effects such as increased cost to the government, an increased risk to public health, and an impact to public safety.

For instance, the cost of homelessness was examined in a 2014 national study conducted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada across five Canadian cities (Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton). The study found, for the highest needs people, providing housing and required support services to people who are homeless cost on average \$19,600 per person, per year. However, this cost was offset by an average reduction of \$42,500 in other services not utilized. The main cost offsets were psychiatric hospital stays, emergency room visits and general hospital stays, visits to community-based health providers, incarceration and police contact. Similarly, a 2020 cost analysis by the City of Toronto using pre-COVID-19 shelter costs, estimated that it could save \$60 million per year by providing permanent housing (supportive housing units and affordable rental units) to 3,000 individuals using emergency shelters.

People who are homeless are susceptible to communicable disease, as seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (discussed in **Section 4.4.2**). Sleeping on the streets in unsanitary conditions and exposed to the elements, or in congregate settings

2.0 Background

2.1 Overview

According to a research paper prepared by the Social Affairs Division of the federal government entitled *Risk Factors for Homelessness in 2012*, the paths to homelessness are complex, varied, and not easily categorized. Risk factors leading to homelessness

in close quarters, can compromise someone's physical health.

Public safety, both for people who are homeless and the rest of the community, is also impacted. Our research found that people who are homeless are more likely to be charged with crimes such as burglary, shoplifting and auto theft, and less likely to be arrested for violent offences. On the other hand, as noted by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, numerous studies show that people who are homeless experience violence and victimization, often in the form of physical and sexual assault.

2.1.1 Legislation

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* (Act) outlines the framework for housing and homelessness programs and services in Ontario. The Act states that “it is a matter of provincial interest that there be a system of housing and homelessness services” focused on achieving positive outcomes, addressing individuals’ housing needs, co-ordinated with other community circumstances, relevant to local needs, and supportive of economic prosperity.

The Act designates municipalities to be responsible for developing a plan to address housing and homelessness in their area, and may establish, administer and fund homelessness programs and services.

2.1.2 Categories of Homelessness

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) categorizes people experiencing homelessness into the following four main categories as outlined by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (see **Figure 1**):

- **At risk of homelessness:** people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.
- **Provisionally accommodated:** people whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure. This includes:
 - transitional housing—intermediate step between emergency and permanent housing;
 - short-term, temporary rental accommodations (for example, staying in motels, hostels and rooming houses);
 - institutional care (for example, penal/health institutions, residential treatment programs and group homes); and
 - living temporarily with others with no guarantee of continued residence or immediate prospect of housing (for example, couch surfing).
- **Emergency sheltered:** people staying in overnight homeless shelters as well as shelters for people impacted by family violence.
- **Unsheltered:** people who are absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation. For example, people living in public places such as sidewalks, parks, forests, or private places such as vacant buildings, and living in vehicles, attics or closets.

For a glossary of terms related to homelessness used by the Ministry, see **Appendix 1**.

As seen in **Figure 2**, housing circumstances range from being homeless to renting at market rates or owning their own home, with many forms of housing in-between. For some people, their housing situation may change considerably and frequently over their lifetime.

Figure 1: Categories of Homelessness

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

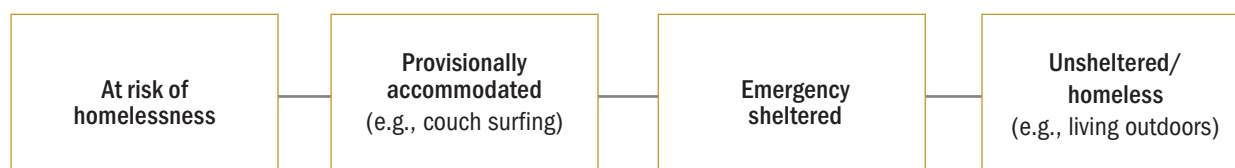
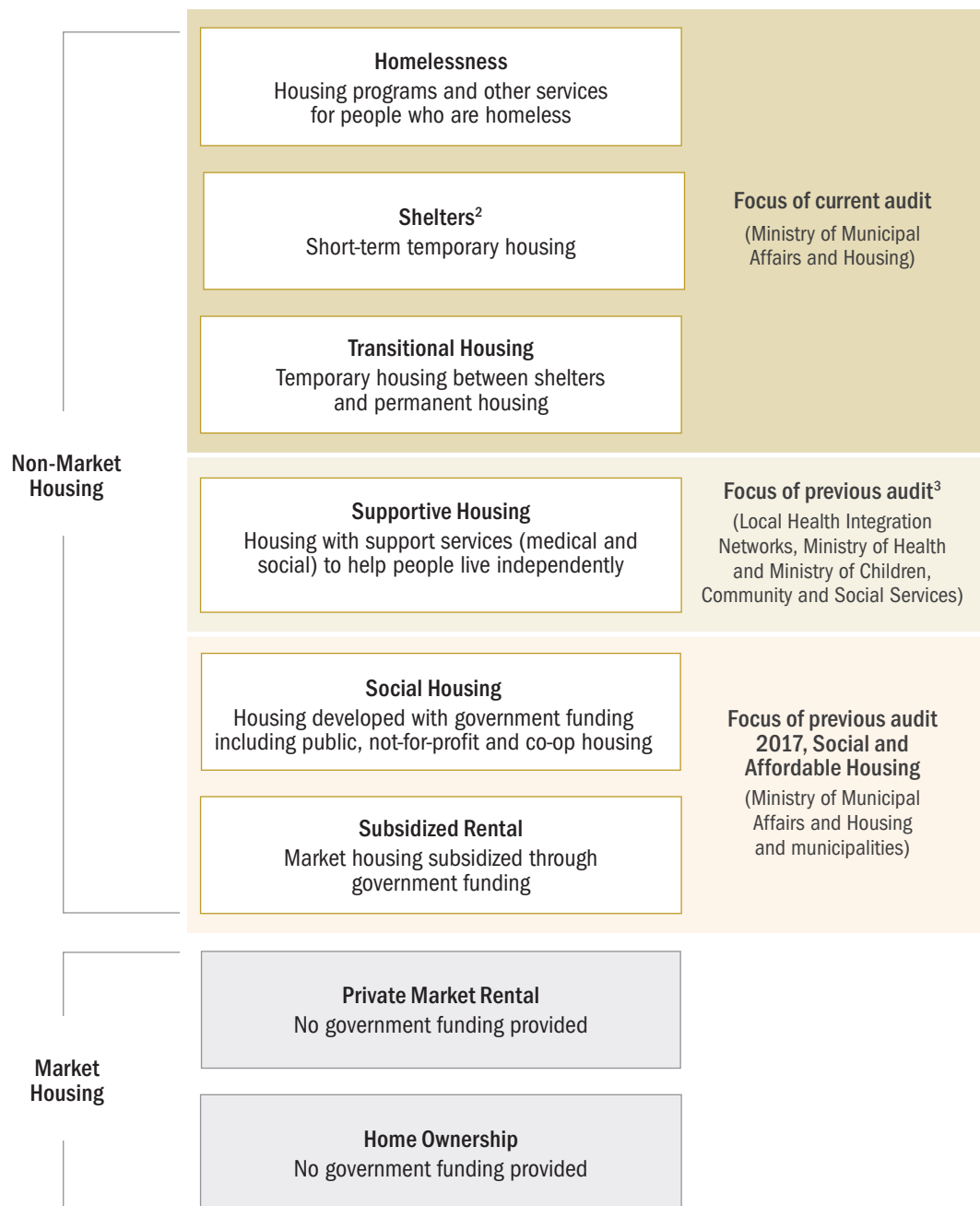


Figure 2: Ontario's Housing Continuum¹

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



1. Programs may overlap.

2. Emergency shelters to be referred to as shelters. Shelters provide temporary accommodation to people who are experiencing homelessness. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services directly funds shelters for women who are experiencing domestic abuse and who wish to leave a violent domestic situation for themselves and their children (this program was audited in 2013).

3. Significant supportive housing programs previously audited by our Office – Housing and Supportive Services for People with Mental Health Issues delivered by the Ministry of Health and the Local Health Integration Networks (2016), and Residential Services for People with Developmental Disabilities delivered by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (2014). Other aspects of supportive housing are part of this audit through the Home for Good and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, as well as the supportive housing component of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

2.1.3 Rates of Homelessness

In 2018, Ontario conducted its first and only systematic count of people experiencing homelessness to date. This enumeration, which counted people who were visibly homeless, that is, people staying in shelters and people living on the street, found that more than 21,000 people were experiencing homelessness across the province. As part of the count, people who were homeless were surveyed. Of the people who responded:

- 79% were living alone;
- 55% were chronically homeless (meaning they were homeless for at least six months);
- about 50% had addictions or mental health issues; and
- 35% were Indigenous.

A report by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in 2019 noted that, on any given night, approximately 9,600 Ontarians experience “visible” homelessness such as living in shelters. Around 90,000 Ontarians experience this type of homelessness throughout the course of a year. Further, the report estimated that as many as 80% of Ontario’s homeless population experiences “hidden homelessness” such as couch surfing, sleeping in abandoned buildings or camping under bridges and in remote locations.

Using the latest available data on the number of people who are homeless from the 2018 enumeration and the latest population data for 2016 available from Statistics Canada, we calculated that for every 10,000 people in Ontario, 16 people were homeless.

Compared with other cities in North America, Ontario’s larger cities, Toronto and Ottawa, have comparatively lower rates of people experiencing homelessness than large cities in the United States. The top five cities in the United States with the worst homeless problem had a homelessness rate of 60 to 103 per 10,000 people.

Finland is a jurisdiction Ontario could look to as an example of effective practices. Between 2008 and 2020, homelessness in Finland decreased 47% from

8,260 people to 4,341 people. According to the Housing First Europe Hub, which is an organization with more than 15 partner agencies across Europe that conduct research aimed at reducing homelessness and facilitating the Housing First approach to homelessness, in recent years Finland has been the only country in the European Union with decreasing numbers of people who are homeless. Finland adopted the Housing First approach in 2007, meaning people who are homeless are provided permanent housing and individually tailored support services. The Finnish government began by increasing the supply of affordable housing through means such as converting hostels into supportive housing units. The government partnered with social housing organizations to provide and develop affordable housing.

One of the key national developers of the Housing First principle in Finland is the Y-Foundation, which is Finland’s fourth-largest landlord and non-profit social housing provider. The apartments owned by the foundation are rented to community organizations and municipalities that then rent them to people who are most in need of housing. Homes are offered mainly to people with a homeless background, who have lost their credit rating or to people who have otherwise become displaced from the rental housing market.

Ontario also encouraged the use of a Housing First model, in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2014–2019 and committed to this approach in the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update, 2016.

2.2 Programs, Services and Supports

2.2.1 Delivery

The Housing Division of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) leads the provincial government’s efforts to develop policies and fund programs aimed to prevent, reduce and end homelessness.

The delivery of housing and homelessness-related services is a local responsibility, administered by 47 municipal service managers in collaboration with many front-line service delivery organizations. Municipal service managers include:

- Consolidated Municipal Service Managers – 37 service managers, which may be regional governments, counties or cities; and
- District Social Services Administration Boards – municipal boards established for 10 districts in Northern Ontario, comprising the various municipalities in each region.

Throughout this report, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards will be collectively referred to as “**municipalities.**”

Additionally, two **Indigenous Program Administrators** receive provincial funding to assist Indigenous people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to obtain and retain housing through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program (see **Section 2.3.1**). Indigenous Program Administrators are not-for-profit organizations that work with local Indigenous community agencies. The agencies, such as existing supportive housing providers, emergency shelters, street outreach, and drop-in centres, develop and implement programming to provide supportive housing and homelessness-related services. This would include identifying potential recipients and facilitating the referral, housing and ongoing supports processes that may be required.

The Miziwe Biik Development Corporation (MBDC) operates in the Greater Toronto Area (Durham, Halton, Peel, City of Toronto and York) and Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) operates throughout the rest of Ontario. MBDC and OAHS have been allocated 25% and 75%, respectively, of the funding set aside for Indigenous organizations.

Municipalities are responsible for monitoring and overseeing the specific programming and service providers they engage with to offer aid and shelter to people who are homeless. See **Appendix 2** for common pathways for people experiencing homelessness to access services and supports.

At the municipalities we met with, job descriptions of staff on the frontlines of service delivery including shelter staff, case managers, and outreach workers (who provide services to people living unsheltered)

all require post-secondary education in social work, social services or a related field.

2.2.2 Key Ministries Offering Services and Supports Used by People Who Are Homeless

People who are homeless or at risk of homelessness typically access programs and services offered by other ministries including the ministries of Children, Community and Social Services; Health; the Solicitor General; the Attorney General; and Indigenous Affairs. See **Figure 3** for the key ministries and programs accessed by people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

2.3 Funding

As of 2019/20, the province provided 63% of all funding toward homelessness and housing services, followed by the municipalities (28%) and the federal government (9%). **Figure 4** shows the annual contribution by each level of government for the four-year period ending 2019/20. **Appendix 3** shows the annual total provincial funding to each municipality and Indigenous Program Administrator for the five-year period ending 2020/21 and the average annual funding per capita over the same time period.

2.3.1 Funding of Key Programs

The Ministry provides municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators with funding allocated under two main programs:

Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)

Provincial funding to CHPI was \$338.7 million in 2020/21. CHPI is administered through transfer payment service agreements between the Ministry and each of the 47 municipalities across the province. Municipalities are given flexibility to fund a wide range of homelessness services based on local needs and priorities. Capital funding is not provided through CHPI.

Excluding funding provided for COVID-19 relief (see **Section 2.3.2**), CHPI is the Ministry's largest program, representing 84% of transfer payment funding in 2020/21 for operating purposes. For people experiencing homelessness, CHPI primarily funds temporary housing in the form of shelters, transitional housing, and supportive housing. It also funds street outreach, and supports such as meals, cleaning services and personal care assistance. For people at risk of homelessness, CHPI provides emergency financial assistance for rent and/or utility in arrears to prevent people from losing their housing.

CHPI came into effect in January 2013, following the consolidations of five provincial programs from two different ministries. The consolidated programs included the Rent Bank Program, which was managed

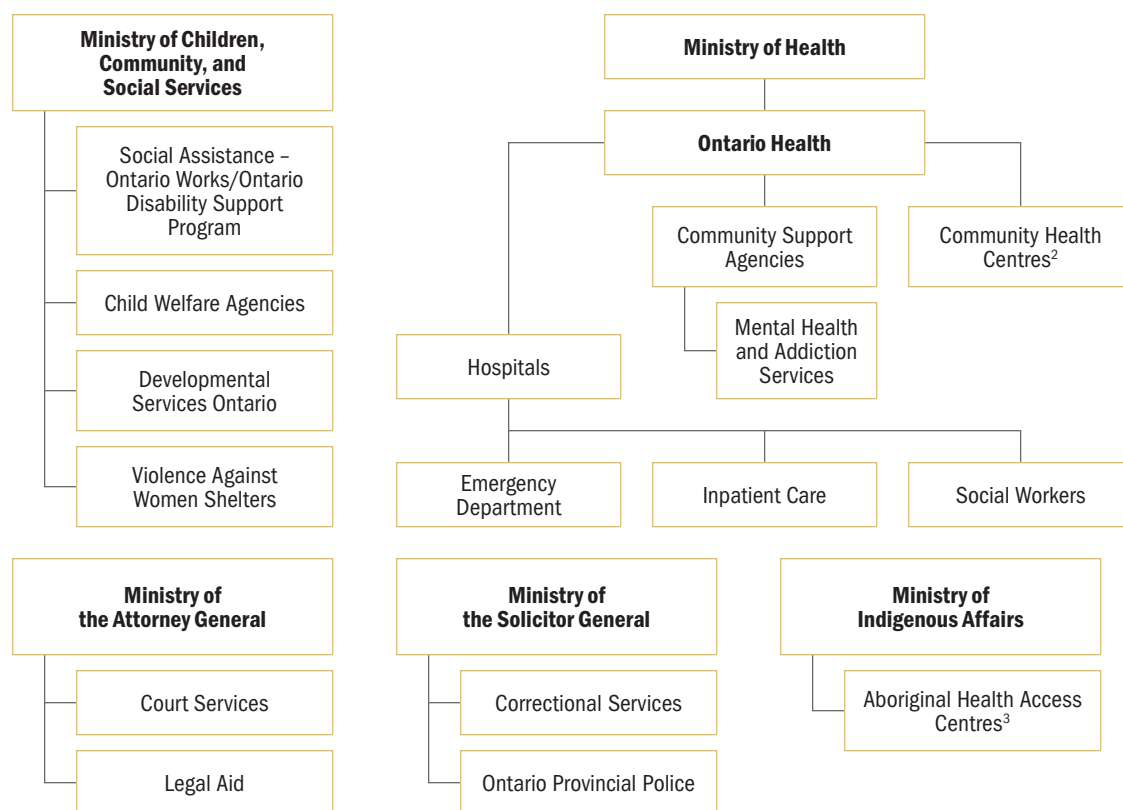
by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and provided emergency loans or grants to tenants facing eviction due to short-term rental arrears. The other four programs were managed by the then Ministry of Community and Social Services: the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, the Emergency Energy Fund, the Emergency Hostel Services, and the Domiciliary Hostel Program.

Supportive Housing Investments

Operating funding in 2020/21 was \$63.1 million and capital funding was \$8.2 million and is provided entirely by the province. This initiative was implemented in 2017/18 and consists of two programs: **Home for Good** and the **Indigenous Supportive Housing Program**. Both programs provide operating

Figure 3: Key Ministries and Programs Accessed by People Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Homelessness¹

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario



1. Excludes programs for people who are homeless offered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as these are shown in **Figure 2**.

2. Clients have access to physicians, nurses, counsellors, community workers and other professionals to offer a wide range of health services. The centres have a mandate to serve populations that have traditionally faced barriers in accessing health services, including people who are homeless, seniors, refugees, new immigrants and low-income individuals. The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario performed a value-for-money audit of Community Health Centres in 2017.

