

PEI Report on Homelessness

May, 2011

The Second Report on Homelessness in Prince Edward Island

Homelessness Indicators (Calendar Year)	2009	2010
Population of PEI (July 1 st official estimation)	140,985	142,266
Number of emergency shelter beds in PEI	44	43
Number of Individuals who stayed in a shelter	242	276
Number of women	117	135
Number of men	46	68
Number of youth (age 16-19)	17	12
Number of families	38	37
Number of children accompanying a parent (age 0-18)	62	61
Number of times shelter beds were used	5428	4995
Average length of stay in emergency shelter (days)	29	16
Number of individuals "turned away" from shelters	68	30*
Number of food banks	6	6
Number of soup kitchens	2	2

*A shelter that accounted for about 50% of those "turned away" in '09 did not record this in '10.

This second PEI Report on Homelessness is published by the PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness, an interagency committee representing non-profit and public sector agencies that work with the homeless population or those at risk of becoming homeless. A complete listing of committee members is on page 2.

Through the publication of an annual report on homelessness, the Committee wishes to increase awareness and action about issues surrounding homelessness, poverty and housing in Prince Edward Island. The report deals with both the homeless and the working poor on issues that affect both populations. This report provides homelessness, housing and income comparative data for 2009 and 2010 and profiles several organizations and programs working to prevent & to reduce homelessness in PEI.

Good news...

Affordable housing units supported by the Canada-PEI Affordable Housing Agreement increased from 120 units in 2009 to 217 units in 2010, an increase of 97 units or approximately 81%.

The Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) has been renewed for another three years effective April 1, 2011. This strategy aims to prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada.

The Province of PEI has announced increases to the minimum wage to \$9.30 per hour effective June 1, 2011, \$9.60 per hour effective October 1, 2011 and \$10.00 per hour effective October 1, 2012.

Things that worry us...

276 people were homeless and stayed in an emergency shelter in 2010 compared to 242 people in 2009, an increase of 34, or 14%.

The waiting list for provincial family housing units is extensive; the number of households on the waiting list is approximately the same as the number of existing units. In addition, there has been little change in the yearly turnover rate.

The Province of PEI has not developed or implemented a Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy that includes additional units of family housing.

Housing Indicators (Fiscal Year)	2008/9	2009/10
Number of provincial Family Housing units	476	476
Number on the provincial Family Housing waiting list	401	419
Approximate annual turnover rate for Family Housing	18.5%	15.5%
Number of provincial Senior Housing units	1,152	1,152
Number on provincial Seniors Housing units waiting list	410	434
Approximate annual turnover rate for Senior Housing	14.7%	16.8%
Number of provincial rent supplements	18	18
Units in Canada-PEI Affordable Housing Program	120	217
PEI overall rental vacancy rate (urban centres) (Oct)	3.1%	2.2%
Average rent for bachelor apartment in Charlottetown (Oct)	\$447	\$477
Average rent for bachelor apartment in Summerside (Oct)	\$444	\$492
Average rent for 1-bedroom apartment in Charlottetown (Oct)	\$560	\$577
Average rent for 1-bedroom apartment in Summerside (Oct)	\$500	\$540
Average rent for 2-bedroom apartment in Charlottetown (Oct)	\$701	\$731
Average rent for 2-bedroom apartment in Summerside (Oct)	\$628	\$661
Income Indicators (Fiscal Year)	2008/9	2009/10
Basic monthly income support for a single person	\$553	\$575
Basic monthly income support for single person who is disabled and/or unable to work	\$736	\$762
Individuals on PEI who accessed social assistance benefits	5,487	5,602
Average monthly benefit for Old Age Security (OAS)	\$489.25	\$490.47
Average monthly Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)	\$446.61	\$452.04
Minimum wage in PEI (Oct)	\$8.40/hr	\$9.00
Increase in Consumer Price Index (PEI) (Calendar Year)	-0.2%	1.9%

For more information on this report card please contact the PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness: 902-367-3356.

