

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS SHEDS LIGHT ON PROGRESS TOWARD ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON**

GUELPH (November 17, 2017) - The Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes Campaign released a 2016/17 annual report today about the progress our community has made in a bid to end homelessness. The report demonstrates that the number of known individuals experiencing homelessness has fallen from 207 in April 2016 to 129 in October 2017, an overall decrease of 38%. Also highlighted in the report are 117 housing placements for individuals considered 'high-acuity' (those with high depth of need).

The local campaign is part of a broader national change movement focused on ending chronic homelessness in 20 communities and housing 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2020. National 20,000 Homes Campaign Director Marie Morrison is celebrating the results from Guelph-Wellington, stating:

"As one of 35 participating communities across Canada, Guelph-Wellington is a tremendous leader in the 20,000 Homes Campaign. In a very short time, they have demonstrated how having real-time data on every person experiencing homelessness and being coordinated and focused on their goal of ending homelessness can show measurable results".

Despite the progress of the campaign, the report also provides insights into some of the issues faced by our community. Maintaining housing stability continues to be a significant challenge for high-acuity individuals moving from homelessness to housing. Unaccompanied youth (age 16-24) face particular hurdles in this area. Of the 28 housing placements that took place from February 2017 to October 2017 for unaccompanied youth, 13 (46%) are being maintained today. Debbie Lauzon, Executive Director of Wyndham House and member of the Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes Leadership Committee shares the following:

"We know that the causes and conditions of youth homelessness are distinct from adults, and therefore, the solutions must be youth-focused to be effective. Our Wyndham House Housing First 4 Youth program has had many successes in this past year but we know there are also challenges unique to this group and there is much more work to be done to ensure that all youth in need of housing get the supports they need. We know that this is the right model and that with the appropriate supports in place young people can be successful in their new housing and sustain their independence in our community."

To continue supporting housing stability for individuals that have experienced homelessness, United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin has announced that they will be supporting a 'Housing Stability Fund.' The fund is being set up for agencies to support clients who are struggling to maintain housing stability. Ken Dardano, Executive Director at United Way, offered the following:

"As a member of the 20,000 Homes Campaign, United Way is pleased to support the efforts to improve housing stability locally. Access to stable, affordable and appropriate housing, as well as reducing the risk of eviction or homelessness are two primary goals

of our “From Poverty to Possibility” focus area. This fund is the beginning of an effective way to assist our community in reaching these goals”, said Ken Dardano, executive director of United Way Guelph Wellington

The report also offers a look at the experiences and demographics of individuals that are currently facing homelessness. In general, the rates of those experiencing chronic homelessness (homeless for 6 months or more in the past year) and episodic homelessness (3 or more episodes of homelessness in the past year) have remained relatively stable. However, those facing physical health issues and substance use issues are impacting larger percentages of those currently experiencing homelessness. Raechelle Deveraux, Executive Director of the Guelph Community Health Centre and member of the Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes Leadership Committee notes:

“Because we know that housing is a core social determinant to one’s health, while it is disheartening to see, it is certainly not surprising that those experiencing homelessness in our community are also experiencing exacerbated health issues. Similarly, substance use can both contribute to one’s ability to maintain their housing; and the stigma surrounding substance use also influences whether or not a substance user will be accepted when applying for a residence. We also know that substances can offer short-term relief for those coping with the harsh realities of living without a roof over their heads. Data such as that provided in the 20K Homes Report allows service providers whose health and social services are designed to support those experiencing homelessness, like the Guelph CHC, to more accurately target our outreach services and to ensure that they are as accessible as possible to those who need them.”

Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes encourages community members, businesses, and other stakeholders to direct donations to United Way for the Housing Stability Fund.

The Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes Annual Report, authored by Randalin Ellery, Coordinator of the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, is available online at [www.gwpoverty.ca](http://www.gwpoverty.ca).

The Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes Campaign is co-led by the Poverty Task Force (PTF) and County of Wellington Social Services.

**For further media inquiries:**

Randalin Ellery

Coordinator, Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination

E: [info@gwpoverty.ca](mailto:info@gwpoverty.ca)

C: 519-803-0484

---

**!** **POVERTY**  
GUELPH & WELLINGTON TASK FORCE FOR  
**ELIMINATION**