



Homelessness in Ontario

Ontario Small Urban Municipalities Conference

May 1, 2025



Outline

1. Context about AMO's policy development and advocacy
2. Overview of the report and why AMO did it
3. Highlights of the report's key findings and take-aways
4. Outline next steps for advocacy to end homelessness
5. Answer your questions

Context

- Homelessness is a significant area of focus for AMO given the ongoing social, health and economic crisis that it presents.
- AMO continues to advocate for the province to work towards a goal of ending homelessness, starting with chronic homelessness, with federal support.
- AMO's structured advocacy originated with the 2023 Pre-Budget submission and campaign calling upon the province to address the root causes of homelessness with solutions that include deeply affordable housing, income security, mental health and addictions and homelessness shelter funding.
- AMO released [Homlessness Encampments: A Municipal Perspective](#) concurrently with the paper [The Opioids Crisis: A Municipal Perspective](#) to raise awareness about the intersection of homelessness and addictions.

Municipalities Under Pressure: The Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis



Report

January, 2025

Municipalities Under Pressure:

THE HUMAN AND FINANCIAL COST OF ONTARIO'S HOMELESSNESS CRISIS



HELPSEEKER
TECHNOLOGIES

AMO
Association of
Municipalities
of Ontario

NOSDA

OMSSA
Ontario Municipal
Social Service Association

About the Project

- AMO partnered with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) and HelpSeeker Technologies to undertake groundbreaking research on homelessness in Ontario.
- All 47 municipal service managers contributed to this research.
- The [report](#) has three main components:
 - **Part 1:** A New Look at Homelessness in Ontario
 - **Part 2:** A 10-Year Perspective on Homelessness in Ontario by 2035
 - **Part 3:** Investing in Solutions
- The final report was released on **Thursday, January 9th.**

Project Objectives

- Quantify the current scale and scope of homelessness in Ontario as well as potential growth without additional interventions;
- Identify and cost solutions at a provincial level to end chronic homelessness in Ontario to a functional zero standard, as defined by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness's Built for Zero: and,
- Identify the gap between current municipal, provincial, and federal investments and the required investments to end chronic homelessness in Ontario.

About the Project Consultant

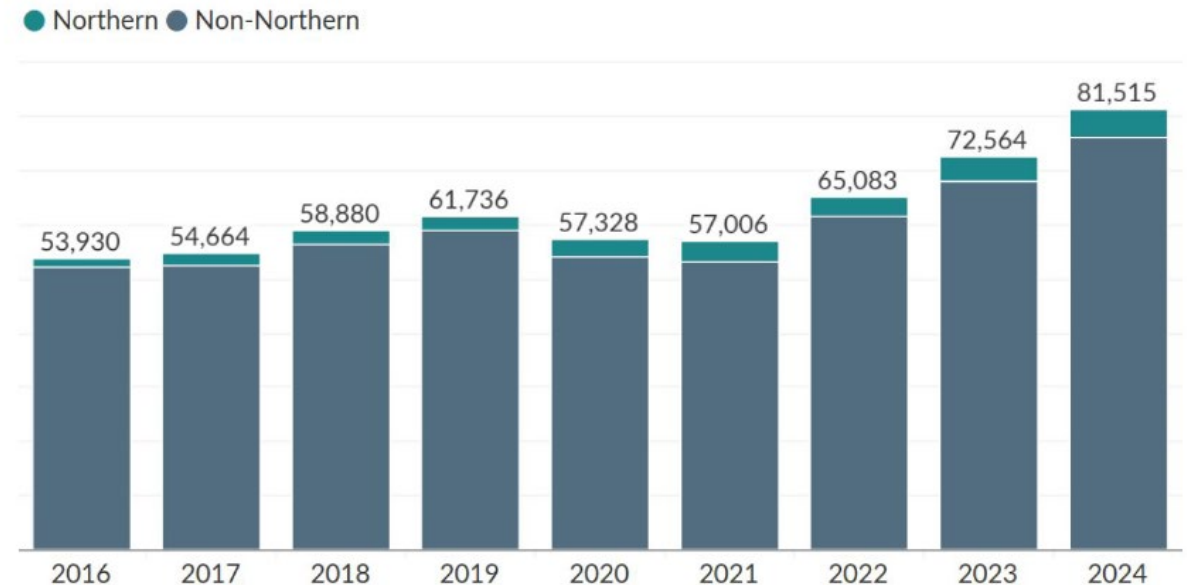
- HelpSeeker Technologies, the project researcher, is recognized for its substantial expertise in cost modelling within the realm of homelessness.
- Additionally, the organization has extensive experience devising strategies and responses to complex social issues.
- A key aspect of their approach includes using responsible AI and machine learning integrated with a human-centred design philosophy.
- More information about HelpSeeker can be found [on their website](#).

