



**OPTIONS
BYTOWN**

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

June 2009

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Our Mission

To provide supportive, permanent housing with rents based on income to people who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness.

To help tenants acquire the skills or get the services they need to live independently in their apartments.

To have staff and tenants collaborate to build a community that honours diversity, mutual respect and community involvement.

Organizational Overview

Options Bytown is a unique organization with roots that stem from within the community. In response to the United Nations proclamation of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, a coalition of concerned Ottawa residents and community groups joined forces to address the growing homelessness problem.

In 1989, the first building, at 380 Cumberland was established. While Options is responsible for the maintenance, repairs and upkeep of the three properties, the Ottawa Community Housing Corporation (OCHC) owns these establishments. There is a very limited, fixed funding that is received from the OCHC in order to maintain our properties. In 1992, the second building, at 375-379 Gilmour, was to follow.



380 Cumberland



Gilmour

In addition to the maintenance, Options Bytown collects rents from and provides services to 123 residents, who are tenants under the Tenant Protection Act. Most units are bachelor and one bedroom apartments; however, there are a few 2 and 4 bedroom units.

Options Bytown has established several Resource Centres in social housing locations throughout Ottawa. These Centres were established in 2001 and continue to support numerous individuals who are at risk of homelessness.

Resource Centres in Ottawa Community Housing Corporation Buildings:

- 251 Donald St.
- 2080 Russell Rd.
- 215 Wurtemberg St.
- 380 Murray St.
- 110 Cobourg St.
- 1030 Pere Charlebois
- 255 Donald St.
- 1455 Heatherington
- 125 McLeod St.
- 506 Bronson Ave.*
- 216 Somerset St. E.*
- 725 Bernard St.

Options Bytown provides support in a variety of manners to the individuals that it services. All residents have access to an on-site housing support worker 7 days each week. The presence of support workers provides residents with an opportunity to interact informally between each other as well as with the support workers. Support workers provide crisis intervention, mediation services, life skills training, referrals to addictions counselling as well as assistance with organizing a household. Moreover, they can assist residents with tackling personal problems or resources for finding employment.

Tenants also develop their life skills and self sufficiency with the support from Options Bytown. Tenants can become members on the Board of Directors or they can become involved with their Tenant's Associations. Programs and groups at Options include, the Options Bytown Women's Group, the Collective Kitchen Program, Gardening Group, Computer Resource Centres, Sewing Club, Home maintenance Program as well as peer support through the Tenant Liaison Program.

In 2004 a self-initiated Operational Review was completed and a Strategic Plan was established in 2005 to pursue development and service expansion opportunities. These efforts are ongoing along with the pursuit of grants to maintain Options Bytown's organization health. Most recently, Options Bytown has held a series of dialogues with community leaders to discuss ways to share our experiences in supportive housing, and its benefits, with the broader public.

Options Bytown also has a long history of partnership building with other organizations. They are an active member of the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network, which is currently working closely with the University of Ottawa in the area of program evaluation. Staff members also engage formally and informally with the Ottawa shelter system, Ottawa Community Housing, and mental health and addiction service providers.

Message from the President

It has been a real privilege to take on the role of President of the Board in this 20th year of Options Bytown operations. Options Bytown was initially formed by a small group of community members in Lowertown, who were dedicated to helping people who are homeless – a true example of Margaret Mead’s philosophy that a small group of people can achieve great things. If small groups of people can achieve great things, what could all of these groups together achieve? Our challenge as a sector, and one that we are all rising to meet, is to leverage the work of committed citizens locally, provincially and nationally to create a true movement around the importance of housing and supports across Canada. The work of Options Bytown over this last year, has focused on the leadership we can contribute locally through our partnerships with the community, with partner organizations, and with our funders. Canada is the only G8 nation without a national housing strategy. It’s up to all of us to contribute, where we can, to put this issue on the agenda.

As a Board, we believe it is crucial that Options Bytown looks beyond the boundaries of our organization, playing key roles in the housing “system” in Ottawa and advocating for the needs of our community. We need to acknowledge the dedication and leadership of our Executive Director, Lorraine Bentley, in operationalizing this principle – a balancing act with all of her other responsibilities. Lorraine’s role as Chair of the Ottawa Supportive Housing Network, in addition to her work on the Alliance to End Homelessness and the Leadership Table on Homelessness, situates our organization as part of a broader community. Ranging from advocacy to service coordination, the objectives of these networks drive forward the development of an accountable, integrated housing and supports system that members of our community can rely on. These kinds of systems partnerships truly exemplify that the whole is greater than the sum of each of the parts.

I want to extend my thanks to my fellow Board of Directors for playing such active roles this year. A number of our current initiatives include:

- A full review of all governance policies and related materials;
- The 20th Anniversary celebration, which will be held in the Fall;
- A partnership evaluation strategy, and;
- Longer-range organizational planning and expansion.

But I cannot thank the Board without thanking the staff and the tenants. The staff’s dedication, working on the front-lines everyday, is an inspiration for us. When tenants succeed, we all succeed. One of the things that has really drawn me to Options, is the tremendous sense of community. Board, staff and tenants are all a part of this community.

The Board has invested significant time in communications and fundraising activities this year, continuing to build and maintain a stable financial base to support the organization. We are extremely fortunate to be supported by community members – and we wholeheartedly extend our thanks for this. In particular, we are very grateful to Dharma Developments - Akash and Katy Sinha have, for five years, held annual charity events to benefit local housing initiatives, and Options Bytown was the fortunate recipient of this year’s “Urbana” event. Community and corpo-

rate support and engagement are must-have ingredients in ensuring there are affordable, adequate and decent housing and support options for every person.

Options has also continued to promote the “Housing Plus” concept through the Supportive Housing Network – encapsulating the essential elements of the types of on-site supports that, combined with affordable housing, are an evidence-based way to help people live stable and successful lives. Everyone needs services and supports to live in the community, regardless of their life situation. Housing Plus provides those services and housing for people who face social isolation and other complex challenges – individuals and families who may have very low incomes and serious, persistent issues that may include mental illness, HIV/AIDS or substance use. The right blend of supports reduces reliance on costly emergency, health and social services and, more importantly, helps people to be strong and successful members of the community. Most recently, we have been developing a social enterprise project, with the guidance of Causeway Work Centre, that will provide tenants with opportunities to build job skills. Options Bytown is also participating in a multi-site study, led by the University of Ottawa, that will evaluate “better practices” in support and service provision.

The value of this Housing Plus approach was recognized in the recent City of Ottawa allocation of one million dollars to provide supports to 100 units across the City. Options Bytown, in partnership with Centretown Citizens Corporation of Ottawa, is thrilled to be the recipient of 24 of these units. There is no doubt that more is needed – but we are more than satisfied to see this as one step towards eradicating homelessness in this City.

One final point: I must reflect on a discussion that occurred a number of years ago at a consultation being held on homelessness in Ottawa. Participants were having a dialogue on what our vision should be – to eradicate homelessness, to diminish it by a certain percentage, and so forth. Some people felt that the vision should be the elimination of homelessness, but recognize that it was not achievable. From our perspective at Options, there is no place for homelessness in a civil society – homelessness not only impacts the person (in ways which no one can truly comprehend unless they have experienced it) but it also has tremendous social and community costs which should be unacceptable to all of us. As a community, we must drive this agenda forward – it is the responsibility of individuals, organizations, and funders to work in partnership to implement the solutions to homelessness. The costs are simply too great if we don't.