3. Clients have access to physicians, nurse practitioners, traditional healers, dietitians, social workers, as well as mental health and addiction support and diabetes support – all designed to meet the needs of Indigenous people.

Figure 4: Annual Homelessness Operating Funding by Level of Government, 2016/17—2019/20 (\$ million)¹

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as reported by municipalities

	Total Provincial Funding	Municipal Funding ²	Federal – Homelessness Funding ³	Total Funding
2016/17	294	110	42	446
2017/18	321	133	42	496
2018/19	377	169	50	596
2019/20	387	175	54	616
4-year Total	1,379	587	188	2,154
4-year Avg	345	147	47	539
4-year % Change	32	59	29	38

1. 2020/21 funding is not presented because incomplete information was provided for municipal contributions for 28 of 47 municipalities. 2020/21 provincial funding was \$402 million, and federal funding was \$54 million.

2. The amount reported by municipalities to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as their own local contributions.

3. The federal homelessness spending reflects only funding that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is aware of from information reported to it by the federal government through the Reaching Home program. The federal government provides funding to communities, which supports the National Housing Strategy. The goal of the federal government's National Housing Strategy is "to reduce homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027 to 2028."

and capital funding that are administered through transfer payment agreements between the Ministry and municipalities (Home for Good) and the two Indigenous Program Administrators (Indigenous Supportive Housing Program).

Operating funding provides financial support to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to obtain and retain housing. Funding may be used for housing supports (rent supplements and housing allowances), and support services, such as counselling and mental illness and addiction treatment.

Capital funding is used to increase the supply of supportive housing units, which can be either transitional or long-term in nature. Capital funding is provided either through upfront payments based on project milestones or over a 20-year period to support mortgage payments upon completion and occupancy of new supportive housing units.

Under the Home for Good Program, 21 municipalities receive funding under the operating portion, and 15 municipalities receive funding under the capital portion of the program. The Indigenous Program Administrators each receive funding through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program.

When the Home for Good program was introduced in 2017, the Ministry selected which municipalities to

provide operating and capital funding to based on a review of submissions prepared by the municipalities that expressed interest.

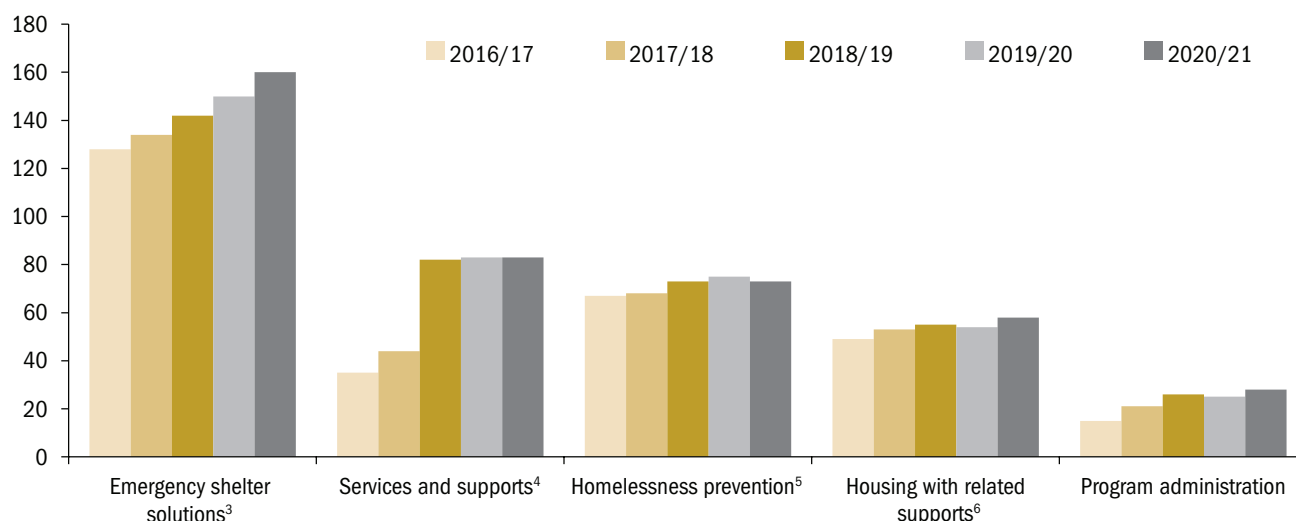
Figure 5 shows the use of program funding by service category provided through the CHPI and the operating component of the Supporting Housing Investments over the last five fiscal years. Categories are not distinct because some activities may be provided under more than one category.

2.3.2 Funding in Response to COVID-19

In March 2020, the province initiated the **Social Services Relief Fund** to assist vulnerable populations, including people experiencing homelessness and at risk of becoming homeless, during the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are homeless have been at an increased risk of contracting the virus. A study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal in January 2021 found that people in Ontario with a recent history of homelessness were over 20 times more likely than the general population to be admitted to hospital for COVID-19, over 10 times more likely to require intensive care for COVID-19, and over five times more likely to die within 21 days of their first positive test result.

Figure 5: Funding Spent by Municipalities for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good, and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, by Service Category, 2016/17–2020/21^{1,2} (\$ million)

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



1. The Social Services Relief Fund was excluded because it was one-time funding and therefore not reflective of normal trends in funding.
2. Capital funding, expensed through the Home for Good and Indigenous Supportive Housing Programs, which began in 2017/18 is not included. Capital spending was \$3.5 million in 2017/18, \$11.0 million in 2018/19, \$7.1 million in 2019/20, and \$8.2 million in 2020/21. Also, capital funding committed by the province in 2017/18 and 2018/19 through the form of 20-year affordability payments to help service mortgage payments once projects are completed was \$47.5 million and \$55.5 million respectively.
3. Includes temporary services such as a safe bed and necessary basic needs.
4. Various services and supports such as outreach services (obtaining identification, case management, food, clothing), mental health/illness and substance use supports related to recovery, and family support services.
5. Services that assist households at risk of homelessness to retain their housing (such as landlord mediation and payment of rental and/or utility arrears).
6. Housing solutions that include the provision of on-site or off-site support services. For example, housing allowances or supplements, assistance with daily living and life skills, medical needs and employment training or education supports for people receiving housing support.

For the 2020/21 fiscal year, the province provided one-time capital and operating funding of \$292 million to municipalities and the two Indigenous Program Administrators. An additional \$255 million in provincial funding was announced in March 2021, to be used to address impacts of COVID-19 from March 2021 through December 2021.

This funding was intended to help municipalities and other social service providers continue to deliver critical services, hire additional staff, and find ways to promote social distancing and self-isolation. Some areas in which funding could be used include minor alterations to shelters to increase capacity, use of motels or hotels, housing allowances, transportation costs, food and supplies, food banks, and enhanced cleaning services.

Funding could also be used for capital projects, such as major retrofits and upgrades to an existing emergency shelter, over-flow shelter, and/or congregate living space to help ensure shelter spaces adhere to public health directives (for example, additions to an existing facility to allow minimum spacing of beds, self-contained bedrooms and washrooms). Projects could also support independent units aligned with more permanent forms of housing where possible; purchase of a hotel, motel or other facility that would be converted/upgraded to provide longer-term housing solutions; and retrofit of existing transitional or supportive housing facility, and/or creating new innovative models of transitional and supportive housing.

See **Appendix 4** for further details about the CHPI, Home for Good, and the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program as well as the Social Services Relief Fund.

2.3.3 Oversight of Funded Programs

The Ministry requires municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators to submit reports on how the funding provided through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good program, Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, and Social Services Relief Fund, is spent. For all these programs, the total amount spent on administration, including staffing, in 2020/21 was \$40.8 million, representing 5% of program spending.

In addition, municipalities submit 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plans.

Municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators submit reports to the province through the Transfer Payments Ontario information and case management system (previously known as the Grants Ontario system). For the regular annual funding programs, municipalities are required to submit the following:

- a plan on how funding will be used;
- interim reports on actual spending, and a re-forecast of remaining spending; and
- a year-end report outlining actual spending and service levels achieved on Ministry-established performance indicators.

For the Social Services Relief Fund provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (see **Section 2.3.2**), municipalities are required to submit, quarterly, and year-end reports on funding outcomes.

Ministry staff review and approve all reports before funding for the next quarter is released. Ministry staff are to use pre-established checklists to confirm that the information provided is complete and reasonable. The checklists are signed off and approved in the Transfer Payment Ontario system. Ministry staff are also to follow up with municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators if

the information reported does not seem reasonable or is not provided in adequate detail.

Appendices 5a, b, c and d present service-level information for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative for the last five years, and for the Home for Good Program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program for the last three years, as these programs began in 2017/18. Information for the Social Services Relief Fund is provided for 2020/21, as this temporary program was initiated in 2020. As noted in **Section 4.7.3**, data reported for these programs was of limited usefulness in assessing the amount or quality of services and supports provided.

Beginning in April 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry also began conducting a bi-weekly shelter survey of all municipalities. Municipalities reported by facility on the number of beds available and clients, as well as COVID-19-related information, including the number of active cases among clients and staff, cumulative cases and number of deaths related to COVID-19.

2.4 Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy

As set out in the *Poverty Reduction Act, 2009*, the province is required to develop a five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy to inform and measure action in the province to reduce poverty. Since the Act took effect, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has released three five-year poverty reduction strategies.

In its *Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2014–2019*, the Ontario government announced its commitment to end homelessness. The *Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2020–2025*, which was released on December 16, 2020, no longer refers to ending homelessness. This latest strategy outlines a plan with an overall goal to increase the number of social assistance recipients who secure employment each year from 35,000 in 2019 to 60,000 by 2024. Initiatives under the strategy directly aimed at homelessness include undertaking a review of supportive housing programs to improve services, and creating a more

co-ordinated, integrated and digitally enabled system of supports and services that help people better address their needs, from housing to mental health.

2.5 Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness

In the *Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2014–2019*, which was released in September 2014, the Ontario government committed to end homelessness. An action item was included to “seek expert advice, including from those with lived experience of homelessness, to help define the problem, understand how to measure it and collect the data and to advise us as we set a target related to ending homelessness.” In response, the Ministry established an Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness in 2014 with the following mandate:

- give advice on how to define and measure homelessness;
- prioritize and set targets for ending homelessness; and
- build the evidence base and capacity to implement best practices around the province.

In 2015, the Expert Advisory Panel released its report *A Place to Call Home*, which contained 23 recommendations (discussed in **Section 4.1.2**).

As a result of the recommendations made by the expert panel, the province committed in its 2016 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy to end chronic homelessness within 10 years, that is, by the end of 2025.

3.0 Audit Objective and Scope

The objective of our audit was to assess whether the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry), municipal service managers (municipalities) and Indigenous Program Administrators have effective strategies, systems and processes in place to address the needs of people who are homeless and to prevent, reduce and measure homelessness by:

- effectively co-ordinating and overseeing the delivery of shelter and support services to people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness, in accordance with relevant legislation, regulations, plans, policies and best practices; and
- measuring and publicly reporting on the effectiveness of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good program, Indigenous Supportive Housing Program and Social Services Relief Fund in meeting their intended objectives.

Before starting our work, we identified the audit criteria we would use to address our audit objectives. These criteria were established based on a review of applicable legislation, policies and procedures, internal and external studies, and best practices. Senior management at the Ministry and municipalities we engaged with during the course of our audit reviewed and agreed with the suitability of our audit objectives and related criteria as listed in **Appendix 6**.

We conducted our audit from January to August 2021, and obtained written representation between November 22, 2021 and November 25, 2021 from the Ministry, and municipalities and the Indigenous Program Administrator that we engaged with, that they have provided us with all the information they were aware of that could significantly affect the findings or the conclusion of this report.

The audit focused on three funded programs and additional COVID-19 spending directly aimed at supporting the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless, and looked at strategies in place to prevent, reduce and measure homelessness. Specifically, initiatives and transfer payments funded under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative; Home for Good; Indigenous Supportive Housing Program; and additional funding provided by the Ministry for homelessness in response to COVID-19. We also reviewed provincial strategies in place to prevent, reduce and measure homelessness.

We conducted our work primarily at the Housing Division of the Ministry and four municipalities: City of Toronto, City of Ottawa, City of Greater Sudbury, and the District of Cochrane Social Services Administration Board. We selected these municipalities for reasons including they had the most people experiencing homelessness in absolute and relative terms, and/or they had a high number of COVID-19 cases in their shelters. These four municipalities accounted for 59% of Ontario's homeless population identified during the latest provincial enumeration in 2018 and 47% of total Ministry funding provided in 2020/21 for homeless initiatives. **Figure 6** shows for each municipality we contacted during this audit, the latest data on the number of people who were homeless, the amount of provincial funding provided under each program and the percentage of provincial funding contracted out by municipalities to third-party service providers. See **Appendix 7** for a listing of all funded municipalities and key information.

At each of the four municipalities, we reviewed information reported to the Ministry, internal data and records maintained at the municipalities, and held discussions with staff to gain a better understanding of how funding provided for the 2020/21 fiscal year was used and the types of services and supports these municipalities provided to people experiencing and at risk of homelessness using provincial money. We also contacted some service

providers to better understand the processes they used in the delivery of services, and visited shelters in one municipality.

We also reviewed how funding was spent by municipalities by examining listings of disbursements to third-party service providers and expenditures for homelessness services delivered directly at each municipality we met with. We also examined contract management processes in place between municipalities and their third-party service providers. Similarly, for one of the Indigenous Program Administrators (Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services) we also reviewed the contract management process with third-party providers for services provided under the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program.

We also obtained data and other information from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, the Ministry of the Solicitor General, and the Ontario Public Guardian and Trustee, and met with staff at these ministries to discuss services provided, data collected, and co-ordination of services for people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

We also conducted research of other jurisdictions (other Canadian provinces, England, Finland, Australia and New Zealand) to see whether they have processes or strategies in place that have proven successful in preventing and reducing homelessness, and the performance indicators used to measure results.

Figure 6: Operating Funding to Municipalities and Proportion Contracted to Third Parties

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and select municipalities

Municipality	Homeless Population 2018 ¹	2020/21 Funding for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (\$ million)	2020/21 Funding for Home for Good program (\$ million)	2020/21 Funding for Social Services Relief Fund (\$ million) ²	% of Funding Contracted with Third Parties for Service Delivery (%)
Toronto	8,598	117.6	24.5	189.4	44
Ottawa	1,654	38.6	4.7	32.4	76
Sudbury	1,714	3.1	0.5	2.7	82
Cochrane	605	1.3	0.4	1.5	91

1. Based on analysis of enumeration results conducted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

2. Includes phases 1 and 2 of funding only. The third and final phase of funding provided in March 2021 is not included as it was to be used from March 2021 to December 2021. The third and final phase of funding totalled \$119 million for the four municipalities listed above, and \$255 million for all municipalities combined.

We did not audit the use of funding by third-party service providers contracted by municipalities or Indigenous Program Administrators. Nor did we examine capital spending, as the focus of the audit was on operating funding.

We conducted our work and reported on the results of our examination in accordance with the applicable Canadian Standards on Assurance Engagements—Direct Engagements issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. This included obtaining a reasonable level of assurance.

The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario applies the Canadian Standard on Quality Control and, as a result, maintains a comprehensive quality-control system that includes documented policies and procedures with respect to compliance with rules of professional conduct, professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

We have complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the Code of Professional Conduct of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, which are founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour.

4.0 Detailed Audit Observations

4.1 Preventing and Reducing Homelessness

4.1.1 Province Lacks a Co-ordinated and Cohesive Action-Oriented Strategy on Homelessness with Achievable Goals and Targets

Since 2010, five different ministries have issued at least 14 strategies to address services and supports aimed at vulnerable groups. Some of the strategies could also benefit people experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. However, the province has not created an overarching provincial strategy

specifically aimed at preventing or reducing homelessness. Notably, the titles in the strategies over the past decade do not include the word “homeless” or “homelessness.”

The strategies aim to address some of the factors that can cause or prolong homelessness (see **Appendix 8**) as noted in the 2015 final report of the Ministry’s Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness referred to in **Section 2.5**. Many of these strategies did not have measurable indicators of performance and, as a result, their effectiveness in preventing or reducing homelessness cannot be assessed.

Alberta established a provincial strategy in 2008, with the goal of ending homelessness in that province by 2019. In its latest available Progress Report on Housing and Homelessness in 2014/15, Alberta reported that homelessness decreased by 15% in its seven major cities from 2008 to 2014. Alberta’s provincial strategy centred on five priority areas: collecting better information; aggressive assistance to ensure Albertans have the needed resources; co-ordinated systems for governments, agencies and communities to work together in an integrated way; more housing options; and effective policies that included shifting the work of agencies, communities and governments away from simply managing homelessness and toward ending homelessness through a Housing First philosophy. That is, to put the primary focus on helping people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness, quickly access safe, affordable and stable housing, and combine permanent housing with wrap-around support services.

RECOMMENDATION 1

To take a more co-ordinated and cohesive action-oriented approach to preventing and reducing homelessness in Ontario, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing take a lead role, in collaboration with other ministries that fund or directly provide services and supports to people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness, in developing a provincial strategy

with specific actions, targets, and timelines to collectively aim to address the issues that contribute to homelessness.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry accepts this recommendation and will continue to work with partner ministries across government and sector stakeholders to develop a strategy aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness. This work will build on local Housing and Homelessness Plans, leveraging the implementation of By Name Lists and the multi-ministry review of supportive housing.

4.1.2 Many Recommendations of Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness Not Implemented after Six Years

The Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness (see **Section 2.5**) released its report, *A Place to Call Home*, in 2015, which contained 23 recommendations. We noted that the recommendations' focus was on measuring and studying homelessness but not on taking direct action to provide immediate solutions. A summary of the Expert Panel's recommendations and our assessment of the status of implementation as of July 2021 is provided in **Appendix 9**.

