



Calgary Homeless Foundation

February 1, 2013

Dear Calgarians:

On January 29, 2013, the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Calgary reached the halfway point! I am pleased to report that there has been significant and exciting progress.

The growth in the number of people experiencing homelessness has stopped, despite recent immigration to Calgary. A point in time count in August 2012 indicated 3,576 people were experiencing homelessness, compared with 3,601 in May 2008. Prior to the 10 Year Plan, the number of people experiencing homelessness increased by 20 to 30% every two years.

It is estimated that around 4,000 men, women and children have received housing and support. It is safe to say that many of these people would be in the city's emergency shelters if they had not been housed.

Housing First works. In a sample of 270 people who were housed with support, 92% retained their housing after one year. This same group also reported a significant reduction in use of more expensive emergency and public systems. As well, one-third sought help for mental illness and addictions.

The homeless-serving system in Calgary is more coordinated and collaborative. Front-line agencies are working together, referring clients, designing innovative programs and eliminating redundancies. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the first of its kind in Canada, has 69 programs and more than 17,000 client records on line. With collaboration and HMIS, the homeless-serving system now can prioritize clients' needs as they enter the system, match them to the right housing and support, and measure how well services are working.

All levels of government have been extremely supportive, despite changing policy and economic conditions. This is especially true of the Government of Alberta, which is the only province in Canada to have its own 10 Year Plan and currently funds over \$29 million in Housing First programs in Calgary on an annual basis.

We've learned a lot and will apply this knowledge to the next five years of the 10 Year Plan.

We must continue to prioritize resources for housing and support to the most vulnerable. These include families, youth, women, Aboriginal people and those experiencing long-term and reoccurring homelessness. Typically these are also the same people who cost our public systems the most. A provincial-wide cost study is going to give us more concrete evidence of the cost savings achieved through Housing First.

Specialized and more intense housing and support programs are needed so some clients with complex issues can better succeed in Housing First programs. There is limited capacity in the non-profit sector to provide this kind of intense support, so a concerted effort must be made to increase

this front-line capacity. This is particularly important because these individuals represent the most significant users of public services, such as police and hospitals.

Comprehensive and higher quality data is required to better understand progress towards existing 10 Year Plan goals. We are reviewing the number of people housed with support as HMIS improves the quality of data received from agencies. Because there was no coordinated intake system in the past, some clients were likely double-counted. We anticipate this adjustment could be between 10% and 20%. Experience from cities in the U.S. that have put HMIS in place, show a restatement with more accurate data is common place. As well, our goal is to enroll all homeless shelters onto HMIS in 2013. The information may impact the goals in the 10 Year Plan.

The next step to make the homeless-serving system more efficient is coordinated intake. This will mean that no matter where a client enters the system they are prioritized consistently and efficiently matched with the right housing and support services. This will also facilitate a better understanding of who is entering the system, where they're coming from and the resources required to move them out of the emergency shelter system into housing.

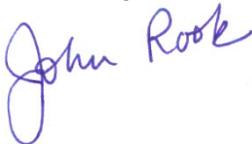
A significant amount of additional affordable housing is required in Calgary. With 20,000 people migrating to Calgary in 2012 and a vacancy rate of 1.5%, more housing must be added. Without this housing, it will be difficult to decrease use of emergency shelters. All housing providers (governments, non-profit agencies and private landlords) must work together to identify what housing stock exists and what is required.

Calgary is viewed as a leader on the issue of homelessness and the 'can do' culture of this city will see this leadership continue. Those working on the 10 Year Plan are committed to getting help to those most in need faster and to providing effective housing and support solutions so people can sustain housing and work on their individual issues.

Only by ensuring this group of Calgarians is provided the vital resources necessary to move forward with their lives will we be a city where everyone can become meaningfully engaged in their community -- a city where we can all contribute and of which we can be proud.

On behalf of the Calgary Homeless Foundation, please accept my sincere thanks for your contribution to our remarkable progress in the first five years of Calgary's 10 Year Plan. We look forward to continuing to work with you to end homelessness in Calgary.

Sincerely,



Dr. John Rook
President and CEO
Calgary Homeless Foundation

