

***What Works: Effective Policies and  
Programs for the Homeless Population  
in Canada***

**Final Report**

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## *Abstract*

The purpose of this study is to undertake a broad synthesis and analysis that critically examines federal, provincial, sub-provincial and international instruments, policies, and practices aimed at fostering the inclusion of homeless persons through:

- Employment related activities that increase labour market attachment and integration;
- Opportunities for skills development; and
- Higher literacy and essential skills achievement via effective policy and program development strategies.

While the goal of the study is to examine Canadian policies and programs, experiences from other countries, notably the United States, England and Scotland, were reviewed to offer a broader perspective on the Canadian experience.



## *Résumé*

Cette étude a pour but de constituer une synthèse et une analyse générales qui jettent un œil critique sur les politiques, les pratiques et les instruments fédéraux, provinciaux, infra-provinciaux et internationaux visant à favoriser l'inclusion des sans-abri en vertu des mécanismes suivants :

- des activités liées à l'emploi qui améliorent l'attachement et l'intégration au marché du travail;
- des possibilités de développement des compétences;
- une amélioration des niveaux d'alphabétisation et l'obtention des compétences essentielles au moyen de stratégies efficaces d'élaboration de politiques et de programmes.

Cette étude a pour but d'examiner les politiques et les programmes du Canada, mais on a aussi passé en revue l'expérience des autres pays, notamment les États-Unis, l'Angleterre et l'Écosse, pour offrir une perspective générale de l'expérience du Canada.



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# *1. Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to undertake a broad synthesis and analysis that critically examines federal, provincial, sub-provincial and international instruments, policies, and practices aimed at fostering the inclusion of homeless persons through:

- Employment related activities that increase labour market attachment and integration;
- Opportunities for skills development; and
- Higher literacy and essential skills achievement via effective policy and program development strategies.

While the goal of the study is to examine Canadian policies and programs, experiences from other countries, notably the United States, England and Scotland, were reviewed to offer a broader perspective on the Canadian experience.

## **1.1 Method**

The first stage of the study was a literature review that focused on materials published in English and French from Canada, the United States, the U.K., and Europe, since 1990. This cut-off date was chosen to reflect the most recent programs and knowledge about employment policies for homeless persons. Furthermore, in Canada especially, the issue of homelessness is relatively recent; for example the federal National Homelessness Initiative was announced in 1999.

For the literature review, researchers searched major indexes and databases through various library systems and electronic data bases such as Academic Search Premier (EBSCO), PsycExtra, Social Sciences Index, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, Readers' Guide Abstracts, Web of Science, and ProQuest using combinations of words relating to homelessness and work, employment, skills, labour, literacy, jobs, vocation/vocational, reinsertion, training and reintegration. Canadian, U.S. and European web sites were reviewed. For Canada, some of the sites included Raising the Roof, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC); U.S. sites included the Department of Labour, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and in Europe, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANSTA), Communities Scotland, Off the Streets into Work, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and Social Exclusion Unit.

The second stage of the work consisted of interviews with key informants in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. While the scope of the study did not allow for a review of individual initiatives, key informants in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal were asked about what programs were being applied in the individual cities. This information was documented and used to build up a list of key informants at the provincial level to understand how provincial programs might be used. Key informants also were asked about reports or studies that might be pertinent.

## 1.2 Scope and Limitations

This study is primarily an overview of policies and programs. It should be noted that few policies that explicitly address the issue of homelessness and employment were found. This is especially true for the Canadian situation. The complexity of the issue of homelessness, education, and labour market attachment as well as the wealth of research and studies of each of these issues individually has meant that anything but a cursory examination of the issues proved to be beyond the scope of this study.

There is a divide in the policy response to homelessness and to employment. The first is a relatively recent phenomenon especially as it concerns the “new homelessness” (discussed below) and for Canada, which has experienced relatively high levels of homelessness only in the last decade. Furthermore, as the discussion on definitions underlines, the question of homelessness has primarily been situated as a problem of “houselessness” and efforts have been directed at helping people leave the street and unstable housing.

Employment on the other hand has been a concern of government for decades as has income support for those who cannot work. In recent years, some effort has been made to meld the two with programs that link welfare to work. However, the programs that address the question of employment are targeted at a large population, with a large range of issues and capacities. Those who are homeless are a small fraction of this group and few programs within the strictly employment universe were found that address their needs. This is especially true in the Canadian context where programs developed using Employment Insurance (EI) funds target those who are already attached to the labour force and receive EI, thereby removing many, if not most, people who are homeless.

The scope of the study did not allow examination of programs and policies that are being implemented in provinces other than British Columbia (B.C.), Ontario and Quebec. Furthermore, as discussed in the conclusions, because employment and homelessness programs and policies remain distinct, it is proposed that the combination of these two areas occur at the level of initiatives themselves rather than at the policy or program level.

Finally, two sub-populations of homeless persons are not included in this report; youth and Aboriginal persons. Within the context of the Human Resources and Social Development Canada process to undertake the What Works mandates, two contracts were given to study specifically these populations. In an effort to avoid duplication, this report does not cover these groups.

## 1.3 Organization of the Report

The report is divided into 12 sections. It begins with an overview of homelessness, including definitions of homelessness and a description of who is homeless. The next section presents an overview of education and labour market dynamics and changes that have occurred over the last few decades. This is followed by a description of the links between homelessness and employment. Descriptions of programs and policies in Canada, the U.S. and Europe follow. Next is a discussion of barriers and challenges to employment initiatives for people who are

homeless, followed by a discussion of different types of employment initiatives. The final sections present conclusions and suggestions for further research.

The literature review completed for the first stage of this study has been incorporated into this final report.



## 2. *Background: Homelessness*

### 2.1 The Definition of Homelessness

The first stage in understanding who is homeless is to define the term. The language that is used to describe the situation of homelessness is important in the overall understanding of the phenomenon, including its causes, pervasiveness and solutions. Some studies make a distinction between *houselessness*, which focuses on the housing situation of an individual and *homelessness* a definition that includes a person's social situation. This distinction is important in the conceptualization of the causes since “the first raises the general problem of the connections between poverty and housing, and the second, the question of those types and processes of social exclusion that are exacerbated by the loss of housing” (Edgar, Doherty, and Mina-Coull 1999).

Definitions of homelessness that are rooted in the housing situation often revolve around the relationship between an individual and physical protection from the elements (shelter or a house) (Daly 1996). For example, in the United States, the *Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act* of 1987 defines homelessness in fairly narrow terms, what might be classified as the absolute, literal or visible homeless: those who not only lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence but also have a primary night-time residence that is a shelter, institution or public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation.

Some definitions incorporate not only unstable housing, but include inadequate shelter, even if it is on a long-term basis, as well as threatened eviction from housing. This inclusion of instability and unsuitability de facto pulls those who are at risk into the realm of homelessness. Furthermore, these definitions begin to encompass causal factors. A number of countries have incorporated these concepts. In Canada, many researchers and practitioners have adopted a variant of the United Nations 1987 definition of absolute and relative homelessness (Pomeroy and Frojmovic 1995; Daly 1996), which incorporates the notion of inadequacy and instability and spills over to non-housing issues: homelessness includes not only those who have no homes and live either outdoors or in emergency shelters or hostels, but also those whose dwellings do not meet United Nations (UN) standards including protection from the elements, access to safe water and sanitation, affordable price, secure tenure, personal safety, and accessibility to employment, education and health care. Thus the UN definition of relative homelessness includes the notion of the “precariously housed” or those “at risk” of homelessness, and in touching on employment, education and health enter the realm of social exclusion. The Canadian National Homelessness Initiative has incorporated the UN definition and includes both *absolute homelessness*, that refers to those living on the street, in temporary shelters or in locations not meant for human habitation, and *relative homelessness* or those “at risk” referring to those who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing or those living in inadequate shelter.

The definition of homelessness also can be based on the notion of social exclusion, referring not only to housing but also to exclusion from livelihood, social security, consumption, and political choice. Homelessness, then, is not a singular state but is viewed as the most severe form of social exclusion. This definition includes the notion of social ties. Research has indicated that homeless persons are not only materially poor but also lack social networks, including family and have difficulty gaining access or using other social institutions. “The majority of those who become roofless and end up on the street or in an emergency shelter for homeless people are poor, have no stable work, have weak health, can no longer rely on family and friends for help and are not well equipped to take part in or make use of the mainstream culture” (Avramov 1999). This definition of homelessness then begins to examine the phenomenon as a process rather than simply a condition of “non-housing”.

An important aspect of all definitions is the pattern or cycle of homelessness and this has implications for policy. This can be seen as a continuum which includes at one extreme a prolonged or *chronic* state; one which homeless persons move in and out of constantly (*episodic*), and at the other extreme a *temporary* situation which never re-occurs (also called transitional or crisis). Kuhn and Culhane (1998) point out that 80% of single adults using shelters in New York City and Philadelphia do so once, for a short period of time. Being temporarily homeless is usually due to an extraordinary event and quickly resolved, while those who are chronically homeless are in and out of the shelter system for months or years, and have multiple health, mental health or other issues (Daly 1996; Springer et al. 1998).

Data from the Toronto shelter system describes three distinct patterns of use by the homeless population: emergency, transitional and chronic. Emergency use, the most common, refers to few visits of short duration (one or two days); transitional is characterized by fewer visits of longer duration (30 to 180 days), and chronic users, which constitute 17% of the cases and occupied 46% of bed nights over the nine year period (the equivalent of 365 days or more) (Springer et al. 1998). Most chronic users are found to be older, single men and chronic users typically face multiple challenges such as health and mental health issues, skill deficits, incarceration and family breakdown. Use of the system for more than a year appears to reduce the chance of permanent exit from the system (Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force 1999). However recent studies have revealed that with sufficient and appropriate support, even those with the greatest challenges such as mental health problems and addictions as well as long-term homelessness, can be successfully stabilized and permanently housed (e.g. Kraus et al. 2005; Serge et al. 2006).

Adopting a suitable definition that adequately espouses prevailing societal norms is one thing –operationalizing it is another. For operational purposes, researchers often adopt the more limited definition, that is, users of shelters/and or soup kitchens, essentially a sub-set of the UN’s absolute homeless definition, sometimes called the *literal* homeless. This is done for practical purposes “simply because it can be impossible and extremely costly to carry out homelessness research if broader definitions (e.g. including the relative homeless) are used (Peressini et al. 1996).

In terms of policy and programs, caution is expressed when attempting too broad a definition.

“Practitioners and policy makers should keep their goals clearly in mind. More specifically, they should remember that preventing homelessness is not identical with ending poverty, curing mental illness, promoting self-sufficiency, or making needy people healthy, wealthy and wise. These are worthy goals, to be sure, but we believe that when attached to the objective of preventing homelessness or rehousing homeless people, these diffuse goals take on lives of their own...” (Shinn and Baumohl 1999).

## 2.2 How Many Homeless People are there?

Interventions and resources that are attributed to a problem often are related to its extent. However, in the case of homelessness, if defining homelessness is considered a conceptual “muddle”, counting homeless people and determining who they are is a practical morass. This section presents an overview of the issues surrounding the estimation of levels of homelessness and of attempts that have been undertaken. As discussed above, the definition used has a direct impact on who is enumerated.

Researchers note a paucity of empirical information describing the extent and nature of homelessness among specific groups such as Aboriginal people, women and youth in Canada. However, some recent studies shed light on the particular issues, experiences, risk factors, service environment, needs and trends faced by particular groups of homeless individuals along gender or racial lines (Novac and Brown 1996; Novac et al. 1999; Beavis et al. 1997). For example, Novac et al. (1999) point out that women’s homelessness is hidden, and due to data collection techniques which rely on service provider data, underestimated in general counts of homelessness.

While there is thus, no current information on the size of the homeless population in Canada, efforts are underway primarily through the Homeless Individual and Families Information System (HIFIS) a database system which is intended to count and describe shelter users on a longitudinal basis.

Effort has been expended at the provincial and municipal levels to measure the extent and nature of homelessness. Most of these are point prevalence counts that estimate the number and/or characteristics of homeless people at *one point in time*, usually one day or night. Springer et al. (1998) discuss the limitations of this approach, which is essentially a measure of the capacity of the shelter system, as “a truncated, decontextualized, and over-pathologized picture of homelessness.” They promote the use of period prevalence measures, which measure a flow of homeless people using services over the course of a year, for example.

Nonetheless, these counts can offer a picture of the evolution of homelessness over time. Calgary has carried out a biennial count since 1992 and the 2004 count revealed an increase of 49% from 2002. Almost 2600 homeless persons were enumerated: 23% were female and 77% were male; 15% were Aboriginal, and 8% were visible minorities. The number of homeless families increased to 104 or 148%.

In Vancouver, the *2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* identified 2,174 homeless people on March 15<sup>th</sup>. This was almost double the number of homeless people enumerated in 2002. The 2005 count found that 30% (551) of homeless adults and unaccompanied youth reported income assistance as their major income source and an additional 11% reported receipt of disability benefits. Twenty-three percent reported no income, 14% reported employment, mostly part-time or casual employment, with the remainder reporting informal income sources such as binning or bottle collecting, panhandling or illegal sources (Social Planning and Research Council of BC 2005).

The City of Toronto undertook its first homeless count on April 19, 2006 and estimates that 5,052 people were homeless in the city on that date. Of these, 3,649 (72%) were in shelters, 818 (16%) were on the street, 275 (5%) were in health care or treatment facilities, 171 (3%) were in Violence Against Women Shelters, and 139 (3%) were in correctional facilities. Social assistance was the main source of income for most of the homeless population, however almost one quarter of the homeless people surveyed (23.2%) received income from some form of employment. Panhandling was a source of income for more than half (57.2%) of the outdoor population.

The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force commissioned an in depth study of homeless people in Toronto in 1998, including their numbers, characteristics, chronicity and trends over time. This produced the first longitudinal measurement of unique individuals who are homeless in Canada. Again, the core data used for the study defined homelessness as people who use shelters. Springer et al. (1998) analyzed a data set maintained by the Hostel Services Division from 1988 to 1996, allowing the number of different individual users of the shelter/hostel system to be counted. Data was provided for two time periods - one year and nine years. It found that 133,000 unique households, comprising 170,000 different individuals used Toronto hostels over the nine-year period. Approximately 25,000 different individuals used hostels in the average year. The authors used housing registry data, food bank data, bed capacity for Out of the Cold sites, and General Welfare Assistance caseload data to expand the count to include a broader definition of homelessness.

## 2.3 Who is Homeless?

What is termed the “new” homelessness generally reflects the expansion of the populations that may be affected by homelessness, whereas the “old” homelessness refers particularly to older, single men, often geographically tied to “skid row” and experiencing problems such as alcoholism. The growth of concern and attention to the issue of homelessness is in part attributed to the new profile. The major components of the new face of homelessness include women, youth and families. The changes that are noted in Canada are echoed in Europe, the United States and in Australia, although in varying degrees. While trends are noted, certain populations, notably women, remain among the “hidden homeless”<sup>1</sup> reflecting survival strategies that often avoid absolute homelessness or rooflessness. Nonetheless there

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<sup>1</sup> “Hidden” homelessness is linked in part to the definition used but can range from “couch surfing” with friends, living with family members to squatting in abandoned buildings.

is clearly a shift and broadening of populations that are affected by homelessness in most countries examined.