At least five of the Expert Panel's recommendations require implementation by municipalities. We found that the Ministry has not taken steps to confirm that all of these recommendations were adequately addressed by all municipalities. Completing these recommendations would give the Ministry a better foundation for understanding homelessness across the province, what actions municipalities are taking, and how effective these actions have been. This understanding would help in developing an overall, co-ordinated, action-oriented provincial strategy for serving people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

RECOMMENDATION 2

To better measure homelessness, track progress to inform whether initiatives are reducing homelessness, and to continually identify best practices for implementation, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- update the work done in 2015 by the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness and implement all unfulfilled recommendations; and
- develop specific actions for service delivery to address identified root causes of homelessness.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry accepts this recommendation and is taking immediate steps to better measure homelessness and address its root causes informed by the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel on homelessness.

By-Name Lists, which are being implemented by all service managers by the end of 2021, will provide more current data to track progress in addressing homelessness within communities across the province. This information will further be supported by enumeration, which is required to be completed by December 15, 2021. Both the By-Name Lists and the enumeration will provide information about transitions into homelessness, helping to develop specific actions to address the root causes of homelessness.

Under the Multi-Ministry Supportive Housing Initiative, the Ministry is working to consolidate its homelessness programs to improve effectiveness, efficiency and outcomes for people. The Ministry will consult on additional targets and indicators to monitor service managers' progress in addressing homelessness. As well, additional provincial indicators will be implemented to track progress on preventing and ending homelessness as part of regular reporting under the consolidated approach.

The Ministry will engage with the ministries of Health; Children, Community and Social Services;

Solicitor General; and Attorney General in this ongoing work, as well as opportunities to reflect related actions like equity assessments, as well as indicators, targets and other priority items in service managers' 2024 Housing and Homelessness plans.

4.2 Transitioning from Provincial Institutions

4.2.1 Insufficient Discharge Planning Contributing to People Becoming Homeless

We found there are no formal discharge planning policies in place to require that plans for housing exist when people without stable housing leave correctional facilities, health-care facilities and the child welfare system. In reviewing available data to understand what information is collected that could aid in setting policies and implementing programs to assist people with housing when they leave provincial care, we noted that information was not always readily available.

Correctional Facilities

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is responsible for individuals awaiting trial and those who have been sentenced. It collects some details on whether inmates have a fixed address at the time of admission to a correctional facility. The limitation to the data available is that there is no provincial requirement that future residency be asked of inmates at time of release. Where it is collected, it is self-reported by the inmate and is unverified. According to data provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General, over the last three fiscal years ending 2020/21, on average almost 3,900 individuals with no stable housing were released from custody each year. The Ministry of the Solicitor General did not have evidence that these individuals participated in any discharge planning prior to their release.

Our 2019 audit of Adult Correctional Institutions found that discharge planning at correctional institutions was insufficient to increase inmates' chances of reintegrating positively into the community. The

Ministry of the Solicitor General did not require institutional staff to prepare a discharge plan for remanded inmates (those charged with a crime but not yet acquitted or convicted and sentenced) due to the short time in custody and uncertainties regarding their release date. Discharge planning was primarily focused on sentenced inmates. However, remanded inmates comprised the majority (71%) of the inmate population.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) has also identified the need for action to address the absence of a co-ordinated provincial discharge planning process in correctional institutions. In an August 2020 letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Solicitor General and the Attorney General, as well as the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the AMO noted that "the discharge process, along with the lack of availability of housing options and community and health services to support successful reintegration to society, continues to be problematic and challenging for both inmates and communities. It is a contributor to the ongoing cycle of chronic homelessness for these individuals. (Municipalities) are challenged to prevent homelessness among this population under these conditions."

Our 2019 audit recommended that superintendents in all correctional institutions require discharge planning staff to collect information about inmates' housing, transportation, employment and other needs in order to identify and actively assist inmates who need help planning for their release and proactively initiate discharge planning for remanded inmates.

At the time of our 2021 follow-up, we found that there still was no provincial discharge planning strategy or policy in place. However, the Ministry of the Solicitor General has drafted a provincial reintegration policy for all remanded and sentenced inmates in the province for implementation by March 31, 2022. This draft policy requires completion of a checklist for all inmates by an assigned discharge planner in order to identify and develop plans to address the needs of the inmate upon release. This includes accommodation, transportation and contact with other needed social services.

According to the Ministry of the Solicitor General's draft policy, specific to housing, the discharge planner is to explore housing options through community partnerships (for example, supportive housing residences) and incorporate housing support services into the reintegration plan. Prior to discharge, safe, affordable housing following the inmate's release should be explored where an inmate identifies no fixed address. Where possible, available bed space is to be confirmed if an inmate indicates they plan to reside at a shelter, or where available, a residence that provides rehabilitative programs or transitional resources.

Health-Care Facilities

We contacted the Ministry of Health to understand whether policies and processes exist to prevent people without stable housing leaving the health-care system from experiencing homelessness. The Ministry of Health told us that the expectation is that each hospital would have appropriate discharge policies in place but it is not aware to what extent this is taking place.

The Ministry of Health does not directly collect data from hospitals on patients who are exiting the hospital system; however, some information can be obtained through the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). CIHI is an independent, not-for-profit organization established by a joint agreement between the federal, provincial and territorial governments, that collects and provides information on Canada's health system and the health of Canadians. CIHI has numerous databases including the Discharge Abstract Database, which captures information on hospital discharges, and the National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, which contains data on people who received services on an outpatient basis at a hospital. Beginning in 2018/19, these databases both began to include a mandatory data field to record whether a patient is homeless. The Ministry of Health receives quarterly extracts of these two databases from CIHI. According to data collected by CIHI, in 2019/20:

- 61,761 outpatient services were provided to people who were homeless, of which 98% received those services in the emergency department; and

- 5,061 discharges from hospital of people who were homeless after receiving inpatient care occurred.

In 2018, the Ontario Hospital Association produced a general guide titled *Managing Transitions* to assist hospitals, Home and Community Care Support Services (previously Local Health Integration Networks) and others in understanding requirements under several pieces of Ontario's legislation related to transitions from one health-care setting to another, including community settings. However, the guide does not address the transition of homeless patients to housing.

We spoke with the Executive Director of the University Health Network (UHN) Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine in Toronto regarding the need for supports for people who are homeless being discharged from hospital without stable housing in place, and initiatives UHN has put in place to address this. We were informed that UHN has recently started the Social Medicine Initiative. As described to us, approaches include providing food delivery to patients discharged from the internal medicine ward, or linking lower-income patients with a financial coach to help them access financial support.

UHN also worked with the City of Toronto and community partners to implement "peer workers" at COVID-19-recovery hotel sites, and later at the emergency rooms of both of UHN's hospitals to support vulnerable people in crisis. A "peer worker" has no medical training, but has themselves experienced homelessness, addiction or mental health issues, which helps them to connect with patients. We were told the peer workers' ability to de-escalate patients in crisis allows nurses to take a trauma-informed approach to their work, while also creating a calmer atmosphere in the emergency rooms.

In August 2019, UHN in partnership with the City of Toronto and United Way signed a Memorandum of Understanding to co-ordinate patient access to services that take the specific needs of patients into consideration. The UHN has set aside a parcel of land in Parkdale, a Toronto neighbourhood, for an affordable housing project to ease overcrowding at its two acute care hospitals. The housing will be available

to people who do not need to be in the hospital but have no stable housing to go to. The first phase of the project is expected to have 51 modular units ready by 2022.

Another positive initiative was the Targeted Engagement and Diversion Program, which is operated by one of the emergency shelters in Ottawa in partnership with a local health association (Ottawa Inner City Health). Through this program, people experiencing homelessness who have health-care needs, including substance abuse, are brought by paramedics, police or outreach workers to special health-care units within local homeless shelters instead of emergency rooms. These special units are staffed by personal support workers and supported by visiting nurses and doctors. In 2020, the program assisted 755 people of which 266 had more than 10 admissions to the program during the year.

Child Welfare System

We found that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services had limited information on youth who age out of the care of a Children's Aid Society once they turn 18. It therefore does not know how many of these youth end up homeless or at imminent risk of being homeless.

In 2017, staff of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing travelled to Ottawa, Hamilton and Timmins to speak directly with youth who had experienced homelessness and to hear more about their interactions with services and programs designed for people who are homeless. One of the key themes noted by participants was the link between involvement in the child welfare system and homelessness. They noted lack of supports during the "aging out of care" process, including supporting educational and employment skills development, resulted in difficulty maintaining stable employment and housing.

Children's Aid Societies are required by the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* to complete a plan of care for each child under its supervision. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services requires that Children's Aid Societies use

a developmental assessment tool, called an Action and Assessment Record, to assess the needs of a child or youth. This includes consideration of the youth's readiness to transition from care. Although the assessment collects much information about the child or youth in care, (for example, the child's or youth's, health, education, family and social relationships, emotional and behavioural development, and self-care skills), it does not include planning for where the young adult will be housed once they leave the child welfare system at age 18.

Similar to the Action and Assessment Record, the plan of care does not provide for establishing the housing or accommodation a young person will obtain upon aging out of the child welfare system at age 18. Overall, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has no directive in place to require that Children's Aid Societies have certain items in place, including a plan for appropriate housing before youth leave the system.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services also funds the Youth in Transition Worker program and the Housing Support Worker program, available to youth leaving the child welfare system that is supposed to help youth navigate access to services and supports, including housing. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services had no current data on the number of youths who obtained housing through this program or were assisted in obtaining housing.

Our 2015 audit of Child Protection Services – Children's Aid Societies, noted that young people in the care of Children's Aid Societies face significant challenges transitioning to independent living. For this audit, we discussed with the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services whether these issues were still prevalent and whether there were any policies or direction for Children's Aid Societies to prevent young people leaving their care from entering homelessness. The Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services confirmed to us that a policy has not been established, and there has been no specific co-ordination with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure housing or

shelter is provided to these young adults at the time they transition.

4.2.2 Ministry Has Taken Little Action to Address Need for Inter-ministry Co-ordination in Transitioning to Prevent Homelessness

In December 2015, the provincial government established the Improving Transition Planning and Services to Reduce Homelessness Working Group. The purpose of this cross-ministry working group was to identify practices needed to reduce and prevent homelessness following transitions from provincial service systems such as child welfare, youth justice, corrections and health. The group was led by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Office. The working group consulted with people who experienced homelessness and front-line service providers to identify the problems that can prevent successful transitions from provincial institutions. A few key problems identified included:

- None of the institutions from which people transition see homelessness as their responsibility—at least not in the sense of helping people acquire stable, permanent housing.
- It is very challenging finding housing for people with severe mental health issues and addictions when they transition from systems.
- Indigenous people who are charged with or convicted of an offence are likely to be displaced if they live in small communities because correctional facilities are usually located in urban centres.

As a result of the consultations, in March 2017, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services made eight recommendations under four priority areas – (i) improving transition planning processes; (ii) removing barriers to successful transitions; (iii) strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships; and (iv) fostering a culture of shared responsibility. Under each recommendation, it identified actions to be taken in each system. Of the 32 actions in total, 11

were expected to be completed in the short-term, 14 in the medium-term and seven in the long-term.

The recommendations informed the next steps identified for the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy in a review of the strategy conducted in spring 2017. However, the recommendations were not formalized or put into action, and no follow-up has taken place. One such recommendation was to develop a strategy to support the level of change that is required to advance the provincial goal of reducing homelessness following transitions. However, there has been no reporting on progress on the development of this strategy. The working group stopped meeting in the spring of 2017.

4.2.3 Ministry Not Collecting Data, Providing Guidance on Discharge Planning for People with No Stable Housing

We found that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) has taken little action to develop or implement an approach to systematically count and measure how many people experiencing homelessness are transitioning from Ontario's systems such as hospitals, including mental health facilities, correctional facilities and the child welfare system. Various ministries that oversee those service systems are responsible for discharge planning and any data collected about people who are discharged from provincial institutions without a permanent address. As we noted in **Sections 4.2.1** and **4.2.2**, they are not collecting the information. Without this information, the Ministry cannot have a full understanding of the extent of homelessness that could be prevented through appropriate discharge strategies in provincially funded institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 3

To reduce and prevent homelessness following transitions from provincial institutions and service systems such as corrections, health, and child welfare, we recommend that the Ministry

of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:

- identify necessary data about people in provincial institutions who will not have stable housing available upon their transition, to use in assessing the extent of the homelessness issue and inform future policy decisions;
- where the data is not being collected, work with the relevant ministry to collect the data;
- establish processes to have accommodation in an appropriate setting immediately available for people transitioning from provincial institutions and service systems; and
- where effective practices are observed (for example, the initiative undertaken by the University Health Network and the Targeted Engagement and Diversion program) share and apply lessons learned with other municipalities.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry accepts this recommendation and will continue to implement all the actions recommended.

Supportive housing is widely considered a key element in addressing homelessness. The ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Children, Community and Social Services; and Health have been working closely together on a comprehensive multi-ministry review to identify improvements to Ontario's supportive housing systems.

As part of this work, we have been engaging across a wide variety of sectors and ministries to support better transitions for people as they leave other systems and settings – like hospitals, corrections, and child welfare. Through this multi-ministry approach we will continue to work on connecting people to the most appropriate housing options during these critical transition

periods – including collecting the data needed to support better transition planning across systems.

4.3 Housing and Supports

4.3.1 Housing Linked to Poverty Reduction Strategy

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association and other research, housing is a social determinant of health. People who are chronically homeless face substantially higher rates of illness in terms of both physical and mental health and shorter lifespans.

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2020–2025*, reports on two housing-related indicators:

- The number of households assisted across community housing programs, as a proportion of all Ontario households below the low-income measure threshold. The baseline status of this indicator as of 2018/19 was 23.5%.
- The percentage of households living in housing that is inadequate, unaffordable or unsuitable, and who would need to spend 30% or more of total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable. The baseline in 2016 (most recent available data) was: total households, 15.3%; Indigenous persons off reserve, 18.8%.

The Ministry has not established targets for these housing indicators, only baseline levels.

We reviewed whether other Canadian provinces had established housing-related indicators for reporting progress toward reducing homelessness. We found that British Columbia had recently established the following measure in its BC Housing Service Plan—the percentage of homeless individuals accessing housing who remain housed six months after placement. It has set a 2020/21 baseline of 80%, and targets of 83%, 85% and 87% for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, respectively.

According to Statistics Canada, housing is considered affordable when it does not exceed 30% of an individual's pre-tax income. Social assistance, which is offered through Ontario Works and the Ontario

Disability Support Program, is the primary source of income for people who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

A single person eligible for Ontario Works can receive up to \$733 a month for basic needs and shelter. A single person living with a disability can receive in total up to \$1,169 per month (\$672 for basic needs and \$497 for shelter).

Social assistance generally does not cover the average market rent of a one-bedroom apartment in the province. According to data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the provincial average rental cost of a one-bedroom apartment in October 2020 was \$1,241 per month. That was \$72 more than the maximum Ontario Disability Support Program monthly payment for a single person and \$508 above the top monthly support payment to eligible Ontario Works recipients. Basic necessities such as food would be additional costs.

According to data maintained by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, for three municipalities we examined and for which data was available, average monthly rental costs for a one-bedroom apartment in October 2020 ranged from \$921 to \$1,421. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation tracks only the cost of primary rental units, which are apartment buildings. The secondary rental market, which is not included, covers rental condominiums and other dwellings not originally built for the rental market.

As of December 2020, which is the Ministry's latest available data, municipalities across Ontario reported there were 211,419 households waiting for social housing in Ontario (individual households can be on waiting lists of multiple municipalities), with average wait times ranging from two months to almost 12 years across the 47 municipalities. As of September 2021, the average length of time households were waiting for housing, at the four municipalities we visited, ranged from 1.7 years in Sudbury to 5.9 years in Ottawa and Toronto. At these four municipalities combined, the number of households waiting for social housing totalled approximately 92,600, ranging from 778 in Sudbury to 78,750 in Toronto.

4.3.2 People Most in Need Not Necessarily First for Housing Placement

In an effort to help connect people who are homeless to available housing that best meets their needs, the Ministry has required all municipalities to establish and begin maintaining a By-Name List by the end of 2021. This is a real-time, up-to-date list of the names and related needs of people experiencing homelessness who require assistance from the municipality to access housing services and supports.

Each municipality uses a common assessment tool, such as the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) to evaluate the level of support needed by individuals or households. This tool was used by three of the four municipalities we engaged with. Toronto had developed its own tool.

Municipalities noted that the By-Name List is not a wait list, which would serve people as their name comes up next. Instead, it is a comprehensive list of people experiencing homelessness from which municipalities can prioritize and match people to case management services or appropriate housing when vacancies arise.

People added to the By-Name List by the municipalities are not guaranteed any specific support, program or service. Based on our review of the list and processes at the four municipalities we met with, we found that processes used do not lend themselves to determining whether people most in need of housing placements, are the first to receive them.

We noted barriers and limitations to the prioritization processes in place at each of the municipalities we contacted.

In the municipality of Toronto, we found that the person's level of need (such as the type, frequency, and intensity of supports required) is not a factor that is considered in comparison to others needing housing. At the time of our audit, the assessment tool used did not assign a score to denote the intensity of supports required by the individual and to allow people on the list to be prioritized. Rather, a person's level of needed support was indicated as low, medium

or high. Toronto's policy is to allocate housing opportunities equally among the four priority populations it has identified: people experiencing chronic homelessness; youth (24 and under); Indigenous people; and chronically homeless seniors (55 or over). In addition, the municipality attempts to allocate one in every three units to people sleeping outdoors, even though these individuals are not maintained on the list. This municipality had no standard method to accomplish meeting the equal distribution.

Toronto has developed a new common needs assessment tool for use with shelter occupants, which it has piloted at select shelter sites, but has not yet fully implemented. City staff and shelter case workers are to use the tool to categorize a person's level of need in several areas—such as history of homelessness, physical and mental health, and substance abuse—to identify need ranging from no support needed to onsite 24/7 support required and assigns a level of support of high, moderate or low. The municipality told us the assessment would be used primarily to match people to housing, based on type and intensity of support required and the type and intensity of supports available. Toronto plans to integrate the tool into its shelter management information system in early 2022. However, Toronto had not finalized how the tool would be used for prioritization.

Individuals on the By-Name List in Ottawa were prioritized and matched to specialized housing case managers, as opposed to being placed directly into housing. These case managers provide individualized supports to assist people who are homeless to obtain stable, safe long-term housing. The case managers also refer individuals to other resources that support housing retention, such as peer support, education, employment, mental health, substance abuse and recreation. They support people up to two years, to provide support in gaining knowledge, tools and skills to live independently. This municipality used a common assessment tool to ascertain a person's level of need, and provide an acuity score.

We analyzed the most recently available By-Name List (as of June 2021), including everyone who had been housed since April 2015, when Ottawa began

using the list to prioritize and match people. We found that it was not always clear why it offered some adult individuals housing before others who had been on the By-Name List longer and who had higher acuity scores. For example, we noted some adult individuals who had been in the city's homelessness system for five to over 10 years, and who had a high acuity, had not been housed. But individuals who had been added to the list more recently (one to three years) and who had a lower acuity, had been housed. People could have been in the city's homelessness system prior to 2015 when the prioritization list began. At least 40 individuals who had been placed on the list by the municipality since 2012 or before (going back to 2002) and who had a high acuity, had not been housed. However, at least 40 individuals who had a moderate to low acuity and who had been put on the list after 2012 (some as recently as 2020), had been housed.

The third municipality, Sudbury, only began to match and prioritize people from a By-Name List through a central standardized process managed and co-ordinated by the municipality, in June 2021. At the time of our audit, Sudbury had matched one person from the list to a housing opportunity. Prior to establishing the By-Name List, individuals were selected and connected to housing opportunities individually by third-party agencies who administer programs for people who are homeless. Individuals must have experienced chronic homelessness to be eligible. These individuals were prioritized using a common screening assessment tool based on the highest needs.

The fourth municipality, Cochrane, had not yet developed a By-Name List, or a policy for how it would prioritize and match individuals to available housing opportunities. It told us a By-Name List was being developed, and was expected to be in place and operational by December 2021.

RECOMMENDATION 4

To provide placement for people most in need of housing supports, we recommend the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- require that municipalities have a consistent, fair, effective and documented process in place to prioritize people in need of housing and accompanying supports, based on assessed need; and
- confirm that municipalities are following their documented process and people are being housed according to level of assessed need.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry accepts this recommendation. By-Name Lists can be used to support better connections between people and the services they need. The service manager guidelines on By-Name List implementation encourages service managers to develop criteria and procedures for making decisions about who should be prioritized for housing and services first. The Ministry will continue working with service managers to put in place appropriate procedures to prioritize people in need of housing supports based on assessed needs, and ensure they are being followed.

In addition, the Ministry is actively examining how to improve the way households access various forms of housing assistance and how they can be better connected with the supports they need.

4.3.3 Municipalities Do Not Have Sufficient Information to Validate That People Who Are Homeless Are Provided with Needed Supports and Services

People experiencing homelessness face numerous barriers to becoming housed. Mental health and substance abuse challenges, in particular, have been cited as significant barriers to housing. Making sure these people have access to the proper mental health and addiction services is key to helping them obtain and keep housing for the long-term. People experiencing homelessness also often need a range of other supports and services such as employment training and job search, education, life skills development, and

legal and immigration services to help them stabilize their lives and find and remain in permanent housing.

According to a survey conducted alongside of the province-wide homelessness enumeration in 2018, 51% (5,359) of all respondents reported having mental health issues and 47% (5,005) said they had addictions. Twenty-eight percent (3,139) reported having both mental health and addictions issues. Note that an individual could be included in more than one of the categories.

At all municipalities we met with, the only way to determine whether an individual had been referred to and received needed supports was in the individual's case notes kept by shelter staff. This information was stored electronically or in paper files at the shelter by the case worker who was assigned to the individual. However, municipalities we contacted could not provide us with system-level health and housing information about individuals, such as the nature of their mental health and addiction issues, or medical condition/physical disability, whether these individuals had received the appropriate services and supports to help them manage or overcome their challenges, or if they had been placed in permanent housing with support services to address their needs.

Three of the four municipalities we met with, Toronto, Ottawa and Cochrane, require shelter staff to complete an assessment that gathers information on a person's housing, health, mental health addictions, social/life skills, and employment and financial needs. Sudbury told us that although a formal assessment is not required, shelter staff discuss needed supports and services with the individual and offer to perform an assessment if the person would like one, but it is not a standard practice. Based on the assessment, shelter staff make appropriate referrals to either on-site supports, where available, or community-based supports and services for the individual, and follow up on these referrals. We were told that referrals made and follow-up done are documented by the case worker in their case notes. However, this information was not tracked in a consistent and standardized way to enable municipalities to draw system-level information.

None of the four municipalities we met with collected or maintained wait-list information for mental health and addictions support services. We obtained average wait times for residential mental health or addiction treatment programs from Connex Ontario, an organization funded by the Ministry of Health to provide information on publicly funded addictions and mental health resources available to Ontarians. Average wait times province-wide had increased by 52%, from 67 days in 2018/19 to 102 days in 2020/21.

At the time of our audit, the Ministry was reviewing homelessness programming funded through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and the Home for Good program. In December 2020, the Ministry held focus groups with municipalities to identify and understand the local needs of the homeless population and service gaps. Supports for high-need individuals, co-ordination with other sectors, and the increasing incidents of homelessness were cited as gaps in most municipal areas. Ministry documentation on information gathered during the focus group noted that municipalities said that many areas did not have the ability to provide mental health and addictions supports. Municipalities also noted that without support for these issues, high-need individuals would be more likely to become homeless again. Several municipalities described a pattern where individuals were provided with housing but who became homeless again in a short period of time due to the absence of mental health and addictions supports.

RECOMMENDATION 5

In order to better inform policy and decision-making with respect to funding and the level and type of services needed, and to provide timely and cost-effective services, we recommend the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing require municipalities, in combination with shelters operated with the use of provincial funding to:

- track the types of supports required for people staying in shelters in a way that will allow for systemic analysis;
- record whether people referred for services attended the referral; and
- track the length of time it takes for an individual referred for support to receive those supports.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry accepts this recommendation and recognizes the importance of connecting vulnerable individuals with the supports they need. The Ministry will engage with service manager partners and with the provincial Information and Privacy Commissioner on next steps to better track information about the services that people on the By-Name List need and use.

These next steps will build on progress to date in the implementation of By-Name Lists. The province requires service managers to update information on their By-Name List every three months for priority groups to help match people with the right services and supports, as they become available. Regularly updated information can help service managers understand changes in needs, how people move in and out of homelessness over time, and other key indicators.

4.4 Impact of COVID-19 to People Experiencing Homelessness

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the risks for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. A research study published in June 2020 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal noted that people who are homeless have a high prevalence of chronic health conditions that increase the risk of poor outcomes if they develop COVID-19. In addition, homeless shelters were identified as being particularly susceptible to the spread of COVID-19 because of shared living spaces, crowding, difficulty achieving physical distancing and high population turnover.

In December 2020, a report commissioned by Employment and Social Development Canada, a department of the government of Canada responsible for social programs and the labour market at the federal level, reported that many services used by people who are homeless (for example, drop-in centres) had been closed, as had many public spaces with access to washroom facilities such as libraries. The pandemic also created additional costs and operational pressures for shelters, including costs related to cleaning, personal protective equipment and increased staffing.

4.4.1 Regular Shelter Spaces Cut during Pandemic while Temporary Spaces Rose 192%

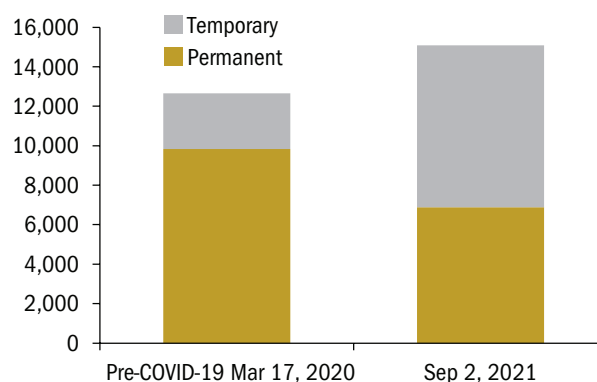
From the start of the pandemic (on March 17, 2020 when emergency measures were first announced in Ontario) until September 2, 2021, total shelter spaces increased by 19% or about 2,400 spaces. As seen in **Figure 7**, based on Ministry data collected biweekly from municipalities, regular spaces in existing shelters for people experiencing homelessness decreased by about 3,000 spaces (31%) in order to provide for physical distancing. Temporary shelter spaces used across the province increased by about 5,400 spaces (192%) to address this decline in regular spaces and to accommodate the increasing number of homeless individuals and families between March 2020 and September 2021. Temporary shelter spaces were generally located in hotels and motels. These spaces are to be made available while physical distancing measures are in place and demand exists.

The Ministry was not tracking shelter occupancy rates prior to April 2020; therefore, we could not obtain the actual increase in shelter occupancy rates across the province for the same time period.

In the absence of historical data on shelter occupancy rates, the overall provincial increase in used shelter spaces, particularly the net increase of approximately 2,400 shelter spaces across the province, is an indicator of the rise in homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. As well, only anecdotal increases were noted in the number of unsheltered

Figure 7: Regular and Temporary Shelter Spaces, March 17, 2020 and September 2, 2021

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



individuals because provincial data has not been collected. This issue is discussed in **Section 4.4.3** (Encampments).

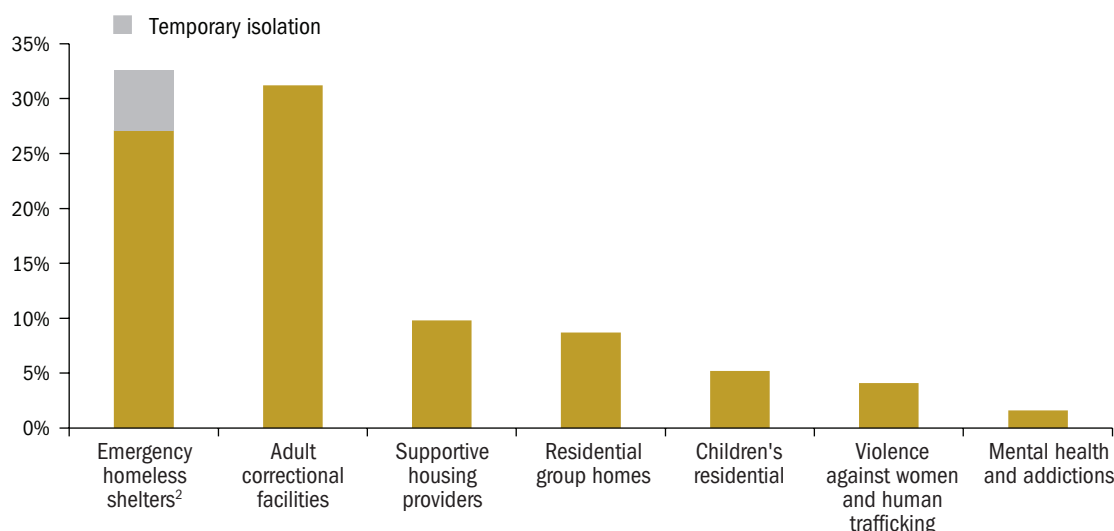
4.4.2 Homeless Shelters Had a 33% Incidence Rate of COVID-19 Cases

Of all types of congregate living settings in existence across the province, with the exception of long-term-care homes and retirement homes, homeless shelters were by far the most impacted by COVID-19. As of September 2, 2021, there were 3,878 cases of COVID-19 including 11 deaths among clients at homeless shelters, and an additional 355 cases and no deaths among shelter staff. This represented a cumulative incidence rate of just over 33% for all people residing at a homeless shelter as of that date. See **Figure 8** for further details.

Municipalities we engaged with had varying impacts to their shelter systems and homelessness situation as a result of the pandemic. **Figure 9** shows the shelter use and impact on accommodation for people experiencing homelessness prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, we noted that municipalities responded to the pandemic largely by creating more physical distancing at existing shelters, opening new temporary facilities, leasing hotel rooms, or renting hotel rooms as needed, and using municipal facilities for both isolation and

Figure 8: COVID-19 Cumulative Incidence Rate among Clients by Congregate Living Setting,¹ September 2, 2021

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



1. Comparison excludes incidents occurring in long-term-care homes and retirement homes.

2. Emergency homeless shelters include temporary isolation facilities, which are shelter spaces contracted to provide temporary shelter such as hotels and motels due to the reduction of permanent shelter spaces. They also include overnight warming centres established due to the pandemic and facilities for isolation of people staying in shelters who contracted COVID-19 and needed to be isolated from others.

Figure 9: Shelter Use and Accommodation Prior To and During COVID-19 Pandemic at Select Municipalities*

Source of data: Information systems of the four select local regions

Municipality	Pre-COVID-19			During COVID-19			
	Shelter Spaces (Mar 16, 2020)			Shelter Spaces (Sep 2, 2021)			# of Hotels, Isolation Centres and Physical Distancing Centres Utilized (2020/21)
	Regular	Temp	Total	Regular	Temp	Total	
Toronto	4,376	1,138	5,514	2,511	3,138	5,649	43
Ottawa	1,551	1,266	2,817	954	1,195	2,149	41
Sudbury	57	0	57	61	17	78	2
Cochrane	68	0	68	33	90	123	4

* Based on Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing data collected bi-weekly from municipalities.

quarantine, in order to maintain the needed amount of shelter space

As noted in **Figure 9**, regular shelter capacity was reduced at all municipalities we met, with the exception of Sudbury, which in November 2020 was able to increase regular capacity through the creation of a four-bed youth shelter. Further to this, its regular shelter capacity was not impacted because it was able to erect physical barriers between shelter beds to maintain physical distancing requirements.

Ottawa noted that due to deep cleaning measures and physical distancing protocols in shelter common areas, clients were asked to leave the shelters during periods of the day. As a result, individuals experiencing homelessness were congregating in parking lots, side roads, parkettes and parks. Ottawa also indicated that there were reports of open drug use and trafficking, improper needle disposal, increased criminal activity, trespassing, neighbourhood resident intimidation and general social disorder associated

with the congregating of people experiencing homelessness in the downtown core.

4.4.3 Fear of COVID-19, Other Factors Triggered Rise of Homeless Encampments

Three municipalities we spoke with (Toronto, Ottawa and Sudbury) noted that during the pandemic, some individuals who normally resided in shelters or who were couch surfing opted to live on the streets, citing personal safety and fear of exposure to COVID-19 as reasons.

According to Toronto, the number of visible encampments in city parks increased during the pandemic. Media articles reported that the public transit system had increases in the number of individuals who were homeless congregating on subway platforms and riding in subway cars. According to a report provided to Toronto's City Council, contributing factors to this increase included:

- people who are homeless moving from ravines and more remote locations into more visible areas of the city because parks and other open spaces, especially in the downtown core, were not used as much by the general public;
- reduced options due to the pandemic for people experiencing homelessness to stay with friends or family or other temporary accommodations;
- fears related to COVID-19 in the shelter system; and
- reduced access as a result of capacity reductions to other provincial programs and services, such as detoxification and substance withdrawal centres, and mental health facilities, as noted in **Section 4.4.4.**

As of June 2021, Toronto reported that 40% of individuals referred to shelters from an encampment had no previous shelter use in the city prior to the start of the pandemic, indicating they may be new to homelessness, or to the city.

Toronto conducted a survey in March 2021 of 72 current and former encampment residents, across a wide range of geographic locations throughout the

city, including 36 separate encampments, to understand the underlying reasons people were living outdoors. Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents indicated they had been offered access to a shelter bed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reasons survey respondents gave for not accessing shelters included the following:

- lack of safety (35%);
- feeling safer outside (30%);
- lack of privacy (23%);
- negative experience during prior shelter stays (23%);
- shelters are an uncomfortable environment (21%); and
- health concerns due to COVID-19 (18%).

The top three reasons cited in the survey for staying in an encampment rather than a shelter were 1) sense of community, including a sense of belonging and the ability to live with partners, friends and family (44%), 2) privacy and control over daily schedule and space (44%), and 3) lost housing (29%). (Note: survey participants could provide more than one answer).

We noted that encampments, in general, contravene the bylaws in many municipalities, that prohibit erecting tents, structures or shelters in a park without a permit. Toronto told us its policy is to clear encampments as a last resort, noting that encampments are to be cleared only once everyone has been offered indoor space, and notice has been provided to them. Toronto reported that since the beginning of the pandemic to August 2021, it had referred more than 1,850 people to indoor spaces. Between January 2021 and August 2021, Toronto noted it cleared more than 1,190 encampments, seven of which were enforced through city bylaws and issued a trespass notice. Toronto estimated that between 200 to 250 people were still living outside in tents and encampments in city parks as of August 2021.

Ottawa said encampments were typically identified by residents and city workers such as police officers and public works staff, and also by outreach service providers. The city's policy was that all options

had to be exhausted and the encampment occupants had been unco-operative in searching for housing or shelter and in adhering to health and safety protocols, before the city dismantled the encampment in a co-ordinated response with service providers.

Both Ottawa and Toronto noted that there are increased risks associated with sleeping outdoors or in an encampment. Outdoor settings may allow increased physical distancing; however, they do not provide protection from the environment, adequate access to hygiene and sanitation facilities, or connection to services and health care. Data from Toronto also noted that in 2020, the fire department responded to 253 fires in encampments—a 250% increase over the same period in 2019, demonstrating the significant risk that encampments can pose to individuals living outdoors, as well as the broader community.

4.4.4 Deaths of People Experiencing Homelessness Related to Opioid Use More than Doubled During Pandemic

Opioids are a class of drugs that are commonly prescribed for pain relief, but can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Examples include morphine, heroin and codeine. The strength or potency varies from one type of opioid to another. For example, oxycodone (an opioid for moderate to severe pain) is 1.5 times stronger than morphine, while fentanyl (an opioid for long-term stable pain) is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. Depending on the quantity or strength of the opioids taken, an individual may experience drowsiness or respiratory suppression, go into a coma or die.

