



Hamilton
Community Services



ON ANY GIVEN NIGHT

Measuring Homelessness in Hamilton

2007 EDITION



ON ANY
GIVEN
NIGHT

IN HAMILTON...

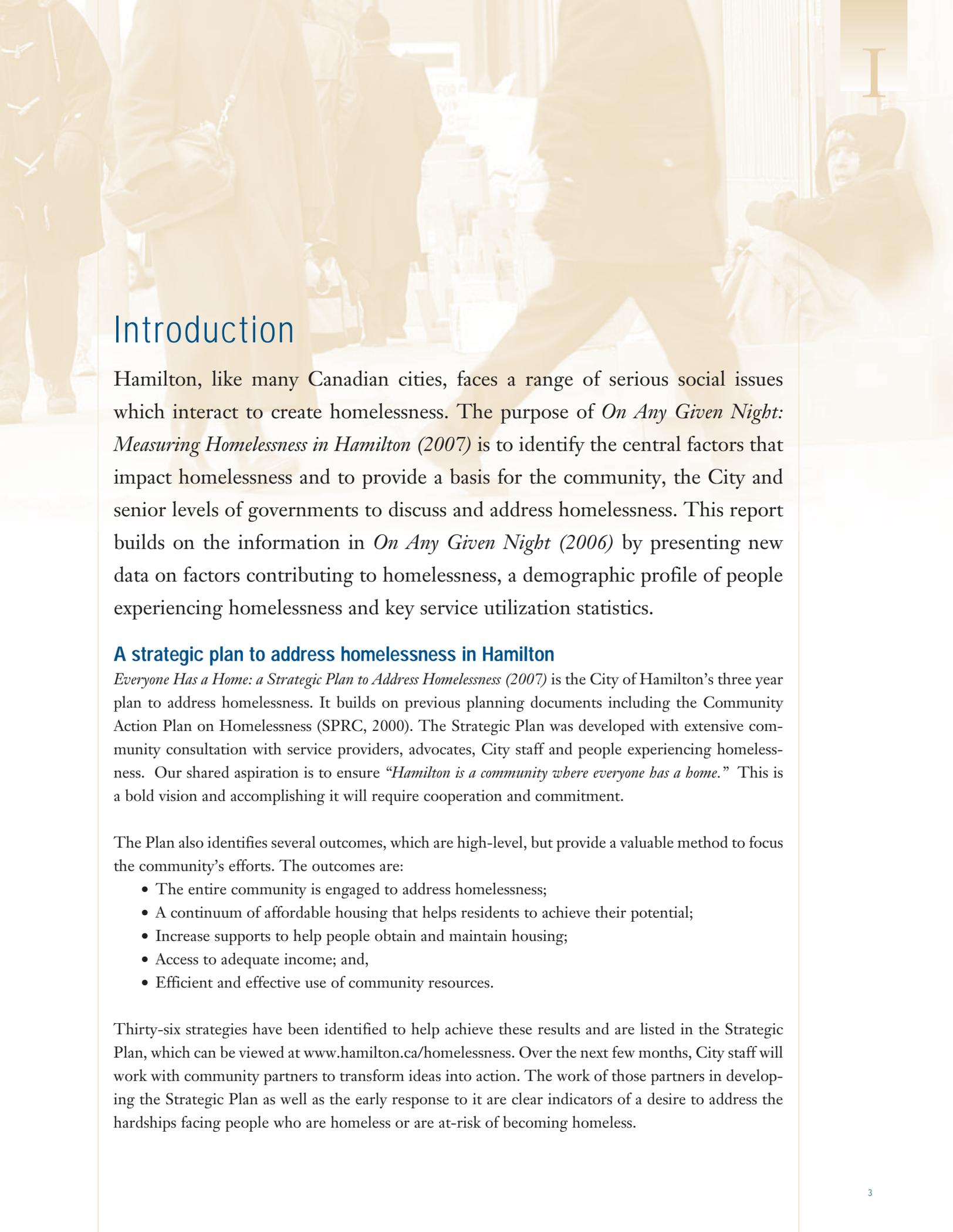
3,950 men, women and children stayed at an emergency shelter at least once in 2006

23 nights is the average length of stay at an emergency shelter

1,644 women stayed at a Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter during 2005/2006

3,817 active applications on the social housing waiting list in 2006

26,000 (21.9%) renter households spend more than 50% of their income on shelter putting them at serious risk of homelessness

A photograph of a homeless shelter interior, showing people in coats and a person sitting on a bench. A large letter 'I' is visible in the top right corner.

Introduction

Hamilton, like many Canadian cities, faces a range of serious social issues which interact to create homelessness. The purpose of *On Any Given Night: Measuring Homelessness in Hamilton (2007)* is to identify the central factors that impact homelessness and to provide a basis for the community, the City and senior levels of governments to discuss and address homelessness. This report builds on the information in *On Any Given Night (2006)* by presenting new data on factors contributing to homelessness, a demographic profile of people experiencing homelessness and key service utilization statistics.