Part 1: A New Look at Housing and Homelessness in Ontario

The homelessness crisis in Ontario is severe and getting worse.

- More than 80,000 Ontarians were known to be homeless in 2024, a number that has grown by more than 25% since 2022.
- More than half of this total are chronically homeless, characterized by prolonged or repeated episodes. This is a critical indicator of the breakdown in the homeless response system.

Figure 1: Estimated Number of People Experiencing Homelessness in Northern and Non-Northern Communities, Ontario, 2016–2024



Adjusted

Missing values have been filled using additional research or statistical methods.

Scale of the Crisis

Homelessness is increasing everywhere, but fastest in rural and northern communities.

- In rural communities, homelessness has grown by more than 150% since 2016, compared to an average of about 50% across all communities.
- In Northern Ontario, homelessness has risen by an estimated 204% since 2016, more than four times faster than in southern Ontario over the same time period.

Different groups of people are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

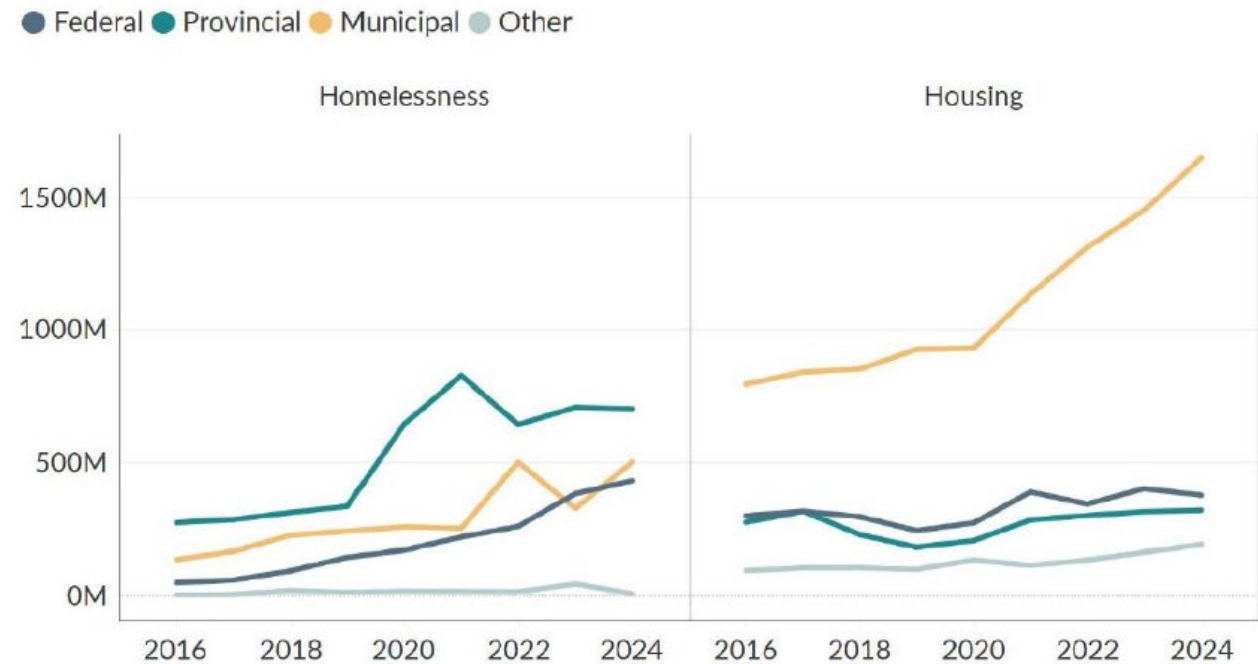
- While the majority of those experiencing homelessness are adults, nearly one quarter of chronically homeless Ontarians are **children (0-15) or youth (16-24)**.
- **Refugee and asylum seeker** homelessness has grown more than 600% in four years, while the number of chronically homeless **immigrants** has doubled in the same time period.
- Almost 50 per cent of the chronic homeless population in some communities are **Indigenous**, reflecting the enduring effects of colonialism. All orders of government need to work together in partnership and commit meaningful resources to advance homelessness solutions that are co-developed and led by Indigenous People, including those living in urban and rural communities.

