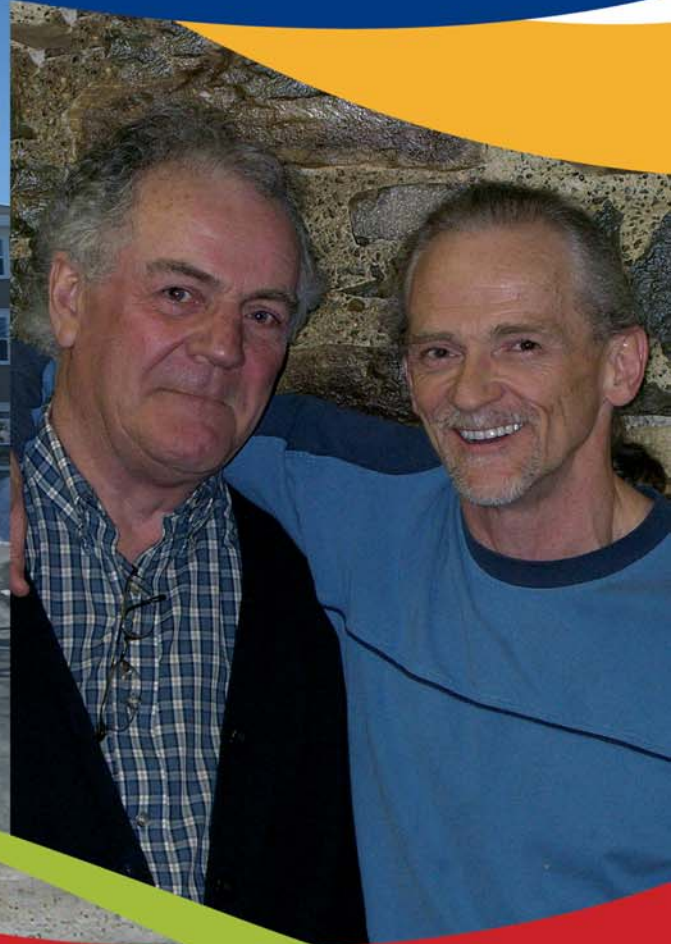




Growing Homes!

Working Together to Address Affordable Housing
and Homelessness in Our Community



Published by the St. John's Community
Advisory Committee on Homelessness

Newfoundland and Labrador 2007



MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is my pleasure to congratulate the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on their second edition of *Growing Homes*.

Within this publication you will find important educational information that promotes cooperation within the community to reduce homelessness and to provide affordable housing for all people in the St. John's region. This second publication is a remarkable milestone for *Growing Homes*, and represents the vast accomplishments that have been made in Phase II (2003-2007) of the National Homelessness Initiative.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador supports these very important initiatives and values our partnership. We look forward to future collaboration and success. Congratulations to the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness for their tireless efforts to ensuring that St. John's is a better place for us all to live!

Sincerely,

DANNY WILLIAMS, Q.C.
Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador



MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE MONTE SOLBERG Minister of Human Resources and Social Development



I am pleased to bring greetings on behalf of the Government of Canada on the occasion of the second edition of *Growing Homes*. In partnership with other levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, the community and volunteers, we are working diligently to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada. From reading the featured articles it becomes evident that these partnerships play a major role in improving and expanding the shelter and supportive housing spaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We are truly making a difference in the lives of vulnerable Canadians.

Canada's new Government realizes that homelessness is no small challenge, and that is why, with your help, we are continuing to take action. We recently announced \$526 million in funding over two years to combat homelessness and to extend Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) renovation programs.

We are providing \$269.6 million over two years for the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). This strategy focuses on a 'housing-first' approach to homelessness because we recognize that secure and stable housing is a precondition to self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society. The remaining \$256 million is for the two-year extension of CMHC's renovation programs to help low-income households remain independent in their homes, and preserve housing for people who are at risk of homelessness. I am confident that these investments, combined with the hard work and dedication of everyone involved, will bring about concrete, meaningful, and lasting results for Canadians in need.

I look forward to working with all interested stakeholders in their continuing efforts to make a positive impact on the shelter and housing needs and supportive programs identified in the community. I also hope I have the opportunity to meet with some of the inspiring people profiled in these pages and hear about their experiences first-hand.

Again, thank you for the invitation to appear in *Growing Homes*. I wish everyone involved continued success as we move forward tackling the challenges of homelessness here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and across Canada.

Monte Solberg
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development

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How the Community came together to address Homelessness

The Great Fire of 1892, the Tsunami of 1929, the Cod Moratorium of 1992. There can be no question that the people who weathered these challenges relied on a strong sense of community.

Today, a new and growing challenge faces Newfoundland and Labrador: the need for decent, affordable homes in our province. Once more, the community has come together – with remarkable results.

Community Leadership

The St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness was created in 2000 under the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). The Committee is co-chaired by community leader Marie White, former Deputy Mayor of St. John's, and Mike Bruce on behalf of Service Canada. The 27-member Committee brings together members of the community, including shelter and housing providers, all levels of government, the homeless, disability rights activists and others. "It's only because the people around the table really understood the community at large and its needs that we do such a good job," says White. "The inclusion of homeless people on our committee brought a face to our work."

Community Priorities

The Committee oversees the St. John's Community Plan for Addressing Homelessness. The key priorities of the plan include: increased shelter space and alternative shelter options, supportive transitional housing, human resources and community development, and coordination of resources. "I think the people around the table had their priorities right from the get-go," says Service Canada program facilitator Bob Abbott. "They prioritized based on the needs of the community, not the needs of their respective organizations."

"We don't move unless the community supports it," says the Committee's community development worker Bruce Pearce. "The program is community-driven."

National Leadership

Since 1999, the Government of Canada has provided over \$13 million in funding and properties through the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) to address homelessness in Newfoundland and Labrador. The program has invested \$1.2 billion across Canada.

The NHI has proven to be effective and popular, bringing people together to develop local community plans to address homelessness, and funding initiatives that address local priorities. The United Nations recognized the program as an international best practice in 2002 because of its ground-up approach. Service Canada administers the program in direct consultation with communities.

Service Canada's Mike Bruce says, "You serve your minister best when you serve your community first. The experts are the people who live in communities. The rest of us facilitate the work to make it happen. That's what this model is all about and that's why it works so well."

Provincial Leadership

In addition to capital funding, the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador plays a critical role in supporting the sustainability of community-based NHI projects by investing in their operations. "The NHI funds the capital side, but in order to do that, the project must be financially sustainable. And without exception the provincial government has supported the programming vision with real dollars," says Pearce.

Municipal and Corporate Leadership

Municipal government also plays a key role by providing planning advice and permit approvals for NHI projects. The City of St. John's has donated land and waived property taxes and permit fees for homelessness projects, and is currently completing an affordable housing action plan of its own. "Information is power," says Mike Bruce, "and that's why we've partnered with the City and

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St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness: (Standing, L to R) Roxie Wheaton/Human Resources, Labour & Employment, Cynthia King/NL Housing Corporation, Gerry Kennedy/NL Housing Corporation, Mike Bruce/Service Canada, Helen Handrigan/City of St. John's, Mary Marshall, Brian Martin/Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Bobbie Boland, Bob Abbott/Service Canada, Moyra Buchan/Stella Burry Community Services, Bruce Pearce/Community Development Worker, Gail Tobin/Iris Kirby House, Renee Spurrell/Correctional Services Canada, Amy Percy/St. John's Community Centre Alliance, Sheldon Pollett/Choices for Youth, Wanda Burt/Salvation Army. (Seated, L to R) Wendolyn Schlamp-Hickey/St. John's Status of Women Centre, Anne Stone, Allison Ivany/Association for New Canadians, Michelle Butcher/AIDS Committee of NL, Myrtle Banfield/St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

For the past 40 years, Newfoundland Labrador Housing (Housing) has been and continues to be committed and willing to listen, learn and work with all community groups and levels of government to find the best possible solutions that will help to provide safe and affordable housing for those most in need throughout our province.

This Government recognizes and supports the need for safe, affordable and sustainable housing and continues to actively address housing issues. An average of \$66 million is allocated to support social rental housing programs in Newfoundland Labrador each year. The province's Provincial Home Repair Program (PHRP), offered through Newfoundland Labrador Housing, annually provides approximately \$7.5 million to over 1,800 households province-wide. Through its various programs, community partnerships, and by working in close co-ordination with various provincial government departments, Housing will continue to provide the best possible assistance to people in the province who are at risk for homelessness.

On behalf of the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, we wish all the partners involved in this year's "Growing Homes" publication much success.



Hon. Shawn Skinner
Minister Human Resources, Labour and Employment
Minister Responsible for Housing



The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to transforming Newfoundland and Labrador over a ten year period from a province with the most poverty to a province with the least.



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CMHC on the housing action plan. We need solid evidence to support what we're going to do." Meanwhile, corporations such as the Iron Ore Company of Canada, Petro Canada and Zellers have also made significant contributions to several projects.

Challenges Overcome

Before the National Homelessness Initiative, the community had limited capacity to address homelessness. Today, as a result of NHI projects, the community and its partners have greater capacity to deliver solutions. Governments, planners, architects, builders, social workers and affordable housing staff also have a better understanding of how to tackle homelessness.

Challenges remain, however. For every person who has been helped by the NHI, there are still more requiring decent housing and supports, and the needs continue to change and grow.

Community organizations working to provide solutions still face red tape, the challenges of developing new capital projects, and the need to create innovative, responsive services that are financially-sustainable. "The capacity that has been built has to be entrenched," says White. "There needs to be additional capacity built, particularly at the provincial level, to consolidate housing policy and housing-related services to address homelessness."

Future Plans

The NHI is being replaced by the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy, which runs until March 2009. "The community needs to stay in the driver's seat alongside government," says Pearce. "And I would respectfully say to the federal minister: 'Look at the value this program is creating. It's one of the best-managed that the federal government has. It's producing some of the best results. Don't wait until it expires to decide its fate – announce plans to renew it within the next year, and make it a long-term commitment, preferably five years.'"

Meanwhile, Mike Bruce says the Committee will continue to work to address homelessness in St. John's and beyond. "We'd like to really reach out to other places outside of St. John's."

Abbott sees opportunities under the new program to assist communities in new ways. "After we put a roof over their heads, how can we help them move to the next level, with support. That would be the blue sky piece for me – the supports."

White says more resources are needed for seniors and persons with disabilities. She says these needs could be met through a provincial supportive and affordable housing strategy.

Making A Difference

White thinks the NHI work undertaken in St. John's will endure the test of time because it's making a difference in people's lives.

"We know that what's been created and built is nice-looking, is environmentally friendly, is responsive to the needs. On a capital infrastructure level we can say, 'Wow! We can be proud of what we see.'"

"But it's not just about the immediate impacts," says White. "It's about the long term impacts on the populations who are being served. It's about the fact that the community came together to say, 'Here are the people who need us the most, and here are the people we are going to serve.' Because of what has happened, we will have youth who will have a life, we will have women who are safe, and we will have aboriginal people who will feel that they still have connections to their own communities. It's that kind of feel-good stuff." ■

VISIT US ONLINE!

