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# Executive Summary

## *A message from the Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan Steering Committee*

Over the past three decades, homelessness has increased in Saskatoon. Government and non-profit organizations have developed emergency services to ensure immediate safety, but a systematic response has been missing. The community has demanded that we do better. We listened and we have acted.

In late 2014, the United Way Plan to End Homelessness (P2EH) Leadership Committee, the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), and the Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness (CAB-SH) formed a Steering Committee to discuss the best way to create a coordinated approach to addressing homelessness in Saskatoon. It was agreed that an updated plan, based on recent community consultations and lessons learned from new initiatives would be developed, and that a leadership model focusing on results and community impact be established.

Since the consultations, many new efforts are already underway and are having an impact on homelessness in Saskatoon. But there is much more to do. With this in mind, we have integrated the community's recommendations to create an ambitious five-year plan that will turn vision into action. The responsibility of leading the Homelessness Action Plan will be undertaken by the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP). To implement the Action Plan, SHIP will review its mandate, its bylaws, and expand its Board in 2016 to be more representative of a community committed to addressing homelessness. SHIP's functions and activities will also expand. As a lead agency, they will facilitate meetings, provide staff support to committees and action teams, help develop new and enhance existing programs, research solutions, evaluate and report on progress, foster collective action and ensure that the actions set out in this plan are undertaken.

This Action Plan is the result of a concerted effort to honour the passion and voice of the community. Based on multiple consultations over the past three years and building upon the existing collaborative efforts already underway, we are confident this plan will create positive change. This will be achieved by improving coordination, ensuring the service and housing infrastructure is meeting the needs of people at-risk or experiencing homelessness, and evaluating progress to make continuous improvements to our homeless serving system.

It is essential that we coordinate and co-operate effectively to meet the needs of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

***Together, we will make sure that homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.***

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### Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan Steering Committee

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*The Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan focuses on four key areas with specific actions and goals to help reach our vision that homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.*

## **1. System Coordination and Innovation**

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Improving service coordination will result in access to the right support at the right time. By promoting collaboration, service providers will benefit from knowing that the services they cannot provide may be provided by a partnering agency. Communicating challenges will expose service gaps that require innovative solutions to help end homelessness individuals and families.

### **Year 1**

- Review availability of housing and support services to assess system capacity, ease of access and service gaps baseline
- Expand the mandate of the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership as the agency leading the coordination, collaboration, research and evaluation efforts detailed in this Action Plan
- Develop and regularly engage Collective Action Teams supporting solutions to homelessness
- Evaluate city-wide data gathering ability and facilitate adoption of tools to improve decision making and performance for clients
- Develop a Communications Plan that
  - facilitates discussions that develop solutions
  - spreads knowledge on the state of and solutions to homelessness
  - celebrates achievements in Saskatoon

### **Year 2 – 5**

- Develop a cost analysis and investment plan driven by results of system capacity evaluation
- Release a report card that charts progress
- Work with service and housing providers to analyze and improve information gathering and performance evaluation
- System and Capacity Evaluation (Year 3)

## **2. Strengthening Housing Placement and Support Programs**

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Addressing homelessness will be achieved by expanding housing placement and support programs such as Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, and Housing Location programs. Providing access to training and data collection assistance for these programs will also enhance local organizations' capacity to serve their clients.

### **Year 1**

- Invest in expansion of housing placement programs and the systems that support its implementation
- Evaluate current housing placement and support programs to promote sustainability and potential areas of expansion
- Create training and expansion plan with service providers

### **Year 2 – 5**

- Ongoing evaluation of programs to identify success, impact and gaps;
- Develop a funding and resource assessment to ensure critical needs are met in the long-term, and to promote new investment that prevent and end homelessness
- Coordinate training and professional development programs
- Develop projects that are long-term solutions to system gaps

### **3. Prevention**

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Stabilizing people by ensuring that they remain in their home prevents homelessness and the trauma that comes with it. Saskatoon is home to several of the most effective prevention programs in Canada, meeting people where they are at and seeing incredible results. However, some people are still falling through the cracks into homelessness and need short-term support, financial or otherwise, to remain housed. For others, it will require encouraging a targeted response during times in their life when they may be particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless.

#### **Year 1**

- Engage with hospitals, child and family services, and correctional facilities to document current policy and practice with respect to discharge/release planning and to identify housing-related barriers to successful transition
- Interview front-line workers and those with lived experience to understand homelessness prevention needs in Saskatoon
- Develop a service provider recognition program

#### **Year 2 – 5**

- Consult Aboriginal service providers and those with lived experience on how to improve access to culturally appropriate counselling and healing practices
- Develop standard discharge planning protocols with hospitals, child and family services, and correctional facilities
- Release a recommendation report and facilitate actions that improve access to culturally appropriate counselling and healing practices
- Create a framework for a local rent bank and a matched savings program
- Report on activities that will promote prevention of homelessness in Saskatoon
- Identify gaps in service for children and youth

### **4. The Solution to Homelessness is Housing**

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An adequate supply of appropriate housing is essential to success of the Plan, and critical to any effort to prevent and end homelessness. This Action Plan will work to ensure a wide range of units are available, including supported living, affordable market, rent-geared-to-income housing and alternatives for those who need something different to meet their housing and social needs. Creating new affordable housing units is a necessary investment to ensure everyone can escape life on the street.

#### **Year 1**

- Conduct a baseline for need centred on existing housing inventory, waiting lists, and current and future demographics of the community
- Look at exceptional needs and best practices in harm reduction models

#### **Year 2 – 5**

- Develop ten year targets for investment in appropriate housing solutions based on current inventory and established need
- Increase the supply of housing with support services
- Establish new housing units with supported housing programs that address the needs of the hardest to house in Saskatoon

## What Will Success Look Like?

### ***Increases in the number of individuals and families supported***

- 150 people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness will be housed by 2019
- Expansion of case management services will provide housing support for an additional 45 people by 2019

### ***Preventing Homelessness***

- A decrease in the number of unique individuals needing emergency shelter, short term stays and for crisis situations only
- Establishment of a rent or utility bank
- Widespread knowledge of tenant rights and landlord responsibilities

### ***Increased amount of affordable housing alternatives***

- A decrease in waiting lists, and an expansion in the number of appropriate and affordable rental and ownership housing alternatives that keeps pace with population growth at minimum.

### ***Improved quality of life for those served by the system***

- A survey of those who have lived experience of homelessness shows they have choices and alternatives to homelessness and report (according to their own definition) improvement in their well-being;

### ***Improved teamwork between all parts of the homeless service system***

- A survey of service providers will report satisfaction in their work and acknowledge that they are working together effectively to support actions to reduce homelessness.
- A data sharing agreement to improve service coordination

### ***Improved reporting and evaluation***

- Creation of a credible registry with a street needs evaluation to guide decision making
- Development of a Homelessness Report Card for Saskatoon

## It's Time to Act!

As the journey proceeds, there will need to be ways to reflect on the efforts and record outcomes and goal achievements. A report card charting our progress will be produced annually, as well as regular profiles of our amazing agencies and people of Saskatoon. It is important to speak to a wider audience – our community at large – about how the Plan is going and what is being achieved.

This purpose of this Action Plan is to enable all stakeholders including those who are homeless, direct service providers, Aboriginal leaders, allies and local, provincial, federal governments to work together sharing an agenda for change. It will maximize the strengths and innovation that characterize our community and will help us achieve our vision that homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.

A right to housing is currently not a recognized human right in Canada, but it should be.

As we approach solutions to homelessness, we will not only see each person as an individual, but also look at the bigger picture. Our job as a community is to find innovative solutions together. Everyone is included and participates in making Saskatoon a better place to live.



## Introduction

Homelessness in our city is real. Individuals and families live day to day without a home and are faced with the instability, risk and volatility this brings to their lives. Some live on the street, many live at shelters, many more live in inappropriate and unsafe situations. It is emotionally and physically devastating for people who live this reality.

The problem of homelessness reflects poorly on our community's ability to take care of vulnerable citizens. Families and individuals who are homeless are forced to use emergency services, often inappropriately, in order to survive. Critical needs often remain unmet, such as access to income support, medical care or prescriptions, food, clothing, transportation and for children, attachment to school. The stability that comes with having a home of your own cannot be overstated. Every person in our city needs a home that is safe, affordable and appropriate.

With the steep rental housing increases in 2008, homelessness and housing insecurity became more immediate issues. That year, Saskatoon had its first Point-In-Time count of people experiencing homelessness. On one day, the count found 260 people experiencing homelessness, but results led researchers to

suspect many more may be couch surfing or 'hidden homeless'. Community members began to come together to think about what we could do differently to really address the issue. The intensity of the efforts so far demonstrates that Saskatoon is ready to move from planning to action.

***This action plan honours the voice of the community from the many consultations that have brought us to this point and demanded that we do better.***

The story of Saskatoon's journey from awareness of the growing issue of homelessness, to strategizing through community consultations, is found in Appendix A of this action plan. The pages that follow contain a hopeful, collective response to homelessness, based on the wisdom gathered through these consultations with our community. Our goal now is to move each of the priorities that were identified from vision to tangible actions. Much work has already happened over the past three years!

We will be implementing a more coordinated approach to ending homelessness in Saskatoon and will be working in partnership with provincial initiatives such as:

- The *Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy*, which contains housing/homelessness as a focus area. The actions in this strategy range from enhancing supportive available housing options to improving access to subsidized rental housing for individuals and families in greatest need.
- The *Truth and Reconciliation Committee Call to Action*, which indicates that the legacy from residential schools continue to this day and is reflected in the significant educational, income, health, and social disparities between Aboriginal people and other Canadians.
- The *Saskatchewan Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan*, which recommends building community-specific partnerships that create opportunities for better mental health and reduced harms from substance abuse. The action plan identifies the city's Plan to End Homelessness as one of the methods to encourage greater collaboration and engagement from the private sector and municipal governments.
- The *Saskatchewan Disability Strategy* places a focus on developing people-centred services.
- The *Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis people*, which identified that the lack of affordable housing was impacting First Nations and Métis people in their search for job opportunities.

Preventing and ending homelessness must be active and practical, not just idealistic or mere rhetoric. We know that a useful plan will include acknowledging and addressing the systemic issues that lead to homelessness, as well as ensuring support to help individuals find homes.

There is a great deal of work to do to ensure Saskatoon has an effective, coordinated system that offers support for people who need help to avoid eviction, and moves those who are homeless rapidly into permanent housing that best suits their needs. In some areas, Saskatoon is far ahead of other cities. We celebrate the effective prevention programs in Saskatoon that have been successfully supporting people and reducing homelessness. We also acknowledge the effective new initiatives which were developed as a response to the gaps that became evident during the community consultations.

But there is more to do. A coordinated system response will involve increased prevention efforts, teamwork between emergency and transitional supports, policy reforms and a serious investment in affordable housing options across the spectrum (social, non-profit and low barrier). In all of our work, it is important that our services are culturally competent,

compassionate and restorative to those who experience the trauma of homelessness.

The community consultations revealed that there was a desire to find solutions not only for people who are chronically homeless, but also to create options for those at greatest risk of becoming homeless. Saskatoon citizens and community leaders who participated in the numerous consultations that inform this report identified a vision that is streamed into four priorities. Each of these priorities will be worked on through specific strategies and tangible actions.

Homeless survivors and allies have described the raw experience of their situation, the despair and trauma, and how hard it is to find a way out. The serious gaps in services and supports have become evident. If there has been one message that is clear from the community, it is that they are ready to end homelessness in our city. Most importantly, a roadmap has been developed, and the journey towards changing how we approach homelessness has begun. The only way to get the job done is to work together, all of us, regular citizens, front-line agencies, Aboriginal leaders, funders, all levels of government and the business community. Let's move forward. It's time to move **from vision to action**.



## Why Should We Prevent and End Homelessness?

We need to prevent and end homelessness because it is the right thing to do for each citizen who does not benefit from the privileges many of us take for granted. Taking action on homelessness is beneficial for the whole community. When people have appropriate housing, they live better and healthier lives; they are less involved with crime; some are able to transition into addressing other needs (like additions or employment); and they are not inappropriately using government-funded services. We all benefit.

The trauma that happens while experiencing homelessness affects self-esteem and limits quality of life. Children who are homeless, even for a short period, can experience serious long-term, negative effects.<sup>i</sup> Adults experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience violence and die from preventable conditions than people who have housing.<sup>ii</sup> This is not inevitable.

Housing First and housing placement programs have proven to be a much better use of taxpayer resources providing quality of life, dignified support, stability, and often better individual outcomes. For families, safe, appropriate and affordable housing provides stability and better developmental outcomes, as school and social supports are not interrupted.

The value to society truly lies in the human impact, the incredible success of changed lives, breaking generational patterns, recognizing the mistakes of the past and ensuring everyone has their needs met. When people are treated with the dignity they deserve, they are able to make shifts we might not expect. Society is better when everyone is treated with dignity.

### ***THIS IS HOMELESSNESS: LEONARD'S STORY***

'Leonard' was eating cereal and toast and sipping on a hot cup of coffee. He was savouring every morsel – as if it might be his last, as if it was his first solid meal in days. He was happy he had a safe place to stay for the night. Since he got out of the hospital about a month previously, after suffering a seizure and being hooked up to life support, most of his nights have been spent under the traffic bridges between the Riversdale and Broadway areas along the riverbanks of Saskatoon's South Saskatchewan River.

Today he is staying at The Lighthouse, an emergency shelter, supported living and affordable housing provider. Staying there not only provides relief from the elements and a bed to sleep on, but access to three scheduled meals a day plus an evening snack, as well as free laundry services. He has had his first shower in weeks – a luxury Leonard is not used to. "Most places fill up really quickly so you have to get there by a certain time," he says. "You have to be one of the first in line."

Leonard says he is an alcoholic. "I used to have a family but I drink too much. I don't blame my wife. I tried detox once but I didn't succeed. All of a sudden I'm out on the street by myself." He doesn't blame his family for not letting him return home. "I drink too much. I'm still an alcoholic."

*Please note that all interviewees were compensated for their time.*

## Why Are People Homeless?

Homelessness is caused by both complex structural and individual issues. The underlying causes are no surprise: poverty; poor physical and mental health; addictions; experiences of trauma and abuse; lack of employment; and a shortage of affordable housing. Ultimately, no one chooses to be homeless, and many people are one paycheque or crisis away from losing their home.

Homelessness as a social problem needs to be seen in context. Almost always, people experiencing homelessness are disadvantaged and marginalized. The emergency shelters do not create homelessness—they are a crisis response when people cannot access housing. Serious addictions do not cause homelessness—the addiction is a result of personal trauma, pain and alienation, which may limit options in housing.

As we look for solutions, we must recognize the uncomfortable realities that contribute to homelessness. This is essential in Saskatoon. Racism, trauma, unfit and unaffordable housing, and poverty are all factors that increase homelessness. Aboriginal people have been affected by colonialism, residential schools and ongoing systemic disadvantage, including the lack of access to the basic necessities of life. Children or youth who lack food or housing, or those removed from their families and placed into foster care, may be introduced to high-risk lifestyles and are more at risk of becoming homeless as adults. There are no easy solutions, but better policies that will fill the gaps and access to culturally competent supports are a good start. People who have experienced homelessness need to be in control and able to choose the support they want.

Sometimes government services, institutions and agencies working in silos also perpetuate the problem of homelessness. Institutional services (hospitals, correctional facilities) often do not add housing support to their mandate and people are discharged without a plan in place. It is difficult to access appropriate mental health and addictions support. Shelters have never been adequately funded to do the work of bridging people into housing, but may be blamed in public discourse for issues related to homelessness. Increased investment and meaningful coordination could go a long way in fixing some of these issues.

It's easy to look at an individual and see that they need support to find housing, but this does not address underlying problems. The individual or family is the point of intervention, but each situation is informed by big picture issues. Sometimes homelessness is a way to escape an abusive home situation. It can reflect good decision-making in a person's life as much as it can reflect poor choices. This needs to be recognized as well.

Self-reliance and employability are important goals, but may be an unreasonable expectation for people who lived traumatic lives that led them into homelessness. They may always need a level of support. Programs that address homelessness should also foster the highest level of independence and participation that each person can achieve. Happiness, safety, choice and community participation are building blocks of a good life and essential goals to help people strive towards.

## *THIS IS HOMELESSNESS: SUCCESS STORY?*

“Social Services will tell you I’m a success story.”

Wallace, unlike most of the other people having breakfast that morning at the homeless shelter he’s been staying at for the past four months, looks much younger than his 45 years. He’s quiet-spoken, clean and articulate. He finished his GED and until last year when both his foster mother and his birth mother passed away, he said he led a pretty quiet life.

His last apartment in the “hood” was run down and unsafe. Neighbours in the building were affected by addictions and mental illnesses or were in gangs. “Water was dripping from the ceiling and it wrecked my television. There was black mold and bedbugs.”

But it was a place to call home. It allowed him to avoid getting into trouble and to remain sober. When his mother passed away he said he couldn’t deal with it. “I fell off the wagon,” he said. “I couldn’t deal with the emotional baggage. I relapsed. I got myself into trouble with drinking and stuff – I went to jail.”

The whole ten months he was there he feared for his life. “It’s filled to the brim,” he says. “People are tripling up in single cells. They’re short on everything a person needs – food, clothing. Basically, everything a person needs they were short on. Forget any programs to help a guy out.” The Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre has been operating over maximum capacity since 2010, posing a risk for inmates, staff and the general public.



“I felt like I was being set up for failure,” says Wallace.

“There is no support once you are out either. It’s hard to find a place to live when you have a criminal record”, he says. Though he can afford the rent, no one, he believes, is willing to take a chance on him. It’s also hard, he adds, when you don’t have a phone.

Reflecting back on his life, he scoffs at the idea that he might be considered a success story.

“I think obviously from foster care they said that I’m one of their success stories but I don’t see it. I’m not working. My life has been stereotyped – I get labeled all the time.”

It doesn’t take a psychologist to look into my background, he says, to see that he’s been damaged. “I’ve been under the government’s care most of my life in one form or the other. First it was residential school. Then I was in and out of foster homes. I have no positive memories of growing up. None.”

*Please note that all interviewees were compensated for their time.*

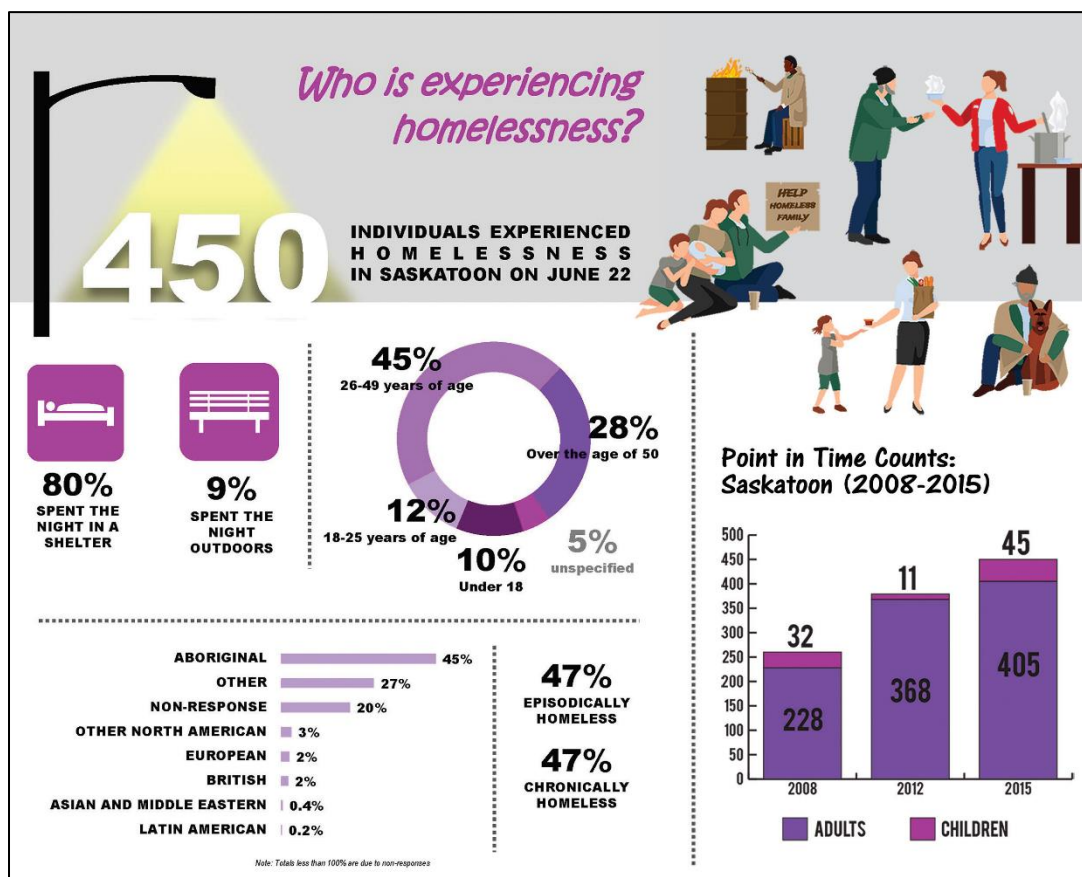
# Why Are People Homeless?

One of the tools to help understand the demographics of homelessness is the Point in Time (PIT) Count of Homeless Individuals and Families in Saskatoon. A PIT count is a count of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness on a single day. This approach provides a snapshot of numbers, demographics, needs and priorities. Although this approach tends to underestimate the problem, it can provide useful information and help to measure progress, increase public awareness, and assist in policy development and program decisions.

- an outdoor survey conducted by teams on the streets of Saskatoon;
- an indoor survey collected by teams at participating shelters;
- data from the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), which includes The Lighthouse, Salvation Army, YWCA Saskatoon and Saskatchewan Housing Coalition; and
- observational data representing those who wished not to be surveyed.

The Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) conducted the most recent count which took place on Monday, June 22, 2015. This count was aimed to create a comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of housing and homelessness in Saskatoon. The analysis was based on:

The results from this count indicated a continued rise of homelessness in Saskatoon. It revealed that there were 405 adults and 45 children without permanent shelter compared to previous PIT Counts. Approximately 45% were between the ages of 26-49 and 28% were 50 or older. Most of the respondents were male at



62%, and 45% self-identified as Aboriginal. The count also discovered that 46% had been victims of physical violence while living outdoors; 45% had lived with foster families during childhood; and 60% attributed income and affordability as their main obstacles to finding homes.

Also in Saskatoon, we gather yearly data on shelter usage. In 2015, there were 1,953 unique individuals who used emergency shelters, up

from 1,358 in 2014. Of those people, 104 experienced chronic or episodic homelessness. Year to year, the numbers remain very much the same or grow. With planning, financial aid and appropriate services, we can do more to lower those numbers. With better prevention efforts and financial supports, we could prevent homelessness for many of the people who could enter a shelter this coming year or ensure they have immediate help to find new housing.

## *THIS IS HOMELESSNESS: BACKALLEY LIVING*

*"Everyone calls me Skipper. All my friends call me that."*

Skipper is a member of the Kinistino First Nation – a descendant of the Saulteaux First Nation that moved to the Qu'Appelle Valley from their ancestral territory north of the Great Lakes in the 1870s. After Treaty 4 was signed Skipper's descendants moved north, eventually securing a reserve southeast of Melfort.

Skipper doesn't remember a time when he didn't drink to help him get through the long days and nights of living on the streets of Saskatoon. He grew up in a residential school like his parents and grandparents before them did. Though jobs were plentiful during the early 1970s for non-Aboriginal people living in Saskatchewan, for young men like Skipper, work was hard to find.

*"I went to fight in the Vietnam War," he says. "It was a job."*

Like many Saskatchewan First Nations men and women who recognize all of North America as First Nations traditional lands, Skipper doesn't distinguish between the American and Canadian parts of Turtle Island. He is one of hundreds of Saskatchewan Aboriginal people who have fought with the United States Army.

Like so many other Vietnam veterans, he witnessed the horrors of war and returned to an uninterested nation and struggled to adjust to civilian life. Life in Saskatchewan was no different than in his pre-service days. He was confronted with racism and discrimination.

