

Options Bytown is a non-profit supportive housing organization in Ottawa that provides not only affordable, rent-geared to income permanent housing, but also a variety of on-site support services to individuals at risk of homelessness who suffer from mental illness and other chronic health conditions, substance abuse, multiple barriers to employment and multiple barriers to housing stability.

Options Bytown : A Showcase for "Housing First"

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The Ottawa Leadership Table on Homelessness was established early in 2008. This body brings together community leaders from all sectors. The Executive Director of Options Bytown, Lorraine Bentley, is a member of this group. The Leadership Table is focussing on the "housing first" approach, based on the fact that long-term housing solutions for people at risk of homelessness must include appropriate supports in addition to a roof overhead. And what better way to learn first hand of the benefits of housing first, than to visit Options Bytown?

On June 3rd, 2008 Options Bytown hosted a visit from Mayor Larry O'Brien, Councillor Diane Deanes, and special guest, Phillip Mangano, from Washington. Mangano is credited with spearheading efforts across North America to bring together a variety of community leaders to find solutions to homelessness using the housing first approach. He asked tenants about being

homeless and how their lives had changed at Options Bytown. After learning that tenants refer to our buildings as "OB1" and "OB2" he opened a good-natured bidding war between the Mayor and Counsellor to support the creation of OB3, OB4...all the way to OB10! He encouraged the politicians to act on their bold offer to solve homelessness in Ottawa by building more supportive housing.



Phillip Mangano (left) and Options Bytown tenant

A Sappy Take on a Spring Tradition

In March of this year Options Bytown participated in an annual event around this part of the country. That's right, a visit to the maple sugar bush with all that it includes: sleigh rides, snow taffy, and an oversized overly delicious pancake breakfast!

This year, Options Bytown organized a trip to Wheeler's Pancake House and Sugar Camp in Lanark County where operators were preparing for a record year of maple syrup with almost 8000 tapped trees covering 180 km or pipeline just waiting and ready for the onset of spring.

Tenants, joined by new Staff Manager, Ann Smith, Jacques Rubacha, and Rob Hosie arrived at the sugar bush shortly

after 11:00 AM. There was a lot to see on site including logging exhibits with antique saws, equipment, and tools as well as some friendly barnyard animals, but it was the smell of pancakes frying in the pan and sausages on the griddle that got everyone really enthusiastic.

After breakfast, tenants participated in a sleigh ride around the property, followed by a quick trip to the sugar candy stand and a tour of the Wheelers Maple Museum before heading back into the city.

A special thank you goes out to Wheeler's Pancake House and Sugar Camp for making our visit so much fun and we'll see you again next year!

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Natasha Poushinsky	President
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Newsletter Contributors

Brodie Berrigan	Editor
Nathalie Ayotte	Translator
Lorraine Bentley	Executive Director
Kathy Lambton	Tenants' Association

A Message from your Tenant's Association Vice President

First I'd like to say thank-you to all of the tenants who showed great confidence in me by voting for me. It's been a great pleasure serving you. The Tenant's Association and I have many ideas for activities and different ways to serve you. We look forward to hearing your suggestions, receiving your support and seeing your involvement. Please come to the tenant's Association meetings, express your opinions and let your voices be heard. Remember your T.A. is here to serve you. Everyone is welcome.

I'm proud to state that our Casino Night/Pool Tournament was successful. Our hostess was our very own secretary, Brenda Irwin. Many tenants donated a lovely assortment of goodies. We established a small but enthusiastic group at the Black jack

table. Brenda was a creative, vibrant dealer and did a super job. Thanks for giving us royal titles for the evening and presenting lovely prizes. The T.A. appreciates your efforts. The host of the pool tournament was our very own Larry Magnan. After a lively competition, John Ford was the victor. Well done! A great time was had by all!



I'm also pleased to state that our potluck supper was successful. We've some very talented cooks here. It was a definite treat for the palate. I'd also like to mention our barbeque was a great success. Our very own president, Gordon Paquette, was the chef and did an amazing job. It was nice to see so many of our tenants gathered together. We had a beautiful day for it.

In closing, I'd like to say, I look forward to serving you, hearing from you and planning some fun activities! I also look forward to your participation in our Canada Day fundraiser. See you at our meetings.

Kathy Lambton

From left to right: Jeff Barclay, Kathy Lambton and April Reid.