A strategic plan to address homelessness in Hamilton

Everyone Has a Home: a Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness (2007) is the City of Hamilton's three year plan to address homelessness. It builds on previous planning documents including the Community Action Plan on Homelessness (SPRC, 2000). The Strategic Plan was developed with extensive community consultation with service providers, advocates, City staff and people experiencing homelessness. Our shared aspiration is to ensure "*Hamilton is a community where everyone has a home.*" This is a bold vision and accomplishing it will require cooperation and commitment.

The Plan also identifies several outcomes, which are high-level, but provide a valuable method to focus the community's efforts. The outcomes are:

- The entire community is engaged to address homelessness;
- A continuum of affordable housing that helps residents to achieve their potential;
- Increase supports to help people obtain and maintain housing;
- Access to adequate income; and,
- Efficient and effective use of community resources.

Thirty-six strategies have been identified to help achieve these results and are listed in the Strategic Plan, which can be viewed at www.hamilton.ca/homelessness. Over the next few months, City staff will work with community partners to transform ideas into action. The work of those partners in developing the Strategic Plan as well as the early response to it are clear indicators of a desire to address the hardships facing people who are homeless or are at-risk of becoming homeless.

Understanding Homelessness

Who is homeless?

People experiencing homelessness are a diverse, mobile population encompassing many subgroups. Some people without housing have nothing in common but their lack of housing. Among those without housing are many single men and women, families, youth, visible minorities, Aboriginal people, and some people with severe mental illnesses and other serious health problems.

(Source: Adapted from www.raisingtheroof.org)

Why does homelessness occur?

Two major contributors to homelessness are the lack of adequate income and the lack of affordable housing. Other factors influencing why families or individuals may be homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless include:

- experiencing abuse or violence
- losing a job
- experiencing food insecurity
- experiencing mental or physical health issues
- experiencing discrimination by landlords or neighbours
- facing challenges with substance use
- lack of appropriate support services

*(Source: Adapted from *Keys to the Home, City of Hamilton, 2004* and *Progress Report on Homelessness in Hamilton, SPRC, 2003*)*

What do we know?

While improvements have been made, homelessness continues to be a significant issue in Hamilton. Emergency shelters for men, women, youth and families continue to experience relatively high occupancy rates. Based on available data, we know that the number of people accessing Hamilton's emergency shelters has more than doubled since 1995. Hamilton's food banks report more than 15,000 visits per month. Just over half of those are families with children. Almost one in five Hamilton residents subsist on an income lower than the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) threshold. The high demand for affordable housing in our community is evidenced by Hamilton's social housing waiting list which currently has 3,817 active applications.

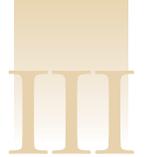
Concepts & Approaches

Defining of homelessness

Homelessness can be defined as the lack of safe, affordable, adequate and secure housing. A range of experiences exist which can be described as living on the street, hidden homeless, short-term or crisis sheltered or being at-risk of homelessness. The new federal Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) provides the following descriptions of these categories:

- **Living on the street** refers to individuals or families who, because of a lack of secured housing, live on the street.
- **Short term or crisis sheltered** refers to individuals or families staying temporarily in emergency and/or transitional housing. This category also includes the episodically sheltered sub-population. Episodically sheltered refers to the families and individuals who access shelters multiple times through the year, seeking assistance, but who are not necessarily able to move to housing stability.





- **Hidden homeless** refers to individuals or families living in locations not intended for human habitation (e.g. abandoned buildings) and/or continuously moving among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family.
- Those **at-risk of becoming homeless** include individuals or families who are at imminent risk of eviction from their current housing, who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing or who live in unacceptable housing. Also included are those who will be discharged from the criminal justice system, those who are leaving a health facility after an extended stay, as well as youth exiting the child welfare system, and who do not have suitable housing in place prior to their discharge.

(Source: Homelessness Partnership Initiative, 2007)

Homelessness - Housing Continuum

The Homelessness – Housing Continuum recognizes a range of housing needs as well as the vulnerability of losing housing to become homeless. There is further recognition that the continuum is not always a linear progression and that individuals and/or families may move back and forth across the continuum depending on their circumstances. Without last month’s rent deposit, without help working through landlord problems to avoid eviction, some people are very close to becoming homelessness. Housing with supports provides vulnerable individuals and families with the daily supports necessary to live in a stable and independent environment. Figure 1 shows a broad overview of selected examples of housing and supports in Hamilton.

FIGURE 1
Housing and Homelessness Continuum

Emergency and VAW Shelters	Transitional Housing	Supported Housing	Social & Subsidized Housing	Private Market Rental	Affordable Homeownership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Centre • Men’s Shelters • Youth Shelter • Women’s shelter • Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelters for Women & children fleeing violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Stage Housing for Women and their children • Transitional housing for youth • Rooming Houses • Transitional housing for teen parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Care Facilities • Senior-assisted living • Group homes for persons with severe mental illness and/ or developmental disabilities • Supportive housing for women • Harm reduction supportive housing for men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units where people pay rent geared to their income to social housing providers • Rent Supplement units in private market rental buildings where some tenants pay rent geared to their income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental apartment buildings and/or houses • Accessory apartments • Single Room Occupancies/rooming houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership housing that is affordable to low-to-moderate income households and first-time home buyers by virtue of its relatively modest cost and/or through government programs that assist buyers with down payment and/or savings plans.
Prevention, Intervention and Support Services					
Trusteeship Programs - Agency makes payment on an individual’s behalf for shelter costs to ensure their housing is retained. Food Banks and Hot Meal Programs – Provision of limited groceries and meals Moving and Storage Services - Free storage and moving of personal effects and furniture Tenant Supports and Prevention Activities – Helpline and other housing loss prevention and intervention services for individuals and families to help at risk tenants maintain housing; includes education, outreach and advocacy activities Health Care – Improved accessibility and coordination of health services through outreach activities and clinics Employment and Training Programs – Assisting individuals to obtain and maintain employment					

What is a Housing First Approach?

Housing First can be considered as an approach that focuses on immediately providing housing to homeless people and concurrently providing the needed supports and assistance. While program models vary depending upon the population served, Housing First programs share the following elements:

- *A focus on helping people who are homeless access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible, and*
- *A variety of support services following the housing placement that promotes housing stability and individual well-being.*

Emergency Shelter Systems in Hamilton

Emergency shelter system in Hamilton

Emergency shelters provide short-term lodging and other supports to people experiencing homelessness. In Hamilton, the emergency shelter system is comprised of three types of services:

Did you know?

- *most shelters close during the day which minimizes the opportunity to provide much need support services to clients*
- *staying at an emergency shelter for some means using a mat to sleep on the floor*
- *privacy and personal space in an emergency shelter is at a premium – in some shelters you may be sharing your space with a large number of strangers*

- Emergency Shelters;
- Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelters;
- Seasonal Programs (i.e., Out of the Cold).

There are also a number of transitional housing programs that offer short to medium term accommodation to people experiencing homelessness. These numbers are not included in this report.

Supply of shelter beds/mats

Currently, there are 509 emergency shelter beds in Hamilton. The majority of emergency shelter beds are for single men (245). The second largest group of shelter beds is for women and children staying in a VAW shelter (100). The total number of shelter beds has increased by 76% between 2000 and 2006 largely due to an infusion of funding from the Federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) and the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

TABLE 1
Supply of Emergency Shelter Beds in Hamilton (2000 – 2006)

Sector	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	% Change 2000-2006
Family	–	–	–	–	53	–	80	n/a
Single Men	164	188	265	270	270	225	245	49 %
Single Women	19	19	24	24	24	24	24	26 %
Youth	20	20	35	35	36	31	20	0 %
VAW	87	85	87	100	100	100	100	15 %
Out of the Cold	–	25	25	40	40	40	40	n/a
Total	290	337	436	469	523	420	509	76 %

Source: City of Hamilton, 2007

Measuring Homelessness in Hamilton

Exact measures of homelessness are difficult to compile. While some people who are experiencing homelessness are included in service utilization figures, many others are living on the street or ‘hidden’.

The following shelter utilization data is from the City of Hamilton’s Community Services department and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC).

Profile of shelter usage across the emergency shelter system

In 2006, almost 4,000 different individuals stayed at an emergency shelter. This represents a 30% increase in shelter usage between 2005 and 2006. Most of the increase is due to approximately 700 individuals who stayed at the new family centre throughout 2006.

The breakdown of shelter use was 78% male and 22% female in 2006. The average length of stay in an emergency shelter was 23 nights in 2006, slightly up from 20 nights in 2005. In Hamilton, the maximum length of time an individual or family may stay in an emergency shelter is 42 consecutive nights. Shelter residents who participate in intensive case management may stay longer.

The majority of individuals and families access emergency shelter for a short-term or temporary period. Some people experiencing homelessness are unable to secure appropriate housing within a short time frame and may stay at one or more emergency shelters for an extended period of time. In 2006, 70 people stayed more than 200 days in an emergency shelter.

FIGURE 2
Number of Shelter Residents by Total Nights Stayed at An Emergency Shelter in 2006

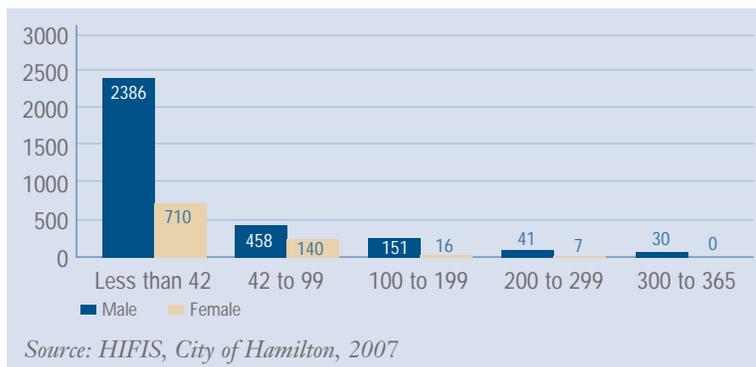


Figure 3 provides a breakdown of singles in the emergency shelter population by age range.

- 14% of the population staying at emergency shelters for singles is below the age of 21
- 53% of the population staying at emergency shelters for singles is between the age 30 to 49
- 19% of the population staying at emergency shelters for singles is over the age of 50

Annual homeless shelter count

The Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) conducts an annual survey of emergency shelter usage in Hamilton. The ‘On a Given Night’ survey data provides historical shelter utilization data in Hamilton. It should be noted, however, that this data only reports on one night in November and may not be representative of fluctuations in occupancy rates throughout the year. While this data provides a snapshot of shelter use on a given night, it does not capture the magnitude of homelessness in a given year.

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

HIFIS is the federal government’s electronic data management system assisting with the collection and reporting of data on the homeless population. An analysis of HIFIS data from 2005 and 2006 has been included in this report and has enhanced our understanding of emergency shelter usage in Hamilton. (Note: Violence Against Women shelters use a different data collection system which means utilization data from this sector is not included in emergency shelter data).

FIGURE 3
Percentage of Single Shelter Residents by Age Group (2006)

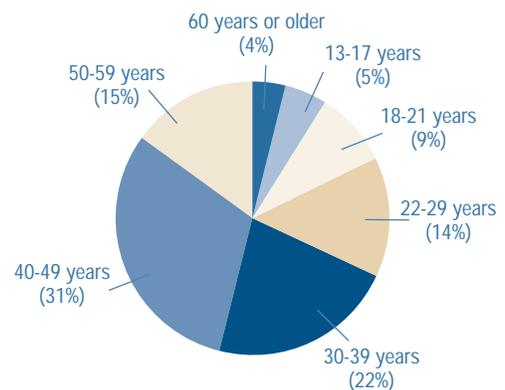




FIGURE 4
Emergency Shelter Use 'On Any Given Night' in Hamilton (1995 to 2006)

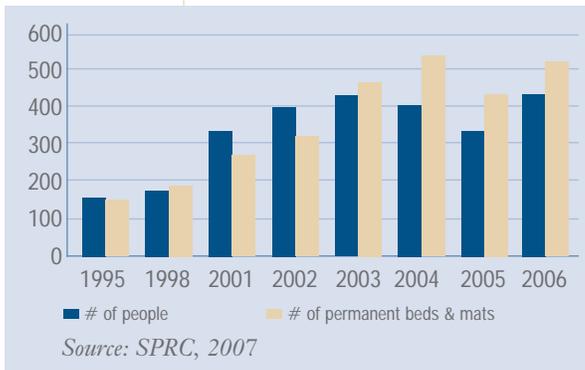


FIGURE 5
Occupancy Rate 'On Any Given Night' in November 2003-2006



TABLE 2
Number of Shelter Residents 'On A Given Night' in November (1998, 2001 – 2006)

	1998	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Men	114	214	243	235	226	194	231
Women	9	18	19	25	20	18	19
VAW	56	80	74	96	84	95	75
Families	--	--	--	--	39	--	63
Youth	--	19	34	31	21	18	19
Out of the Cold	--	12	26	33	9	15	22
Total	179	343	396	420	399	340	419

Source: SPRC, 2007

The number of people accessing shelters in Hamilton on a given night in November has doubled since 1995. Trends show that since 2002 the number of shelter residents has stabilized from 396 in that year to 419 in 2006. Occupancy rates on a given night in November have dropped slightly, in part, due to an increase in beds and mats available in the emergency shelter system in 2003 and 2004. Each year the number of emergency shelter beds fluctuates resulting in increased occupancy rates in the youth and men's sectors in the past two years.

Single men

Single adult men comprised the largest group of emergency shelter residents at 53% in 2006. On a given night in November (2006) there were 231 men accessing an emergency shelter bed or mat. There are four emergency shelters in Hamilton that provide refuge for single men. These shelters are the Good Shepherd Men's Centre, Mission Services Men's Residence, Salvation Army Booth Centre and Wesley Centre.

Single women

Emergency shelter beds are available for women experiencing homelessness for reasons other than domestic violence. Good Shepherd Mary's Place provides 9 beds and the Wesley Drop-In Centre provides 15 mats for women experiencing homelessness. On a given night in November 2006, there were 19 women staying at an emergency shelter in Hamilton. Mary's Place, as the only single gendered shelter for homeless women, is often at capacity and has to turn women away. In 2006, Mary's Place turned away women 878 times due to the shelter being at full capacity.

