



LAWSON

Ottawa  
deserves better.

ALEX LAWSON FOR MAYOR

A plan to stop the slide into the streets.

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## 01 / OVERVIEW

# A management problem, not a money problem.

Ottawa's shelters have become dangerous. The drug crisis inside the buildings is a public safety failure for the people shelters are supposed to protect, and the disorder around them has changed how local families experience their neighbourhoods. That isn't a money problem. It's a management problem.

But the people at risk aren't only in the shelters. They're the people only one missed paycheque away. The renter who just opened a hydro bill they can't pay. The young mother whose landlord has given her notice. The senior watching every grocery run cost more than the last.

Their fear is what this election is about. They don't need kind words from City Hall. They need a city that builds enough homes that they don't slide into a shelter, and a shelter system that's safe if they ever do.

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## 02 / WHAT WENT WRONG

# Rents up. Charges up. Builders out.

### TWO-BEDROOM RENT

**+\$291 / month**

Up since Sutcliffe took office

CMHC Ottawa CMA, Oct 2022 to Oct 2025.

### ASKING RENT TODAY

**\$2,490**

Quoted to a new tenant, Q1 2025

StatsCan Quarterly Rent Statistics.

### LOWER-RENT VACANCY

**under 1%**

Where working families look

CMHC 2025 Rental Market Report.

### NEWLY BUILT VACANCY

**6.7%**

Most priced above \$2,000

CMHC 2025 Rental Market Report.

When Mark Sutcliffe took office in late 2022, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Ottawa was \$1,625/month. By October 2025 it was \$1,916. That's \$291 more a month, or close to \$3,500 a year, out of a household that very likely did not get a \$3,500 raise.

The city raised development charges anyway. In May 2024, council voted to hike charges on a new single or semi-detached home by 11%, adding up to \$6,220 to the cost of a home built outside the Greenbelt. The federal government warned in writing that doing so put Ottawa's Housing Accelerator Fund money at

risk. Council went ahead anyway. Ottawa priced itself out of its own market. Builders walked away. Housing starts slowed significantly.

Ottawa now has two classes of renter. The tenant who locked in a two-bedroom in 2022 is paying close to their old rent today, held there by Ontario's rent-control rules. The tenant looking for the same kind of place this month is being asked to pay \$2,490. That's roughly a \$700 a month gap, \$8,000 a year, between staying put and moving. The renter who is afraid of needing to move is afraid for a reason.

The headline numbers say Ottawa's rental market eased in 2025. The vacancy rate ticked up to 3 percent. But that easing didn't reach the renters who need it. Lower-rent units in Ottawa, the kind a working family can actually afford, sit at a vacancy rate under 1 percent. Newly built units, almost all priced above \$2,000 a month, sit at 6.7 percent, more than double the city average. The new supply is in the wrong half of the market.

Frontline charities have done the diversion work. The Alliance to End Homelessness, with the Shepherds of Good Hope, dropped the average shelter stay from 90 days to 11. That is people kept out of the spiral. The federal government has shown up with the construction money. Prime Minister Carney's Build Canada Homes partnership announced \$400 million for 3,000 homes in Ottawa, with \$150 million directly to the City of Ottawa for shovel-ready affordable units. While the basics of housing have continued to slip, others have done the work the mayor was elected to do.

Mark Sutcliffe is not a bad person. But Ottawa's housing problem has gotten worse on his watch and so has the homelessness crisis it produces. Good intentions are not enough. Outcomes speak for themselves. A mayor's job is to deliver, not to narrate.

## There is only one taxpayer.

### 03 / WHAT WE'LL DO

## Five moves.

#### MOVE 01

##### **Cut development charges in half for one year, immediately.**

A clear signal to every builder in Ottawa: build two- and three-bedroom rentals now, while the door is open. The target is a starting rent around \$1,800 a month for a two-bedroom and \$2,200 for a three-bedroom. Not subsidized units. Not a lottery. Real homes a working family can afford on one income, or a young couple on theirs. Homes where you can start a family. Homes that get adult kids out of their parents' basement and into a place of their own.

#### MOVE 02

##### **If the market doesn't deliver, I will.**

If after twelve months the industry isn't well on its way to building the family-sized rental supply Ottawa needs, the city will step in directly. Public land. Public financing partners. A shovel-ready package that stops waiting and starts building.

#### MOVE 03

##### **Fix shelter safety.**

A top-to-bottom review of shelter operations in Ottawa, with police, paramedics, and shelter operators at the table, on a 90-day timeline with public terms of reference. The drug crisis inside Ottawa's shelter



system is a public safety failure for the people inside the buildings and the neighbourhoods around them. Both groups deserve a system that works.

#### MOVE 04

### **Back the people doing the work.**

The Alliance to End Homelessness, Shepherds of Good Hope, the Youth Services Bureau, and Ottawa's frontline service network are getting results despite the city, not because of it. As mayor, Alex will treat them as partners, not press-conference props. The diversion model that took the average shelter stay from 90 days to 11 is exactly the kind of measurable result Ottawa should be scaling.

