



## **Review of Housing and Homeless Service Delivery in the County of Frontenac**

**Recommendations for Preventing & Ending Rural Homelessness**

**June 16, 2017**

Report prepared for:

**City of Kingston's Housing Division**

Report prepared by:

**OrgCode Consulting Inc.**



## Background

Rural communities in Canada are not immune to the challenges related to homelessness and the communities that make up the County of Frontenac certainly experience the suffering and costs related to housing instability and homelessness. The same structural factors that contribute to urban homelessness – lack of affordable housing options, especially rental housing stock, and inadequate income – remain the primary drivers for homelessness in rural communities. Insufficient incomes, lack of affordable housing options, high poverty rates, and poor or non-existent transportation options also wreak havoc on efforts to gain housing stability. However, for many rural communities, the over-arching challenge of housing instability is further compounded by a lack of access to appropriate services. This lack of local infrastructure to effectively identify, respond, prevent and end homelessness often results in residents of Frontenac County needing to leave their home communities to access shelter and emergency services within the City of Kingston where their lack of social supports, knowledge of the city service landscape and connection with the important sense of “home” further adds to the trauma of homelessness and the challenge of returning to housing stability.

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for the implementation of housing and homelessness initiatives in the County of Frontenac, the City of Kingston’s Housing Division is dedicated to ensuring that the rural homelessness strategy implemented is evidence informed, effective and customized, where possible, to align with the current realities, opportunities and challenges encountered in South, Central and North Frontenac. In February 2017, the City of Kingston’s Housing Division, as the Service Manager, contracted with OrgCode Consulting to complete a review of current homelessness prevention and re-housing services provided throughout the County and to examine opportunities to enhance service delivery and access to supports for individuals and families experiencing housing instability and homelessness in Frontenac County. It is OrgCode’s hope that this review of rural homelessness approaches in Frontenac County will provide the City of Kingston with the information and recommendations to create a more unified system of service delivery espouses the principles of Housing First and fosters the person-centred responses that reflects the challenges and strengths of all communities within its region – urban and rural alike.

It should be noted that while the County of Frontenac includes the Frontenac Islands, due to proximity, most Island residents choose to access services in the City of Kingston rather than the Country of Frontenac. To achieve a client centric service delivery model, the funded homeless service providers in both rural and urban areas allow the client to choose their service provider/area of service and all agencies participating in the Kingston-Frontenac Housing & Homelessness Services system complete a Coordinated Intake with all clients presenting for services at which time, if applicable, area of service is discussed.

This review of current rural homelessness approaches and strategies involved an analysis of available Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)



data, stakeholder interviews with the City of Kingston staff, Home Base Housing staff that fulfill service coordination roles with rural staff and the leaders of the three partner agencies in Frontenac County. In addition to this data review and interviews, site visits were also facilitated with the 2 housing staff employed by the Southern Frontenac Community Services Corporation (SFCSC) and tasked with delivering a blended model of homelessness prevention and re-housing services in South, Central and North Frontenac. SFCSC currently has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with two partner agencies to enhance “the provision of sustainable, consistent Prevention Diversion, Rapid Re-Housing and Homelessness Prevention Fund supports”. The Northern Frontenac Community Services Corporation (NFCSC) and the Addictions and Mental Health Services of Kingston Frontenac Lennox & Addington (AMHS KFLA) are partners in the delivery of this blended service delivery model and provide office space and community connections for SFCSC staff in their communities of Verona and Sharbot Lake.

Although this initial project could never be considered a thorough analysis of all aspects of the rural homelessness prevention and re-housing services throughout the County, it is hoped that this initial review will provide both an examination of the opportunities and promising practices for enhancing service delivery for the individuals and families experiencing housing instability and homelessness throughout Frontenac County. With this goal in mind, this report is generated to provide not only reflections of the current state of service but to highlight options for improved collaboration, support provision and access to emergency and permanent housing options for residents that require such assistance.

Although the enhancements reflected in this report will be challenging to implement and may involve a departure from current approaches to the delivery of funded services in the County, they are critical to understand that there is an immense cost to not acting to improve service orientation and implementation. There are over-arching community and capacity benefits associated with acting to prevent and end homelessness through a focus on service integration and increased access to housing options that are safe, stable and affordable.

## **Introduction**

Opinions and debates about rural homelessness include such statements that “all services provided in urban settings must be provided in all communities, including rural and remote” to “true homelessness is so uncommon in rural communities that developing a coordinated system of care is a huge waste of taxpayers money”. It is the opinion of this OrgCode team member that the correct response to service delivery rests in the adoption of Housing First practice that not only endorses the philosophies of service provision that is person-centred, strength based, recovery oriented and evidence informed but that is committed to progressive engagement efforts for service delivery and breaking down access barriers to supports that can enhance stability and wellness. The role of innovation and true collaboration remain hallmarks for the implementation and adaptation of efforts dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in all

communities – regardless of population size, economic factors and industry drivers or infrastructure. Preventing and ending homelessness in rural communities, however, actually demands increased efforts to innovate, engage and commit to the eradication of access barriers due to the lack of resource-rich environments in rural regions separated by vast geography and limited transportation options. For most communities that commit to ending homelessness through systemic transformation, regular approaches tied to colocation and cooperative agreements prove to be insufficient within a rural landscape. Perhaps the greatest opportunity available throughout the County of Frontenac to fully generate rural-based solutions to such issues as a lack of emergency housing and affordable housing stock rests in the self sufficient and innovative spirit of the communities and people that call rural communities home. The recent participation in local summits and “town hall” events provide one such barometer of the communities’ desire to tackle the housing, health and poverty issues negatively impacting their neighbours. It must also be realized that, as is the case for all communities, no external entity can dictate or predict what can and should work for the communities throughout Frontenac County. However, evidence informed practices regarding homelessness prevention and re-housing efforts, a housing aligned service orientation and capacity building within professionals and community partners will assist in improving services and supports in the County.

### **Myths that Impede Our Progress**

- There are no homeless people in rural areas.
- There’s no affordable housing.
- Housing people is more challenging in rural areas.
- Shelter space will solve rural homelessness.
- Case management is harder here.
- It’s impossible to find people.
- “I don’t want to set them up for failure”
- Once you access shelter in the city, you can never return home.
- All services provided in the city must be provided in each rural community.

~ From OrgCode’s “Effective Practices in Rural Homelessness Service Delivery” Learning Clinic

## Key Challenges Impacting Efforts to Prevent and End Homelessness in the County of Frontenac

From the data analysis, key informant interviews and the site visits, the following challenges are identified as the primary impediments to progress in efforts in addressing homelessness in the County of Frontenac that spans almost 3200 square kilometers where approximately 25,000 individuals call home:

1. With 34% of local staff time spent travelling between South, Central and North Frontenac<sup>1</sup>, efforts and activities dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness in the County currently looks markedly different than the provision of service in an urban area.
2. At present the relationship between SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS KFLA is more closely aligned with a co-located model of service – not as collaborative as it could be and not demonstrating as much service integration as possible. Adoption of an integrated service hub model that serves individuals and families effectively in South, Central and North Frontenac could greatly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of needs assessment and efforts to prevent and end homeless.
3. The current lack of emergency housing options (including motel voucher options) and the required migration to the City of Kingston for access to emergency shelter was certainly identified by the community partners as a barrier to service for local residents. It was also identified by NFCSC that based on their experience; the movement to Kingston for emergency shelter and supports does not accurately reflect the natural migration of people experiencing a housing crisis in North Frontenac. Based on anecdotal information shared by partner agencies, there was a perception that, for many households, reliance on service provision in Perth is more prevalent than migration south. Follow-up with the County of Lanark Service Manager performed by the City of Kingston however identified that no County residents had accessed emergency shelter beds or limited motel vouchers in the Perth area.

**Opportunities to improve access, staff support, clinical supervision and technical assistance to service providers in the County of Frontenac must be optimized.**

---

<sup>1</sup> The identification of the staff time dedicated to travel was identified by AMHS KFLA reviews of internal operations.



4. Naturally, with both funded Homelessness Prevention & Re-Housing Staff based out of the home base of Southern Frontenac Community Service Corporation, more services and improved accessibility to supports are available for residents living in the South Frontenac area than in Central or North. Given the demographics, economic and social realities for Central and North Frontenac, however, it is anticipated that there will likely be an increasing need for housing and homelessness needs in Central and Northern Frontenac in the future. With improved access to housing assistance, the true housing and homelessness needs impacting Central and North Frontenac would be better understood;

**One full time equivalent Support Worker that is housed in the North and dedicated to serving North and Central Frontenac would better serve the housing needs of the local population and alleviate the inefficiencies in service caused by geography.**

5. Given the fact that finite resources are a reality for all Service Managers throughout the Province, it may not currently be possible to increase the staffing resources available in the County. If the opportunity to enhance the County-based system of care exists, an additional FTE that is housed in the North and dedicated to serving North and Central Frontenac would better serve the population needs due to the large geographical region to be covered. The current staffing resources could then continue to be housed in South Frontenac and also support Central Frontenac. Such an addition would provide flexibility to ensure that landlord liaison and outreach activities could be better accomplished. See Appendix 1 to view a proposed staffing model for the County of Frontenac.
6. Staff support and clinical supervision of housing based case management is limited for the staff operating in the County of Frontenac. The Service Manager funds a Service Coordinator, operating out of Home Base Housing. This Coordinator's time is of course limited given the multiple responsibilities of this role, however as we fully develop the rural homelessness strategy, it is anticipated that this role will be better able to fully understand the realities of rural service delivery and provide enhanced support;
7. The introduction of initial triage and needs assessment at the front door of the 3 host agencies is currently not streamlined, therefore reducing its effectiveness in ensuring targeted access to homelessness prevention and re-housing supports for the most vulnerable residents in the County;
8. Given the realities of staffing limitations and multi-service agencies in rural communities, Homelessness Prevention and Re-Housing staff are often required to complete initial agency intake for SFCSC. This naturally detracts from time and focus on homelessness prevention and re-housing services as staff spend considerable time completing applications for utility and financial relief with local



residents who often do not match the target population. While such application assistance are important poverty reduction activities, these in and of themselves, are not always homelessness prevention activities. The implementation of reception and intake strategies and tools during agency-based reception/intake prior to connecting residents with dedicated homelessness prevention staff will allow for more staff time to provide services to the target homeless population. The City of Kingston must review the role of initial triage activities with SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS KFLA to ensure that local residents receive the same approach and access to supports as their urban neighbours.