- **Women:** Still a minority of the homeless population, some Canadian data put the proportion of homeless women as high as almost thirty percent (Springer et al. 1998). Women are especially represented among young homeless persons. For example studies suggest that in Vancouver almost half are female; in Toronto, about a third (Hagan and McCarthy 1997, Gaetz et al. 1999).
- **Youth:** Springer et al. (1998) note a marked growth in hostel users under 18 years (28% in Springer et al.).
- **Families:** A study of homeless families in Canada (SPARC et al. 2003) found that family homelessness is a growing problem in many urban centres and many key informants interviewed noted an increase in homeless families or those at risk requesting services over the previous five years. While homeless families were found to be a diverse group, about 80% featured in the study were headed by single mothers.

Springer et al. (1998) also notes a marked growth of families with children among hostel clients so that individuals in families made up 31% of people in the hostel system over nine years. In terms of households, the share of family households using shelters rose from 9.3% of households in 1989-90 to 17.6% in 1995-6. In fact, the share of Toronto children who stayed in emergency shelters matches the share in the Toronto population overall.

- **Aboriginal populations:** Despite the large share of Aboriginal people among the homeless in Canada, there is relatively little data describing who they are, their age, gender or other characteristics. In Toronto, the Mayor's Taskforce on Homelessness found Aboriginal people to be over-represented in the homeless population. Not only is the Canadian Aboriginal population young, many youth coming from other provinces, territories and reserves are finding themselves on the street (Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. 1999). The *2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* found that 30% of the homeless population identified as Aboriginal, whereas Aboriginal people are only 2% of the general population in the area.
- **People with problems of addiction and mental health:** Tolomiczenko (1997) reports that approximately two thirds of the homeless population have a lifetime diagnosis of mental illness, which is 2-3 times the prevalence rate of the general population. The prevalence rate of alcohol and substance abuse in that same study was again roughly two thirds of the entire homeless population. This is 4-5 times the prevalence rate in the general population. Dual diagnosis of both mental illness and substance misuse is not uncommon among the homeless (Hwang 2001). The *2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* found that almost half the homeless population (49%) had an addiction problem, while 23% reported a mental illness. The City of Toronto has estimated that up to 20% of its homeless population suffers from severe mental illness and addictions (City of Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force 1999).

- **Elderly persons:** While the proportion of homeless elderly persons is relatively low, they are generally found to be over-represented among the chronically homeless. Definitions of “elderly” vary, however, most studies include those over 50 years due to stresses, nutritional problems, and untreated health conditions that contribute to premature aging (Serge and Gnaedinger 2003). Data from Toronto indicate that while only 13% of shelter users were 45 to 64 years old and 2% were over 65, when data was analyzed for chronicity, those over 50 years (10% of the users) stayed in hostels two times as long as those under 50. Furthermore 24% of hostel users over 50 were women (Springer et al. 1998). In Calgary data on utilization of inner city homeless agencies and shelters found that while only 6% of users were over 55, they were found to consume 10% of resources (Holley and Arboeda-Flórez 1997). In Montreal, a study of shelter and day resources used in Montreal and Quebec City over a one-year period found that those aged 45 and over represented 35% of the population studied (Fournier et al. 1998). In Greater Vancouver, the 2005 Homeless Count found that the number of homeless seniors age 55 and over grew significantly from 51 persons in 2002 to 171 persons in 2005.
- **Others:** Other populations have been noted as over-represented in the homeless population and include those with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)<sup>2</sup>, youth leaving care, persons who have been incarcerated, and, especially in the U.S. and U.K., veterans.

## 2.4 Causes of Homelessness

In attempting to understand the causes of homelessness, it is important to remember that it is a complex result of multiple processes. The theoretical understandings of homelessness need to be sensitive to their limitations and differences in time and space; “homelessness is the product of a convergence of factors operating at the local, national and global scales. Moreover, the combination of processes operating in different localities at different points in time is unique.” (Marsh and Kennett 1999).

Nor is there a single event that pushes a person off a precipice and into homelessness or a single set of circumstances with a predictable outcome of homelessness. The danger of oversimplification is of consequence in the examination of solutions. Reducing the complexity of homelessness can lead to the “idea of solving the entire problem with housing measures or alternatively, at the other extreme, to provide re-insertion or social reintegration programmes in all cases.” (Tosi 1999). The reduction of the problem has a further consequence if it is “cut off” with respect to other wider questions: poverty, the lack of affordable housing, etc.” (Tosi 1999).

The apparently two extreme positions, structural versus personal causes, are in part a reflection of the complexity of the issue and the observation that all homelessness is not the same. Rather than the notion that personal failings are responsible for an individual’s homeless status, Canadian conceptions of the causes of homelessness led, by the mid-1990s, to a resolution in favour of either a combination of structural and personal factors or structural factors only (Hewitt 1994). Many authors conclude that homelessness is caused by a combination of personal and structural or systemic factors (Beavis et al. 1997, Begin

<sup>2</sup> See for example, <http://www.fasdconnections.ca/id83.htm>

1996, and Fallis and Murray 1990). Few studies actually analyze the cause(s) of homelessness, although many authors review the debate and choose sides. The Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force, for example, reviewed the factors leading to homelessness in its interim report before determining that the causes were both structural and personal. Structural factors include demographic changes, an inadequate supply of affordable housing, changing job markets, increasing poverty, and a weakening social safety net. Personal or proximate causes include mental illness, alcohol and substance misuse, domestic violence and deinstitutionalization.

In Canada, Fallis and Murray (1990) identify structural factors as consisting of housing markets, poverty, but also include "psychological causes" such as family breakdown and deinstitutionalization. Daly (1996) outlines three categories of structural factors which can be broadly construed as causing homelessness: economic (loss of manufacturing jobs, growth in involuntary part-time low paid employment, and decreases in real wages), policy (less emphasis on new social housing, few private rental units and declining social benefits), and demographic (changes including smaller households, more single mothers with children and more seniors, and gentrification). Pomeroy and Frojmovic (1995) and Novac and Brown (1996) conclude that there is strong consensus in the Canadian literature that the causes of homelessness are structural. Pomeroy and Frojmovic define structural to include the market economy and weak or inadequate community and social service networks. However, the general policy environment, one of weakening the social safety net, has been implicated in the rise of homelessness (Daly 1996).

Fitzpatrick et al. (2000) incorporate the notion of proximate causes of homelessness used by other researchers, but uses the term "trigger". Individual risk factors associated with homelessness are well established in the research literature: poverty, unemployment, sexual or physical abuse, family disputes and breakdown, previous local authority care, prison, armed forces, drug or alcohol misuse, school exclusion, and poor mental or physical health. The known triggers flow from these and include leaving the parental home after arguments, marital or relationship breakdown, eviction, widowhood, discharge from the armed forces, leaving care, leaving prison, and a sharp deterioration of mental health or increase in substance misuse. It is proposed that preventive strategies should focus on risk factors and trigger points.



## ***3. Background: Education and the Labour Market***

### **3.1 Educational Trends**

Overall trends in Canada indicate higher educational attainment and lower drop out rates: over half of Canadians have more education than their parents and only 17% have less (Corak 1998). However, in spite of the general increase in educational levels and enrolments, educational attainment appears to be strongly linked to family of origin and there are signs of polarization:

- Data from the early 1990s indicate that a relatively high proportion of Canadian youth graduate from university but that Canada is third lowest among 19 Organisational of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in secondary school completion (Crysdale et al. 1999).
- The Adult Literacy Survey reveals that while Canada has the second highest proportion of adults at the highest literacy levels (next to Sweden), it also has the second highest proportion at the lowest literacy level (next to the U.S.) (Secretariat of the Council of Ministers of Education et al. 1998).
- Analysis of Canadian data from the International Adult Literacy Survey of two separate age cohorts, not only reveals that “inherited intellectual capital” makes a difference but that the “relative gap between children whose parents are at both extremes of the educational attainment spectrum does not seem to close as time goes by. There are even signs that the polarization of educational opportunities is on the rise.” (De Broucker and Lavallée 1998).
- Findings from a study by the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) suggest that low literacy, poverty, and exclusion are all part of the same problem; that children from poor and disadvantaged families are at risk of low literacy; and that inequalities in literacy contribute to inequalities in income, occupational status and access to certain labour markets (NAPO 1992).
- There is a gap in university participation rates. For example, in 1986, 14% of youth 18-21 from low socio-economic backgrounds were in university, compared to 15% from middle socio-economic backgrounds; by 1994 the gap had widened to 18 and 25% respectively (Thiessen 2001).
- The profile of youth who drop out is fairly consistent; males more than females, lower socio-economic familial background, lower levels of parental education, negative parental attitudes towards education, single parent backgrounds, early marriage and parenthood, disabilities, less engagement in school, poor academic performance, including repetition of a grade in elementary school. This last factor, poor academic performance, has been shown to exert the strongest influence on the decision to drop out of school (Thiessen 2001).

- Reasons invoked for dropping out also are related to the characteristics of the school – boredom with the content, a perceived irrelevance of the curriculum, authoritarianism and social exclusion by other students (Marquardt 1996).
- It is posited that the gap in university participation rates between youth from low and middle socio-economic backgrounds may have recently widened with increases in university tuition. Interviews with Canadian graduates between 1982 and 1995, two years and five years after graduation, found increased levels of borrowing, increased debt-to-earnings ratios, and for each cohort, a decrease in loan repayment, with 10 to 15% of graduates experiencing difficulties in loan repayment (Finnie 2001).
- Canadian studies have found that cost “is the single most-frequently mentioned consideration among youth who did not pursue post-secondary education” (Thiessen 2001).
- Finally, labour market training programs are found to be quite limited in Canada and the “onus remains on individuals after they leave school to acquire most of the skills they need” (Marquardt 1996). Those that do receive training are found to be primarily well-educated workers, particularly males, in higher-status and permanent full-time positions, which further polarizes the labour market by “contributing to the skills and credentials of those who are already advantaged” (Marquardt 1996).

## 3.2 Labour Market Trends

The polarization that is noted in education is as prominent, if not more so, in the labour market. The changes that have occurred in Canada are not unique and have taken place in the labour market and economy as well as at the policy level. These changes include:

- A drop in the rate of unionization and coverage by a pension plan (Beaudry and Green 1998).
- A decline in median annual earning since the 1980s and a widening gap between the top and bottom decile of earning distributions (Beaudry and Green 1998). More recent data show a continuing polarization: the average market income of the bottom vingtile of income earners dropped 38%, while that of the top vingtile increase by 28% (Farrell 2005).
- The growth of non-standard forms of employment, such as temporary or part-time jobs, self-employment and multiple jobs, has grown; in 2001, 38% of Canadians worked in non- standard jobs. This has increased levels of job insecurity: for example, self-employment accounted for about 58% of net job creation in the 1990s, while temporary employment accounted for about 20% of job creation in 2003. Furthermore, earnings of workers in non-standard employment tend to be significantly lower than those in standard employment (Farrell 2005).

- Poor quality work has been shown to provide few opportunities for learning and skill development. One study found that 21% of Canadians in the workforce have jobs that do not make use of their literacy skills, and this proportion is higher for women and youth (Marquardt 1998). Poor quality work at best provides “a very limited form of inclusion; at worst, such employment may inadvertently reinforce and perpetuate precariousness and marginalisation.” (Esping-Andersen et al. 2001).
- While frequent job change may improve the fit between worker and job, “it is more likely to result in quite similar, low-level employment. Unemployment, especially if it becomes chronic, also tends to have negative implications for subsequent wage attainment” (Mortimer 1996).
- Workers have difficulty moving out of low-paying jobs: only 43% of men and 27% of women were able to move out of low-paying work after four years and about a quarter fell back into low-paying work within the following four years (Farrell 2005).
- While official unemployment rates appear to be stabilizing, when other measures of unemployment are used, incorporating those who are discouraged from searching for work, waiting to be recalled to work, and are working part-time but would prefer full-time work, the unemployment rate in the 1990s is revealed to be almost as high as it was in the 1930s, and although “moderating in the 2000s, it still remains high by historical standards” (Farrell 2005).

In a draft report on homelessness and the labour market, Farrell (2005) notes policy changes that have further had an impact on workers, notably reduced income support for persons without work and more stringent eligibility requirements for social assistance programs. The changes to the labour market, in particular the growth of non-standard forms of employment, have resulted in negative outcomes such as lack of developmental opportunities, self-dignity and respect; personal and family hardship; lack of access to statutory benefits and protections as well as employer-provided benefits; and exclusion, differential treatment of workers and poor enforcement of workers’ rights (Farrell 2005).



# ***4. Homelessness, Education, Employment, and Unemployment***

## **4.1 Homelessness and Education**

While it is understood that there is a link between problems of health, mental health and addictions and education and employment, little research exists beyond correlations and causality is difficult to assess (Josephson 2004). For example, anecdotal evidence would suggest that persons involved in literacy programs (learners) “are periodically homeless or live in transient shelters. In Vancouver, many learners live in cheap downtown hotels...”(Trumpener 1997). Part of the problem, it is suggested, is the vulnerability of persons with literacy problems when confronted by the complexity of the information that tenants must decipher. However, one obstacle is that when homeless persons are asked about needs, people stress economic issues and housing and gaining literacy skills is rarely mentioned. Furthermore, persons working with literacy among homeless persons are well aware of the difficulties confronting homeless persons, including the fact that, “Many learners are hungry when they come to literacy programs, affecting their ability to learn” (Trumpener 1997).

Much of the focus of studies has been on education and youth homelessness, including particular sub-groups such as youth from the child welfare system or Aboriginal youth. Studies of Canadian homeless persons refer to low levels of education and the percentage of persons without high school has been found to range between 63 and 90% in Ottawa and Toronto, compared to 34% for all Canadians (Josephson 2004). A study of family homelessness in Canada found that homelessness can affect the ability of children to complete their education successfully. The report notes that homelessness often means that families must leave their immediate neighbourhood. As a result, children are required to change schools, sometimes several times. Children may miss school and fall behind. Overstressed parents may be unable to provide the support children need to study, and often there is no appropriate place for children to do their homework. The long term impact can include leaving school early, lower grades compared to before the family became homeless, illiteracy, and a continuing cycle of poverty. Agency key informants reported that children of homeless families are likely to become homeless themselves as adults and that they were seeing young parents in their shelters who stayed with them as children. One of the reasons cited was poor performance in school, which affected the ability of the children to get jobs that paid enough to afford decent housing. (Social Planning and Research Council of BC, Kraus and Dowling. 2003).

However, an overview of the Canadian literature finds that aside from “descriptive statistics, little is known about the factors related to homeless people’s education and the relationships among those factors. In general, very little information was located on how to address the education needs of homeless people in Canada.” (Josephson 2004).

## 4.2 Homelessness and Unemployment

High levels of unemployment have often been identified as a structural cause of homelessness (e.g. Conseil de l'Europe 1993; Daly 1996; Koegel, Burnam and Baumohl 1996). Studies have found that the loss of manufacturing jobs, growth in involuntary part-time low paid employment, and decreases in real wages have an impact on individuals, especially those with few skills or low educational levels.