#### MOVE 05

### **Bring a delivery plan to every partnership.**

Ottawa's mayor should walk into federal-municipal partnerships with a delivery plan, not a thank-you speech. If the city wants senior governments to keep partnering with us, the city has to deliver on its end first. The federal cheques will keep coming when Ottawa shows it can put shovels in the ground.

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## 04 / WHY IT MATTERS

# Compassion needs competence.

The renter who can't make rent this month is someone facing homelessness three months from now. Every month Ottawa doesn't build a two-bedroom they can afford; that's a family closer to a shelter that isn't safe.

Compassion without competence is its own kind of cruelty. Ottawa hasn't been short on compassion. It's been short on results.

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## 05 / WHY ALEX

# A builder, not a career politician.

Alex Lawson is not a career politician. He's a homebuilder and an employer who has spent his working life turning plans into finished houses. He's run framing crews on Ottawa job sites, employed tradespeople, and watched up close how delay, red tape, and rising input costs flow through to the price of a home and the rent of a family. He listens to families and working people because he is one. He understands the real cost of groceries, fuel, and housing because he pays those bills himself.

Some will point to the fact that Alex is not a lifelong politician and doesn't have a polished political résumé. This moment calls for practical leadership, not titles. Ottawa's housing problem is, at its core, a delivery problem. Four years of consultations, plans, and announcements have not produced four years of homes. The city needs a mayor who knows how things get built and is willing to be accountable for the result.

## Every figure here is sourced.

### CMHC TWO-BEDROOM RENT

\$1,625 (October 2022) and \$1,916 (October 2025). CMHC Rental Market Survey, occupied-unit average rent for purpose-built rental, Ottawa CMA, October survey periods. The \$291 monthly increase and the close-to-\$3,500 annual figure follow directly from these numbers.

[https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/TableCategory?geographyType=MetropolitanMajorArea&geographyId=1265&categoryLevel1=Primary+Rental+Market&categoryLevel2=Average+Rent+\(\\$\)](https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/TableCategory?geographyType=MetropolitanMajorArea&geographyId=1265&categoryLevel1=Primary+Rental+Market&categoryLevel2=Average+Rent+($))

### STATSCAN ASKING RENT, OTTAWA TWO-BEDROOM

\$2,490 in Q1 2025. Statistics Canada Quarterly Rent Statistics, joint program with CMHC, asking rent on listings posted to major rental platforms. Methodologically distinct from CMHC occupied-unit rent. Used here only for the move-now comparison.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250625/dq250625b-eng.htm>

### ONTARIO RENT-INCREASE GUIDELINE

2.5% in both 2024 and 2025, applying to most existing tenancies. Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Used to estimate that a renter who signed in October 2022 at the then-prevailing market rate is paying close to their original rent today, plus guideline increases.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rent-increase-guideline>

### OTTAWA VACANCY BY PRICE BAND

Overall Ottawa CMA vacancy 3% (October 2025). Newly built units 6.7% (more than double the city average). Lower-rent units under 1%. CMHC press release, December 11, 2025; CMHC 2025 Rental Market Report, fall 2025 release.

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2025/canadas-vacancy-rate-rises-amid-historically-high-rental-construction>

### 2024 DEVELOPMENT CHARGE HIKE

11% increase, with up to \$6,220 added to a single or semi-detached home built outside the Greenbelt. Inside-Greenbelt rate rose from \$43,494 to \$48,265. Outside-Greenbelt rate rose from \$51,376 to \$57,596. Ottawa City Council vote, May 2024.

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ottawa-to-increase-fees-on-new-homes-by-4-700-to-6-200-1.6887905>

### FEDERAL HAF WARNING

The federal government formally warned Ottawa, before the May 2024 council vote, that hiking development charges would put the city's Housing Accelerator Fund money at risk. Council went ahead anyway.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-development-fee-charge-rule-change-1.7205504>

### BUILD CANADA HOMES PARTNERSHIP

\$400 million federal-municipal partnership to build up to 3,000 mixed-income homes in Ottawa, including \$150 million directly to the City for shovel-ready affordable housing pipeline projects, plus 8 Build Canada Homes projects approved for 1,100+ rental homes. Approved by Ottawa City Council April 22, 2026; announced by Prime Minister Carney April 23, 2026.

<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2026/04/23/prime-minister-carney-delivers-commitment-accelerate-homebuilding>



## **ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS DIVERSION PILOT**

Average shelter stay of 11 days for diverted clients, against a system-wide adult average of 90 days. Pilot run by Shepherds of Good Hope with the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa. Diversion Outcomes Evaluation Report released January 2026.

<https://www.sghottawa.com/2026/01/30/diversion-pilot-program/>

*Authorized by the official agent of the Alex Lawson campaign.*