Learn more about *Growing Homes* and our community's plans for decent, affordable housing and shelter services:

www.growinghomes.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Raising the Roof



Seniors living on fixed incomes, working families facing rent hikes, runaways seeking handouts on the streets, and children whose parents have lost their jobs—these are just some of the faces of homelessness in our province.

Finding Solutions

As the only national charity solely dedicated to finding long-term solutions to homelessness, Raising the Roof was formed in 1997 in response to a growing awareness that homelessness in Canada had reached crisis proportions. Since then, over two million dollars has been raised to help more than 90 community agencies across Canada address homelessness.

Toque Campaign

Each winter Raising the Roof's sells distinctive toques throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to raise awareness and funds to address homelessness locally. Proceeds from the campaign go to the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, Choices for Youth, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, the Salvation Army and Stella Burry Community Services.



Daniel, Ian and Hannah Browne pose in RTR toques, excited about their pancake breakfast!

In St. John's, toques can be purchased from the Community Youth Network and across the city at Royal Bank and Scotia Bank branches, the Home Depot, Auntie Crae's, and Downhome Shoppe and Gallery.

Radio Action

Raising the Roof and CBC Radio's Morning Show host a high profile Community Pancake Breakfast every February at St. John's Battery Hotel. The 2007 event attracted 600 people, raising \$4,300 and reaching out to people across the city through a live radio broadcast with stories, performances and interviews about homelessness.

Youth Works

A three year initiative launched by Raising The Roof in 2006, Youth Works aims to break the cycle of homelessness among youth by investing in promising community-led projects across Canada.

Choices for Youth in St. John's is one of three Youth Works funding recipients, and is using the funds to develop new supportive housing, employment and education services.

Youth Works also sponsored Canada's first national youth homelessness conference,

— Dave Murphy

Beyond the Street, hosted in St. John's in September 2006.

Tools for Schools

The Youth Engagement Program educates young people about homelessness and helps them get involved in their communities through tools like *No Place Like Home*, an educational booklet for teachers, students and youth leaders at www.raisingtheroof.org.

Spotlight on Hidden Homelessness

In many communities like St. John's, the face of homelessness is often hidden from view. Raising the Roof is helping Canadians better understand hidden homelessness through thought-provoking television and print ads. Find out more at www.hiddenhomeless.ca.

Sharing What We've Learned

Raising the Roof's interactive Shared Learnings web-

site—www.sharedlearnings.org—provides practical tools, resources and information for frontline staff and volunteers working to address homelessness in our communities.

You Can Make A Difference

Raising the Roof harnesses the power of people. "None of this would happen without the support of volunteers, the members of our corporate community, and the individuals who work on the frontlines," says Raising The Roof's Newfoundland and Labrador Coordinator Dave Murphy. "One person can make a significant impact." ■

CBC's Annual Community Pancake Breakfast



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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The Salvation Army St. John's



THE NEW WISEMAN CENTRE

Making A Difference

Every morning Tobias Keats meets with the staff and residents of the new *Wiseman Centre*. Immediately after, he takes care of building maintenance chores. By 11am he's got his sleeves rolled up, putting his renowned culinary skills to work on a hot, delicious lunch for everyone.

"The last two weeks have been unbelievable," says Keats, a temporary resident of the new *Wiseman Centre*. "The staff here are awesome. They really care."

The Courage to Change

When the Salvation Army first opened its doors to the *Wiseman Centre* in 1986, its mandate was relatively simple. The building on Water Street West would provide food and temporary shelter to the homeless men of St. John's.

Yet despite the Army's best intentions, the issues surrounding the city's homeless men proved to be powerfully complex – with some 'shelter' residents becoming permanent because there was nowhere else to live. Designed only to meet the men's most basic needs, the *Wiseman Centre* would survive two more decades before both the building and its mandate were in need of major repair.

After an external review was ordered and a final report, *Casting the Net*, was written in 2002, the Salvation Army has pursued a new direction in meeting the needs of homeless men.

And as men like Keats are determined to prove, the new direction is making a difference.

Out of the Ashes

Since closing its doors in 2005 and temporarily relocating the *Wiseman Centre* program to Springdale Street, the Salvation Army collaborated with the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness and to write a capital funding proposal to the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI).

With \$1,397,500 in funding secured from NHI, \$575,000 from Human Resources and Employment, \$750,000 from the Canada-NL Affordable Housing Program and \$240,000 from the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, the 100-year-old Water Street West building was granted a \$3-million facelift.

With utmost care taken to maintain the building's beautiful historic features, the new *Wiseman Centre* has emerged a state-of-the-art facility, with a new extension, 20 short-term shelter units and 10 longer-term supportive living apartments.

The Centre's new shelter is designed to provide housing for transient and homeless men ages 30-65. The 20 new rooms will be used for short-term stay to a maximum of two months.

The supportive housing program provides 10 affordable housing units for men needing longer-term housing, including men with mental illness.

The new program focuses on empowering men through life skills training and after-care supports. The new team includes an onsite psychologist, social worker, life-skills coach, and outreach worker.

Shelter resident, Dave, once a wealthy and respected tradesman, is currently undergoing treatment for addictions.

"I finally found the support and encouragement I needed here," says Dave.

Empowerment in Practice

According to Executive Director Harold Bungay, the new *Wiseman Centre* has also updated its approach to helping people.

"In the former building, we were more or less doing things for people," says Bungay. "We are now looking at the capacity for people to help themselves."

Bungay says their new empowerment approach is designed to ensure men learn "to thrive in the community, rather than just survive."

"We seek to address why they are homeless, and then help them to engage in positive, long-term changes for their lives," says Bungay.

Empowerment in Design

The new, improved facility is also designed with efficiency and empowerment in mind.

The new *Wiseman Centre* will have a library, meditation room, and job search centre with a computer and Internet access. All common areas are also equipped with residential style appliances and cleaning supplies.

"We don't hire cleaners or cooks, they do all that themselves," says Bungay.

And, while common areas are spacious and well furnished, each of the resident's rooms is equipped with a bathroom, microwave, fridge and dining table.

The Springdale Properties

As a result of *Casting the Net* and lack of funding, the Salvation Army shut down two of its former downtown ministries in 2003, using one of the buildings to temporarily house and accommodate the men of the *Wiseman Centre*.

Recently, the Salvation Army received \$40,000 from the National Homelessness Initiative to explore redeveloping these Springdale Street properties. Bungay says, once the new *Wiseman Centre's* operations are up and running smoothly, the Army will direct its attention to these properties.

Meanwhile as the Army works to help Tobias Keats find an affordable apartment, Keats says he's intent on improving his life for the better.

"In the past I've gotten sidetracked," says Keats. "This time I plan to take care of myself." ■

"I finally found the support and encouragement I needed here."

– Dave, Wiseman Centre Resident

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Getting INNOVATIVE with Building Designs

Affordable housing today is built with creativity and passion to meet the housing needs of real people. Energy efficiency and accessibility are areas in which Newfoundland and Labrador's affordable housing sector is breaking new ground.

Affordable, Efficient and Green

Three nonprofit agencies in St. John's have led the way to maximizing the energy efficiency of their new shelter and supportive housing projects through the Commercial Building Incentive Program (CBIP).

"It's different," says Energy Consultant, Dr. Rocio Rangel-Ruiz. "Usually the ones to take the lead are in the private sector. The nonprofits here are actually leading the way toward a more environmentally-friendly architecture."

Choices For Youth, Stella Burry Community Services' Rawlins Cross project, and the Tommy Sexton Centre have all received grants from Natural Resources Canada to boost energy efficiency.

According to Rangel-Ruiz, all three buildings have saved more than 25% annually with energy innovations when compared to their "business as usual" prototypes.

A closer look at the numbers reveals just how much money energy efficiency can save in the long-term. The first building in St. John's to avail of CBIP, Choices For Youth, received a grant of \$14,000. Within two years, the energy efficiency improvements had paid for themselves in reduced costs. Every year, the energy savings continue — at \$8000 annually. Likewise, CBIP energy efficiency improvements to Stella Burry Community Services (31% better than the reference case) led to \$9200 savings annually and Tommy Sexton Centre (also 25% better than the reference case) to \$5200 savings annually.

"The nonprofits here are actually leading the way toward a more environmentally-friendly architecture."

– Dr. Rocio Rangel-Ruiz

Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director of Choices for Youth says that the savings mean more money for other services.

"Not only is it good for the environment, it saves money, which of course is not in abundance with nonprofits," says Pollett. "This in turn frees up money for other areas of need."

Other nonprofits have followed Choices for Youth's lead and used this approach to permanently reduce energy costs in their homelessness initiatives.

The newly improved Salvation Army Wiseman Centre features maximum insulation and a continuous air flow exchanger. Architects are also incorporating energy efficiency into the designs of Marguerite's Place, a new women's shelter being built by the St. John's Status of Women.

Meanwhile creative energy efficient designs are becoming increasingly popular with nonprofits. Stella Burry Community Services plans to add a rooftop garden to its Stella's Circle facility.

Tackling Greenhouse Emissions and Energy Poverty

Currently, 30% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions come from energy used by buildings. Much of Canada's older affordable housing stock is less energy efficient, resulting in energy waste and higher bills.

Not surprisingly, energy costs disproportionately affect low-income households. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the poorest 20% of households spend a whopping 16.4% of their annual income on energy costs, compared with 5.3% for the average-income household (Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest energy poverty rate in Canada). With such a large portion of people's incomes being spent on heat and light bills, it's little wonder why many homes are forced to choose between heating and homelessness.

Building Smart: Designing with Accessibility in Mind

As part of its guiding principles, the design of buildings funded by the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) must incorporate the individual's right to self-respect. As such, every building funded by NHI has built accessibility and inclusion into the cornerstone of its design.

Recent construction projects, such as Choices for Youth, the Native Friendship Centre, and the Wiseman Centre, have met these standards in their buildings' designs and layout, while existing buildings, such as those serving clients at Emmanuel House, Naomi Centre, Carew Lodge and Stella's Circle have been upgraded to include access.

Universally Accessible Designs

Meanwhile universally accessible designs are created to be useful to as many people as possible, irrespective of factors such as health, ability or age. These designs range from architectural features such as widened hallways to room details like enlarged toggle switches within easy reach.

The Tommy Sexton Centre is the city's first affordable housing project to incorporate universal design.



Stella Burry Community Services worker helps to build on efficient and accessible designs.

"Lots of people think if there's a ramp, then it's accessible, but there are so much more to it," says Michelle Boutcher, Executive Director, AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador. "Space around the doorways, plug-ins and switches at a low levels, wheel-in showers and light sensors. Here we even have one apartment with a door that opens with a button."

As the trend towards universal design begins to take hold, pending constructions like Marguerite's Place, a women's shelter and supportive housing project proposed by the St. John's Status of Women Centre, are also seeking to incorporate universally accessible features into its building's construction. ■



“I knew there was something wrong with me, but I didn't know what it was, and I couldn't find any answers outside of the prison system.”

– Geraldine Lush

Plagued by childhood memories of abuse, Geraldine Lush resorted to crime, drugs and abusive relationships before attempting to take her own life. Against all odds, Lush would survive and finally find the help she needed.

She would find Stella Burry Community Services (SBCS).

SBCS is a body of the United Church of Canada and a community-based organization dedicated to addressing the impact and root causes of poverty, abuse and oppression.

