FACTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- 752 individual youth were supported at Operation Come Home during 2023
- 14,352 hot meals were served so far
- 103 received ongoing mental health or substance use support
- 694 youth were engaged through street outreach
- 30 youth obtained housing in new apartments
- 11 landlords signed agreements with HousingWorks, to lease units for youth
- 16 youth were reunited with family
- 73 youth enrolled in our education program, the John Bosco Achievement Centre
- 249 youth received help to find employment
- 79 youth achieved stable, full-time jobs
- 33 youth were employed in one of our social enterprises

MATCHING GIFT CAMPAIGN 2023

Any gifts made during November or December will be automatically matched, dollar for dollar, by our wonderful friends at Knifewear. This support will help our resource centre, where we provide warm meals, clothing, personal care products, and basic necessities. To make your gift, you can visit operationcomehome.ca/donate, send your contribution to the address provided below, or call us at 613.230.4663.

CONTACT US

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Charitable B/N: 11906 8997 RR0001

Dear friends of Operation Come Home,

The news in Ottawa has been concerning. Many in the media are reporting a significant rise in homelessness. Shelters are full, programs are stretched, and resources are scarce. As the winter gets closer, these challenges are expected to grow.

Yet there is another side to the story, one that I am proud to be a part of. Here at Operation Come Home we are making tremendous progress helping our youth succeed. And though our problems will grow, I know we can get through it with the help of our community.

We have been able to persevere. Each day, youth in our programs are finding housing, obtaining employment, and working towards graduating high school. Our singular goal is to help our youth achieve their goals, and move into stable, permanent housing.

To keep going, we need your help. If you have a winter coat you no longer need, we will gladly accept it. If you can provide new socks, shampoo, toothpaste or soap, we will pass these things along to our youth. And if you can help with a donation this year, we can put it to use help one of our youth realize their potential.

We could not do this work without your wonderful support. Thank you,
RISING HOMELESSNESS IN OTTAWA: CAUSES

Why is homelessness increasing? It is a question we are often asked, and one that can be explained by a few factors at work in our City and others across Canada.

Loss of Affordable Units: Ottawa, like many cities in Canada, is facing a shortfall in affordable rental housing. Over the past twenty years, many previously affordable units were lost due to building renovations, often referred to “renovictions”. Demand for apartments also increased at the same time. These factors enabled landlords to charge higher rents. According to CMHC data for Ottawa, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment increased 22% in the past year. People living with low income now face significant trouble finding or maintaining housing, leading to increased homelessness.

Foster Care: Youth exits from foster care have increased in the past year. During the pandemic, governments placed a moratorium on youth exiting care, leading to a backlog in the system. The moratorium was lifted last December. In the months since, youth have gradually been leaving the foster system. Many have moved on to stable housing, but some have fallen behind.

Newcomers: Newcomers coming to Ottawa have also increased over the past year. Like many cities in Canada, Ottawa is seeing record levels of immigration. Many newcomers, particularly those who arrive as refugees, experience the same challenges finding affordable apartments. Without other options, they often turn to the shelter system for short-term stays. As many as 40% of the available beds in the shelter system are occupied by refugees and other newcomers.

Universities Resuming Post-Pandemic: Ottawa has several large post-secondary institutions, and more than 20,000 students arrive in our City each year seeking places to live. Many live in residences, but others seek affordable places to live off-campus. During the pandemic, most students arriving from out of town were able to stay at home. Now that restrictions have lifted, these students are back in Ottawa seeking places to stay, leading to increased pressure on the system.

Inflation: Price increases have affected rent costs, but also living costs such as food and basic necessities. This has increased levels of stress within low-income families, increasing the rates of family conflict and leading to increasing numbers of youth leaving home, either by choice or involuntarily.

Together these factors have contributed to record levels of youth homelessness in Ottawa.

WHERE YOUTH ARE STAYING

Youth participating in programs at Operation Come Home often stay in a variety of places while they experience homelessness. The majority of our youth are staying in shelters downtown, with an increasing proportion now staying in adult shelters, putting them at greater risk of harm.

During the fall, we have noticed an increase in the number of youth sleeping on the street or in encampments, leading to worries about their well-being with winter coming. We will work closely with shelters and other housing providers to ensure youth are supported during the winter months.

YOUTH TESTIMONIALS*

Operation Come Home has been incredible. The people are nice and have helped me with everything - food, clothes, a job, everything. I tell everyone I know to go to OCH.

-Javier

I started in the employment program in 2022 and loved and enjoyed my time here. The staff are world class! I would recommend the housing program to everyone.

-Jessica

*Youth names and personal details have been changed to protect their confidentiality