A study of homeless adults in California found that while a person's own confidence and attitude are a factor in being able to search for housing and work, "escaping" from homelessness often went beyond "personal control" and involved powerful structural factors such as "political and economic climates". The results of the study underscored that "homelessness and unemployment are not just personal problems, but social problems demanding social remedies" (Epel et al. 1999).

However, the research suggests that a strong economy does not necessarily end homelessness. Homelessness persists even in periods of strong economic growth and prosperous countries do not necessarily register fewer homeless persons than those with less buoyant economies (Avramov 1999). The Social Exclusion Unit in England has noted that "The fall in unemployment has not been matched by a fall in 'economic inactivity'".<sup>3</sup> In Canada, economic and related population growth in Alberta was identified as a critical issue contributing to homelessness due to increasing housing prices and lower vacancy rates (Eberle et al. 2001). Specifically in Calgary, half of the homeless population have employment income occasionally (Farrell 2005). Similar trends are found in other cities: 12% of homeless persons in Halifax have either regular employment or income from Employment Insurance (EI) and for 4% of those in Vancouver the major source of income was employment. Furthermore over 13% of food bank users are found to be working (Farrell 2005).

Studies of housing vulnerability (e.g. those who are spending more than 50% of their income on shelter) – those who can be considered at risk of homelessness or part of the "new" homelessness also point to the same sub-groups that are vulnerable in terms of employment: single mothers, immigrants, and Aboriginal people (Farrell 2005).

## 4.3 Can Employment Alone End Homelessness?

Some American studies have found that employment is associated with quicker exits from homelessness. For example, an 18-month study of shelter users in New York City found that a shorter period of homelessness was related to a number of factors including current or recent employment (Caton et al. 2005).

However, simply having a job may not be enough to end homelessness. For example, the 1998 homeless count in Calgary found that 45% of shelter users were employed, with average earnings of \$7.40/hour (Eberle et al. 2001). Workers in some of Baltimore's homeless shelters and soup kitchens have also noticed that many of their clients have full

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/page.asp?id=4>.

time jobs, a situation that helped persuade City Council to increase the base pay for city contract workers (Gertner 2006). Studies report that it is rare for entry-level jobs to provide enough income to pay for adequate living arrangements (Friedman et al. 2003; Nelson 2003). According to the U.S. National Low Income Housing Coalition, “there is no community in the nation in which a person working at minimum wage can afford (using the federal standard of affordability) to rent a one-bedroom unit” (Washtenaw County 2004). In Canada, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association has calculated that to afford an average bachelor apartment, workers in Toronto and Vancouver must earn over \$13 per hour, compared to the minimum wage of \$7.45 and \$8.00 respectively (Pomeroy 2006).

Recognition that entry-level and unskilled jobs do not pay a “living wage” points to the need for more skills development and literacy programs that are targeted to homeless people. Examples include Beat the Street, a program of Frontier College that offers basic literacy instruction and upgrading to street youth and homeless adults, and the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in Toronto.

Initiatives funded by the City of Toronto are geared to helping homeless participants increase their labour market skills so they can get good paying jobs. In the Transition to Work pilot project (described later), shelter clients participating in the George Brown College apprenticeship program are expected to receive the training needed for good paying jobs.

## **4.4 Housing and Employment**

Research shows that both housing and employment programs are critical for homeless people to exit homelessness. For example, Shinn and Baumohl (1999) cite several research studies that conclude: “every study that has looked has found that affordable, usually subsidized housing, prevents homelessness more effectively than anything else. This is true for all groups of poor people, including those with severe and persistent mental illness and/or substance abuse.”

A longitudinal study of homeless families in Boston participating in welfare-to-work programs also concluded that, “the stabilizing force of housing subsidies cannot be overemphasized. With all the other stresses and worries that families uniformly have to deal with, parents indicated that not worrying about paying their housing costs was key and allowed them to focus on other aspects of their current and future well-being.” (Friedman et al. 2003). In addition, the study concludes that educational achievement and technical skills affect workers’ ability to obtain jobs that pay a living wage.

Studies also indicate, however, that while housing may end homelessness, housing alone may not be enough to achieve social inclusion. For example, in Germany, one project found that while housing people, “put an end to homelessness”, it did not end their “poverty and exclusion from the job market” (Busch-Geertsema 2000). Research also found that employment often becomes a priority once people are housed but many housing or other service programs are not equipped to address this need (Shaheen et al. 2003).

Similarly, an evaluation of the Supportive Housing Demonstration Program (SHDP) in the U.S. that provides supportive housing for homeless persons with disabilities found small

gains in employment. Of the residents who had been in a project for at least one year, employment increased from 24% at entry to 29%. Another 14% were participating in meaningful activity such as job training, volunteer or school activities. In addition, there were no significant changes in income or income sources (Westat Inc. 1995). In summary, research would seem to indicate links between factors such as housing instability, insufficient education, job skills, employment opportunities and their contribution to unemployment among homeless persons (Shaheen et al. 2003).

## **4.5 The Importance of Employment, Education, Training and Meaningful Activity**

Research indicates that for some populations, for example people with serious mental illness, work can aid in the recovery process. The recognition that can come from having a job “can help people develop motivation to change, dignity and self-respect, and hope for the future” (Shaheen et al. 2003). First-person testimonials illustrate how important work is to individuals with serious mental illnesses. Bowen (2004) cites one woman who wrote, “The thought of employment seemed far-fetched and out of the question for me. But my mind was changed by seeing other tenants working at various jobs within the building. I thought to myself, I can do that.”

Studies point to the desire of homeless people for training and education. The Homeless Outreach Project for Empowerment (HOPE) was initiated in 1994 to learn and document the educational and vocational experience, aspirations and related support needs of homeless and mentally ill people in the Boston area. It undertook a survey of 100 volunteers who were homeless and mentally ill and found that:

- A significant number of people who experience mental illness and homelessness are highly motivated to join education, employment, and vocational training programs. Approximately one-third of the sample indicated an interest in returning directly to work and cited the need for job search, placement and support services.
- Approximately 85% indicated a desire for more education (literacy, basic math and English, GED preparation, and/or supported educational services). Sixty-one percent noted a desire for technical or vocational training leading to more highly skilled jobs than are traditionally available through transitional employment to persons with a mental illness.
- In discussing their ideal jobs, it was found that factors such as the personal qualities of the employer/supervisor (i.e. kindness, and sense of fairness), relations with co-workers, job dignity, safety and physical difficulty appear to significantly outweigh other mentioned considerations (wage level, hours, location, benefits, flexibility, or interest in task) for most of the survey participants.

The authors cite one participant who noted that, “Homelessness is no joke and being unemployed gives you a sense of emptiness and unproductiveness and doesn't make you feel very important. Working gives me a sense of belongingness and worth that I couldn't feel just going day by day in the street.” (Camardese and Youngman 1996).

The psychological impact of unemployment would appear to be significant: a study of newly homeless persons quotes one individual as stating, “Once you become homeless, it’s a shock. Then it becomes a constant humiliation. You envy people going to work’ (Wenzel 1992). To be unemployed for long periods, it is suggested, carries a stigma and can result in living a life of “shame and guilt” (Hill 2004).

The importance of employment or meaningful activity has been found in recent Canadian studies as well. A study of projects using a harm reduction approach with homeless persons found that, “Some projects put emphasis on clients undertaking activities or engaging with community organizations. For example, the Ottawa Inner City Health Project has found that social isolation contributes to the harm from substance use and because many are less welcome in the “regular world” they will spend more time with other addicts, on the streets, and loose social supports” (Kraus et al. 2005). Interviews with 33 clients of the profiled initiatives revealed that about one quarter identified getting a job as one of their main goals. In another Canadian study that includes interviews with clients of projects dealing with concurrent disorders (i.e. mental health and substance use problems), a number of participants stated that working had made a significant change in their lives and was very important to them (Serge et al. 2006).

Given the challenges faced by many homeless persons, there is a need to recognize approaches that offer alternatives or stages before competitive employment. A study in Scotland of four projects found that volunteering may be a meaningful route out of homelessness for some people and that an emphasis on “soft skills” may be important in the interim. Funders need to recognize these outcomes as positive. The findings cautioned about the role of employment and job readiness in the early stages of stabilization in housing, emphasizing the need to move “from crisis to stabilization” before developing employability (Verve Associates 2004).

FEANSTA (2006) identifies principles to facilitate inclusion of homeless persons into the labour market which include being holistic and taking multiple dimensions of homelessness into account. They underline the importance of quality support and a case management approach which is deemed best, but also suggest that supported employment can be a first step into the labour market. In Denmark for example, employers were paid to hire homeless people and these funds could be used to cover replacement costs if the person was absent. FEANSTA found that meaningful occupation is an important tool to develop skills and self-confidence (for those unable to handle supported employment), emphasising that inclusion requires more than a job.

An evaluation by the Corporation for Supportive Housing of Next Step: Jobs, a three-year demonstration program, recommended a more flexible definition of work that would include part-time and supervised employment. The evaluation found that the more barriers to work a person faces, the harder it will be to become self-sufficient. Nonetheless, people with multiple barriers can find work, but the expectation that everyone can work full-time “does not reflect the experience of significant numbers of people who struggle to gradually attach themselves to the labour market in small, tentative steps” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2000). Unpaid work may be important as a way to learn about the work world and to help people refine their interests and goals (Shaheen et al. 2003).

Studies also seem to indicate that paid employment is not the only option applicable to everyone, and that many people gain the same satisfaction and self-esteem a wage-paying job provides from other life activities, including parenthood, caring for ill or disabled family members, or volunteerism.” (Shaheen et al. 2003).

## **4.6 Different Populations**

The literature indicates that the link between unemployment and homelessness may not be the same for all sub-groups. Three populations that have been studied are discussed below.

### **4.6.1 *People with Mental Health and/or Substance Use Issues***

Substance use, often combined with mental health issues can have negative impacts on job performance, timeliness and attendance, as well as the stigmatization of individuals with these disorders (Shaheen et al. 2003). Persons who have mental health issues are also more prone to “self-medicate” and may have problems with substance abuse, complexities that often complicate access to the appropriate and comprehensive services that are needed (Serge et al. 2006; Kraus et al. 2005; Pickett-Schenk 2002). Homeless persons with mental illness often realize that having a job would improve their lives dramatically and most service providers also know that finding employment for their clients is a crucial first step in helping them move from dependency and despair to lives of independence and hope. However, individuals who are homeless are often “derailed” by the debilitating effects of their mental illness (Bowen 2004).

Homeless persons with mental health problems would appear to have greater difficulty in finding work: a study of the JTHDP program found that 60% of participants with mental illness reported not being employed in the six months prior to enrolment in the program, compared to 49% of other participants. Similar trends were found with another program, Next Step: Jobs, which found that 9-21% of persons with mental health issues were employed at entry into the program compared to 28-42% of other participants (Pickett-Schenk 2002).

However, a study of homeless adults that hypothesised that persons with lifetime substance-use disorders and recent drinking or drug use would be less likely to participate in the labour force (i.e. employed or looking for work) found that while recent drug use was related to significantly less likelihood of being in the labour force, alcohol use, even recent heavy and consist use, was unrelated to participation. Lifetime alcohol or drug use did not seem to be related to labour-force participation either. However it should be noted that this study of 384 persons, was carried out over a 15 month period and that while almost 80% at one point in time during the study reported that they were in the labour force, less than half were in the labour force throughout the study (Zlotnick et al. 2002).

## **4.6.2 Women**

The increasing numbers of women becoming homeless has identified issues that are particular to them. Women who become pregnant before the age of 18 are greatly hindered from entering the workforce: having a child at a young age appears to decrease the likelihood of completing high school and may curtail the work experiences and job skills a woman attains during young adulthood (Brooks and Buckner 1996). Yet a three-year longitudinal study of 340 homeless families in Westchester County, New York who sought emergency housing during 1992 found that a history of full-time work is the best predictor of whether a woman will find full-time employment after an episode of homelessness. Even an extensive history of part-time or informal work was not predictive of finding employment after leaving a homeless shelter, something that is a concern given that for many, especially those with young children, informal and part-time work is the only work they can reasonably manage. The study found that women with full-time work histories who experienced high levels of depressive moods at the onset of a shelter episode were likely to leave the shelter quickly, while women with lower levels of depressive symptomatology stayed and were more likely than others to complete an education or job training program. Regardless of depression, women with full-time work histories were more likely than women with weak work histories to find full-time employment after a homeless episode. The authors provided two explanations. The first is that the difference is due to the ability to gain access to adequate child care and that mothers with more experience in the full time formal economy were more likely to have access to adequate child care: they had successfully made such arrangements in the past and could do so again after their spell of homelessness was over. A second suggestion is that experience in the formal economy for low-wage workers generally implies employment in a large institution and therefore experience in negotiating with bureaucracies. This experience may be useful when entering the bureaucratic shelter system, obtaining services from it, and in seeking a new job at the end of a shelter stay (Bogard et al. 2001).

Homeless women have been found to face more discrimination than men in seeking shelter, food and employment and their generally poorer economic situation, often combined with the demands of single parenthood, make it a greater challenge for them to maintain a home (Sacks et al. 1999). It has been suggested that the experience of being homeless is more difficult for women and that they may have to overcome a sense that control over their lives is exerted by others – the locus of control – especially for black women (Wenzel 1993).

One study of single mothers found that child care and family responsibilities were the most common reasons given by women for not working and child care was cited as the most needed resource in finding a job. Furthermore, more than a quarter of the sample stated that they needed transportation to find a job (Brooks and Buckner 1996).

## **4.6.3 Seniors**

Older homeless persons are a population that is still relatively unknown. It is believed that homeless persons over 65 are a relatively small proportion of the overall homeless population, in part because of the availability of various financial entitlements such

as pensions or social security (Cohen 1999). Two distinct groups can be identified – people who are chronically homeless and those who become homeless when elderly. It should be noted that especially for the former group, research indicates that because of life expectancy, the impact of homelessness on premature ageing, stresses, nutritional problems, and untreated health conditions, there is consensus that “elderly” among the homeless population refers to persons aged 50 and over (e.g. Bruckner, 2001; Cohen 1999).

Some studies indicate that structural factors play a role in precipitating homelessness among elderly persons, including lack of affordable housing, job loss, and deinstitutionalization (e.g. Hecht and Coyle 2001; Rosenheck et al. 1999; Hawes 1999). However, the causes also appear to be more complex and related to “personal inadequacies, stresses accumulated over years, and mental illness” (Crane 1999). Loss of social support is an important factor as well: older homeless persons are “not usually embedded in the diverse family network that characterizes their age peers in the general population.” Cohen (1999).

A recent Canadian study finds that macro causes are both economic and financial and that the “narrow, more specific causes of homelessness of seniors and vulnerable adults are factors such as insufficient numbers of affordable and secure dwellings, declining physical health, mental health difficulties, relationship breakdown, violence and abuse. In addition, the death of a spouse, social isolation, discrimination, or lack of knowledge of benefits and services can compound the risk of homelessness” (Hightower et al. 2003).

