



ON ANY
GIVEN
NIGHT



Hamilton

Homelessness Indicators Report

May 2010 EDITION

Homelessness Indicators Report

Quick Facts:

1,435 women and **521** children stayed at a Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter from April 2008 to March 2009.

There was a **23%** increase in the total number of households accessing a foodbank between 2008 and 2009.

During 2009, **3,697** individuals stayed at one of seven emergency shelters with the majority, 77% staying less than the maximum length of stay (42 days).

5,171 individuals and families were on the social housing waiting list as of March 31, 2010.

437 adults, youth and children stayed in one of Hamilton's emergency or Violence Against Women's Shelters on the snapshot night in November 2008 (SPRC, 2008).

According to 2006 census data, **33,340** or 44% of renter households in Hamilton spent more than 30% of their household income on shelter.





1.0 INTRODUCTION

Building on extensive community consultation, the City of Hamilton developed a three-year plan, *Everyone has a Home: A Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness* (2007).

In order to achieve this shared vision, the City of Hamilton's plan to address homelessness identifies five outcomes:

- The entire community is engaged to address homelessness;
- A continuum of affordable housing that helps residents achieve their potential;
- Increase supports to help people obtain and maintain housing;
- Access to an adequate income; and,
- Efficient and effective use of community resources

Since 2006, the City of Hamilton and the Social Planning and Research Council have collaborated to produce the report *On Any Given Night* which tracks various indicators of homelessness, particularly emergency shelter data. Collecting this kind of information allows government, social service and housing providers to identify gaps in services and undertake long range planning. It is also a way to keep the broader community informed about homelessness. Given the challenging economic times of the last several years, monitoring changes in the scope of poverty and homelessness in our community is critical.



Affordability is often referred to in this report. Housing is considered affordable to households below a certain income level, if those in the household spend 30% or less of their gross income on housing costs. This is a widely accepted benchmark of what is meant by affordable housing.



2.0 UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

The Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) defines homelessness as:

- Living on the street
- Staying overnight in a temporary shelter
- Staying in places not meant for human habitation
- Moving continuously among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends, or family.

There are many concepts and indicators to be considered in understanding homelessness, some of which are touched upon in this report.

The three broad categories to consider in defining homelessness include:

- Those who are sleeping outside, in a public place, or in a shelter; **absolute homelessness**;
- Those who are staying with friends or family; **hidden homelessness**;
- And those **at risk of homelessness** including those who are **inadequately housed**.

The chart below conceptualizes the range of shelter and housing options that exist in our community. Households don't necessarily move through the continuum from left to right; emergency to permanent affordable housing. Instead, the goal is that there are sufficient and accessible options for low-income households and households needing supports to achieve housing stability at any point along the continuum. Although, defining concepts and reporting on indicators of homelessness can give some idea as to the scope of the problem, the emotional costs to individuals and families should not be underestimated.

Table 1

Continuum of Homelessness and Housing Options					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless • Living on the street • Squatting • Couch surfing • Emergency shelters • Out of the Cold program • In hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional housing • Supportive/ supported housing • Rooming houses • Residential care facilities • Second stage housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent geared to income (RGI) • Rent supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing allowance • Affordable home ownership • 20% below market rent 		
Emergency Shelters	Transitional Housing	Housing with Supports	Social Housing	Market Rental	Affordable Home Ownership

Source: City of Hamilton, 2009

3.0 EMERGENCY SHELTER SYSTEM IN HAMILTON

3.1 The Shelter System and Information Collection

One indicator of absolute homelessness in our community is shelter usage. Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is the federal government's electronic database system used by communities to collect and report on data specific to people who are homeless. All emergency shelters in Hamilton collect data using HIFIS. This includes shelters that are funded by the City of Hamilton that serve men, women, families and youth. Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters which are funded by the Province of Ontario collect information using a different system and are therefore not included in the HIFIS data presented.

3.2 Shelter-User Demographics

HIFIS data indicates that 3,697 individuals stayed at one of seven emergency shelters during 2009, with the majority of people staying less than the maximum length of stay of 42 days. *Table 2* represents data from the following shelters: Good Shepherd Notre Dame, Salvation Army, Good Shepherd Men's Centre, Mission Services, Good Shepherd Mary's Place, Wesley Centre and the Good Shepherd Family Centre.

Table 2

The purpose of emergency shelters is to accommodate people on a short-stay basis. In 2009, 77% of total emergency shelter users stayed less than the maximum stay of 42 days and 23% stayed more than 42 days.

Number of Shelter Users by Total Nights Stayed at An Emergency Shelter in 2009				
Total Nights Stayed for All Shelters in 2009	Males	Females	Transgender / Other	Total
Less than 42	2,201	646	4	2,851
42 to 99	477	187	0	664
100 to 199	130	12	0	142
200 to 299	26	1	0	27
300 to 365	12	1	0	13
Total	2,846	847	4	3,697

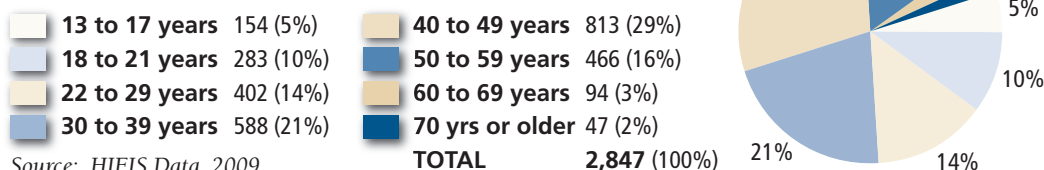
Source: HIFIS Data, 2009

While the HIFIS system is set up to capture the number of male, female and transgender people using shelters, only a few people were documented under the category of transgender. This may be due to the fact that not all shelter users are provided the option to self-identify their gender or may not feel safe to do so. Ensuring accessibility, respect, safety and privacy for those who are transgender should be considered a necessary part of the shelter system (Mottet and Ohle, 2003).



Figure 1

Age of Individuals Staying in a Homeless Shelter (not Violence Against Women Shelters or Family Shelter)



Source: HIFIS Data, 2009

In 2009, 2847 people over the age of 13 stayed at one of the following locations: Good Shepherd Men's Centre, Mary's Place, Mission Services, Notre Dame, Salvation Army or Wesley Centre. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of people in each age group. Half of shelter users were 30 to 49 years of age. The other 50% of shelter users include 15% youth, 13 to 21 years of age; 22 to 29 year olds who make up 14%, and 21% of shelter users who are 50 years or older.

Table 3

% of Individuals by Age Staying in a Homeless Shelter for 2007 to 2009

(Not Violence Against Women Shelters or Family Shelter)

Age	2007	2008	2009
13 to 21 years	14%	15%	15%
22 to 29 years	14%	15%	14%
30 to 49 years	53%	50%	50%
50 yrs & over	19%	20%	21%

Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of people in each age group. Half of shelter users were 30 to 49 years of age. The other 50% of shelter users include 15% youth, 13 to 21 years of age; 22 to 29 year olds who make up 14%, and 21% of shelter users who are 50 years or older. *Table 3* indicates that the age breakdown of those accessing shelters has been consistent over the past three years. Consideration for the age-related needs and unique barriers to permanent housing for those accessing emergency shelters is a necessary part of a system response.

Violence Against Women Shelters (VAW)

There are four shelters for women and children leaving a situation of domestic violence in Hamilton: Good Shepherd Martha House, Mission Services Inasmuch House, Native Women's Centre and Interval House. The VAW shelters can accommodate 100 women and children across these four shelter sites. In 2008/09, 1,435 women and 521 children stayed in a VAW shelter in Hamilton. The average occupancy rate for the VAW shelters has fluctuated over the past four years but increased from 83% in 2007/08 to 96% in 2008/09.

Women Needing Emergency Shelter for Reasons Other Than Partner Abuse

Women who need emergency shelter for reasons other than partner abuse aren't always able to access a shelter due to lack of capacity. Good Shepherd Mary's Place provides nine beds and Wesley Drop-In Centre provides 15 mats for women experiencing homelessness. In 2009, there were 1,609 times women were turned away from Mary's Place because the shelter was full; however, it is not known how many distinct individuals this represents. Although the Wesley Centre overnight program will close July 31, 2010, future expansion is planned within the women's emergency shelter sector. This will include 13 apartment style shelter units with capacity to accommodate 40 women and children at Martha House and 20 private units at Mary's Place. Each shelter will close at their current location and move to new and expanded facilities later in 2010. This expansion of women's shelter services should ease some of the existing pressure on women's shelters and improve access to emergency shelter services for women.



Men's Shelters

There are four emergency shelters for men with a total of 235 beds/mats: Good Shepherd Men's Centre which has 40 beds, Mission Services with 58 beds, Salvation Army has 97 beds and Wesley Centre which can accommodate up to 40 men overnight on mats.