Lush's recovery began when SBCS acquired Carew Lodge, a dilapidated rooming house in the centre of the city and the site of numerous encounters with local police, and secured nearly \$665,000 in 2001 from Canada's National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) to renovate the Lodge. The building, once the eyesore of the neighbourhood (and a former home to Lush) was converted into supportive housing for fourteen low-income individuals.

Inspired by Lush's resolve to get her life on track, Jocelyn Greene, Executive Director of SBCS, would hire her as the building's new superintendent, and ultimately, help Lush initiate steps towards a life-long recovery.

Homes, Jobs and Dignity

By the time the Carew Lodge development came on stream, SBCS's roots in the community were already well established with programs like Emmanuel House, Naomi Centre and the Community Support Program.

Meanwhile, SBCS was able to acquire seven

properties through the NHI's Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPI) and leverage their equity to purchase other properties in the

city's core. SBCS availed of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) to upgrade these properties, and today, they are part of the organization's Long Term Affordable Housing Program.

SBCS now owns or manages over 50 units of supportive housing in the city, and with the support of the NHI and other partners—and a dash of its own professional insight—SBCS plans to continue spearheading new and innovative affordable housing options in the city.

Stella's Circle

The old location of the W.J. Murphy store at Rawlins Cross has also recently undergone quite a transformation. Today the site is home to *Stella's Circle*, a multipurpose facility housing the Community Support Program, six affordable housing units and the SBCS offices. Made possible through Proposal Development Funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, SBCS was able

to secure \$1.2 Million through the NHI for the property's purchase and development. With the help of \$450,000 from the Canada-NL Affordable Housing Program, \$144,000 from the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, and over \$150,000 from The United Church of Canada and corporate donors, *Stella's Circle* is up and running.

SBCS is also in the process of developing plans for an onsite café. This social enterprise is designed to provide training in food preparation and low-cost meals for members of the Stella Burry community. Meanwhile, “Stella's Crew,” a musical collaboration of SBCS staff and participants, is already preparing to host regular Open Mike Nights at the café.

135 Military Road

Across the street, the former Lawton's drugstore at 135 Military Road (also known as the O'Mara-Martin building) was recently acquired by SBCS, and plans for renovation are underway.

The NHI's Regional Homelessness Fund has provided \$150,000 to upgrade and convert the first floor into office space for the new SBCS *Housing and Employment Resource Centre*. The building's top two floors and adjacent property at 84-86 Prescott Street will also be developed to provide 18 more affordable housing units. The Canada-NL Affordable Housing Program has approved \$1.2 million and the United Church Trust Funds will provide \$250,000 for the project. The remaining necessary funds will be secured through other grant sources, a corporate fundraising campaign and mortgage financing.

The Resource Centre and affordable housing units at 135 Military Road are expected to be home to eighteen people by spring 2008.

Stella's Circle
Hope lives here.

Carew Lodge Expands

As the waiting list for Carew Lodge continues to grow, SBCS has secured NHI funding to begin design work to accommodate eight more supportive housing units at the Lodge.

Meanwhile Geraldine Lush, the superintendent of Carew Lodge, is upfront about her personal transformation with new tenants.

“I tell the residents that ‘I'm just like you guys, I still went through the ringer. I just want to do something more with my life.’”

Lush, who once had lost all hope, now appears to be sharing an abundance with others.

“I love what I do.” ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.stellaburry.ca
(709) 738-7805



Newfoundland Labrador

Housing

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Newfoundland Labrador Housing (Housing) is a provincial crown corporation which has responsibility for the implementation of government's overall public housing programs. The corporation is governed by a board of directors and reports to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador through the Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Responsible for Housing.

The primary mandate of the corporation is to develop and administer social housing assistance programs to meet the needs of low-income households. In fulfilling this mandate, the corporation works in close coordination with various provincial government departments and numerous community-based organizations to deliver the following programs:

Rental Housing Program

NLHC owns and administers approximately 5,700 social housing units throughout various regions of

the province, with the greatest concentration of units located in St. John's (3,300) and Corner Brook (805). Low-income earners are the beneficiaries of the program with rental rates based on 25-30 per cent of monthly income. Approximately 27 per cent of units are occupied by pensioners. There are an estimated 14,000 individuals housed in NLHC units under this program.

Rent Supplement Program

NLHC provides a rent supplement program to help low-income households obtain suitable private-sector rental housing in cases where NLHC cannot meet this need through its social housing portfolio. Under a rent-geared-to-income formula, NLHC assists low-income households bridge the gap between the private market rate and their capacity to pay. Approximately 1,000 such rental agreements, housing 1,500 individuals, are funded by NLHC, primarily in St. John's and Corner Brook.

Community-Based Housing Program

This program is directed in support of social housing initiatives largely in partnership with community-based non-profit housing groups. Most of the approximately 5,100 social housing units under this program are operated directly by individual groups with NLHC holding the mortgage on these properties and providing some level of operating assistance. Overall, approximately 80 per cent of the 5,100 community-based units are occupied by seniors with an average age of 76 years and an average annual income of \$12,000.

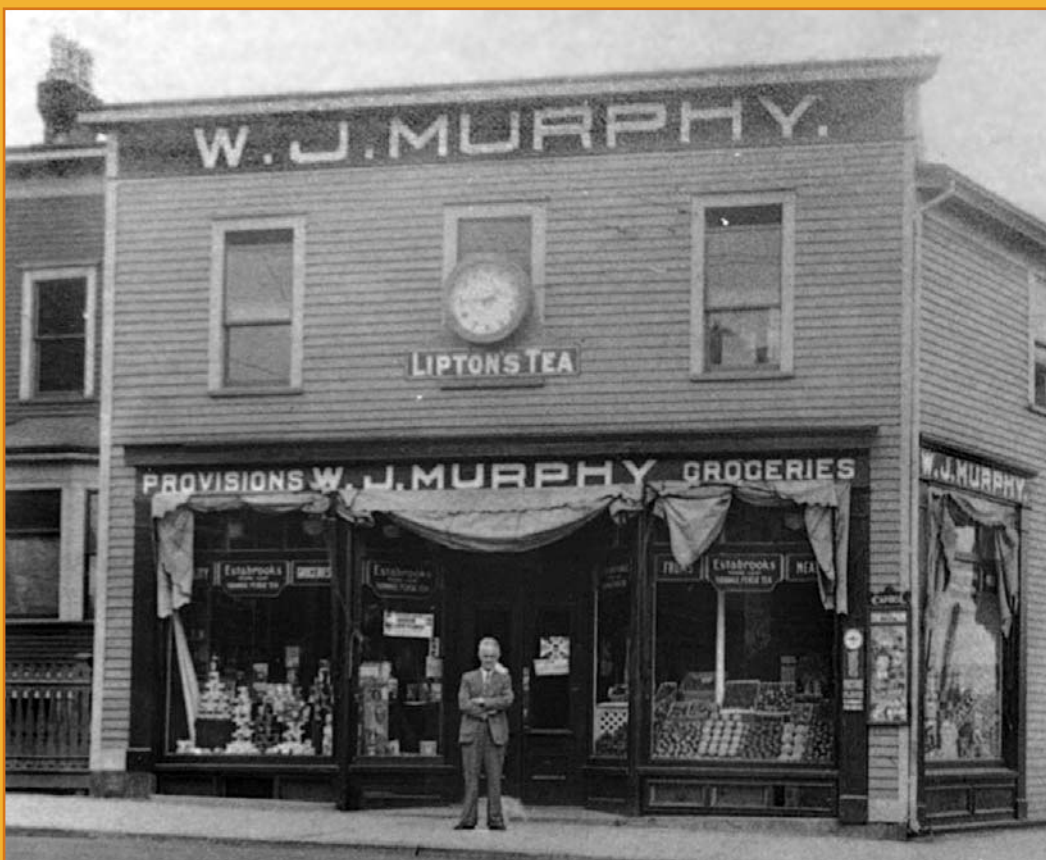
Provincial Home Repair Program (PHRP)

PHRP is a 50/50 federal/provincial cost-shared initiative which is administered/delivered by NLHC. Low-income households are assisted under this program with modest assistance levels to improve privately owned households. This program benefits primarily seniors living in rural areas of the province. The average homeowner recipient is 61 years old, has an annual income of \$13,000 and occupies a 41-year old house.

Affordable Housing Program (AHP)

In May 2003, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Affordable Housing Agreement was signed. The \$30 million agreement is cost-shared 50/50 with the federal government and administered through NLHC and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. In November 2005, Newfoundland and Labrador was allocated \$5.3 million in federal funding under Phase II of the Affordable Housing Agreement, these funds are to be cost-shared by the provincial government for a total of \$10.6 million and spent over a four-year period. The objective of the AHP is to stimulate the development of affordable rental housing in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The province's priorities are rental housing for seniors and supportive housing for persons living with mental, developmental or physical health needs, who require supports to live independently in the community. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.nlhc.nf.ca



Rawlins Cross

has been a pivotal intersection in St. John's, in no small way due to the presence of the W.J. Murphy Grocery Store which was a focal point in the Georgestown neighbourhood for over 100 years. Stella Burry Community Services acquired the building in late 2002 with plans to convert the historic building to a mixed-use space that would combine affordable housing with retail operations and administrative offices. The project was completed and occupied in late 2006. In the space where Mr. Murphy (photographed) and his family once purveyed groceries to the community, SBCS will operate a program that provides food services training in a cheerful and comfortable café atmosphere that will be open to the public by late 2007.

THE YOUTH SERVICES CENTRE

A welcoming place

A Philosophy of Partnership

The new Youth Services Centre allows the city's youth services to coexist in a friendly, welcoming, youth-centred environment. Home to three community agencies and a division of the provincial government's regional health board, *Choices for Youth* owns and operates the building, while the *Community Youth Network*, *Day Break Parent/Child Centre* and Youth and Family Services (Eastern Health) all rent space on site.

Choices for Youth

Choices for Youth is a non-profit charitable, community-based agency with a 16-year history of providing housing and lifestyle development supports to youth in the St. John's metropolitan area.

The core programs of *Choices* include the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter for Young Men, and the Youth Outreach and Engagement Program. The programs are designed to address the youth's emergency and long-term housing needs, as well as their social, education and economic needs.

The Community Youth Network

The Community Youth Network is a national collective mandated to facilitate an array of services for youth at risk of poverty.

The core programs of the *Community Youth Network* include Street Reach, Youth At Promise, Community Building and Special Project Grants. All focus on creating educational, employment and community building opportunities for youth.

Daybreak Parent/Child Care Centre

Daybreak is a parent/child care resource that runs its Downtown Family Resource Centre through the Youth Service Centre. *Daybreak* supports young parents and their children facing health and housing risks through programs like the *Healthy Baby Club* and *Postnatal Support Group*.



Youth and Family Services-Eastern Health Authority

A division of the Department of Health and Community Services, Youth and Family Services runs three of its programs out of the Youth Services Centre: Youth Service, Youth Corrections and Youth Diversion. All programs are geared towards the empowerment of at-risk youth.

Eva's Phoenix Replication Project in St. John's

Building on its success, *Choices for Youth* is growing to further assist at-risk youth in St. John's.