**Policies,  
processes and  
definitions must  
be realigned to  
meet the realities  
and nuances of a  
rural context**

9. Currently, policies, processes and definitions that govern homelessness prevention and re-housing efforts are aligned with the realities of urban service delivery expectations – including the expected availability of complimentary emergency services. A realignment of service expectations as well as opportunities for increased flexibility and enhanced eligibility for service in rural areas will greatly enhance efforts to prevent and end homelessness in an evidence informed manner with valid and reliable tools. Housing sustainability will remain a focus of all efforts to support residents. To assume that rural residents will have access to the same emergency services and resources as urban residents. A realignment of service expectations as well as opportunities for increased flexibility and enhanced eligibility for service in rural areas will greatly enhance efforts to prevent and end homelessness in an evidence informed manner.
10. For those rural residents who do not have access to emergency housing options in the County and therefore migrate to the City of Kingston, repatriation to their home community does not appear to be identified as a viable option – by service providers or service participants. Through the Kingston and Frontenac County system of care, a return to home should be a paramount consideration for any individual or family that chooses to return to the County. Our opportunity is to ensure that, through effective service planning and service integration, we can effectively support and house our neighbours in the community of their choosing.
11. Strategies and approaches to preventing and ending homelessness in the County of Frontenac are challenged to achieve alignment with evidence informed practices. However, seeking creative solutions to collaborative case conferencing with mainstream systems, targeted outreach and landlord relations must be prioritized and invested in for the County of Frontenac. Initial (time-limited) projects could not only generate initial databases and relationships but also create the momentum for ongoing community development and technical

assistance initiatives dedicated to continual improvement of services and supports for individuals and families living in the County and experiencing housing instability or homelessness. The Service Manager will incorporate homelessness prevention prescreens using the Prevention/Rehousing VI-SPDAT which will assist in making more informed decisions regarding who is at risk of homelessness and requires supports and in the Prevention/Diversion Program.

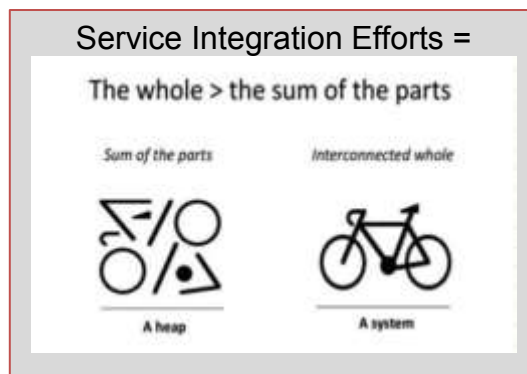
## Recommendations for Enhanced Services to Prevent and End Rural Homelessness

### A. County-Based Service Delivery Enhancements

The commitment of partner agencies, community leaders and funded staff to address housing and homelessness needs throughout the County of Frontenac was evident throughout this review project. It is in appreciation of this steadfast commitment to meeting the housing needs of rural neighbours that the following recommendations for enhancements are presented. These strategic opportunities are designed to improve future activities and service provision for homelessness prevention and re-housing services in South, Central and North Frontenac.

#### Strategic Opportunity # 1: Enhancing the Collaborative Partnership Between SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS KFLA.

Although a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed for the three partner agencies for the delivery of homelessness prevention and re-housing services throughout the County of Frontenac, the document does not provide an effective vehicle for service integration and collaborative efforts across agencies (and mandates) and there is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for staff and agency partnerships dedicated to seamless and comprehensive support for individuals and families experiencing housing instability and homelessness.





Concepts of co-location, collaboration and service integration<sup>2</sup> are commonly misunderstood in human and social services industries. The delineations amongst these realities play an integral role in improving the service delivery system and collaborative relationships developed by SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS KFLA. Co-location efforts are often viewed as the beginning stages of service integration where the idea of a “one stop shop” allows for easier access to an array of supports and resources for local residents. It is hoped that such co-location of services would also, naturally, lead to improved collaboration and information sharing amongst independent service agencies. However, such an organic evolution has proven, time and again, not to be the reality for most communities or service models. The next stage of cooperation between service entities that serve the same target populations is a model of collaboration where diverse agencies actively cooperate to deliver specialized initiatives and/or projects or to properly support shared clients with the goal of reducing the duplication of services and developing improved supports to the shared client(s). The final, and most impactful, evolution of inter-agency cooperation rests in service integration where every client served by the agency is viewed as a common client and all service providers actively share responsibility for the holistic identification/assessment of support needs, while collectively identifying service pathways and innovative solutions to overcome challenges. Within a service integration model, resources are viewed as co-owned and co-managed. Isolated examples of collaborative support and service integration have certainly been witnessed by homelessness prevention staff and the partnering agencies operating within the County and are encouraging; however, more activity in this regard is needed.

