



A COUNT OF HOMELESS PERSON'S IN EDMONTON

2008

A Count of Homeless Persons in Edmonton 2008

Conducted October 21, 2008 by

Homeward Trust Edmonton

Homeless Count Committee 2008

with assistance from

our **Community Partners**



THANKS TO THE COMMITTEE & COMMUNITY

The Homeless Count 2008 was organized by Homeward Trust Edmonton under the auspices of the Homeless Count Committee, Chaired by Marg Milicevic. Homeward Trust would like to thank the members of the Homeless Count Committee, the 180 agencies who took part in the Count and the 200 + volunteers who volunteered their time to complete the eighth Homeless Count in Edmonton.

We would like to thank the people involved in the Volunteer Orientation presentation (October 16th held at the Stanley Milner Theatre, Edmonton Library) namely Sergeant Serge Soucy, Edmonton Police Service; Leona Courtrille, a previous Count volunteer; and Mr. Leonard Martial, who gave us an insightful view of street life and the experience of being homeless.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to *Second Cup, Subway, Tim Horton's, Bee Bell Bakery, Corporate Express, Wild Earth Bakery, RBC Mutual Funds, CMHC, the City of Edmonton, and Native Counselling Services of Alberta* for their generous support. In addition, we would like to thank the "Site Coordinators and Base Site locations" for providing space to coordinate and organize volunteers.

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This report is available at <http://www.homewardtrust.ca>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HIGHLIGHTS

The eighth count of Homeless people found 3079 homeless people in the City of Edmonton. Of these, 1862 were absolute homeless (having no housing alternative) and 1217 were sheltered homeless (living in emergency accommodations). This represents an increase of 18% in the overall number of homeless individuals in the City of Edmonton from the 2006 count tally of 2618.*

OVERVIEW

The Homeless Count Committee is a working group of Homeward Trust Edmonton. The membership of the committee comprises community representatives, the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta, and the Government of Canada. The Count Committee was created to implement the recommendation detailed in the May 1999 report *Homelessness in Edmonton, a Call to Action* that “the count be continued on a regular basis so trends of the homeless population can be monitored”. The 2008 Homeless Count Committee applied the same methodology used in the previous counts (March/November 1999, March/September 2000, October 2002, 2004 and 2006), to ensure a reliable 'snapshot' of the homeless population. Utilizing the same methodology enables the monitoring of changes and trends of the homeless population.

*For the purpose of the count, the Count Committee continues to use the definition of homeless persons as outlined in the report *Homelessness in Edmonton, a Call to Action*:

*“1. Individuals and families who are **absolutely homeless** (having no housing alternatives)”*

and;

*“2. Individuals and families who are the **sheltered homeless** (living in emergency accommodations and expected to be 'on the street' at the end of their stay).”*

It is important to note, that the committee acquired the energetic support of approximately 220 volunteers, as well as the community serving the homeless. Although this figure is substantial, it fell short of the 300+ volunteers required for satisfactory coverage of the Edmonton region. This shortfall caused certain volunteer shifts to be shortened or cancelled and left certain areas with little or no coverage. In addition, a number of previous count locations such as temporary employment agencies did not wish to participate in 2008, this is also reflected in the overall count total. This year with the help of Boyle Street's Parkland Outreach, we were able to enumerate in areas of the city previously unavailable to us.

COUNT DAY

The count began at 5:00 am on October 21st, 2008 and concluded at 10.00 pm the same day. The weather on the 21st was cloudy with sunny periods, but windy with daytime temperatures ranging from a high of 10°C to a low of 2°C (Environment Canada).

