



## Terms of Reference

### Mission

The Housing Stability Alliance (HSA) advises, informs and makes recommendations for St. Thomas-Elgin responses to homelessness and housing stability. The HSA is not a decision-making body.

### Vision

The vision of the HSA is safe, affordable and stable housing for all members of St. Thomas-Elgin.

### Membership

Membership consists of any community member representing themselves and/or an organization interested in participating in the HSA as a Member or Associate Member.

Anyone interested in becoming a Member or Associate Member is invited to send an expression of interest to the HSA Secretary, Andrea Graves, at [agraves@stthomas.ca](mailto:agraves@stthomas.ca). New membership requests will be reviewed at the next HSA meeting and will be approved by group consensus.

### Meetings

The HSA meets a minimum of four times a year. Members will schedule meetings by consensus and will generally suspend meetings over July and August.

## Role and Responsibilities

### Members

Members of the HSA agree to attend HSA meetings regularly. Members participate in: moving or seconding a motion; voting in or acting as the Chair; updating the Terms of Reference, and voting on other areas of focus for the HSA such as establishing priorities. Consensus through voting is determined through quorum meaning 50% of the vote + 1 of Members in attendance. Members who miss three consecutive HSA meetings may be removed from the membership.

### Associate Members

Associate Members are invited to attend HSA meetings but are not expected to attend regularly. Associate Members participate in discussions and provide input but hold no voting, motioning or seconding authority.

### Chair

It is expected that the Chair of the HSA holds in-depth knowledge of St. Thomas-Elgin's homelessness and housing stability response and system. The Chair will: organize, convene, and facilitate HSA meetings; develop the agenda for the meeting in collaboration with HSA Members; review and update the Terms of Reference as needed and represent the mission and vision of the HSA.

### Secretary

The Secretary is the St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services Administrative Assistant. The Secretary will: send out the meeting agenda and previous minutes to the HSA ahead of the scheduled meeting; record the meeting minutes; and receive and present new membership inquiries to the HSA.

All HSA roles include and are not limited to the following responsibilities:

- Sharing information and working collaboratively towards the co-ordination of services;
- Identifying local homelessness and housing stability needs;
- Identifying and recommending solutions to respond to needs including new or enhanced service provisions and funding opportunities;
- Advocating to stakeholders, community service providers and all levels of government on issues relating to homelessness and housing stability;
- Assisting in organizing community events such as community information and education sessions and Point in Time Counts;
- Providing input and monitoring the development and progress of the recommendations included in the St. Thomas Elgin 10 Year Housing & Homelessness Plan; and,
- Developing smaller sub-committees to focus on specific objectives or initiatives.

In addition, the roles of the HSA include the responsibilities of the former Social Housing Advisory Committee which includes:

- Investigating new and existing funding and program opportunities from upper levels of government and local municipalities;
- Collaborating with private and non-profit housing proponents who are interested in the provision of affordable housing;
- Investigating opportunities for the development of new affordable housing; and,
- Creating liaisons among various levels of government, local agencies, private and non-profit developers, and other stakeholders to help facilitate the provision of affordable housing.

### **Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference (ToR) will be reviewed and updated as needed and at a minimum of once every other year.

**Expected Outcomes**

Working in collaboration with all members, the HSA enhances the quality and accountability of priorities and planning for homelessness and housing stability needs in St. Thomas-Elgin. By enhancing the quality and accountability of priorities and plans, the HSA contributes towards the vision of safe, affordable and stable housing for all members of St. Thomas-Elgin.

**Background**

In 2005 & 2006 the Elgin-St. Thomas United Way (United Way), received a 30-month grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to conduct community consultations in each part of Elgin County. The community consultations were held to identify community priorities using an asset-based approach. After eight meetings, the following priorities were identified for Elgin County: Youth; Poverty & Unemployment; Medical and Mental Health Issues; & Transportation.

In 2009, the United Way received an 18-month grant, funded through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to move forward with solutions in response to the identified priorities in the first stage. This initiative was led by a Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from local social services agencies including: the Salvation Army; Canadian Red Cross; YWCA St. Thomas Elgin; St. Thomas – Elgin Social Services; CMHA; Elgin/St. Thomas Youth Employment Counselling Centre; Mennonite Community Services; St. Thomas & District Labour Council; West Elgin Community Health Centre; Thames Valley District School Board; and Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.

As part of this initiative, the collaborative created several action groups with the goal of creating new or enhanced programming around specific priority areas including the Housing Stability Advisory Group, formerly known as the Housing & Homelessness Action Group. This group was formed to focus on housing and homelessness needs in St. Thomas and Elgin County.