A report titled *Changing Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, released in May 2021, found a 79% increase in the number of opioid-related deaths across the general population in Ontario when comparing a period before the pandemic (March 16, 2019 to December 31, 2019) to the same period a year later during the pandemic (March 16, 2020 to

December 31, 2020). The report was released on behalf of the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network, the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, Ontario Forensic Pathology Service and Public Health Ontario.

This report noted that the number of opioid-related deaths among people experiencing homelessness more than doubled (139%) from 135 to 323 deaths. In the pandemic period, these deaths represented 16.0% of all opioid-related deaths in the province compared with 11.6% in the pre-pandemic period.

Of the 66 opioid-related deaths that occurred in hotels during the pandemic period, 43 (or 65.2%) occurred within a hotel designated to provide COVID-19 physical distancing shelter or isolation services. See **Figure 10** for further information regarding opioid-related deaths among people experiencing homelessness.

The report cited that the following factors contributed to the increase in opioid-related deaths in Ontario before and during the pandemic:

- Changing access to health-care services and community-based programs and supports, and the resulting disruption in social relationships and support – According to data provided by Connex Ontario, as of 2020/21, average wait time for residential mental health or addiction treatment programs was 102 days.
- Early release of people from prisons – Beginning in March 2020, the province began to expedite the bail process for many people on remand (charged with a crime but not yet acquitted or convicted and sentenced).
- Changing patterns of substance use that have been attributed to increased anxiety during the pandemic across Canada – A July 2021 report published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* on the changes in substance supply (largely due to the Canada-US border closure) and abuse among people who use drugs in Canada, noted that disruptions to substance supply led to increased use and substitution for toxic and adulterated substances, which ultimately amplified risk for experiencing related harms, including overdoses.

Figure 10: Demographics and Location of Opioid-Related Deaths of People Experiencing Homelessness, Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: *Changing Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, May 2021

	Pre-pandemic Cohort (#) ¹	Pandemic Cohort (#) ²	% Change
Age Group			
<24	20	22	10
25-44	81	194	140
45-64	32	106	231
65+	2	1	(50)
Total	135	323	139
Gender³			
Male	107	257	140
Female	28	66	136
Total	135	323	139
Geographic Location⁴			
Large urban centres	95	256	169
Medium urban centres	18	32	78
Small urban centres	8	9	13
Rural areas	5	20	300
Total	126	317	152
Location of Incident			
Private residence	57	96	68
Outdoors	32	87	172
Hotel/motel/inn ⁵	8	66	725
Shelter/supportive living	15	28	87
Public indoor space	8	15	88
Rooming house	3	16	433
Other	11	14	27
Unknown	1	1	-
Total	135	323	139

1. The number of people who died of an opioid-related cause between March 16, 2019 and December 31, 2019.

2. The number of people who died of an opioid-related cause between March 16, 2020 and December 31, 2020.

3. The report did not include a category of "Other" or "Non-binary."

4. Rural (<1,000); small urban centre (1,000-29,999), medium urban centre (30,000-99,999), large urban centre (100,000 or greater). Excludes nine people with missing data in the pre-pandemic cohort and six with missing data in the pandemic cohort.

5. Includes deaths that occurred within hotels used as temporary shelters and to facilitate COVID-19 physical distancing and isolation during the pandemic.

4.5 Shelter Inspection and Safety

4.5.1 Lack of and Varying Provincial Shelter Standards Prevent Ministry Assurance that Sufficient Service is Being Delivered

The Ministry has not developed provincial shelter standards or service directives that must be adhered to by municipalities and third-party shelter operators. Without a standard inspection process, the Ministry cannot be assured that shelter service

providers are providing sufficient service to their clients.

Because municipalities are able to develop their own shelter standards, the standards in place and inspection requirements for adherence to those standards vary across the province, as discussed further in **Section 4.5.2**. Having provincial shelter standards in place and periodic inspections would allow the Ministry to confirm that systemic health and safety concerns are consistently monitored and addressed.

4.5.2 Not All Municipalities Have Shelter Standards and Conduct Inspections of Shelters

Shelter standards and requirements for inspections to ensure health and safety of residents and shelter staff varied between Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury and Cochrane. As seen in **Figure 11**, of the four municipalities we met with, only Ottawa and Toronto had in place standards that shelters in their areas must adhere to. However, we found that only Ottawa had conducted regular inspections of all its shelter sites, in accordance with a defined inspection schedule and process it had developed.

The Canadian Shelter Transformation Network—an organization which shares resources, research and toolkits, and best practices—identified Toronto Shelter Standards as an example of a best practice. In 2020, Ottawa updated its shelter standards

and introduced transitional housing program standards, which both closely follow Toronto's standards.

Our assessment of the inspection process and review of the inspection results and follow up of corrective action at the four municipalities we met with found that Ottawa conducts two types of shelter inspections—site reviews and compliance reviews, both of which are scheduled in advance. Site reviews involve a review of emergency and maintenance plans, inspection records and certificates such as for food safety and fire regulations. They are to be conducted annually on years when a compliance review is not conducted. Compliance reviews involve a review of policies and procedures in addition to site review procedures, and are to be conducted every 30 months. The last one occurred in 2018. All inspections are conducted jointly by municipal staff and a local Public Health Inspector. We noted that all the regular shelter locations were inspected according to the inspection cycle for the three-year period (2018–2020). However, offsite temporary locations, such as hotels and motels, were not inspected.

According to Ottawa's 2019 shelter inspection guidelines, if a shelter is found to be non-compliant at the time of review, a re-inspection is to be conducted or confirmation of corrective action taken no more than 60 days from the time of inspection, unless there are extenuating circumstances. We found that for all inspections conducted in the three-year

Figure 11: Shelter Standards and Inspections at Selected Municipalities

Source of data: Select municipalities

Municipality	Ottawa	Toronto	Cochrane	Sudbury
Shelter standards in place	Yes	Yes	No ¹	No ²
Inspection checklist in place	Yes	Yes	No	No
Regular inspections conducted	Yes	No ³	No	No
# of shelters	10	77 ⁴	2	4
Shelters inspected against shelter standards in 2020/21	9	0	0	0
# of violations noted	0	n/a	n/a	n/a

1. Draft shelter standards developed and expected to be available to shelters in fall 2021.

2. In the process of developing shelter standards.

3. Inspections have been conducted for a specific purpose (e.g., infection prevention and control).

4. Includes both shelter sites and respite sites. A respite site provides a safe indoor space with services including resting spaces, meals and service referrals.

period, reports were not provided to shelter operators until 99 to 471 days after the inspections took place. However, we were told that shelter operators are provided with a verbal debrief of the inspection results following the inspection. Ottawa told us the reason for the delay in providing the more recent reports was due to shifting its focus at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For compliance reviews conducted in 2018, five out of 10 shelter sites required corrective action. For these shelters, the follow-up of corrective action occurred between 168 days and 354 days after the inspection date; in some cases, corrective action occurred prior to the inspection report being issued due to verbal debrief.

Toronto established shelter standards in 2015 that include requirements for regular and transitional shelters to have various reviews and inspections for quality assurance. Additional standards, including inspecting 24-hour respite sites (women's drop-in centres that provide resting spaces, meals and service referrals) were developed in 2018. However, the shelter standards (including those for respite sites) do not state the frequency of when inspections are to be conducted.

Toronto's quality assurance team assumed responsibility for conducting inspections beginning in 2019, but it has not conducted any full inspections of compliance with shelter standards. In 2019, the first year of inspections by the quality assurance team, the focus was on the 13 agency-operated 24-hour respite sites. In 2020, as a result of COVID-19, the focus of the assessments shifted to physical distancing and infection prevention and control compliance assessments and pre-opening site assessments for required temporary shelters, which continued in 2021. These assessments are to ensure that appropriate measures, including hygiene, cleaning and surveillance practices are in place to reduce the risk of the spread of viruses such as COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Cochrane had developed draft shelter standards that it anticipated making available to shelters in fall 2021. It has not conducted inspections of the shelters in its area, with the exception of an annual fire

inspection. Instead, service providers that operate the shelters are responsible for conducting their own inspections and Cochrane does not collect the results from any inspections. Without collecting the results from the inspections, it is unaware of any issues that may pose a risk to health and safety of the people using the services at the shelters.

Similarly, Sudbury did not have documented shelter standards in place, although it told us it is in the process of developing them, and municipal staff visit shelter locations for ad hoc review and discussion of concerns. According to its contract with shelter service providers, the shelter operators are required to develop their own operational policies and procedures relating to health and safety requirements, standards and guidelines and monitoring and enforcement of its safety program. However, Sudbury has not collected or reviewed any documentation related to them.

RECOMMENDATION 6

To protect the health and safety of residents and staff in homeless shelters, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- develop and issue provincial shelter standards required to be complied with by all municipalities and their third-party service providers;
- require municipalities to conduct periodic surprise inspections of shelters, including offsite and temporary shelter locations; and
- require municipalities to consolidate and provide the number and results of inspections conducted to the Ministry, summarized in a manner that can inform future homelessness funding and shelter policy development.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry accepts this recommendation and will engage with service managers and other delivery partners on the concept of shelter standards and inspections as part of next steps to better monitor and address the

effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of homelessness programs.

4.6 Funding

4.6.1 Ministry's Method of Allocating Funding for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Not Based on Current Municipal Needs

We found that the current funding model for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) does not allocate funding based on current need because a significant proportion is still allocated based on 2013 historical program spending and outdated 2011 Statistics Canada data.

The CHPI (see **Section 2.3.1**) provides about 84% of the Ministry's homelessness funding, for operating purposes. See **Figure 12** for the breakdown of CHPI's funding allocation method in place since 2017/18. In the nine years since CHPI began, the Ministry has conducted reviews in 2014 and 2016 on how funds should be allocated to municipalities, but still allocates 50% of the funding based on historical levels of program spending that predate the establishment of the CHPI program.

In its 2014 review, a variety of indicators were considered, such as low-income indicators, long-term unemployment rates, level of education, the number of Ontario Works cases, and demographic and income changes. However, the Ministry decided to maintain

the status quo funding formula for municipalities up until the end of 2016/17, pending the work of the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness.

The 2016 review conducted with an external working group developed indicators that mirrored the province's priorities, highlighted by the Expert Advisory Panel. However, the Ministry found that the replacement of previous program spending by other need-driven factors would have had a significant redistributive effect on municipalities and therefore decided not to use this information to revise how it allocates funding. Beginning in 2017/18, the Ministry decided that only new funding and a legacy allocation of \$42 million initially from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services would be distributed based on the Ministry's priority populations of the chronically homeless, youth, Indigenous people, and people transitioning from provincial institutions, as seen in **Figure 12**.

We analyzed funding to municipalities after the 2016 review and found that between 2016/17 and 2020/21 only three of the 47 municipalities had their proportional share of funding changed by more than 1%, with Toronto having the highest proportional change of a 3.3% decrease.

We also noted that the information used to calculate the current funding allocation is outdated. Although the last update from Statistics

Figure 12: Funding Allocation Model for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Funding For	Allocation %	Allocated Based On	Data Source
People experiencing homelessness	50	Historical program spending by each local region in 2013	2013 program spending levels
People at risk of homelessness	25	Deep Core Housing Need ¹	2011 Statistics Canada census data
	25	Provincial priority individuals (people who are chronically homeless, aged 16-24 or of Indigenous identity) ²	2011 Statistics Canada census data

1. Deep Core Housing Need – A measure compiled by Statistics Canada that identifies the number of households for which housing does not meet its standards for at least one of the following: adequacy (reported by residents as not requiring major repairs); affordability (shelter costs equal to less than 50% of total before-tax household income); or suitability (has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of resident households according to National Occupancy Standards). Additionally, the household would have to spend 50% or more of total before tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing in the area.
2. Chronically homeless – Local region's share of households that meet Statistics Canada's Low-Income Measure After Tax. This measure determines the percentage of households that fall 50% below the median household income for the area. Additionally, the Ministry factors in the local region's share of unemployed population, share of provincial youth (16 to 25 years), and share of provincial Indigenous identity population.

Canada has been available since 2016, the Ministry is still using data from the prior census in 2011.

We recalculated the amount of funding that would have been provided to the municipalities in 2020/21 if calculated solely on the funding formula currently in use but excluding the historical component—that is, based on chronic homelessness (including deep core housing need), and the proportion of Indigenous people and youth within a municipality. We also used the more current 2016 Statistics Canada census data. As seen in **Appendix 10**, under this scenario, we found a significant number of municipalities (37 of 47) would have seen a change in their funding of more than 30% in their 2020/21 funding allocation—funding would increase for 33 municipalities by 32% to 146%, while funding would decrease for six municipalities by 10% to 49%. In comparison, between 2016 and 2020, 22 of 47 municipalities saw increases of at least 30% in the number of households on their social housing wait list.

In 2017, the Regional Municipality of Niagara expressed its concerns to the Ministry that the funding model was failing to address local needs. According to this municipality, important factors—including a decrease in affordable housing vacancies, an increase in children accessing the emergency shelter system, and an increase in the level of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program cases—are not addressed in the funding model. Additionally, Ottawa noted the need to consider the demand for shelter services and wait times for addiction and mental health services in the allocation of funding to municipalities.

RECOMMENDATION 7

To fairly allocate funding to municipalities based on need, we recommend the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- revisit the options identified in past funding reviews and re-evaluate its funding model for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative;
- implement changes to the funding model; and

- use the latest census data from Statistics Canada to recalculate the current funding allocation under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees with this recommendation. The Ministry is committed to undertaking a review of the CHPI funding model methodology to more equitably allocate funds based on current local need. This review will include revisiting the options identified in past funding reviews, including replacing the outdated historical program spending component and using more updated data. The Ministry will consult with service managers before implementing funding model changes impacting CHPI funding allocations.

4.6.2 No Written Justification for Ministry's Allocation of Funding under Home for Good Program

In 2017, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) launched the Home for Good program (see **Section 2.3.1**). We found that five municipalities were not selected to receive funding despite having overall higher scores than five others that did receive funding. As well, decisions by senior ministry officials for the final funding selections were not documented.

The Home for Good program and the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program provide both operating and capital funding to assist the Ministry's priority populations of the chronically homeless, youth, Indigenous people, and people transitioning from provincial institutions. We reviewed the allocation of operating funding, which was budgeted for \$192 million over four years (2017/18 to 2020/21) and accounted for 59% of the total program funding. Operating funding is to provide rent supplements and allowances, and provide supports to at-risk households living

independently in the community to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Municipalities were required to submit a business case to the Ministry by May 2017 and funds were provided in October 2017.

In order to receive Home for Good operating funding, municipalities were required to submit a business case to the Ministry when the program started. The business cases were scored and ranked by inter-ministerial staff teams, with representation from the ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community and Social Services, and Health and Long-Term Care (now two separate ministries). These teams assessed submissions by municipalities using a standard scoring sheet weighted equally on five established factors. All but one of the 47 municipalities submitted a business case. Submissions were evaluated first by individual reviewers, and then together where all inter-ministerial teams reached a consensus on the scores and ranking of applicants. A master scoring spreadsheet was compiled based on these discussions and presented to senior ministry staff and the Minister's Office staff. Twenty-one municipalities were selected to receive funding.

Although a robust process to review proposals was in place, including defined criteria to score and rank the proposals, we noted that five municipalities were not selected despite having overall higher scores than others who did receive funding. When we asked the Ministry why this was the case, the Ministry told us that consensus scores for the submissions were further revised by senior management based on direction received during briefings with the Minister's Office. The Ministry told us it did not know the names or positions of the officials involved, as the people in senior ministry positions have changed since 2017.

However, there was no documentation on the specific methodology used for these latter revisions. We were told that senior ministry officials provided direction to fund municipalities that they anticipated assisting the highest number of people who were chronically homeless in respective communities. This approach is not in accordance with the Transfer

Payment Accountability Directive, which requires that funding decisions be documented.

The Ministry has stated that it plans to expand the Home for Good program beyond the initial 21 municipalities currently funded, but at the time of our audit had not indicated when.

RECOMMENDATION 8

To provide funding to grant recipients in an objective and transparent manner based on submitted applications, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- include fully documented rationales for all final funding decisions; and
- follow the Transfer Payment Accountability Directive in selecting grant recipients.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees with this recommendation and will ensure that a rationale for funding decisions is fully documented and in compliance with the Transfer Payment Accountability Directive.

4.6.3 Municipalities' Use of Provincial Funding for Homelessness Varies Widely

The Ministry provides funding to municipalities through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), the Home for Good program (see **Section 2.3.1**), and, in response to COVID-19, the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) (see **Section 2.3.2**). For CHPI and SSRF, municipalities are required to report to the Ministry on how they spent their homelessness funding allocations among five service categories permitted by the Ministry:

- emergency shelter solutions;
- homelessness prevention;
- housing with related supports;
- services and supports; and
- administration.

For the Home for Good and the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators are required

to report how they spent their funding among three categories:

- housing allowances/rent supplements (homelessness prevention);
- services and supports; and
- administration.

As seen in **Figure 13a**, the four municipalities we examined spent most of the provincial homelessness funding on shelters. The proportion of total funding spent by municipalities on the various categories varied significantly. For example, the proportion of spending on services and supports ranged from 15% to 31%. For funding provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the Social Services Relief Fund, as seen in **Figure 13b**, with the exception of Toronto whose top category for spending was shelters at 42%, the other three municipalities we met with spent the majority of funding in the area of services and supports, ranging from 64% to 69%.

Although the Ministry provides some guidance on how funding can be spent under each category, the categories are broad and not well defined. As well, certain types of expenses can be recorded under different categories. As a result, we found inconsistency in the categorizing of spending between municipalities and within the same local region, limiting the usefulness of expense information reported to the Ministry.

The Ministry's guidance to municipalities states that some activities may be provided under more than one service category. In addition, for each of the service categories, the Ministry's program guidelines states that the use of the funding is not limited to the examples provided in the guideline. For this reason, it was not clear what services are actually included under each category.

For an example, where different municipalities categorized similar services and supports under different

Figure 13a: Percentage of Homelessness Program Spending at Select Municipalities by Category for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and Home for Good Program, 2020/21

Source of data: Program records of select municipalities

Service Category	Toronto	Ottawa	Sudbury	Cochrane*	Range
Emergency shelter solutions	55	49	37	39	37-55
Services and supports	21	15	31	21	15-31
Homelessness prevention	14	12	24	14	12-24
Housing with related supports	4	19	-	20	0-20
Administration	6	5	8	6	5-8
Total	100	100	100	100	-

* Home for Good spending is based on information reported in final year-end report to the Ministry. This municipality could not provide information on how funds were used because it had not received information from the service provider on the use of funds.

Figure 13b: Percentage of Social Service Relief Fund Spending at Select Municipalities by Category, 2020/21

Source of data: Program records of select municipalities

Service Category	Toronto	Ottawa	Sudbury	Cochrane	Range
Emergency shelter solutions	42	31	20	16	16-42
Services and supports	32	66	64	69	32-69
Homelessness prevention	21	-	10	-	0-21
Housing with related supports	3	-	-	15	0-15
Administration	2	3	6	-	0-6
Total	100	100	100	100	-

service categories, we noted Ottawa categorized CHPI funding it provided to general housing assistance centres under “homelessness prevention activities.” Toronto, which used CHPI funds for similar services (housing help centres), categorized these expenses under the category of “services and support.” As another example, we noted Toronto categorized salaries and benefits of staff who worked at offsite COVID-19 spaces (such as hotels and motels used to meet physical distancing requirements) funded through the Social Services Relief Fund under “emergency shelter solutions,” whereas Cochrane categorized similar expenses as “services and support.”

We also found cases where municipalities themselves were categorizing expenditures for the same or similar services inconsistently among the categories and did not always classify expenses according to the most appropriate service category.

RECOMMENDATION 9

To have consistent and meaningful reporting on the use of provincial funding information, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- develop distinct service categories; and
- provide specific guidance to municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators on how to classify program costs according to their defined service categories.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees with this recommendation. The Ministry will better clarify and differentiate the categories of services, and guide service managers and Indigenous Program Administrators on how to classify their program expenditures through future program materials.

4.6.4 Municipalities' Management of Third Parties Does Not Always Adhere to Provincial Practices

The four municipalities we contacted provided 44% to 91% of the 2020/21 provincial funding for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), the Home for Good program, and the Social Services Relief Fund combined to third-party service providers (see **Figure 6**). These third parties deliver programs, supports and services to people experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness in their municipalities.

We reviewed the procedures at four municipalities and one Indigenous Program Administrator used to oversee contracts with third parties. As shown in **Figure 14**, we found inconsistent practices across each municipality and the Indigenous Program Administrator, and found that Ottawa was better at holding agencies accountable than the others we contacted.

The Ontario Transfer Payment Directive sets out the accountability framework for the oversight of transfer payment activities, as well as the financial management policies and best practices recommended for effective oversight of third-party providers. Key oversight and reporting activities include:

- established performance measures that clearly relate to the output and/or outcomes being funded; and
- reporting requirements for the entity receiving funding, including how the recipient is achieving progress toward the intended output and/or outcomes of the activity being funded.

We found that all four municipalities we contacted collected financial reports, including audited financial statements, from each agency funded, as well as performance indicator data to comply with Ministry reporting requirements. However, we noted that municipalities rarely used this data for purposes other than Ministry reporting. For instance, we noted that 44% of the contracts between municipalities and agencies we sampled did not include targets

Figure 14: Contract Management Process Comparison

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

	Toronto	Ottawa	Sudbury	Cochrane	Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services
Contracts stated services to be performed	✓	✓	✓	×	×
Contracts stated measurable service targets to be achieved	✓	✓	✓	×	×
Contracts contained measurable outcome indicators for services to be performed	✓	✓	×	×	×
Program reviews were completed and the results documented	×*	✓	×	×	×
Data verification procedures were conducted to ensure completeness and accuracy of information reported by service providers	×	✓	×	×	×

* Toronto collects and reviews program reports semi-annually, and conducted site visits as a form of program review; however, it did not consistently track the visits conducted to allow us to determine which sites had been visited and which had not.

for service delivery demonstrating outcomes of the funded activity.

We also found that Toronto and Ottawa had established and monitored service targets for programs delivered by third parties established in contracts. Sudbury, Cochrane and the Indigenous Program Administrator did not have any effective means to evaluate whether baseline service targets and program outcomes were being met by third parties.

We noted that Cochrane flowed more than 90% of its 2020/21 CHPI funding to various agencies to deliver homelessness-related programs. However, Cochrane did not establish clear expectations about the types of services to be delivered by the agencies. It also did not include program objectives, service targets or guidance about the type of data that should be collected by the agencies to evaluate whether they were having an impact on reducing or preventing homelessness in the municipality.

We reviewed the required reporting from agencies funded by Cochrane and found that it only required reporting on the number of people served. This is

insufficient to monitor the impact program spending is having on reducing and preventing homelessness.

A similar issue was noted when we reviewed agreements between the Indigenous Program Administrator we examined and the agencies it funds with the use of provincial funding through the Indigenous Supportive Housing Program. We found that while proposals for funding received from third-party service providers contained targets and expected program outcomes, these were not subsequently used to measure performance through the contracts between the Indigenous Program Administrator and service provider. We noted that the year-end reports submitted by agencies track all of the same output measures, regardless of the type of programs being delivered. The Indigenous Program Administrator told us its philosophy is to empower local communities and Indigenous communities to respond to the specific, unique needs of individuals experiencing homelessness; however, this limits its ability to assess whether agencies are meeting their contractual obligations, and the extent to which agencies may be having a positive impact on client outcomes.

Cochrane told us the purpose of collecting data was to meet the administrative needs of the

Ministry, and that it did not use this information to assess the extent to which the programs have had an impact on homelessness in their local areas.

Toronto and Ottawa both conducted forms of program review to assess whether contract obligations were being met. However, only Ottawa had a process in place to assess the effectiveness of the funded agencies and the programs they deliver. Ottawa completes an annual risk assessment of each agency, examines eligible expenses and performs annual site visits of each funded program to ensure program objectives are being met. It also centrally tracked that all oversight procedures had been completed and contract milestones had been met before funding was released.

We also found that only Ottawa had a process for verifying and validating the information received from service agencies to give it some assurance over the accuracy and quality of what is reported. Accurate and high-quality data is key to being able to assess whether funded agencies are meeting their program objectives, and whether funded services collectively are contributing to the municipality's overall objectives. Ottawa accomplished this by verifying the accuracy of a sample of client and program level data, such as case management files, issued cheques and accounting records.

RECOMMENDATION 10

To gain assurance that provincial homelessness funding is being used appropriately and effectively, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing require municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators to develop and implement processes to verify that funding provided to third parties for service delivery is being used in accordance with the province's Transfer Payment Accountability Directive.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees with this recommendation and will work with service managers and Indigenous Program Administrators to develop and

implement processes to verify that funding provided to local agencies is consistent with the Transfer Payment Accountability Directive.

4.7 Data Limitations

4.7.1. Data Collected for the Only Province-wide Count of People Who Are Homeless Had Gaps

Most of the work being done to tackle homelessness is city-specific and, as a result, there exists a patchwork of collected data, making it difficult to systematically understand the state of homelessness in Ontario.

The first and only completed attempt to capture province-wide data on people experiencing homelessness was in 2018. A 2016 amendment to the *Housing Services Act, 2011* required the province's 47 municipalities to conduct local homeless enumeration, and a ministerial directive required that it be done every two years, beginning in 2018. This enumeration identified more than 21,000 people experiencing homelessness in Ontario.

It also included a survey that collected information from more than 12,500 people experiencing homelessness to learn about their circumstances. However, the Ministry found gaps and limitations in the 2018 enumeration data and in August 2019 directed municipalities to pause the next enumeration required in 2020. On March 19, 2021, the Ministry issued a directive to municipalities to do a point-in-time count of people in their service area who are homeless before December 15, 2021.

The purpose of the 2018 enumeration was to provide the Ministry and municipalities with baseline data on the homeless population, which could be used to measure and report on homelessness going forward. However, the following gaps and limitations were noted with the data collected:

- The enumeration results likely underestimated the total number of people experiencing chronic homelessness because municipalities did not perform the enumeration across their entire area. Municipalities were required to enumerate in areas that covered at least 30% of the population

in their municipality. The Ministry estimated that overall, 72% of the province's population was covered.

- The Ministry also allowed the use of three enumeration methodologies or a combination of the three: registry week, point-in-time counts and period prevalence counts (See glossary in **Appendix 1** for a description of each). Using different methodologies does not allow for a comparable set of data across the province and may misrepresent the extent of the problem in one area compared with another.

The use of different methodologies to count the number of people who were homeless was recommended by the Expert Panel on Homelessness in its 2015 report to allow for varying levels of capacity and resources in municipalities. The 47 municipalities used the various methods as follows: Period Prevalence Count – (36%); combination of Point-in-Time Count and Registry Week – (30%); Registry Week – (12%); Point-in-Time Count (11%); and combination of Period Prevalence Count and Point-in-Time Count – (11%).

As part of the 2018 enumeration, a survey was administered to collect additional information about people who are homeless. However, not all people who were counted as homeless were surveyed. About 40% were not asked any questions about themselves or their experience, or chose not to respond to the questions.

Figure 15 provides key statistics resulting from the survey conducted during the 2018 enumeration. Based on those who responded to the survey, 51% of people experiencing homelessness said they had mental health issues and 47% said they had addictions. In addition, 35% indicated they were Indigenous. Almost 40% of respondents identified economic circumstances and or abuse as a reason for their homelessness. Eighty percent of respondents received government benefits as a source of income.

4.7.2 Ministry Lacks Comparable Data on Homelessness Plans from Municipalities to Assess Progress in Reducing Homelessness

Beginning on January 1, 2014, municipalities started releasing 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plans (Homelessness Plans) to the Ministry in compliance with the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. At the time of our audit, all municipalities had developed housing and homelessness plans as required. The municipalities also provide annual reports to the Ministry regarding progress and achievements toward meeting the objectives and targets in their plans. According to the Ministry's review guide for Homelessness Plans released in April 2018, the Ministry requires municipalities to set goals, objectives and measurable targets to reduce homelessness and improve the outcomes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. However, the Ministry has not prescribed or specified any common goals, objectives or targets for all municipalities to work toward. Instead, it allowed municipalities to set their own particular set of performance measures to allow them to develop whatever they considered most appropriate for their communities. The result has been that the Ministry has been unable to analyze the data in any meaningful way.

We examined the Ministry's review of Homelessness Plans and annual reports, but because of the information's lack of consistent reporting content, the Ministry had not conducted an analysis of the expected outcomes or performance measures on a provincial or regional level. The Ministry itself found this to be an issue following the submission of the 2016 annual progress reports by municipalities. It noted through a briefing to senior management that the intent of the review was to allow for regional summaries to share internally and among municipalities. However, due to a lack of consistency in the reporting format and the performance measures presented, it could not complete such an analysis.

Ministry staff who reviewed the reports also found it difficult to assess progress made by municipalities toward achieving the goals stated in their

Figure 15: Characteristics and Demographics of People Experiencing Homelessness, 2018 Enumeration

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Characteristics	% of respondents ¹	Characteristics	% of respondents ¹
Age Group (years)		Current Lodging (at time of survey)	
<26	21	Provisionally accommodated	46
26–35	26	Emergency sheltered	45
36–49	29	Unsheltered/Other	9
50–64	21	# of Times Homeless in Prior Year ⁵	
65+	3	Once	60
Chronic Homelessness ²		Twice	16
Chronic (>=180 days)	55	Three times or more	24
Not Chronic (<180 days)	45	Addiction ⁴	
Reasons for Homelessness ³		No	53
Economic	38	Yes	47
Conflict/Abuse	37	Mental Health ⁴	
Health	32	No	49
Incarceration	9	Yes	51
Other	19	Income Sources ³	
Indigenous Status		Government benefits	80
Non-Indigenous	65	Any employment	16
Indigenous	35	Other source of income/No income	15
Acute/Chronic Medical Condition ⁴		<div>1. The number of respondents to each of the 15 survey questions ranged from 10,181 to 12,327 because respondents often did not provide an answer for each question.</div> <div>2. Nineteen percent of people surveyed did not provide duration of their homelessness, consequently enumeration results are likely to underestimate the total number of people experiencing chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness refers to people who have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation.</div> <div>3. Multiple reasons/sources could be selected.</div> <div>4. Six local regions did not ask this question.</div> <div>5. There is some inconsistency in the way the question was interpreted, some people counted each day as a separate episode.</div>	
No	61		
Yes	39		
Physical Disability ⁴			
No	70		
Yes	30		
Family Status			
Homeless on own	79		
Homeless with children	13		
Homeless with another adult, but no children	8		

Homelessness Plans because the annual reports tended to measure outputs such as the number of people who received shelter or other services, rather than outcomes.

In 2020, the Ministry reviewed the municipalities required five-year review updates to their Homelessness Plans. According to the Ministry, its review was not an assessment of the plans, and it was not intended to provide customized feedback to the

municipalities; rather, it was intended to provide only an overview of plan updates on key themes such as affordable housing, co-ordinated access to housing programs, homelessness prevention and use of enumeration data. Once again, the Ministry noted that because no prescribed common format for the Homelessness Plans existed, there were limitations in terms of provincial consistency. As a result, regional- and provincial-level information could not be produced.

RECOMMENDATION 11

To better understand changes in the growth, distribution and demographics of homelessness both provincially and at the municipal level, and to better direct policy toward the specific groups experiencing homelessness and the underlying reasons causing their homelessness, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

- use data obtained through the enumeration process to begin in 2021, to set a baseline for the periodic assessment of progress toward reducing chronic homelessness;
- establish and require municipalities to track common performance indicators aimed at measuring the root causes of homelessness and priority groups experiencing homelessness, as recommended by the Expert Panel on Homelessness; and
- develop and set targets for common performance indicators to be reported on by all municipalities in their Housing and Homelessness Plans.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees with this recommendation. Service managers are required to enumerate using a Point in Time count and develop a By Name List by the end of 2021. Both activities will support a baseline to support continuous improvement.

Under the Multi-Ministry Supportive Housing Initiative, the Ministry is working to consolidate its homelessness programs to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes for people. The Ministry will review performance indicators and consult on additional targets and indicators to monitor service managers' progress in addressing homelessness and its root causes. The Ministry will work with service managers to identify how to incorporate the findings of the Auditor General into updated Housing and Homelessness Plans required under the *Housing Services Act* in 2024.

4.7.3 Ministry Does Not Collect Sufficient Information from Municipalities to Evaluate Effectiveness of Programs and Services

Municipalities are required to provide the Ministry with an annual report containing service levels achieved during the year for funding provided through the three key programs— the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), Home for Good, and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program. Service levels are collected for two types of households: people who are experiencing homelessness, and people who are at risk of becoming homeless. In addition, in April 2020, the Ministry began collecting information on the use of shelters.

See **Appendices 5a, b, and c** for cumulative service level information for each program reported.

We reviewed the data collected by the Ministry for the three programs and found that it was insufficient to monitor and assess the quality of services and support provided by individual municipalities. We also found that the information required to be reported is inadequate to inform policy and program development. It also does not allow the Ministry to assess that the spending of taxpayer money is having a positive impact in both the short- and long-term. Our specific concerns with the data collected are outlined below.

Required reporting is focused on the short-term and primarily output-based

Performance indicators for the largest program (CHPI) measure the number of households who received services from Ministry-funded programs, that is, direct counts of program activities that typically include the types of services delivered by the program or the number of people served.

For example, the Ministry collects data from municipalities on the number of households that moved from experiencing homelessness to long-term housing, and the number of households that retained long-term housing for at least six months. However, information is not collected to determine the percentage of people needing housing this represents, or the percentage of households

that retain their housing over the longer-term—six months, 12 and 24 months.

Three of the four municipalities we met with attempted to collect information to determine how long people remained housed if they left a shelter into housing. However, it was not collected for all shelter residents. Further, in at least one-third of cases, the whereabouts of people leaving shelters was unknown.

Knowing the longer-term outcomes of people who received services, versus only the number of people who moved through the homeless system, would allow the Ministry to better identify municipalities with effective services, programs, and service providers, which could then be discussed and shared with those municipalities experiencing less success.

Duplication exists in reporting of those served

The performance indicators (service levels) required to be reported by municipalities are not tracked on a unique household basis. This results in households that receive multiple services, or receive the same service multiple times during the year, being counted multiple times within the same count period. This overstates services levels reported by municipalities and impedes the Ministry's ability to perform meaningful analysis of the data it collects.

Required reporting does not provide useful information for analysis

The Ministry does not have procedures to validate the quality and reliability of information received from the municipalities. Based on our analysis of data reported by municipalities to the Ministry, we noted that the number of households able to obtain supports and services by municipality fluctuated significantly year over year. For example, in reporting the number of people experiencing homelessness who were assisted to obtain or retain housing, variances between 2019/20 and 2020/21 ranged from a 94% decrease to a 4300% increase.

The number of households at risk of homelessness who were assisted to retain their housing also fluctuated greatly year-over-year between 2019/20 and 2020/21, ranging from an 81% decrease to an increase of 217% in reported service levels. When we

asked the Ministry if it had analyzed the reasons for the large differences between and within municipalities from one year to the next, the Ministry informed us that the data should not be compared across fiscal years. The Ministry told us that it does not compare data collected by municipalities across fiscal years, or use the data for any regular analysis, as municipalities have the discretion and flexibility to change which programs they fund with provincial money and to change their program offerings each year.

Data is not validated for accuracy

Ministry staff told us that they only assess municipalities' data for reasonableness through communications with municipalities throughout the year.

When we asked the Ministry how it obtains assurance over the year-end performance indicator data submitted by municipalities, including results aggregated from third-party service providers, the Ministry informed us that it relies on the municipalities to validate third-party data they submit to the Ministry. However, three of the four municipalities and the Indigenous Program Administrator we met with did not have procedures to validate third-party reporting.

In February 2020, the Ministry performed a review of program data and noted that for the Home for Good and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program in particular, there were inconsistencies in how data was entered by municipalities, including when households were removed from the program. Specifically, an analysis completed by the Ministry found that three of the 47 municipalities and one of the two Indigenous Program Administrators reported that some households might still be counted as program participants even though they were no longer accessing any services. Following the review, the Ministry itself identified that a more regular and robust review process would allow issues to be identified and resolved earlier in the process.

RECOMMENDATION 12

To sufficiently monitor and assess the quality of homelessness services and support provided by

municipalities, we recommend that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in collaboration with municipalities:

- develop standard, required indicators that measure standard, defined outcomes for those accessing the services funded through provincial homelessness programs, and report on them annually;
- require municipalities to report at a consolidated level, standard, defined outcomes of individuals receiving services and supports on a unique basis;
- establish a process to effectively validate the accuracy of data used in the standard, defined indicators; and
- use the information reported to identify provincial and regional trends in services and regions that require further focus and support.

MINISTRY RESPONSE

The Ministry agrees with this recommendation. As part of its work to consolidate its homelessness programs, the Ministry is reviewing program performance indicators to improve effectiveness, efficiency and outcomes for people. This work will also consider process improvements to effectively validate the accuracy of data based on the clarified data definitions, and will support annual provincial and regional trend analyses on the data to identify areas that require additional support or focus for continuous improvement.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

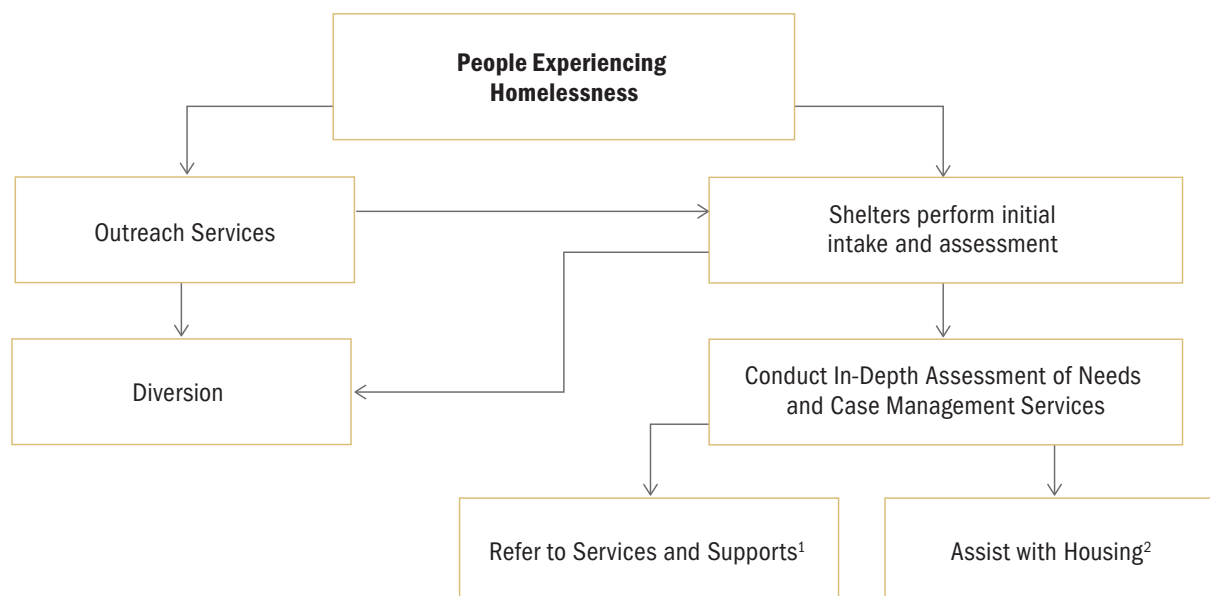
Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Term	Definition
At risk of homelessness	Refers to households who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious and/or does not meet public health or safety standards.
By-name list	A list of people known to be experiencing homelessness who want to receive housing services and who consent to have their names and survey responses in a database. They are asked to share their names, answer some standard questions and consent to have their names and responses used by agencies to get them access to housing and supports.
Chronic homelessness	Refers to people, often with disabling conditions (e.g., chronic physical or mental illness, substance abuse problems), who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e., have spent more than 180 cumulative nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation).
Deep core housing need	A household is said to be in Deep Core Housing Need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards, and it would have to spend 50% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards).
Homeless enumeration	The measurement of the number of people experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time or at a point-in-time.
Homelessness	The situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it.
Household	A household may consist of a family group, a couple, or a person living alone.
Housing First	A recovery-oriented approach to addressing homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and providing individualized supports so they can maintain that housing.
Long-term housing	Housing that is provided for a period beyond one year. Includes market rental, co-op housing, subsidized housing, group homes, housing formerly known as domiciliary hostels, supportive housing and ownership housing.
Period prevalence enumeration method	Involves a co-ordinated, multi-day count of people who are homeless who access a variety of service organizations that are likely to be used by persons experiencing homelessness such as community meal programs and drop-in centres, in addition to shelters.
Point-in-time enumeration method	A count of sheltered and unsheltered people who are homeless on a single night. It is intended to capture numbers and basic demographics of persons experiencing homelessness at a single point in time.
Provisionally accommodated	Refers to people whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transitional housing - intermediate step between emergency and permanent housing; short-term, temporary rental accommodations (e.g., staying in motels, hostels, and rooming houses); institutional care (e.g., penal/health institutions, residential treatment programs, and group homes); and living temporarily with others with no guarantee of continued residence or immediate prospect of housing (i.e., hidden homelessness).
Registry week enumeration method	Involves a co-ordinated, multi-day count of people experiencing homelessness on the streets, in shelters and other spaces frequented by people who are homeless. A Registry Week is a co-ordinated outreach and assessment process to collect information that will help find housing for persons experiencing homelessness, starting with the most vulnerable.

Term	Description
Shelter	<p>A facility designed to meet the immediate needs of people who are homeless.</p> <p>Shelters may target specific sub-populations, including women, families, youth or Indigenous persons. These shelters typically have minimal eligibility criteria, may offer shared sleeping facilities and amenities and may expect clients to leave in the morning. They may also offer food, clothing or other services.</p> <p>Does not include extreme weather shelters, such as Out of the Cold programs and crash beds.</p>
Supportive Housing	Permanent housing that includes a combination of housing assistance and support services that enable people to live as independently as possible in the community.
Transitional housing	Supportive, yet temporary, accommodation that is meant to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support, life skills and education.
Unsheltered	Living on the street or in places not intended for human habitation.
Youth	Persons under the age of 25.

Appendix 2: Common Pathways for People Experiencing Homelessness to Access Services and Supports

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario



Outreach services	Municipal or third-party service providers who engage with people living outdoors to connect them to safe shelter, access to support services, and housing opportunities
Shelters	Shelter staff explore potential for diversion from shelters for people who just lost their housing, and complete an initial assessment of client needs
Diversion	People who can be diverted away from shelters with minimal amount of support (e.g., able to stay with family or friends; support to help them return to current tenancy)
In-depth assessment of needs and case management services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough assessment of client and their needs • Build housing plan that identifies barriers, solutions, actions and goals to find and maintain housing • Regular meetings with client on progress toward housing goals and to reassess need • Assistance to find housing (e.g., applying for social housing registry, rent supplements, housing allowances; housing search; lease signings)
Services and supports	For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health and addictions treatment • Employment, income, and life skills • Health and medical • Legal and settlement • Securing identification
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private market rental or ownership • social and affordable housing • supportive housing • transitional housing

1. In some cases, these services and supports may be available within and provided by a shelter. If not available within a shelter, referral to another service provider is made.

2. Transitional housing may be available within some shelters.

Appendix 3: Operating Funding by Municipality and Indigenous Program Administrator, 2016-17-2020-21¹

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Municipality	Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good Program, Indigenous Supportive Housing Initiative (\$ million)					Social Services Relief Fund Phases 1 and 2 (\$ million) ²	Funding per capita ³ (\$)
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2020/21	
Kenora	0.87	1.97	4.43	4.43	4.81	3.48	50.38
Toronto	111.57	116.41	140.06	140.06	142.10	189.37	47.61
Ottawa	35.62	37.23	42.35	42.35	43.36	32.40	43.01
Prescott and Russell	3.51	3.58	3.64	3.64	3.71	2.27	40.47
Hamilton	19.07	20.09	20.46	20.46	20.65	18.36	37.52
Cornwall	3.44	3.48	3.51	3.51	3.55	4.40	30.83
Peterborough	3.31	3.60	4.36	4.36	4.40	2.46	29.00
Kingston	4.08	4.12	4.16	4.16	4.20	3.50	27.52
Thunder Bay	2.70	3.34	4.19	4.53	4.81	1.91	26.80
Brantford	2.73	2.84	3.58	4.04	4.30	2.68	25.94
Windsor	9.09	9.63	10.17	10.17	10.70	4.09	24.94
Lambton	2.23	3.12	3.14	3.14	3.16	4.55	23.36
London	9.59	10.16	10.73	10.73	11.29	5.59	23.05
Chatham-Kent	1.75	2.05	2.45	2.45	2.46	3.39	21.89
Stratford	0.55	0.98	1.75	2.31	2.42	1.76	20.87
Waterloo	9.31	9.92	11.78	11.78	12.24	9.73	20.57
Greater Sudbury	2.67	2.96	3.41	3.48	3.61	2.73	19.96
Nipissing	1.50	1.59	1.68	1.68	1.77	3.19	19.77
Grey	1.67	1.74	1.82	1.82	1.89	2.83	19.05
Hastings	2.01	2.24	2.83	2.83	2.92	1.55	18.81
Lanark	1.22	1.25	1.28	1.28	1.31	2.15	18.41
Cochrane	1.00	1.33	1.60	1.60	1.71	1.47	18.14
Sault Ste. Marie	1.32	1.38	1.44	1.44	1.50	0.77	18.09
Simcoe	6.44	8.66	9.23	9.21	9.78	7.22	18.07
Kawartha	1.36	1.42	1.82	1.82	1.87	2.11	17.75
Algoma	0.61	0.63	0.64	0.64	0.66	1.82	17.71
Niagara	6.91	7.36	8.05	8.29	8.60	3.54	17.51
Muskoka	0.98	1.01	1.04	1.04	1.07	1.74	17.00
Timiskaming	0.41	0.50	0.56	0.56	0.58	0.59	16.19
Rainy River	0.17	0.27	0.37	0.37	0.46	0.11	16.18
Manitoulin-Sudbury	0.32	0.47	0.62	0.62	0.77	0.98	16.10
Wellington	2.98	3.32	3.66	3.66	4.00	2.16	15.84
St. Thomas	1.22	1.30	1.38	1.38	1.46	2.14	15.16
Parry Sound	0.54	0.59	0.65	0.65	0.70	1.90	14.59
Peel	12.84	16.02	20.46	20.53	23.03	13.65	13.44

Municipality	Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Home for Good Program, Indigenous Supportive Housing Initiative (\$ million)					Social Services Relief Fund Phases 1 and 2 (\$ million) ²	Funding per capita ³ (\$)
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2020/21	
Norfolk	1.17	1.33	1.49	1.49	1.65	1.75	12.99
Oxford	1.33	1.35	1.37	1.37	1.39	1.73	12.29
York	10.53	12.30	14.52	14.52	16.24	13.39	12.28
Leeds and Grenville	1.13	1.17	1.22	1.22	1.27	1.59	11.96
Dufferin	0.57	0.67	0.77	0.77	0.86	1.26	11.77
Durham	5.89	6.95	8.01	8.01	9.07	5.71	11.75
Renfrew	0.89	1.07	1.26	1.26	1.45	2.51	11.59
Northumberland	0.88	0.97	1.05	1.05	0.99	1.91	11.57
Lennox and Addington	0.62	0.71	0.80	0.80	0.88	1.29	11.24
Halton	4.28	5.29	6.80	6.80	7.56	2.71	11.21
Huron	0.49	0.52	0.55	0.55	0.58	1.37	9.05
Bruce	0.42	0.52	0.63	0.63	0.73	1.74	8.56
Indigenous Program Administrator							
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Social Services Corporation	-	1.31	3.98	9.99	9.99	7.05	n/a
Miziwe Biik Development Corporation	-	0.18	1.57	3.33	3.33	4.08	n/a
Total	293.82	320.89	377.29	386.79	401.83	390.69	n/a

1. Capital funding provided through the Home for Good program and Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, which began in 2017/18, is not included. Capital spending was \$3.5 million in 2017/18, \$11.0 million in 2018/19, \$7.1 million in 2019/20 and \$8.2 million in 2020/21. Capital funding committed by the province in 2017/18 and 2018/19 through 20-year affordability payments to help service mortgage agreements once projects are completed was \$47.5 million and \$55.5 million respectively. Capital funding, which is also provided through the Social Services Relief Fund in 2020/21, is not included. Capital spending for the Social Services Relief Fund was \$113.6 million in 2020/21.
2. Includes \$212 million of funding provided by the federal government. Based on spending information reported to the Ministry by municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators, we calculated operating spending of \$164.2 million and capital spending of \$47.8 million. Allocations to each municipality and Indigenous Program Administrator were provided as a total sum and the Ministry could not differentiate funding based on the federal and provincial amounts by municipality.
3. Funding per capita was based on the five-year average of annual homelessness funding, which included the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative; Home for Good Program; and Indigenous Supportive Housing Initiative. The most recent Statistics Canada population data (2016) was used.

Appendix 4: Details of Homelessness Programs

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

	Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), 2013	Home for Good/Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, 2017/18	Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF), 2020/21
Program objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the province's goal to end chronic homelessness by 2025. Reduce reliance on shelters and services. Facilitate the development of seamless services and programs that connect people to community resources. Focus on an outcomes-based and people-centred approach, while recognizing the complexity of homelessness and issues related to homelessness. Support municipalities to develop creative and innovative approaches to homelessness, which are aligned with their local housing and homelessness plans. 	<p>To make demonstrable progress in ending chronic homelessness, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to housing assistance Improved access to other supports to meet individual goals Increased housing stability Increased sense of inclusion and community connection Improved physical, mental and emotional well-being 	<p>Operating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create longer-term client service models that support preparation for potential future outbreaks or emergencies. Provide supports and services to address the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable Ontarians, including people living in congregate care settings, people with low incomes, social assistance recipients, and people experiencing homelessness. Encourage longer-term housing-based solutions to homelessness post-COVID-19. Enhance rent assistance provided to households in rent arrears due to COVID-19. <p>Capital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide longer-term housing-based solutions to homelessness post-COVID-19 outbreak. Change the physical design of congregate care settings such as shelters, to allow physical distancing and self-contained bedrooms and washrooms.
Target groups	<p>To assist recipients that fall under the Province's homelessness priorities population:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People experiencing homelessness People at risk of homelessness 	<p>To assist recipients that fall under the province's homelessness priorities population:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic homelessness Youth homelessness Indigenous homelessness Homelessness following transitions from provincially funded institutions 	<p>To assist vulnerable populations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous people People living in community housing People living in supportive housing People with low income Social assistance recipients People who require other social services support People experiencing homelessness

	Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), 2013	Home for Good/Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, 2017/18	Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF), 2020/21
Program elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency shelter solutions and related supports (e.g., shelters, a bed in a hotel, food and clothing, help with securing shelter). Housing and related supports (e.g., housing allowance or subsidy, medical care, transportation assistance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes operating funding for transitional and long-term housing such as apartments, rooms in houses, and boarding and lodging homes (congregate settings). Homelessness prevention (e.g., financial assistance for unpaid rent or utilities, landlord outreach and mediation). Other services and supports, as applicable, are determined by local regions to meet local needs. 	<p>Operating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent supplements (rent subsidies tied to a rental unit and paid directly to landlords, on behalf of recipients). Housing allowances (rent subsidies paid directly to recipients). Funds can also be used for eligible support services such as counselling, personal support, case management, assistance with medication, and life skills training. <p>Capital: 20-year mortgage payment support for the creation of new supportive housing units.¹</p>	<p>Operating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program elements described under CHPI. Other services and supports determined by local regions to meet local needs (such as personal protective equipment, medical assistance, COVID-19-related renovations, and costs of physical distancing in shelters). <p>Capital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major upgrades and retrofits to an existing emergency shelter. Purchase of facilities that would be converted/upgraded to provide longer-term housing solutions. Retrofit of existing transitional or supportive housing facility.
Funding allocation methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 50% of total program funding, allocated based on historical program spending by each municipality. Approximately 25% allocated based on the municipality's proportional share of households with deep core housing need.² Approximately 25% allocated based on the municipality's proportional share of provincial priority groups. Up to 10% of annual allocation allowed for program administration costs and up to 15% if conducting enumeration. 	Based on business case submission and assessed using established criteria.	<p>Phase 1 - 5% allocated to Indigenous program administrators, with the remainder allocated based on the funding model used for CHPI.</p> <p>Phase 2 (initial) - 50% allocated based on CHPI funding allocation, 50% based on the municipality's projected spending needs for COVID-19.</p> <p>Phase 2 (hold back) - targeted funding allocated to Indigenous program administrators based on identified needs. Remainder distributed using CHPI funding allocation (50%) and COVID-19 incidence and positivity rate above thresholds (50%).</p> <p>Phase 3 - distributed based on proportionate share of SSRF funding allocated through phases 1 and 2.</p>

For a list of performance indicators for each program see **Appendices 5a, b, c, d**.