The following partners collaborated and actively participated in the organization and implementation of the count: *the community serving the homeless, individual volunteers, the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta, and the Government of Canada. Other agencies such as hospitals, health centres, correctional facilities, community serving agencies and housing providers and registries* also participated. These partners were involved in all the previous counts.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ✓ As in the 2006 Count of Homeless Persons there is an increase in the number of homeless people in Edmonton. A total of 3079 people were counted in 2008. This reflects an increase of 18% or 461 people in the total number of homeless counted. The number of absolute homeless increased by almost 5% or 88 to 1862 and the number of sheltered homeless increased by approximately 44% or 373 to 1217;
- ✓ In terms of gender, 2124 or (69%) of homeless individuals were observed to be male and 23%, or 702 were female. Of the remaining 253 or 8%, 245 were children and caregivers in families whose gender was not observed. The relative proportion of the number of men to women is higher than the 2006 count results; in total, there was an increase of 304 males and 94 females;
- ✓ The Count recorded a significant decrease in the number of turnaways in 2008. Only 52 people were turned away as compared to 256 in 2006. In addition, the number discharged with no home to return to dropped to 72 from the previous count of 113. ***Turnaways are not included in the homeless tally.*** There were no turnaways from housing providers;
- ✓ There was a significant increase in the number of families enumerated in 2008 as compared to 2006 (133 compared to 79). This represents an 87% increase (34) in the number of Absolute Homeless Families; a 50% increase (20) in the number of Sheltered Homeless Families. This can be attributed to a number of factors including improvements in the survey forms, which clarified the definition of dependants, caregivers, and their housing status, as well as an increase in the number of spaces available for women and children i.e. La Salle and Wings of Providence;
- ✓ There are 125 children living on the street;
- ✓ There was an increase in the number of shelter spaces available from 2006, of those available spaces, a large number are reserved for women and children, this is reflected in the increase in the number of homeless families;
- ✓ The vast majority of the 3079 total homeless figure is single aboriginal men between the ages of 31-54;
- ✓ The numbers reflect an increase in the number of children, and seniors over 65 yrs of age living on the street.

3079

METHODOLOGY

All organizations and community agencies who work with those individuals and/or families facing issues of homelessness were contacted.

The 2008 count of homeless persons involved a tally of people in emergency shelter beds, as well as those individuals living unsheltered on the street:

The count attempted to capture homeless individuals through:

- **Street count:** *asking people on the street if they have a permanent residence to return to that night, and recording the number that did not.*
- **Agency count:** *asking people at agencies (such as food banks, drop-in centres, and bottle depots) if they have a permanent residence for that night, and recording the number that did not.*

In addition to the count of homeless, the following information was collected the same day but *these figures are reported separately*:

- **Number of Turnaways:** *people turned away by providers and crisis services based on ineligibility, client behaviour, or because no appropriate housing was available.*
- **Number of Discharges:** *people either discharged or ready for discharge from facilities but with no permanent residence to go to.*

Demographic data gathered during the count includes observed gender, race, age, and family status. This data includes the number of dependent children up to 16 years of age and the number of caregivers 17 years of age and older.

Forms documenting count results were requested to be faxed to Homeward Trust Edmonton on October 22, 2008 however; several agencies were challenged in complying with this timeline because of staffing issues and were accommodated to ensure their information was included in the count tally.

The Count Committee acknowledges that the count methodology has inherent limitations and that the results reflect a *'point-in-time count'* of homeless individuals. In order to maintain consistency over time the October 21st count followed the same methodology used in all previous counts. Again, this year, the count forms and instruction sheets were revised to better reflect the information to be gathered while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the methodology. As in previous counts, additional emphasis was placed on the training of volunteers with respect to the completion of the count forms, and as an aside, 80% of the volunteers were new to the count and this lack of experience may have impacted the count.

METHODOLOGY CON'T

The community was organized into the following sectors, with a coordinator assigned to organize and implement the count:

- ✓ institutions (hospitals/correctional facilities)
- ✓ inner-city agencies
- ✓ streets
- ✓ shelters (youth, adult and families)
- ✓ adult group homes
- ✓ youth group homes
- ✓ seniors facilities
- ✓ treatment centres
- ✓ Edmonton Transit and LRT
- ✓ hotels and motels
- ✓ housing providers and registries
- ✓ aboriginal agencies and housing
- ✓ immigrant serving agencies
- ✓ outreach programs
- ✓ bottle depots
- ✓ Stanley Milner Library
- ✓ food banks
- ✓ river valley park system
- ✓ Edmonton Emergency Medical Services
crisis and assistance services

COUNT RESULTS

When examining the numbers in the following charts please note that all percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

Total Homeless

A total of 3079 homeless persons were counted on October 21st, 2008 in Edmonton: 1862 absolute homeless (60%) and 1217 sheltered homeless (40%). This includes adults and children.

TOTAL HOMELESS		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	1862	60%
Sheltered Homeless	1217	40%
Total Homeless	3079	100%

Household Status

A majority of individuals counted were single (2729). Among the single homeless, 1693 (62%) were absolute homeless compared with 1036 or (38%) who were staying at shelters.