Although the issue of older homeless women remains relatively unknown (Serge and Gnaedinger 2003), some studies have found that men were twice as likely to report that job loss was the precipitating cause of their homelessness, while women were nearly three times more likely to report eviction, leading to the conclusion that “the two types of structural causes of homelessness (jobs and affordable housing) may affect people differently according to gender” (Hecht and Coyle 2001). A study of women shelter users in California found that they were significantly more likely than any other group to report a history of mental health problems (Hecht and Coyle 2001).

Poverty can especially effect women as well; while there are various entitlements for those over 65 years, the risk of becoming homeless is great for those between 50 and 65 (Cohen 1999), including “poor older women who have never worked, individuals with very limited benefits, and elders whose meagre incomes have been exploited by others, are still too poor to support themselves in stable housing” (Rosenheck et al. 1999).

In many instances, persons who have been homeless for a long period of time need support in a variety of areas such as life skills and perhaps addictions and mental health. A Canadian study, *Housing Options for Elderly or Chronically Ill Shelter Users*, found that while one project that was profiled identified pre-employment programming as an unmet need for its population, other projects emphasised the need for activities: these “provide stimulation, opportunities for interaction with peers, and alternatives to using alcohol during leisure time” (Serge and Gnaedinger 2003).

# ***5. Canadian Policy and Programs***

## **5.1 The Federal Government: Labour and Education**

While education is the responsibility of provincial governments, the federal government has a role in training and employment through the Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) and Employment Insurance (EI). (It should also be noted that the federal government provides funding for Aboriginal education, and complements provincial funding for minority official language education and second official language instruction.)

Since 1996, the federal government has entered into LMDAs with provinces and territories with the goal of enhancing client services, better co-ordination of federal and provincial programs to reduce duplication, and greater flexibility in meeting regional and local labour market needs. The LMDAs are administered jointly or responsibility has been or will be transferred to the provinces (e.g. the responsibility was transferred to Manitoba in 1997 and is to be transferred to Ontario in January 2007). Because the funding for this program comes from the EI funds, the target is unemployed workers and the help offered in terms of gaining skills, work experience, and employment assistance is for those who are already attached to the labour market.

In recognition that the LMDAs were not addressing the needs of all, the federal government introduced Labour Market Partnership Agreements (LMPAs) to create an “inclusive labour market by maximizing the participation of those currently employed, under-employed, or unemployed, through the removal of barriers and the enhancement of opportunities” (SDC Canada-Ontario LMPA). This initiative specifically targets persons who are not eligible for EI programming, including Aboriginal people, people facing labour market barriers such as older workers, displaced workers and persons with disabilities, and youth at risk. Workplace skills development as well as literacy and essential skills are included in the action areas. However, bilateral agreements between the federal government and provinces were signed only for Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in November 2005. It is unclear whether this initiative will be expanded to other provinces.

Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD) fund programs and services to improve the employment situation of Canadians with disabilities and improve their employability and increase employment opportunities. Disabilities can include people with mental health problems and could therefore be applicable to some homeless persons. Finally, project funding is available through programs such as the Opportunities Fund that is available to non-profit organizations to help persons with disabilities prepare for and obtain employment and to develop the skills to maintain employment.

## **5.2 The Federal Government: Homelessness**

The federal government has played an essential role in housing since it established Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in 1946. CMHC is the key policy and program

home for housing policy at the federal level. Most significant for a discussion of homelessness is CMHC's funding of a significant stock of social housing, although the Federal government withdrew from new social housing investment in 1993. In 1997 there were more than 661,000 units of social housing in projects managed by provincial governments and municipal or non-profit housing agencies (Wolfe 1998).

To the extent that Canadian housing policy focused on creating affordable social housing for households in core housing need, there may be said to have been an implicit homelessness *prevention* policy. However, there is some debate about whether social housing programs actually serve individuals who were formerly homeless or most at risk of homelessness (Banting 1990). For example, single persons traditionally receive a lower priority than the elderly or families with children, and homeless people often cannot be accommodated in many social housing projects that do not offer support services.

The federal National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) announced in 1999 represents the first federal foray into homelessness policy in Canada. The initiative was based on the recognition that the issue of homelessness is complex and that the problem could not be solved by one level of government or sector. Partnerships between governments and community organizations that pooled resources and efforts were encouraged and local community plans were often the first stage in work under the NHI.

The first round of NHI (1999-2003) addressed the most urgent needs and investment was primarily in emergency shelters and support services such as soup kitchens, day centres and food banks. The Initiative was renewed in 2003 for an additional three years and the emphasis was on longer-term solutions such as transitional and supportive housing and the program received a one-year extension to March 31, 2007.

The Housing and Homelessness Branch (HHB) is responsible for the NHI. The HHB promotes an integrated approach to homelessness and housing policy and programs as well as the development of horizontal linkages to other policy areas such as health, justice and immigration.

The NHI supports communities to address homelessness through a series of programs:

**Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI):** SCPI is considered the “centerpiece” of the NHI. It was launched in 1999 to create a more integrated and community-based approach to addressing homelessness. Funding was available to eligible recipients in designated communities. To access SCPI funding, these communities were required to complete plans that identified long-term solutions to homelessness and how the community intended to sustain activities over the longer term. SCPI also encouraged community groups to work together with provincial, territorial and municipal governments as well as the private and voluntary sectors to strengthen local capacity and develop new responses to homelessness. One of the goals of SCPI was to increase the availability and access to a range of services and facilities along a continuum, which includes homelessness prevention services, emergency shelters, outreach, transitional/supportive housing, and support services (such as addictions counselling and employment training).

**Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH) and Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS):** During the first phase of the NHI, funding was allocated for Aboriginal people through the homelessness component of the UAS. The goal was for federal departments to work together to increase the effectiveness of their programs to prevent and reduce homelessness for Aboriginal people. In the second phase of the NHI, additional funding was made available to address the needs of Aboriginal people through the UAH component of the NHI. One of the goals was to facilitate the development of an integrated, culturally-appropriate and community-driven service delivery system to address Aboriginal needs.

**Regional Homelessness Fund:** Funding was made available through the NHI to support small and rural communities experiencing homelessness in their areas. One of the goals was to help small communities establish the support services necessary to prevent homelessness - so that individuals and families could stabilize their living situations and not be forced to move larger urban centres. Funding was also available to small communities to help address youth homelessness.

**National Research Program:** NHI funding was allocated to research to increase understanding of the magnitude, characteristics, causes of homelessness, and best practices to address homelessness.

**Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI):** Under this program, surplus federal properties may be made available to municipal, provincial and territorial governments and non-profit community organizations working to address homelessness. The properties may be used to provide residential or non-residential emergency services or permanent housing. The SFRPHI program compensates the federal departments and agencies at market value for their surplus properties and transfers them at a nominal cost to the community organization, non-profit or government agency.

**Youth Homelessness Strategy 1999-2003:** During the first phase of the NHI, the federal government allocated a designated amount of funding specifically to address youth homelessness.

**CMHC Renovation and Conversion Programs:** CMHC also offers two programs that support the NHI. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) is designed to help prevent homelessness through the improvement of low cost housing. Funding may also be used to convert non-residential properties into affordable rental units. In addition, the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP) assists in creating new shelters or repairing existing shelters for women and children fleeing domestic abuse and youth fleeing family violence. SEP is also available for second-stage housing.

### **5.3 Ontario/Toronto**

In Ontario, the Ministry of Community and Social Services is responsible for a variety of programs and services aimed at supporting the Province's most vulnerable citizens. These include:

- Social assistance programs; and
- Initiatives to address homelessness.

### **5.3.1 Social Assistance Programs**

Ontario's social assistance programs provide income and employment supports to single adults and families in Ontario who are in financial need. The main goal is to help people move towards long-term self-sufficiency.

There are two social assistance programs, Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

**Ontario Works** provides financial and employment assistance to help people in temporary financial need move to sustainable employment and independence. Applicants must be residents of Ontario, in financial need, and agree to participate in employment activities. Ontario Works provides income assistance for basic needs and shelter; benefits for specific needs including prescription drugs, basic dental and vision care, moving costs and employment start-up expenses; and emergency assistance for people in crisis. The program also provides employment assistance to help clients get jobs, including:

- Resource centres where clients may receive practical advice, help with resumes and letters of application, interview tips and may access computers, internet, fax machines, and photocopiers.
- Referrals to basic education, literacy training and job specific skills training programs.
- Community placements where participants can build confidence, gain experience and obtain current references.
- Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) for young parents to help them finish high school, learn more about being good parents and get a job.
- Employment placement to give clients additional support to be placed in paid jobs.
- Help with expenses such as childcare, transportation, work-related clothing, grooming, and special equipment such as hard hats or essential tools.

Clients who are working may also receive assistance for employment related expenses such as transportation, supplies and equipment, work clothing, work boots and helmets, reference checks, fees for medical training certificates and child care costs.

Recently, Ontario Works provided more incentives for clients to move back into the workforce. These include changing earnings exemptions so clients can keep a higher percentage of what they earn on top of their benefits (50%), extending health benefits for up to six months (or 12 months in exceptional circumstances) for people leaving social assistance for employment, providing an employment benefit of up to \$500 to help pay for job-related expenses, and increasing the maximum deduction for informal child care costs from \$390 to \$600 per month per child.

Starting in 2006, three core employment outcomes that will drive planning and funding through the employment component of the Ontario Works program are:

- Employment – helping participants find and keep jobs;
- Earnings – improving the quality of jobs that people get; and
- Increased employability – helping people become progressively more “employment-ready”.

Ontario Works is delivered by trained caseworkers in 47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers/District Social Services Administration Boards and 109 First Nations.

**Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)** is designed to meet the unique financial and employment needs of people with disabilities. It offers income and employment support to Ontario residents who are 18 years of age or older, qualify financially, and have a substantial physical or mental impairment that is continuous or recurrent and is expected to last one year or more.

The employment support initiatives help participants with disabilities prepare for, find and maintain employment. Participation is voluntary. Assistance may include help with clothing or uniforms for work, safety shoes or work boots, tools and special equipment, or licensing and/or professional fees. If childcare costs are required to begin employment or a training program and payment is required up front, eligible clients may qualify for advanced childcare payments. Earnings exemptions are also available to encourage recipients to move towards financial independence.

Unlike Ontario Works, ODSP is delivered provincially by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

**Other initiatives.** In addition to Ontario Works and ODSP, in June 2006, the Ontario government introduced a new Employment Innovations Fund to engage employers in expanding employment opportunities for people on social assistance, including people with disabilities. Organizations such as employer associations, municipalities and not-for-profit organizations were invited to submit proposals for new programs designed to create sustainable job opportunities and help businesses tap into this pool of willing, job-ready people.

In 2005, the JobsNow pilot project was introduced in six communities to work one-on-one with clients and local employers to match clients to the right job. The program also provides:

- Pre-employment supports;
- Job orientation information;
- Counselling and issues resolution; and
- Up to 18 months of job retention and follow-up services.

### **5.3.2 Applicability to People who are Homeless**

People who are homeless are eligible to participate in most of the employment support initiatives described above. However, the programs were not specifically developed for them, and there is some question about the extent to which homeless people access these programs. A significant percentage of homeless people are not job ready and require support to address a number of issues before entering the workforce.

The government recognizes that increasing numbers of clients are living with multiple barriers to employment and has been working to develop programs that meet their unique needs. In addition, funding is available through the Community Services Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to address the specific needs of people who are homeless.

### **5.3.3 Initiatives to Address Homelessness**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services provides funding to address homelessness through the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP). This program provides funding to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards in Ontario to develop, deliver, and manage homelessness prevention initiatives to meet local needs.

The CHPP replaces five former provincial programs that were designed to help people who were homeless and at risk of becoming homeless:

- Provincial Homelessness Initiatives Fund (PHIF);
- Supports for Daily Living (SDL) Program;
- Community Partners Program (CPP);
- Emergency Hostel Redirection (EHR) Program; and
- Off the Street Into Shelter (OSIS) Fund.

Services funded through the CHPP must address one or more of the following goals:

- Improve access to and connect households that are homeless with the system of community services;
- Support households experiencing homelessness to obtain and keep longer-term housing; and
- Assist households at-risk of homelessness to retain housing.

The main reasons for consolidating the homelessness initiatives under one funding umbrella were to simplify administrative requirements and give municipalities more flexibility in addressing local needs - so they would no longer be constrained by the parameters of individual programs. As long as municipalities meet the overall goals of

the consolidated program, they are free to develop their own strategies to end and prevent homelessness. The provincial government will measure success based on the number of households at risk of homelessness who were stabilized so they could remain housed and the number of homeless people who were helped to obtain housing. The idea is that once homeless people have a stable place to live, service agencies can be more effective in connecting them to community services – which could include employment initiatives.

### **5.3.4 City of Toronto**

The City of Toronto is involved in several initiatives designed to help homeless people find employment. These include administering funds through the federal government's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), developing the Transition to Work pilot project, and participating in the Toronto Enterprise Fund.

The City of Toronto serves as the “Community Entity” in charge of administering the SCPI program in Toronto. It has a contract with Service Canada to define local priorities to address homelessness - in consultation with the community, and to distribute SCPI funds to the community through a Request For Proposals based on community priorities. The agencies report to the City about their use of SCPI funds and the City reports to Service Canada.

In May 2005, the City approved the allocation of \$2,343,045 SCPI dollars to 14 agencies in the community to provide employment related support targeted to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The projects address a range of services to address specific barriers they experienced in preparing for, finding and maintaining employment, including:

- Pre-employment programs - geared to providing basic, transferable skills to help individuals become job ready. Activities include life skills, basic computer literacy, internship style placements, job search skills, job maintenance, case management and referrals to employment programs.
- Employment programs - geared to participants who are job-ready. They serve participants with up-to-date skills and an ability to work, who simply need help to find and secure a job.
- Education initiatives - geared to helping provide a foundation for employment. Activities include help to get a General Education Diploma, literacy training and skill training/re-training.
- Support services - designed to address specific barriers faced by people who are homeless. They may address issues such as health, psychosocial, legal, financial, laundry/shower, referral and material services (i.e. clothing, food), which are often a critical link in helping participants to be successful in gaining and maintaining employment.

The City of Toronto recognizes that ending homelessness requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that addresses the need for social networks, health, housing and income/employment. This includes providing opportunities to help people who are homeless transition to work.

The SCPI Community Plan for Toronto 2003-2006 identified a need to develop employment programs specifically targeted to people who are homeless. The Plan noted that many of the existing employment programs do not respond to the particular needs of homeless clients and are often unavailable to them.

Some community agencies do provide programs for people who are homeless, but often they have mandates to serve a particular client group (e.g. youth, people with a mental illness). Community agencies and clients have identified a need for more programs targeted specifically to people who are homeless.

As a result, “despite their willingness to do so, many people who are homeless have difficulty entering the traditional job market. Employers may not hire them for a variety of reasons, including low levels of education, skills not being valued by the labour market and mental health or addiction issues. They may not appear presentable in the workplace and may face discrimination based on their current situations. Community economic development (CED), social purpose enterprises, skills enhancement and employment readiness programs targeted to people who are homeless can be effective in giving participants opportunity in a way traditional employment services are not able to” (City of Toronto 2003). One of the six objectives of the Community Plan for Toronto is to create skills enhancement and employment opportunities. The Plan also established two priorities: to support community economic activities and to enhance links with the skills development and employment sector.