Table 4
Shelter Capacity in 2008

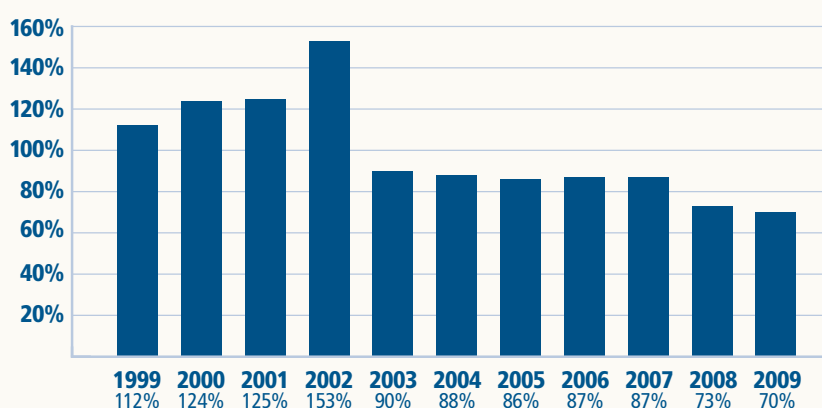
	Beds/Mats
Good Shepherd	40
Mission Services	58
Salvation Army	97
Wesley Centre	40 (mats)
Total	235

In 2009, the average occupancy rate in the men's shelter system was 70% which represents a 17% decrease since 2007 (see *Figure 2*).

This drop is in part due to several initiatives which have assisted men to move from the shelter system into permanent housing. These initiatives include: the City of Hamilton Hostels to Homes Pilot Project; Finding Home; Wesley

Figure 2

Occupancy Rate in the Men's Shelters 1999 – 2009



Urban Ministries' Claremont House and funding for another phase of the Good Shepherd HOMES program. Hostel to Homes specifically targeted people using shelters for more than 42 days per year and assisted men and women to move directly into permanent housing with ongoing supports.

Immigrants and Refugees

In 2006, the City of Hamilton was the destination for 2.9% of Ontario's immigrants. Over 25% of Hamilton's population is comprised of immigrants compared to Ontario with just over 28% (Hamilton Training Advisory Board, 2009). According to 2006 census data, the poverty rate for recent immigrants in 2005 was 51%; this being the highest rate of poverty for any group in the City of Hamilton (SPRC, 2009b).

There are two shelters in Hamilton that provide settlement services to refugees: Micah House which houses up to nine refugee claimants and SISO New Dawn Reception House which can assist up to 30 government sponsored refugees for a maximum 15 day stay. Refugee claimant families that cannot be accommodated at Micah House can access the Family Centre. If the Family Centre is full then families can be accommodated at a hotel on a short stay basis, subsidized by the City of Hamilton. The Family Centre and other emergency shelters are not set up to provide comprehensive settlement and integration services on-site to assist individual and refugee claimant families with their transition to Canada and the Hamilton community specifically.



Urban Aboriginal Homelessness

In Canada's large urban areas, it is estimated that Aboriginal people comprise 20% to 50% of the total homeless population (Ontario Off-Reserve Housing Trust Report, 2008). The Aboriginal community in Hamilton has been growing steadily reaching 13,735 in 2006, up 55% since 1996 (SPRC, 2009a). In 2006, the percentage of Aboriginal individuals within Hamilton's population is 2.8%. (Ibid). The Hamilton Aboriginal population is much younger than the general population with more than 40% of people under the age of 24 (Hamilton Training Advisory Board, 2009). Although, reliable HIFIS data pertaining to the Aboriginal status of shelter users is not available, some conclusions can be drawn from broader statistical data on urban centres in Canada. Aboriginal people are overrepresented within the homeless population as a result of poverty, discrimination and other barriers to safe, quality, culturally appropriate and affordable housing (Ontario Off-Reserve Housing Trust Report).

Family Shelter

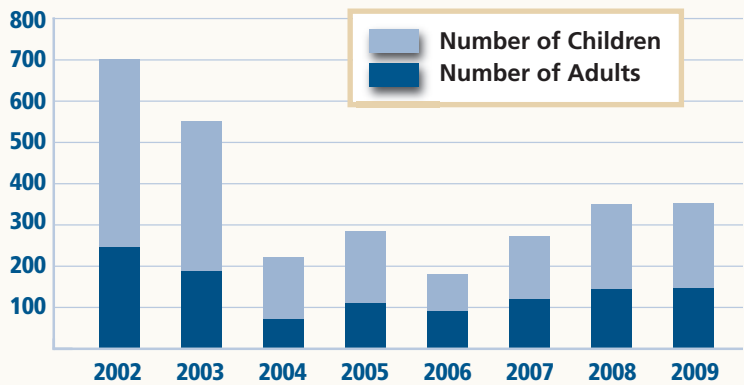
The Family Centre run by the Good Shepherd opened in December 2005. In 2009, 862 people were served at the Family Centre. Approximately 37% were children 12 years of age and under and 13% were youth between 13 and 17 years of age. Of the families staying at this shelter, 67% stayed less than 42

days and 33% stayed between 42 and 99 days. The average length of stay was 37 days. In 2009, 261 contacts (not distinct households) were received and turned away because the shelter was full and an additional 139 households were ineligible at the time they contacted the Family Centre.

Emergency stays in hotel/motels (see *Figure 3*) were used prior to 2005 to accommodate homeless families and households that could not be served in the shelter system. This option was used less often in 2004 and 2006, but occupancy began to increase in 2007 as the Family Centre began operating at capacity in part due to influxes of refugee-claimants.

Figure 3

Number of individuals staying in emergency Hotels in Hamilton, annually



Source: City of Hamilton, 2009

Homeless and Street Involved Youth

Hamilton is recognized provincially and nationally for innovative system planning with street-involved youth. A three-year evaluation of the work of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative (with support from the SPRC) has shown success in developing new pilot and permanent programs for street-involved youth. These include two new transitional housing projects: 1) 19 units for youth 16 to 21 years of age and 2) 15 units for young moms and their children. Street outreach in the lower city is another program recently implemented which targeted youth 12 to 21 years of age. Also, community agency collaboration with the child welfare sector has enhanced support interventions which ultimately result in better outcomes for youth transitioning from this system.



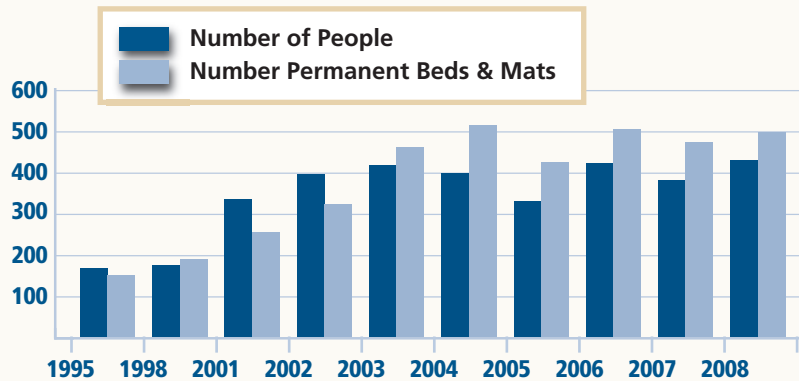
3.3 Annual Survey of Emergency Shelter Usage

The Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) conducts an annual survey of emergency and VAW shelter usage in Hamilton. Starting in 1995, the survey provides a snapshot of shelter usage for one night each November.

According to *Figure 4*, from 1995 to 2003 there were years when the number of people exceeded the number of beds/mats available in the broader shelter system. In 2003, 118 beds were added to the system. Since 2006, aside from minor fluctuations, the number of beds available and people accessing a shelter on one night in November has remained fairly consistent.

Figure 4

Emergency Shelter Use on Snapshot Night in November in Hamilton (1995 – 2008)



Source: SPRC, 2008

Table 5

Number of Shelter Users "On Any Given Night" in November (1998, 2001–2008)

	1998	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Men	114	214	243	235	226	194	221	176	187
Women	9	18	19	25	20	18	19	20	19
VAW	56	80	74	96	84	95	75	93	105
Families	--	--	--	--	39	--	63	61	74
Youth	--	19	34	31	21	18	19	13	22
Out of the Cold	--	12	26	33	9	15	22	21	30
Total	179	343	396	420	399	340	419	384	437

Source: SPRC, 2009

Table 5 provides information on the number of shelter users on the November snapshot night starting in 1998 and illustrates changes in the number of people year to year. As illustrated in *Figure 4*, the capacity of the system, or number of beds/mats also changed over time as new shelters have opened or beds have closed in certain parts of the shelter system. It is important to recognize that shelter counts reflect the number of shelter beds/mats and the shelter usage for a given night and not the number of people who are homeless.



4.0 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Beyond shelter use there are indicators of homelessness that reflect other parts of the housing continuum. Three indicators highlighted in this section include: social housing wait lists; vacancy rates in the private rental market and government sponsored affordable housing programs.