Skipper traded the horrors of residential school for a life in-and-out of correctional institutions. *"When I was in the penitentiary I thought the guards were nicer than the priests."* His eyes misted up when he recounted his time in residential school. *"The priests were so mean. It was worse than slavery. It was a hell hole. They were supposed to be ministers!"*

He concluded his conversation by saying, *"I'm a survivor. I get by okay. I stay alive."* Getting by for Skipper and his friend means sleeping in the back alley behind 20<sup>th</sup> Street in Saskatoon's newly revitalized Riversdale area. When asked about what he does when it turns bitterly cold he explained, *"You just get up and walk around 'til you warm up. I stay alive. Either you die or don't."*



*Please note that all interviewees were compensated for their time.*

## Cultural Competence & Lived Experience Inform Action

The need to be culturally competent in offering services is self-evident, but even more essential as homelessness services are developed. There are a significant number of First Nations, Métis, and other ethnic groups that are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness. The 2015 Point In Time Count indicates that Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the homeless population.

The Kitaskinaw project from 2013-14 analyzed the demographics, program needs, gaps and preferences of Aboriginal service-users in Saskatoon. Based on the project findings, the first two recommendations from the technical committee dealt with cultural competence in services and the need for Aboriginal led services:

- ✓ More effort must be made to address Aboriginal employment levels and to building cultural competencies within organizations.
- ✓ An Aboriginal-led housing initiative must be developed to address the housing needs of Saskatoon's Aboriginal population.

In this action plan, we honour the Kitaskinaw recommendations in order to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal citizens in Saskatoon:

***The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (TRC)*** outlines what can be done to redress the awful legacy of residential schools. All Canadians need to honour the people who told their stories of abuse and loss at residential schools, and commit to the recommendations in the Calls to Action. Throughout the TRC report, the need for

culturally appropriate services and cultural competency training is clear.

Any programs or efforts from this action plan must be developed with awareness of the systemic issues causing homelessness and honours the restorative power of cultural connection. This is not just cultural sensitivity. Action must recognize the immense value of cultural involvement, holding space and time for the inclusion of cultural knowledge and allowing the strength of community to heal the trauma people have experienced in homelessness.

Cultural competence in services can seem like a non-essential element of care, but it is vital to success. The individuals and families who are creating a new life for themselves will respond better when their values are reflected in the support they receive.

The voice of lived experience has the ability to provide context, correct misconceptions and help allies challenge and check their privilege. As a community working to prevent and end homelessness, we continue to listen and welcome leadership from those who have experienced homelessness.

Organizations and individual support workers are at various levels of awareness, knowledge and skills when it comes to cultural competence. If our efforts are to be successful, hiring practices, program parameters, outcome measures need to be informed by cultural diversity and the knowledge of lived experience. A commitment to cultural competence and honouring the voice of lived experience will frame the actions that follow in this action plan.

## HOUSING STABILIZES FAMILIES

Shirley Isbister knows first-hand the struggle of life on the streets of Saskatoon. “I grew up in extreme poverty,” she says. As a child, she remembers sleeping along the riverbanks and bouncing from basement to basement – with no permanent place to call home. Many of her family members and friends have struggled with addictions, mental health issues, and other residual effects of colonial policies and systemic racism.

Shirley puts her personal understanding of the injustices that have been directed to the Aboriginal community to good use in her role as president of the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. CUMFI is a community-based Métis owned and operated non-profit that provides transitional and emergency housing to Aboriginal families.

Shirley emphasized that many children who end up in foster care are there not because of abuse but because their families lacked stable, affordable housing options. This often means these children get trapped in cycles of care/custody/incarceration and end up homeless themselves when they age out of the system.

The National Children’s Alliance reports that there are more children in the child welfare system and not with their families than there were children in residential schools during the height of this now acknowledged travesty of justice.



“No children should ever be apprehended by Social Services due to homelessness,” says Shirley. “We keep four suites at the top of our building for family emergencies.”

Saskatoon’s vacancy rate is on the rise and currently sits at 6.5 per cent but available apartments and homes are useless when prices are still unaffordable and property owners are reluctant to rent to the clientele that CUMFI and other service providers like them represent.

“The problem is that many of the families we deal with have burned a lot of bridges. They don’t have landlords giving them good references or anything – so that’s always a barrier to getting into a home.” One solution is to offer property owners some protection, such as a way to pay damages, or incentives to relax their criteria for rental and credit histories.

“Providing real access to mental health support has also become a big part of the rapid re-housing or housing first approach,” says Shirley. “Mental health issues and addictions go hand-in-hand with justice issues. Since we’ve opened, we have always been doing housing first – if you don’t have a roof over your head and food to feed your children you’re not worrying about education or employment or anything else. It’s just a game of survival so that’s why people get evicted from their homes because of drugs, alcohol and violence. They then become statistics.”

As a member of the Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness, Shirley is part of the group that has recommended funding for some new initiatives in Saskatoon, such as the Housing First and Rapid-Rehousing programs at the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre, the Friendship Inn, White Buffalo Youth Lodge and the Lighthouse. The goal is to move individuals and families as quickly as possible from shelters, transitional housing, and other temporary housing situations into permanent housing and to provide services and ongoing support to keep them stable once they are there.

## Vision, Purpose and Principles of the Plan

A right to housing is currently not a recognized human right in Canada, but it should be. It is difficult to make stable life choices without safe, affordable and appropriate housing.

As we approach solutions to homelessness, we not only see each person as an individual, but also look at the bigger picture. We acknowledge and work to solve the structural and systemic issues that create the problems of homelessness and housing insecurity. We respect the individual's or family's personal journey and their unique situation and needs. We acknowledge the privilege and power dynamic that is involved in support worker/client relationships, and strive to offer support without labels or expectations. We offer support that is strength-based, safe, culturally competent, and person centred. We commit to accountability and honestly measuring our progress, making efforts to prioritize evaluations from those who receive the support offered.

Through the community consultations, it became clear that there was a need to visualize and work towards something different; a more streamlined and properly resourced approach to tackling homelessness.

To that end, a vision, mission and principles emerged from the feedback:



### Vision

***Homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief, and does not reoccur.***

### Purpose

The *Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan* will enable all stakeholders including those who are homeless, direct service providers, Aboriginal leaders, allies and local, provincial, federal governments to work together sharing an agenda for change. Saskatoon's Plan will maximize the strengths and innovation that characterize our community and will help us achieve our vision.





## Principles

*The Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan with mutually agreed upon Strategies and Actions will be based on the following principles:*

- We are ready to work hard as a community to make homelessness a priority;
- Inclusion and collaboration are the foundation of all our efforts;
- Culturally appropriate/competent services are critical to honour diversity and ensure success. This is achieved through leadership and partnerships with First Nations and Métis communities, including Aboriginal-led services;
- Direct involvement from those with lived experience of homelessness will be expected;
- A continuum of housing options is essential, including temporary short term shelter and supported housing choices. Developing a sufficient supply of permanent affordable housing across the community is the primary end goal;
- Individual choice and person centred decision-making must be the focus in policy and practice;
- Harm reduction approaches will support individual success and effective change;
- The Housing First approach is an effective tool that will guide our work;
- Policy changes and improvements must be guided by research, measured outcomes and rooted in evidence from front-line knowledge and experience;
- Promoting effective and consistent data collection will ensure the right information is available to make appropriate and timely recommendations on new directions;
- Promoting the highest level of self-sufficiency and community participation for every individual supports the highest quality of life;
- Mutual responsibility and accountability at all government levels and among all stakeholders are essential;
- All work will be guided by a shared understanding that there are complex individual and structural contributing factors to homelessness including, but not restricted to:
  - Historical injustice
  - Systemic disadvantage
  - Poverty
  - Mental health/physical health conditions
  - Violence and abuse
  - Discrimination and Racism
  - Addictions
  - Inadequate affordable housing
  - Reliance on temporary emergency responses
  - Ineffective human service system processes

## ***THE JOURNEY HOME – PROVIDING HOPE FOR OUR CITY'S MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS***

As a Health Region Case Manager, rarely a day passes when 'Cindy Laroque' doesn't see how the lack of accessibility to safe, adequate, affordable housing has negatively impacted the clients she serves. "Although each person that I meet is unique the thing they have in common is that most of them are heavily burdened by oppression and dismal socio-economic circumstances," says Laroque.

"They often have chronic addictions and mental health problems. Many of them spent their childhood in residential schools or in foster homes. When they are forced to live on the streets or move from temporary place month after month or year after year their problems are just exacerbated."

In 2014 the United Way of Saskatoon and Area contracted Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services to deliver the Journey Home program. It uses a Housing First approach to help people experiencing chronic homelessness to find permanent housing and supports. Since its inception in April 2014, 40 participants have been assisted by the intense case management approach to move towards housing stability. The participants had an average length of homelessness of three to five years prior to enrollment. One person had been homeless for as long as 17 years.

Laroque became emotional when she described how she felt when she called one of her clients shortly after her telephone and answering machine was hooked up.

"Her voicemail message stated very emphatically, 'Hi you have reached Julia, this is my very first answering machine, from my very first phone, in my very first place...,' said Laroque. "It was very humbling for me to see that something that is so commonplace was something so extraordinary to her."

Another client, 'Angie,' gave her a tour and showed her all of her new belongings. "Angie was so excited about buying a pineapple to share with friends in her own home. In my opinion the pineapple represented something larger. This gave her a feeling of having something to offer, purpose and signified relationship building, sharing and camaraderie."

For both of these women, it was the first time they had a place of their own. Both had spent most of their lives in foster care, on the streets, in shelters and incarceration. Both expressed a deep gratitude to their Journey Home Case Manager and how vital they were to not only sustaining their housing, but the betterment of their lives altogether.

During the first two years' pilot phase, Journey Home has supported and housed forty people. One of the outcomes observed in the first year was that the inappropriate use of health care, social services and emergency services went down dramatically. As individuals were enrolled in the program, they shifted their focus to using community resources more appropriately and with more successful results.

Comparisons of service use in the year prior to enrollment and then the year after showed considerable differences. In the year prior to joining Journey Home, the first 24 participants made 400 emergency room visits. That was reduced to 85 visits in their first year. Since taking part in Journey Home, participants only had nine nights in a police cell because of intoxication, compared to 89 overnight stays in the previous year. Early results for the second year show similar reductions and a lower rate use rate maintained by the original participants.

"Everyone deserves a home," says Judy Shum, Director of Community Impact for United Way, adding that she is encouraged to see how the community has come together to develop a strategy to end homelessness. "Together Saskatoon is moving in the right direction with programs like this one."

The next goal of the Journey Home program is to support sustainable housing for another 100-homeless people over the next three years.

*Please note that all interviewees were compensated for their time.*

## Oversight of the Community Plan

An ongoing theme brought up in community consultations was that of leadership and accountability, as there is a history of community plans on various subjects that are created and then collect dust on a shelf when there is no one responsible for taking the plan forward.

In light of this, the United Way Plan to End Homelessness (P2EH) Leadership Committee, the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP), and the Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness (CAB-SH) came together to investigate a number of leadership models that focus on results, collaboration, and have community impact at its core.

Leadership should provide both the guidance and direction required to fulfill the vision, while maintaining accountability, fulfilling responsibilities to the community, and reflecting the core values of the group. However, if those directly affected are left out of the decision-making process, the resulting decisions can be inconsistent with community's needs and goals. Responses to homelessness are appropriate when those with lived experience are included as active participants in any planning and decision

making, as it brings more legitimacy to the process.

In a *Community Engagement Governance* framework, the focus is on community impact. It promotes responsiveness to the needs of the community, and is more adaptive to emerging needs. Using the principles of participatory democracy, self-determination, genuine partnership, and community-level decision making, responsibility is distributed and shared. This in turn will create joint ownership and accountability. The Board of Directors is not the centre of a control structure; rather governance is a process that empowers key stakeholders across the community and functions to help people work together to achieve results.

The Steering Committee concluded that leadership that empowers a collaborative oversight process would benefit the community, and that a Community Engagement Governance process will be a catalyst to help this plan to succeed. The concept of collaboration must be central to the lead organization's mandate, across the homeless serving sector and deep within the community and government sectors in order to address homelessness in Saskatoon.

### *Expanding the Mandate of the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership*

To achieve a multi-sectoral approach to addressing homelessness, the Steering Committee has agreed that it would be best to work with an established organization that brings knowledge and experience in the development and management of projects relating to housing and homelessness in Saskatoon.

As an organization with a diverse Board of Directors representing a broad base of sectors relating affordable and supported housing, the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) was recommended as the organization that would provide oversight for the Plan.

Since 1999, SHIP has assisted in the successful development of a range of affordable housing choices in Saskatoon. This includes supported housing, seniors housing, affordable rental units and affordable home ownership. Over the past four years, SHIP has administered the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding in Saskatoon; researching, developing and investing in many capital and service projects that have had an impact on homelessness. They are well positioned to bring a strong perspective on housing and homelessness in Saskatoon.