### **Pre-conditions for a Person who is Homeless to Gain Employment**

The City understands that people who are homeless or living in shelters in Toronto often need support before becoming employment-ready. To become employment ready, a person needs a level of stability. This includes having a place to stay – knowing where they will be staying on any given night. They need a place to keep their possessions, do their laundry and take a shower.

A person also needs a proper employment assessment. This assessment needs to identify barriers that might prevent the person from being able to work and explore why a person has lost jobs in the past. The assessment also needs to consider how to address these issues. The person may need assistance with lifeskills and help to manage their mental health and addictions issues. They may also need help with literacy, general skills, anger management, and living independently as well as practical things such as proper clothing, workboots, and transportation.

A person coming to a shelter at the very least may be suffering trauma from the experience of becoming homeless. It may be difficult for them to participate in group sessions/workshops. Some support may be needed to work with a participant to build up their confidence and self-esteem. It has been noted that most employment programs run for about three to four weeks, whereas someone who is homeless may need more time (closer to six months) to address their issues and prepare for employment.

Some people who are homeless are very independent and just need information about getting a job, but this is not the majority.

People who are homeless may also need ongoing support through job coaching and a supportive employer. Social enterprises often provide a supportive environment that recognizes the need to accommodate people with special needs and to provide extra help or support. Private sector employers may need some education and support to work with this population.

### **Transition to Work Pilot Project**

The City of Toronto established a Transition to Work pilot project to address the issue of employment for homeless people. This initiative is funded through SCPI. The City of Toronto provides in-kind resources such as office space and staff time. The Transition to Work pilot project involves collaborating with community groups to develop policies and programs that generate employment options and help homeless people make the transition to work. Another focus of the Transition to Work pilot project involves partnering with staff in Toronto's homeless shelters to:

- Work with shelter clients who are ready to make the transition to work;
- Improve the shelter's capacity to guide their clients to appropriate employment options;
- Connect with work-related resources in the community for client referrals; and
- Create in-house tools, resources and transition-to-work programs.

This initiative grew out of consultation with the community and city-run shelters. The shelters identified a gap in service for their clients who were working part time. They estimated that about 20-30% of people in shelters work part time in low paying jobs and want to increase their skills to get better jobs. There are some shelter clients who want to get into the job market, and others who need a supported environment if they are to work. Shelter staff believe that if they can help clients achieve their employment goals, the clients could move out of the shelter.

Shelter staff believed that shelters are an excellent place to start working with clients interested in transitioning to employment or improving their employment situations. They noted that programs in the community don't offer the type of service and flexibility needed by their clients. For example, programs are often open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. which doesn't work for their clients, and shelter clients may not have strong enough self-esteem to participate in a community program. Also, many clients need childcare, which most employment programs do not offer. However, shelter clients already have a relationship with shelter staff, and some shelters already provide childcare. Several shelters also offer support to help clients with their resumes and job search. Others have developed informal partnerships with agencies in the community to help shelter clients access their services. In considering the continuum of employment, it was felt that shelters could play a role in pre-employment and planning.

The Transition to Work pilot project put some ideas into action in two Toronto shelters: the City's Fort York Residence for homeless men and Family Residence.

The City's Fort York Residence is a shelter for men who are employed and need a place to sleep. Some of the shelter clients are employable and looking for work. The shelter has more privacy and more of a focus on employment than most other shelters. However, until recently, the shelter did not offer any employment programs. Shelter staff found that some issues were preventing their clients from achieving their employment potential. These included mental health and addictions issues as well as a lack of skills.

At present, with the support and direction of the Transition to Work pilot project team, both the Fort York Residence and Family Residence have put in place employment resource centres, staff mentoring, workshops and individual support to help their clients achieve success in the work place. Once shelter clients decide they want to transition to work, they enter a three stage process which includes:

- Working with a Transition to Work pilot project employment specialist to create an action plan outlining the steps and obstacles to steady work;
- Choosing to attend workshops that address issues ranging from job search skills to decision-making; and
- Receiving individual support to gain the required skills to thrive in the workplace and in the community.

The Transition to Work pilot project has also sponsored 13 people to start at George Brown College in a pre-apprenticeship program. The City and George Brown College worked together to customize an existing program to make it work for shelter clients. City staff will provide support. Participants will be able to apprentice in a variety of trades such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical, refrigeration and air conditioning. City staff do a thorough assessment of participants and are available to talk to participants if issues arise. A housing worker at the shelter is also available to support participants. Participants will be eligible to complete the first requirement to obtain an apprenticeship certificate. This program is unique in that most skills development and job training programs such as that offered by George Brown College are not available to people who are homeless. Nine shelter clients started the program in May 2006 and four more will start in September 2006. These additional four needed academic upgrading which they were working to complete in the summer.

City of Toronto staff are working to make the Transition to Work pilot project sustainable. They are doing staff mentoring and training on employability dimensions, labour market issues and barriers to employment. One of their goals is for shelter staff to be able to facilitate the "life on track" workshops and help residents use the resource rooms.

The City has designed a survey that will be sent to 90 shelters in Toronto to find out to what extent they think their clients are ready to work, what their clients need to become employable, and what the shelters are already doing to assist their clients with employment. They City wants to identify four or five more shelter sites that could participate in the Transition to Work pilot project.

One of the things that has worked well with this initiative is the combination of the policy work that was done to develop the model, work on capacity building and develop the workshops and the on-site practical work with clients and staff. Another strength has been working collaboratively with the community to identify needs and new ideas. One of the weaknesses has been the short-term nature of the funding which means that there is not enough time to do sufficient up front planning. Also, the need for programs and initiatives is great, and there are not enough resources. Staff are stretched too thin.

## **Toronto Enterprise Fund**

The Toronto Enterprise Fund is a vehicle to encourage the development of social purpose enterprises working with people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness. The program has the support of all three levels of government and the voluntary sector, including Human Resources Development Canada, SCPI, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (Ontario Disability Support Program), City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto. The United Way of Greater Toronto acts as the administrative partner for the Program and has played a very central role in the development and administration of the Fund. Program funding decisions and strategic direction for program activities is provided through a Program Steering Committee with representation from each of the partners. Having a variety of funding partners and participants on the funding committee is a source of strength because it makes the program less vulnerable to funding cuts and the different participants bring a range of perspectives.

The goal of the Toronto Enterprise Fund is to help people who are homeless and marginalized to participate in an enterprise or become self-employed. The belief is that social purpose enterprises can create both community connections and real economic opportunities for homeless and at-risk populations by developing businesses that balance revenue generation with a social mission. The enterprises provide people with employment opportunities, work experience, additional income, improved life skills and self-esteem, and better connections to their community and the labour force. They help reduce poverty, thereby helping to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The Toronto Enterprise Fund provides funding to identify and support fledgling enterprises. They hope the enterprises will bring in enough money to cover the business costs, but revenues are not expected to cover social costs e.g. for training, support and lifeskills.

Examples of social purpose enterprises receiving support through the Toronto Enterprise Fund include.

- All-A-Board Youth – River Restaurant: a restaurant and lounge that provides on-the-job training to homeless and at-risk youth.
- Dixon Hall – The Mill Centre: a woodworking shop that provides on-the-job training to homeless and at risk people.
- Eva’s Phoenix – Phoenix Print Shop: a commercial print shop that provides on-the-job training to homeless and at-risk youth.

- FoodShare – Growing Green Jobs: an urban farm that provides training and work experience for individuals with persistent and severe mental health issues.
- The Furniture Bank – Furniture Link: a furniture delivery and refurbishment business providing employment to homeless and at-risk people.
- Native Men’s Residence – Tumivut Earthkeepers: a horticultural and landscaping business to employ and train residents of the Tumivut Youth Shelter.
- Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses – Out of This World Cafe: a canteen, an espresso bar, a catering operation, and a mobile coffee cart that offers permanent employment to psychiatric consumer/survivors.
- Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses - Parkdale Green Thumb Enterprises: a horticultural maintenance business that provides permanent employment to psychiatric consumer/survivors.
- Sistering - Inspirations: a studio space for homeless and marginalized women to develop skills and micro-businesses in arts and crafts production.
- SKETCH – SKETCH Connections: an art studio space and collaborative marketing initiative for homeless and at risk youth.
- Somali Women and Children’s Support Network – Haween Enterprises: a sewing enterprise that provides training, work experience and employment opportunities for immigrant and low-income women.
- St. John the Compassionate Mission – St. John’s Bakery: expanding their bakery and adding a retail outlet to provide employment and training to homeless and at risk people.

## **Program Outcomes**

A report on outcomes for the 14 SCPI funded projects is not yet available. However, initial agency reports demonstrate that participants have been able to access a variety of employment-related supports geared to their level of job-readiness. Several projects reported placing participants in jobs and educational/training programs, and others have successfully increased the employability level of their participants (City of Toronto Staff Report 2005).

The Transition to Work pilot project is still in its early stages. The City plans to analyze the outcomes towards the end of SCPI. They will develop indicators to consider in what areas program participants have made progress.

City staff believe that a number of factors need to be considered in evaluating employment/pre-employment programs targeted to people who are homeless. They note that the programs need to be viewed as part of a continuum that starts with lifeskills and pre pre-employment. The value of pre-employment programs also needs to be recognized. The City also notes that helping people become employment-ready can require a longer-term investment than is recognized by most employment programs.

And while some program participants do obtain employment, programs that measure success simply on the basis of “getting a job” do a disservice to service agencies.

## **Future Directions**

The City of Toronto believes it is important to recognize that employment is a way out of homelessness. Housing is important, but people also need a sufficient income. A national strategy is needed as well as more work at the community level to help the more vulnerable people in society participate in the labour market. It is also important to note that some people in shelters have work skills, but may need other types of support. Employers need education as well assistance to support their employees.

The City of Toronto has held some meetings and focus groups with the private sector to develop employment strategies to alleviate homelessness. There haven't been many jobs created yet for people who are homeless, but the City believes there is potential. Some corporations seem interested. The City of Toronto Parks Department has been working to build rapport with homeless people and has decided to hire a few of them as City staff to coordinate and teach recreation activities and monitor activities in City parks that are frequented by some homeless people. The City plans to hire more homeless people a few hours a week to start. This has been a good initiative, and may serve as a good example to others.

## **5.4 British Columbia/Vancouver**

### **5.4.1 Province Wide**

Employment services in B.C. for people who are unemployed, including people who are homeless, are governed by two sets of policies/programs addressing employment generally.

1. Canada-BC Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), which outlines the role of the federal government in this area of provincial jurisdiction. It sets out the relationship between the two levels of government. It provides funding for “employment benefits and support measures” including wage subsidies, self-employment assistance, job placement training, and financial assistance for skills upgrading. In addition, it provides funding for employment assistance programs. LMDA is targeted to people who are eligible to receive Employment Insurance (EI) or who have had EI claims in past 3 years. It is also available to mutual clients, who meet the eligibility requirements of EI and receive provincial income assistance.
2. The Provincial Ministry of Employment and Assistance (MEIA) has mandatory employment programs for income assistance recipients. The Ministry is introducing a new employment program called BC Employment Programs, which will replace the Job Partnership Program. Intake is expected to begin in late July 2006. It has been established to meet the changing special needs of income assistance clients, many of whom have

barriers to employment. It is recognized that remaining Income Assistance (IA) clients require more intensive services to help them achieve employment or meaningful activity.

Three components of the new program address the needs of:

- Persons who are employable, having recently lost work, and mainly need assistance with job referral etc.;
- Clients who are employable with some barriers such as mental health or addictions; and
- English as a second language clients and new immigrants.

The new provincial programs will take a holistic approach, offering whatever services a client needs, including one-on-one counselling. Each component of the program is contracted to a delivery agent that may also sub-contract components to agencies experienced in working with specific populations.

It will work in conjunction with other related MEIA programs such as the Community Assistance Program, which focuses specifically on assisting individuals to develop their basic life skills, enhance their quality of life and prepare them to participate more fully in their community. It will also complement the Direct Access to Housing outreach project, which aims to link homeless people directly with income assistance and housing. MEIA also intends to work with Vancouver Coastal Health Authority case managers to link persons completing residential treatment programs with this employment program.

The intended outcomes are to help people find work or meaningful activity, including connections with the community and improve lifeskills. Moving people off Income Assistance is also a goal.

The B.C. Fast Track to Employment (2005) study recommended improved access to income assistance and formation of non-profit temporary employment programs like Street Youth Job Action in Vancouver. Multi-service agencies, such as those dealing with mental illness or immigrants, were found to be in the best position to provide comprehensive services, including employment services. For example, two mental health agencies that operate short term/day labour projects reported that they don't have homeless workers because they have the staffing and resources necessary to arrange housing and support services for agency clients prior to their work involvement. Employment programs in large immigrant service groups also reported that they are able to refer any homeless clients to inhouse advocates to help them find housing during the course of the program (Fast Track to Employment 2005).

### **5.4.2 Vancouver**

The province of B.C. also funds a three-year demonstration program called the *Case Coordination Service* under the auspices of the Vancouver Agreement Employment Strategy, which is a tri-government level framework for addressing social and economic issues in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. This initiative is intended to provide pre- and post- employment supports to 450 *long-term unemployed* persons in the Downtown Eastside

area of Vancouver only. The provincial Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance funds this project with approximately \$3.25 million. Clients must be on income assistance.

Ten staff work one on one with clients offering intensive support to help them obtain and retain employment. The project takes a holistic approach. Case managers will assist clients with a range of issues, such as housing, addictions, mental health issues, etc. Some clients may require a few months support, and others may work with a case coordinator for up to two years to accomplish the goals set out in their back to work plan.

The management of the case coordination project is contracted to a non-profit organization called Building Opportunities for Business (BOB), and the case coordination is contracted to six existing non-profit agencies serving different sub-populations, such as immigrants, women, Aboriginal persons etc.

At the end of February 2006, approximately 200 people had been referred to the program. Although there are no statistics available yet, very few are thought to be homeless, because of the requirement to be on income assistance. The initiative is being evaluated and early results indicate that most clients are being placed into volunteer work opportunities. Further it is recognized that some clients will never be able to secure traditional employment.

According to the program coordinator, the strengths of the program are:

- It uses existing service providers and thus is well connected to the community;
- They are successful at achieving more stable living environments for their clients;
- The intensive support that is being provided is good; and
- Some clients are being connected to the Ministry of Employment and Assistance to obtain disability benefits, which provides a higher level of financial support and earnings exemptions.

The weaknesses:

- Case coordinators are housed in different non-profit agencies making coordination and consistency challenging; and
- Early indications are that outcomes are less favourable than originally expected. It was originally thought that 50% of clients might become employed, but it appears that this may be too optimistic.

### **5.4.3 City and Regional Initiatives**

Municipal and regional homeless policies and plans recognize the importance of employment in addressing the cycle of homelessness. The Greater Vancouver Regional Homeless Plan, *Three Ways to Home*, refers to housing, income (including employment income) and support as the three cornerstones of an effective homeless strategy. However, there are few actual programs or initiatives addressing employment for homeless persons.

The City of Vancouver's *Homeless Action Plan* counted over 40 different initiatives aimed at helping people to connect to employment, but none are targeted to people who are homeless. The City plan supports the view that "providing homeless persons with employment opportunities is necessary to break the cycle of homelessness" (City of Vancouver 2005). It calls for all levels of government to "support and enhance employment assistance services and training programs specifically to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. ... The programs should provide assistance and support to help homeless people to transition to a level of employment that is consistent with their goals, strengths and abilities and "where they are at"" (City of Vancouver 2005). The City of Vancouver's role is to continue to work with the Vancouver Agreement, an urban development initiative of the federal, provincial and local government of Vancouver that promotes partnerships between the three levels of government, community organizations and business to address social and economic issues in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver.

Referring to the previous provincial government employment programs, the study on *Barriers to Employment for Persons Who are Homeless* (2005) pointed out that nine out of 36 (or 25%) employment service providers interviewed reported their program was not accessible to homeless people because clients need to have an address/place to live/way to communicate with the employment service. Those who were able to serve homeless clients reported minimal take up of their programs by homeless persons – 22 reported 5% or less of their clients were homeless. Six employment service provider respondents reported that a substantial proportion of their client base was homeless (ranging from 10% to 60% homeless).

## 5.5 Quebec/Montreal

### 5.5.1 Provincial Programs

The *Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale* (Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity) is responsible for employability programs. Local *Emploi Quebec* offices offer direct help to those who are unemployed and support for those who need more specialized help. However, the primary model used in Quebec is one of partnership with community organizations. The Ministry has programs of social accompaniment for people who are not ready in the short term to join the labour market. For example, *Devenir*, consists of individualized support given by community organizations to help prepare people to participate in larger public employment programs.

A number of networks operate throughout the province to offer support. These include:

- The *Collectif des entreprises d'insertion du Québec*, established in 1995 is the result of work that began in the 1980s when organizations in various Quebec regions undertook initiatives to "reinsert" individuals by setting up innovative social enterprises. As requests for information and education multiplied, common features and goals were recognized, including that of being a bridge permitting people to be integrated socially and through the labour market. The insertion enterprises are non-profit and have a double goal of veritable

economic activity and training/insertion and support for people who have serious difficulties in integrating into the labour market. The average program is 27 weeks and allows people to develop abilities and knowledge that are transferable. Support is given in how to integrate in the working milieu, how to take one's place as a worker, how to play an active role in the community, develop habits and attitudes that support social insertion, and have a positive experience of work.

The enterprises all share a common goal of social insertion, work with persons in difficulty (i.e. who have experienced multiple failures and for whom existing resources are inadequate and non-adapted), be a true enterprise (i.e. commercial offer of goods or services and gives participants real and significant work experience), offer a salary to participants, personalized support, holistic support (personal, social and technical), and partnership with other organizations in the milieu.

- The *Regroupement Québécois des Organismes pour le Développement de l'Émployabilité* (RQuODE) brings together and supports community organizations that specialize in the development of employability. During the 1970s and 1980s community organizations confronted with problems of unemployment, sought to develop solutions by offering services to create employment. The recession in 1982 and public policies that addressed structural unemployment, led these organizations to develop projects to deal with the needs of those unemployed persons who were the most affected by structural changes to the market. The RQuODE was established in 1986 to defend the interests of these organizations, following a change in federal policies with the advent of the Conservative government.

Initially funded by the federal government (in 1988) the RQuODE has been funded by the province since the transfer of the labour dossier to Quebec.

Member organizations adhere to the following principles:

- Universal accessibility;
  - A focus on client needs;
  - Adaptation to the issues confronting clients;
  - View the client as someone who has power over their own development;
  - Aim for employment autonomy;
  - Develop means to evaluate results;
  - Adjust to the socio-economic reality of the milieu; and
  - Ensure optimal management.
- The *Réseau des services spécialisés de main-d'œuvre* (RSSMO) consists of 52 non-profit organizations in all regions of Quebec that help persons with difficulty integrating into the labour market. Organizations can work with particular populations including women, youth, persons 35 years and over, immigrants, persons with a criminal record, people with

problems of alcoholism, addictions and compulsive gambling, and those who have been out of the labour market for a significant period of time (including those over 45 years).

Services offered include testing, orientation, professional and educational information, development of employability, help in job searching, counselling, psycho-social support, internships, and support in staying employed.

In June 2005 the National Assembly adopted Bill 57 (*Individual and Family Assistance Act*), which provides for the creation of a new Social Assistance Program, for those who are “fit for work” but temporarily lack sufficient means to meet their basic needs. The new program establishes a minimum benefit that is no longer reduced in the event of non-participation in an employment-assistance measure. A Social Solidarity Program is included in the Act and will provide people with a severely limited capacity for employment a social solidarity allowance. The new legislation also establishes a program designed to help people removed from the labour market take steps to become active participants in society and to prepare them to participate in an employment-assistance measure or program.

### **5.5.2 Homelessness (NHI)**

The National Homelessness Initiative in Quebec is undertaken through the Canada /Quebec Agreement. The program is administered in Quebec by the Ministry of Health and Social Services. The terms of the agreement limit interventions to areas that are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry – anything to do with training or employment is seen as an incursion into provincial areas of competence. Therefore projects funded under the NHI cannot include an employment component – even mention of “salaries” is not allowed (instead terms such as “participation bonus” may be used). While a few projects in the first round of SCPI did include an employment component (e.g. Éco-Boulot mentioned below), these conditions were restricted in the second round of SCPI to not infringe on provincial jurisdiction.

Nonetheless, individual projects may have a component that includes employment – but this would not be part of the NHI project. Social welfare does allow people to undertake volunteer work and an additional amount is given to participants in these programs. However it would appear that many of the positions are not especially rewarding or satisfying, nor do they lead to experience that can be used elsewhere.

### **5.5.3 Montreal: Groupe Information Travail (GIT)**

In the early 1980s, members of the *Réseau d'Aide aux Personnes Seules et Itinérantes de Montréal (RAPSIM)*, a network of organizations working with homeless or at risk persons noted that the missing link in services being offered to their clientele was employability. The Groupe Information Travail (GIT) was incorporated in 1986 and works closely with shelters, detox centres, drop in centres, and transitional housing. Its mission is to help homeless persons in Montreal develop their autonomy through work. It is the only organization in Montreal that offers pre-employment training for homeless persons.

The GIT offers three programs, of which two are directed at youth: Éco-Boulot gives street youth an opportunity to work on outdoor projects (e.g. building a collective garden, cleaning up the banks of a stream) and is flexible and adapted to the youths' current situations, for example they are paid on a daily basis. The second youth project is *Git en Amérique*, undertaken in partnership with Canada World Youth. It consists of community work in central America (Costa Rica, Mexico) and includes a 6-week preparatory stage, 4 weeks in the country and a 2-week evaluation period.

The third, Programme Préparatoire à l'Émloi (PPE) is for persons 16 to 65 and consists of an 11-week preparatory program, funded by Emploi Québec. Participants often have problems of addiction, mental health, and criminal records. Some also have health problems such as HIV/AIDS, physical handicaps and many have multiple problems. Participants are interviewed before being accepted into the program and must have minimal reading and writing skills; if they have problems with addiction they must be in a program dealing with this (but not necessarily abstinent). Participants are not homeless – a minimal level of stability is necessary before people can begin to look for work.

PPE includes exploration of working life (e.g. expectations, preferences, etc.), internships (about 300 enterprises participate), job searching, and preparation of a CV.

- The first two weeks are workshops on self-understanding, social competences, and staying employed.
- Week 3 and 4 are internships in enterprises from a GIT list of 300, to allow evaluation of ability, competence, behaviour, motivation and the interests of participants.
- Week 5 is workshops on job searching techniques.
- Week 6 is a search for an internship by the participant.
- Weeks 7, 8, 9 and 10 are the internship in the enterprise chosen by the participant with a goal of gaining permanent employment in this enterprise.
- The last week is to help participants who did not get a permanent job to continue their search.

There are 75 participants annually but a number drop out during the 11-week session – often due to problems such as eviction or health: participants lives are often quite unstable and can rapidly be further destabilized by such events. Support is given to participants for at least a year after they have completed the program, including support groups – participants are considered members for life.

Participants are recruited through partner organizations such as shelters and in 2005 social assistance cheques included a pamphlet describing services from seven Quebec organizations, including GIT, which resulted in 200 calls for more information. Information sessions also are held at partner organizations on a regular basis.

In 2004/5 260 persons were referred to the program; 170 were interviewed; 122 accepted into the program; and 73 completed it.

The profile of participants is:

- 62% male and 38% female;
- 22% between 16 - 24 years; 14% 25 - 30; 5% 31 - 35; 21% 36-40; 38% over 40;
- 53% were living in apartments; 11% in treatment centres; 5% in youth centres; 19% supported housing; 7% with family/friends; 4% in shelters; and
- 12% only had a primary school education; 47% had some high school; 22% had completed high school.

While financial autonomy is the objective, this is a complicated goal. Educational level is a problem for many and many of the jobs are precarious and not very well paid. People often find themselves unemployed again.

The agreement with Emploi Québec stipulates that 60% of participants should be “placed” (i.e. either started a job or a 12-week training program) at the end of the program – i.e. at least 45% employed and a maximum of 15% pursuing studies. The results for 2004/5 were somewhat below target: 34% had started a full-time job and 11% part-time and 8% full time and 4% part-time training.

## ***6. Homelessness and Employment: United States***

In the U.S., the Department of Labor is responsible for administering employment and training services, which are considered crucial in addressing the cycle of homelessness. The Department's objectives are to provide access to mainstream employment assistance and services, identify skills needed in the workforce, and address skill deficiencies of this population.

The Department of Labour offers both mainstream programs and initiatives specifically targeted to people who are homeless or at risk, to help them achieve employment and self-sufficiency.

The Department of Labor is one of the partner agencies involved in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. This Council was established in 1987 to coordinate the Federal response to homelessness under the *Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act*, (now known as the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*), and was revitalized by President Bush in 2002. Its main goal is to abolish homelessness and to coordinate the federal response to homelessness. Twenty-two federal agencies are involved in developing new strategies to coordinate the nation's response to homelessness. The first priority set by the President is to eliminate chronic homelessness by 2012.

The Council encourages activities and initiatives that incorporate research-driven, performance-based, and results-oriented solutions. For example, the Council supports:

- The dissemination of new and innovative approaches such as Housing First and, Assertive Community Treatment Teams that are proving effective at ending chronic homelessness;
- Local cost-benefit studies that reveal the costs of homelessness to the community and the cost savings that arise from effective solutions;
- Strategies to prevent homelessness for individuals and families before it occurs; and,
- Access to mainstream resources for the benefit of homeless persons and families.

The Council recognizes that homelessness is affected by factors that cut across Federal agencies, including housing costs, job readiness, education, substance abuse and mental health.

### **6.1 Mainstream Programs**

The Department of Labor's mainstream programs, authorized under the *Workforce Investment Act (WIA)*, offer employment and training services to all individuals in need of assistance, including those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Consistent with the goal to help homeless people access mainstream services, the Department is working

to remove barriers so homeless people may better access the workforce investment system. The Department developed the One-Stop Career Center system as a way to improve services. One-Stop Career Centers offer three levels of service:

- Core – includes eligibility assessment and job search;
- Intensive – includes literacy skills enhancement and job clubs; and
- Training – includes on-the-job training and occupational skills training.

Clients are assessed by the local One-Stop Career Center as to what services they need and are eligible to receive. The One-Stop Career Centers are intended to provide comprehensive employment and training services and information through an accessible delivery system. Services are designed to meet individual needs and include:

- Job-search and job-placement assistance;
- Free access to computers, Internet, fax machines, and printers for job search purposes;
- Access to job listings and labour market information;
- Assistance preparing resumes;
- Comprehensive assessment of job skills, abilities, aptitudes, and needs;
- Career counselling;
- Workshops on topics such as interviewing skills;
- Case management;
- Pre-vocational services;
- Information on Unemployment Insurance;
- Individual employment plans;
- Training in literacy skills;
- Rehabilitative services;
- Referrals to training, education, and related supportive services (such as transportation and child care); and
- Outreach and recruitment for business.

The Department of Labor Fiscal Year 2003-2008 Strategic Plan set a goal to “increase the number of homeless persons who receive workforce services.” They have also identified a number of ways to facilitate services to people who are homeless through technical assistance, identifying promising practices and research. They collect information on the number of homeless youth they serve and plan to collect information on the number of homeless adults they serve and who obtain employment as a result of the services.

Some of their initiatives to help homeless individuals take full advantage of the employment and training services available through the One-Stop Career Center delivery system include the following:

- FirstStep. Provides an interactive electronic tool for service providers to ensure they are aware of all the resources available to homeless individuals in a given community. The goal is to help agencies help their clients to access benefits from Federal mainstream benefit programs.<sup>4</sup>
- An interagency collaborative initiative that pairs supportive housing with employment and training services through the One-Stop Career Centers.
- Disability Program Navigator Initiative. In February 2006, the Department of Labor and Social Security Administration jointly established a new position, the Disability Program Navigator, within the One-Stop Career Centres, to help people with disabilities (including people with addictions and who are chronically homeless) to navigate through the challenges of seeking work.

## **6.2 Targeted Initiatives**

In addition to opportunities and assistance afforded to homeless persons through mainstream programs, the Department of Labor is directly involved in preventing and reducing homelessness through targeted and specialized employment and training programs as follows:

### **6.2.1 Prevention Programs**

These are designed to help people at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless. An example is Job Corps, a comprehensive residential education and job training program for at-risk youth, ages 16 through 24. The program combines classroom, practical, and work-based learning experiences to prepare youth for stable, long-term, high-paying jobs. There are 122 Job Corps centers in 49 states and Puerto Rico that offer educational training and a variety of vocational training programs. The program is targeted to foster care, homeless and runaway youth.

### **6.2.2 Re-entry Programs**

These are designed to improve employment outcomes for ex-offenders and reduce crime and recidivism. Examples include:

- Youth Offender Demonstration Grants. In 2004, the Department of Labor awarded nearly \$50 million to provide services to at-risk youth and youth offenders throughout the U.S.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/homeless/firststep/content/overview.html>.

- Ready4Work is a three-year national demonstration project introduced in 2004 to assist faith-based and community programs that provide mentoring and other transition services for men and women returning from prison.
- The Prisoner Re-entry Initiative was introduced by President Bush in 2004 to help strengthen urban communities and assist ex-prisoners re-entering the community through an employment-based program that incorporates housing, mentoring, job training, and other services. The initiative is designed to draw on the unique strengths of faith-based and community-based organizations, and rely on them as a primary partner for social service delivery to ex-prisoners by providing a direct link into the communities to which they are returning.
- Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative. The Department of Labour is collaborating with the Department of Justice and other departments to focus on the increasing number of offenders released from prisons, jails or court-affiliated training schools. The initiative is designed to reduce further criminal activity by violent ex-offenders upon their return to the community through job training and supportive services in preparation for gainful employment. It addresses both juvenile and adult populations who are serious, high risk offenders.

### **6.2.3 Intervention Programs**

These are programs designed to provide services to those who have become homeless, including veterans and people with disabilities. The goal of these programs is to help homeless people become self-sufficient. Examples include the following:

- The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program provides services to help homeless veterans obtain meaningful employment. Funds are awarded through competitive grants. Eligible entities include state and local Workforce Investment Boards, public agencies, for-profit or commercial entities, and non-profit organizations. Grantees provide veterans with intensive case management, employment and training services, job placement, career counselling, resume preparation and critical linkages to supportive services available in their local communities. The program also hires formerly homeless veterans to do outreach, and provide counseling, peer coaching, intake and follow-up services.
- The Veterans Workforce Investment Program is intended to meet the needs of veterans with service-connected disabilities, who have significant barriers to employment, who served on active duty in the armed forces during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, and recently separated veterans. The program provides employment and training services to eligible veterans to help them into gainful employment. These programs can provide for, but are not limited to training (formal classroom or on-the-job training), retraining, job placement assistance, and support services, including testing, and counseling.

- Ending Chronic Homelessness through Employment and Housing projects is a partnership between the Department of Labor and Department of Housing and Urban Development. The goal is to develop tailored employment strategies to enable people who are chronically homeless to achieve employment, permanent housing and self-sufficiency. Five demonstration projects are designed to bring together the expertise and capabilities of the local workforce investments system (One-Stop Career Centers and their partners) and local permanent housing service organizations to develop and document the most effective strategies to respond to the employment needs of persons who are chronically homeless. Lessons learned will be applied to build the capacity within the mainstream employment and training system to serve hard-to-serve populations such as persons who are chronically homeless.



## ***7. Homelessness and Employability: Europe, England, and Scotland***

This section presents an overview of policies and programs that are being carried out in Europe, especially through the European Union, and those in England and Scotland.

In Europe and the U.K. there has been a focus on assisting the socially excluded, including homeless persons, with reintegration into society, often through employment. Employment initiatives have been a priority for governments and organizations that work with people who are homeless. European Union member states have adopted an employment policy that specifically targets homeless persons in their Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs 2005-2008.

“Facilitating access to employment for job-seekers, preventing unemployment and ensuring that those who become unemployed remain attached to the labour market and increase their employability are essential to increase participation and combat social exclusion. This requires breaking down barriers to the labour market by assisting with effective job searching, facilitating access to training and other active labour market measures and ensuring that work pays, as well as removing unemployment, poverty and inactivity traps. Special attention should be paid to promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged people in the labour market, including through the expansion of social services and the social economy” (European Commission 2005).

### **7.1 Europe**

In March 2005, the European Council<sup>5</sup> re-launched the Lisbon Strategy<sup>6</sup> by focussing on growth and employment with the objective of “contributing to social cohesion” (Commission of the European Communities 2006). While the Council acknowledges that policies have been undertaken in member states to bring excluded people back into the labour market, a sizeable “hard core” of people are noted as having little prospect of finding a job and falling into poverty and social exclusion. The goal is to ensure that social protection policies mobilize those who are capable of working while providing a decent living standard to those who are outside of the labour market. The Council notes that progress has been made in fighting exclusion from the labour force, notably:

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<sup>5</sup> The European Council brings together the heads of state of the European Union and the president of the Commission (the Commission is the Executive body of the Union) and defines the general political guidelines of the European Union.

<sup>6</sup> Lisbon Strategy is an action and development plan for the European Union set out by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000.

- Minimization of disincentives to paid employment;
- Financial incentives, such as tax credits for those in low-paying work to increase income; and
- Measures to facilitate access to basic services and goods such as healthcare, child-care, decent housing and food.

Minimum income schemes also have been implemented in some states to make up the difference between earned income or social benefits to ensure basic living standards. While they are not time-limited (but assumed to be temporary), they require people to be available for work.

Nonetheless it is noted that about 8.5% of the population (or 31.7 million persons) of working age, 16 to 64 years, were excluded from the labour market. They included the long-term unemployed, persons discouraged after repeated job search failures, or willing but unable to find work because of disability, chronic illness, lack of basic skills, discrimination and/or family responsibilities.

Three elements are suggested as key for a policy of active inclusion: a link to the labour market through job opportunities or vocational training; income support that is sufficient to give people a dignified life; and access to services to remove hurdles that may be confronting people entering mainstream society through work such as counselling, healthcare, child-care, flexible work arrangements, and psychological and social rehabilitation. Furthermore, it is emphasised that these strands must be interlinked (Commission of the European Communities 2006).

A specific response to the Council's proposals from the perspective of the needs of homeless persons has been outlined by FEANTSA<sup>7</sup> which underlines a key element to allow people to fully participate in society – access to adequate and affordable housing (FEANTSA 2006). The other essential elements noted are:

- Extra time and support to get back to work given the multiple barriers faced by homeless persons;
- Comprehensive services that include advice and guidance, training and skills development including basic and life skills; work placement, in-work and follow-up support; meaningful activity, supported employment and social enterprises, and “non-work” support and guidance such as access to housing, abuse treatment, promotion of social networks;
- A case management approach with flexible services and the possibility of changing track if a job placement has failed;
- Supported employment as the first step into the labour market. Positive results have been found from using approaches that not only “adapt the employee to the employment but the employment to the employee”;

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<sup>7</sup> FEANTSA undertakes research on specific themes each year. For example, that for 2006 was the right to health, 2005 was crisis intervention, 2004 was prevention, and 2002 was immigration. The planned theme for 2007 is employment.

- Meaningful occupation as a tool to develop skills and self-confidence. Recognizing that some populations will not be able to take up even supported employment (e.g. persons with long-term illness or mental health difficulties) can be counter productive, FEANTSA proposes that meaningful activity or volunteering can be important tools to develop personal and social skills and self-confidence. “These are important requirements to bring people closer to re-integration and employment;”
- Active inclusion requires more than integration into the labour market as illustrated by the “working poor” who cannot house themselves adequately. A better understanding of the housing dimension of employment is urged;
- Real incentives, such as minimum income schemes or tax reduction for low-income groups, to make work pay in real terms; and
- Sufficient financial resources and long-term investments to promote the inclusion of homeless persons (FEANTSA 2006).

## 7.2 England

Great Britain is one of the few countries in Europe to enshrine statutory responsibility for homelessness, albeit at the local authority level. *The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act* of 1977, most recently amended in 2002, charged local authorities with the duty to prevent homelessness or secure housing for people in priority groups. The latest version of *the Homelessness Act* placed new duties on local authorities to undertake review and develop strategies to not only deal with homelessness in their areas but also to prevent it. It is expected that this will result in a shift away from crisis management to early intervention.

Another related element in addressing the needs of homeless persons is the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU)<sup>8</sup> which developed policies and programs to deal with issues of unemployment and inactivity, as well as the potential of factors such as new technologies for populations that are excluded, such as youth, persons with mental health problems, youth in care, and young parents.<sup>9</sup>

While these government initiatives address critical issues, research undertaken by Off the Streets and into Work (OSW) in London reveals that policy around homelessness focuses on housing (Singh 2005). The study finds that there is a need to look beyond immediate housing needs and that other services, including those related to employment and training, should be “part of the core – rather than treated as “bolt-ons””.

Interviews with homeless persons revealed that 97% wanted to work in the future (and 77% at the time of the interview) but that they faced a wide range of personal and structural barriers to gaining access to training and employment services. These included

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that on June 13, 2006 a restructuring was announced and a new approach, including a Social Exclusion Taskforce bringing together some staff from the former Social Exclusion Unit and other policy specialists. The SEU had been under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which has now become the Department for Communities and Local Government.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/page.asp?id=4>

the need to deal with other pressing issues such as benefit claims, health problems and other person issues. Previous negative experiences and the structure of services proved to be barriers as did lack of experience, skills, training or relevant qualifications and “low-level” barriers such as lack of suitable clothing. The need for wider dissemination of information as well as one-to-one support was seen as a means to overcome some of the barriers. However, housing was noted as an issue for almost a quarter of respondents, including finding work that would pay sufficiently for housing and living expenses.

The results point to the multiple challenges that confront homeless persons and when these results were compared to previous studies, it was found that the barriers to employment “remained unchanged over time” including financial incentives to work, employer discrimination and misunderstanding the recruitment process. The one change that was noted was, that because of housing shortages and hostel places, housing was an even greater barrier to employment.

The research pointed to benefits that employers gained from hiring homeless persons but also concerns about whether individuals were “work ready”, although it was noted that there was considerable ambiguity about the term. The findings also highlighted the need for ongoing support for individuals once they were placed as well as better job-matching, pre-employment training and realistic job previews or work trials.

Homeless persons experiences with two initiatives, Jobcentre Plus<sup>10</sup> and New Deal<sup>11</sup> found that in the first instance jobs were not appropriate and that “individual needs and circumstances arising from their homelessness were not acknowledged” and with the second program, training and courses were found to be unsuitable and rules appeared unfair (Singh 2005).

### 7.3 Scotland

Government policy in Scotland has acknowledged the importance and the challenges of integrating employment programs into homelessness initiatives. For example, *the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001* specifically targets employment as a focus as well as “rewarding activities and transitional employment programs” (Wooley and McNaughton n.d.). As part of the approach, pilot programs were undertaken to address two major concerns: the need for support agencies to focus on employment as an outcome, and the need for training agencies to provide adequate support to clients.

Since devolution in the late 1990s, differences have emerged in England and Scotland in the approaches to homelessness that can be attributed in part to the size of the two countries and legislative impacts of the Conservative and then New Labour governments in England. In 2003 Scotland passed an amendment to *the Homelessness Act* that foresees that everyone will have permanent housing by 2012.

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<sup>10</sup> Jobcentre Plus is a government agency supporting people of working age from welfare into work.

<sup>11</sup> New Deal is a Government programme to give unemployed people help and support to get into work. A personal adviser acts as a point of contact throughout the program and helps develop a plan to get people into a suitable job.

One of the outcomes of this target has been to examine how solutions to homelessness can be made sustainable. It has been determined that key elements include developing social networks and support – often that come from employment and meaningful activity. Putting people into housing may not be enough. They also need to be involved in a community, geographical or other, and have a reason to belong. However there also is recognition that while employability is a key route out of homelessness, this must be sustainable employment.

As noted in other jurisdictions, there is generally a divide between homelessness and employment policy. However, Workforce Plus, the framework document from the Scottish Executive that sets out national and local actions to help people get back into work, released in June 2006, includes the issue of homelessness. It is important to note that while homelessness issues have been devolved to Scotland, employment policy is the jurisdiction of the U.K. government – making a co-ordinated approach challenging.

Work undertaken by the Scottish Homelessness and Employability Network (SHEN), have raised some of the issues that revolve around integration of homeless persons into employment. One of these is the issue of employability. While there appears to be common understanding about the meaning of the term (“the combination of factors and processes which enable people to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to move on in the workplace”), its application in the context of homelessness would appear to be unclear. Two issues are raised: when the process should begin and whether the focus of employability “training” should be individual development or linking the persons to the job market. The research finds that the way the concept is used in Scotland is that it is “more likely to be understood as a consequence of resettlement than an integral part of the resettlement process”. Furthermore the study finds that employability issues should be addressed at an early stage in the resettlement process and that it should be “presented positively as a sustainable route out of homelessness” (Wooley and McNaughton n.d.).

Other issues raised in the Wooley and McNaughton study include: the need for more flexibility in the benefits system to provide support for those in a “fragile position in the labour market”; information about the range of provisions available and the progress being made by the user are needed; more support in helping employers develop more inclusive employment practices; and that partnerships between services providers are needed to provide coherent and expert services.

SHEN has also raised questions about the measurement of skills and outcomes, particularly the difficulty in measuring soft skills (e.g. life skills). This is a concern in a context where funding can be tied to hard outcomes, such as the number of people working, when the reality of homelessness can be that someone can take three to four years to stabilize. Furthermore, the hard skills cannot be put into place without the soft skills. Employers have stated that they can teach people the hard skills for a job – but the soft skills are an essential starting place before this can occur.

Valuable lessons were learned from the Scottish New Futures Fund Initiative (NFF) launched in 1998, that sought to reduce social exclusion and disadvantage for people 16 to 34 years old who have problems getting a job. The evaluation of Phase 2 (from 2002 to 2005) found that the better projects were engaging and delivering activities that attracted and sustained client involvement. Better projects also had a “moving” approach with an emphasis on moving the client towards the labour market or to a stepping stone along the way – distinctive when compared to care provision in health and social work. Data from the NFF showed that a significant proportion of clients needed to move on relatively quickly. The evaluation also found that a partnering approach between client and service provider worked well (McGregor et al. 2005).

While the NFF had positive results in terms of moving people into jobs and job-related destinations (especially given that a high proportion had multiple barriers) and that it was cost effective, the evaluation raised questions about which organizations were best placed to deliver this type of service and whether to build the services around specialized needs such as addiction or if “generic cross-barrier” services would be more appropriate (McGregor et al. 2005).

# 8. *Barriers/Challenges*

## 8.1 Barriers to Employment

Studies have identified several barriers to employment for homeless persons. In British Columbia (B.C.), a study that included homeless persons, homeless services providers and employment service providers found that few homeless respondents had used employment services. They identified three reasons for detachment from labour force – illness, drugs, and alienation from mainstream society (Fast Track to Employment 2005). Barriers to obtaining employment identified by respondents included hygiene, clothing, life skills, stress management, people skills and dealing with authority. The lack of a permanent address also presents a barrier as this makes it difficult for potential employers to contact a homeless person, or people may be reluctant to leave the phone number or address of a shelter (Shaheen et al. 2003). The lack of access to resources to maintain employment, such as transportation, child care, food etc., have been identified as impediments as has the “digital divide” and “information poverty”, which is linked to income and results in a divide between the “information haves” and “information have-nots” and has implications for education and employability (Hersberger 2002/3).

Studies reviewed point to a number of specific barriers:

- **Multiple needs:** An analysis of the effectiveness of employment as a route out of homelessness in Scotland found that homeless persons had multiple needs and must be stabilized before employability is developed and sustainable employment may only be possible after stabilization (Verve Associates 2004). Similar conclusions were reached in a B.C. study that included surveying service providers; “homeless clients need to deal with their basic needs and/or shelter issues before working on employment issues” (Fast Track to Employment 2005).
- **Remedial skills:** In the U.S., the Job Training for Homeless Demonstration Program (JTHDP) found that almost a quarter of individuals referred for occupational training received remedial or basic skills training and 22% were school drop outs. Other factors can further make provision of training difficult including:
  - The need to quickly find employment unless arrangements can be made for income and housing while in training;
  - Past failures in educational settings which may have resulted in low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed; and
  - Resistance to structures and requirements (Kessler-Beck et al. 1997).
- **Barriers faced by women:** A study of clinical social work services in homeless shelters describes homeless mothers arriving at a shelter, with their children and in various stages of depression, anger, pain and abuse. Many were found to be using or to have used alcohol or drugs to deal with their lives. The approach used emphasized both feminist theory and

clinical social work skills and included listening to the client's story, viewing her as an equal, working with her towards a sense of empowerment, and aiding her to acknowledge her strengths and understand the importance of connections with others now and in the future. The study noted the importance of on site services, "These women spend too much time and money traveling on public transportation to find jobs, housing, and day care" (Goldberg 1999).