Funding Trends for Housing and Homelessness

Municipalities have stepped in to address homelessness in their communities despite limited resources. The province and federal governments have not done their part.

- Municipal spending on homelessness and housing programs has sky-rocketed since 2020, growing to more than \$2.1 billion in 2024.

Figure 27: Funding Trends for Homelessness and Housing Programs by Source (Federal, Provincial, Municipal, Other), Ontario, 2016-2024



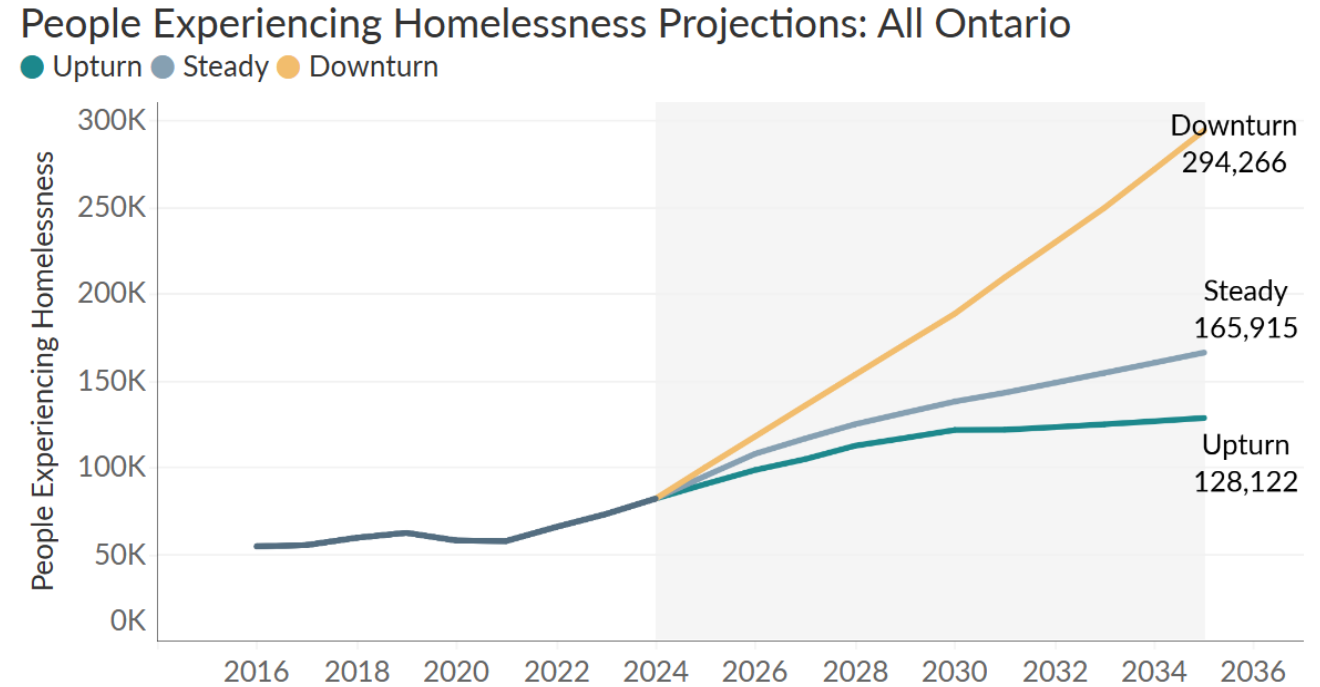
Adjusted

Missing values have been filled using additional research or statistical methods.

