



## SYSTEM LEVEL RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS

- St. Thomas Elgin became a **Built For Zero** Canada Community in May 2021 in order to receive support in implementing and using national and international best practices to drive down occurrences of homelessness. **Recently, recognized as the second Canadian community to reach functional zero Veteran's homelessness.**
- Some of those best practices include:
  - 1) Having a **quality By Name List. (approx. 130 individuals St.Thomas + Elgin)** A By Name List is a living list of people identified as actively experiencing homelessness in your community. It is updated frequently including daily and supports local processes for matching people to resources and making data informed decisions.
  - 2) Having a **Coordinated Access System.** In St. Thomas-Elgin, Coordinated Access is made up of multiple service providers who come together bi-weekly to review the By Name List and make matches of people to resources using community identified priorities and acuity levels. Our local priorities currently include: chronic homelessness, high hospital recidivism, Indigenous, Veterans and youth.
- **St. Thomas sees the solution to ending occurrences of homelessness as being housing and housing with supports.** We offer supportive housing to people identified on our By Name List through two long standing community partners: The YWCA and CMHA.
- We have also partnered more recently with **Indwell** to build and operate supportive housing for high and mid-acuity. Our first partnership and build with Indwell focused on **high acuity** and has been operating 15 units with intensive supports attached since October 2021. **Tenants are selected from the By Names List (BNL).** Our second build focusses on **mid-acuity** and we look forward to having an additional 45 units on line this summer. The final phase will be a 50 bed **low-acuity** build. Presently, funding options are being reviewed.
- We also operate emergency shelters, as sadly they are still very much needed. We have **one 24/7 housing focussed 40 bed shelter** that operates in St. Thomas and we work with partners in our rural areas to operate 2 winter emergency shelters for occurrences of rural homelessness.
- **Our intention is to work our way out of needing shelter services and be able to reinvest those resources into more housing and housing with supports.** This plan includes converting the existing shelter into supportive units, once it is no longer required.



## SUPPORTS IN THE DOWNTOWN

Where we see the most homelessness occurring in our municipality is in the downtown core of St. Thomas. In response, we have additional resources available to support vulnerable people including:

- 1) **STP Community Resource Officers:** A team of Community minded Special Constables working closely with downtown businesses and residents and in partnership with local resources and services with community agencies. **The primary goal is to enhance the overall well-being of the downtown community and all of its members.**
- 2) **STP Mobile Outreach Support Team:** A collaborative effort between STP and CMHA to employ mental health specialists to respond to people in crisis.
- 3) **Housing Focussed Street Outreach:** A collaborative effort between CMHA and Social Services to respond to occurrences of unsheltered homelessness with the goal of connecting people to resources and supports and end their occurrence of unsheltered homelessness.

## HOUSING CONTINUUM

We also recognized that homelessness, emergency shelters and supportive housing are a part of the **broad housing continuum**. In St. Thomas-Elgin we are committed increasing housing stock across the continuum with an emphasis on affordable housing and deeply affordable housing.

A couple examples of this would be:

- 1) **Builds that include mixed use and opportunity to stack with public services.**  
For example, in 2019/2020 we completed a build at **230 Talbot street** where we now operate our Social Services office out of the main floor and have 26 units of housing units on two additional floors above. The units are a mix of market rent, RGI and head leases with community service providers.
- 2) Our commitment to support community initiatives.  
For example: **Tiny Hope** is a development led by the YWCA with support from a local builder and the municipality that will include 40 tiny homes prioritizing women led families, Indigenous people and youth who are at risk of or experiencing housing instability.