The Board of Directors of the SHIP have agreed that the organization will accept the responsibility of leading the Plan. The Board will focus on the specific issues of homelessness and affordable housing, and the organization will take on the responsibilities of facilitating the actions of this plan. SHIP will also continue to provide expertise on the development of

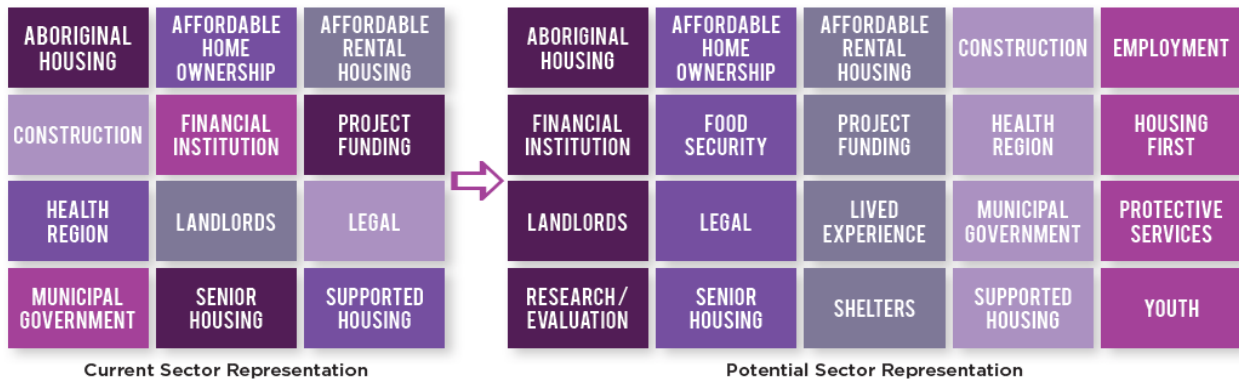
affordable housing and support service projects in order to promote a wide range of appropriate and affordable housing solutions in Saskatoon. With this new expanded mandate, the SHIP Board has set out a strategy to expand the organization in order to achieve the actions of this plan within the next five years.

***Transforming SHIP’s Structure, Functions and Activities***

A multi-sectoral approach is essential to achieving the collaboration necessary to meet the goals of the Plan. Leading by example, SHIP will endeavour to inspire change in our community, and embolden everyone to work together towards a common vision. To implement the new participatory governance process, SHIP will review its mandate, its bylaws, and shape its Board in 2016 to be representative of a community committed to addressing homelessness. SHIP will create a more inclusive, open organization which fosters support and encourages participation.

As shown below, SHIP’s Board of Directors currently encompass sectors that are related to affordable and supported housing. To broaden the perspective to increase the focus on homelessness, SHIP will actively recruit Board and Committee members to ensure that the knowledge and efforts of those who are homeless, Aboriginal leaders, organizations already working in the area, and the public and private sectors are represented. This will build upon the strength of the existing Board, and bring the right people together to achieve the goals of this Action Plan.

**Figure 1: SHIP Board and Committees – Current and Potential Sector Representation**



To respond to the needs of Action Plan, SHIP will also have to expand the activities it undertakes. Currently, SHIP performs various functions to support the development of affordable housing in Saskatoon. SHIP also administers the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funding in Saskatoon,

allocating close to \$2 Million per year into service and capital projects to address homelessness.

These functions will expand in light of the updated Action Plan. Activities will also be added in order to achieve to goals set out in the plan.

**Figure 2: Functions of SHIP as Lead Agency**



**Figure 3: Action Plan Priorities**



The expanded Board of Directors will play an essential role in moving the plan forward, and Collective Action Teams will be created to complement the work required in this Action Plan. Supported by SHIP staff, Collective Action Teams will discuss issues and advise the Board, other Collective Action Teams, government and the community at large on a wide array of issues relating to homelessness and housing. These

Teams will include board members and volunteers to ensure a rich perspective when addressing the needs of the community. The five initial Action Teams will focus on addressing their specific theme as it relates to each of the four priorities of the action plan. Additional committees will be struck as the need is identified.

## Activities of SHIP – Current and Additional

Function	Current Activities	Additional Activities
<b>Guide Vision &amp; Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct community consultations to establish community investment targets of HPS funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a common understanding around solutions to homelessness</li> <li>• Provide strategic guidance to develop tangible actions</li> </ul>
<b>Support Effective Communication &amp; Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek paths for, and recruit, new partners</li> <li>• Create opportunities for development of support service and housing projects that align with other efforts in the community</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure mutually reinforcing activities occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene partners and key external stakeholders</li> <li>• Coordinate and facilitate communication and collaboration</li> </ul>
<b>Data Collection and Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help establish data collection protocols for funded projects</li> <li>• Promote the use of a single data collection system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help establish shared measurement systems</li> <li>• Partner with others to collect, analyze, interpret and report data</li> </ul>
<b>Build Public Will</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the public about the need for and benefits of affordable housing to the community</li> <li>• Promote positive attitudes for affordable housing in neighbourhoods across Saskatoon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a sense of urgency and articulate a call to action on homelessness</li> <li>• Support community member engagement activities</li> <li>• Produce and manage external communications on homelessness</li> </ul>
<b>Advance Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy analysis and advocacy to promote the development of affordable housing</li> <li>• Assist organizations in advocating for policy changes that effect service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for an aligned policy agenda that promotes quality of life, rapid access to services and effective support</li> </ul>
<b>Mobilize Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business planning and proposal development for capital funding for affordable housing projects</li> <li>• Homelessness Partnering Strategy Fund Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to leverage public and private funding to support housing and support service goals</li> </ul>
<b>Project Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need and Demand Research</li> <li>• Business Planning</li> <li>• Feasibility / Financial Analysis</li> <li>• Homeless Service Project Development</li> <li>• Project Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify gaps and researching best practices in affordable housing and homeless support services</li> <li>• Provide learning opportunities to share knowledge with the community</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Structure of SHIP and Collective Action Teams



For example, the Funding and Resources Action Team will be an opportunity for funders to come together and discuss existing programs, new initiatives, and potential new projects that will impact homelessness. Information about gaps and emerging needs will be collected by SHIP through consultation of the Collective Action Teams as well as other frontline agencies and stakeholders. For instance, the Service Coordination Action Team may recommend certain training that requires funding, or the Housing and Service Gap Action Team may identify an emerging need that is requires investment. Funding and Resources Action

Team members could include such organizations as the United Way of Saskatoon and Area, SHIP (HPS), Saskatoon Health Region, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, the City of Saskatoon, and the Ministry of Social Services. They would gather to understand the scope of the problem, existing programs and potential responses. At the same time, there would be opportunities for collaboration between funders, increased understanding of what type of funding is available, and coordination between funding cycles to improve chances for leveraging dollars more collectively.

## The Saskatoon Homelessness Action Plan

The problem of homelessness is too complex for a single community organization or government ministry to solve on its own. The good news is that much work is already well under way, and the consultations gave direction on how to make things better. Community members have been eager to “stop talking” and “make it happen.”

This action plan summarizes what was learned during community consultations and the important actions that have happened so far. It articulates a common vision, a road map and accountability measures for the next five years.

To make the kind of progress we all want to make on homelessness, it is important that all partners accept the shared principles and be committed to coordinating efforts. Service coordination will mean that people who experience homelessness will find and have timely access to the right supports when they need them. Together, service providers will be empowered and funded to work on a series of action items, each with its own target, timelines, responsibility and expected outcomes. Through this approach, we can work together to more effectively find and fill the gaps, and provide a high standard of care and treatment, by the right people at the right time, in the right place.

This Action Plan was initially led by a steering committee of community members who are committed to be champions for action on homelessness. Moving forward, SHIP will act as a facilitating agency. SHIP will ask stakeholder organizations to participate in refining and endorsing the plan. Community agencies will be asked to identify which action items they are

already working on or can commit to help achieve in future years, including identifying their funding needs. SHIP will facilitate ongoing community engagement to look at each action item and figure out if there is a way to enhance success. This structure will foster community impact and participatory decision making.

Putting an action plan on paper challenges us to evaluate the effectiveness of our collective efforts, and monitor or progress as time goes on. The plan must remain flexible as circumstances change and critical needs emerge. Regular updates and communications will be essential to ensure that we are all moving in the same direction.

To be successful, we recognize that this plan requires new financial commitments from all three orders of government, businesses, philanthropists, foundations and the public. At this time, it is difficult to make estimates of the actual costs required, but this will be a critical part of implementation. Further study is needed to make strategic and informed decisions and recommendations about the necessary investments. However, we understand that by working together, we will be better positioned to pool, leverage, and allocate investments that have the most impact.

This action plan outlines a vision and activities to take place over a five-year period. There will be learning and development for all of us. We realize that change won't take place overnight, but by working together, we can make a difference.



## From Vision to Action – Plan Priorities

Throughout the community consultations, it was clear that our existing system of emergency supports was not enough to move people out of homelessness. Based on clear priorities from the community, this action plan outlines the work we need to do to promote appropriate services and housing options for anyone in need of assistance. The necessity for these creating a range of housing options is also demonstrated in the recent research on homelessness and in the experience of other communities who have successfully tackled this issue.

This action plan seeks to formalize and update Saskatoon's priorities as we tackle homelessness. It promotes collaboration among the government sectors that impact

homelessness (housing, health, mental health, addictions, corrections, social services, child protection, income assistance, education and training) and community-based organizations. It provides a foundation for practical evaluation of our successes and challenges, with the goal of creating efficient service pathways and eliminating system gaps and barriers to support. In the end, we expect to see better policies, better services and more targeted housing options.

By ensuring housing stability we prevent homelessness. By intervening during crisis and ensuring that affordable housing and support are available for every citizen, we will end homelessness in Saskatoon.

The action plan highlights four priority areas, set by our community:

- ✓ **SYSTEM COORDINATION AND INNOVATION**
- ✓ **STRENGTHENING HOUSING PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS**
- ✓ **PREVENTION**
- ✓ **THE SOLUTION OF HOMELESSNESS IS HOUSING**

Each priority area has a number of strategies that address specific issues. These strategies, in turn, have specific actions and targets. Together, all of the agencies and stakeholders in Saskatoon who

play a role in preventing and ending homelessness must work together and identify how they can best contribute to the expected outcomes.

## Priority 1: System Coordination and Innovation

No one program can reduce homelessness on its own. Working together intentionally is critical to ensure services are effective, and that we are progressing towards broader community goals and finding and filling gaps.

A system that is fragmented or has agencies working in isolation does not serve people well. System coordination is a way to optimize our resources, avoid duplication and ensure that needs are being met.

Coordination of services will result in community members having timely access to the right supports to avoid or exit homelessness. When they seek support, it will be available and effective. Service providers in an integrated system benefit from knowing that there is a

collaborative approach, they are being listened to, and the services they cannot provide will be provided by a partnering agency.

Saskatoon already has great partnerships and open communication between frontline agencies, but in the past, there were pieces missing, especially centralized intake, direct housing placement, case management and support for coordination. Recent investment has increased this level of service, but has also exposed other service gaps.

Our job as a community is to find innovative solutions together. Everyone is included and participates in making Saskatoon a better place to live.

### *Strategy 1: Bring Together Champions to Navigate the System*

Many community consultations took place to develop a clear plan. A concern that was raised by many voices was an assurance that the plan was being acted on, monitored and evaluated. Therefore, we must ensure action is taken in a way that is responsive, and accountable and respectful to the people served, the frontline agencies, funders and the general public.

A group of champions will take this plan and find ways to ensure that each part of it is being implemented. As issues emerge, these champions will brainstorm ways to manage or initiate change, informed by consultation and solid data.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Develop Plan Steering Committee	SHIP, United Way, CAB-SH	2015Q4	Completed
Engage & Develop Strategic Partnerships	SHIP, United Way, CAB-SH	2016 Q2	In progress
Evaluation of Community Plan by Aboriginal Leaders to Support Tangible Ways for Cultural Needs to be Addressed	Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Service Agencies, SHIP	2016 Q4	
Create Collective Action Teams, and Establish Terms of Reference and Concrete Action Plans	SHIP	Within the first 6 months	
Discuss innovation, resource coordination, policy issues, system gaps	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Annually (Q3)	
Develop cost estimates for plan	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	
Communicate achievements and challenges to broader community	SHIP	Annually (Q1)	

**Strategy 2: Determine the Homeless-Serving System’s Structure**

To create a coordinated system, it is necessary to understand and involve a wide range of programs and services. Without a clear understanding of the local service delivery structure, there is a risk that we may not be as effective as we can be.