Part 2: A 10-Year Perspective on Homelessness in Ontario

The situation will only get worse if we don't take action.

- Without additional action, homeless will continue to increase.
- Even under a steady economic scenario, homelessness in Ontario would double over the next 10 years and could grow to almost 300,000 people in an economic downturn.



The scale and scope of homelessness described in this report should be unacceptable in Ontario.

Part 3: Investing in Solutions

To end chronic homelessness, we need a fundamentally new approach that prioritizes long-term housing solutions over temporary emergency measures and enforcement-based responses.

- To end chronic homelessness, the report modelling showed that **\$11 billion** over 10 years would re-focus investments into capital, increase focus on prevention, and create more than 75,000 new affordable and supportive housing units. This approach would prevent people from becoming chronically homeless by creating stable exits from homelessness.
- To tackle the immediate priority of ensuring all encampment residents are appropriately housed, we need an investment of **\$2 billion** over eight years to greatly increase the capacity of support services and supportive, transitional and community housing, and to move people into stable housing.

Through collective and strategic action, we can make our communities safer, improve quality of life, reduce costs and improve local economies.

Project Value

This research project has filled in critical data gaps related to homelessness and supports AMO and our project partner's work on this key priority:

- **Advocacy** – Findings will enhance evidence-informed advocacy for a Social and Economic Prosperity Review and the urgent need for solutions to the homelessness crisis.
- **Policy Development** – Insights will inform policy discussions with the provincial government (i.e., multiple ministries).
- **Strategic Guidance** – Providing Service Managers and District Social Service Administration Boards with data for informing local approaches and advocacy.

Goal Checklist for Implementing Strategies

Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis

Partnerships

- Consultant
- Municipal staff associations
- Stakeholders
- Steering Committee

Membership Buy-In

- Importance of having every member participate
- Role of champions to convey the importance of participation

Confidence in Data

- Validation of data with stakeholders
- Full participation

Communications Plan

- Clear key messages
- Media strategy
- Briefings with government staff
- Outreach to provincial elected officials
- Stakeholders supported and shared messages

Continuing Advocacy



AMO 2025 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission

AMO released its [2025 Pre-Budget Submission](#) in January 2025 before the provincial election and the Trump Presidency.

This submission built upon AMO's call for a Social and Economic Prosperity Review and the urgent need to reset provincial-municipal fiscal fundamentals.

To address the growing threats to quality of life across Ontario, AMO urges the provincial government to make concrete commitments in these key areas:

1. Infrastructure funding for housing and the economy
2. Reduced provincial reliance on municipal subsidies
3. Fixing broken provincial systems to address **homelessness**

On April 23rd, AMO released a [2025 Pre-Budget update](#) that continued this call within the new economic context.

Housing: Response to Tariffs

- The US tariffs and the uncertainty caused by them have already begun disrupting Ontario's economy.
- Investments in infrastructure and community housing have been an important element to past responses to economic downturns.
- AMO is calling for a stimulus investment of \$3.45 billion annually over five years, including \$790M per year in social housing for new capital development, capital repairs to existing stock, and acquisition and rehabilitation of existing buildings to protect Ontario.
- Investments in social housing improve our long-term productivity and economic resilience. They improve overall housing affordability and enable workers to live where there is demand for skills and labour. This reduces labour market mismatches and lost time due to long-distance commuting while improving worker spending power and well-being.

What's Next



Next Steps

- AMO will continue bringing together a range of municipal and sector partners to advocate for action to address the root causes of homelessness at the municipal, provincial and federal governments with a broad range of partners.
- AMO is also applying this experience to additional advocacy opportunities;
 - AMO recently launched a survey of all 444 municipalities to better understand how municipalities are contributing to health services in their communities. Responses are due May 2nd.

Thank you!

Any Questions?

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