With the purchase of the former Lilly factory building at 52-58 Bond Street, *Choices for Youth* is in the process of developing supportive, affordable housing for at least one dozen youth aged 16-25 in one and two-bedroom apartments. In addition, the facility will include program space for the delivery of a new pre-employment program and *Youth at Promise* – a basic literacy/math skills program operated by the *Community Youth Network*.

For the youth of St. John's, this project represents a tremendous opportunity to develop skills and create a brighter, more stable future for themselves.

"Like *Eva's Phoenix* in Toronto (a program recognized nationally for its innovative approaches to working with youth), we're hoping to get our young people involved in an apprenticeship carpentry program," says Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director of *Choices for Youth*, "That is, we plan to both train and employ our youth to renovate the new building."

The new building will be staffed by *Choices* around the clock to ensure that youth have consistent access to hands-on support and services. ■

According to Susan MacLeod, Program Manager, Youth and Family Services (Eastern Health), the Youth Services Centre in St. John's is addressing a longstanding need first voiced by local social service providers in the 1990s.

"It wasn't until the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) was introduced and a committee was struck locally that we were able to put our ideas to action."

The St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness identified a young men's shelter as a priority in its community plan under the NHI in 2001. Several youth-serving organizations responded to the Committee's call for proposals, including Eastern Health, *Naomi Centre* (a shelter for young women operated by Stella Burry Community Services), *Choices for Youth*, and the *Brother T.I. Murphy Learning Resource Centre*.

The Committee encouraged the organizations to combine their proposals into one that included a young men's shelter and together agreed to make *Choices for Youth* the project's lead proponent.

With \$1.69 million in capital funding secured from the NHI, \$162,000 from both the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, \$14,000 from Natural Resources Canada, and operating funding secured from Eastern Health, Health and Community Services and Human Resources, Labour and Employment, the mandate and capacity of *Choices for Youth* grew significantly—as ultimately did the resources of our city's at-risk youth.

Located on Carter's Hill Place in the heart of downtown St. John's, the Youth Services Centre opened its doors in 2003. It is designed to be a one-stop service centre for youth in crisis in the St. John's area.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

(709) 754-3047

www.choicesforyouth.ca

Community Youth Network

(709) 754-0536

www.cyn-stjohns.nf.ca

Youth and Family Services

(709) 752-4466

www.easternhealth.ca

Partnerships to help Canada's most vulnerable families and individuals



The Government of Canada recognizes that homelessness is no small challenge and it is delivering on its commitment to help Canadians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

On April 1, 2007, a new Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) came into effect, replacing the existing National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). This new Strategy is providing \$269.6 million over two years to help put in place the structures and supports needed to move homeless and at-risk individuals towards self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian Society.

In addition, in December 2006, the Government of Canada announced a two-year, \$256 million extension of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's renovation assistance programs for low-income households. Through these renovation

programs, CMHC is helping to improve the quality of affordable housing for some 38,000 low-income Canadians, including seniors, people with disabilities, victims of family violence and Aboriginals. In St. John's, these renovation programs are delivered under the Provincial Home Repair Program (PHRP) by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. More information is available by visiting www.nlhc.nf.ca or www.cmhc.ca.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy

The new HPS builds and improves upon the National Homelessness Initiative by focusing on a 'housing-first' approach to homelessness in Canada, one that recognizes that once secure and stable housing has been established, other supports be instituted to improve health, parenting, education,

and employment.

Working with communities, provinces and territories, partners in the private and not-for-profit sectors, and Aboriginal partners, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy will bring together federal, provincial, and territorial investments in order to give easy access to the range of services and programs that homeless individuals and families need in order to become independent.

The new Homeless Partnering Strategy comprises three initiatives:

- **Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI)**
- **Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)**
- **Homelessness Accountability Network (HAN)**

Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI)

Because different communities have different needs, the HPI has identified four categories of funding in order to respond to each community's unique situation:

Designated Communities: These are communities identified as having a significant problem with homelessness. As with the Supporting Communities Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) of the NHI, these communities will be able to access funding, over many years, that must be matched from other sources.

Rural and Outlying Areas: These areas, which include the North, will be eligible for funding to support one-time projects to fill specific gaps in rural infrastructure addressing homelessness.

Partnerships with Aboriginal Groups: These partnerships will ensure that services meet the acute and unique needs of the homeless Aboriginal people, whether in cities or rural areas.

Federal Horizontal Pilot Projects: Human Resources and Social Development Canada will work with federal departments such as Health, Justice, Citizenship and Immigration, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development on issues that could potentially lead to homelessness such as corrections, mental health, family violence, and immigration.

Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)

The SFRPHI program makes surplus federal property and land available to community organizations, the not-for-profit sector, and other levels of government for projects such as residential and non-residential emergency services and permanent affordable housing.

Partners in the SFRPHI program include Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

Homelessness Accountability Network (HAN)

HAN helps strengthen program accountability and develops knowledge to allow organizations to build their networks and share best practices. This initiative provides an opportunity to strengthen networks between the Homelessness Partnership Initiative, designated communities, and a range of other key stakeholders.

The HAN has three goals:

- to play a more pro-active role with respect to knowledge development;
- to support the creation of sustainable national and regional networks and partnerships; and,
- to enhance the community planning process and improve the ability to measure progress and report on results at the community and national levels.

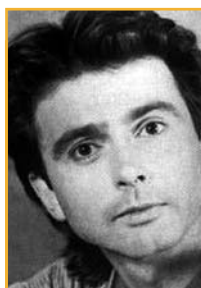
To achieve these goals, the HAN will streamline results-reporting, strengthen program accountability, develop knowledge, share best practices, and build upon both the existing knowledge base of the National Homelessness Initiative's National Research Program and its research partners. It will also build upon the existing network of shelter and service providers and community organizations and continue to promote the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).

Canada 

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.homelessness.gc.ca



TOMMY SEXTON CENTRE



The St. John's actor, comedian and writer who entertained so many with his brilliant life's work (*CODCO*, *The Wonderful Grand Band*) would also initiate a dramatic social awareness campaign following his death in 1993 due to AIDS-related complications.

Named in his honour, the *Tommy Sexton Centre* is a new facility dedicated to the housing and social support of persons living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS (PHAs) and their families.

On September 15, 2006, the dream that began with his mother nearly fifteen years earlier would become a reality. Through the support of the Sexton family, the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador (ACNL), and strong community and government partnerships, today's \$1.4 million Centre is the only shelter and supportive housing initiative of its kind for PHAs east of Montreal.

The federal government granted over

\$850,000 in funding through the National Homelessness Initiative to build the Centre. Other capital funding partners include the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, while the City of St. John's and the Department of Transportation and Works provided in kind contributions to the Centre. The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador also provide the Centre with yearly operational funding.

Owned and operated by the ACNL, the *Tommy Sexton Centre* includes three distinct program areas: a four-unit Short Term Shelter, a six-unit Supportive Housing Program and the ACNL Offices.

The Short Term Shelter provides safe, affordable, short-term accommodation to PHAs and those at high risk. While priority is given to PHAs, emer-



gency and short-term shelter services are available to all individuals aged 16-65. The Shelter also provides individual support, life-skills training, and links to other services and resources.

The Supportive Housing Program is designed to provide PHAs and their caregivers with safe and affordable one and two bedroom accommodations for a transitional period.

"Several of the individuals living here came from boarding houses where they felt unsafe and often had to share unclean kitchen and bathroom facilities," says Michelle Boutcher, Executive Director of the

ACNL. "Because they were living in crisis, these individuals couldn't meet their basic needs, including adhering to drug treatments."

The philosophy of the Supportive Housing Program at the Centre is to provide services that

enhance quality of life, build on individual strengths and promote independence. The building's innovative design also offers universal accessibility and enhanced energy efficiency.

According to Boutcher, while the Centre is not responsible for medical treatment or homecare, some of the residents' immune system responses to infection have actually gone up since they came to live at the *Tommy Sexton Centre*, illustrating the positive health impacts of decent housing.

"It's a dream come true, really. I can't help thinking how proud Tommy would be."

- Sara Sexton

"The job for us is to make sure that we provide the highest level of support so people can move forward," says Boutcher. "We wouldn't put people right back where they were, but we are upfront about the fact that this is just transitional."

Joe Veenhof has been a resident of the *Tommy Sexton Centre* since it opened.

"The *Tommy Sexton Centre* is where you go to learn to live with HIV and AIDS, not die," says Veenhof.

The ACNL Offices and staff also provide a supportive environment designed to enhance the Centre's independent living philosophy. They provide hands-on support and active listening, life-skills teaching, ongoing advocacy, and links to social and educational resources.

As Tommy Sexton's mother Sara recalls in a 2006 *Telegram* interview: "It's a dream come true, really. I can't help thinking how proud Tommy would be." ■



ACNL Staff, Ta Da Productions Spokeswomen Sheila Guy Murphy and Terry Andrews and mother Sara Sexton pose after accepting Divas Do Christmas fundraising donation. From back left to right: Executive Director Michelle Boutcher, Sheila Guy Murphy, Terry Andrews, Richard Neron, Tree Walsh, Sara Sexton, John Baker and Chris Shortall.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.acnl.net (709) 579-8656



A UNIFIED STAND

The City's First Housing & Homelessness Network

Kale MacLean is an 18-year-old youth who just found a home.

Until recently, MacLean was sleeping under the overpass.

"I think there needs to be a drop in shelter," says MacLean. "Just for one night, cots for people to just crash if they need to."

A group of close to forty housing and homelessness advocates—from frontline community shelter workers to local government representatives—is hoping to learn more from people like MacLean.

Formed in November 2006, the St. John's Housing & Homelessness Network (SJHHN) is a new collaborative forum designed to address the continuum of housing needs for people at risk of homelessness in St. John's.

"Whereas each of the shelters in St. John's has their own individual mandates," says Cheryl Mallard, SJHHN Co-Chair and Choices for Youth employee, "We saw the need to pool ideas and focus on the bigger picture of the city's homeless-related issues."

Since the first meeting, the Network has already identified recurring themes.

Examples of these include: the length of wait-lists for shelters and housing, the demand for emergency housing for people in mental health crises, a lack of housing resources for youth with complex needs, and a need for long-term aftercare support following shelter stays.

"Our city's young men's shelter has a 52% readmission rate," says Mallard.

While Mallard says the reasons are complex, she says the high readmis-

sion rate could be in part due to a lack of affordable housing.

"Many receive an income support rate of \$433 per month. Considering the average local bed-sitter goes for \$350 per month, that leaves little money for food—or anything else."

Lack of vacancies and availability in the private rental market is another challenge to affordable housing.

"For a lot of the clients we work

with, private landlords can pick and choose who they accept," says Mallard.

"Someone who

is struggling with barriers is less likely to find a decent place to live."

Another development priority of the Network is shelter funding.

"Whereas some shelters are block-funded, others are funded on a per diem basis, or according to how many beds are actually used per night. For the latter, the budgets are very insecure."

Meanwhile, the Network has already adopted social inclusion, collaboration, safe housing and advocacy as their core values.

Finding Homes

In an effort to effectively address problems like these, the Network has already convened three housing and homelessness working groups.

The Youth Working Group aims to address an increased incidence of visible youth homelessness in the St. John's metro areas by providing more proactive supports and services to the city's at-risk youth population.

The Supportive Housing Group aims to collaborate and set priorities on supportive housing concerns such as emergency shelter care, client case

management and landlord partnerships.

The Shelter Emergency Response and Capacity Working Group aims to address the shelter capacity and emergency response needs of people experiencing multiple barriers (including severe addictions, criminal histories or health problems) and therefore considered inappropriate for generic shelter environments.

The Voice of the People

In an effort to collaborate with and advocate for the widest population possible, SJHHN co-chair Annette Breen, a Liaison Social Worker with the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, says the Network intends to expand and diversify its participating membership to

those who were formerly homeless - like MacLean -, those at risk for homelessness, the currently homeless, and beyond.

Seniors, businesses, the media, and social workers are some of the groups the Network will reach out to.

"We are working towards a collective, unified voice on the city's housing and homelessness issues," says Breen. "We want to find the gaps in the system, and eliminate them altogether." ■

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 (709) 754-3047

annettebreen@gov.nl.ca
 (709) 729-7502

WE SEE WHAT MOST DON'T

We see the heartbreaking effects of poverty, homelessness, abuse and addiction every day. Last year in Canada, The Salvation Army served 2.5 million meals to the hungry, helped 10,000 people with addictions and provided one third of all shelter beds each night. We ask you to please open your eyes and your heart. And give.

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Beyond the Street
Youth & Communities
Taking Action on Homelessness
A NATIONAL CONFERENCE



St. John's hosts GROUNDBREAKI

Canada's first national conference on youth homelessness – *Beyond The Street* – took place in St. John's in September 2006, bringing together 250 delegates from every part of the country to tackle the growing problem of youth homelessness. It's estimated there are 65,000 youth in Canada with no place to call home.

Action Needed Now

"Young people living on the street cannot wait patiently for governments to make homelessness a priority," says Jill Pitman, a youth panelist from St. John's who has experienced homelessness. "Tonight in St. John's, Vancouver, Toronto, and in communities across Canada, hundreds of young people will sleep on the street, or sell themselves for food or drugs – it's happening now, and we need to do something about it."

Bruce Pearce, conference co-chair and member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness, agrees.

"A growing number of Canada's youth will not succeed unless we work together to address homelessness. We need to provide a new platform for youth to take a role in addressing this issue and put youth homelessness on the national agenda."

The event attracted a broad cross-section of people, including a street youth community artist from Toronto, a professor from Halifax, a CEO from West Vancouver, a Member of Parliament from St. John's, and a women's shelter worker from Yellowknife, to name but a few.

Youth and Communities Working Together

Beyond The Street aimed to drive awareness, action and funding to address the problem. The conference received widespread national media coverage, and delegates unanimously endorsed a new Homeless Youth Action Agenda (see inset) and formed a National Youth Homelessness Network to carry on the work.

"It was critically important for conference participants to turn their words into action," said Sean Gadon, President of Raising the Roof. "In adopting a plan of action, the conference has set in motion a national agenda to address the urgent needs of Canada's homeless youth."

The event was hosted by the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness and co-sponsored by Raising the Roof, the Urban Core Support Network, the National Homelessness Initiative and Service Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the NL Housing Corporation, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, VOCM Cares Foundation, and the City of St. John's.

St. John's Hosts the Nation

Conference planners agreed that youth homelessness should be a priority and that meeting face-to-face is the best way to share and develop ideas, and build new leadership. St. John's was chosen as the venue to underscore the fact that youth homelessness is not just a big-city issue – it's a nationwide problem requiring national solutions.

"We actually do have homelessness in this city," said Kale MacLean, a former homeless youth who recently moved off the streets of St. John's. "Just because you don't see it doesn't mean it's not here."

HOMELESS YOUTH ACTION AGENDA

Unanimously endorsed by Beyond the Street conference delegates:

Fully Recognize Homeless Persons

That Canadians and governments fully recognized homeless persons, including homeless youth, and respect their rights as citizens

Make Action on Youth Homelessness a Top Priority

All groups and individuals, including our governments, immediately make comprehensive and supportive action on youth homelessness a top priority in Canada

Action for Governments

Governments maintain and enhance all programs on homelessness, including the National Homelessness Initiative, affordable housing and youth support programs

Reverse Federal Cuts to Youth Programs

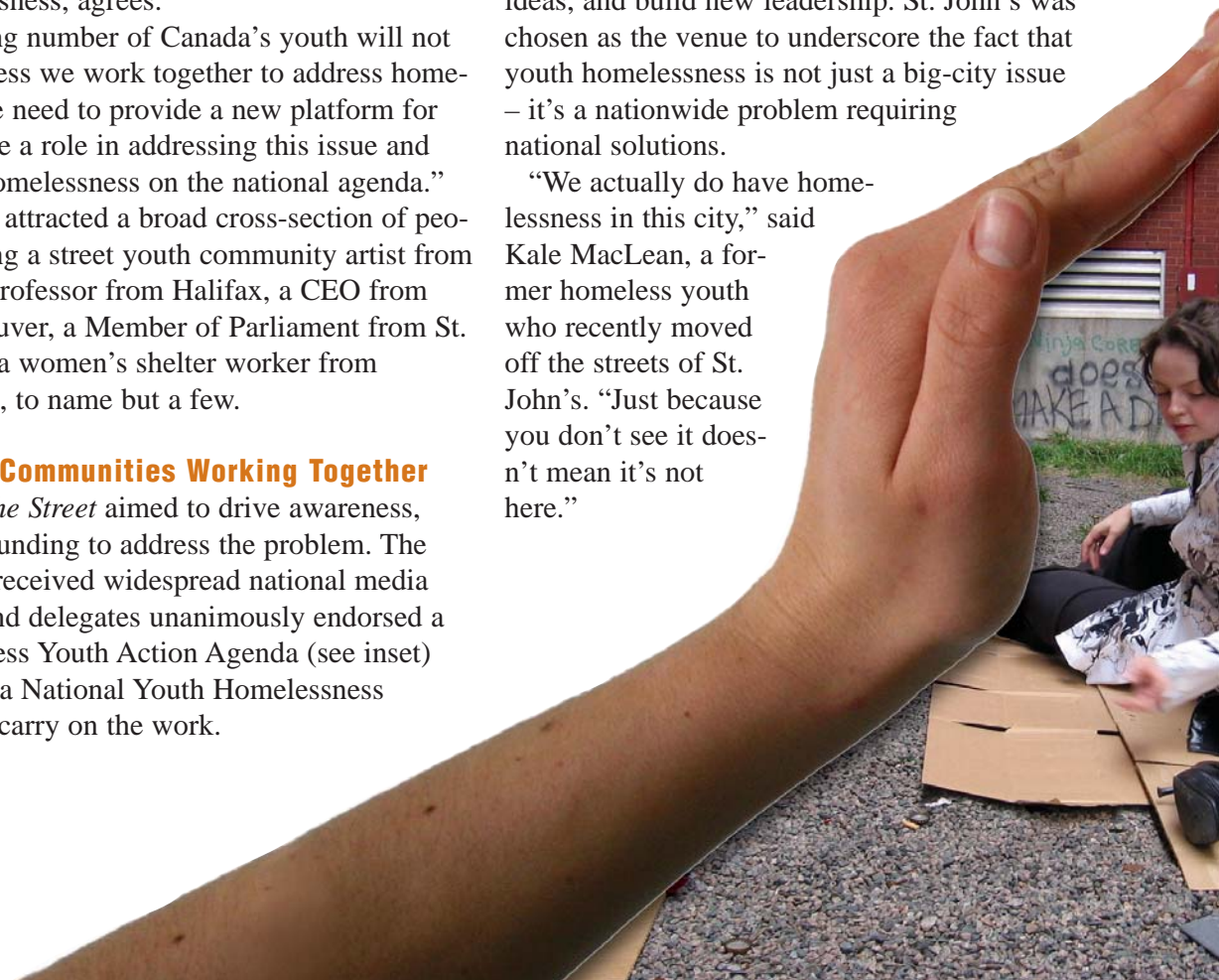
Urge the federal government to reverse the \$55.4 million to youth unemployment and support programs

Follow-up National Youth Conference and Advocacy

A national steering committee has been formed to plan a follow-up National Youth Conference, organize future advocacy, information sharing and promote access to youth resources

Action for Conference Participants

Conference participants take back and share what they have learned and experienced in St. John's with their local communities and support the "Homeless Youth Action Agenda"



NG CONFERENCE

During 2006, for example, Choices for Youth turned away over 100 youth from its new St. John's shelter for young men because it was full. Most homeless youth have not completed high school, limiting opportunities for training, employment and housing; and many have experienced abuse, violence, illness and family instability. Homeless youth are also more likely to get sick and die on the streets. And, unless action is taken, statistics show the longer youth remain homeless, the worse their life chances become.

National Youth Homelessness Network

The new National Youth Homelessness Network created at the conference includes 31 members from across Canada.

Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director of Choices for Youth, is one of the Network's founding members. "One of the things we discussed was, 'Where do we go from here?' We're all gathered here on the issue of youth homelessness," he recalls. "Who would like to do more of this from a youth focused point-of-view? How can we create that?" And the Network was born, with the continued support of Raising The Roof. ■



THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

The *Beyond The Street* Conference Committee would like to thank the following organizations for their funding contributions and in-kind support: Raising The Roof, the Urban Core Support Network, Service Canada, the National Research Program of the National Homelessness Initiative, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the City of St. John's, VOCM Cares Foundation, the Canadian Labour Congress, Reddy Kilowatt Credit Union, Granite Studios, Atlantic Audio Visual, and Ron Fougere & Associates.

Special thanks also to Mike Bruce, Mylene Goulet, and all our colleagues on the Conference Steering Committee.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.youthhomelessness.ca

Native Friendship



The St. John's Native Friendship Centre provides temporary housing and socio-cultural services to aboriginals residing in or visiting St. John's.

According to Amos Semigak, an Inuit from Hopedale, Labrador, this is his first stay at the Shanawdithit Shelter.

"It's really nice here, as are the people. And the meals are wonderful," says Semigak. "I must have gained a couple of pounds since I arrived."

And while Semigak says he enjoys the clean sheets and hot meals, he says he's also proud of the aboriginal culture sustained by the *St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association*.

"My heritage is very important to me," says Semigak, "There's a great aboriginal community here."

"My heritage is very important to me... There's a great aboriginal community here."

– Amos Semigak

Incorporated in 1983, the *St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association* (SJNFCA) is one of 117 Friendship Centres across Canada providing services to both aboriginals and friends-in-need.

With nearly \$950,000 from the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), as well as additional \$225,000 from the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, the Centre relocated its operation to Water Street from Casey Street in 2003 and unveiled the Shanawdithit Shelter.

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre provides temporary housing and socio-cultural services to aboriginals residing in or visiting St. John's and surrounding areas.

Inside the Circle

The Centre incorporates a large range of services into its programming, including shelter, transportation, recreation, education, employment counseling and spiritual leadership.

"In the Talking Circles, people sit in a circular

formation and pass around a feather or a rock," says Banfield. "Everyone is given an opportunity to either speak or pass on the object. It might take a while but after a few times around the circle most are sharing their thoughts."

A group of local aboriginals also meet weekly to take part in drumming and dancing events.

Meanwhile Banfield says language preservation is a cultural priority of the centre, especially among the youth.