It also helps to create common definitions and outline how agencies will work together. By articulating the role of each program and how they work together (or where they fail to), we will gain valuable insights into the dynamics of the local response to homelessness and where shifts can occur to meet our common goals.

Part of the work of implementing approach is for the community to figure out who is well served

by existing supports, as well as for whom each program was intended and designed. Where serious gaps emerge, it will be necessary to target financial investment or by revamping programs and facilities.

While understanding the current landscape of Saskatoon is important, the provision of housing and services must take account of the current and future needs of the community. This is especially important in light of the City’s growth plan to 500,000. Housing and services must be planned as a partnership with service agencies and funders. Therefore, it will be necessary to review the system and housing stock annually and be proactive in our approach to addressing homelessness in Saskatoon.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Map Homeless Serving System	SHIP	Within the first 6 months	
Point in Time Count Evaluation	SHIP	2017	
Housing Inventory Count	SHIP	Within the first 6 months	
Identify Key System Components	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	
Achieve Consensus on Homeless Serving System Design and Needs	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	
Review System Capacity and Identify Gaps	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Annually	

### *Strategy 3: Ensure Co-ordinated Entry and Easy Access*

Centralized intake and assessment can be challenging but for people facing homelessness and for frontline agencies, it has many benefits.

For an individual or family, it means going through one door knowing that it will be the only place you need to enter in order to receive support with housing. It means you are not making multiple phone calls or struggling to find the right help. Some people experiencing homelessness find the right agencies easily, but many people struggle to find support.

A centralized approach means that whatever the person’s needs are, they will be directed towards appropriate support. Placing someone who needs a low level of support in a Permanent Supported Housing program for example, will not only fail to serve the client’s needs, but also take up valuable and limited program spaces away from someone who would benefit from them. By the same token, placing clients with complex needs that require long-term and intensive supports in a Rapid Rehousing program who exits them within 6-12 months may result in a return to homelessness.

With the established Journey Home Housing First pilot project, and more agencies planning to offer similar case management services, it was

necessary to create a centralized intake and assessment program to take on the task of screening clients for appropriate support programs. With the assistance of the Journey Home staff, SHIP funded the Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre (SIMFC) to develop and manage the centralized intake and assessment system. The addition of the Housing Locator at The Lighthouse have been the first steps to establishing a system of Housing First support in Saskatoon. Over the past few months, SIMFC, the White Buffalo Youth Lodge and the YWCA Saskatoon have begun offering Housing First intensive case management services, assisting individuals and families that are homeless in Saskatoon.

In Saskatoon, we respect and value the organizational autonomy and wisdom of service providers to choose their own clients. Some agencies will conduct their own intake as potential clients come through their doors. Centralized intake does not diminish their individual approach to services; it is there to ensure that agencies have a place to refer clients who do not fit well into their services, while providing one easy place to seek support when experiencing homelessness.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Develop Centralized Intake	SHIP (HPS), United Way, SIMFC, Lighthouse, Journey Home	2015	Completed
Agree upon an acuity assessment tool	HF/RRH Team	2016 Q1	Completed
Build clients referral protocols	HF/RRH Team	2016 Q3	In Progress
Develop eligibility/referral process info for frontline staff and clients	HF/RRH Housing Team, SHIP	2016 Q4	In Progress
Create city-wide knowledge of Centralized Intake	HF/RRH Team, United Way, SHIP	Ongoing	In Development

#### *Strategy 4: Regular Communication*

Homelessness is a growing concern for our community. We hear about it in the news. There has not been enough communication about the state of homelessness in our city, what is being done, and what can be done to address the challenges we face.

The goals of enhanced communication are twofold:

- Keep the public engaged on the issue of homelessness to create the will for change; and
- Convene homeless-serving agencies more often to create better chances to come up with solutions.

Engaging the public about homelessness is extremely important. Public concern can effect change politically, as well as bring much needed investment from government, philanthropists and the business community.

There are major communications challenges around homelessness because how the public, the funders, the agencies and people affected all have different interpretations of what the problem is and what success looks like. The majority of people who hear about homelessness are worried about the impact on those who are homeless and think we can and must do better. Success will mean a real reduction in homelessness. Some people see

homelessness as a public safety issue, and success will mean they feel safer. Some may be concerned with the inappropriate or overuse of emergency services. No matter what the concern, we want to communicate how reducing homelessness will have a positive impact.

Currently there is popular rhetoric that reducing homelessness will save money. The fact is some programs do save taxpayers money for high-needs individuals, while for some people an additional investment is necessary. Success will be demonstrated when people experiencing homelessness are no longer forced to inappropriately use emergency services to meet the basic need of shelter, because they have secure housing. The benefit to the individual or family by moving them out of homelessness is immeasurable.

Communication between service providers is essential. There is interest in having a common table that brings service providers together in order to get everyone on the same page. However, frontline agencies are busy and under-resourced. Attending meetings takes time away from helping people. Therefore, meetings must be productive use of everyone's time. When the administration and planning for front-line meetings is consistent and we remain focused, there is a reason for service providers to participate.

Communicating regularly can have a multitude of benefits, as it:

- helps identify common problems, such as discrimination by landlords, or too few spots for addictions support;
- provides an opportunity to discuss practical/policy issues, partnerships, challenges and successes.
- brings service providers and stakeholders together to plan individual interventions and coordinate support for people who are high risk or have complex needs, in a fashion comparable to the HUB Concept;

Facilitating sharing between agencies and making meetings an effective use of time will help bring our community together to work towards our common goal.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Facilitate regular service provider discussions	SHIP	Annually Q2	To be Initiated
Investigate value of convening a Case Management Support Group	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Within the first 6 months	In Progress
Convene a Housing Placement Team that discusses barriers to success	SIMFC, Journey Home White Buffalo, YWCA,, SHIP	Bi-Monthly (Ongoing)	Completed
Coordinate YXE Connects Event	YXE Connects Committee	Annually	In Progress
Communicate achievements and challenges to broader community	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Annually (Q1)	
Organize Homelessness Awareness and Solutions Conference	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Annually	
Conduct Business Engagement Meetings with local business associations	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Annually (Q2 & Q4)	
Develop Homelessness Website	SHIP	2016	Completed
Develop Communications Strategy	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Within the first 12 months	To be Initiated

### ***Strategy 5: Continuous Improvement and Filling Gaps***

In order to serve people better, it is necessary to look carefully at how effective we are at helping them. A quality service is one which is emotionally safe and culturally relevant for clients, effective and sustainable.

The fact is it is difficult to improve services when there is an incomplete picture of what is being done well and what needs to change. It is hard to celebrate successes when it is not tracked. It is hard to demonstrate the need to fund a program that is working without the “proof” attached.

Continuous improvement is about looking at what we do, how we do it, and improving how we work. This is not done in silos, but with each other, and focusing on the larger scheme in order to accomplish our community’s goals.

Together, we track outcomes, evaluate, and set goals, enabling us to identify what we want to achieve, and how we plan to get there. We continuously improve the quality of the service and safeguard high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in care will flourish.

In a systems-focused performance management process, we work together to:

- ✓ Evaluate the system’s impact on individuals and specific populations;
- ✓ Articulate what the system aims to achieve;
- ✓ Illustrate the level of performance expected of all services;
- ✓ Facilitate client and frontline staff participation in evaluation of quality at program and system-levels; and
- ✓ Promote service integration across the homeless-serving sector and with mainstream systems such as health and justice.

The challenge with continuous improvement is the data collection on the outcomes and impact of programs. For service providers, data collection can feel tedious and time consuming, especially when frontline pressures are overwhelming. Further, data collection without the time or resources to collect and analyze it doesn’t readily tell them anything about their clients they don’t already know. It is an unrealistic expectation that data will be collected without the resources to do it.

If agencies already know their clients, why collect the data? If collected properly, data can show demographics, trends, and where investment needs to go. Ultimately, the value of data collection must be demonstrated. Tracking how a client is served (*or more importantly, not served*) by the system is one such value-added proposition. For instance, if a referral by an agency results in a lack of appropriate service to the client, data that shows the gap in the system can work to ensure that the brokered services assist people appropriately.

Currently, the Homeless Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS) is the most widely used data collection software in Saskatoon. With the assistance of the Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, the community will work together

to identify what we want to achieve, the data necessary to understand challenges and gaps, and provide the tools and training to gather and analyze information that will help us achieve our common goals.

Data collection must also be done in a fashion that respects individual rights. The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) and the Health Information Protection Act (HIPA) must be at the forefront of what we do, for it is the only respectful way to treat each other.

Accountability to the people who are being served is the focus of data collection efforts, and services will be improved when we can demonstrate how well they are served.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Establish a set of performance indicators	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	Completed
Work with service providers to establish targets for success	SHIP, Homeless Serving Agencies	Within the first 12 months	In Progress
Identify barriers to useful data collection and analysis	SHIP, Homeless Serving Agencies, Provincial HIFIS Coordinator	Semi-Annually (Ongoing)	In Progress
Assist in the evaluation of service delivery	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, SHIP, Individual Agencies	Within the first 12 months	
Develop a Saskatoon Report Card on Homelessness	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, Lead agency	Within the first 12 months	
Conduct Point-In-Time Count	SHIP (HPS), Research Agency	2017	
Develop a Credible Registry	SHIP	2017	

## Priority 2: Strengthening Housing Placement and Support Programs

The gap that existed for many years was that no one was doing housing placement as a primary activity or focus. Many organizations have case managers who provide housing placement, but mostly out of necessity. Without funding, frontline organizations cannot prioritize this activity. That is changing. New pilot Housing First and Rapid Rehousing programs have been funded by the United Way of Saskatoon and Area

and the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership with funding from the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Housing placement and the essential intensive case management supports to remain housed are taking place, but there are already extensive waiting lists. More investment is required to ensure everyone has the support they need.

### *Strategy 6: Reduce Homelessness through a Housing First Approach*

Housing First intensive case management (ICM) takes the view that if people have stable housing, they will be in a better place to make decisions and deal with the other factors that may have led to their homelessness. It’s an approach that works for the majority of people who enter Housing First programs. In Canada, the At Home/Chez Soi project was a large, multi-site pilot project that prioritized a Housing First approach for people who are chronically and episodically homeless. The results were promising, so much so that the Government of Canada redirected the Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding to prioritize a Housing First approach to services.

In 2013, the United Way of Saskatoon and Area stepped forward to invest in a Housing First pilot project, which has had dramatic results for Saskatoon citizens who were chronically homeless. In many ways, frontline agencies have been doing Housing First with clients for years, but this is an opportunity to really target funding to intensive case management that we know works well and is based on dignity and a right to housing. Over the past year, SIMFC, the White Buffalo Youth Lodge and the YWCA Saskatoon have been funded by the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) to offer Housing First case management.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Investment in Housing First Programs	SHIP (HPS), United Way of Saskatoon	Within the first 12 months	In Progress
Convene a Landlords Round-Table	SHIP	Every 6 months	In Development
Fidelity Assessment of HF programs	Self-Assessment compiled by SHIP	Annually (Q4)	In Progress
Develop Landlord Database	SHIP	Ongoing	In Progress
Promote sustainability of HF Programs	SHIP, HF delivery agencies	Ongoing	In Progress



**Strategy 7: Provide Individualized Housing Placement and Support Services**

For many people, the barriers they face to retaining housing or exiting homelessness are not intensive. Providing individualized support to people ensures that those with less intensive needs who enter homelessness are quickly moved into housing of their choice. Sometimes

they need help with landlords or applications for housing or rental supplements. Whatever the need, individualized support can bridge people out of homelessness with the right support at the right time.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Develop Rapid Rehousing case management for mid-acuity clients.	SHIP (HPS), SIMFC, Friendship Inn	2015 Q2	Underway
Study models of delivery for housing coordination and income advisory	SHIP	Quarterly (Ongoing)	To be Completed
Assessment of programs	SHIP, Self-Assessment	Within the first 12 months	In Progress
Promote sustainability of Housing Placement and Support Programs	SHIP, Service Delivery agencies	Ongoing	In Progress

**Strategy 8: Evaluate Current Housing Placement and Support Programs Strategies to Promote Sustainability of Homeless-Serving and Housing Placement Agencies**

Program evaluation of pilot projects will show what is working well and where to channel or increase investment. It’s critical to be able to show the benefits of housing placement -- that it reduces inappropriate use of health care and corrections resources and over the long-term stabilizes families to reduce interaction with child protection services and provides stability for children and youth. Sometimes the intangibles are hard to determine, but there is data and the voice of those served.

transition services as homelessness is reduced. When women leave bad relationships and when youth find themselves addicted and broke, services need to be there, even if we end homelessness. When people are evicted, shelters need to be open. Shelters protect people from freezing to death in our prairie winters. They are not the end, but part of a well-functioning system of care. With over 1,958 unique people using shelters in 2015, and only 104 estimated as regular shelter users, we have a need for this essential support (HIFIS data 2015).