Table 6

Quick Facts About Social Housing				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of social housing units	14,692	14,692	14,692	14,692
Number of social housing units where tenants pay rent geared to income	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Number of active applications on the social housing wait list (as of March 31)	3,663	4,145	4,377	5,171
Number of new applicants per month	149	243	315	
Average number of people housed / month	87	91	98	
Number of people who have homeless status on the wait list (as of March 31)	312	433	511 <small>(as of Dec 31/09)</small>	
Number of people housed annually who have homeless status	156	159	187	

Source: City of Hamilton, 2007, 2008, 2009

4.1 Social Housing Wait List

In Hamilton, the supply of social housing has remained fairly constant over the last number of years. Conversely, the need for affordable housing has continued to grow. There has been a 41% increase in active applications for the social housing wait list between March 2007 and March 2010. Given the need for affordable housing, it is not uncommon for individuals and families to wait three to nine years for a subsidized unit.

Housing Allowances are a flat monthly rate of typically \$200 that is paid to a private or non-profit landlord to help bridge the gap between a tenant's ability to pay market rent. Programs such as these typically run for a five year period.

4.2 Vacancy Rates in the Private Rental Market

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) tracks vacancy rates in the private rental market as one indicator of the supply of rental accommodation. Low vacancy rates indicate less available rental housing in Hamilton. Table 7 provides a summary of average market rents and vacancy rates based on unit size for the past three years.

A balanced market is reflected by a 2 to 3% vacancy rate and Hamilton's vacancy rates remains above 3%.

Table 7

Average Market Rents and Vacancy Rates in Hamilton (2009)						
Private Apartments, 6+ Units	Average Monthly Rent			Vacancy Rates		
	2007	2008	2009	2007	2008	2009
Bachelor	\$501	\$508	\$509	6.5%	5.0%	7.0%
1 Bedroom	\$624	\$637	\$644	3.7%	3.5%	3.8%
2 Bedroom	\$762	\$775	\$767	3.9%	3.4%	4.7%
3+ Bedroom	\$907	\$900	\$874	2.7%	2.7%	3.9%

Source: CMHC, 2009

4.3 Affordable Housing Programs

Although senior levels of government no longer fund new social housing, there has been considerable investment, through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (COAHP) to create affordable homeownership opportunities and rental units that are below market rent. Since 2003, approximately 731 new



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rental units, at 20% below market rent, have been built or are under construction. Of this number, 622 units are occupied and 109 units are underway. The City of Hamilton through participation in the COAHP Homeownership program has provided 197 eligible low and moderate income renter households with down payment assistance to buy a home.

Housing allowances are another key strategy the federal and provincial governments have invested in. Phase I and II of the program provided 440 Hamilton households with more affordable rents.

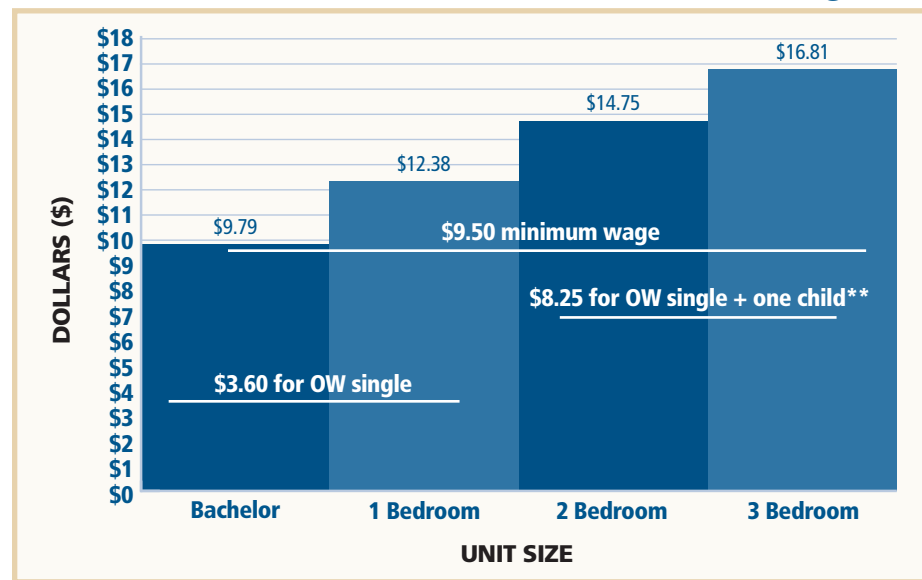
5.0 ACCESS TO AN ADEQUATE INCOME

Lack of an adequate income and an insufficient supply of affordable housing are the two main reasons people become homeless. Housing is the single greatest cost for most households. For people whose income is low or fixed, the cost of rent plus utilities can consume a large part of that income. This section continues to examine indicators of homelessness related to poverty.