"We often have guest linguists help with the aboriginal languages such as Innu-amiut and Inuktituk," says Banfield.

The Centre also encourages a return to nature through aboriginal wilderness retreats.

Every summer and spring the *St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association* brings elders and outdoors people together to engage youth in cultural camps.

"The elders teach the younger generation how to construct a tepee or build canoes," says Banfield.

Other activities include snowshoeing and outdoor cooking or 'boil ups' featuring traditional foods such as bannock.

The Four Winds Aboriginal Youth Center

With funding from the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC) under the Department of Canadian Heritage, *The Four Winds Aboriginal Youth Center* opened in 2004.

The Youth Centre provides urban aboriginal youth with a wide range of programs, services and activities.

According to Banfield, aboriginal youth have

been active in the centre since day one.

"We see between 12 to 20 after school each day," say Banfield.

The Shanawdithit Shelter

The Shanawdithit Shelter, named after the last surviving member of the Beothuks, was built in 2003.

The shelter contains 20 beds and 10 bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, dining room and children's play area. Residents of the shelter also have full access to all the other services of the Friendship Centre.

"Women, children, men, transient clients, anyone," says Banfield. "We serve all people, across the board."

Meanwhile, in 2006 the Centre received funding from the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) to help strengthen partnerships with aboriginal groups and enhance the Centre's sustainability.

Banfield says the Association is actively engaged in generating creative sustainability solutions for the future of the Centre, and choices for aboriginals like Semigak.

Semigak carries with him a picture frame containing his birth certificate and photos of

his family and home in Labrador.

"It reminds me of where I come from," says Semigak. "I'm anxious to see my family again soon." ■



At the Shanawdithit Shelter, Amos Semigak proudly displays mementos of his heritage.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
(709) 726-5902
www.friendshipcentre.nf.net**

HOME ON THE RANGE

The Banyan Ranch Development

St. Francis Foundation is a well-established provider of residential and support services to young people under 18 years of age and their families. With just four youth in their care in 1978, St. Francis has evolved into a multi-service agency with residential and support programs for hundreds of children, youth and families province-wide.

Among the many innovative programs, services and supports designed for young people, the Banyan Program and, in particular-- the Banyan Ranch-- appear to be the most novel of all.

The Banyan Program

Launched in October 2004, the Banyan Program was set up on the outskirts of St. John's to provide one-on-one programming and supportive housing to youth with complex needs. In the rural setting, residents and fellow youth were encouraged to participate in a structured, nurturing environment as well as outdoor activities like fishing, hiking and horseback riding.

Shortly after the first youth moved in, an abandoned beagle would follow suit.

Rescued by a local animal welfare agency, "Trinity" was referred to the Banyan Program for foster care by a Beagle Paws volunteer. A survivor of abuse and neglect, the foster-pup received a warm welcome by the youth and staff at the facility. Several weeks later Trinity was adopted by St. Francis and made an official member of the Banyan household.

Banyan Coordinator Dave Walsh says the youth's bonding to the dog has been remarkable. "The kids clearly love Trinity and identify with her experience," says Walsh.

Walsh says Trinity's presence also provides the Banyan



Trinity, adopted by the St. Francis Foundation.

environment to at-risk youth through a holistic, earth-bound approach. With \$100,000 in funding being sought from the National Homelessness Initiative, St. Francis is now in the process of acquiring a ranch to launch their program.

The ranch environment and farm-based activities are designed to help youth under the age of sixteen achieve personal growth through trust and team building exercises. The staff at Banyan Ranch hope to break new ground with these at-risk youth and inevitably empower them to improve their outcomes in the home, school and the community at large.

Planting Good Seeds

Far from the distractions of urban settings, Walsh says young people at the ranch will be nurtured by outdoor settings and daily routines. Availing of therapeutic relationships both within and outside the home, Banyan youth will take part in both household chores and grounded social interactions as well as the care of farm animals, nature retreats, landscaping and crop planting.

The ranch setting will also allow the program to actively engage in an emerging psychotherapy known as Equine Assisted

staff with a positive and engaging tool to help young people appreciate empathy, unconditional love and the impact of their feelings on others.

The Banyan Ranch

An extension of the Banyan Program, Banyan Ranch is designed to provide a therapeutic living

environment to at-risk youth through a holistic, earth-bound approach. With \$100,000 in funding being sought from the National Homelessness Initiative, St. Francis is now in the process of acquiring a ranch to launch their program.

Learning (EAL). With EAL therapy, horses are used as tools for emotional growth and learning. Trained in EAL, Banyan leaders will work with youth to help them learn about themselves through activities with the horse, helping them to process feelings, behaviours and patterns.

"For example, youth quickly learn that if they are being aggressive, the horse will not respond to them or do what they want," says Heather Modlin, Executive Director of the St. Francis Foundation. "This interaction helps youth both learn and understand the importance of skills like patience, for example."

In keeping with the activities of all other St. Francis programs, youth at the Banyan Ranch will develop skills that are transferable to the broader community. Once young people leave the program, wrap around services will also be provided in an aftercare capacity in order to increase the likeli-

The Banyan Program is named for the tree of the same name. Originally from East India, the tree with many trunks symbolizes shared support and a connection to the earth and spirituality.

hood of continued success.

The Banyan Program plans to eventually expand to a four-bed residence for young people. The average length of stay per youth is intended to be between one to two years, though the time frame will vary with each individual case.

Modlin says she and the staff are anxious to get plans underway.

"We're not sure exactly which crops we'll plant yet, but we plan to get the young people working on the land as soon as we move in," says Modlin. "We've thrown around the ideas of Christmas trees and pumpkins for example...It's going to be a lot of fun."

If initial funding is approved, the ranch hopes to break ground this spring. ■



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Older Adults Face HOUSING CRISIS

Clarence Hillier, 79, is originally from Fortune Bay where he worked on the boats most of his life. Now in retirement, he and his wife moved to the city to rent an apartment.

"I've worked hard my whole life and I don't depend on anybody for anything," says Hillier. "But you can't expect seniors to survive on the old age pension."

The Department of Health and Community Services reports this province has the most rapidly aging population in Canada. By the year 2016, almost 20 per cent of the population will be over 65.

"We need to look at independent living for seniors with assisted supports," says Rosemary Lester, Executive Director, Seniors Resource Centre. "We need people coming to the table from all areas."

Without intervention, the province will face a seniors housing crisis of epidemic proportions.

Seniors Resource Centre

The Seniors Resource Centre is a non-profit organization promoting the independence and well being of older adults in Newfoundland and Labrador.

According to their 2006 Annual Report, financial, home support and housing were the most frequently requested services sought from their *Seniors Information Line*. The increase in requests for financial help is due in part to the hardship many seniors face in trying to heat their homes as energy costs rise.

Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance

ASHRA is a group of older adult advocates, partners, and community organizations from all four Atlantic Provinces that are completing a comprehensive research project called *Projecting the Housing Needs of Aging Atlantic Canadians*.

The study will determine the existing and emergent housing needs and options for our region's aging population.



Members of the Senior Citizens Club on Bennett Avenue, St. John's, perform "Music and Friends."

Services and Coordination Needed

In 2004, the Department of Health and Community Services created the new Division of Aging and Seniors to facilitate program and service coordination for older adults.

Meanwhile, eligible seniors are accessing provincial affordable housing programs wherever possible. The *Provincial Home Repair Program* (PHRP), administered by the NL Housing Corporation, assists homeowners with

"I've worked hard my whole life and I don't depend on anybody for anything... But you can't expect seniors to survive on the old age pension."

— Clarence Hillier

emergency and critical accessibility repair needs. Nevertheless the pool of resources allocated from NLHC is limited.

"Usually the situation is pretty dire by the time a senior's housing crisis is addressed," says Lester.

The provincial government also provides a *Rent Supplement Program* to assist older adults in the private rental market. The *Affordable Housing Program*— a federal/provincial cost-shared program—encourages the development of

affordable housing by offering forgivable loans to affordable rental developers.

Abandoned in Poverty

More often than not, older adults struggle to maintain older family homes, even if they're not energy efficient or accessible. Most available affordable housing in the province is not accessible. And with most living on fixed incomes, older adults do not have the resources to renovate their homes.

Meanwhile, Clarence Hillier, shopping at the Salvation Army Thrift Store, says seniors are getting too little, too late.

"The pension just went up \$29 per month," says Hillier. "The poor here have just been getting poorer."

In response to the housing crisis, the provincial government has been gathering recommendations from stakeholders across Newfoundland and Labrador over the past year. Administered by Health and Community Services' Division of Aging and Seniors, the province's *Healthy Aging Strategy* will be unveiled this Spring. ■

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance:
www.ashra.ca**

**Seniors Resource Centre of NL:
www.seniorsresource.ca (709) 737-2333**



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Canada



Inside the CMHC

Housing Help for Canadians

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is Canada's national housing agency, and celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2006. With a mandate to create more affordable housing, the CMHC offers innovative housing solutions and a wide range of ideas and best practices.

Brian Martin is CMHC's Corporate Representative for Newfoundland and Labrador, and is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

"Basically I work with communities, municipalities, non-profit groups and private developers to help them identify and develop affordable housing opportunities in the province," says Martin.

Housing Research and Advice

CMHC provides research about housing in St. John's and across Newfoundland and Labrador, such as the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment or current vacancy rates. When these figures are compared to other cities across Canada, they can help an organization demonstrate the need for affordable housing.

CMHC also offers advice to non-profit groups new to the arena of developing and managing housing — on topics ranging from hiring an architect to rental agreements.

"There is a learning curve there. My role is to try to bridge some of the knowledge gaps," says Martin.

Seed Funding

This CMHC funding program provides the first financial seeds of growth, up to \$20,000, to potential housing providers during the early stages of affordable housing project development.

"It provides you with the means to hire an expert to help you with your early decisions," says Martin.

"Seed Funding can be used to help

in the development of a business plan, preliminary drawings, environmental assessments, financial viability analysis, and so on."

Proposal Development Funding (PDF) Loans

CMHC offers interest-free PDF loans of up to \$100,000 per project to support the further development of an affordable housing project proposal. These loans help with the cost of taking an existing proposal for a housing project, and developing the proposal to the point where a commitment of financing can be obtained to allow the project to proceed. The PDF loan is repayable when the housing project moves to implementation.

Just as the Seed Funding will help to firmly plant an affordable housing project in the ground, Martin says the PDF loans are designed to build them.

"The PDF loans are designed to help developers who've identified a need and demand and are ready to take it to the next level," says Martin.

Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Affordable Housing Agreement

In 2003, CMHC and the NL Housing Corporation (NLHC) agreed to cost-share this new program to construct new affordable rental housing. The \$30.28 million program was expanded in 2005 with \$10.62 million to be cost-shared by the two governments. The Affordable Housing Program is administered by NLHC.

Mortgage loan insurance with flexibility

CMHC mortgage loan insurance allows borrowers to access financing for their housing project at the best possible rate. They also offer underwriting flexibilities, which include higher loan amounts, flexible cash flow requirements and reduced mortgage loan insurance premiums. Premiums can even be waived completely for eligible non-profit affordable housing projects. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
(709) 772-4034
bmartin@cmhc.ca



PARTNERSHIPS

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S

"On behalf of the city, I would like to say we are proud supporters of local affordable housing and homelessness initiatives happening in St. John's. Through our in-kind partnerships, including donations and tax exemptions, we play a role in supporting groups who are dedicated to assisting those requiring safe, appropriate housing."