Our shelters are extremely valuable and we need to ensure they remain sustainable to provide

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Explore alternate funding models and methods of service delivery to adapt to changing circumstances and critical service needs	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Ongoing	Underway
Utilize program evaluation as a catalyst for appropriate resource allocation and to promote needed investments	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Quarterly (Ongoing)	To be Completed

**Strategy 9: Capacity Development**

Training and technical assistance across the homeless-serving sector not only promotes a high quality of care, it also ensures that best practices are used and appropriate management of risk is accounted for when providing services.

Sometimes specialized training is needed to ensure that clients are served effectively. We are committed to the principle of cultural competency and know that homelessness for Aboriginal people is clearly linked to our colonial past and ongoing inequality in Canada.

Through training, our community will increase potential to achieve measurable and sustainable

results, and create a high standard of care and treatment for people in need through a well-designed training plan from frontline staff to management to volunteers.

There are financial and logistical obstacles that inhibit front-line homeless-service agencies from receiving training. Collective Action Teams will work together to identify needs and funding sources required to improve access to training and technical assistance in Saskatoon.

The hope of this strategy is to create a culture of continuous improvement to ensure our clients are served well.

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<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Create training and development plan	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	2017 Q1	Underway
Training for staff on roles and responsibilities	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Bi-Annually (Ongoing)	To be Completed
Assessment of training effectiveness	Survey of participants	Annually (Q1)	In Progress

## Priority 3: Prevention

During the community consultations, prevention was seen as key, especially for families and youth. Prevention means making sure that homelessness is avoided or supporting a move from inappropriate housing that is not affordable or safe. Stabilizing individuals and families by ensuring that they remain in a home they choose prevents homelessness and the trauma that comes with it. Prioritizing prevention will also mean working within institutions, so that people do not go from reserve, jail, foster care, an abusive relationship, parental home or maternity ward to homelessness.

Saskatoon is home to several of the most effective prevention programs in Canada, meeting people where they are at and seeing incredible results. We recognize that these

initiatives are strategic and effective for the populations they target. However, some people are still falling through the cracks into homelessness and need short-term support, financial or otherwise, to remain housed.

Key strategies that prevent homelessness include affordable housing, income supplements, eviction prevention programs, front-line community care supports, supportive housing, transitional housing and direct payments to landlords. We also need to expand, build on and strengthen the successful prevention programs that exist, tying our efforts to the *Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy* in that we both seek to enhance supportive available housing options and improve access to subsidized rental housing for individuals and families in greatest need.

### *Strategy 10: Recognizing & Building on Successful Programs that are Preventing Homelessness*

Preventing homelessness has been a key priority in Saskatoon for many years, and has led to several grassroots efforts to meet people where they are at and offer the support they need in order to avoid crisis in their lives. Local organizations, such as CUMFI and EGADZ, are known across Canada for the work they are doing to create change in the lives of families and youth. The Lighthouse Supported Living Inc. has expanded its services to include supported housing for people with complex social needs and a stabilization shelter for people who are manageably intoxicated, while hiring case managers to move people from shelter into housing. The John Howard Society of Saskatoon, the Elizabeth Fry Society, AIDS Saskatoon and the YWCA all work with people in crisis situations to

stabilize them and help them find housing. The Saskatoon Tribal Council, CUMFI and programs like Kids First are working with families to ensure they have their needs met. These organizations are seeing profound results that often do not receive enough accolades. We are proud of this work.

Through their prevention work, organizations working at capacity are aware of the gaps. They have waiting lists, some people need more intensive or different support than they can provide, and sometimes their work is time-limited. Together we can see prevention as a multi-faceted approach from income to financial management to anti-racism training to front-line community care workers.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Profile local stakeholder organizations on homelessness website	SHIP	Quarterly	
Develop a best practices/service provider recognition as part of communication strategy	SHIP	Within the first 12 months	

### ***Strategy 11: Prevention Happens when People Stay Housed***

If people remain housed, paying their rent on time, receiving support that they need to clean, cook and manage negative influences, then homelessness is prevented. For families, when they can feed their kids without a struggle and pay rent, then homelessness is prevented.

Some of the ideas that surfaced in the community consultations are exciting and show

that this community is thinking outside the box to make prevention a real priority. One potential innovation is a community care and outreach program, which includes supports to help people pay rent on time, clean and cook, and receive social support to maintain positive decision-making.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Develop eviction prevention protocols for placement programs	Individual Non-Profits, SHIP	2016 Q2	Underway
Develop eviction prevention programs (i.e. rent bank, matched savings plans)	SHIP	Year 2-5	To be Completed
Investigate the potential impact of community care and outreach programs	SHIP	Year 2	In Progress
Research innovative approaches to curbing food insecurity, especially for families	Food Bank, CHEP, SHIP	Year 3	

### ***Strategy 12: Prevention Means Supporting People in a More Intense Way***

Every frontline worker has seen clients come for services and thought we need to find a different way to intervene before it's too late. Maybe it's a youth who needs a mentorship program that is street-wise. Maybe it's rapid access to addictions support for a young woman leaving the sex

trade. Maybe it is access to counselling or a cultural connection. Supporting people in a more intense way when they are demonstrating vulnerability or risk factors can be the moment that homelessness is prevented. We can improve in this area.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Develop recommendations to improve access to culturally appropriate counselling and healing practices	STC, CUMFI, SIMFC, Camponi Housing, SHIP	2017	To be Completed
Address gaps in services for children and youth	SHIP	Year 2-5	To be Completed
Develop discharge planning protocols	Individual Agencies, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	To be Completed
Interview front-line workers and first-voice individuals to gain better understanding of prevention support needs in Saskatoon	SHIP	Within the first 12 months	

## Priority 4: The Solution to Homelessness is Housing

It seems simple — that the solution to homelessness is housing. But it is essential that housing case managers have units that are available, including supported living, affordable market, social housing or non-profit units. The Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness, which helps assess funding decisions for HPS, has emphasized the need for capital investments. An investment in building a supported living or transitional unit creates long-term value. All levels of government must

prioritize affordable rental housing as the cornerstone of a stable society. When there is enough housing and it is affordable, fewer people become homeless. The need for a diverse range of housing types is also critical. Some people simply need support and flexibility to leave homelessness. Increasing housing units with support, or low barrier housing, will create the stability that will allow people to escape the street.

### *Strategy 13: Increase Affordable Housing Supply*

Every community consultation has concluded with the priority of increasing the amount of affordable housing. In 2007, housing prices tripled and rental prices doubled. People who were previously housed were homeless, at risk or in extreme core housing need, unable to afford to live. The situation has improved, but

more targeted investment is required. Many years of unprecedented population growth has led to a crisis. Local and provincial leaders have recognized this need and now we are beginning to see an approach that values units geared to what people can truly afford, and can be maintained for years to come.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Establish targets for affordable housing by demographic	Collective Action Teams, SHIP, City of Saskatoon	Within the first 12 months	To be Completed
Promote development of affordable housing to meet needs in Saskatoon	SHIP, City of Saskatoon	Ongoing	To be Completed
Discuss Saskatoon affordable housing program needs with Sask Housing Corp	SHIP, City of Saskatoon, Individual Agencies	Year 2-5	To be Completed

**Strategy 14: Increase Alternative Housing Options**

Some people’s life circumstances and complex needs require a different approach to successfully bridge them out of homelessness. Sometimes this means long-term supported housing. It may mean supported low-barrier housing that accounts for unique needs the should be addressed. It may involve housing groups of people who found support together during a time of crisis and became a chosen family. It could mean micro-units. The frontline workers who work with chronically homeless individuals see that there are some people who will not do well in market housing, or living independently will put them at risk. Leaving them homeless is not humane. We can create new options -- alternatives for those who need something different to meet their housing and social needs.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Create specialized housing units where people with an addiction are supported in their independence.	To be determined	2017	To be Completed
Establish housing with a managed alcohol program	To be determined	2017	To be Completed
Increase support for existing complex needs supported housing services	To be determined	2017	To be Completed

## MOM AND BABY MOVING FORWARD

The vast majority of people experiencing homelessness only need a hand up in order to locate income supports and find permanent housing. The Rapid Rehousing program at partner agencies The Friendship Inn and Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre is offering this support.

After an argument with a domestic partner, 21-year-old Emily found herself 4 months pregnant and homeless, forced to couch surf with relatives. The homes she was able to crash at were overcrowded, and “sketchy.” At one relative’s home, she stayed at there were cockroaches and she sensed there were drugs and illegal activities happening in neighbouring units. Fights and alcohol abuse were also very common. “The apartments I was staying in were not safe for me or the baby. A child protection worker was concerned about the living conditions. It was really bad, dirty.”

Emily had been homeless for many years as a small child, frequently in and out of family shelters and transitional programs for families affected by domestic violence. She remembers that once their stay had expired at a shelter, sometimes they would have to move to a shelter in another city just to stay off the street. There never seemed to be help available to move from the shelter to stable housing. Having experienced this trauma, she wanted a different life for her baby and began seeking help.

At the Friendship Inn, Emily found a solution—she met a case manager who could help her find housing and support. Her Rapid Rehousing case manager coordinated with income support, helped her look at apartments, took her to the food bank and helped her access prenatal care. She also received emotional support from her case manager when meeting with government workers. Before baby Maya was born, Emily was able to find an apartment she could afford and have everything in place to welcome her baby. Emily’s first baby had tragically passed away shortly after birth a couple years before, which made the birth of this baby even more exciting and anticipated.

Emily has big goals for the future. Once Maya is a little older, Emily plans to upgrade her high school and go to SIAST. Eventually, she hopes to become a counsellor and help families who have experienced infant or child loss. At her young age, Emily is clearly moving forward and making good decisions.

## What Will Success Look Like Along the Way?

### ***Increases in the number of individuals and families supported***

- 150 people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness will be housed by 2019
- Expansion of case management services will provide housing support for an additional 45 people by 2019

### ***Preventing Homelessness***

- A decrease in the number of unique individuals needing emergency shelter, short term stays and for crisis situations only
- Establishment of a rent or utility bank
- Widespread knowledge of tenant rights and landlord responsibilities

### ***Increased amount of affordable housing alternatives***

- A decrease in waiting lists, and an expansion in the number of appropriate and affordable rental and ownership housing alternatives that keeps pace with population growth at minimum.

### ***Improved quality of life for those served by the system***

- A survey of those who have lived experience of homelessness shows they have choices and alternatives to homelessness and report (according to their own definition) improvement in their well-being;

### ***Improved teamwork between all parts of the homeless service system***

- A survey of service providers will report satisfaction in their work and acknowledge that they are working together effectively to support actions to reduce homelessness.
- A data sharing agreement to improve service coordination

### ***Improved reporting and evaluation***

- Creation of a credible registry with a street needs evaluation to guide decision making
- Development of a Homelessness Report Card for Saskatoon



## Conclusion

Although this action plan establishes the priorities, strategies and action items to overcome homelessness, we must recognize that every person is unique and there are common systemic issues, such as poverty, colonialism, racism and discrimination, which impact particular groups in our community. Homelessness is more prevalent in certain groups, especially among First Nations and Métis people. Supports and policies must be structured to assist these groups competently. The approach to this plan must be person-centred, which recognizes the unique needs of youth, families with children, people with disabilities, women, immigrants, seniors and other vulnerable populations.

As we implement this action plan, we will see people, first, rather than labels or issues. We must work with people to understand their history, evaluate their present conditions, and identify meaningful change in their lives. We must provide individuals and families with choice for support and providers, which are flexible to meet their needs. We must also align our system structures and processes to respond to cultural diversity, and foster community connections.

An end to homelessness requires changes to our system, tackling complex social issues, understanding cultural competency, and undertaking a person-centred approach. This is a significant challenge, but one that we must make in order to meet the needs of people in our community.