Currently the model of collaboration can be best described as a co-located model. Moving from a co-located model to a more collaborative approach will require the facilitation of deliberate activities and discussions designed to ensure shared case management and cross-training opportunities dedicated to improving overall supports for all clients served – especially given the fact that housing stability plays such an integral role in the supports provided by SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS KFLA. Ideally, service integration could be achieved in each of the locations where SFCSC staff are housed, however, without an increase in the number of staff providing homelessness prevention and re-housing services or the number of hours/days spent in each location, such a goal will be a challenge to achieve.

---

<sup>2</sup> For additional information, please see “The Integration Imperative: reshaping the delivery of human and social services.” KPMG International and University of Toronto’s Mowatt Centre, School of Public Policy & Governance, 2013.

## Recommended Enhancement

**Building on the current relationship outlined in the RFP submission and the Memorandum of Understanding, enhance service delivery for County residents through deliberate efforts to move from a co-located model for housing supports to more of an integrated service hub model.**

### Recommended Resources:

Small budget (\$10,000) available to the community partners to facilitate service integration discussions and cross training opportunities.

### Recommended Lead:

Joint SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS Leadership Committee with facilitation from the City of Kingston

**Priority:  
High**

## **Strategic Opportunity # 2: Enhancing the Valuable Relationship between the Service Manager, Service Coordination Partners (Home Base Housing) and the Frontenac County Partners.**

As Service Manager, the City of Kingston's Housing Division has led the implementation of evidence informed homeless prevention and re-housing service delivery throughout the region. As Lead Agency, given the current context and stage of the evolution of the local system of care, the City of Kingston's Housing Division is primed to actively increase its support to foster an enhancement of service delivery throughout the County of Frontenac.

**a. Enhancing Support Provided to Rural Service Providers:** It is recommended that the staff identified at Home Base Housing to provide service coordination support to the County partners commit themselves to attending a minimum of 1 case review meeting per month, in person, to increase their understanding and clinical/program support provided to individuals and families receiving homelessness prevention and re-housing supports. In addition to increasing the "clinical" supports provided to County-based Homelessness Prevention and Re-Housing staff, this on-site support will further enhance the development of tools and approaches that align Housing First interventions with rural realities. Currently, on-site supervision and support for funded SFCSC staff is extremely limited and as a result opportunities with case reviews with job coaching is also limited. The addition of such technical and clinical support will assist in improving service delivery, data entry and outcomes. After the initial 6 on-site monthly visits, it is recommended that the partners decide on the schedule of on-site visits monthly or quarterly.



**Recommended Enhancement**

**For a 6-month period, HomeBase Service Coordinator Partners attend 1 case review meeting per month to enhance support to rural staff and enhance the tools and approaches to end rural homelessness.**

**Recommended Resources:**

- Dedicated staff time and travel costs for HomeBase staff.
- Dedicated staff time for rural staff.

**Recommended Lead:**

Service Coordination Team at HomeBase and SFCSC Supervisor

**Priority:  
High**

**b. Promotional Materials for Rural Homelessness Services:** Currently, the promotional materials generated to discuss homelessness prevention, emergency shelter and re-housing services primarily focus on services and supports available in the City of Kingston. Additional promotional material that focuses on homelessness prevention and re-housing service options available in the County including when travel to the City of Kingston for supports will be required. The rural service delivery partners will, of course, be integral partners for the development of these promotional materials.

**Recommended Enhancement**

**Develop a separate brochure and other promotional materials (i.e. posters, etc.) primarily highlighting homelessness prevention and housing services available in the County of Frontenac as well as the resources that can be accessed in Kingston.**

**Recommended Resources:**

Budget for the development, copying and distribution of brochures targeting services and supports available in the County of Frontenac

**Recommended Lead:**

SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS Leadership Committee and City of Kingston Communications Division

**Priority:  
Medium**

**c. Exploration of Emergency Housing Options in the County of Frontenac:** Currently, individuals and families that cannot be diverted from homelessness have no access to emergency shelter options in the County of Frontenac. Travel to Kingston for shelter admission is the only available option, although transportation options are limited. Unlike so many other rural areas, the County of Frontenac is unable to avail of motel rooms as an emergency housing option since there are no motels in the County. Local partners have held conversations with a local Bed and Breakfast owner who has expressed an interest in providing space for emergency housing, when space is available. Although an unusual option for emergency sheltering, future examination of the appropriateness of this possibility for future short-term use while seeking permanent

housing would be beneficial. Other rural communities across North America have also examined such emergency housing options as “host homes”<sup>3</sup> - a short term respite support arrangement for rooms to rent as well as such community responses as church led out-of-the-cold shelter options for short stints of time. Beyond providing respite for a few days, it must be realized that travel to the City of Kingston for bona fide shelter admission will need to be better coordinated in the future. In some communities, such as in the Region of Waterloo, small “bunkies” have been built and positioned on appropriate sites to provide temporary shelter for some individuals experiencing homelessness who can not use traditional shelter options. Community engagement around the development of specific innovative options in addressing the need for short-term emergency housing would likely generate solutions for this local need. These short-term solutions provide temporary housing solutions while long-term permanent housing is being sought.