Natasha Poushinsky
President



Message from the Executive Director

The year 2009 is Options Bytown's 20th anniversary. As significant as this milestone is, it is most notable in the fact that the services that our organization provides have become accepted as the norm and not the exception. Our community partners, funders and clients expect and deserve a high stand of support services for people who need help in order to live safely and independently in their own homes. We undertake this task not only by working constantly on improvements to our services, but also by creating new services to meet the growing and changing needs of the community we serve.

For instance, this past year, the staff have worked together to create an improved intake and assessment process. The focus is on identifying the needs of new tenants at the earliest possible stage, so that a support plan is in place both to ease the transition to permanent housing and to ensure that needs are being met in an appropriate manner. We are seeing results after only a few months, such as early response to mental health, addictions and health issues; as well as a marked improvement in community safety and stability.

One of the key features of this intensive assessment and early response approach has been the services offered through our partnership with Rideauwood Addictions and Family Services. We are pleased that the one year grant we received in 2008, from the federal Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI), to fund this service, has been extended for another two years and that Rideauwood will be continuing to provide staff training and on-going clinical supervision to our Housing Support Worker who specializes in addictions.

In addition to our partnership with Rideauwood, Options Bytown has been able to increase the range of services by partnering with a number of other agencies. For instance, staff meet regularly with the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Group's psychiatric outreach nurse. This is a long-standing partnership that contributes value and support to our team and to those in need of help. We also work closely with the various ACT teams in the community and with CMHA on a case by case basis. These are mutually productive partnerships in which each member contributes expertise to enhance the well-being of the residents and clients of Options Bytown. (A more complete list of our community partners appears later in the Annual Report.)

I would like to note, in particular, two special projects that have contributed to an improvement in the quality of life for the tenants and clients of Options Bytown. Firstly, as a result of a Board initiative to provide tenants of Options Bytown with the opportunity to develop leadership skills, a federal HPI grant was used to arrange for 4 customized training workshops for tenants. Feedback from participants was positive and the following accomplishments were reported:

- Confidence-building
- Team work
- Improved communication, problem-solving and interpersonal skills
- Listening and keeping an open mind
- Relaxation techniques
- Understanding the effects of emotions and non verbal communications on others

Also noteworthy is the on-going support we receive from a group of generous graduate students in the University of Ottawa's Applied Sports Psychology program. With their guidance in both individual and group activities, tenants are provided with tools for healthy living, such as stress relief techniques, ways of setting attainable and realistic personal goals and how to take charge of one's emotions, thoughts and behaviours. From all accounts, this has proven to be a mutually satisfying encounter for both volunteers and tenants.

We have also created a new service as part of the City's initiative to provide support services to 100 tenants of social housing per year, on an on-going basis. We have received a new annual allocation of \$200,000 from the City of Ottawa to work in partnership with CCOC, to support up to 24 tenants per year who are at risk of losing their housing. The supports will be provided by two case managers. Individualized support services will be offered in tenants' homes as well as in counseling space to be created in our buildings on Cumberland and Gilmour.

This service will be starting in a few short weeks and we look forward to working with the staff and tenants of CCOC, an organization that excels in all aspects of providing social housing in Ottawa - and last year's recipient of the Options Bytown "Make Homelessness History" Award. This working partnership will expand further, when the Beaver Barracks project is completed in the coming year and a further 6 clients of Options Bytown will be housed in decent, affordable and permanent accommodation.

I would like also to highlight the work that Options Bytown does in partnership with Ottawa Community Housing Corporation. In September 2008, our Board of Directors made a presentation to the Board of OCHC in an attempt to raise awareness of our on-going struggle to maintain the buildings on Cumberland and Gilmour that we block lease from OCHC.

In this lease arrangement Options Bytown provides OCHC with all tenancy-related services, property management services, rent collection, and building maintenance and repairs. We also oversee the building systems at 380 Cumberland that affect Salvation Army Anchorage, as joint tenants of the building. In return, OCHC provides Options Bytown with an annual allocation that last year, totalled over \$250,000 as well as being responsible for capital replacements.

In our presentation, we pointed out that our buildings are aging and that maintenance costs are rising by at least 10% per year. On the other hand, the annual OCHC funding increases, instituted in 2002, average between 2 and 3 per cent.

As a result of our presentation, discussions began on ways to work collaboratively with OCHC to find the necessary resources in order to best meet the needs of the tenants of Options Bytown. Our overall goal is to ensure that the building costs are adequately covered by the OCHC annual

allocation. At the present time, that annual allocation is falling significantly short of our actual costs to keep our buildings safe, secure and in decent condition for our tenants. We estimate that Options Bytown would need an additional \$168,000 per year just to meet our current maintenance and tenancy services responsibilities. With growing wear and tear and aging of the buildings and with more challenging tenancies, we expect our funding needs to grow even more in the coming years.

Since our initial meeting, we have received a number of positive responses from OCHC. They agreed to a one-time payment of \$11,000 to contribute to the cost of Capital Security's night time service at the front door. This year, OCHC increased our annual allocation by approximately \$16,000, which we welcome as a good start. In addition, Options Bytown, OCHC and the City Housing Department, as Service Manager, are exploring a way to apply provincial benchmarks for supportive housing to the funding formula for Cumberland and Gilmour in the hope of arriving at a more realistic funding amount. This work has yet to be completed. We very much appreciate the commitment shown by both OCHC and the City in working with us on this issue..

We work with OCHC on another level, as a partner in the Resource Centre Program. We operate resource centres in 15 apartment communities. This program has developed significantly since it began in 2000 when the original objective was for Options Bytown to play a major role in helping those people who were fast-tracked into OCHC units through the Hostel Redirection Program maintain their tenancies. (We house 10 people from shelters in each apartment community.) Since that time the target population has changed. There is an increase in the numbers of tenants with addictions and concurrent disorders and a growing number of new Canadians. Since 2003 more homeless people are being fast-tracked into social housing, as a result of the City's Local Priorities Policies. These and many other groups, require specialized supports to enable them to maintain successful tenancies.

Options Bytown offers a range of housing support services to OCHC tenants and community development initiatives in partnership with OCHC and other community resources that allow individuals and families to become more self sufficient in their communities as well as to maintain their housing. We use a holistic approach with housing as the focal point. After assessing an individual's specific needs that affect their ability to live independently and maintain their housing, we assist them to access the supports they need in the community as well as helping them to learn the life-skills they need on a day-today basis.

The Resource Centre Program is a unique model in Canada. We have received enquiries from other communities who are considering replicating the program. We have succeeded in developing a specialist housing support service as well as in-house addictions services to address specific issues connected to maintaining housing and preventing evictions. The contribution of this program is significant, especially in terms of value for money. The community, as a whole, benefits because people are receiving the help they need to become active and contributing members of their local communities. Ultimately, we are promoting independence and reducing dependency.

Last but not least, I would like to point out the role that Options Bytown plays in the broader community to promote the many advantages of supportive housing as a permanent solution to homelessness. We continue to participate in the University of Ottawa Housing Plus collaborative community project, along with other supportive housing providers. We are completing the 2nd year of the 3 year study of the quality of supportive housing in Ottawa. In the coming year

we will complete an evaluation tool that will assist supportive housing providers to identify the key elements of our service and ensure we are providing the best possible service to our tenants and clients.

Finally, the high point of the year was Urbana. This was a fundraising event, sponsored by the generous people of Dharma Developments. Not only was over \$17,000 raised for Options Bytown, but we were able to tell our story to people who may have been hearing it for the first time. We hope that the stories of the lives of Options Bytown's tenants will leave a lasting impression and that those people will pass those stories on to more and more people. Only by continuing to spread our message can the vision of Urbana be realized - that strength in community starts with decent housing.

Lorraine Bentley
Executive Director



Service Statistics 2008

	2007	2008
Number of tenants at 380 Cumberland and 375-9 Gilmour	121	121
Number of past tenants since 1989	589	614
The Options Bytown Waiting List		
Total waiting list as of Dec. 31, 2007	579	
Total waiting list as of Dec. 31 2008		1102*
Active waiting list as of Dec. 31, 2008		237*
<i>* As of Jan. 1, 2008 the waiting list was re-designed to reflect both active applicants and those applicants who could not be located after three attempts to contact them. "Inactive" applications are kept on the waiting list for 7 years. On average 40 to 50 of these cases contact Options Bytown in any given year and their applications are then moved to the "active" waiting list.</i>		
Number of new tenants who moved into Options Bytown	23	14
Number of tenants who passed away	1	4
Number of tenants who chose to move to more independent housing	16	14
Number of tenants who were evicted	11	4
Number of tenants who moved to special needs housing	1	1
Number of tenants who moved for other reasons	4	2
Vacancy rate	5.77%	5.01%
Number of applicants	279	240
Percentage of applicants referred by homeless shelters	18%	30%
Percentage of applicants referred by mental health services	19%	12%
Percentage of applicants referred by housing providers/advocates	14%	2%
Percentage who applied directly	49%	55%
Number of applicants who completed interviews with staff	168	120
Number of times tenants at Cumberland and Gilmour accessed services	1,149	1103
Number of completed maintenance requests at Cumberland and Gilmour	732	705
Number of resource centres in OCHC buildings	10	10
Number of Ottawa Community Housing apartment buildings served	15	15
Number of OCHC apartments allocated to former shelter residents receiving Options Bytown support services	90	90
Number of times that OCHC tenants accessed services at resource centres	24,222	40,461*
<i>* The notable increase in services is due to a number of factors. First, in 2008, two additional support workers joined the staff team working in the resource centres. One of these workers specializes in addiction. Therefore a wider range of client needs were addressed. Second, changes and refinements were introduced to record-keeping practices resulting in more detailed records.</i>		

Financial Report Highlights

For the year ended December 31	2008	2007
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Revenue		
Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP)	\$ 658,812	\$ 645,931
Ottawa Community Housing Corporation (OCHC)	264,440	247,020
Support to Community Partnership Initiative (SCPI)	-	56,477
Homelessness Partnership Strategy	345,436	172,817
Tenants' rent received	225,558	224,752
Donations	38,985	19,341
Interest and other	13,736	12,933
Other projects	3,924	25,878
Amortization of deferred contributions (Note 4)	4,937	13,849
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	1,555,828	1,418,998
Expenses		
Administrative fees and services	25,055	31,004
Amortization of capital assets	11,072	22,983
Bad debts	4,658	2,600
Board expenses and volunteer services	6,273	7,759
Insurance	7,902	7,508
Office	49,753	30,346
Other programs	3,924	-
Repairs and maintenance equipment	-	25,469
Repairs and maintenance	49,907	35,692
Salaries and benefits	1,087,755	988,013
Staff training and travel	20,880	19,813
Security	39,888	6,431
Tenants' rent disbursed	225,558	224,752
Tenant services	23,475	20,024
Writedown of capital assets	-	7,669
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	1,556,100	1,430,063
Deficiency of revenue over expenses for the year	\$ (272)	\$ (11,065)
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Community Partners

Options Bytown has a variety of community partners and corporate volunteer groups that assist the organization with accomplishing their mandate. Community support is an integral and fundamental component in ensuring that Options Bytown flourishes and continues to provide services to those in need.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS			
Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services	Ottawa Withdrawal Management Centre	The Good Food Box Program	University of Ottawa, Centre for Research on Community Services
Ottawa Community Housing Corporation	Entraide Budgétaire Ottawa	Immigrant and visible Minority Women Against Violence	YW/MCA
Lower Town Community Resource Centre	OCISO	Community Information Centre	Shepherds of Good Hope
Overbrook Forbes Community Resource Centre	Housing Help	Parent Resource Centre	Mission for Men
Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre	Action Logement	Youth Services Bureau	Salvation Army
Canadian Mental Health Association	Causeway	Schizophrenia Society	Cornerstone / Le Pilier
Carlington Community and Mental Health Services	Elizabeth Fry Society	Ottawa Food Bank	Center 454
Ottawa Inner City Health Inc.	Ottawa Inner City Ministries	Salvation Army's Money Wise Program	Center 507
Montfort Hospital	Centretown Community Health Centre	Women's Initiative for Safer Environments	The Well
City of Ottawa Public Health Dept.	John Howard Society	LESA Program (Lifestyle Enrichment for Senior Adults)	OASIS
Ottawa Police Service	Meals on Wheels	Algonquin College student placement program	Le Patro Community Centre
Housing Plus – The Supportive Housing Network	Catholic Immigration Centre	Causeway	Good Neighbours Community House
Ottawa Social Housing Network	Community Legal Services	Community Care Access Centre	Sandy Hill Community Centre
City of Ottawa Housing Branch	Elizabeth Bruyère – Psychogeriatric Services	Volunteer Ottawa	
CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEER GROUPS			
Rotaract Club of Ottawa	Service Canada	Deloitte	
Nortel	Canada Revenue Agency	Students of Ottawa University	

Urbana

Options Bytown was delighted to be the recipient of \$17,500 raised by Dharma Developments at the fifth annual URBANA. The event helps people to find and keep decent affordable housing - a goal which truly encapsulates the mandate of Options Bytown. This year it took place on April 16th at Saint Brigid's Centre for the Arts and Humanities. It showcased live visual art constructed around the theme of supportive and decent housing, by some of Ottawa's best local artists. Over 200 guests attended the event including City Councillors, community members, staff, board members and tenants.



Appreciation

The Board of Directors consists both of community members and tenants.

2008 – 2009 Board of Directors:

Natasha Poushinsky, President
Mary Simms, Vice President
Allan Rix, Treasurer
Mary Francoli, Secretary
Lew Auerbach, Past President
Brodie Berrigan, Director
Georgette Demers, Director, Tenant Representative
Richard Eveleigh, Director, Tenant Representative
Kim Kealey, Director
David Lo, Director
Larry Magnan, Director, Tenant Representative
Lisa Mills, Director
Holly Solomon, Director
Joan Weinman, Director
Lorraine Bentley, Executive Director (non-voting ex officio)

We are very grateful to all of our Board members for their ongoing commitment to the organization. The Communications Committee, chaired by Joan Weinman, has had a very active year in implementing our communications strategy, not to mention coordinating the Urbana event. Thank you to David for spearheading the work of our Governance project. Larry, Georgette, and Richard continue their work in keeping both Board and tenants informed of activities. Mary Francoli and Mary Simms are valued members of the Executive Committee in their new roles of Secretary and Vice-President. As always, Brodie has continued to lead development of our newsletters, a crucial tool in maintaining close ties with our community.

Of course none of this would be possible without the energy and dedication of Options Bytown staff. Staff are the people who do all of the good work of the organization, day in and day out – providing excellence in service to our tenants and to our community.

We cannot properly thank Katy and Akash Sinha of Dharma Developments, for selecting Options Bytown as the recipient of this year's Urbana fundraiser event. They set an example for all of us in how we can translate our professional work to meaningful social change.

We would also like to thank the businesses which contributed to the Urbana event: Paul Jubinville of Print Shack and Nathalie Ayotte, our translator. And, thank you to graphic artist Scott Acker for creating our wonderful 20th anniversary newsletter masthead.

The final word goes to our many volunteers who participate in our Committee work, run the computer resource centres, prepare Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, prepare our newsletters, teach sewing and crafts, paint our buildings, plant our gardens, deliver bread and so much more. We truly value their generosity, time, and energy.

Last but not least, thank-you to Mary Francoli for preparing this annual report!