Our Vision: ***“Homelessness in Saskatoon is rare, brief and does not reoccur”*** is ambitious and a challenge for Saskatoon.

Over the next few years, stars will have to align to make all the strategies and actions work in

synchronicity and produce measurable outcomes. While we are working to fulfill this plan effectively there will be difficult times and undoubtedly set-backs and road blocks will occur as the community strives to collaborate for complex, but worthwhile change. Ensuring enough of the right resources in the right places will be frustrating and will take honest, passionate debate and courageous decision-making. It will be important for the community to cheer each other on when the going gets rough; however, this plan has been deliberately designed to be based on the strengths already working among many agencies organizations and individuals. As this plan states at the outset, “a roadmap has been developed and the journey towards changing how we approach homelessness has begun”.

As the journey proceeds, there will need to be ways to reflect on the efforts and record outcomes and goal achievements. A report card charting progress (and setbacks too) will have to be produced regularly and some course correction decided so those involved know where they are on the map. Yet, it is important to be able to speak to a wider audience – our community at large -about how the Plan is going and what is being achieved.

As the Plan makes progress towards the Vision, people like Leonard and Skipper, Wallace and Julia, Angie and others who have lived on the streets of Saskatoon will be helped to find stable permanent housing and participate as full community members. There will be progress when those who find themselves temporarily homeless including families and their children are immediately provided with safe short term accommodation and rapidly re-housed as soon as possible.

## Appendix A: From Awareness to Planning

### Community Consultations and Creating Champions to End Homelessness

The action plan priorities and strategies were drawn from several community consultations about homelessness that happened in Saskatoon from 2010 to 2014. Housing affordability reached critical levels 2007 and 2008, with rental prices doubling and purchase prices tripling. Homelessness became a more visible problem, with community agencies scrambling to offer support. Homelessness was not a new problem, but greater awareness and the significant decrease in affordable housing, led to a desire for change.

Since 1999, Saskatoon had been one of the cities in Canada earmarked for federal funding to prevent and reduce homelessness through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). The HPS allowed grassroots input on funding allocations through the Community Advisory Board on Saskatoon Homelessness (CAB-SH, formerly the Saskatoon Homelessness Advisory Committee). The CAB-SH has representatives from community agencies, Aboriginal organizations and government departments that work with people experiencing homelessness.

In partnership with the City of Saskatoon and Service Canada, the CAB-SH commissioned a broad community consultation in 2010 to look at how Saskatoon should respond to homelessness. The resulting report was called “The Saskatoon Housing and Homelessness Plan” and was used to guide HPS funding decisions from 2011-2014. This first housing and homelessness plan identified the need to increase the availability of emergency, supportive and transitional housing, share knowledge and research, youth homelessness, Housing First and an increase in affordable housing. The report also indicated that the Housing First philosophy offered potential solutions. This philosophy centres around getting people into

permanent housing as quickly as possible, supporting them to remain housed and bringing in the supports they require to address their challenges to remaining housed (such as addictions or mental health). In 2012, Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) was contracted by Service Canada as the “Community Entity” to work on implementing the plan and managing the HPS funding for Saskatoon, in partnership with the CAB-SH.

Interest in Housing First as a way to address homelessness continued to increase in Saskatoon, and a Housing First Task Force was struck to further the initiative. In November 2011, the Housing First Task Force hosted a homelessness summit in which representatives from the Calgary Homelessness Foundation discussed the situation and successes in their city. In the same year, the Safe Streets Commission was created, seeking to reduce criminal and problematic activity on the street by isolating the long-term issues of why visibly homeless people are on the streets and what could be done.

Learning from the success of other communities through the 7 Cities Summit in Alberta, and the At Home/Chez Soi national initiative, interest in bringing Housing First to our city solidified. The City of Saskatoon issued a report which indicated that Housing First was the ideal solution to homelessness and they created a task force. The City’s report acknowledged that existing agencies were already providing some of the elements of Housing First, but highlighted the need for further capacity building and increased coordination. Many community leaders were now convinced that Housing First should be part of a coordinated approach to ending homelessness in Saskatoon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>City of Saskatoon, “Saskatoon Interim Case Study: Partnership for Health Systems Improvement – Transforming Housing and Treatment Services for

Chronically Homeless Persons with Mental Illness,” May 7, 2015.

The two main groups that began to drive the process of Housing First were the United Way of Saskatoon and Area and the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP).

As a next step towards promoting greater action on homelessness, the United Way sponsored a homeless Point-In-Time count in 2012 to develop a clearer picture of the problem and to understand the change in homelessness since the previous count in 2008. On September 24, 2012, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) found that there were 379 people without permanent housing.

In May 2013, the United Way's Plan to End Homelessness Committee conducted a two-day facilitated charrette to gain insight from community partners on what should be done about homelessness. The result was the Plan to End Homelessness (P2EH), with five main strategies and 72 recommendations. The United Way announced it would lead the plan for two years, and developed P2EH Leadership Committee comprised of people with backgrounds in business, real estate, Saskatoon Tribal Council, finance, media relations, government organizations and policy, and those with lived experience.

One of the key outcomes from the charrette was the creation of the Housing First pilot project (since renamed *Journey Home*) which focussed on providing Housing First initially to the chronic long-term homeless people identified by the Saskatoon Safe Streets Commission in 2013. The first individuals identified drew heavily on the Saskatoon Police Service, hospital emergency wards, as well as mental health, addictions and justice system services. Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service was chosen as the host agency for the Journey Home team to

support chronically homeless individuals find housing and support. That program has grown and further developed to provide intense case management to 40 chronically and episodically homeless individuals and will continue to expand in the years to come through United Way support.

In early 2014, with the renewal of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funding until 2019, SHIP began to update the community plan priorities and build on the strength of the previous achievements. Research was conducted to map the city's assets, assess needs and identify gaps. In July 2014, SHIP hosted a stakeholder forum, which was attended by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers, government representatives, and volunteer agencies. This forum helped outline the community's preferred model for implementing Housing First and funding priorities, and laid the foundation for actions moving forward. This community consultation helped establish the priorities to provide rapid rehousing for people whose needs were less acute than those served by the Journey Home team, to develop a system for centralized intake and assessment, to provide a housing locator, to develop a Housing First logic model, and to create a coordinated data management and evaluation plan.

So much effort from community stakeholders went into the attending the consultations, setting priorities and then working together on teams to begin action on different priorities. In the process, we have seen many champions come forward, ready to prevent and end homelessness.

This action plan honours the hard work that went into planning and developing priorities. The actions associated with each priority are tangible ways for us to move forward as a community.

## Appendix B: Housing First 101

The response to homelessness typically relies upon shelters for emergency housing and acute care services, such as emergency room visits, for health care. This is now being considered a costly and ineffective method for dealing with these issues. It is estimated that homelessness costs \$7 billion annually in health care, justice and social service use.<sup>2</sup> There is a growing trend in communities to use the Housing First approach, which was developed in New York City by Pathways to Housing, which involves the immediate provision of permanent housing and supports to people who are experiencing homelessness and living with serious mental illness. This approach uses principles of immediate access to housing with no housing

readiness conditions, consumer choice and self-determination, recovery orientation (including harm reduction), individualized and person-driven supports, and social and community integration.

In 2008 the federal government invested \$110 million for At Home/Chez Soi, a five-year research demonstration project to help understand the potential of Housing First in Canadian communities. Service teams were created in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton and each received training and technical assistance. Local adaptations to the program model were encouraged to meet local needs.

Some of the key findings from this project included:

- Housing First can be effectively implemented in Canadian cities of different sizes and different ethno-racial and cultural composition. The approach was successfully adapted to serve Aboriginal people, immigrants, and other ethno-racial groups in a culturally-sensitive manner.
- Housing First rapidly ends homelessness. Participants who rapidly obtained their housing retained it at a much higher rate than the treatment as usual.
- Housing First is a sound investment as the economic analysis discovered many cases of cost savings for the chronically homeless.
- It is Housing First but not Housing Only. This approach moved people away from many types of crisis, acute and institutional services and towards more community and outreach basis services.
- Having a place to live and the right supports can lead to other positive outcomes above and beyond those provided by existing services. Participants also demonstrated better quality of life and community functioning outcomes.
- There are many ways in which Housing First can change lives. Participants indicated fewer negative experiences through this approach.
- Getting Housing First right is essential to optimizing outcomes. Participants experienced better housing stability, improved quality of life, and positive community functioning.

The implications for this research are that Housing First is an effective, pragmatic and

humane approach to address homelessness. It improves access to community services and

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<sup>2</sup> [Vancouver Sun: Gregor Robertson makes mental health Vancouver's new priority.](#)

leads to overall cost effectiveness. To achieve the best outcomes, Housing First programs should adhere to its core principles with some room for local adaptation. To effectively implement Housing First, partnerships and collaboration across government, communities and service sectors is required. Housing First may need to be adapted to meet the needs of specific sub-populations, such as families, women or youth. Finally, policies and funding that address the lack of affordability housing is required.

The School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary has also played a leading role in researching this approach. It emphasizes that the implementation of Housing First requires a difficult and systematic process, beginning with planning and strategy development that recognizes how every part of the homeless-serving system will coordinate around the Housing First philosophy. In many communities, the entire organizational infrastructure will have to be re-aligned in such a way that clients can be assessed by their needs using standardized methods across all agencies while reducing duplication of services across agencies. An important component is an effective and

integrated information management system so that different agencies can know what services are (and aren't) being provided to each client. There must also be a formal system of performance management and quality assurance to clarify whether systems are operating as efficiently as they should and if the condition of clients is improving.

It should be recognized that program models vary significantly depending upon the population served so what works in one city may not work in another. Although there are lessons to be learned from other jurisdictions, there is a need for a made-in-Saskatoon approach.

The vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness after a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless assistance system. For these families and individuals, the Housing First approach is ideal, as it provides them with assistance to find permanent housing quickly and without conditions. In turn, these people often need surprisingly little support or assistance to achieve independence, saving the system considerable costs.

## Appendix C: Action Plan

### Priority 1: System Coordination and Innovation

#### *Strategy 1: Bring together Champions to Navigate the System*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Develop Plan Steering Committee	SHIP, United Way, CAB-SH	2015Q4	Completed
Engage & Develop Strategic Partnerships	SHIP, United Way, CAB-SH	2016 Q2	In progress
Evaluation of Community Plan by Aboriginal Leaders to Support Tangible Ways for Cultural Needs to be Addressed	Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Service Agencies, SHIP	2016 Q4	
Create Collective Action Teams, and Establish Terms of Reference and Concrete Action Plans	SHIP	Within the first 6 months	
Discuss innovation, resource coordination, policy issues, system gaps	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Annually (Q3)	
Develop cost estimates for plan	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	
Communicate achievements and challenges to broader community	SHIP	Annually (Q1)	

#### *Strategy 2: Determine the Homeless-Serving System's Structure*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Map Homeless Serving System	SHIP	Within the first 6 months	
Point in Time Count Evaluation	SHIP	2017	
Housing Inventory Count	SHIP	Within the first 6 months	
Identify Key System Components	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	
Achieve Consensus on Homeless Serving System Design and Needs	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	
Review System Capacity and Identify Gaps	Collective Action Teams, SHIP	Annually	

### ***Strategy 3: Ensure Co-ordinated Entry and Easy Access***

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Develop Centralized Intake	SHIP (HPS), United Way, SIMFC, Lighthouse, Journey Home	2015	Completed
Agree upon an acuity assessment tool	HF/RRH Team	2016 Q1	Completed
Build clients referral protocols	HF/RRH Team	2016 Q3	In Progress
Develop eligibility/referral process info for frontline staff and clients	HF/RRH Housing Team, SHIP	2016 Q4	In Progress
Create city-wide knowledge of Centralized Intake	HF/RRH Team, United Way, SHIP	Ongoing	In Development

### ***Strategy 4: Regular Communication***

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Facilitate regular service provider discussions	SHIP	Annually Q2	To be Initiated
Investigate value of convening a Case Management Support Group	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Within the first 6 months	In Progress
Convene a Housing Placement Team that discusses barriers to success Coordinate YXE Connects Event	SIMFC, Journey Home White Buffalo, YWCA,, SHIP YXE Connects Committee	Bi-Monthly (Ongoing) Annually	Completed In Progress
Communicate achievements and challenges to broader community	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Annually (Q1)	
Organize Homelessness Awareness and Solutions Conference	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Annually	
Conduct Business Engagement Meetings with local business associations	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Annually (Q2 & Q4)	
Develop Homelessness Website	SHIP	2016	Completed
Develop Communications Strategy	SHIP, Community Engagement Action Team	Within the first 12 months	To be Initiated
Facilitate regular service provider discussions	SHIP	Annually Q2	To be Initiated