Discharged into homelessness

People who are released from foster care, prison, mental health care facilities, hospitals, and other public institutions without a place to go are said to be discharged into homelessness. Often individuals in these situations need to enhance basic life and job skills and do not have the support from family and/or friends to help them successfully transition into mainstream society.

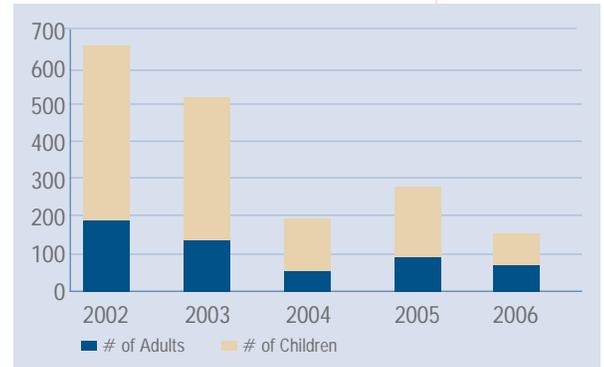
The Salvation Army Discharge Program offers transitional housing for 17 men and 2 women, individuals discharged from hospital to shelter and offers follow-up in the community for 6 months. Located within the shelter, the program assists with specific needs and offers intensive case management to help individuals transition out of the shelter and into the community.

Families

The number of individuals in families experiencing homelessness accommodated in motels/hotels decreased from 696 in 2002 to 176 in 2006. As a result of the opening of the Family Centre, Hamilton's newest emergency shelter, families are less likely to be placed in emergency motels/hotels.

On any given night in November 2004 there were 39 people staying in the temporary emergency family shelter. In December 2005, the permanent family emergency shelter opened to accommodate up to 20 families (or up to 80 individuals). On a given night in November 2006 there were 63 individuals who accessed the Good Shepherd Family Centre. It is important to note that the number of families accessing emergency motel and hotel beds is not reflected in the 'On a Given Night' data.

FIGURE 6
Number of individuals staying in emergency motels and hotels in Hamilton, annually



Women and children experiencing domestic violence

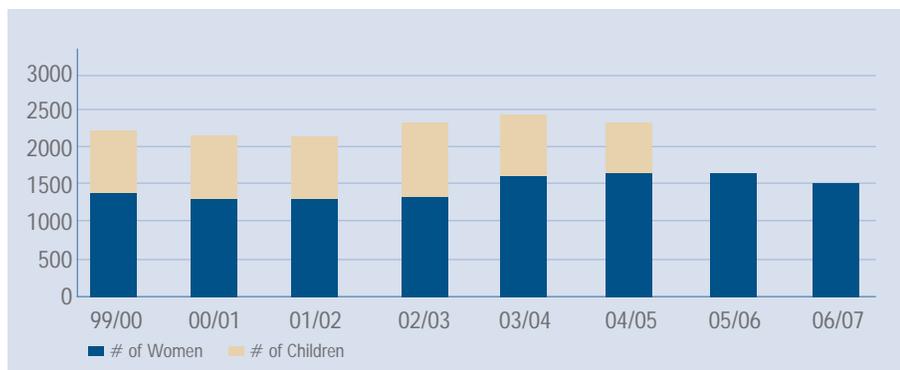
Women and their children experiencing domestic violence can stay in one of four Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters. There are 100 beds available in the VAW

system in Hamilton. From April 2006 to March 2007, 1,504 women stayed in a VAW shelter. On average, women stayed 27 nights during this year. From April 2005 to March 2006, 1,644 women stayed in a VAW shelter. The average length of stay for women in these shelters was 26 nights during this year. The number of children staying in a VAW shelter was not counted during this year. Note that we do not know if these numbers represent one time or multiple stays. In 2006, there were 57 women and children staying at a VAW shelter on a given night in November.

Did you know?

It is important to recognize that many women wind up homeless because of poverty, family violence and family breakup (Lenon, 2000; Novac, et al. 1996a; Miller & DuMont, 2000).

FIGURE 7
Violence Against Women Shelter Utilization (1999-2007)



Note: As of 2005/2006 the MCSS no longer collects data on children staying at VAW Shelters. (Source: MCSS, 2007)

Homeless and street-involved youth

According to a study prepared by the SPRC and community partners in 2005, there were at least 600 street-involved youth (or 1.5% of total youth population) in Hamilton. Street-involved youth are young people between the ages of 16 to 21 who are absolutely homeless or precariously housed using services for street-involved youth and/or spend the majority of their time on the street.

Homeless youth, a sub-group of street-involved youth, are those with no place to live and might stay at emergency shelters. On a given night in November 2006, there were 19 youth staying at an emergency shelter.

By virtue of their age and circumstances most young people experiencing homelessness have not had opportunities to gain work experience, participate in job training programs or obtain further or higher education all of which help secure adequate income to attain financial independence. Nor have most homeless youth had the chance to develop practical and interpersonal skills needed to manage on their own. In Stromberg's (2006) words, "homeless youth are not simply young versions of homeless adults".