5.1 Housing Wage vs. Minimum wage

The minimum “housing wage” is defined as the amount required for a one wage earner household to afford suitable accommodation for their family size and not pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent. In 2009, the gap between minimum wage (\$9.50 per hour) and the housing wage necessary to afford an average market bachelor apartment (\$9.79 per hour), one-bedroom apartment (\$12.38/hour), two-bedroom unit (\$14.75/hour) or a three-bedroom unit (\$16.81/hour) was substantial.

Figure 5



In this example, other government benefits such as Goods and Services Tax Credit and child benefits are included as part of the person or families annual net income. Therefore, a single person’s net income based on all government

* Housing Wage = The hourly wage required in order for households to rent without paying more than 30% of their gross income on rent; based on CMHC Average Market Rents for the City of Hamilton, October 2009 and a 40 hour work week.

**In this example, the housing wage is calculated based on social assistance rates and child benefits for a single parent with one child.



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Freeway Good Food Box

The Freeway's Good Food Box program is accessible to community members and costs \$15 per month. More information can be found at www.frwy.ca/good-food-box/ or call (905) 296-1424.



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sources is \$7,480 and the parent with one child receives \$17,160 (Stapleton, Millway & Chan, 2009). If these annual incomes are calculated as an hourly wage, recipients of Ontario Works receive \$3.60 per hour as a single person or \$8.25 per hour as a single parent with one child.

As noted in *Figure 5*, in 2009 an individual receiving Ontario Works is markedly below the housing wage necessary to afford a suitable apartment. A single parent with one child receives below the equivalent of minimum wage and is well below the amount necessary to afford an average two bedroom unit.

5.2 Food Insecurity

Table 8

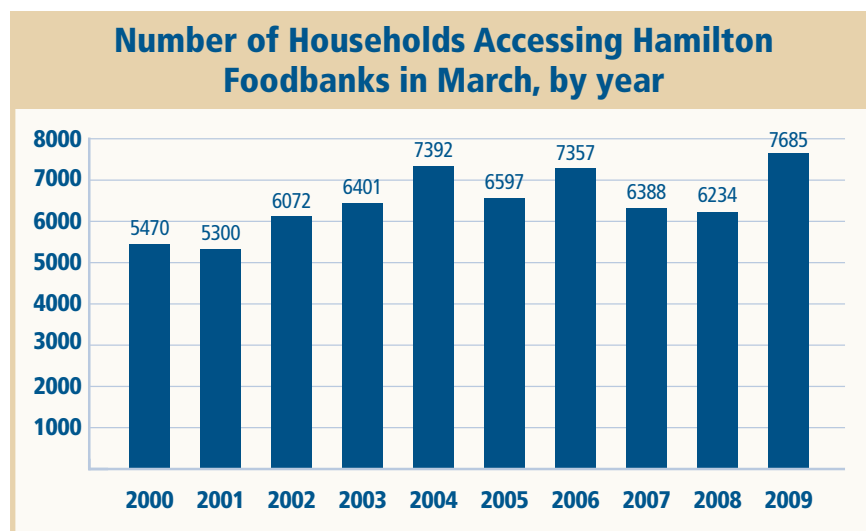
The Hunger Count Survey is completed each year in the month of March as it represents a typical month for access to food banks and allows for comparison from year to year. *Table 8*

Food Bank Access			
	March 2008	March 2009	% Increase
Adults	9,284	11,289	21.6%
Children	6,227	8,313	33.5%
Total People	15,511	19,602	26.4%
Total Households	6,234	7,685	23.3%

Emergency Food Action Committee, 2009

provides a breakdown of the number of adults and children relying on foodbanks in a given month. Food bank access in 2009 (*Figure 6*) reflects the highest total number of people turning to food banks ever recorded by the Hamilton Hunger Count (No One Goes Hungry, 2009). In addition, 51,276 individual hot meals were served through emergency food programs in 2008 which is consistent with data collected in 2007 (Healthy Living Fact Sheet, 2008). Without an adequate income to meet basic needs, many low income families are faced with choosing between paying the rent or buying groceries. Based on these trends, the Emergency Food Network recently completed a system plan to strengthen its capacity to respond to hunger in Hamilton.