**Recommended Enhancement**

**Investigate 2015 and 2016 data to determine the number of County residents requiring short-term (1-4 days) emergency housing options residents who could not be diverted from homelessness and the immediate transport to the Kingston shelters was not a viable option for the individual/family. Based on demonstrated need, explore appropriate emergency housing options for the County to better meet the immediate shelter needs of residents.**

**Recommended Resources:**

- Staff time to examine data related to diversion efforts over the past 2 years by SFCSC as well as shelter admission data for Kingston-based programs. Such a data mining activity will shed light on the magnitude and gravity of the emergency housing challenges facing County residents.
- Staff time to develop a list of potential emergency housing options, explore the feasibility of each option and connect with additional community partners.
- Once the most appropriate County-based emergency housing option is identified, a fund will be required for the nightly costs of accommodations or the capital costs of such options as “bunkies”.

**Recommended Lead:**

Joint City of Kingston and SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS Leadership Committee

**Priority:  
High**

<sup>3</sup> Although much more common in addressing youth homelessness in North America, there is no reason why “host home” options could not be investigated. Mental health partners across Canada have identified community based respite home designations to meet local needs so examples of such models are available. For additional information on this, visit such websites as <http://homelesshub.ca/solutions>; <http://www.homelesshub.ca> and <http://avenuesforyouth.org>

**d. Coordinated Repatriation Efforts for County of Frontenac Residents:** Client choice is a cornerstone of Housing First. With this in mind, the City of Kingston’s Housing Division is encouraged to monitor and report on the service pathways of individuals and families from the County to examine migration patterns and repatriation efforts. During the re-housing of individuals and families from the County experiencing homelessness in the City of Kingston who wish to return to their home communities, joint service planning should be coordinated between the Kingston based service providers and the SFCSC employees to facilitate a return to the County and the appropriate delivery of housing stabilization supports. Such repatriation efforts should be promoted with service providers to ensure that former residents of the County have the opportunity to return home, if this is their preference.

**Recommended Enhancement**

**Promote client choice and repatriation options for County residents that enter the Kingston shelter system. Joint Service Planning between staff delivering homeless services in both the City of Kingston and County staff will focus on the provision of housing location and housing stabilization supports in the client’s home community.**

**Recommended Resources:**

- Together with partner agencies, the City of Kingston Housing Division will develop a Service Standard to govern repatriation efforts.
  - No additional staffing resources anticipated.
- Client transportation costs may need to be covered through Program Funds.

**Recommended Lead:**

The City of Kingston and funded community partners – urban and rural.

**Priority:  
Medium**

### **Strategic Opportunity # 3: Clarifying the Role & Responsibilities of Homelessness Prevention & Re-Housing Staff in the County of Frontenac.**

#### ***Realities of Effective Rural Service Delivery***

- *Get out of the office - The woods aren't going to spit people into your building*
- *Capitalize on the true nature of rural residents – innovation and 'stick-with-it-ness'*
- *Budget for travel but remember that your 'community' involves more than you and your agency*
- *Rapid Re-Housing & Housing First remain essential interventions*
- *Have a schedule and build partnerships that allow the impact of housing stability surpass the time Your Mandate allows you to dedicate to clients – stability and improved wellness is a shared mission.*
- *Be a trusted part of communities – service connections and collaborative client centred supports surpasses any one agency or mandate.*
- *Show success in preventing and ending homeless – data demonstrates success and impact.*
- *Train your people. Train them again.*
- *Give direction and mentorship – feeling alone is amplified in a rural setting if supervision is ineffective.*

~ From OrgCode's "Effective Practices in Rural Homelessness Service Delivery"  
Learning Clinic

Given the lack of community services and supports in the County, it is natural that Southern Frontenac Community Services Corporation staff funded to provide homelessness prevention and re-housing services would likely connect with the majority of vulnerable clients accessing services in their home base, the Sydenham office. Given the limited time that SFCSC staff members spend in the Verona and Sharbot Lake locations, the office staff for each of those locations appear to have refined the service pathway and initial assessment of needs, which is completed by receptionist and/or intake staff. Only those individuals and families that require assistance with rental or utility arrears, housing instability and homelessness tend to be seen by SFCSC team members there. Recognizing that the supports and processes required for homelessness prevention efforts may not be re-scheduled for the limited times when SFCSC staff are on-site, it will be important to investigate other support options for local individuals and families seeking assistance in the County. Perhaps the greatest opportunity for redevelopment with SFCSC involves the examination of methods – including self-serve tools, receptionist or intake staff-led activities or via, on an emergency basis, telephone access to the dedicated Prevention and Diversion team at HomeBase for guidance – to ensure that valuable homelessness prevention and re-housing resources are not tied up performing intake activities for all services provided by the SFCSC agency. Such an intake and triage process cuts into limited client-centred supports dedicated to homelessness prevention and re-housing and results in a “first come, first served” and crisis driven response for the two staff members. Such a “being all things to all people” approach - which is the antithesis of a Housing First approach - erodes the staff's ability to perform the specific duties, activities and interventions

governed by the Grant Funding Agreement with the City of Kingston and creates huge concerns related to accountability and transparency of outcomes and impacts. These resourcing issues must be identified, owned and addressed with SFCSC and collaboration with their funding partners, especially the City of Kingston.