SINGLE HOMELESS*		
	No.	%
Absolute Homeless Singles	1693	62%
Sheltered Homeless Singles	1036	38%
Total Homeless Singles	2729	100%

**Includes - Singles without Children*

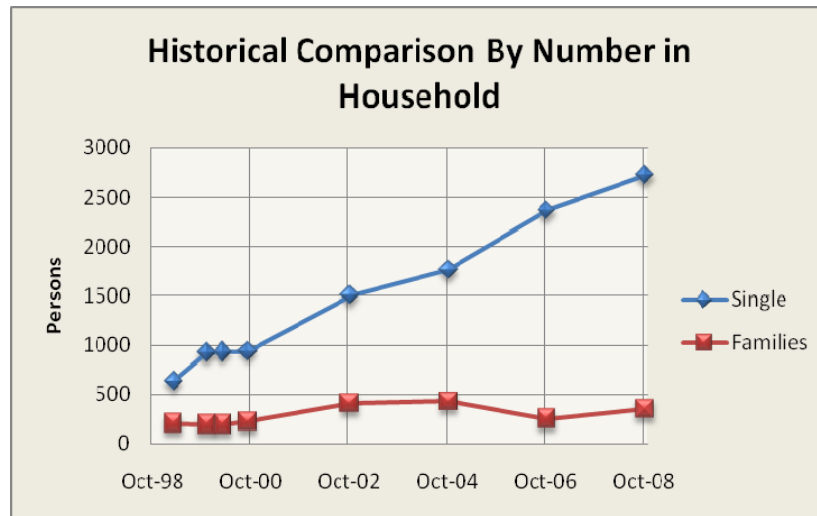
Families

There were 133 families counted, encompassing 207 children up to the age of 16 years and 143 caregivers 17 years of age and older. Among families, 55% (73) identified themselves during the street count as absolute homeless, while 45% (60) stayed at shelters. There were 86 children and 83 caregivers identified as absolute homeless; 121 children and 60 caregivers stayed at emergency shelters.

Families having one caregiver totalled 105, while 28 had two or more caregivers. Among the absolute homeless, 49 families had one caregiver while 24 had two or more caregivers. At shelters, 56 families had one caregiver while only four had two or more caregivers. Caregivers include men & women 17 years of age and older.

Household Status – Families Continued

HOMELESS IN FAMILIES								
	Families By # of Care Givers				Total Families		Children	
	2 or more	%	One	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless Families	24	18%	49	37%	73	55%	86	42%
Sheltered Homeless Families	4	3%	56	42%	60	45%	121	58%
Total Homeless Families	28	21%	105	79%	133	100%	207	100%

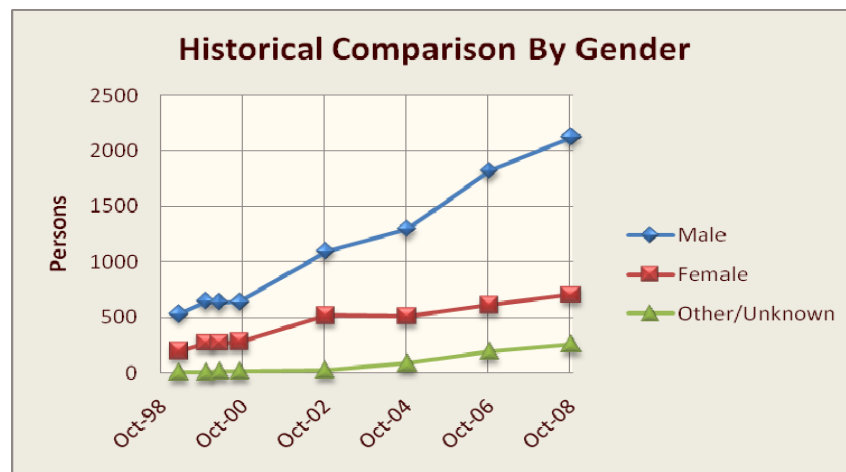


HISTORICAL COMPARISON BY NUMBER IN HOUSEHOLD		
Count Dates	Household Type	
	Families	Singles
Mar-99	203	633
Nov-99	194	923
Mar-00	193	932
Sep-00	224	936
Oct-02	408	1507
Oct-04	428	1764
Oct-06	252	2366