Figure 6



Source: Hunger Count 2000-2008

5.3 Cost of Utilities

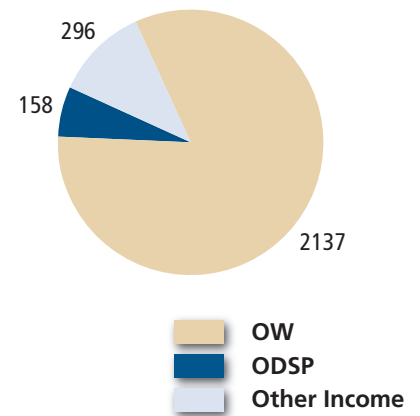
In 2009, 2,591 low income households accessed help for heat and hydro (including water) arrears through the City of Hamilton, Utilities Arrears program. This is an increase from the 2,238 people that were served by this program in 2008.

The Utility Arrears Program assists low income households with heat, hydro and water arrears that are putting the individual's or family's housing in jeopardy. The income source of households applying for utilities assistance included 2,137 households receiving Ontario Works, 158 receiving ODSP, and 296 low income households whose income are derived from other sources. Of the households seeking assistance with utilities, nearly 83% are receiving Ontario Works.

Due to increases in utility costs, the costs for this program have continued to climb. This was the case even in 2008 when the number of households served was nearly 10% lower than the previous year. In 2009, this program provided assistance to low-income households in the amounts of: \$811,186 in hydro and water arrears and \$367,863 for heat arrears.

Figure 7

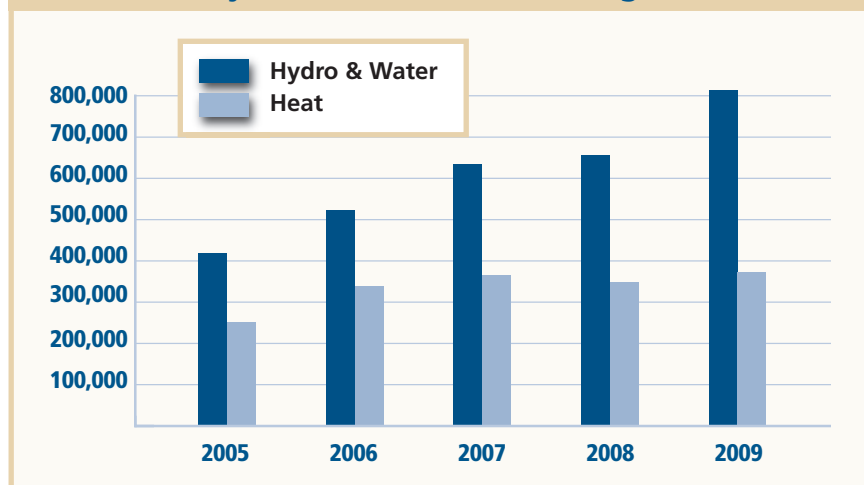
Number of Households by Income Source Assisted with Utilities Arrears 2009



Source: City of Hamilton, 2009

Figure 8

Total Utilities Costs Issued Through City of Hamilton Arrears Program



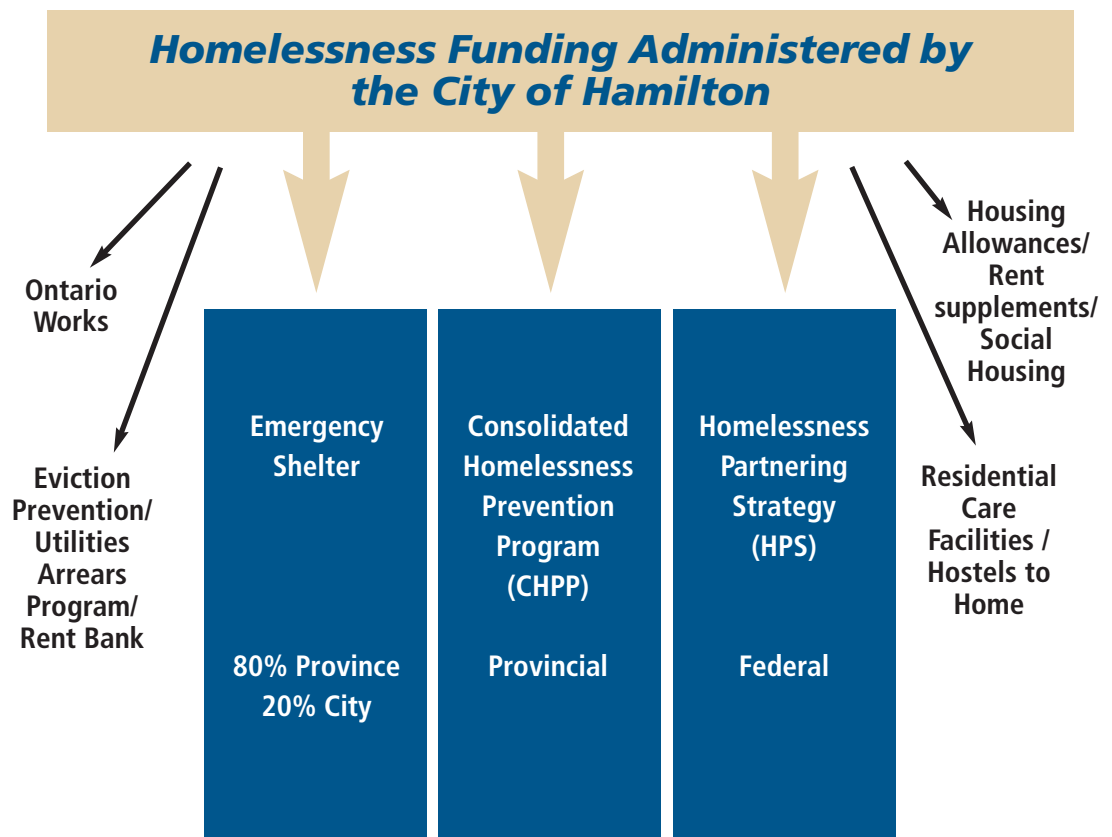
Source: City of Hamilton, 2009



5.4 Eviction Prevention

- **Hamilton Housing Help Centre** provides free information, assistance and advocacy for people with low incomes and people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. In addition, **Hamilton Community Legal Clinic** provide a range of free legal services to low-income tenants. This includes providing legal information and advice up to providing full representation at the Landlord & Tenant Board. The clinic also works with the community to advocate for systemic changes and law reform that will help their clients to obtain and retain safe, secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing.
- The **Rent Bank** is a provincial government program that the Housing Help Centre administers on behalf of the City of Hamilton. In 2009, the Rent Bank assisted 308 households facing eviction due to rent arrears. The average amount of one-time assistance per household to stabilize housing was \$745.31.
- As the largest social housing provider, **CityHousing Hamilton** together with community partners has taken a lead role in developing an eviction prevention policy. Since 2006, this policy has been in place to assist in preventing evictions for economic reasons from CityHousing Hamilton's rent-geared-to-income and market rate rental units. The eviction rate from CityHousing Hamilton's approximately 6,000 units is less than 1% annually.

5.5 Homelessness Funding



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The Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services

The City of Hamilton and local men's emergency shelter providers are undertaking a two year plan to improve basic shelter services and assist people to move into permanent housing with supports. Now in the implementation phase the key strategies are to:

- Reduce the number of emergency shelter beds for men due to declining occupancy rates
- Offer 24/7 access to all shelters
- Implement shared service standards
- Assist long-term shelter residents to move into permanent housing with supports through the introduction of a mobile case management team, Transitions to Home (T2H)



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5.6 What's New?

In the past several years, the "Housing First" model has been integrated with the men's emergency shelter system. The goal is to assist those staying in a shelter to move to permanent housing as quickly as possible and provide support services to ensure housing stability. This is a departure from a continuum of care model that is based on the assumption people need to gain necessary skills or receive treatment before moving along the pathway to permanent housing. The Hostels to Homes initiative which was profiled in the On Any Given Night 2007 report has proven to be a successful model based on tenant satisfaction feedback and improved housing stability for long-stay shelter users. With the Hostels to Homes pilot winding down, a new Integrated Mobile Case Management Team, **Transitions to Home**, is underway. This team will operate on the best practices established by pre-existing programs such as the Mental Health Outreach Team, the HOMES program, Finding Home, Claremont House and the Hostels to Homes Pilot Project.

6.0 LIMITATIONS

On Any Given Night is an annual report made available to the community based on data collected from various information sources. The report has several biases and limitations worth noting. The focus of this report is renter households and not low-income homeowners as a high proportion of renter households in major cities across Canada, particularly those on social assistance, face severe affordability issues (Jackson, 2004). Also, this report highlights a number of indicators and is not intended to provide in-depth analysis of any one issue. Further, there are other groups affected by poverty and homelessness such as seniors, people with disabilities and single parent households who are not profiled in this edition of the report.

7.0 REFERENCES

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The Social Planning and Research Council is recognized for their important contribution to this edition of On Any Given Night. The information and insightful feedback from community partners made this edition possible.

For this report and other research on homelessness please see the City of Hamilton's website at www.hamilton.ca/homelessness

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