

Affordable Housing

A Position Paper by the Homelessness and Affordable Housing Working Group

Opportunities for Mission in the Diocese of Ottawa

As a response to the 2013 joint declaration of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, the Homelessness and Affordable Housing Working Group has been mandated to promote prayer, learning, advocacy and action on the priority issues of homelessness and affordable housing.

The Homelessness and Affordable Housing Working Group (HAHWG), has worked in close partnership with members of the Real Estate Working Group (REWG) and the Property and Finance Committee (P&F) of the Diocese to encourage the creation of affordable housing through policy development and concrete action. To facilitate this strong collaboration, a number of members sit on both HAHWG and REWG. Several meetings including members of both committees have led to the development of some innovative planning tools to benefit the Diocese in its assessment of surplus properties. An exciting outcome of this collaboration has been the success of a joint application for a SEED grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to explore models for transformation of surplus church property into projects including affordable housing. The Trillium grant will bring valuable additional capacity to the Diocese's efforts to explore, plan and pilot some models for use of surplus property in the future.

HAHWG has received support in the Diocese for its goals to facilitate the creation of 125 new units of affordable housing by 2021 and to engage parishes across the Diocese in these efforts. This is the right time to move forward with concrete policies and action plans to achieve these goals. The use, disposal of, sale and proceeds of surplus property will be an important aspect of successfully meeting the targets.

There are several compelling reasons to make affordable housing a top priority in determining proceeds of sales of surplus property. Some of those reasons are:

1. The Anglican Church of Canada and the Diocese of Ottawa have officially declared homelessness and affordable housing to be a priority for the church. In particular, the Ottawa Diocese has set itself a goal to create 125 new units of affordable housing by 2021, its 125th anniversary.
2. We are at a critical juncture in the church's emergence as a social justice leader in Canada. The elimination of chronic homelessness in our communities has been identified as a target within reach **in ten years** through the creation of adequate affordable housing. The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa is already known to be a leader among faith communities through its successful affordable housing programs and its breadth of involvement in local, provincial and national advocacy efforts to impact housing policy. We are being looked to for direction and continued bold examples which can be duplicated and adapted to meet local needs.
3. Safe, affordable housing serves as a foundation from which to address most other basic human needs. An individual or family grounded in a place they can call home is much more able to seek a caring

community, a vibrant faith life, meaningful activity and a role as a contributing citizen. A healthy, whole life starts at home. Those populations most at risk in our communities: indigenous people, seniors, youth at risk, immigrants and refugees, and those living with disabilities, are immeasurably less vulnerable when they are in safe, affordable housing with the right support.

4. The Diocese has access to real estate now in a way that is unprecedented. This provides unique opportunities and a responsibility to find innovative solutions that can be used as models of practice for Dioceses across Canada and for other faith communities having property that could be leveraged to develop affordable housing to radically improve people's lives.
5. It makes sense to invest the proceeds of surplus real estate sales into the management, maintenance and development of other Diocesan real estate. Many municipalities, including the City of Ottawa, have embraced such a policy. This ensures good stewardship of valuable assets, and it creates equity and investment for the Diocese.
6. A number of congregations are currently considering redevelopment of their properties to meet missional goals while ensuring sustainability of parish ministry. Including affordable housing as an element of the redevelopment of church properties offers a significant opportunity to engage in ministry that will have long term impact on the lives of parishioners and the communities they live in.
7. The creation of affordable housing requires significant investment, especially in the development period before government funding is secured. A housing trust funded through the sales of surplus property would enable congregations and ministries to take on projects which would not otherwise get a strong start.
8. There are a number of affordable housing projects in the early stages of development or consideration across the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa right now which need some investment of skill and financial resources to be viable. The most effective way to ensure the Diocesan goal to have every parish engaged in the issues of homelessness and affordable housing, and to realize the ambitious goal of 125 new homes by 2021 is to have access to the resources needed to get projects from vision to action.
9. Concrete financial targets are the strongest indicators of determined intent. When the Ottawa Diocese commits to a defined monetary investment in affordable housing, everything will change. We will have the capacity to move projects from vision to reality. We will have increased credibility at government and community tables where critical decisions happen. We will have the track record to leverage new funding and more innovative partnerships. The church's voice in the public square will reflect its significant contribution more fully.

Members of HAHWG are aware that the Real Estate Working Group is currently in the process of making significant decisions regarding the future of surplus church properties. It is our hope that the following principles developed by HAHWG will form part of the policy framework to be used in making decisions regarding use, disposal and sale of these properties going forward:

1. A top priority for new Diocesan property development will be the provision of affordable housing

2. When a church property or facilities become available, these assets will first be assessed for their suitability for affordable housing
3. When a Diocesan property is sold, at least 10% of the proceeds of the sale will be designated to be used in affordable housing projects sponsored by the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa
4. Affordable housing projects to be prioritized by the Diocese will be those which are initiated by and championed by parishes and ministries of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa
5. Efforts will be made to support a range of affordable housing projects located in urban, suburban and rural communities