Gender

69% of the homeless adults counted were male, totalling 2124 compared to 702 (23%) female adults. There were 253 persons counted as “Other/Unknown”, 245 of these were dependent children up to 16 years of age and additional caregivers whose gender was not observed.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED GENDER								
	Males		Females		Other/Unknown		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	1271	41%	463	15%	128	4%	1862	60%
Sheltered Homeless	853	28%	239	8%	125	4%	1217	40%
Total Homeless	2124	69%	702	23%	253	8%	3079	100%

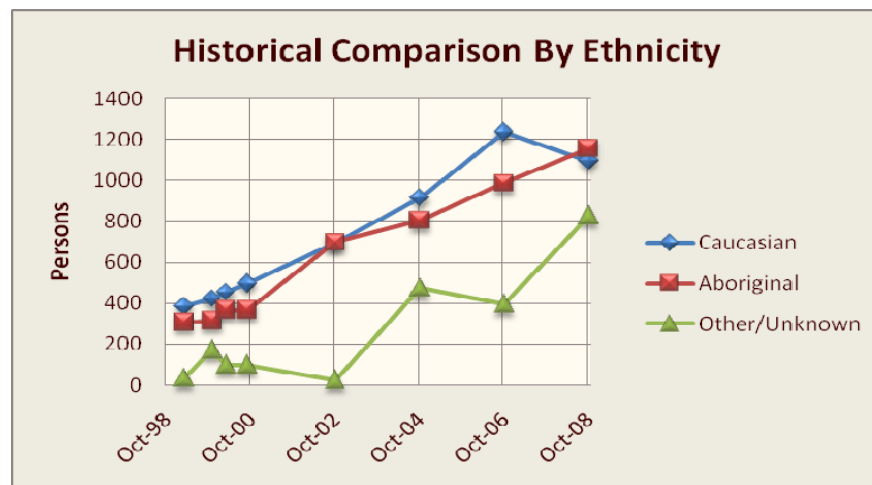


HISTORICAL COMPARISON BY GENDER			
Count Dates	Gender		
	Male	Female	Other/Unknown
Mar-99	530	194	0
Nov-99	644	271	4
Mar-00	635	271	12
Sep-00	638	278	11
Oct-02	1096	513	23
Oct-04	1297	508	81
Oct-06	1820	608	190

Ethnicity

The percentage of Caucasian homeless identified by observation was 36% (1096) and Aboriginal homeless was 38% (1156). The ethnicity of the remaining 27% (827) was “Other/Unknown” and may include Caucasians, Aboriginals, and others. 245 dependent children up to 16 years of age and additional caregivers were recorded as “Other/Unknown” as their race was not observed.

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED ETHNICITY								
	Caucasian		Aboriginal		Other/Unknown		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	588	19%	852	28%	422	14%	1862	60%
Sheltered Homeless	508	17%	304	10%	405	13%	1217	40%
Total Homeless	1096	36%	1156	38%	827	27%	3079	100%



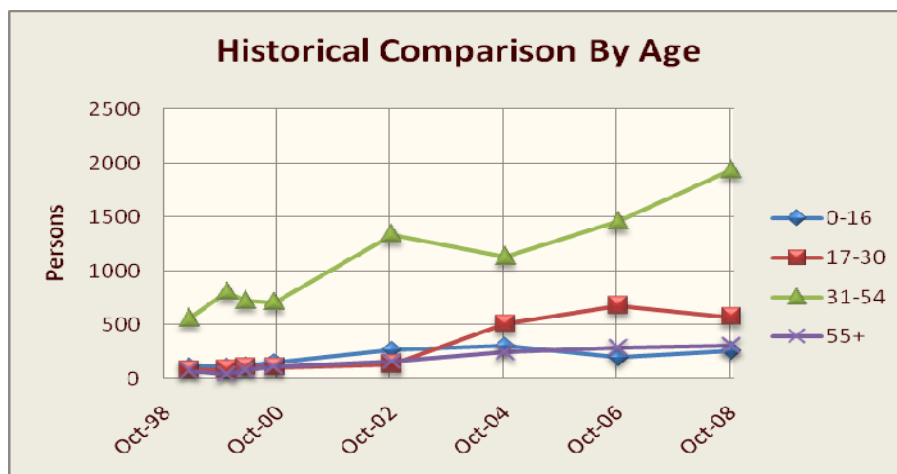
HISTORICAL COMPARISON BY ETHNICITY			
Count Dates	Ethnicity		
	Caucasian	Aboriginal	Other/Unknown
Mar-99	385	307	32
Nov-99	421	313	172
Mar-00	453	366	99
Sep-00	497	366	99
Oct-02	694	698	24
Oct-04	914	804	474
Oct-06	1236	986	396

Age

Those between the ages of 31 and 54 years were the predominant age group surveyed , at 1940 or 63%. The next largest was the 17 to 30 age group, at 574 or 19%.

