



MEDICINE HAT REACHES FUNCTIONAL ZERO BECOMES FIRST CANADIAN CITY TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Medicine Hat, AB (June 2, 2021) – Working on the belief that housing is a fundamental right, the city of Medicine Hat can add achieving functional zero chronic homelessness to its list of social achievements, including as the first community in all of Canada to do it.

Medicine Hat's historic achievement of reaching functional zero chronic homelessness shows that ending homelessness in Canada is possible. Functional zero means there were three or less individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the community for three consecutive months. Reaching functional zero is a national achievement confirmed by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness's Built for Zero Canada.

"Through perseverance, progressive change, the development and a reconsideration of beliefs, Medicine Hat has become a community willing to take on the systems, engage in the difficult conversations and move towards finding a successful outcome for those within the vulnerable population," says **Jaime Rogers, Manager of Homeless & Housing Development for Medicine Hat Community Housing Society**.

In aligning with the standard federal definition, Medicine Hat defines chronic homelessness around individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and who have either had a total of at least 180 days of homelessness over the past year or have experienced recurrent homelessness over the past three years.

"Medicine Hat's groundbreaking work has resulted in an historic moment for all of Canada," says **Tim Richter, President & CEO, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness**. "Once again, this determined and focused community is showing the rest of us not only that it's possible to end homelessness, but also how it's done. Medicine Hat was at the forefront of many of the strategies that are now embedded in Canada's federal Reaching Home program including Housing First, data driven decision making, effective and inclusive local leadership, and developing a coordinated local homeless system.

Building on the progress and knowledge gained over the past 11 years, Medicine Hat made headlines in 2015 for becoming the first and only Canadian city to end homelessness. They defined this success by proving they had built a system where no one in Medicine Hat would experience homelessness for more than 10 days before they had access to stable housing and the supports needed to maintain it. Since that time, Medicine Hat joined the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness's Built for Zero Canada campaign and committed to ending chronic homelessness using CAEH's functional zero definition.

For more information, visit mhchs.ca

Quick Facts

- From 2009, more than 1,323 unique individuals (358 of those were chronic) have gotten a place to live, including 328 children through Housing First programs. An even greater number of people have been stabilized or housed through diversion and rapid resolution. At the same time, shelter use has reduced by 64% overall—including children in shelter and family violence.
- In 2015 Medicine Hat announced it ended homelessness using its own definition. What's different this time from 2015 is it has been confirmed externally by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness using Built for Zero Canada's definition of functional zero and the federal definition for chronic homelessness.
- A community has functionally ended chronic homelessness when there are three or fewer individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in a community sustained for three consecutive months. In this way, the community has demonstrated that they have a data-driven, coordinated system that ensures fewer people are experiencing chronic homelessness than can be routinely housed in a month. Medicine Hat is the first community in Canada to reach this milestone.
- [Built for Zero Canada](#) is a national movement of 39 communities working to end chronic and veteran homelessness as a first step to ending all homelessness.

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ADDITIONAL QUOTES:

"Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. That's why our government has been making historic investments and working with all orders of government to end chronic homelessness across Canada. Today's announcement is a testament to the real progress we can make for Canadians when we all work together. Medicine Hat is the first city in Canada to end chronic homelessness, but with continued investments like the National Housing Strategy and Reaching Home, they won't be the last." – **Prime Minister Justin Trudeau**

"My heartfelt congratulations to the City of Medicine Hat for achieving this ground-breaking milestone. What a wonderful example of what can be achieved when we all come together with a common goal to end chronic homelessness. Our government will continue to work with partners in Alberta and across the country through programs like Reaching Home, to ensure every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home." – **The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development**

"This is a remarkable achievement for Medicine Hat, and shows us that Alberta is on the right path. I commend the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society and the coordinated efforts of the many homeless-serving agencies for their hard work and passion to improve the lives of the city's most vulnerable. This accomplishment gives us all hope that we can replicate similar success in other cities and end chronic homelessness once and for all." – **Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Community and Social Services**

"When you have to step over a person lying in the street in your own city, you can no longer ignore the issue. From the idea of Housing First to ending chronic homelessness in our city, much work has been done to ensure that all our vulnerable citizens have a place to call home. Medicine Hat has become a beacon for other cities across Canada and internationally to put an end to chronic homelessness. The world is looking at us, and our successes, to find hope in their strategies to give people a hand up and a home of their own." – **Ted Clugston, Mayor Medicine Hat**

"Medicine Hat's success in ending chronic homelessness is about determined partnerships focused on the common good of the community. Our use of an innovative, collaborative and systems approach is a recipe that can be repeated across the nation." – **Glen Motz, MP Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner**