THE HOMELESSNESS PARTNERING STRATEGY

Partnerships that Work
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As Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, I have been privileged to visit and tour many buildings and resources centres, shelters and transitional housing projects that have been built by Canadians in communities all across this great country. Each one of these establishments is a concrete example of a successful project, sometimes many years in the making. When I learn about how these projects came together, and when I see the men, women, children and families who benefit from them, I know that the real success stories are about people and partnerships.

This booklet shines a light on the people and organizations that came together in partnership to find effective ways of addressing homelessness in their communities. It celebrates the individuals who have benefited from these partnerships and who are making strides along their path towards independent and productive living.

This booklet is also a testament to a program that works: the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Providing over $269 million over two years, the Strategy helps to put in place the structures and supports to help homeless and at-risk individuals build a better and stronger future. The Strategy is targeted at developing transitional and supportive housing, and at supporting programs—such as health programs, skills training, and substance abuse treatment—that help people who are homeless become self-sufficient. It is the emphasis on community planning and partnerships with other levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, and community and volunteer organizations that makes it a program whose success belongs to everyone involved.

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

I wish everyone involved continued success as we move forward in tackling the challenge of homelessness across Canada.

Monte Solberg
Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.
www.homelessness.gc.ca
The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) began on April 1, 2007. The Strategy is providing $269.6 million over two years to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada.

Recognizing that homelessness cannot be solved by any one level of government or sector, the HPS supports partnering approaches. Governments, community organizations and a variety of partners are working collaboratively to pool resources and efforts.

The HPS supports community efforts by providing guidance for planning and implementation, sharing information, overseeing accountability on behalf of the Government of Canada, and allocating funds. HPS funds are targeted directly toward community priorities, which have been developed through an inclusive community planning process.

The HPS takes a housing-first approach and focuses on transitional and supportive housing as important ways to move individuals out of homelessness. The HPS recognizes that housing stability is a pre-condition to enhancing the successful outcomes of other interventions such as education and training, life skills development, and treatment for substance abuse or mental health issues. By working with communities, provinces and territories, partners in the private and not-for-profit sectors, and Aboriginal partners, the Strategy encourages an alignment of federal/provincial/territorial programs and services that help homeless individuals and families move towards self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society.

Under the HPS, the Government of Canada is offering all provinces and territories the opportunity to work in partnership. Once put in place, such partnerships would encourage better alignment of federal and provincial/territorial investments, and help to provide a seamless continuum of supports for homeless people.

The HPS has three main initiatives: the Homelessness Partnership Initiative, the Homelessness Accountability Network and the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative.

The Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) is the cornerstone of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Its housing-first approach recognizes that the first step is to provide individuals with transitional and supportive housing.

The HPI has four funding components:

- Designated Communities
- Outreach Communities
- Aboriginal Communities
- Federal Horizontal Pilot Projects

The Homelessness Accountability Network helps to strengthen program accountability. It also develops knowledge and encourages organizations to reinforce their networks and share best practices.

The Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative makes surplus federal property as well as land available to community organizations, the not-for-profit sector, and other levels of government, for projects to prevent and reduce homelessness.

For more information on the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, please visit: www.homelessness.gc.ca
The Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) is the cornerstone of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The HPI is a unique community-based federal program designed to help prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada. There are 61 designated communities that receive funding under the HPI. Each of these communities has a unique experience and its homeless populations, issues and needs are varied. The HPI, through its community-based delivery model, is designed to ensure that communities have the flexibility and tools to identify and address their community’s own distinct homelessness needs and priorities.

The community-based model means that community partners are involved at every level of program delivery under the HPI, including:

* identifying community priorities and targets to address homelessness through an inclusive community-led planning process,

* selecting projects for funding to address the community priorities identified through an open and transparent call for proposals processes, and

* supporting the delivery and monitoring the success of projects, programs and services to address the needs of homeless individuals and families and those who are at risk of homelessness.

The involvement of community stakeholders in the delivery of the HPI is critical to its success.

Prior to receiving funds under the HPI, all designated communities must complete an inclusive community planning process. The planning process is usually led by a Community Advisory Board (CAB) or a planning committee composed of a wide range of community stakeholders. These include, but are not limited to, representatives from: local homeless service providers, the private sector and all three levels of government. Representatives of various key homeless sub-populations, including Aboriginal people and youth are also encouraged to participate formally on the CAB.

The formal involvement of these groups in the planning process helps ensure that: priorities and investments are strategic and reflect the diverse needs of the homeless population; that new partners and funding are brought to the table; that new and existing homelessness programs, supports and services are better coordinated; and, that new partnerships are forged.

Communities are able to use HPI funds to support community planning efforts. These efforts usually entail a number of research activities, including community needs assessments and feasibility studies, as well as environmental scans which include stakeholder consultations. The communities, through a formal community plan assessment, also review their progress in achieving
the priorities in previous plans, and use this assessment to inform the planning process.

Once a community plan is developed, it is communicated to the community at large and is usually posted on a community Web site for broad dissemination.

**Project selection**

Once the community planning process is completed, local service providers are invited to apply for HPI funding, usually through an open call for proposal process. Proposals must fit into identified community plan priorities and targets.

The call for proposals process is lead either by:

* a community entity, often a municipal government that is entrusted by the federal government to select and manage projects in the community; or

* the federal government itself, usually Human Resources and Social Development Canada through local Service Canada Centres, in concert with the Community Advisory Board.

Through either approach, community partners are formally involved in reviewing project proposals and in recommending, or deciding upon, project selection.

**Applying for HPI funding**

Given the flexibility afforded to communities under the HPI community-based delivery model, community-specific procedures and priorities for HPI funding vary widely across Canada.

Individuals or organizations may inquire about a local call for proposal for HPI funding. They may also request a copy of the community’s plan by contacting the federal city facilitator on homelessness at a local Service Canada Centre in each of the 61 designated communities.

**Designated communities**

**British Columbia / Yukon**
Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Kamloops, Victoria, Nelson, Prince George, Whitehorse

**Alberta / NWT / Nunavut**
Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Wood Buffalo, Medicine Hat, Yellowknife, Iqaluit

**Saskatchewan**
Regina, Prince Albert, Saskatoon

**Manitoba**
Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson

**Ontario**

**Québec**
Montréal, Québec City, Trois-Rivières, Drummondville, Sherbrooke, Saguenay, Gatineau

**New Brunswick**
Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton, Bathurst

**Prince Edward Island**
Charlottetown, Summerside

**Nova Scotia**
Halifax, Sydney (Cape Breton)

**Newfoundland and Labrador**
St. John’s
The basic theory behind partnerships is that working together and leveraging assets and resources is more effective than working in isolation. A partnership draws its strength from coordinating resources so that two or more individuals or groups can work toward a common goal.

Partnerships are especially important in addressing issues such as homelessness and poverty. Because they are multi-dimensional, these issues require multi-dimensional responses (such as affordable housing, employment, justice, training, child care, mental health, addictions, etc.). No one level of government, sector or organization can claim to be able to address these issues in isolation.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) acknowledges the importance of these partnerships and encourages communities to expand their partnerships. The Strategy aims to fully engage all interested service delivery groups that assist at-risk individuals—local health institutions, justice and housing authorities, faith-based organizations, service clubs and foundations, as well as the private sector—in order to implement broadly supported and durable solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness.

At the federal level, the HPS is also committed to strengthening collaboration with other departments that have a common interest in homelessness. Efforts are being made to explore how federal policies in areas such as health, justice and immigration can be better coordinated with homelessness policies and programs to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The HPS is also working with the provinces and territories to develop partnerships with the federal government and communities. The goal is to increase coordination of strategic investments and social supports leading to longer-term solutions for homelessness.

Community-based approaches to addressing social issues like homelessness seek to empower local organizations and individuals through an atmosphere of dignity and participation, with the goal of achieving durable results. Achieving this goal of individual and community empowerment requires collaborative efforts among all local partners—including the private sector.

Many companies intuitively recognize that healthy communities help create the right operating conditions for long-term sustainable enterprises. Driven by the belief that quality of life is inextricably linked with productivity, innovation and competitiveness, these businesses possess a strong sense of responsibility to give back to the communities in which they operate.

Homelessness is a highly visible and significant issue that affects the health, wealth and integrity of our communities. It is therefore in the interests of the private sector—as it is in the interests of us all—to work toward a more inclusive and caring society.

Today, many corporations are making significant contributions that result from a greater awareness of the social and environmental impact of their presence in communities. Corporate
social responsibility has become an important consideration in mainstream business practice and is increasingly influencing how companies operate.

Beyond philanthropy and the recognition that healthy communities are good for business, many companies are experiencing more direct economic benefits from their engagement activities. By acting in socially responsible ways, companies are able to improve one of their most valuable intangible assets—their brand or marketing reputation. Along with this benefit is the recognition that volunteer activities can become a source of employee motivation and team building, and can help strengthen values such as caring. These benefits can also lead to improved staff retention and reduced stress and absenteeism.

Some businesses are also looking at bridging their own business expansion with the housing and sheltering needs of the homeless. Companies are helping to provide meaningful employment to the homeless—a traditionally untapped labour source—and the homeless, in turn, are helping to addresses the labour shortages that many companies experience. The private sector is also benefiting as a partner in many procurement and construction activities.

- The provision of no-interest, no-profit mortgages or reduced rental fees is helping more individuals and families in need to access housing.
- Private-sector involvement has provided thousands of hours of volunteer time and expertise to support homeless charities across Canada.
- Companies have committed cash and gifts-in-kind (e.g., building materials, essential services).
- Free professional services, such as dentistry, have been offered to those in need. Clients have credited these services as contributing to improved self-confidence and creating more opportunities for job interviews. Some private companies are also using these partnerships as an opportunity to provide students with hands-on training.
- Employment training and job opportunities, by providing sustainable incomes, have helped move individuals and their families into independent housing.

These are just some examples of the many ways in which the private sector is engaging in the community effort to tackle homelessness. By helping their most vulnerable members, these organizations, together with other key partners, are contributing to the social and economic health of the community as a whole.
Celebrating Success

Through the power of partnerships, communities that are tackling the issues of homelessness are seeing remarkable and long-lasting results.

The strategy is based on a community plan that allows each community to determine its own needs and develop projects to meet those needs. The emphasis on community partnerships encourages all partners and levels of government to come together to create a plan with actions that make a positive difference in the lives of people in vulnerable situations.

Within these pages are just a few of the many examples of successful homelessness projects in Canada. These stories illustrate the power of communities, organizations and individuals whose efforts are rooted in a plan built on partnerships.
At 26, Frank* was homeless, living on the streets, and in and out of crack houses. With a high-risk lifestyle, he had contracted HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

By a stroke of luck, one rainy afternoon he ran into someone who would help turn his life around.

“It was wet so I ducked into a doorway to stay warm. That’s when I happened to meet Michelle Boutcher (Executive Director of the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador),” he recalls.

“Michelle took me by the hand and hooked me up with all the right people and right resources to set me straight.”

After the chance encounter, Frank became one of the first residents of the Tommy Sexton Centre, an emergency shelter and supportive housing facility for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Now, Frank is taking his medication, seeing a doctor regularly and getting help for his addictions.

“My health has improved dramatically,” said Frank. “Two years ago, I weighed only 98 pounds and was losing weight quickly. Now, I actually have a few extra pounds around my belly.”

The Tommy Sexton Centre is the only housing facility for people living with HIV/AIDS in Atlantic Canada. It owes its existence to the hard work of many people in the community.

“From the start, this project has been very community-driven,” said Boutcher. “It was a real community effort. It was just amazing to see how fast it happened.”

Since opening in September 2006, the Centre has provided short-term shelter to more than 85 men and women as well as supportive housing to eight people living with HIV/AIDS.

It is currently the only place in St. John’s that provides short-term shelter to women over 30. It also serves many youth in the community.

The $1.5-million complex has six apartments and four emergency shelter beds. It also houses the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, where a variety of other programs and services are provided, including HIV/AIDS prevention education and awareness, supportive services and a needle exchange program.
The Centre is the city’s first supportive housing project to incorporate universally accessible design and is energy efficient.

The Centre is named in honour of one of Newfoundland and Labrador’s most beloved entertainers.

Tommy Sexton was only 36 when he died of AIDS in 1993. The comedian, who climbed to fame as a member of the Codco comedy troupe, was the first celebrity in the province to disclose he had the disease.

For many in the province, he put a human face to AIDS.

His death was a serious blow to Canadian entertainment. Today the Tommy Sexton Centre celebrates his life and his legacy.

Tommy’s family helped spearhead the campaign to build the Centre. At 85, his mother Sara Sexton still visits local schools to talk about the son she lost to HIV/AIDS.

“Everyone in Newfoundland knows and loves her. She has really helped to raise awareness and to fight the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS,” said Boutcher.

For people living with HIV/AIDS, what makes the Centre unique is its access to health care. Residents are able to consult a family physician, visit the HIV clinic and stay on their HIV/AIDS medication. As a result, they have boosted their immune systems.

“This really speaks to the housing-first philosophy,” said Boutcher. “Without a clean, safe and affordable place to live, they are simply under too much stress to get stronger and healthier.”

The Tommy Sexton Centre is owned and operated by the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of these partners and the community at large, people like Frank now have access to a healthier, more stable life.

The project was headed by the St. John’s Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness. It drew support from two levels of government, community organizations and the private sector. Many members of the community organized charity drives to raise money for the Centre.

The Government of Canada contributed $832,500 to the project through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Additional funding was provided through the collaborative efforts of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Affordable Housing Agreement ($450,000) and additional provincial funding of $144,000 from NLHC. In-kind contributions were also provided to the project by the City of St. John’s and by the provincial department of Transportation and Works, which donated the land for the project.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
Ron* is a man in his early fifties with a developmental disability. He was happy living on the farm with his family. He helped with the chores and his contribution was much appreciated. In turn, he received the support and attention that he needed.

But Ron’s parents were worried. They knew that one day they would not be able to provide the care that Ron needed and that he would require outside help. This uncertainty concerned them and, as they aged, they began looking for a solution that would ensure their son would be well taken care of.

Living in a rural area, their options were limited. They were apprehensive about the prospect of leaving their son to live in an institution, and they feared the possibility that he would become homeless.
MacIntyre House: Ron is Home

Ron’s parents found out about the Souris Group Home Association, a non-profit corporation that provides housing for adults with a wide range of developmental disabilities and support needs. The Association runs MacIntyre House, a home for people with disabilities who can no longer be housed with their families.

As the only facility of its kind in Souris, MacIntyre House provides a permanent home for six men with developmental disabilities, and has one bed to accommodate short-term needs. Residents arrive from different backgrounds and circumstances, but typically the family members who provided care for them have passed away or are now unable to give the support and supervision required.

The alternative is bleak; without MacIntyre House some of the residents would be homeless.

The original facility was a warm and comforting place where the men felt completely at home, but there were some challenges. The old building required a lot of maintenance and was located in an area that was not easily accessible.

The Souris Group Home Association was able to acquire a former RCMP building worth over $90,000 through the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative, a component of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. With funding from a number of other sources, including Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the building has been transformed to accommodate MacIntyre House.

Acquiring the building was only the first step. Upgrades and retrofits had to be done to meet the needs of the residents. Fortunately, the people of Souris rallied around this project.

The parish priest quit smoking, took up running, and ran a marathon to raise $28,000. A potato farmer gave the project a cheque for $5,000. A number of service clubs organized events and drives to raise funds.

In March 2004, the residents moved to the new facility. It is within walking distance of the Harbour View Training Centre, where most of the residents work.

“This project is the result of actions by a large number of people and organizations,” said Veronica MacPhee, chairperson of MacIntyre House. “We could not have done this on our own. It is the sum of everyone’s participation, from the federal government to the kids who sell raffle tickets.”

And Ron? He loves his new place!

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.*
Sarah* had nowhere else to go. At 55, she had lost her job, her common-law husband had left her and she had hit rock bottom.

“I was a lost soul and a broken spirit. It was tough love from everyone I knew,” recalls Sarah, who struggles with alcoholism.

That’s when she turned to Holly House, a transition house for women in the Halifax-Dartmouth area.

For Sarah, support services and transitional housing made all the difference between homelessness and a home.

“Holly House has given me a lot of harmony,” she said. “When I get up in the morning, there is always someone here to support me.”

“I know that I can start a new chapter in my life with the hope, encouragement and support of its caring staff and residents,” she added.

Now, she is getting her life back on track with job training, addiction counselling and treatment programs.

“At Holly House, she has continued to grow and heal,” said Donna Phillips, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia. “She is taking baby steps and getting back on track with her career goals.”

Holly House opened its doors in April 2007, thanks to the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Other funding partners included community organizations, Kent Building Supply, and Greytop Construction, which provided discounts on services.

“Our residents are women recovering from addiction or mental health issues or fleeing domestic violence,” said Phillips. “Many come from homeless shelters or recovery programs.”

“When they come to Holly House, they feel they are not quite ready to live on their own yet,” she said. “It is a time of healing.”

At Holly House, an outreach worker provides support for women who have been charged with
offences or who are at risk for conflict with the law.

Residents have a community kitchen, community garden and access to a wide range of workshops on everything from anger management to setting personal boundaries.

There is also a food bank, clothing bank and relapse prevention support services with an addiction counselor on site. Residents can also take advantage of yoga and meditation programs.

The project owes its success to the original funding partners, as well as ongoing partnerships with local community organizations such as Alice House, Bryony House, the Marguerite Centre, the Adsum Centre, Phoenix Youth Programs and Community Action on Homelessness.

Local companies, which donated goods and services, were instrumental in helping to build the transition house. They continue to support Holly House with donations of everything from furniture to linens.

The Rodeo Lounge in Burnside recently adopted Holly House as its charity of the year. They organized several fundraisers, with all proceeds going to Holly House.

In November 2007, local Pharmasave drug stores also pitched in with the Holly Leaf campaign to support Holly House.

Holly House provides an opportunity for the Elizabeth Fry Society to combine its programs and residential services under one roof.

For more than 25 years, the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia has been helping women to make positive changes in their lives. The Society takes its name from the Quaker Elizabeth Fry, who crusaded for prison reforms for women in 19th century England.

Since then, Elizabeth Fry Societies across Canada continue to fight for better conditions for women in conflict with the law and those at risk.

“Many people are looking at Holly House as a best practice,” said Phillips. “It’s a good example of what can be done when the community and the private sector rally behind you.”

Thanks to Holly House, women like Sarah are able to find the support they need to make a new start in life. Already, three women who have lived in the temporary residence found the courage to move on to independent living.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
Mobile One is an innovative project that began with a mobile soup kitchen operating out of a retired Moncton city transit bus.

It all started in 2001, with the community plan to address homelessness in the Moncton area. The plan acknowledged how difficult it was for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to find a meal in the evenings and on weekends, when the local soup kitchens and food banks are closed.

“So we thought we could take the kitchen to them,” says Séan Tobin, managing director of Mobile One Community Services and a regional director for the New Brunswick Association of Food Banks.

Representatives of eight food banks, soup kitchens and shelters operating in Greater Moncton came together to create Community Mobile Soup Kitchens Inc. When the City of Moncton decided to retire four transit buses, one of them went to the project for a token fee of $1.

During meal service at the Ray of Hope Needy Kitchen where Tobin was then general manager, he put a bowl in the centre of the stage and asked the people who were using the kitchen to contribute to raise that dollar, under one condition. It had to be in pennies. “That dollar was not paid for by the project, it was paid by all of the people who use the Ray of Hope,” says Tobin.

Mobile One is a tremendous success in Moncton and the surrounding area with community support continuing to be very strong. Additional financial support comes from the provincial and municipal governments and a number of community organizations, faith communities, corporations and individuals.

Out of the mobile soup kitchen project came Atlantic Canada’s first mobile food pantry system. Now operating five mobile pantries, it delivers food from the existing warehouse to people in need. One of the mobile pantries is a first in Canada: a pantry specifically targeted to assist medical shut-ins and people over the age of 75 who still live in their own homes. Mobile One also operates a large Mobile Food Bank in the Moncton core, serving well over 500 families.

In 2006 some 13,012 volunteer hours were donated by volunteer drivers, on-board service crews and community and corporate groups. There were 270 volunteers involved in the project, not counting visiting groups of students, community service workers, and other groups who also donated time to the project.

Tobin says that the Mobile One project was started and has been successful thanks to the financial support of the Government of Canada’s homelessness program. He also says the project is something the community should be proud of.

“We want the people in the Greater Moncton area and everyone involved to pat themselves on the back and say, “Job well done.”
Many individuals and families at risk of homelessness depend on food banks. However, for the Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond, it is also important to help people become less dependent on food banks by providing them with an alternative solution so they don’t have to rely on them.

To reach this goal, the organization created Le SAC (Soutien Alimentaire du Comptoir), a discount store where users can purchase food for 15 percent less than cost. “This store helps people make the transition from receiving all their food for free to buying all their food at full price,” explains Sylvie Lejeune, head of the initiative and director of the Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond.

Users also appreciate this initiative. “Even though I’m not well off, I can finally choose what I want to eat,” says Jacques*, a regular Le SAC customer. “When I was going to the food bank, I just took what I was given. At Le SAC, I can make my own choices.”

In addition to obtaining food at reduced prices, Le SAC users can also improve the quality of their meals. Le SAC provides samples and recipes to those who want to learn to identify healthy, nutritious and economical foods. “By participating in the taste-testing demonstrations, I discovered barley soup,” says Maria*. “I had never even heard of it before since I’m from Colombia. Because of Le SAC, I now know how to make this delicious recipe!”

“Newcomers to Canada who use the organization’s services are thrilled to discover new foods, such as tourtière. It is always nice to see people enjoy our traditional dishes,” adds Lejeune.
To carry out this project, the Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond negotiated supply agreements with various local providers in order to purchase items at a low price. Those items are then resold for 15 percent less than cost. “We have seven grocers, a family owned business and a pharmacy that let us buy an unlimited number of their sale products. Some of them even deliver the merchandise to us,” explains Lejeune.

Contrary to what some people may think, merchants do not consider Le SAC to be a competitor. Having approached merchants about the project, the Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond discovered that they fully understood the purpose of the discount store. A number of them were even prepared to support the project, for example, the Jean Coutu chain of pharmacies provided shelving for the store. “We are happy to know that our shelves can help the organization better arrange the products it is selling,” says Daniel Benoît, owner of the Jean Coutu pharmacies in Drummondville.

According to Lejeune, the store’s partners understood how they could make a difference in the lives of individuals. “Now when someone is caught stealing food, merchants refer that person to us instead of calling the police,” she says. This example of cooperation shows the extent to which good partners can contribute to the well being of a community.

Since its official opening on June 6, 2006, the discount store has been highly successful. To date, 931 adults and children have bought food for less, and the store has 250 regular members. The Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond has also received many awards because of this initiative, including a recognition award for the Drummondville and Centre du Québec area, the Excellence Cascades award for Centre-du-Québec and the Paulhus Innovation award, which is presented at the annual community gala for the Drummond regional county municipality (RCM).

**Mission of the Organization**

The Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond is an emergency, non-profit food bank. Its mission is to help feed individuals and families in need in the Drummond RCM and to decrease the stress and anxiety associated with the inability to adequately feed one’s family.

The organization, which opened on September 25, 1991, operates five days a week and provides over 80 food baskets per day. Each year, it distributes over 13,895 bags of groceries to over 1,785 families (2,340 adults and 1,704 children).

The Comptoir Alimentaire Drummond receives federal homelessness funding to carry out its projects. It also receives $59,490 per year from the Agence Régionale de la Santé et des Services Sociaux. Of this amount, the organization uses $50,000 to buy perishable food items to help families in need.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.*
For 10 years James* had been living on Toronto’s streets in the Regent Park area. A crack user since 1992, he had settled for a life with no future.

“I was sitting on a grate one day and this lady approached me and said she could get me into housing and on social assistance,” he says. “I laughed. But I eventually agreed. I’ve been in this apartment for more than eight months.” James is no longer a user and is focusing on stabilizing his health and his addictions with the help of ongoing support. “Housing is one of the most important elements in my success. I’m moving toward a healthier, cleaner life.”

The outreach worker who originally helped James, and the housing support workers who continue to provide assistance as he makes the
Streets to Homes: Putting Housing First

transition from the streets to permanent housing, are all part of a Toronto housing program called “Streets to Homes.” This award-winning collaboration among all orders of government, not-for-profit agencies and health care providers has helped more than 1500 people move into permanent housing directly from Toronto’s streets, parks, squats, and ravines. Almost 90 percent remain in their homes.

“The philosophy behind the program is housing first,” says Phil Brown, General Manager of the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, the City division that oversees services for Toronto’s homeless people, the emergency shelter system and the social housing portfolio in the city.

“We believe that the best place to deal with issues such as mental or physical health and addictions is from the safety and dignity of your own home.”

Streets to Homes’ housing-first approach is resulting in dramatic boosts to the quality of life for its clients. Research among clients who have been housed through the program demonstrates that people are healthier, happier, and more optimistic about the future as a result of being housed and having the follow-up supports that are an integral part of the Streets to Homes program. Many reported using fewer drugs and less alcohol, with 31 percent of those who used drugs saying they had stopped completely. Another important finding of the research is that, once they are housed, Streets to Homes clients use fewer emergency services such as visits to hospital emergency rooms, which suggests that there are system-wide savings.

Most clients find homes in the private rental market, the result of win-win relationships developed by Streets to Homes. “Landlords with large portfolios need tenants and Streets to Homes delivers tenants who have the support of professional housing help workers. This is an advantage to the landlord, who has a contact person in the event of tenant issues, and an advantage to our clients who can see reduced rents and a choice of units across the city,” says Brown.

Clients choose where they live. Only three rules apply: rents get paid directly to the landlord, clients must agree to follow-up supports once housed, and clients must fill out an application for social housing. This is critical because the rent for many clients exceeds 30 percent of their income, the maximum that is set for rent-geared-to-income social housing.

An important reason for the success of Streets to Homes as a housing program is its complete focus on client needs. Nine out of 10 homeless people want permanent housing, according to the April 2006 Street Needs Assessment in Toronto. “We no longer ask clients ‘how can we help you?’” says Iain De Jong, Streets to Homes Manager since its start. “We ask: ‘how can we help you get into housing?’” This has led to better system coordination that addresses barriers that homeless people face in finding permanent housing. This coordination stretches across City divisions as well as to programs delivered by other orders of government and by the health-care sector.

Streets to Homes stands out as one of the success stories under federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding in Ontario, and is proving that many partners pulling together can deliver results even on the most challenging issues. The program is delivered through City of Toronto staff and 25 community not-for-profit
agencies that provide street outreach, housing follow-up supports, and other services, all using a coordinated case-management model. A committee made up of social service providers, health care professionals, psychiatrists, and people from the worlds of municipal government and business have provided guidance and advice to the Streets to Homes program since the beginning.

Streets to Homes has added new programs as service gaps are identified for a particular client group—all part of the overall strategy to end street homelessness. For example, the mobile Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team (M DOT) was created in partnership with community agencies working with two health care providers and the City. It provides street-level assessments of individuals with mental health and/or addictions issues severe enough to interfere with their ability to choose housing.

Another example of ongoing service development is the Post-Incarceration Housing Program, a partnership among the City and three organizations with existing relationships with Toronto area correctional facilities and courts. This program helps to find housing for homeless people who have just completed a jail sentence. The John Howard Society, one of the partners, recently won a Donner Award for the project, recognizing their work as one of the best social innovations in Canada.

People are noticing the success of Streets to Homes both in Canada and abroad, recognizing it as a successful model that could work elsewhere. Representatives have been invited to national and international conferences to share information about the approach, and staff from the program have assisted over 80 other jurisdictions considering similar programs.

“This program is about getting results with the resources at hand, a model that we think can be replicated in other parts of the world,” concludes Brown.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
Hannah’s Place: Making Change Happen

At Hannah’s Place, hope begins with a warm bed and a hot shower.

Since opening in May 2007, Hannah’s Place Emergency Shelter, part of Siloam Mission, has been bringing people in from the cold of Winnipeg’s streets.

For many, it is a place to seek comfort and care from the hardships of homelessness.

“Everyone deserves some love, care and comfort,” said Wayne Smith, Director of Hannah’s Place. “For a lot of people, a shelter means just a mattress on the floor. Here at Hannah’s Place, there are beds, clean sheets, showers and nice décor. There is no hopelessness.”

Hannah’s Place provides 100 emergency beds for Winnipeg’s less fortunate and features warm beds, clean sheets, shower stalls and change rooms.

Hannah’s Place is more than just a shelter, according to Wayne Smith. “It’s not just about having a warm dry place and a pillow to rest your head,” said Smith. “It is about bringing back a person’s dignity.

“At Hannah’s Place, it’s about helping people who have become homeless. Things happen in our lives that sometimes catch us unawares. I’ve seen a man who lost his life partner of 25 years and couldn’t cope. Circumstances change and people lose everything—their money, their job and their self-esteem.”

Its dry shelter policy has encouraged some residents to stay clean and sober in a desire to have a safe place to sleep. In fact, many are asking for early wake-up calls so they can shower, dress and go out to look for work at the local temp agency.

“We wanted to offer a better alternative for people to change their situation,” said Smith. “In the six months since we opened, we have not had a fight or a raised voice so it has worked really well.”

The shelter is named in honour of 11-year-old homeless crusader Hannah Taylor, who founded Winnipeg’s Ladybug Foundation. Taylor began raising
funds for homeless people at the age of five, after seeing a homeless person eating out of a garbage can. To date, she has raised over $1 million for charity.

Since 1987, Siloam Mission, which runs Hannah’s Place, has grown to become one of Canada’s leading agencies serving poor and homeless people.

As many as 2,000 homeless people live in Winnipeg, one of world’s coldest capital cities, and on average between 400 and 500 people come through the doors of Siloam Mission every day.

Siloam Mission offers people hot meals, clothing and food hampers, along with counseling, educational and employment training services. But it doesn’t do it alone.

The Mission serves as a connecting point between Winnipeg’s caring citizens and the city’s less fortunate.

“This is a place of dignity, a place of warmth and safety for Winnipeg’s homeless,” said John Mohan, Chief Executive Officer of Siloam Mission.

“Addressing the plight of the homeless defines us as a compassionate society—a society that respects the human right for all members of society to access safe shelter.”

The Mission forms strong partnerships with governments and service groups, schools and churches, individuals, corporations and foundations. It also partners with other inner-city agencies and Christian ministries.

Hannah’s Place is also the result of many partnerships.

“A lot of people have worked hard to make this shelter happen,” said Mohan. “We appreciate their investment on behalf of Winnipeg’s homeless.”

The Government of Canada’s federal homelessness strategy, the Thomas Sill Foundation, the Winnipeg Foundation and the Ladybug Foundation all contributed toward construction costs. Capstone Construction, Loewen Mechanical, CEL Electric, and Northwind Innovations also contributed to the project.

Funds for operating the shelter are provided by a partnership between the Province of Manitoba and private donors.

Every month, volunteers donate over 2700 hours of time to Siloam Mission. Though volunteers come from all walks of life, they have one thing in common: they all seem to get back more than they give.

Volunteers provide everything from meals to free haircuts, books and professional medical services.

“Since coming to Siloam Mission, I have seen the many volunteers who give of their time. It’s their love, grace and compassion that make the greatest impact on the lives of the less fortunate,” said Smith.

In 2006, Siloam Mission provided more than 169 000 meals to the hungry, 2700 food hampers to the needy, and recorded more than 9680 visits to its clothing bank. It also provided nearly 5000 people with help and referrals.

In short, it has changed thousands of lives.
The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op (CNYC) has come a long way in just 10 years. The co-op was the brainchild of Rusty Chartier and Owen Fortosky, who in 1996 had a great idea: to start a co-op to teach young people work and life skills and help them earn a decent living at the same time.

The founders had three main goals: to develop a program for youth that would encourage the principles of cooperation, to give youth the opportunity to earn spending money, and to reach these goals in ways that are environmentally friendly.

Now, with federal Homelessness strategy funding, CNYC recently transformed an old building in the city’s core area into a community centre for homeless girls, providing them with an alternative to life on the streets.

“Above all, we wanted to provide a safe place for young women who have survived the streets,” said Deborah Hanley, Business Manager for CNYC.

“Now, the girls are coming here instead of being out on the streets.”

The renovated building, which opened its doors in May, allows CNYC to expand its job skills and education program and focus on girls who have dropped out of school. It also provides laundry facilities for these girls, many of whom are homeless.
It is located next to the sponsor’s existing office where youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who live in Saskatoon’s inner city, earn income while engaging in projects that connect them to their peers, their community and continuing education and employment opportunities. But the group will not turn away youth under that age who show up at their door. Programs for younger children encourage them to reengage into the school system and their community.

“For many of these girls, the reality of their lives is pretty stark,” said Anita Verlangen, Executive Director of the Saskatoon Environmentors Co-operative Ltd., which runs the project. “We wanted to give them a place to break out of the cycle of poverty and abuse. They needed a place for girls only so the healing could begin.”

From the start, CNYC has pursued economic ventures with environmental and cooperative themes.

Today, it is helping inner-city youth to make a living in the furniture business and is branching out to organic greenhouse produce.

Co-op staff and youth market their products to the Saskatoon community.

Under the project, the youth decide what projects CNYC is going to undertake. Youth share responsibility for maintaining the co-op’s building. In return, about 80 percent of the money generated by the co-op is returned to the youth; the remainder covers the co-op’s expenses.

During the past year, the youth of CNYC have earned thousands of dollars by building wood furniture and compost bins and growing organic produce.

These young people can learn a profitable trade, such as woodworking, bicycle repair, quilting, beadwork and sewing, while working toward finishing high school.

Under the carpentry program, they are taught how to make everything from outdoor to dining-room furniture. Not only do young people learn strong carpentry skills, but they also learn how to be productive, respectful and diligent employees.

Working in partnership with the Saskatoon Catholic School Division, CNYC is also responsible for the groundbreaking Community Credit Program.

This program takes education out into the community to engage youth who have left the school system. It has helped many troubled youth develop valuable life and job skills while earning high school credits.

So far, 20 young people have returned to school or found a job this year. Another 100 have earned credits toward a high school diploma.

To achieve its goals, CNYC has established partnerships with the province of Saskatchewan, Quint Development Corporation, FirstSask Credit Union, the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School District, Communities for Children (C4C), the City of Saskatoon and other local organizations.

It is these ongoing partnerships and the generous and cooperative spirit of the people of Saskatoon that allow CNYC to offer a wide variety of programs for at-risk youth and to make a real difference in their lives and the lives of future generations.
Kootenay Lodge: Opening Doors for Aboriginal People

John* became one of the first residents of the new Kootenay Lodge after living on the streets of Calgary in his wheelchair for 10 years.

“For people like him, this is huge,” said Katherine Medos, Wholistic Coordinator for Brain Injury Services at the lodge. “He went from being out on the streets to having a room he can call his own.”

Now, John is doing his own laundry, cooking, cleaning and grocery shopping.

“He has accomplished so much in such a short period of time,” said Medos.

For many Aboriginal people with disabilities, the story is all too familiar. They are locked in a cycle of poverty without being able to find support and affordable housing.

To overcome these challenges, Kootenay Lodge combines housing with social supports to provide a stable environment for residents. It helps to integrate them into the community with skills development, education and volunteer opportunities.

When it opened its doors in September 2007, the Kootenay Lodge became the first housing facility in Western Canada for homeless Aboriginal people with disabilities.

The lodge is named after Beryl Kootenay, who is recognized for her work in advocating for Aboriginal people with physical disabilities. She was instrumental in bringing the issue to public attention. The lodge
Kootenay Lodge: Opening Doors for Aboriginal People

grew out of an urgent need to help homeless Aboriginal people with disabilities in the Calgary area.

Finding a way to better house these people became a priority for John Currie, former Chair of the Calgary Homeless Foundation and the Calgary Community Land Trust.

“At the time, there were disabled Aboriginal people who were living on the streets, rolling their wheelchairs through the snow,” said Currie. “They were living the most horrible life you can imagine. I don’t think any Canadian would condone that.”

Today, Kootenay Lodge provides safe, supported, community-based housing for Aboriginal people with disabilities who would not otherwise have a home. The lodge has been adapted to meet the needs of its residents and to meet universal accessibility standards.

Residents are offered smudge ceremonies, workshops on the Medicine Wheel, and traditional Aboriginal foods, such as buffalo and bannock. Elders visit to share their advice and wisdom.

“A lodge is really a place of healing and growth in Aboriginal culture,” said Hauser. “At Kootenay Lodge, we want to reintroduce these people to their Aboriginal culture. That is absolutely key.”

Staff and residents at the lodge are given orientation sessions, titled “Not Just Beads and Feathers,” about Aboriginal culture.

Staff work in partnership with services in Calgary, including the Native Addiction Centre and the Elbow River Healing Lodge, to offer programs with a native perspective.

“This project is built on a tremendous partnership effort with the Calgary Homeless Foundation, the Calgary Community Land Trust, URSA and the native community,” said Hauser.

Under federal homelessness funding, the Government of Canada provided $431,535 for the purchase and renovation of the facility.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provided $320,000 in funding under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

Other capital funding was provided by the Government of Alberta, the Calgary Homeless Foundation and other generous donors in the community.

Owned by the Calgary Community Land Trust, Kootenay Lodge is operated by the Universal Rehabilitation Service Agency. Operating funds are provided by the Government of Canada, the Province of Alberta, the United Way and donations from the community.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
At 35, Henry* was a well-respected family man, working as a bank manager.

In reality, his life was in ruins. He was struggling with an addiction to cocaine and heroin.

“Everything came crashing down on me in 1998,” said Henry. “That’s when I lost everything—my job, my house, my wife, my kids.”

Coming to the Phoenix Centre was a turning point in his life.

“It has just been a phenomenal experience for me. It has taught me that I do have worth as a person,” said Henry, now 46.

“At the Phoenix Centre, the atmosphere is so full of support and care and concern that you cannot help but grow as a person,” he said.

Today, Henry is working at a high-tech call centre at the Phoenix Centre. He has begun making child care payments. And after a recent court appearance, he may have an opportunity to see his two daughters again for the first time in two years.

“This whole experience has taught me how to be a productive member of society,” said Henry. “Now, I want to give back to the community.”

The Phoenix Centre is a $10.9-million integrated addiction services centre that offers a wide range of services to people recovering from addictions and mental illness.

“The Phoenix Centre is really about community building community,” said Michael Wilson, Executive Director of the Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society. “This Centre represents a collaborative community social and economic development approach to addiction issues that considers the broader determinates of health.”

The Phoenix Centre is the first development of its kind in British Columbia, combining clinical addiction services with transitional housing, employment and education services.

The Centre provides 36 transitional housing units and 28 addiction recovery beds.

It also provides health and mental health services to help people with substance abuse problems to build the strength, skills and self-sufficiency to reintegrate into the community.

The combination of care and services helps to ensure residents have support at all stages of their treatment and recovery.

“Addiction is a complex issue. That’s why we wanted to do things differently,” said Wilson. The Phoenix Centre’s service delivery model has been designed to mirror the complexity of the community needs it aims to address.
Phoenix Centre: Helping People Overcome Addiction

“Not only do we want to help people reduce their substance abuse, but we also want to help them participate in the labour market. We cannot afford to leave anybody behind in this economy.”

The Centre is operated by the non-profit Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society. The Society uses an innovative approach to address problems of homelessness, substance abuse and unemployment by providing a range of supports to meet each person’s unique needs.

Most residents stay at the Phoenix Centre for a minimum of 90 days in the early stabilization program before finalizing action plans to return to work or school or enter the transitional housing program.

Through a partnership with Kwantlen University College, a learning program has been developed to help people in recovery with education and upgrading.

Residents are offered classes in completing their General Educational Development (GED), strengthening career plans, academic upgrading and skills assessment. Classes are offered in financial literacy in partnership with Vancity Savings Credit Union.

The Phoenix Centre also has a florist and a coffee shop that operate as a training centre for residents. Another business partnership with High-Tech Executive Coach provides job training at a small call centre located at Phoenix Centre.

“It’s the synergy of all the partnerships and all these interventions working together that produce results,” said Wilson.

Offices for service providers and partners are located throughout the new building.

The community centre in the basement features an alumni office, gym, games room, crafts room, workshop room and meditation room. It provides opportunities for residents to improve their physical health and develop healthy lifestyles.

Since the Phoenix Centre opened its doors in March 2007, 47 people who have gone through the program have already found work.

“When you consider that these people were homeless, undernourished and addicted when they came to the Phoenix Centre, that’s an extraordinary outcome,” said Wilson.

“The phoenix is a powerful symbol of transformation. That is really what the centre and our clients are all about,” said Roy Dickey, Board Chair of the Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society. “The Phoenix Centre represents a significant transformation in thinking about the complex issues surrounding homelessness and addictions.”

Building the Phoenix Centre was truly a community effort.

The Government of Canada contributed over $3.72 million in federal homelessness funding, $1.55 million through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and $270,000 through Western Economic Diversification. The land for the Centre was also purchased with the assistance of federal homelessness funding. Another $2.48 million was provided by the province of British Columbia.

Other capital partners included Real Estate Foundation of B.C., the Vancouver Foundation, the Rotary Club of Surrey, Vancity, Woodwards Foundation, Peace Arch Hospital, the City of Surrey, Lark Construction, Guildford Rotary, Coast Capital Savings, and a private donation.

In 2004, Vancity members chose the Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society as the recipient of the $1 Million Award for improving the lives of British Columbia residents. The Centre also recently won the Surrey Board of Trade Business Excellence award in the non-profit category.

These awards help recognize the powerful transformations that are taking place in the lives of the residents of the Phoenix Centre—transformations that will benefit the individuals and the community where they live for years to come.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
Iqaluit’s new soup kitchen is serving up hope to local residents, including homeless people.

The new building, near the former site of St. Jude’s Cathedral, will soon be the permanent home to the city’s busy soup kitchen and new thrift shop.

It provides a central location for services for the needy of Iqaluit.

“This project brings new hope and the potential for new skills and opportunities for our residents,” said Peter Scott, who when not providing project management support and volunteering for the soup kitchen, is also the president of the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

The Government of Canada has contributed to this project through federal homelessness funding. Local businesses and organizations have also donated to this project.

The soup kitchen is a beacon of hope, especially during the long, harsh winters of Nunavut.

It shows residents that the soup kitchen is here to stay.

“For me, this is more than just a bricks and mortar building,” said Scott.

“It’s a place where people can sit down and enjoy a hot meal together and share their fellowship with others in similar situations.”

The new building for the soup kitchen will offer soup and sandwiches, warm clothing or a blanket. It will offer life skills counseling, when the person is ready to make a transition from homelessness.

It also provides an opportunity for residents to give back to their community.

“People shouldn’t have to scrounge around for food,” Scott said. “Instead of just offering a handout, we would rather have people participate in the operation of the soup kitchen by chopping vegetables, learning to make a stew or helping with clean-up.”

Scott envisions that the soup kitchen will go beyond its mandate by offering counseling services, including résumé writing and job interview skills through the outreach program of St. Simon and Saint Jude’s Anglican Church.

Revenues from the thrift shop will help cover the operating costs for the building, making the project sustainable.

The store will be run by Iqaluit’s Piviniit Society, which views the project as a good way to make cheap clothing available, while diverting waste from the city’s growing landfill. Residents will be able to buy reasonably priced clothes and small household items.

“The temperature with wind chill is often about -45 here in the winter, so not too many people can cross town for a hot meal. The new central location will help to make a difference,” said Scott.
Qayuqtuvik Soup Kitchen: Bringing Hope to Nunavut

The project was over two years in the making. By all accounts, it was a real community effort.

Much of the construction was done by volunteer work crews from the local construction industry.

“Just about every construction company in town has donated building materials, reduced prices or provided labour,” said Scott. “Our list of community partners is growing.”

The use of land for the new building was donated by the Bishop of the Arctic.

Construction of the new building was a success in itself as the northern location provided many obstacles in construction, including ordering and packaging materials for the short sealift season, a short construction season and extreme weather conditions.

Demolition began in March 2006 at the old mission house next to the igloo-shaped church. After the ice broke up, construction supplies arrived on the first sealift.

The new location for the soup kitchen has something previous sites lacked—a kitchen. In the past, food had to be prepared elsewhere and delivered to various locations for the daily meal service.

The permanent home will help the soup kitchen offer better and fresher food.

Construction of the building was also used by Nunavut Arctic College and the Baffin Correctional Centre as a training ground for a pre-trades program that ended in December 2007.

Nine men on early release from the correctional centre did framing, insulation and vapour barrier for the building’s walls, roof and windows. Most never received formal training in the skilled trades.

“They gained valuable experience on the construction site,” said Scott. “They were exposed to everything from carpentry, plumbing, mechanical and electrical work.”

Having completed their exams, they are now eligible for apprenticeships with local employers.

“I can tell you, I worked side-by-side with several of these guys. I was really impressed by their skills and attitude,” added Scott.

The soup kitchen began about six years ago when Elders and residents recognized the need to provide basic food services to the homeless in Iqaluit, a town of about 6,100 people.

The organization that runs the soup kitchen is the Qayuqtuvik Society. Qayuqtuvik means “the place of broth” in Inuktitut. Members are all volunteers who actively participate in activities of the soup kitchen.

Soup kitchen volunteers have struggled to keep the program going for years.

Organizations such as the Qikiqtani Inuit Association have rescued the soup kitchen several times, giving it free space in the old ‘dome’ building, as well as donating its current facility.

In 2004, the soup kitchen faced disaster when the sprinkler system froze and flooded the entire building.

“At one point, we were serving soup, sandwiches and hot meals out of the tailgates of our vehicles because people were still hungry,” recalls Scott.

The soup kitchen is open seven days a week. On the weekends, they serve a heartier meal, like a stew, spaghetti or lasagna. During peak months over the winter, they serve as many as 60 clients during weekdays and 40 during the weekends.
A new national information system is helping community shelters paint a more accurate picture of homelessness in communities across Canada.

The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), as part of the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), is designed to increase understanding of the magnitude, characteristics and causes of homelessness in Canada.
One important part of the HIFIS initiative is its software, which allows shelters and other service providers to record client information to manage their operations. It allows communities to collect and analyze data on shelter use in Canada and to measure the progress that communities are making in reducing homelessness.

Yellowknife was the first community in Canada to send enough data to the national HIFIS team for statistical analysis. The study paints a picture of who is using Yellowknife’s shelters, covering gender, age and patterns of use. It will help to evaluate Yellowknife’s capacity to house homeless people.

“Here is a community that really embraced HIFIS. It generated enough information that it was able to send reports back to Ottawa,” said June Beisiegel, Senior Program Consultant for the HPS.

“It is very difficult to track the homeless population due to various factors,” said Dayle Handy, HIFIS Community Coordinator and Homelessness Coordinator for the City of Yellowknife. “The HIFIS program works with shelters to track information vital to program development. This data collection system allows us to understand our homeless population and shelter use at greater depth.”

The City of Yellowknife has four shelter organizations operating in the community, representing seven shelters. The shelters have a total of 150 beds for homeless people, split between emergency beds and transitional housing.

By continuing to collect more data, researchers and shelters can gain new insights into why people are homeless in Yellowknife. As a result, the HPS and their partners can use this information to find local solutions to local problems.

“In future, we are going to gather more fields of information. This will give us a much broader understanding of homelessness in Yellowknife,” said Handy.

“Our ultimate goal is to increase our understanding and awareness of homelessness. We want to work to end homelessness in Yellowknife,” she added.

At the national level, HIFIS has become a powerful tool for researchers and policy makers alike.

Data collected by HIFIS users provides a portrait of shelters and their clients. The data are analyzed and shared with researchers and policy makers.

The National Database is built through the signing of data-sharing agreements and receiving data from shelters, non-profit organizations and various levels of government.

To date, close to 300 data-sharing agreements have been signed across Canada.
By the time he was in his early teens, it was clear that the relationship between Martin* and the authorities would be a rocky one.

Growing up in Whitehorse, Martin was in and out of jail with a long record of criminal offences. He spent years living on the streets. He was later diagnosed with full Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD).

Now 30, Martin is staying out of trouble. Thanks to the one-on-one supports offered by the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon (FASSY), he has a nice place to live, holds down a part-time job with the local temporary agency and spends time with his two children.

“He’s managed to stay out of jail and out of trouble,” said Lilliam Sequeira Duran, Acting Executive Director for the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder has only recently been recognized as a major cause of problems that often lead to homelessness, addiction and trouble with the law. But awareness is growing and more promising community solutions and supports are emerging.

The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon has developed a successful program to help the public gain a better understanding of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder and improve the quality of life for those living with the condition.
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon: Making a Difference for Adults Living with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder

The program, called “Trying Differently”, helps adults like Martin with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder find living space and support with local community members.

Under the federal homelessness funding, the Government of Canada provided over $162,000 for the “Trying Differently” project.

Support workers spend whatever time is necessary to help their clients succeed. They are on call 24/7 to help with everything from finding furniture to picking up groceries. They also go to appointments with probation officers and assist those who have completed their jail terms. The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon also provides lunch five days a week for its clients.

Sequeira Duran, who has an 11-year-old foster daughter with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, says she wants people to understand that it is the community’s responsibility to come together to prevent future generations of children from being born with the disorder.

“In some cases, we are in our fourth generation of people affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder up here,” said Sequeira Duran.

“We are trying to spread the message of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder into the community,” she explained. “The message is that when we work with people with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, we have to try differently, rather than harder. We are the ones that have to change (our way of thinking).”

“We are working with a group of people who have been victimized their whole lives,” said Sequeira Duran. “For some, violence, crime and addiction has become the norm. We want them to feel they have a place where they belong. By modelling and providing safe activities, we want to show them they can lead a better life.”

It is hoped that this project will serve as a model for communities throughout the Yukon and Canada.

“Our number one goal is to find these people a safe and stable place to live,” said Sequeira Duran. But we don’t measure success by that alone. As much as possible, we try to keep them busy with positive and safe activities during the day, after hours and during weekends, so that they don’t get into trouble.”

“With one-on-one support and positive role models, we have been able to reduce the crime being committed by these individuals by at least 60 percent,” she added.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder is a term that describes a wide range of disabilities that may affect people whose mothers drank any amount of alcohol while they were pregnant.

Those affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder have a wide range of symptoms. Children and adults who are affected may present problems such as learning difficulties, hyperactivity, difficulty managing anger due to unreasonable expectations and sensory overload. Some may have undetected serious medical problems.

Secondary issues may develop over time due to the lack of support addressing addictions, homelessness, mental health issues, as well as social and emotional issues.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder is an equal-opportunity affliction. People of all ages and backgrounds may be affected.
Diagnosis is often difficult to establish because it requires a team of medical professionals with a strong knowledge of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder and related training.

Those diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder never “recover” or stop needing the support provided by organizations such as the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon.

It’s estimated that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder affects about 1 percent of people living in Canada. This means that there may be about 300,000 affected people living in Canada today.

In the Yukon, about six babies out of every 100 are born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, according to the centre’s statistics.

Despite efforts to provide information to the community about the effects of alcohol on the fetus, including warning labels on all alcohol products sold in the Yukon, the number of people diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder continues to grow.

So far, one of the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon’s programs has helped 20 adults with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder find and maintain safe housing.

The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon also works to help the public gain a better understanding of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder through workshops, fundraisers and training sessions in the community.

The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon has built a strong network of support with all aspects of the community, including police, probation officers, social workers, teachers, child-care workers and government workers.

The Yukon Government also provided funding to the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society of the Yukon to support the “Little Help from My Friends” program and other projects.

*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.