An electronic copy of this report is available at:

http://fvps.ca/sites/default/files/images/2010Report_Card.pdf

PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness

Members of the PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness include representatives from:

Bedford MacDonald House Inc.
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Canadian Mental Health Association (PEI Division)
Charlottetown Boys & Girls Club
City of Charlottetown
City of Summerside
Community Connections Inc.
Dept of Community Services, Seniors and Labour
East Prince Youth Development Centre
Habitat for Humanity PEI
John Howard Society of PEI
Native Council of PEI
PEI Family Violence Prevention Services Inc.
Salvation Army-Charlottetown
Salvation Army- Summerside
Service Canada
Veteran Affairs Canada- PEI District Office
Volunteer Community Members

Explanatory Notes:

1. Homelessness Indicators:

Emergency Shelters: In PEI, there are four emergency shelters in operation, including Anderson House (19 beds), Bedford MacDonald House (6 beds), Grandmother's House (6 beds) in Charlottetown, and Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter (12 beds) in Lennox Island. There are no emergency shelters in operation in the City of Summerside.

Food Banks: In PEI there are six public food banks including the Upper Room Food Bank and the Salvation Army Food Bank in Charlottetown, the Southern Kings and Queens Food Bank in Montague, the Souris Food Bank, the Salvation Army Food Bank in Summerside and the West Prince Caring Cupboard in Alberton. AIDS PEI also operates a food bank for their clients. There may be other food banks in operation for specific clients in the province; however, there are only six food banks in the province that are open to the general public. There are two soup kitchens in operation in the province: the Upper Room Soup Kitchen in Charlottetown & the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen in Summerside.

Explanatory Notes Continued...

2. Housing & Income Indicators:

Provincial family housing provides subsidized housing to low and moderate income families who are unable to obtain adequate and affordable accommodation in the private market place. The units, with rents based on 25% of income, are situated in nine communities across the province.

Provincial seniors housing units are located in 37 communities across the province and provide apartment-style rental units to low and moderate income seniors. The rent for seniors housing is 25% of income.

Rent supplement program utilizes private market housing to provide accommodations for families selected from the family housing waiting lists. Rents are made affordable for the families via rent subsidies from the Province.

The Canada-PEI Affordable Housing Agreement was signed in 2003. Funding under this agreement is used to create new additional affordable housing units for low to moderate income Islanders through rental, conversion and home ownership initiatives. The program is administered by the PEI Department of Community Services, Seniors and Labour and the PEI Housing Corporation.

Consumer Price Index (CPI) is an indicator of changes in consumer prices experienced by Canadians. This is obtained by comparing through time, the cost of a fixed basket of commodities purchased by Canadians including food, shelter, household operations, clothing and footwear, transportation, etc.

3. Sources of Information

Sources of information for this report on homelessness in PEI include the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), a national data information system on homeless shelters in Canada, CMHC Rental and Housing Market Reports, PEI Housing Corporation, the PEI Dept. of Community Services, Seniors and Labour, and the PEI Dept. of the Provincial Treasury.

The **PEI Helping Tree** included with this report card was created by the Canadian Mental Health Association's Suicide Prevention Committee, as adapted from the original design by the Grand Falls' Suicide Prevention Committee. It is designed to inform Islanders of the many helping resources available on PEI. There are times when we need to reach out to others- sometimes it is just a matter of knowing how to contact them. For more information, please contact CMHA or visit their website; www.cmha.pe.ca

Hunger Count 2010

Prior to 2010, food bank use in Prince Edward Island had remained relatively stable over a number of years, and actually decreased slightly in 2009. This year, however, PEI has experienced a 13% increase in the number of people turning to food banks for help. More than 3,000 people accessed food assistance in March of 2010, and all of the province's food banks reported increased demand.

Almost a quarter of households turning to food banks in PEI list Employment Insurance (EI) as their primary source of income, up 5% compared to last year. At the same time, the number of households reporting employment income remained close to a fifth of the total. Clearly, having a job is not necessarily a guarantee of adequate income.

While provincial Gross Domestic Product actually expanded during 2009, not all Islanders are feeling the benefits of economic growth. Many of the available jobs are seasonal, temporary, or do not offer enough hours to provide the income necessary to make ends meet. For those unable to work, or to find work, social assistance benefits are barely equal to the cost of housing, which forces people to access food banks so they can make it to the end of the month.

The high cost of housing continues to be one of the main reasons that people in PEI turn to food banks. Many are finding high rents, combined with high energy costs, unaffordable – and the problem is not limited to renters. Thirteen percent of households assisted by food banks in the province are homeowners, and this figure rises to 28% in rural areas.

Food banks are having much more trouble meeting the need for their services than in the past. The majority of food banks in PEI took emergency measures to address food shortages in March. The most commonly reported action was to cut back on the amount of food provided to each household, which in PEI stands at three to five days' worth of food in the best of times. Half of food banks also reported purchasing more food than usual to keep up with demand.

Food banks in PEI have been assisting more than 2,600 people every month for more than a decade. We, as a province, need to find long-term solutions to this problem. There have been positive developments; for example, the minimum wage was increased to \$9 per hour in 2010. While this was undoubtedly welcomed by Islanders working low-wage and seasonal jobs, it remains the case that many issues – the high cost of housing and low social assistance benefits, among others – remain to be addressed.

* This article was originally published in Hunger Count 2010 (pages 36-37), Food Banks Canada as submitted by the Prince Edward Island Association of Food Banks, Member of Food Banks Canada and prepared by Mike MacDonald, Upper Room Food Bank.

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Highlights

- 3,068 individuals were assisted, March 2010
- +13% change since March 2009
- 36% are children
- 20% report employment income
- 24% receive Employment Insurance
- 37% receive social assistance
- 6% receive disability-related income supports
- 100% of food banks saw an increase

Youth Housing and Support Services Report (May, 2010)

Concerned about the lack of housing options and housing support services for homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 18 in Charlottetown and Summerside, the PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness commissioned a study and has released the resulting report in May of 2010, titled *Needs and Demand for Youth Housing and Support Services in Charlottetown and Summerside, PEI*.

Through their research and analysis, the study's authors concluded that each year, there could be 200 to 300 youth in need of housing and support services. In two-thirds of the actual youth cases reviewed, housing assistance or need was requested or discussed. The study also found that on a proportional basis, the needs are approximately the same in both cities, perhaps higher in the Summerside area. There is also a large number of rural youth in need of housing and support services.

There are potentially more 16- to 18-year-olds in need of housing and support services since not all service providers and agencies provided data and not all people in need are known to service providers and agencies. In addition, the anecdotal evidence provided by key informants suggests that there are more youth in need of housing and support than the data demonstrates.

The authors recommend that in each city a small facility be constructed to offer short- to medium- term housing for up to ten youth at a time. The authors indicate that the implementation of their recommendations will require a partnership among several stakeholders.

The PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness has accepted the report but has not yet formally endorsed the recommendations. The Committee is still exploring solutions in other jurisdictions which have addressed youth housing and support needs, to possibly promote such best practices among PEI stakeholders. Again this year, the Committee has identified the need for youth housing and support services as a priority during the next three years.

There is a gap in the housing system in PEI says Corinna Costain, owner of Independence Place in Summerside. There are too many people with mobility issues living in inadequate situations and Costain is working towards closing that gap. "I wanted to target those who got lost in the shuffle."

In the early 1990s, Costain could only stand by and watch as her grandmother was one of those. She was living a full life, all on her own, in an apartment in the Tignish area, said Costain. She lost the use of her legs and with that her independence. She had to go into the local manor because there was no affordable, accessible housing available.

Costain watched as she whittled away and vowed to do something about it. "If I can make a difference, I'm going to." Twenty years later, Independence Place is the result of that. The apartment complex, Independence Place, has 22 units. They are all one level, with ergonomic appliances and plenty of sunlight.