Of those up to 16 years of age, (121 of 134) were sheltered with a caregiver. For those over 17 years of age, more were in absolute homelessness than sheltered (1737 compared to 1083).

HOMELESS BY OBSERVED AGE												
	0-16		17-30		31-54		55-65		65+		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Absolute Homeless	125	4%	416	14%	1153	37%	145	4%	23	1%	1862	60%
Sheltered Homeless	134	4%	158	5%	787	26%	115	4%	23	1%	1217	40%
Total Homeless	259	8%	574	19%	1940	63%	260	8%	46	2%	3079	100%



HISTORICAL COMPARISON BY AGE				
Count Dates	Age			
	0-16	17-30	31-54	55+
Mar-99	112	87	561	76
Nov-99	111	86	807	42
Mar-00	117	112	725	81
Sep-00	146	108	711	108
Oct-02	267	133	1342	157
Oct-04	306	510	1133	243
Oct-06	194	678	1460	286

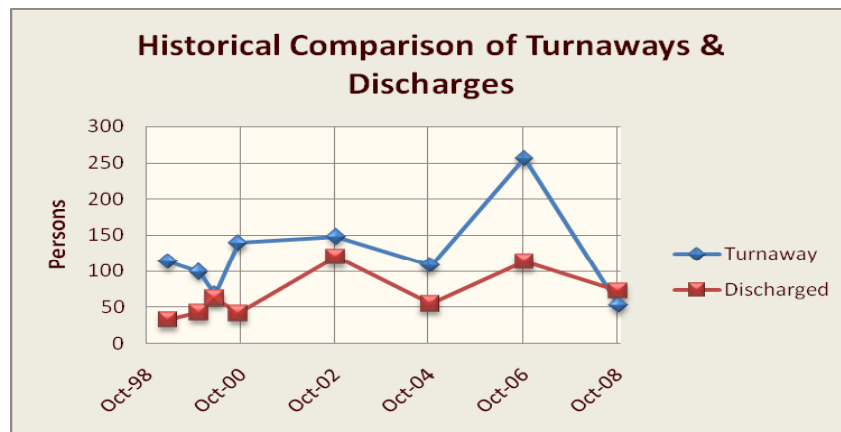
THE FOLLOWING FIGURES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE HOMELESS TALLY.

Turnaways & Discharges

A tally was also taken of the number of people denied a bed because the facility was full or the client did not meet entrance standards (for example, the individual exhibited violent behaviour) and who declared having no home to return to. Of the 52 people that were turned away from facilities on the day of the count, all of them were turned away from shelters. It should be noted that this number is quite a bit lower than 2006 (when 256 were turned away from facilities) and that is mainly due to the fact that numerous agencies that had supplied turned away and discharged data in 2006 did not participate in 2008. Discharges totalled 37 (51%) people from correctional facilities, hospitals, and group homes and 35 (49%) from Housing Providers and Treatment Centres.

COUNT OF TURNAWAYS & DISCHARGES *				
	Turnaways		Discharges	
	No.	%	No.	%
Housing Providers/Treatment Centres	0	0%	35	49%
Correctional Facilities/Hospitals/Group Homes	0	0%	37	51%
Shelters	52	100%	0	0%
Totals	52	100%	72	100%

**Turnaways and discharges declaring no home to return to.*



Turnaways & Discharges Continued

HISTORICAL COMPARISON OF TURNAWAYS & DISCHARGES		
Count Dates	Turnaways & Discharges	
	Turnaways & Discharges	Discharged
Mar-99	113	32
Nov-99	99	42
Mar-00	67	62
Sep-00	139	41
Oct-02	148	120
Oct-04	108	54
Oct-06	256	113

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways

The number of persons who were housed or turned away by each participating shelter on October 21, 2008 is outlined in the table below. Herb Jamieson Centre housed the highest number, at 254 (102% occupancy). The number registered are included in the homeless tally, the turnaways are not.