- Capital projects were approved by the Ministry in 2017/18 and 2018/19, and funding has been committed to be paid according to project milestones or as affordability payments over 20 years upon completion of capital projects and occupancy of units.
- A household is said to be in "deep core housing need" if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and it would have to spend 50% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable. This indicator was developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Appendix 5a: Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Provincial Service Level Information, 2016/17–2020/21¹

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
People Experiencing Homelessness Obtain and Retain Housing (# of Households)					
Unsheltered/provisionally accommodated to transitional housing	2,569	2,978	4,300	3,782	2,100
Unsheltered/provisionally accommodated to long-term housing	10,952	13,166	8,295	7,377	4,838
Emergency shelter to transitional housing	2,453	2,467	3,147	3,183	1,973
Emergency shelter to long-term housing	16,479	14,814	13,591	13,038	10,900
Services and supports for households experiencing homelessness ²	1,041,733	998,786	1,673,139	122,629	208,472
Services to obtain housing (e.g., housing search assistance, utility/rent deposits)	n/a	116,505	293,944	73,202	135,629
Education services (e.g., budgeting skills, tenant rights, life skills training)	38,794	42,030	247,806	46,964	47,850
Employment assistance referrals ³ (e.g., to local region employment services, Employment Ontario employment and training services, and community-based employment supports)	n/a	n/a	n/a	21,517	34,571
People At Risk of Homelessness Remain Housed (# of Households)					
Transitional housing to long-term housing	2,613	2,181	2,102	2,222	1,549
Housing loss prevention (e.g., eviction prevention services, assistance with rent)	102,580	96,416	126,178	110,717	95,134
Housing retention (i.e., retained long-term housing for at least 6 months)	20,138	19,278	28,134	22,308	19,772
Services and supports for households at risk of homelessness ²	1,138,804	870,435	909,950	250,085	255,569
Education services	57,641	72,489	90,279	210,821	160,680
Employment assistance referrals ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	70,664	40,867
Emergency Shelter Use					
Emergency shelter use, all shelters combined	79,621	109,088	126,876	148,026	112,495
Emergency shelter use, general/adult ^{3,4}	n/a	n/a	n/a	121,562	101,889
Emergency shelter use, youth ^{3,4}	n/a	n/a	n/a	6,923	5,859
Emergency shelter use, family ^{3,4}	n/a	n/a	n/a	10,503	10,854
# of nights households spent in a shelter (spaces occupied) ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,555,371	2,797,790
# of shelter spaces/emergency beds (spaces available) ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,367,025	1,435,797

Note: Grey shading denotes indicators used by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to track program outcomes.

1. Year-over-year variances are largely because municipalities have discretion and flexibility to change which programs they fund each year. As such, service levels vary because of the introduction of new programs or the removal of programs, therefore fewer people were counted as receiving service.
2. Significant decreases in service levels in 2019/20 were because the Ministry reduced the number of service level indicators municipalities were required to report on.
3. This indicator was introduced in the 2019/20 reporting period and data collection began in the same fiscal year.
4. Number of people or households that stayed in a shelter.

Appendix 5b: Home for Good Provincial Service Level Information, 2017/18–2020/21

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

		2017/18 and 2018/19*	2019/20	2020/21
# of Households	assisted by Home for Good	5,133	5,899	5,276
	receiving Housing Allowance with program funding	853	537	896
	receiving Rent Supplement with program funding	619	478	546
	receiving Support Services with program funding	4,575	4,712	3,047
	receiving both Housing Assistance and Support Services with program funding	1,339	1,474	2,128
	receiving Housing Assistance from other funding sources	1,677	3,087	2,207
	receiving Support Services from other funding sources	682	914	1,238
	successfully housed for one year or more	834	2,517	1,441

* The Ministry could not separate indicators reported in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 fiscal years, due to challenges with collection of data from municipalities in the first year of the program, 2017/18.

Appendix 5c: Indigenous Supportive Housing Initiative Provincial Service Level Information, 2017/18–2020/21

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

		2017/18 and 2018/19*	2019/20	2020/21
# of Households	assisted by Indigenous Supportive Housing Program	571	3,703	3,357
	receiving Housing Allowance with program funding	34	68	66
	receiving Rent Supplement with program funding	381	1,523	1,362
	receiving Support Services with program funding	571	3,703	3,319
	receiving both Housing Assistance and Support Services with program funding	415	1,591	1,027
	receiving Housing Assistance from other funding sources	20	295	462
	receiving Support Services from other funding sources	119	431	847
	successfully housed for one year or more	277	278	419

* The Ministry could not separate indicators reported in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 fiscal years, due to challenges with collection of data from municipalities in the first year of the program, 2017/18.

Appendix 5d: Social Services Relief Fund Phases 1 and 2 Provincial Service Level Information, 2020/21

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Emergency Shelters	
Facilities funded for isolation/recovery and emergency shelter	506
Spaces/beds/units funded for isolation/recovery and emergency shelter	42,775
Unique households assisted with emergency shelter, hotel/motel/isolation stays	50,318
Unique households moved from emergency shelter to longer-term housing (e.g., transitional/supportive housing)	8,351
Unique households moved from unsheltered to longer-term housing (e.g., transitional/supportive housing)	9,746
Services and Supports	
Agencies provided with funding for pandemic expenses (e.g., cleaning, security, equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19-related renovations under \$50,000, costs for distancing centres)	1,694
Agencies provided with funding for services and supports (e.g., food security, medical services, PPE, transportation, mental health and addictions services)	2,077
Households assisted with food security	1,097,143
Households assisted with medical services	63,099
Households assisted with personal protective equipment	313,442
Households assisted with transportation	308,506
Households assisted with mental health and addictions services	328,805
Homelessness Prevention	
Unique households assisted with rent banks (e.g., for arrears)	7,510
Unique households assisted with emergency energy/utility funds	3,511
Unique households assisted with other supports to retain housing	55,307
Housing with Related Supports	
Unique households assisted with housing allowances	1,128
Unique households assisted with rent supplements	5,578

Appendix 6: Audit Criteria

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry)

1. The Ministry has an overall strategy to address homelessness and effectively co-ordinate with other provincial ministries and agencies, other levels of government, and transfer payment recipients (i.e., municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators) to address homelessness.
2. Funding is allocated to municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators on a needs-basis in a timely and equitable manner.
3. There is sufficient oversight of municipal service managers/Indigenous program administrators and appropriate accountability provisions in agreements to ensure that funding to address homelessness and risk of homelessness is used for the purposes intended.
4. Financial and management information systems provide relevant, reliable, and sufficiently detailed information to allow the Ministry to assess whether municipal service managers/Indigenous program administrators and their service providers are effectively and efficiently meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness or people at risk of homelessness. Concerns identified are resolved on a timely basis.
5. The Ministry gathers appropriate and sufficient financial and performance information, and performs the required analyses to determine and publicly report whether programs' goals and objectives are being achieved. Where warranted, appropriate and timely corrective action is taken.

Municipal Service Managers and Indigenous Program Administrators

1. Municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators deliver programs and allocate provincial funding toward supports and services provided by third parties, based on the assessed need of people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness in their area.
2. Effective processes are in place to monitor whether shelter and supports provided by the municipality directly or by a third party to homeless people are delivered in accordance with legislative and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Ministry) policy requirements, and to provide the Ministry with accurate operational, performance and financial information.
3. Municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators measure, evaluate and report on the effectiveness of their program delivery in addressing homelessness in their area.

Appendix 7: Homelessness Statistics and Shelter Spaces by Municipality

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Statistics Canada

Municipality	Population (2016 census)	Homelessness		Emergency Shelter Spaces/ Beds ¹	
		Homelessness Enumeration (2018) ²	Homeless per 10,000 pop.	Pre-COVID-19	As of Sep 2, 2021
1 Toronto	2,731,571	8,598	31	3,130	5,649
2 Greater Sudbury	161,647	1,714	106	61	78
3 Ottawa	934,243	1,654	18	2,002	2,149
4 Peel	1,381,739	918	7	530	770
5 Niagara	447,888	662	15	198	294
6 Cochrane	79,682	605	76	33	123
7 Simcoe	479,650	540	11	126	312
8 Thunder Bay	146,048	537	37	104	132
9 Hamilton	536,917	473	9	363	600
10 London	455,526	432	9	365	487
11 York	1,109,909	389	4	138	242
12 Lambton	126,638	345	27	48	478
13 Waterloo	535,154	340	6	252	540
14 Kenora	65,533	327	50	74	150
15 Halton	548,435	319	6	45	105
16 Wellington	222,726	288	13	7	86
17 Peterborough	138,236	259	19	76	144
18 Windsor	398,953	220	6	403	805
19 Durham	645,862	213	3	54	168
20 Hastings	136,445	187	14	21	34
21 Brantford	134,808	182	14	78	131
22 Nipissing	83,150	182	22	37	62
23 Kingston	150,475	173	11	72	97
24 Parry Sound	42,824	142	33	44	46
25 Renfrew	102,394	139	14	0	0
26 Lennox and Addington	67,623	131	19	133	133
27 Muskoka	60,599	131	22	54	54
28 St. Thomas	88,978	119	13	40	140
29 Stratford	76,796	110	14	37	120
30 Sault Ste. Marie	78,159	102	13	23	37
31 Huron	59,297	100	17	0	2
32 Rainy River	20,110	86	43	0	0
33 Manitoulin-Sudbury	34,801	82	24	0	5
34 Chatham-Kent	102,042	80	8	193	235
35 Norfolk	109,787	77	7	17	17
36 Kawartha	93,485	75	8	-	41
37 Oxford	110,862	63	6	25	105

Municipality	Homelessness			Emergency Shelter Spaces/Beds ¹	
	Population (2016 census)	Homelessness Enumeration (2018) ²	Homeless per 10,000 pop.	Pre-COVID-19	As of Sep 2, 2021
38 Northumberland	85,598	62	7	21	33
39 Timiskaming	32,251	60	19	9	9
40 Dufferin	61,735	52	8	29	29
41 Algoma	35,935	44	12	7	7
42 Cornwall	113,429	39	3	122	154
43 Grey	93,830	35	4	46	81
44 Leeds and Greenville	100,546	30	3	13	13
45 Lanark	68,698	26	4	0	3
46 Prescott and Russell	89,333	19	2	2	2
47 Bruce	68,147	17	2	92	172
Total	13,448,494	21,378	16	9,124	15,074

Note: Grey shading indicates the four municipalities we met with.

1. Data obtained through bi-weekly shelter survey conducted by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing with municipalities. Includes both permanent and temporary shelter spaces. Pre-COVID-19 shelter spaces are those which existed prior to the pandemic, after adjustments for physical distancing.
2. Data gaps and limitations were noted in the enumeration. For example, results may not be comparable across regions as differing enumeration methodologies were used.

Appendix 8: Provincial Strategies Addressing Factors Contributing to Homelessness

Source of data: Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Health, Children, Community, and Social Services, and the Solicitor General

Strategy and Responsible Ministry	Factors Contributing to Homelessness							
	Unemployment	Domestic violence or abuse	Family breakdown or child welfare	Mental illness	Substance abuse	Lack of affordable housing	Need for supportive housing	Indigenous or racialized identity
Municipal Affairs and Housing								
Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, 2010		✓				✓	✓	
Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update, 2016		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ontario Supportive Housing Policy Framework, 2017		✓		✓	✓			✓
Community Housing Renewal Strategy, 2019		✓				✓		✓
More Homes, More Choice Action Plan, 2019						✓		
Children, Community and Social Services								
Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2014-2019	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2020-2025	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Child Welfare Redesign Strategy, 2020	✓		✓	✓				✓
Health								
Open Minds, Healthy Minds								
Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, 2011	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Roadmap to wellness - a plan to build Ontario's mental health and addictions system, 2020				✓	✓		✓	✓

Strategy and Responsible Ministry	Factors Contributing to Homelessness							
	Unemployment	Domestic violence or abuse	Family breakdown or child welfare	Mental illness	Substance abuse	Lack of affordable housing	Need for supportive housing	Indigenous or racialized identity
Indigenous Affairs								
Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, 2016		✓	✓					✓
Pathways to Safety, Ontario's Strategy in Response to the Final Report of the National (Indigenous Affairs) Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2021								
		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Solicitor General								
Mental Health Strategy for Corrections in Canada, 2016 (A Federal-Provincial-Territorial Partnership)				✓	✓			
Mental Health for Women in Prison, 2019				✓				

Appendix 9: 2015 Recommendations of Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness by Key Priorities and Related Implementation Status as of July, 2021

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Priorities	Recommendations	Complete	Complete and Ongoing	In the Process of Being Completed	Little or No Progress
Defining homelessness in Ontario	1. Adopt a comprehensive, technical definition of homelessness for Ontario (adapted from the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness)	✓			
	2. Adopt the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy definition for chronic homelessness	✓			
Prioritizing and setting targets to end homelessness in Ontario	3. Set up four priority populations to focus on to prevent, reduce and end homelessness: chronic, youth, Indigenous, and transitioning provincial institutions	✓			
	4. Local municipalities adopt additional, local priorities as appropriate		✓		
	5. Set target to end chronic homelessness within 10 years		✓		
	6. Invest in further study, capacity building, and program implementation to inform adoption of additional targets			✓	
Measuring homelessness and collecting data to track progress	7. Improve standardization of data collection over time			✓	
	8. Provincial indicators for tracking progress on homelessness build on data collection already underway or planned across Ontario communities			✓	
	9. Track chronic homelessness and create a dashboard of indicators to measure progress on preventing and ending homelessness			✓	
	10. Develop a new approach to measuring homelessness following transition from provincially funded institutions and service systems			✓	
	11. Local regions carry out local enumeration from a standardized menu of options and the province should conduct further analysis to develop this menu	✓			
	12. Local regions develop local indicators to track overall local homeless numbers and local progress on provincial priorities populations			✓	
	13. Local communities must gather a minimum set of standardized data which has been developed by the province after further study	✓			
	14. Municipalities carry out local equity impact assessments to work toward equitable outcomes of housing and homelessness plans and policies				✓

Priorities	Recommendations	Complete	Complete and Ongoing	In the Process of Being Completed	Little or No Progress
Expanding the evidence base and building capacity to address homelessness	15. Develop knowledge mobilization framework for sharing research and best practices		✓		
	16. Centre of Excellence for Evidence Based Decision Making allocate resources to focus on homelessness	✓			
	17. Share local success stories and convene provincial homelessness summit	✓			
	18. Promote data integration and sharing of homelessness related data across Ontario and explore the potential of common intake systems for homeless serving agencies			✓	
	19. Promote policy cohesion by inviting partners to review programs and policies and commit to make continuous improvements and avoid "stupid rules"	✓			
	20. Support local capacity to promote cultural sensitivity and awareness, including providing education, training and support		✓		
	21. Support local municipalities with tools, resources, and funding to support local capacity to carry out equity impact assessments				✓
	22. Provide increased funding to support capacity building and local system transformation and commit to long term, stable funding for affordable housing and homelessness-related programs, as opposed to annualized funding				✓
	23. Work with key partners and engage with federal government to develop a national housing strategy; to commit to long-term funding to create permanent, affordable housing		✓		
# of Recommendations		8	5	7	3
% of Recommendations		35	22	30	13

Appendix 10: Municipal Funding Allocations Based on Updated Provincial Priority Indicators, 2020/21

Source of data: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Statistics Canada

Municipality	2020/21 Actual Funding Allocated (\$)	2020/21 Funding Allocated Based on Updated Provincial Priority Indicators (\$)	Change in Funding Allocated (\$)	Change in Funding Allocated (%)
Timiskaming	466,729	1,147,132	680,403	146
Cochrane	1,345,185	2,989,057	1,643,872	122
Algoma	657,297	1,436,791	779,494	119
Renfrew	1,447,608	3,120,871	1,673,263	116
Leeds & Grenville	1,267,909	2,568,045	1,300,136	103
Huron	578,131	1,151,273	573,142	99
Nipissing	1,771,340	3,526,620	1,755,280	99
Bruce	729,553	1,427,153	697,600	96
Sault Ste. Marie	1,495,440	2,928,384	1,432,944	96
Lennox and Addington	884,096	1,622,859	738,763	84
Greater Sudbury	3,059,602	5,584,315	2,524,713	83
Parry Sound	702,477	1,273,115	570,638	81
Hastings	2,272,835	4,079,731	1,806,896	79
Northumberland	1,141,104	1,993,071	851,967	75
Rainy River	463,830	764,145	300,315	65
Stratford	851,608	1,346,552	494,944	58
Durham	9,066,779	14,365,879	5,299,100	58
Kawartha	1,521,153	2,352,298	831,145	55
Manitoulin-Sudbury	766,183	1,190,168	423,985	55
Simcoe	8,097,053	12,446,578	4,349,525	54
Oxford	1,388,277	2,113,949	725,672	52
Chatham-Kent	1,807,547	2,740,161	932,614	52
Peel	20,362,752	30,758,699	10,395,947	51
Thunder Bay	3,542,466	5,344,145	1,801,679	51
Norfolk	1,646,955	2,474,223	827,268	50
Muskoka	1,071,453	1,590,925	519,472	48
Halton	6,555,275	9,558,953	3,003,678	46
Niagara	7,847,786	11,462,913	3,615,127	46
York	15,692,604	22,459,278	6,766,674	43
Dufferin	861,461	1,210,904	349,443	41
Lambton	2,299,063	3,130,849	831,786	36
St. Thomas	1,458,954	1,949,678	490,724	34
Lanark	1,307,907	1,728,423	420,516	32
Grey	1,888,303	2,261,174	372,871	20
Brantford	3,045,056	3,561,143	516,087	17
Peterborough	3,413,935	3,905,064	491,129	14

Municipality	2020/21 Actual Funding Allocated (\$)	2020/21 Funding Allocated Based on Updated Provincial Priority Indicators (\$)	Change in Funding Allocated (\$)	Change in Funding Allocated (%)
Kenora	1,908,267	2,080,035	171,768	9
Waterloo	10,682,886	11,496,084	813,198	8
London	11,290,770	12,113,635	822,865	7
Wellington	4,002,383	4,249,725	247,342	6
Kingston	4,198,383	4,178,614	(19,769)	0
Windsor	10,703,752	9,647,915	(1,055,837)	(10)
Cornwall	3,545,054	3,058,763	(486,291)	(14)
Hamilton	19,645,911	13,603,341	(6,042,570)	(31)
Toronto	117,619,934	80,590,663	(37,029,271)	(31)
Ottawa	38,626,981	22,220,321	(16,406,660)	(42)
Prescott and Russell	3,707,118	1,903,532	(1,803,586)	(49)
Total	338,707,145	338,707,145	-	



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