Ernie, one of the residents, considers himself lucky he found a spot there. He moved into his new apartment in October. Before that he always lived in basement apartments. "They were cheaper," he said, but that they came with a price. The dampness was always an issue and the stairs were hard on Ernie who has problems with his feet that stems from his diabetes. Another downfall was the lack of light, he said. "I always said I'm going home to my dungeon. I had one little window and all I ever saw was feet walking by."



"I wanted to target those who got lost in the shuffle."

- Corinna Costain

Now Ernie can sit on his exercise bike in his living room and see a whole new world. He is looking forward to sitting outside when the snow clears and getting to know his neighbours. Community is what it's all about, said Costain. "It makes you feel good to feel like you're making a difference in the community."

Costain has received awards for her efforts and she says while those are nice, recognition from the renters makes her the most proud. "The little notes on the rent envelopes and cards from families saying what a difference this place has made in their lives." Anyone can do this, said Costain. By taking advantage of programs like the PEI Affordable Housing Agreement the gap is slowly being filled, she said.

The government gives the builders a grant and in turn they agree to keep the rents at an affordable rate for 10 years. There are also grants available from CMHC to help with the research and business plan costs, she said. "It's there for anyone who wants to develop affordable housing." There is still a need, said Costain. While another 13 units are being built at Independence Place, there are 56 people on the waiting list.



Queen's County Residential Services Inc.

A place to call home is a treasured thing for Trina and Jenny. When Trina toured her new home in 2009, it was still in the construction stages. She was nervous and excited about living on her own for the first time. Trina and her dad lost their home in a fire.

Trina, a 43-year-old with intellectual disabilities, was thinking it was time to be on her own, but proper housing wasn't available. These days, thanks to a new facility built by Queens County Residential Services, she is settled and enjoying her independence.

"I'm a city girl now." The building houses three apartments, the agency's offices and facilities to run day programs for clients. Community supports program manager Eleanor Ferguson said the apartments are the first of their kind in PEI. "They allow clients to live on their own with the support staff on hand if needed."

Trina has come a long way since she first moved in. She cooks and cleans for herself and she is aware of the transit schedule so that she can get to the fitness centre, the movies and the grocery store. She is also on the maintenance staff and keeps the snow cleared in the winter and helps clean the five group homes run by QCRS.

Trina's neighbour Jenny is also enjoying independent living too. Jenny, who has Prader-Willi Syndrome, is the first with the disease to live independently in PEI. Prader-Willi Syndrome is a rare chromosome disorder which, among other things, affects metabolism and can lead to excessive eating and life-threatening obesity.

Jenny, 37, has to keep a strict log of her food intake and has extra support from the staff to keep her on track.

When Jenny first learned of the apartments she was determined to find a way to become a tenant. She wrote a letter to the selection committee and with the support of her caregiver and the staff at QCRS she was accepted. "It has been my life-long dream to live on my own."

Ferguson said the apartments are just one of the ways QCRS provides support to the 120 clients with intellectual disabilities throughout Queens County. The day program at QCRS provides structured activities for clients. Financial support is provided for those living independently, with caregivers or in a group home; however, there is a gap in service, said Ferguson. There aren't enough resources to help the growing population of adults with intellectual disabilities being taken care of by aging parents, she said.

Executive Director Bill Lawlor said these people often get misplaced in community care facilities, or hospital beds, or makeshift arrangements that causes back up in other areas. "Respite beds are filled with people who have no place else to go and they stay longer." Progress is being made, but there needs to be more developmental planning to avoid people being placed in the wrong setting, he said. QCRS gets funding from the provincial government, which is used to run the group homes, while federal grant money is used for day program activities.

Trina likes to keep in touch with her family over the internet. She has been living on her own for over a year with the support of Queens County Residential Services.



Jenny spends a lot of her free time knitting. She has always wanted to live on her own and now she can, with the support of Queens County Residential Services.

A Conversation with the PEI Provincial Housing Coordinator

Bill Fleming has been the Provincial Housing Coordinator with the PEI Department of Community Services, Seniors and Labour since 2005. Previously, he was Manager with the Social Programs Division of the Queens Health Region for 10 years. Bill is also a member of the PEI Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

Can you explain the factors that account for the increase of 97 units (120 units to 217 units) in the Canada- PEI Housing Program between the fiscal year 2008/2009 and 2009/2010?

BF: The primary reason for the increase was the introduction of the Canada Economic Action Plan. This program provided the Province with an additional two million dollars worth of funding with investments targeted towards seniors and persons with disabilities. Additionally, funding from a onetime payment known as the Affordable Housing Trust was directed towards development of affordable family housing units.

What has this increase meant in meeting the housing needs of Islanders?

BF: While we continue to have strong demands in many areas of the Province for social and affordable housing, the introduction of this many units will have impact. The Canada Economic Action Plan is a two year funding program and we anticipate larger numbers of units being created in 2010-11.

Is there a map available showing the location and numbers of affordable housing units in the province?

BF: We do not have a map presently, but consider this an excellent idea and we will incorporate the suggestion into our planning. Information is available at www.gov.pe.ca under Affordable Housing.

How do Islanders access these units?

BF: These projects are developer managed and accordingly, developers select tenants.

What are the eligibility criteria?

BF: Tenants must meet the targeted population for the project, i.e. seniors, families, persons with disabilities. Additionally, their income cannot exceed maximums assigned to each of the projects. These income limits can be obtained from the respective developer.

How would you characterize the living conditions of people accessing these units?

BF: We understand most tenants are moving from accommodations that were more expensive than they could afford, resulting in reduced quality of life; or were in accommodations that were not suitable due to overcrowding or in need of repair.

Is there a waiting list for these units?

BF: While our developers are not required to provide this information, we understand that in cases such as barrier-free housing for persons with physical disabilities, there are waiting lists.

What does your department see as solutions for long wait lists for senior and family housing units in the province?

BF: We continue to engage in discussions with the federal government to look at long-term solutions to the high demand. We are also reviewing other strategies such as rent supplements and tax incentives as potential measures to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Freezing for Warmth Campaign — November 25 & 26, 2010

Page 7

Although the temperature was above freezing, recorded at plus 1, the volunteers, youth and staff of the Native Council of Prince Edward Island would tell you it “was freezing” during their 4th Annual Freezing for Warmth event.

Thirty volunteers gathered in layers of clothing and their sleeping bags to bear a breezy 24 hours sleeping on the streets of Charlottetown. Freezing for Warmth is an

annual 24 hour vigil/fundraiser in aid of Grandmothers House, which also serves to raise awareness and combat homelessness in the Province. This year the campaign raised approximately \$6,100 in support of Grandmother's House.

Jayne Tremere, Homelessness Taskforce Committee member said, “A lot of people ask us why we choose the end of November for this event when

weather can be very cold. But the sad reality is that the people faced with being homeless don't get to pick a hot sunny day to become homeless.

We choose this time of year to bring the issue of homelessness to people's attention. While the lucky majority of people are at home curled up and warm, some individuals are facing a cold night on the street looking for shelter and a place to rest their head.”

**24 HOURS
ON THE
STREETS OF
CHARLOTTETOWN**

**“So others don't
have to...”**



WrapAround

Delivered by the John Howard Society since 2001, WrapAround is an individualized planning process aimed at helping individuals and families create strategies to meet their needs with the assistance of a personal support team. The program helps participants solve problems and build skills in various aspects of their lives, such as independent living, employability, and communication. Facilitators work primarily with individuals experiencing homelessness including high-risk youth (these are priority clients), families, and persons with disabilities; youth struggling with stress, anxiety and worry; and single parents struggling with stress.

The WrapAround process builds on the individual's strengths while connecting them to their community through available resources. While making informed decisions about the planning process, the participant, with the help of their personal supports, identify strategies to work towards their goals. The goals are stated by the participant, and progress is reviewed on a regular basis. WrapAround is unique in that there are no other services available in our province that support individuals in making changes in a multitude of areas in their lives, usually one overlapping with another. The length of the WrapAround process is determined by the participant; three to six months is a common time frame. There is no fee for service.

The **expected outcomes** of WrapAround are to help participants meet their needs for food, clothing and shelter, to increase their awareness of community resources, and increased feelings of self-efficacy, independence and problem solving skills. With the involvement of personal supports, WrapAround fosters the participant's support network and works toward keeping it intact long after professional involvement is finished.

Since WrapAround began in 2001, more than 400 individuals have participated. Here is what some participants have to say: “I like WrapAround because the program helped me in so many ways that I thought wasn't possible. It'd work for me because every support plan is unique to each individual. I continue to grow and achieve more than I ever did before. I recommend the program to anyone that needs help.”—Brittany

“I am a 22 year old single mother of two wonderful boys and before I contacted the WrapAround program in June, I was overwhelmed with basic life situations. “ —Anon.

Since starting the program, I have found a place of my own with my children. I have learned from having a support team I do not have to do everything on my own and can depend on others as well as myself. I have self esteem and like who I am knowing I can do what I put my mind to. I have learned budgeting and communication skills. I have created boundaries in life and have better relationships with my children...I am grateful for the program. It has changed my life for the better.”—Amy

“As a client I feel very appreciative of the help I received from this group. In this environment one can get a handle on one's physical, emotional, intellectual ability to overcome struggles in life. With the help I received from WrapAround, I now have some basic ideas on life's difficulties. I know I'm not alone.”—Darla

Parent Power

Parent Power is a program provided by the East Prince Youth Development Centre (EPYDC), which operates as an “umbrella of services” for youth in the community, providing them with resources, information and skills to enhance their employment future.

Housing is a continuous issue EPYDC sees among its “everyday” clients and the participants in each program. Many youth coming into EPYDC are experiencing financial difficulty making it impossible for them to secure long-term housing, living in unfit housing environments, “couch-surfing” or experiencing complete homelessness and have very little or no support systems. These scenarios are very common among participants of the Parent Power Program. Several young parents are living in abusive homes, living with others experiencing similar barriers making it nearly impossible for them to escape risky environments, having an unsupportive or no support network to rely on, having unsafe living conditions (i.e. mold, bugs, buildings in disrepair, unsafe communities) or no stable housing.

Parent Power is an employment-based program designed to assist single parents between the ages of 15-30. Each year 10 participants are selected to attend the 26-week program and are provided with the opportunity to set, reach, and maintain their employment and life goals. The program curriculum includes employment skills, life skills, parenting skills, nutrition and health presentations, sessions on community services and resources, entrepreneurship information, event planning, volunteer experience and on-the-job training opportunities, as well as providing various other guest speakers and presentations throughout the program.

Another component of Parent Power is Community Kitchen. Participants complete sessions on Canada’s Food Guide, budgeting meals and Food Safety and Preparation. They spend one day a week at Community Kitchen learning to plan and prepare meals for their family, including school snacks and lunches.

Participants also complete two or three community projects each year, either putting on an event or creating a resource on a specific topic. This provides opportunities to raise awareness on resources and services available, gain experience in planning and completing a project and networking and becoming connected to contacts in their community.

The overall goal of EPYDC’s Parent Power Program is to provide a style of programming for young parents that will help them develop their self esteem, parenting skills, employment skills and work experience, so that they become self-sufficient and provide a more positive and stable life for themselves and their children.

Recommendations

What can you do as member of the community to address homelessness?

1. Contact local charities and non-profit organizations in your community and offer to volunteer, make a financial donation, or ask what the organization needs and then provide it.
2. Welcome all types of housing in your neighbourhood and help change attitudes about homelessness among your friends and people within the community to help reduce NIMBY (“Not in My Backyard”) syndrome.
3. Education yourself and learn more about the issues surrounding homelessness including becoming aware of the language you use and refrain from using words that refer to people experiencing homelessness in derogatory ways.

Note:

Recommendations for federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government were included in the 2010 PEI Report on Homelessness released in May, 2010. An electronic copy of this report is available at: http://fvps.ca/sites/default/files/images/Report_Card.pdf

These recommendations will be reviewed for progress and implementation in the 2012 Report on Homelessness.