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: New Spaces

A number of new spaces were added to the shelter system as it pertains to the Homeless Count in 2008. To avoid confusion for those familiar with the shelters included in previous counts, a chart detailing the number of new shelter spaces and the organizations that they belong to is included below.

Shelter-by-Shelter Numbers: Registered and Turnaways continued

SHELTER SPACES EXISTING IN 2006						
Shelter Name	Available Spaces	No. Registered	% Occupancy	Percentage of Total Registered	No. Turned Away	Percentage of Total
Catholic Social Services Safe House	8	4	50.00%	0.33%	0	0.00%
Elizabeth House	24	14	58.33%	1.14%	0	0.00%
Emergency Hotels	0	67		5.47%	0	0.00%
George Spady Centre	80	87	108.75%	7.11%	32	61.54%
Hope Mission: Herb Jamieson Centre	250	254	101.60%	20.75%	0	0.00%
Hope Mission: Intox Centre	70	70	100.00%	5.72%	0	0.00%
Hope Mission: Youth Shelter	30	30	100.00%	2.45%	0	0.00%
Inner City Youth Housing Project	29	14	48.28%	1.14%	1	1.92%
Lurana Shelter	25	13	52.00%	1.06%	5	9.62%
Protective Safe House	5	2	40.00%	0.16%	0	0.00%
Seniors Safe House (SAGE)	7	3	42.86%	0.25%	0	0.00%
Urban Manor	75	74	98.67%	6.05%	5	9.62%
Women in Need 1	30	7	23.33%	0.57%	0	0.00%
Women in Need 2	30	11	36.67%	0.90%	0	0.00%
Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre (WEAC)	75	69	92.00%	5.64%	4	7.69%
Youth Emergency Shelter Society	28	23	82.14%	1.88%	5	9.62%
Youth Emergency Shelter Society: START House	10	9	90.00%	0.74%	0	0.00%
SUB-TOTAL	776	751	96.78%	61.36%	52	100.00%
SHELTER SPACES ADDED IN 2008						
Hope Mission: Winter Emergency Shelter	200	178	89.00%	14.54%	0	0.00%
Hope Mission: Women's Emergency Shelter	70	43	61.43%	3.51%	0	0.00%
Hope Mission: Youth Shelter	30	4	13.33%	0.33%	0	0.00%
La Salle	30	30	100.00%	2.45%	0	0.00%
Salvation Army: Addictions & Residential Centre (ARC)	154	153	99.35%	12.50%	0	0.00%
Wings of Providence	96	65	67.71%	5.31%	0	0.00%
SUB-TOTAL	580	473	81.55%	38.64%	0	0.00%
TOTAL	1356	1224	90.27%	100.00%	52	100.00%

*Elizabeth House has 24 long-term transitional spaces. Urban Manor has 23 emergency spaces and 52 long-term transitional spaces; information captured for comparison purposes to earlier counts.

**On an as needed basis provided by Alberta Human Resources and Employment – no set number of spaces.

***Total includes 76 long-term transitional spaces at Elizabeth House and Urban Manor

Homeward Trust Edmonton

Homeward Trust Edmonton was launched in June 2008 and stems from the amalgamation of Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF) and the Edmonton Joint Planning Committee on Housing (EJPCOH). It brings together EHTF's recognized financial and funding expertise and EJPCOH's in-depth community planning and research experience.

In order to help open doors and build hope, Homeward Trust Edmonton will:

- ✓ *Determine the needs and priorities of the community with respect to the continuum of housing, support services, and other needs, including identifying the gaps in housing and developing a Community Plan to reflect community needs.*
- ✓ *Consolidate and leverage public, not for profit and private sector funding streams for housing initiatives in Edmonton to meet the highest priority needs identified in the Community Plan.*
- ✓ *Implement a mechanism to allocate funds on a transparent basis to priorities set out in the Community Plan, including funding for emergency, transitional, and long-term supportive housing units, as well as support service needs.*
- ✓ *Be responsible for monitoring and evaluating all funded projects and demonstrating accountability to the funders.*
- ✓ *Build and promote community awareness around housing and homelessness issues.*
- ✓ *Fund formal research projects and gather information regarding housing and homelessness issues and best practices.*
- ✓ *Conduct consultation activities with a broad range of stakeholder groups to understand community needs, funding priorities, build community capacity, and assess the impact of funded projects.*
- ✓ *Engage the Aboriginal community to ensure strong representation and a more effective engagement model.*

opening doors. building hope.

Homeward Trust Edmonton

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