Youth in Care and Homelessness

Addressing the connection between foster care and youth homelessness is important not only to improve outcomes for those youth with foster care histories who are presently homeless but also to assist young people currently in care to avoid becoming homeless. According to Novac (2006) and Karabanow (2004) a disproportionate number of youth experiencing homelessness have had or currently have connections to the child welfare system in Canada. Findings from a Canadian study emphasize poverty and homelessness as significant parts of the aftercare condition for many youth with previous child welfare care involvement (Hare & Leslie, 2000).

Urban Aboriginal homelessness

Urban Aboriginal homelessness continues to be a serious issue in communities across Canada. Hamilton is no exception to this assertion as estimates suggest that 20% of people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton are Aboriginal. According to the 2001 census, 1.3% of Hamilton's population self-identified as Aboriginal indicating that this population is overrepresented in the homeless population.

(Source: HEDAC, Homelessness Trail: "The Voice of the People", 2001)

Out of the Cold program

Out of the Cold is a drop-in program for people seeking temporary shelter and is operated by local faith groups. In Hamilton, the Out of the Cold program provides 40 mats per night at various locations across the City. On a given night in November, 22 people sought shelter through this program in 2006.

Did you know?

- *The poverty rate for the Aboriginal population in Hamilton is 44% whereas the overall poverty rate in Hamilton is 20%.*
- *39% of Aboriginal renter households are in core housing need. A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its gross income to pay rent.*
- *The average household income for Aboriginal renters is \$33,794 whereas the average household income for non-Aboriginal renters is \$37,918*

Sources: CMHC, Housing in Canada Online and Statistics Canada, 2001

Access to Adequate Income Update

Low income affects access to necessities such as adequate housing, nutritious foods, warm clothing and education. It can also affect the overall well-being of an individual as low income may increase stress, lower self-esteem and limit participation in the community.

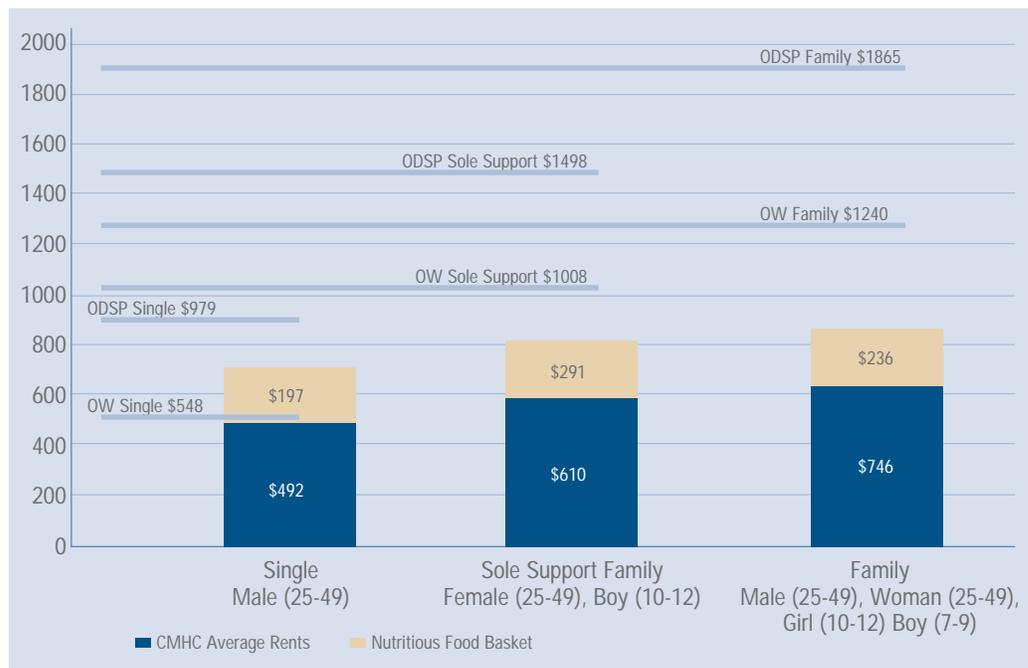
Social assistance and basic needs

The high demand for affordable housing in our community is evidenced by Hamilton's social housing waiting list which currently has 3,817 active applications. The total number of beneficiaries in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) was 22,765 and the total number of beneficiaries in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) was 22,497 in 2006. Nine per cent (45,262) of Hamilton residents are coping with social assistance rates that have not kept pace with increases in cost of living. This means participants are increasingly unable to afford basic necessities such as adequate housing and nutritious food.

Cost of a nutritious food basket and average rent compared to social assistance rates

Figure 8 compares Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) average rents in Hamilton and cost of a nutritious food basket for a single person, a sole-support family and a two-parent family to social assistance rates. For instance, a single person living on OW income is approximately \$141 short to cover these basic needs. Using the same criteria, a family of four will have just under \$259 remaining after paying for rent and food to pay for other necessities such as clothing, school supplies, utilities or other personal items.

