

News Release
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The Council on Aging of Ottawa / Le Conseil sur le vieillissement d'Ottawa

Shortage of Affordable Housing For One In Three Ottawa Seniors

According to a report just released by the Council on Aging of Ottawa, there is a chronic shortage of affordable housing options for low and modest income seniors (where households spend 30% or less on accommodation), a growing demand for temporary emergency housing by seniors and the situation continues to worsen with the senior population explosion.

The report, titled "Housing Seniors: Choices, Challenges and Solutions", provides an overview of the Ottawa housing situation in the public and private sectors, the retirement home industry and looks at emerging issues concerning emergency temporary shelter for a growing number of seniors.

Highlights include:

- the urgent reminder that the current population of Ottawa seniors, now approximately 103,000, will more than double to 230,576 by 2031 and that the quantity and quality of supply is far short of projected need
- most seniors in "core housing need" spend over 40% of their income on housing
- 11.5% of Ottawa seniors are visible minorities;
- approximately one in four low income seniors is currently accommodated by social housing
- almost half of all senior women have less than \$20,000 income;
- the cost of living in a "retirement residence" is beyond the means of the majority of seniors;
- taxes based on mounting assessed values on inner-city properties disproportionately affect seniors on fixed incomes

The 40-page study formed the framework for the "Policy Forum on Housing for Seniors 55+", sponsored by the Council in the fall of 2007. In his spirited keynote address to forum participants, the Honorable Ed Broadbent drew attention to the fundamental social right of citizens to shelter and called on participants to remind governments at all levels of their obligations to provide support and programs to protect that right – especially for seniors. "Early in the 1990s, the government abolished our federal housing programmes, making us the only country among developed democracies without a national housing policy." Broadbent said.

Input from the professionals, laymen and laywomen who participated in the daylong forum helped shape priorities for future action by the Council in the area of Seniors Housing. Based on the findings of the report, the Council on Aging is committed to work with like-minded individuals and organizations to foster the needed political will of decision-makers at all levels of government and in the private and non-profit sectors to make lasting improvements in the area of seniors' housing in the Ottawa area.

The Council on Aging of Ottawa is a bilingual, non-profit, voluntary organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all seniors in Ottawa. The Council works with and for seniors in the community to voice issues and concerns to all levels of government and to the general public.

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Information: Full report is attached. See The Council on Aging of Ottawa website www.coaottawa.ca for full text. For hard copy, contact Lise-Michelle Bouchard 613-789-3577 #11 or Eric Cosgrove, Chair, Housing Committee (613-526-3936) ericcosgrove@rogers.com

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