### ***Strategy 5: Continuous Improvement and Filling Gaps***

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Establish a set of performance indicators	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	Completed
Work with service providers to establish targets for success	SHIP, Homeless Serving Agencies	Within the first 12 months	In Progress
Identify barriers to useful data collection and analysis	SHIP, Homeless Serving Agencies, Provincial HIFIS Coordinator	Semi-Annually	In Progress
Assist in the evaluation of service delivery	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, SHIP, Individual Agencies	(Ongoing) Within the first 12 months	
Develop a Saskatoon Report Card on Homelessness	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, Lead agency	Within the first 12 months	
Conduct Point-In-Time Count	SHIP (HPS), Research Agency	2017	
Develop a Credible Registry	SHIP	2017	
Establish a set of performance indicators	Provincial HIFIS Coordinator, Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	Completed

## **Priority 2: Strengthening Housing Placement and Support Programs**

### ***Strategy 6: Reduce Homelessness through a Housing First approach***

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Investment in Housing First Programs	SHIP (HPS), United Way of Saskatoon	Within the first 12 months	In Progress
Convene a Landlords Round Table	SHIP	Every 6 months	In Development
Fidelity Assessment of HF programs	Self-Assessment compiled by SHIP	Annually (Q1)	In Progress
Develop Landlord Database	SHIP	Ongoing	In Progress
Promote sustainability of HF Programs	SHIP, HF delivery agencies	Ongoing	In Progress



***Strategy 7: Provide Individualized Housing Placement and Support Services***

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Develop Rapid Rehousing case management for mid-acuity clients.	SHIP (HPS), SIMFC, Friendship Inn	2015 Q2	Underway
Study models of delivery for housing coordination and income advisory Assessment of programs	SHIP SHIP, Self-Assessment	Quarterly (Ongoing) Within the first 12 months	To be Completed In Progress
Promote sustainability of Housing Placement and Support Programs	SHIP, Service Delivery agencies	Ongoing	In Progress
Develop Rapid Rehousing case management for mid-acuity clients.	SHIP (HPS), SIMFC, Friendship Inn	2015 Q2	Underway

***Strategy 8: Evaluate current housing placement and support programs strategies to promote sustainability of homeless-serving and housing placement agencies***

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Explore alternate funding models and methods of service delivery to adapt to changing circumstances and critical service needs	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Ongoing	Underway
Utilize program evaluation as a catalyst for appropriate resource allocation and to promote needed investments	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	Quarterly (Ongoing)	To be Completed

***Strategy 9: Capacity Development***

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Create training and development plan	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	2017 Q1	Underway
Training for staff on roles and responsibilities Assessment of training effectiveness	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP Survey of participants	Bi-Annually (Ongoing) Annually (Q1)	To be Completed In Progress
Create training and development plan	Homeless Serving Agencies, SHIP	2017 Q1	Underway

## Priority 3: Prevention

### *Strategy 10: Recognizing & building on successful programs that are preventing homelessness*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Profile local stakeholder organizations on homelessness website	SHIP	Quarterly	
Develop a best practices/service provider recognition as part of communication strategy	SHIP	Within the first 12 months	

### *Strategy 11: Prevention happens when people stay housed*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Develop eviction prevention protocols for placement programs	Individual Non-Profits, SHIP	2016 Q2	Underway
Develop eviction prevention programs (i.e. rent bank, matched savings plans)	SHIP	Year 2-5	To be Completed
Investigate the potential impact of community care and outreach programs	SHIP	Year 2	In Progress
Research innovative approaches to curbing food insecurity, especially for families	Food Bank, CHEP, SHIP	Year 3	

### *Strategy 12: Prevention means supporting people in a more intense way*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Develop recommendations to improve access to culturally appropriate counselling and healing practices	STC, CUMFI, SIMFC, Camponi Housing, SHIP	2017	To be Completed
Address gaps in services for children and youth	SHIP	Year 2-5	To be Completed
Develop discharge planning protocols	Individual Agencies, SHIP	Within the first 12 months	To be Completed
Interview front-line workers and first-voice individuals to gain better understanding of prevention support needs in Saskatoon	SHIP	Within the first 12 months	

## Priority 4: The Solution to Homelessness is Housing

### *Strategy 13: Increase affordable housing supply*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Establish targets for affordable housing by demographic	Collective Action Teams, SHIP, City of Saskatoon	Within the first 12 months	To be Completed
Promote development of affordable housing to meet needs in Saskatoon	SHIP, City of Saskatoon	Ongoing	To be Completed
Discuss Saskatoon affordable housing program needs with Saskatchewan Housing Corp	SHIP, City of Saskatoon, Individual Agencies	Year 2-5	To be Completed

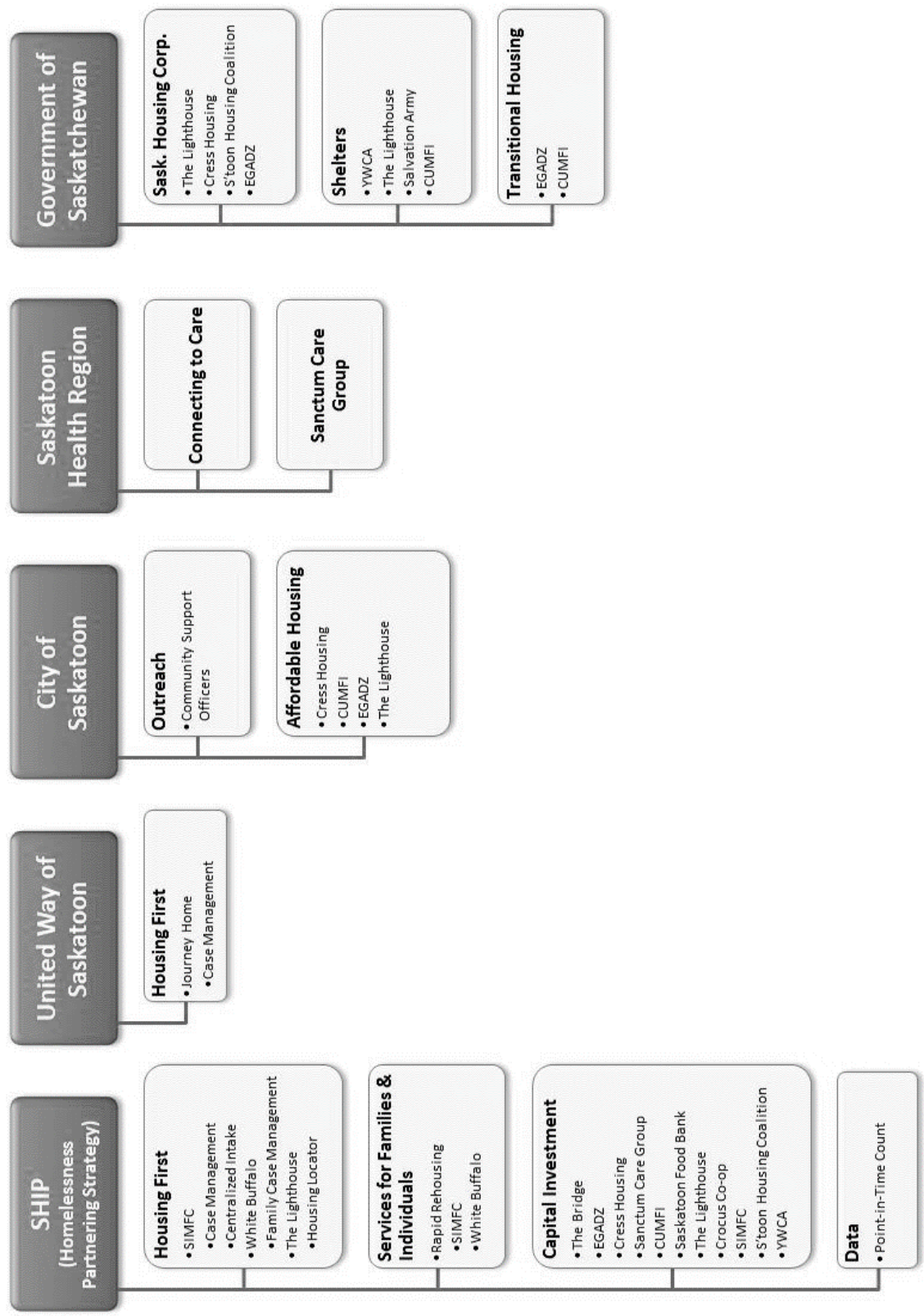
### *Strategy 14: Increase Alternative Housing Options*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Progress
Create specialized housing units where people with an addiction are supported in their independence.	To be determined	2017	To be Completed
Establish housing with a managed alcohol program	To be determined	2017	To be Completed
Increase support for existing complex needs supported housing services	To be determined	2017	To be Completed

## Appendix D: Timeline for Transition of SHIP

Activity	Timeline
Final Draft of Action Plan Completed	2016 Q2
Approval of Action Plan by SHIP Board, United Way P2EH Committee and CAB-SH	2016 Q2
Update on progress to Steering Committee	Ongoing
Recruit new SHIP Board members	2016 Q3
SHIP begins to undertake activities outlined in the Action Plan	2016 Q3
Review SHIP Mandate and Bylaws	2016 Q3
SHIP Annual General Meeting to amend bylaws and elect new Board members	2016 Q3
SHIP recruit additional staff to facilitate activities of the Action Plan	2016 Q4
SHIP update on progress to on plan to stakeholders	2016 Q4
Recruit members for Collective Action Teams	2016 Q4 – 2017 Q1
Present Action Plan at a Community Gathering	2016 Q4
Dissolve Plan Steering Committee	2016 Q4
SHIP officially undertakes Lead Agency Role for the Homelessness Action Plan	2016 Q4
Present Action Plan to City Council	2017 Q1

# Appendix E: Funders and Programs in Saskatoon



## Appendix F: Collective Impact Guidelines

The oversight process and responsibilities will focus on Community Collective Impact. Collective Impact is not just a new term for collaboration. Instead, it represents a fundamentally different approach to achieving large-scale impact:

- Funders and agencies understand that social problems, and their solutions, arise from the complexity of the system and how people and organizations interact within that system;
- Progress depends on working towards the same goal and measuring the same things
- Large scale impact depends on increasing multi-sector alignment and learning among many organizations
- Not for profit, corporate and government organizations are all essential partners
- Organizations actively coordinate their action and share lessons learned to continuously improve outcomes

There are number of important responsibilities as the lead organization. Specifically, the lead agency will:

- **Set the tone for cooperation**
  - In some cases, agencies compete for the same funding resources. It is the purpose of the lead agency to rise above this competition and help find ways for agencies to cooperate in completing the shared vision and goals.
- **Give “authority” to partnering organizations**
  - In multi-agency projects such as this, there are rarely direct lines of authority between cooperating groups or agencies. It is the role of the lead agency to make sure the means and mechanisms of collaboration and mutual benefit are in place to get things done.
- **Represent stakeholders that do not directly on the board or action teams**
  - A group can only have a limited number of members. It is the job of the lead agency to represent those that do not have a direct representative in the oversight structure.
- **Ensure equality in decision-making**
  - As the lead agency, make sure the project or initiative meets the needs of as many parties as possible. This means it must fairly weigh all requests and act impartially to do the most good with the resources it has available.
  -

To promote Community Impact, SHIP will seek to have Board and committee members who:

- Have a progressive understanding of homelessness;
- Are visionary, with a strategic, forward-thinking perspective;
- Can provide wide contacts throughout the community;
- Are active professionals in the community and in various circles;
- Understand human dynamics and relationship building;
- Are respected across the community for their passion for housing and homelessness;
- Are experienced with organizational development;
- Have the authority to make executive-level change;
- Have integrity;
- Can leave their personal agendas behind;
- Have a desire to communicate, lead and facilitate change; and
- Are able to consistently provide assistance, guidance and support.

<sup>i</sup> <http://homelesshub.ca/blog/how-does-homelessness-affect-early-childhood-development>; <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/homelessness-and-its-effects-children>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/how-many-people-die-result-homelessness>; <http://homelesshub.ca/resource/how-does-sexualized-violence-contribute-homelessness>