FIGURE 8
Comparison of 2006 Social Assistance Rates vs. the Cost for a
Nutritious Food Basket and CMHC Rents



Source: MCSS 2006, CMHC 2006, City of Hamilton, Public Health Services 2006

Food insecurity

Food insecurity in Hamilton, and Canada, is primarily the result of poverty. Food insecurity can be defined as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. The need for emergency food programs and services is highly correlated to the low levels of social assistance payments: three out of four households using food banks reported OW or ODSP as their primary source of income.

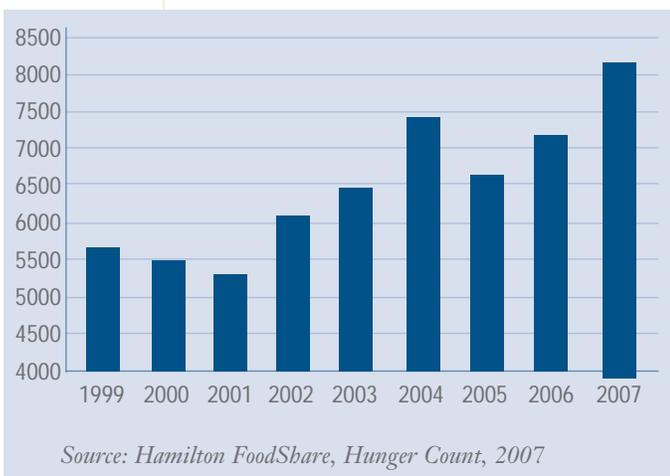
(Source: *Hunger Count, Hamilton FoodShare, 2007*)

Food banks and hot meal programs

Indicative of worsening food insecurity in Hamilton is the increased and persistent reliance on the emergency food system. Food banks provide necessary emergency assistance to thousands of people each month and still must turn some people away. Those who have come to rely on food banks are often not able to meet all of their nutritional requirements. Originally set up as temporary “stop-gap” measures to assist people facing emergency situations, food banks have become a more permanent fixture in the community. Food banks in the community are an integral piece of the puzzle when it comes to people staying housed.

(Source: *Hamilton Emergency Food System Assessment – Phase I, SPRC, 2005*)

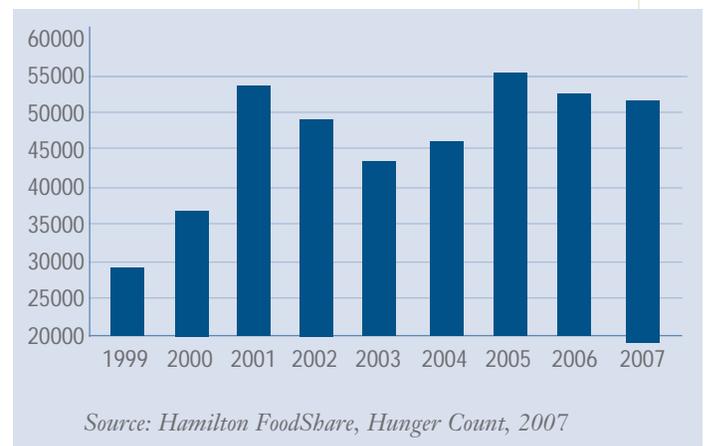
FIGURE 9
Number of Visits to Hamilton Food
banks in March, by year



- In March 2007, there were 8,179 visits to local food banks.
- In March 2007, over 52,000 hot meals were served at meal programs.

(Source: *Hunger Count, Hamilton FoodShare, 2007*)

FIGURE 10
Number of Meals Served at Hamilton Meal
Programs in March, by year



The lack of affordable housing in Hamilton puts many residents at risk of homelessness.

- In Hamilton, 21.9% of renter households spend more than 50% of their income on shelter putting them at serious risk of homelessness.
- Approximately 45% of renter households spend more than 30% of their household income on shelter.
- The social housing waiting list reveals the pervasive need in Hamilton for rent-geared-to-income housing. There were 3,817 active applications on the social housing waiting list in 2006.
- 400 new units of affordable rental units required to keep pace with demand
- Average rent \$610 (1 bedroom) in 2006, slightly down from \$615 in 2005
- 4.3% vacancy rate (1 bedroom) in 2006 vs. 5.0% in 2005

(Source: Statistics Canada, 2001; City of Hamilton, 2007; CMHC, 2007)

Quick Fact about Subsidized Housing	2005	2006
# of social housing units	14,692	14,692
# of social housing units where tenants pay rent geared to income	10,000	10,000
# of active applications on the social housing waiting list	4,258	3,817
# of new applicants per month	272	271
average # of people housed per month	130	124
# of people who have homeless status on the waiting list	906	355

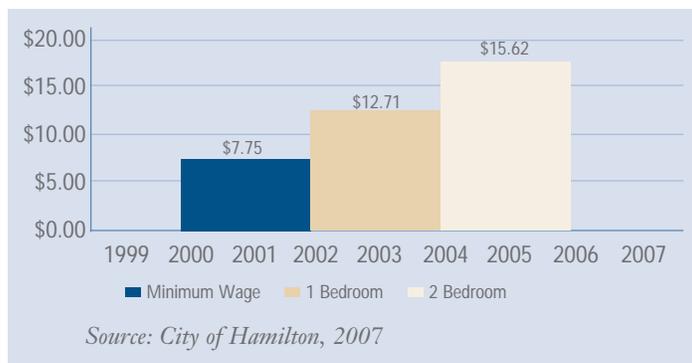
Housing wage vs. minimum wage

The minimum “housing wage” is defined as the amount required for a one-wage earner household to afford a one-bedroom or two bedroom apartment and not pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent. In 2006, the difference between minimum wage (\$7.75/hour) and the housing wage for a one-bedroom apartment (\$12.71/hour) or two-bedroom apartment (\$15.62/hour) is substantial.

Average Market Rents and Vacancy Rates in Hamilton (2006)		
	Rent	Vacancy Rate
Bachelor	\$492	6.5%
1 Bedroom	\$610	4.3%
2 Bedroom	\$745	5.1%
3 Bedroom	\$903	3.5%

Source: CMHC, 2007

FIGURE 11
‘Housing Wage’ vs. Minimum Wage, Hamilton, 2006



What's New in Addressing Homelessness in Hamilton?

Hamilton's Hostels to Homes Pilot Project (H2HP):

The Hostels to Homes Pilot (H2HP) is an innovative 18 month provincially funded program designed to re-invest community resources to support chronic shelter residents' move along the housing continuum. Chronic shelter residents are individuals staying in an emergency shelter 42 or more days in the last year. In 2006, Hamilton shelters reported 608 chronic shelter residents. Pilot participants will receive individualized support from the new Integrated Mobile Case Management Team (IMCMT). The IMCMT will help participants find and maintain long-term housing in the community. It is anticipated that 80 individuals will be housed before the end of the 18 month pilot project which began in May 2007.

Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI):

The Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) is part of the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The City of Hamilton is responsible for administration of the program which is intended "to prevent and reduce homelessness by helping to establish the structures and supports needed to move homeless and at-risk individuals towards self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society." The HPI is described as a "housing-first" approach with an emphasis on supportive and transitional housing. A new Community Advisory Board has formed to advise the City of Hamilton about funding allocation and project selection under HPI.

Prevention of homelessness:

- The City of Hamilton administers approximately \$1.25 M. of provincial funding to community partners under the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP). A key objective of CHPP is to have a network of support services to connect individuals and families to community resources and assist households experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and keep stable living arrangements.
- CityHousing Hamilton's Eviction Prevention Policy recognizes that it is better to work with tenants through early intervention to prevent evictions so that housing is maintained and homelessness is reduced.
- The Rent Bank Program, Housing Emergency Loan Program and Trusteeship programs continue to help low income renter households remain housed during a financial crisis.

Creating affordable housing:

- The Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program – provides assistance in the form of capital grants and housing allowances for the construction of rental housing with rents at or below the average market rents for the City. As a result of a partnership between the City of Hamilton, the Federal and Provincial governments, 525 new affordable housing units will be built. The total investment into these new housing units is over \$29 million.

Collaborative networks:

A number of community groups are addressing homelessness and affordable housing issues in Hamilton. Here are a few examples:

- The Affordable Housing Flagship is a voluntary group of formal and informal community leaders with a mandate to ensure that affordable housing contributes to a healthy and vibrant city.
- The Food Shelter and Housing Advisory Committee is a voluntary committee that provides recommendations regarding income, food, and housing and homelessness issues to the Emergency and Community Services committee of Council.
- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is spearheaded by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation. The Roundtable brings together civic leaders from numerous boards, agencies, businesses, media, and municipal government to work with concerned residents, organizations and businesses in identifying the issues around poverty and developing solutions to overcome those issues.

Other examples of key community networks include: Hamilton Executive Directors Aboriginal Coalition, Solutions for Housing Action Committee, Woman Abuse Working Group, Hamilton Addictions and Mental Health Coalition, Shelter Operators Group, Emergency Food Action Committee, Roomers and Boarders Committee and the Residential Care Facilities Tenants Coalition.

Issues/data for future consideration:

With the implementation of HIFIS and the co-operation of our community partners, gains have been made in what we know about homelessness in Hamilton. However, there is still more to learn. For example, we need to understand more about:

- Aboriginal homelessness
- length of time in shelters across years

This knowledge is crucial in order to continue to develop responses to the homelessness crisis.

Acknowledgements:

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Hamilton
Community Services



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ON ANY GIVEN NIGHT

Measuring Homelessness in Hamilton