



# Homelessness

## 2021 Value-for-Money Audit

### Why we did this audit

- In the past year, there has been significant attention on homelessness in Ontario, which increased during COVID-19.
- The existing data indicates that the problem is serious in Ontario. The 2016 Census conducted by Statistics Canada found that Ontario had the highest count of shelter residents.

### Why it matters

- Understanding homelessness in Ontario is a challenge because there is a lack of high quality, comparable province-wide data on homelessness.
- Homeless encampments were prevalent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting both the homeless and other members of the community who wanted to use the parks but were unable to due to open drug use and trafficking, increased litter and general social disorder.

### What we found

#### No Broad Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness and No Coordination of Programs for Homelessness

- Ontario does not have an overarching and co-ordinated provincial strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness.
- Over the last decade, numerous strategies were aimed at expanding access and supports for affordable and supportive housing, and addressing factors that may be the root causes for homelessness.
- There are no formalized plans, processes or procedures to coordinate with other responsible ministries to prevent homelessness for people transitioning out of provincial institutions.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1, 3

#### Little Data Collected About Services Provided or Quality

- Municipalities do not have enough information about whether people who are homeless are provided needed supports and services.
  - Municipalities do not collect system-level health and housing information about individuals.
  - At all municipalities we met with, the only way to determine whether an individual had received needed supports was in the case notes kept by shelter staff.
- The data collected by the Ministry was insufficient to monitor and assess the quality of services provided by municipalities and Indigenous Program Administrators.

#### RECOMMENDATION 5, 12

#### Service Providers Do Not Consider Need Level

- People most in need of housing placements may not be the first to receive them.
  - In Toronto, a person's level of need, such as the type, frequency, and intensity of supports required, is not a factor considered when comparing to others who need housing.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

#### No Standards for Shelters

- Neither the Ministry nor some municipalities have established standards for shelter operations.
- None of the municipalities we met with were performing adequate inspections of shelters to ensure health and safety standards are being met.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

**Funding Method Outdated**

- The Ministry's funding methodology for its largest homelessness program is primarily based on historical spending and outdated Statistics Canada data on housing need and other related information.

**RECOMMENDATION 7****No Evaluation of Program**

- The Ministry does not evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services provided with provincial funding to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

**RECOMMENDATION 12****Conclusions**

- The Ministry does not have an overarching strategy that effectively co-ordinates actions to reduce homelessness with other provincial ministries, municipalities, and their third-party service providers.
- The Ministry does not collect enough province-wide information or perform required analyses to determine whether program goals have been met, and whether it has made any progress in preventing and reducing homelessness.
- Municipalities did not have processes in place to determine whether people most in need of housing placements are the first to receive them.
- Municipalities also did not have effective processes to monitor third-party service providers and did not have sufficient consolidated information confirming whether people who are homeless are provided needed supports and services.

Read the report at [www.auditor.on.ca](http://www.auditor.on.ca)