—Mayor Andy Wells, *City of St. John's*

CBC RADIO

"At the Morning Show, we're always looking for community-minded people and organizations that are doing good work. We also have a strong connection to our audience, a lot of whom are quite active as volunteers. So we



realized the CBC's Raising the Roof Pancake Breakfast was a perfect fit. Not only do we get to highlight the good work of organizations tackling homelessness, we also get to participate and help. We consider this a real important part of what we do here at CBC."

—Gerry Amey, Producer, *The Morning Show*

VOCM CARES

"VOCM Cares Foundation is a proud sponsor of many charitable organizations and their com-

munity events. At VOCM Cares, we believe no one should ever have to deal with homelessness, especially our youth, being one of our province's most treasured assets. Therefore, we were pleased to provide \$5,000 to assist with printing conference materials for the recent *Beyond The Street* national forum held in St. John's to address this issue."

—Michelle Myrick, Executive Director, *VOCM Cares Foundation*

GEORGETOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

"The Georgetown Neighbourhood Association promotes the building, preservation, and enhancement of community feeling. Due to the changing character of the neighbourhood and the ongoing loss of affordable housing, we wrote a letter in support of the housing and training initiative being provided by Stella Burry Community Services at Rawlins Cross. We believe Stella Burry chose a great location



because of its proximity to amenities and accessibility to *Metrobus*. In addition, we think it will add to the diversity which is important to a healthy community.

—*The Georgetown Neighbourhood Association*

IRON ORE COMPANY OF CANADA

"Hope Haven provides emergency shelter to abused women and their children in the Wabush, Labrador City and Churchill Falls areas. The Iron Ore Company of Canada has been and remains a key partner of our organization. Prior to the construction of our new shelter, the IOC donated the use of apartments to provide our women and children with emergency shelter, and in 2001, the land on which to build the shelter. Since then, the IOC has assisted the shelter with in-kind contributions. In addition, the IOC has provided our organization with a letter of support for a proposed new affordable housing development in Hope Haven. Our organization is grateful to acknowledge the support provided by the IOC."

—Marsha Power-Slade, Administrator, *Hope Haven*

STAFF OF THE AIDS COMMITTEE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

pose in front of a van (below) donated by *Tom Woodford Motors*. The van is used by both the ACNL and *Streetreach* (a mobile outreach service) as a crisis intervention and a needle exchange information resource.





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Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
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20 Crosbie Place
P.O. Box 8400
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Advisory Committee on
Homelessness for publishing
their second edition of
Growing Homes.**



**Councillor
Ron Ellsworth**

Using S P A C E Wisely

Communities Receive Surplus Federal Properties

With the announcement of the National Homelessness Initiative in 1999, the Government of Canada created an innovative program to transfer surplus federal properties—at no cost—to municipal, provincial and territorial governments and non-profit community organizations working to alleviate homelessness.

Since 2000, upwards of \$4 million worth of surplus properties have been transferred to communities province-wide to help them provide affordable housing.

“These properties provide families with a terrific start. You have your own front door, back door, and garden.”

– Bridget Foster

communities province-wide to help them provide affordable housing.

Spearheading the initiative in Newfoundland and Labrador, former federal government employee Joe Connors has helped Service Canada

provide 42 surplus properties to nonprofits across the island. From St. John's to Corner Brook, receiving organizations include: the Association for New Canadians, Cabot Habitat for Humanity, Cara House, the City of St. John's Non-Profit Housing Program, Iris Kirby House, the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC), the Jan Peters Foundation, and Stella Burry Community Services.

Initially a call for proposals helps to determine the best way to use the surplus federal government property to address homelessness. Proposed projects have ranged from residential/non-residential emergency services to permanent afford-

able housing. Upon selection of the most suitable proposal, the Surplus Federal Real Properties Initiative (SFRPHI) then compensates federal departments and agencies at the market value for the surplus property and transfers it to the new owner at a nominal cost.

Several Government of Canada organizations—Public Works and Government Services Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Service Canada, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation—work together at the national and regional levels to implement the program.

Along with contributions of real property, additional funding for construction and renovation costs is also available to eligible projects through other federal and provincial initiatives, including the NLHC and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

“The communities were so eager to get the work done, it was easy for a fella like me,” says Connors. “I must say though, after all was said and done, it was really gratifying to finally go in and show them their homes.”

“The communities were so eager to get the work done, it was easy for a fella like me,” says Connors. “I must say though, after all was said and done, it was really gratifying to finally go in and show them their homes.”



A Closer Look at How Surplus Properties Tackle Housing Deficits

Stella Burry Community Services

Affordable housing is a major focus of Stella Burry Community Services (SBCS).

Since 2002 SBCS acquired seven houses in St. John's through SFRPHI, providing a total of nine housing units ranging in size from two to four bedrooms. Together, these houses are now affordable homes for 29 low-income people.

Additional funds were accessed from the

NLHC to renovate the properties.

Stella Burry's Executive Director Jocelyn Greene says the SFRPHI properties also provided equity, allowing the non-profit agency to provide even more affordable housing in the downtown area.

“We were able to use them to acquire other run-down properties and renovate them, so that's been a hugely successful kind of domino effect.”

This strategy has helped SBCS create a further 20 units of affordable housing for 23 people through the acquisition and renovation of four private properties, using equity from its SFRPHI properties.

The Association for New Canadians NL

The Association for New Canadians (ANC) acquired three residential properties through SFRPHI.

Two properties near Memorial University were used to create affordable housing for new Canadian families with special or specific housing needs.

The Joseph S. Connors property in Amherst Heights is used as a transitional or temporary housing unit.

ANC Executive Director Bridget Foster says these residential properties provide a great foothold for newcomers to the province.

“A house gives you a greater sense of permanency. These properties provide families with a terrific start. You have your own front door, back door, and garden.”

Foster says she's also pleased with the sense of community these locations afford.

“The transition to all three locations has been seamless,” says Foster. “They are all very comfortable situations.” ■

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CONGRATULATIONS to **St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness** on publishing their 2nd **“GROWING HOMES” Phase II (2003-2007)**



The City of St. John's

Conducting a Study of Affordable Housing

The City of St. John's has played a significant role in the development and delivery of affordable housing for the residents of St. John's since 1982. This housing is provided in partnership with the Federal and Provincial government and accommodates approximately 1100 families, seniors and single adults in 426 housing units located in the St. John's area.

Throughout its involvement in the provision of affordable housing, the City has recognized that there are other agencies/organizations involved in advocacy, research, development and operation of various types of affordable and special needs housing. All of these agencies have their own objectives, strengths and challenges and the City would like to strengthen its partnerships with these agencies to ensure that the City and its resources are involved (where appropriate) in all aspects of the development of affordable housing for the residents of St. John's.

The City's Housing and Planning Committee established a Housing Subcommittee in 2005 which brought together various stakeholders to assess the affordable housing situation in the St. John's area. This committee, in partnership with Canada Mortgage and Housing, the National Homelessness Initiative and the City of St. John's,

are presently involved in a comprehensive study of affordable housing in the St. John's area.

This study will highlight the needs, demands, trends and issues in the St. John's area in consultation with the target population, partner agencies and government. The study will recommend a strategy for how the City, (in collaboration with the target population, community agencies and other levels of government) can address the need for affordable housing in the City, including costs, benefits and the suggested level of City involvement in the short term (2- 5 years) and long term (6-10 years).

During a public consultation on March 5, 2007, the consultants shared some preliminary findings with the public and solicited feedback on housing needs in the capital City.

Preliminary findings show that changing demographics will impact the demand for affordable housing in the St. John's area. The population is aging and living longer, there is an increase in single parent families, growth in the single adult population (ages 30 to 60) and a demand for housing with support services. These changing demographics translate into a demand for smaller, more energy efficient units for singles, seniors and smaller as well as a demand for more accessible

units and also the need for choice for people to live independently; also there is the issue of regulation and the condition of some of the boarding houses in the St. John's area.

In the course of the research on affordable housing, the consultants had the opportunity to meet with a large number of individuals/agencies/government agencies to gauge what the future should look like in terms of gaps and the opportunities which may exist to address the various housing needs that have been identified. One opportunity would be to build on the existing partnerships with government, the private sector and community agencies. Another opportunity would be to develop new models for existing housing infrastructure, some of the present housing stock does not adequately serve the present demographics and may have to be renovated/reconfigured to meet the needs of our aging population. ■

The final report on this comprehensive study will be released May 2007.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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On October 5, 2006, Lesley Bishop, Mark Griffin and Charlotte Courage, spent 24 hours on the streets of St. John's to get a first-hand look at the reality of homelessness. The three social work students hit the streets with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Their goal was to find food and shelter.

Here are excerpts from their account of that autumn day:

Lesley: *It's another dull Thursday morning... Shortly myself and two others will begin our transformation from social work students to homeless people...*

Mark: *I walk into the doors of the food bank and see the stack of numbers on a peg. The number 12 lies on the top of the stack. "My god," I think to myself. The food bank has only been opened for ten minutes and eleven people have already been here...*

Lesley: *I always understood the concept of the 'working poor' but in the food bank waiting room it suddenly becomes very clear: the people we see here are just like us. They aren't dirty, or "crazy." Just "normal" people in need...*

Lesley: *Now the realization that we have no place to go is beginning to sink in... People are in cars going places, catching the bus. We are just watching...*

Charlotte: *The rain pounds the pavement as our feet move silently. We hum "The Littlest Hobo" theme song. We all smile. Somehow the human spirit prevails.*

Lesley: *We meet up with Street Reach just after eight. A worker boils the kettle and matches up knitted mittens and hats for us. Such kindness after the day's events proved overwhelming.*

Charlotte: *We run to the outreach van and I can't stop shaking. I look into the face of a man who is*

also in line. He is alone with the exception of his shopping cart. I begin to cry... As we walk back up the hill to Choices for Youth I am shaking so bad that I can't drink my hot chocolate.

Lesley: *Street Reach gives us what we have been chasing all day—an information card listing services and phone numbers.... She also directs us back to Choices for Youth to eat and dry our clothes...*

Charlotte: *As I walk into Choices I see it from a new angle... We relax in the chairs. I realize how valuable a service Choices provides. We call around to the shelters. There is only one bed left in the entire city.*

Mark: *Later that night, [we sit] against a wall on Water Street with a paper cup and a sign saying that we are homeless. No one leaves a cent... I realize now that when the people walk by... we are being ignored in the worst possible sense... suddenly I am the wall on which I lean, something to be walked past, unnoticed. We are [as much a] part of the downtown scenery as the jaywalkers or streetlights. I want to stand up and ask if anyone sees me.*

Charlotte: *We don't know where to sleep. We need somewhere safe. We find park benches. The wind from the ocean is biting but it is spacious and no one can see us from the road. I sleep with my glasses on because I can't chance being taken by surprise.*

Mark: *I am so uncomfortable. I am exposed to the elements and the people passing by... Every foot-*

step on the gravel around me rings in my ears. I begin to doubt the good nature of people. What if someone sees our backpack and tries to take it? I feel very responsible for Charlotte and Lesley...