**Recommended Enhancement**

**Clarify the expected roles of homelessness prevention and re-housing staff at SFCSC and work to improve triage/intake activities – through both self-serve and staff led tools. These enhanced triage activities and tools may also enhance current processes in NFCSC and AMHS KFLA offices as well.**

**Recommended Resources:**

- Development of triage and intake tools/processes at SFCSC.
- Explore methods to connect reception staff to the HomeBase Prevention and Diversion Team on an as-needed basis for guidance with client centred supports.

**Recommended Lead:**

SFCSC Management Team and the City of Kingston

**Priority:  
High**

**Strategic Opportunity # 4: Capacity Building for Human, Social and Health Service Providers in the County of Frontenac via Service Integration Hubs**

It must be recognized that ongoing housing instability and homelessness within the communities throughout the County of Frontenac impacts everyone – whether through direct experience or the social cost of providing services. The quest to prevent and end homelessness will require a comprehensive response from the entire region – municipal councils, governmental Divisions, community partners and allied mainstream systems including health, justice and children’s services. Given the challenge of limited resources experienced by so many rural communities, it is recommended that capacity building opportunities in the County ensure that all health, human and social service resources adopt an increased focus on the role of housing stabilization and the impact of homelessness on the lives of all residents served in the County. OrgCode would never expect that all government, non-profit and community-based services become specialists in housing stabilization techniques. There is, however, the opportunity to ensure that the realities of housing instability and homelessness (indicators, signs, symptoms, resources available to assist, etc.) are better understood by all health and social service providers operating throughout the region, ensures that available resources are enhanced/expanded. Given the fact that AMHS KFLA also provides housing supports to their clients, the partnerships between housing staff within AMHS and SFCSC provides a valuable opportunity for improved service coordination.

It is recommended that a day-long session be developed to increase the local capacity to recognize and support individuals and families achieve housing stability and build improved service integration throughout the County as we collectively serve our most

vulnerable individuals and families. Sessions should include representatives from the City of Kingston’s Housing and Social Services department who provide social assistance services to rural residents. Mainstream partners also play a key role in the development of innovative emergency housing, homelessness prevention and re-housing strategies by leveraging the creativity, resourcefulness and innovation that remain primary strengths of rural living. In fact, when all community partners provide an assessment of needs and supportive activities that highlight the role of safe appropriate housing scenarios in the lives of local residents, it is recognized that a network of multi-disciplinary outreach and in-reach efforts can be formed to ensure improved identification, referral and program matching for service participants that require specialized homelessness prevention and re-housing services from dedicated staff. A deliberate effort to build strong connections with rural based service providers (regardless of funding, mandates or perceived jurisdictional challenges) will foster a much more inclusive and appropriate safety net for local residents.

<b>Recommended Enhancement</b>	
Enhance the capacity of all host agencies to be service integration hubs for local residents via cross training opportunities and the development of joint case conferencing/file review protocols for shared clients.	
<b>Recommended Resources:</b>	
Limited budget for professional development sessions/technical assistance	
<b>Recommended Lead:</b>	
SFCSC, NFCSC and the AMHS Leadership Committee. Assistance may be required from the Service Coordination Team.	
<b>Priority:</b>	
High	

## **B. Service Coordination Enhancements in Kingston & the County of Frontenac**

### **Strategic Opportunity # 5: Enhancing a Unified Housing and Homeless System of Care for the City of Kingston & the County of Frontenac**

a. **Coordinated Assessment & Collective Service Planning:** With the adoption and successful implementation of a centralized assessment team services within the City of Kingston, it is recommended that the centralized assessment team begin to complete SPDAT assessments on individuals and families in South, Central and North Frontenac that are identified as homeless and will likely require re-housing services in order to return to a state of housing stability. On an appointment basis, the centralized assessment team will travel to the partner agencies in Sydenham, Verona and Sharbot Lake (or to an identified safe location that is suitable for the client) to complete SPDAT assessments to identify housing and support needs. Upon completion of the assessment, it is recommended that the funded Homelessness Prevention and Re-Housing staff, together with all relevant ancillary support professionals already attached



to the service participant facilitate a case conference to identify re-housing and support plans for the household. It is understood that in the current staffing structure, the funded SFCSC staff will be required to support the household with housing stabilization activities but given the limited resources in each of the 3 areas of Frontenac County, an integrated service delivery approach that involves all relevant service providers is the most appropriate approach to the delivery of supports.

<b>Recommended Enhancement</b>	
<b>Capitalize on the expertise and availability of the centralized assessment team to complete SPDAT assessments in the County. Joint service planning with local County-based staff (including other mainstream affiliated professionals) will then focus on developing a housing support strategy.</b>	
	<b>Recommended Resources:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time and travel costs for the Centralized Assessment Team</li> <li>Staff time for local County-based staff</li> </ul>	
	<b>Recommended Lead:</b>
City of Kingston in consultation with Assessment Service Provider agencies and SFCSC	
	<b>Priority:</b>
	<b>High</b>

**b. Targeted Housing Location Initiatives for Rural Communities:** Given the fact that very few rental-housing options currently exist in the County, efforts to build relationships with local landlords and homeowners have been extremely limited. Clarity is required on the current role of the Housing Liaison position in terms of housing location activities in the County. It is recommended that a future project based initiative focus on identifying potential housing options for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the County. Such alternative re-housing options as “rooms for rent”, shared housing options and host home scenarios should be investigated. Marketing materials, community engagement opportunities and research efforts dedicated to increasing alternative housing options in rural communities should be actively explored. Once initial options have been identified and local homeowners/landlords identified through a specialized, time-limited development initiative, the current staffing complement should be able to maintain the list and relationship building.

<b>Recommended Enhancement</b>	
<b>Initiate a targeted Housing Location/Landlord Recruitment campaign in the County of Frontenac that optimizes ongoing community discussion and social innovation opportunities.</b>	
	<b>Recommended Resources:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget for a short term (6 month) project based initiative to investigate alternative housing options; facilitate community engagement; build relationships with potential landlords and develop housing lists and</li> </ul>	

**Recommended Enhancement**

**Initiate a targeted Housing Location/Landlord Recruitment campaign in the County of Frontenac that optimizes ongoing community discussion and social innovation opportunities.**

- resources for County staff to continue using in the future
- Budget for marketing/recruitment materials and community engagement opportunities

**Recommended Lead:**  
Housing Liaison Worker and SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS Leadership Committee

**Priority:**  
**Medium**

**c. Use of Prevention Specific Prescreen Tools by funded Homelessness**

**Prevention & Re-Housing Staff:** Given the primary role of homelessness prevention support for individuals and families throughout the County of Frontenac and the current challenges related to identifying those households that are the most likely to enter homelessness if interventions are not targeted<sup>4</sup>, it is recommended that the Prevention VI-SPDAT be implemented as the accepted triage/prescreen tool to determine “imminence of homelessness” and appropriate target support and financial assistance. Recognizing that research has demonstrated that historical approaches to intake and assessment relied on guesswork, inappropriate indicators of “homelessness imminence” and the confusion of worker experience or instinct with objective assessment of risk, the incorporation of an evidence informed and validated tool will ensure that prevention investments and supports are grounded in the identification of needs and the delivery of targeted and proven strategies.

**Recommended Enhancement**

**Incorporate Prevention VI-SPDAT products into all Homelessness Prevention and Diversion activities in the City of Kingston and the County of Frontenac**

**Recommended Resources:**  
Nil

**Recommended Lead:**  
City of Kingston and Service Coordination Team

**Priority:**  
**High**

<sup>4</sup> Shinn, M., Baumohl, J., & Hopper, K. (2001) *The Prevention of Homelessness Revisited. Analyses of Social Issues and Policy*, 1(1).

**Strategic Opportunity # 6: Review and Refinement of Policy, Decision Making Processes & Practices to Better Align with Rural Realities.**



The desire to create policies, practices and processes that are implemented throughout all communities where the same Service Manager manages homelessness prevention and re-housing services is a natural one. However, such a desire for consistency and uniformity is prefaced on the belief that all communities and sub-populations served by the funded service are equal when, in fact, the demarcation of rural and urban surpasses an exploration of geographical boundaries. For the communities that make up the County of Frontenac, the increasing levels of low income households, fewer employment opportunities, rising costs of living (especially utility costs), limited transportation options and the extremely limited availability of rental housing options further complicate issues related to poverty and housing instability. Information gathered by the staff of AMHS KFLA revealed that approximately 34% of staff time is spent travelling through the rural communities to provide access to services and supports. Although the geographical challenges are expected for all rural service delivery models, the realities of distance must be appreciated when dedicating ourselves to appropriate service provision to our rural neighbours. In addition to this, the lack of community resources to meet basic needs is further exacerbated in communities where the shame of homelessness, relationship and economic struggles may further hamper the process of seeking assistance. It is recommended that SFCSC complete an analysis of transportation funding needs to assist residents in rural communities to travel to their site offices, when necessary and appropriate, as opposed to staff travelling to clients.

At present, it is clear that the greatest number of clients being served by funded homelessness prevention and re-housing staff reside in South Frontenac but whether this current reality indicates a lack of need in Central and Northern Frontenac – or simply improved access to staff - is unknown. Given the higher levels of low income

households, housing disrepair and the increased number of households spending more than 30% of their budget on shelter, it is likely that the need for homelessness prevention and re-housing services is higher in Central and Northern Frontenac than currently believed, with the lack of readily available services decreasing our understanding of the local reality. The following suggestions are provided to increase success of the responses and approaches for a rural homelessness context.

***a. Definitions of “Eligibility” for Homelessness Prevention & Re-Housing***

**Supports:** As is often the case in rural service provision, “homelessness” may not be as readily identifiable or substantiated. For example, the lack of rental housing stock often ensures that room rental scenarios are not governed by tenancy agreements (or landlord tenancy regulations) and therefore providing documentation of homelessness may be a challenge. In addition, the lack of emergency shelter results in an increased incidence of couch surfing; doubling up in stressful situations; living outside and/or in unsafe situations – scenarios that may actually reduce the individuals (and community’s) understanding of the incidence of homelessness locally. With this in mind, it is recommended that tools designed to determine “homeless” and “imminence of homeless” be generated to clearly examine “habitability” and “health and safety standards” when examining someone’s current living situation. At present, many regions create a list of “indicators” that identify/prove that someone is eligible for homelessness prevention and re-housing supports. In rural communities where such an infrastructure of resources and services does not exist, multi-service agencies are tasked to meet multiple needs and replicate supports for those households that wish to remain in their home communities. The current definitions and tools to confirm “eligibility” need to be re-examined with a rural context lens.

***b. Flexibility for Rural Responses to Meet Service Needs:*** Desire to examine the current financial limits established for the Homelessness Prevention Funds and/or Discretionary Residency Benefits for individuals and families living in the County of Frontenac, must be aligned with an investigation into longer term housing sustainability considerations. It is recognized that for some residents, rehousing efforts to a more affordable, sustainable location may be identified as the best approach. The lack of emergency based service provision throughout the County of Frontenac and the increased costs normally associated with high heating and living costs however, results in local households being placed in potentially precariously unsafe scenarios with no access to the basics of life – food security, access to emergency shelter, etc. In rural communities with limited resources and safety net scenarios, the community services are left trying to access finite local donations to off-set homelessness prevention challenges. The introduction of the Prevention VI-SPDAT into these services will result in decision making that is based on a review of vulnerability and risk factors related to housing and support needs. Such a tool will provide essential objective recommendations in identifying appropriate interventions to assist households – financial assistance and/or support provision.

## Recommended Enhancements

Following the incorporation of the enhancements outlined in this report, it is recommended that the City of Kingston Housing Division support the creation of a unique Rural Service Standard dedicated to better serving rural residents in their home communities, where possible.

### Recommended Resources:

- Development of a rural service standard dedicated to better serving rural residents in their home communities.
- Review all re-housing and homelessness prevention policies, procedures and practices to identify unintended hardships created for residents living in the County who have limited access to other emergency services and supports.

### Recommended Lead:

City of Kingston Housing & Social Services Division, SFCSC, NFCSC and AMHS KFLA and HomeBase Service Coordination Team

**Priority:**  
**Medium**

## Concluding Thoughts

It was indeed an honour to investigate the current rural homelessness approaches, challenges and opportunities for improvement. In our work throughout North America and Australia, OrgCode has witnessed the impact that finite investments and targeted community development efforts can have when evidence informed practices, strategies and tools are incorporated to optimize the impact of homelessness prevention and re-housing efforts in all communities – both urban and rural. The first step in success however comes from a concerted effort to align all approaches, strategies, policies and practices to the local realities and nuances of the community and regional needs. Throughout the County of Frontenac, the opportunity to strategically enhance service integration and collaborative delivery of services and supports to enhance health, stability and self-sufficiency is upon us. The guidance and technical assistance required to align and unify the system of care throughout the entire region (including the City of Kingston and the County of Frontenac) is available and the time to harness the innovative and solution focused strengths of rural communities is here

## Appendix 1

### Proposed Homelessness Prevention & Re-Housing Staffing Model for the County of Frontenac

If the opportunity to enhance the County-based system of care exists, an additional FTE that is housed in the North and dedicated to serving North and Central Frontenac would better serve the population needs due to the large geographical region to be covered. The current staffing resources could then continue to be housed in South Frontenac and also support Central Frontenac for 1 day each week. Such an addition would provide flexibility to ensure that landlord liaison and outreach activities could be better accomplished. If such a staffing addition is feasible, it is also recommended that one SFCSC staff become a dedicated Prevention and Diversion worker and the other become a Rapid Re-Housing Worker. The newly acquired staff that is housed in the North would continue to provide a blended prevention/re-housing role, supporting Central Frontenac 2 days each week. This blended position would also collaborate with the SFCSC Rapid Re-Housing Worker to support individuals and families being re-housed in North and Central Frontenac.

If additional resources can be secured, the addition of 1 FTE would result in the following County-based team: **1 SFCSC Prevention/Diversion Staff** that serves South Frontenac for 4 days each week and 1 day in Central Frontenac; **1 SFCSC Rapid Re-Housing Worker** that supports any household identified by the Centralized Assessment Team as needing re-housing and supports in the County and **1 NFCSC Blended Prevention/Diversion & Re-Housing Worker** serving Central Frontenac 2 days per week and North Frontenac 3 days per week.



# Integrated Service Hubs in the County of Frontenac

