

A Way Home: New National Coalition Works Together to End Youth Homelessness

Coalition sets a 10-year mandate to end youth homelessness in Canada

OTTAWA, ONTARIO (October 29, 2015) – In an unprecedented example of collaboration, six national organizations have come together to commit to one bold goal: putting an end to youth homelessness in Canada. Called *A Way Home*, the coalition will work collectively to support communities and governments to effectively plan and implement strategies to prevent, reduce and ultimately end this crisis, which currently affects 35-40,000 youth across the country each year.

“We have come together as a coalition rooted in the mutual belief that ending youth homelessness in Canada is possible,” said Sheldon Pollett, Co-Chair of the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness. “Working collectively, and with the necessary buy-in from communities and government, we believe this can be achieved through enhanced prevention efforts and quickly offering youth supports that reflect their needs when they find themselves in crisis.”

The group’s ambitious 10-year mandate to end youth homelessness highlights a new direction, moving away from an approach that simply manages the issue. With a focus on prevention, *A Way Home* will support communities to develop effective plans, integrate local services, and engage with government to align strategies at the national, provincial and community level.

“If we are really going to address youth homelessness in Canada we have to do things very differently,” added Dr. Stephen Gaetz, Director of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. “We have to move from ‘managing’ the problem, to instead shift the focus to prevention and moving young people out of homelessness as quickly as possible. For the first time in Canada, I feel that there is a real chance for change, and *A Way Home* is going to be leading the way ...”

As a coalition of dedicated entities, members of *A Way Home* support a collaborative effort to end youth homelessness in Canada, building on their existing strengths and activities to engage communities, governments, and organizations in support of long-term solutions.

Jody Ciufo, Executive Director of coalition member Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, stated, “We are in the unique position to engage communities and advocate government collectively, working together as a united coalition dedicated to ending youth homelessness in this country. The collaborative efforts of the members of *A Way Home* can truly be a catalyst for change at the local, provincial and national levels.”

A Way Home’s goal of ending youth homelessness is a crucial ‘piece of the puzzle’ in ending overall homelessness in Canada for good. By reducing and ultimately ending youth homelessness, we inevitably reduce the number of youth who become homeless adults.

About A Way Home

The work of *A Way Home* will inspire and enable communities and governments to organize, plan, and implement strategies to address youth homelessness in a coordinated, measurable and impactful way.

Vision

We can prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness in Canada if:

- The general public and decision-makers understand that youth homelessness can and must be ended.
- We adopt a Family First philosophy and ensure that young people and their families have access to the necessary resources and supports to reduce the risk of homelessness.
- All responses to youth homelessness, including Housing First, must be conceived, planned and implemented based on the needs of the developing adolescent and young adult.
- Communities, government, organizations, businesses and interested individuals work together to support change.
- Necessary resources – including affordable housing and youth focused supports – are in place to implement solutions to youth homelessness.
- Young people are engaged as active partners in developing solutions to youth homelessness.

Coalition Members of A Way Home

- The National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness (Eva's)
- The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH)
- Raising the Roof
- The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA)
- The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH)
- Egale Canada
- A Funder's Table including (but not limited to) the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, The Home Depot Canada Foundation, and the Laidlaw Foundation

Launch Event

At the launch of *A Way Home* on October 29th, 2015, media are invited to attend a youth-led mobile event. This will consist of a young person with lived experience, as well as key spokespersons, guiding media and event participants through a key location in downtown Ottawa that holds significance and offer snapshots of the experience of homelessness. The event is co-hosted by the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, whom *A Way Home* will support in developing a community plan to prevent, reduce and end youth homelessness in Ottawa, and will begin at 10:30 a.m.

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Caitlin Boros at caitlin@raisingtheroof.org.

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