Lesley: *It would be safe to say that by 4 in the morning I am questioning every decision I ever made in my life that led me to this park bench with a layer of frost over me... I am awakened by the glare of car lights...*

Mark: *I want to get up and leave... Out of all of the reasons I come up with in my freezing, tired mind, one inexorable fact remains. Real homeless people don't have the choice to get up and go. There are real homeless people sleeping outside tonight. I saw someone in a sleeping bag outside earlier...*

Lesley: *Shame is another reality... Even though I know better, I feel judged... I can't meet people in the eyes. I yearn for the warmth and safety that the morning will bring...*

Mark: *I made it through the night... unharmed, but definitely changed. I experienced a glimpse into what it means to be homeless, a fraction of the struggles that people have to go through, and I could barely do it...*

Charlotte: *Finally it is time to go back... to Choices and debrief about our life-changing 24 hours on the street. I will never let go of this newfound resolve. I will make a difference, and I will never walk past a person in need without saying hello. I have been changed. ■*

The Regional Homelessness Fund

With \$1.7 million in funding from the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) since 2000, the Regional Homelessness Fund (RHF) has assisted communities province-wide, including St. John's, Bay Bulls, Gander, Corner Brook, Happy Valley Goose Bay, Labrador City and Nain.

The RHF is designed to help support small and rural communities experiencing homelessness.

Hope Haven, Labrador City

Hope Haven is a new shelter and resource facility for women and their children who are escaping domestic abuse and violence. The facility received \$625,000 from the Youth component of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), \$112,000 through the *Shelter Enhancement Program* (cost-shared between Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC)), and a *Proposal Development Funding* loan of over \$17,000 through CMHC.

This shelter includes four large wheelchair-accessible bedrooms with two bathrooms, administrative offices and activity rooms, and provides women access to computer equipment, library resources, a 24-hour crisis line and other resource and referral programs. The new facility offers safe and secure shelter and support services and can accommodate up to 225 women and children annually.

Key supporters of the project also include the past and present members of the Hope Haven Board of Directors and staff, the *Iron Ore Company of Canada (IOCC)*, the departments of Health and Community Services, Human Resources Labour and Employment, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Wabush Mines and many others within the community.



Grand opening of Hope Haven, Labrador.

The Happy Valley-Goose Bay Homelessness Community Plan

During 2006, the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay agreed to sponsor and administer the development of a local community plan to address homelessness, led by a multi-stakeholder Homelessness & Transitional Housing Committee. With representatives from *Labrador Literacy Information and Action Network*, *Libra House*, *Mokami Status of Women Centre*, *Lake Melville Community Employment* and all levels of government, the community has come together

to create its first-ever action plan on homelessness.

In January 2007, Service Canada approved \$25,000 to help the community complete its plan.

"Without the funding from the Regional Homelessness Fund...our homelessness issues would continue to grow," says Donna Roberts, a member of the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Homelessness/Transitional Housing Working Group. ■

What do you think about the issue of homelessness locally?



Lois Skanes, Lawyer

"Well I'm sure there's a lot of it and I think that is something that we need to deal with. I don't think the supports are there to give people a proper place to go when they are in crisis or any unexpected situation."



Donald Hewitt Tucker, Musician

"I think everyone should have a home obviously. Years ago, you'd never hear about anything like that in Newfoundland, but lately you see more and more people living outdoors. It's a sad state of affairs especially this time of year."



Colleen Simpson, Expediter

"I think it's terrible, especially in the winter. They're people trying to do something about it though. They were trying to raise money for the Pancake Breakfast at the Battery yesterday."



Billy Jordan, Homeless

"It's hard being on the street, getting a bite to eat and its down, really down here now. I don't sleep. I slept in the bank last night. It was hard to sleep."



Phonse Miller, Gallery Shoes, Owner

"Nobody should be homeless in this day in age, but we know it happens. A lot of time I think its because some cases are just hard-to-deal-with people and the system just lets go because there is too many people for too few social workers or whatever group of people takes care of them."



Brian Windsor, Retail sales clerk

"It's kind of a problem. There's some, but not a whole lot though. There's a couple, three or four that I see every day."



Hendrik Vanderkuilen, Father

"I personally know about twenty people who are homeless. I think homelessness is an issue that people haven't been dealing with as well as they should. Right now I have a home, but I still panhandle to this day. I just came from panhandling."



Sarah Brown, Memorial University Student

"I don't really know anyone in particular but I've heard of lots of people crashing on people's couches and stuff like that."



Andrew Gillespie, Full-time student

"I think its not as widely accepted or probably widely known as other big cities in Canada, but I think it does definitely exist here."



Kayla Pittman, Daycare worker

"I don't think it's addressed enough. I think it's out there more than people realize it is. More should be done to help them get back up on their feet and actually find a place to live. Everybody deserves a second chance in life."

Are you looking for a job? Are you looking for staff?

Contact the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment
Career Information Resource Centre.

The centre is open to the general public, employers, persons receiving income support and individuals looking for work. It is fully equipped with access to computers, the Internet, newspapers and magazines, audio/video materials and a variety of print resources to aid in career and employment searches.

For Individuals

- access a variety of tools, professional support and counseling services to help you connect to today's changing labour market
- a resource base within the community for professionals engaged in guidance and career counseling
- workshops on job search techniques, resumé writing, career planning, life planning and entrepreneurship
- staff can help individuals navigate through and understand current and projected trends in the labour market
- staff can help a person make decisions related to education and training, including short-term training

For Employers

- the CIRC plays an important role in helping business and employers connect to employees within the local labour market
- offers a convenient location to promote work opportunities and meet potential employees through matching services
- assist local employers improve their human resource planning, recruitment and training needs

For more information,
contact a CIRC office in St. John's

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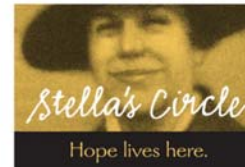
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Our new location at Rawlins Cross provides six affordable apartment homes as well as administrative offices and a café on the ground floor that will offer training in food services as well as great food at a price that anyone can afford!



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Not your Average Joe

The Legacy of Joseph S. Connors

Joe Connors was a federal government employee for 38 years. Five years before retiring, Joe was handed the National Homelessness Initiative file.

In those five years, as Co-chair of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness (SJCACH), Connors initiated lasting change for our

province, transforming the dreams of our province's homelessness advocates into a legacy of homes province-wide.

Joe retired in November 2005. The rest, shall we say, is history.

This page is dedicated to Joe Connors and the people whose lives he's changed. His many friends and colleagues take this opportunity to reflect upon his work.



Marie White, Co-chair, *St. John's Advisory Committee on Homelessness:*

"I had the absolute pleasure of being Co-chair for the entire time Joe was the rep from HRSDC. He recognized quickly that the Committee was comprised of people with expertise and passion - and he capitalized on both ...Joe saw value and potential in everyone."

Mike Bruce, Co-chair, *St. John's Advisory Committee on Homelessness and Regional Manager, Community Capacity Building, Service Canada:*

"After 33 years in the federal government, he spent his last five on the homelessness file. He calls it his best years in government. His hard work, dedication and passion for the file was recognized across the country. At the same time, community development workers held a very heart-warming retirement party for him. In my 25 years with the government, this is the first time I've seen a display of this kind of incredible recognition from the community."

Bridget Foster, Executive Director, *Association of New Canadians:*

"We named a home after Joe. He was absolutely terrific in supporting us. We just had to acknowledge his work."

Myrtle Banfield, Executive Director, *St. John's Native Friendship Association:*

"He has a real sense of community. Joe speaks to everybody. He liked to be in the background when he should have been in the forefront. There's so much that he's done to help us and with this initiative...Nobody forgets."

Robert Burt, Published Poet and *Service Canada Employee:*

"...Joe's work can be seen from Labrador West to Water Street West..."

Jacqui Winter, Human Resources Administrator, *Iron Ore Company of Canada:*

"I worked at a shelter for abused women. We had exhausted all avenues. Then Joe Connors came along. Joe did more than "just his job." I will forever be grateful for what he's provided ..."

Wanda Burt, Community & Family Services Director, *The Salvation Army NL East:*

"Joe really got the ball rolling for us locally and with the Wiseman Centre... Joe made our vision of the Wiseman Centre part of his vision."

Jocelyn Greene, Executive Director, *Stella Burry Community Services:*

"He just drove this entire initiative... whatever he's taking on, he does it exceptionally well. We made the decision early on to keep Joe on our side— it was always a joke at Emanuel House— by feeding him touts. We'd give the housekeeper advance notice..."

Mary Marshall, Committee Member, *St. John's Advisory Committee on Homelessness:*

"Joe realized that the true power of information only magnifies when it is shared with partners who are all trying to meet the same objectives—i.e., meeting the needs of our constituents."

Michelle Boutcher, Executive Director, *AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador:*

"The day of the grand opening [of the Tommy Sexton Centre] Joe was like a proud dad. He made us believe that we could do it..."

Bob Abbott, City Homelessness Facilitator, *Service Canada:*

"I never saw anybody take on a file like that ...there were nights I'd drive by and I'd see Joe's car in the parking lot. Joe just loved what he was doing and the impact he was making."

Gail Tobin, Acting Executive Director, *Iris Kirby House:*

"I remember the day that Joe delivered our van to us, straight off the parking lot from a local dealership, he was just gleaming with pride...telling us we could now assist our residents with travel to appointments and children to school. Joe will always be a friend of Iris Kirby House."

Bruce Pearce, Community Development Worker, *St. John's Advisory Committee on Homelessness:*

"I don't think the community realizes how much Joe went to bat for us in Ottawa. There's a lot of stuff he made happen between the regional and the main offices. But he never told us about it. He never asked for any thanks."

Marsha Power-Slade, Administrator, *Hope Haven:*

"When Joe came to attend the shelter's opening, we expected a ribbon cutting, a speech and a race to catch the next flight out. What we got was an organizer, cook, housekeeper and a friend we will always remember. Joe's name is spoken with great admiration and respect within our walls."

Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director, *Choices for Youth:*

"Certainly it became evident that the whole stereotype of the bureaucrat was out the window with respect to Joe Connors. He really got it. I think he's one of the main reasons the St. John's model is on the map as a shining example of what a community can accomplish."

Marguerite's Place

The National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) has provided \$22,000 for preliminary design work on *Marguerite's Place*, a proposed shelter and supportive housing for women in St. John's.

Designed for women over 30, the project will include a four-room emergency shelter and 15 longer-term transitional housing units. Safety, accessibility and energy efficiency will all be features of the project, sponsored by the St. John's Status of Women Council.

Meanwhile *Marguerite's Place* Partnerships Coordinator Wendolyn Schlamp-Hickey says the shelter will also be designed to offer a variety of support services to women.

"The women who come to stay at *Marguerite's Place* will leave with the knowledge that they are not alone in the community," says Schlamp-Hickey. "They will have found a community of support, both within and beyond the walls of *Marguerite's Place*."

Marguerite's Place is named in honour of the life of Marguerite Dyson, a former advocate and friend of the St. John's women's community. Remembered best for her "contagious smile and strong spirit," Dyson was murdered in one of the city's run down boarding houses in 1996.



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Growing Homes!