Importance of Housing a Key Theme at This Year's AGM

There was a lot to talk about at this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on June 12, 2008 at the Courtyard Marriot in downtown Ottawa. As usual we received updates on past accomplishments and upcoming initiatives, but it was also an occasion to acknowledge the tenants and communicate the success of the Housing First approach to ending homelessness.

To start, incoming Board President, Natasha Poushinsky presented the second annual "Make Homelessness History" award to Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC). CCOC has become one of the largest non-profit housing agencies in Canada with over 1000 units in 48 buildings. Accepting the award was CCOC Executive Coordinator Catherine Boucher who, in reflecting on the changing nature of homelessness over the past 20 years, noted that "it really was about housing" and promised that CCOC "would keep plugging away." Options Bytown is fortunate enough to be working in partnership with CCOC on its latest project, Beaver Barracks which will serve as a

"green gateway" to the city.

In addition, the AGM was an opportunity to recognize the achievements of tenants Georgette Demers, Anne Whalen, Pierre Gauthier and Bob Haddad who were quick to acknowledge the impact a Housing First approach like the one embraced by Options Bytown has had on their lives. As Bob Haddad noted, "After what I've been through Options Bytown is like heaven. The stress free environment, a knowledgeable empathetic and extremely patient staff increased my joy for living and hope to continue to stay clean."

Like many community-based organizations the time and devotion of its volunteers are very important to its success. Executive Director, Lorraine Bentley, took the opportunity to thank the volunteers who make Options even more of a home including computer volunteers Christian Potvin and Damien Redhead, sewing club leader Linda Hayes and even the efforts of our very own newsletter.

All in all this year's AGM was packed as our community gathered to celebrate the year's accomplishments, as well as meet the Dream Team, a group of psychiatric survivors living in supportive housing in Toronto. The link between housing and homelessness was made clear. As outgoing President Lewis Auerbach noted in his report, "just as dealing with affordable housing does not solve the homelessness issue, providing adequate supportive housing does not mean that the issue of affordable housing has been dealt with."

Thanks to everyone who participated.

Catherine Boucher speaking at AGM



Profile of Lewis Auerbach, Outgoing President Options Bytown

When Lewis Auerbach started on the Board of Directors of Options Bytown six years ago, serving his last three years as President, he was struck by how involved the tenants were with the organization. Having tenants sit directly on the Board was "one of the most challenging and interesting parts of working with Options Bytown," he commented, "it keeps you focused on what you are doing."

In many ways, this statement characterizes Lewis (Lew) Auerbach's time at Options Bytown very well. Lorraine Bentley, Executive Director, described Lew as "the most hands on president that [she] can remember. He has always been available to attend our events and meet our tenants. He is guided by his sense of responsibility and in some ways, it is evident that he feels humbled and greatly moved by the challenges that our tenants face." For Lew, being part of an organization

means not only working for the tenants, but working with the tenants.

So it is not at all surprising that when asked what some of his favourite memories of his time at Options were he zeros in on the tenants and his relationship with them through the Board and on occasion at events throughout the year. If you probe him a little further his vast experience in both the public and private sector shines through when he talks about his role in, for example, the strategic planning exercises. In particular he mentions the impact it had on expanding the reach of the organization into the community. "When you bring stakeholders from across the city together to look at homelessness you make your challenge, other people's challenge, and that sense of collective responsibility allows the community as a whole to work together."

Despite this, it hasn't been entirely smooth sailing over the past six years. One of the biggest challenges Lew faced while on the Board was the goal of new development. "In the end," as Lew notes, "funding is key and we haven't been able to get the kind of additional funding that would allow us to be able to serve more people."

While Lew would say that he could have done a lot more with his time at Options, everyone involved with the organization, from tenants to staff, agree that his passionate commitment and inspiring record of service to the tenants of Options Bytown will be remembered.

You Are Needed!

Options Bytown is supported by the City of Ottawa Housing Branch, the Ontario Provincial Homelessness Initiative Fund and the Federal Homelessness Partnership Strategy. We're also very grateful to our supporters throughout the Ottawa community.

As a charitable organization, we welcome donations that will provide an enhanced quality of life for the tenants of Options Bytown. Donations help pay for communal dinners at Christmas and Thanksgiving, summer and winter outings for tenants, and lifeskills training to support tenants in their efforts to set goals and work towards stable, independent living.

YES! I am interested in volunteering my time at Options Bytown.

YES! I would like to become a Friend of Options Bytown, enclosed is my donation.

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