Literature from both the U.S. and Canada report that childcare costs have an impact on labour force participation of all women, regardless of socio-economic status (Breitkreuz 2005; Fast Track to Employment 2005). The research has demonstrated that "accessible, affordable, and quality childcare is crucial in determining whether or not a parent will be able to sustain employment after welfare". Also important is flexibility in childcare hours, especially since low-skill jobs often entail evening and night hours as well as rotating schedules (Breitkreuz 2005). The research further points out that employment expectations must consider the increased costs associated with women entering the workforce, such as transportation and clothing expenses, which may well exceed the increase in the woman's earned income (Fischer 2000).

- **Housing and other living expenses:** A study in London, England that drew on a large database of clients (over 10,000 in ten years), found that while 77% wanted to work at the time of research and 97% wanted to work in the future, there were numerous barriers. Twenty-four percent of respondents stated that the main barrier to employment was a lack of housing, and 9% reported that they could not find a job with a wage that would cover living expenses. Other barriers included a lack of experience, training, and qualifications, as well as barriers due to substance use, asylum/refugee issues or language issues. It was noted that barriers to sustaining employment were similar to those for gaining employment, and that employers also had concerns about whether individuals were "work ready".

The study found that when compared to previous studies, barriers to employment have remained the same, although there is evidence of a greater importance of housing. The study concluded that, "Homeless people are often caught in a peculiar paradox – a recurrent comment from respondents was the need for a "home first, work second"; but respondents also felt that a job would enable them to secure and sustain a home. This paradox exists because currently, labour market policy is not joined up with homelessness and housing policy." The author states, "Our overarching and broad recommendation is that homelessness policy needs to be re-imagined. In particular, we believe that housing policy and labour market policy need to join up effectively and coherently to offer homeless people a sustainable route out of homelessness and unemployment" (Singh 2005).

A detailed analysis of challenges faced in employment programs for homeless persons is described in the study of 63 organizations that provided services under the U.S. Job Training for Homeless Demonstration Program (JTHDP), which ran from 1988 to 1995 (Kessler-Beck et al. 1997). For example, challenges were identified at the occupational skills training stage, including the lack of resources while in training, a preference for employment over training, and for some persons a need to only upgrade skills because they have been involved in programs before. The strategies that were identified to deal with these included tailoring training to the interests and needs of the individual as well as the local demands of the labour

market and developing co-ordination agreements with a wide variety of education and training providers to accommodate the interests and needs of participants.

Challenges to placement activities included the difficulty of presenting candidates to employers (e.g. gaps in resumes, lack of references or physical appearance), constraints in availability for work (e.g. curfews in half-way houses), transportation, the lack of an address or phone number. Strategies to overcome these include having a job placement strategy that is a combination of a participant-directed and job developer-directed approach and beginning job development before training is completed.

Finally post-placement challenges were identified, including the lack of a permanent address, reluctance to seek or accept support as people wished to put their homeless period behind them, and behaviour problems that may emerge once the person is employed. Strategies suggested included offering an array of post-placement services (e.g. continued life skills classes, material assistance, mentors, etc.) and being prepared for some participants to need placement services again and build this into the retention strategy (Kessler-Beck et al. 1997).

## **8.2 Making the Transition Off Welfare and Out of Homelessness**

The experience of welfare-to-work programs illustrates the challenges of employment programs for persons who are marginalized. These programs, brought in during the 1980s in the U.S. and subsequently imported to Canada, Australia, and the UK, were part of a larger trend towards “self-sufficiency” and less dependence on the state. The continuation of welfare benefits was contingent on requirements to work or undertake work-related activities such as training, rehabilitation, volunteer, or underpaid work. The programs indicate that for people with “persistently marginal attachments” to the labour force, helping them secure and retain long-term employment is very difficult and that even in the “most successful services, few participants succeed, and the benefits they garner are modest” (Hill 2004). For example, a three-year evaluation of a California project, considered to be one of the most successful, showed that by the end of the third year of the program, two-thirds were not employed (Hill 2004).

Other studies of “work first” models (e.g. *the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act*), found that while over a million women who had been on welfare were working part-time, two thirds had earnings below the poverty level and 40% who left the rolls were unemployed (Hill 2004). Studies conclude that for long-term recipients, the goal of self-sufficiency is “very problematic” and that severe mental health, physical health and family problems pose considerable barriers (Hill 2004). An evaluation of the workfare or job search component of the General Assistance programs (GA or programs of “last resort”) in the U.S. found that the barriers to employment included transportation, lack of education or job skills, scarcity of jobs, criminal record, and health problems. For some, the homeless status was a further impediment (Hill 2004). Other constraints included training that was too different from what was available on the job or in schools (Goetz and Schmiede 1996).

Another study found that successful employment outcomes 6 to 12 months after exiting a family shelter were more likely for families headed by an older adult who had lived in their own home before coming to the shelter, who were homeless for shorter periods of time, and who had employment income when they left the shelter. Employed families had approximately twice as much income, on average, as families relying solely on welfare, nevertheless, their incomes were still not enough to meet their basic needs and they continued to live in abject poverty (Friedman et al. 2003).

Limits of welfare-to-work programs have been noted in the Canadian context as well. A number of studies have found that these programs lead to “part-time, temporary, low-paying, “precarious jobs” and that most “do not include flexibility, autonomy or benefits such as paid sick time” - benefits that are especially important to parents of children. Moreover, “when employment related costs such as childcare, transportation and suitable workplace clothing are incurred, the disposable income of the employees may be less than that obtained from welfare payments” (Breitkreuz 2005).

Studies have noted that consistent welfare entitlements are associated with housing stability – but low participation in the labour force. On the other hand, because most of the jobs obtained by homeless people are low paying, part-time and “precarious”, they may be less likely to remain housed, which presents a social dilemma. Concern has been expressed that efforts to increase employment through welfare-to-work programs that include removal of entitlement benefits may jeopardize housing stability among those homeless adults who had consistently received welfare entitlements (Zlotnick, et al. 2002).

Concerns have also been raised about welfare programs that are linked to training and employment, since “these programs often do not train workers for jobs that pay enough to compete with the amount of money and services provided by government assistance” (Goetz and Schmige 1996).

This same concern is expressed by FEANSTA (2006) which emphasized that it is important to “make work pay”: taking a minimum wage job often leads to the loss of social benefits. Solutions would include maintaining benefits for an initial period or reducing taxes for low income groups.

Similar conclusions are drawn in an evaluation of a transitional housing program for families in Atlanta, which has education, vocational or employment as a focal point of the program. The program is successful, for example for those who entered the program in 1991-94, 76% had either completed their chosen program or were making reasonable progress toward completion by the time they left the residence and after the residential period, 61% of the women were employed and 11% were in school or training. Barriers to employment for the rest were noted, primarily related to health problems or lack of child care. Furthermore at follow-up, working women had held their current job, on average, nearly nine months, were working full time and had gross monthly earnings from work of nearly \$1,200. The evaluation notes that the policy agenda must address three areas to help people move towards economic independence: earnings and income, housing stability, and family health and environment. The study concludes,

“Homelessness results from families having too little income to afford adequate housing. An elementary approach to resolving the financial difficulties of these families would be for the women to secure employment with sufficient income and benefits to meet their needs. Based on the experience of formerly homeless families from the FDC and other research, this presents an intractable problem for many families. Even if the women are able to secure employment, the income they receive will often not lift the family from poverty. Employment and training programs have not provided a reliable avenue to job market success. The employment experiences these women are able to secure may not be of sufficient skill level to move families ahead economically. Low-wage employment with few or no benefits does not provide sufficient opportunity for families to make the leap to independence.” (Fischer 2000).

These findings are not limited to North America; in the U.K. research has found that the training and jobs available to vulnerable young men are of poor quality and do not lead to sustainable employment. Furthermore, people with multiple barriers are not successful in achieving sustainable employment or mainstream training and there are difficulties achieving “hard” outcomes for this client group (Furlong and Cartmel 2004).



## ***9. Pre-employment, Employment and Post-employment Programs***

Mainstream employment programs are those aimed at the population as a whole, without regard for the specific needs of a particular population group. Targeted programs aim to address some of the particular needs of certain groups of individuals in their design and implementation, for example, homeless persons, typically by widening the mandate of the program. This section will focus on the latter.

Many countries have adopted such targeted programs, including the U.K. with “progress2work linkup” and the U.S. “Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program” (terminated), the “Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program” and “Ending Chronic Homelessness through Employment and Housing Grants”. In Europe, “EQUAL” is a Community Initiative strand of the European Social Fund that tests and promotes new ways to combat labour market discrimination and inequality in various countries throughout Europe, some of which focus on the homeless. In Canada, Josephson (2004) notes “there is agreement on the need for programs in education, training and employment [for the homeless]. Toward this end several programs exist. However, information is lacking on the details of their operations, and objective evaluations of their performance are rare.”

The types of employment program that are available to homeless persons can be broken down into three stages: pre-employment, employment and post-employment. However, this process is not necessarily a linear one and different components of the various “phases” may be undertaken in different sequences or simultaneously as the examples discussed below illustrate.

### **9.1 Pre-employment Programs**

Pre-employment programs are especially important for people who have not worked for a long time. Some agencies use opportunities within their own programs to offer work experience. For example, project HOME (Housing Opportunities, Medical Care and Education) in Philadelphia offers employment training opportunities, volunteer activities, casual labour and part- or full-time inside or outside the project, but the primary objective is to “empower residents and build self-confidence while preparing them for meaningful employment”. People not yet ready for outside employment can work as volunteers (e.g. mail couriers, cashiers, clerks), which allows them to “sharpen his or her interpersonal and organizational skills” (Coughey et al.1999).

It has been noted that while helping people make career choices and develop plans to work towards these is necessary, programs need to go beyond technical job training and include “social aspects” to securing a job, such as grooming for an interview, interviewing skills and resume writing (Washington 2002).

The JTHDP best practices identified strategies to overcome some of the challenges at the basic skills stage. These included providing for a wide variety of settings, methods and timing in arranging for basic skills training; regularly monitoring how the individual is progressing and ensuring that basic skills training is contextual (i.e. in real world setting and appropriate for adults). Finally the study also found that life skills training should be part of any occupations or basic skills training program for homeless individuals (Kessler-Beck et al. 1997).

Literacy programs can be considered part of a pre-employment package. Studies in the U.S. indicate that it is important that these target the specific needs of homeless persons. For example, an evaluation of adult education for homeless persons found that traditional instruction materials did not address the needs of homeless individuals and that programs that understand homelessness and plan activities to meet their need had a greater impact than general Adult Education efforts. Furthermore the impact was greater if instruction was given in shelters, transitional housing or other locations where people received other services (U.S. Department of Education 1998).

The importance of adapting programs to fit the needs of homeless persons extends to children as well: Homes for the Homeless (HFH) was found to be very successful in providing educational services by offering on-site children's educational programs that adapted to the reality of frequent moves, absenteeism, and need for remedial work, as well as integration of adult education to foster learning as a family activity. The program noted significant improvements in academic performance, often within a few months (da Costa Nunez 1994).

Offering a range of employment options at the pre-employment stage may be important. Bowen (2004) describes several projects that do this. For example, Project Renewal, based in New York City is a program committed to showing people who are homeless and who have serious mental illnesses how to make the transition to work. The program includes a Culinary Arts Training Program and a 6-month tutorial in commercial food preparation. It has graduated 40 people since it opened its doors in 1995, and has a job placement rate of 85%. The Project also provides a variety of tailored employment programs and training in life skills necessary for getting and keeping a job.

## **9.2 Employment Programs**

There are several different types of programs that have been developed to help people who are homeless access and maintain employment. An overview of program approaches prepared by Shaheen et al. (2003) is attached in Appendix A. It describes a range of employment programs, on a rising scale in terms of involvement, from transitional employment to self-employment. Others include pre-employment programs and those that focus on meaningful activity as opposed to employment per se.

### **9.2.1 Transitional Employment**

This type of approach, developed initially for people with serious mental illnesses, involves placements in time-limited jobs. The Fountain House Foundation in New York City implemented the first Transitional Employment Program in 1964. The Foundation developed a Clubhouse Model, and offered day treatment based on a psychosocial rehabilitation approach. Transitional employment programs continue to be one of the primary vocational services offered to members of psychosocial clubs in the US. These clubs often provide work-readiness services (e.g. help with resume writing and job searches), and provide a safe environment for consumers to explore the idea of returning to work. Participants often work in a series of time-limited jobs (four to six months) to gain employment experience and skills and identify job preferences. The rehabilitation agencies enter into agreements with private businesses whereby the agency agrees to fill jobs with their clients/trainees, and the businesses agree to provide the jobs. Staff from the clubs provide on and off-site job coaching.

Community Access Inc. in New York operates the Cooper Employment Training Center, which is a psychosocial club for people with a serious mental illness, about half of whom have been homeless. The Center helps participants obtain their high school equivalency (GED) and prepare for college, and also offers assistance with computer skills, job readiness, on-site internships and volunteer positions, and on-site transitional and permanent employment placements (Shaheen et al. 2003).

Results of the transitional employment approach appear to be mixed. There is evidence that it can have a significant impact on employment outcomes with increased length of follow-up or coaching periods. However, it has also been found that longer involvement can lower rates of competitive employment (Shaheen et al. 2003).

### **9.2.2 Supported Employment**

The supported employment approach also has been used for decades. The purpose is to provide paid employment opportunities in an “integrated setting” while providing a range of short and long-term supports after placement. Life Link, an organization in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has been recognized as providing an exemplary supported employment program that helps homeless individuals and families find affordable housing and achieve self-sufficiency and community integration. It believes that everyone can be employed in some way, and has achieved a 50% job placement rate. Nearly half the people placed have remained employed for six months or longer (Shaheen et al. 2003). Recent studies have demonstrated that supported employment initiatives can be effective. Some factors that are believed to increase success for people with a mental illness include active involvement in identifying job goals, more time educating employers and coworkers, increased training in emotional-interpersonal skills development, and increased support (Shaheen et al. 2003).

LAMP, Inc., a homeless services agency in Los Angeles, has made a commitment to hire graduates of its program to work within the agency. Approximately one-third of staff members are former guests of LAMP. The agency provides social, vocational and supportive housing to more than 1,800 adults who have been homeless and who have a serious mental illness, most of whom have substance use issues. Services include on-the-job-training in LAMP businesses, supportive counselling and job coaching, self-help groups, a drop-in centre, an emergency shelter, and transitional and permanent supportive housing. LAMP operates a number of small businesses in the Skid Row neighbourhood, including linen services and a laundromat (Shaheen et al. 2003; Bowen 2004).

### **9.2.3 The PACT Vocational Model**

The Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) provides “comprehensive, community-based clinical and rehabilitative services for discharged state hospital patients identified by outpatient mental health centers as requiring extensive and intensive support” (Shaheen et al. 2003). The model addresses the needs of their clients using a team approach that can include nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, peer specialists, and substance use counsellors. The approach recognizes the importance of work in the treatment process, although, few PACT programs include vocational or employment specialists on their teams. One of the major differences between the PACT and other approaches is the philosophy that the best way to address people’s strengths and limitations is in a normal work setting. The PACT model emphasizes rapid placement into competitive work rather than extended involvement in pre-employment testing and assessment (Shaheen et al. 2003).

### **9.2.4 Individual Placement and Support**

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program, developed by the New Hampshire-Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Centre and Dartmouth Medical School, considers work as treatment. Employment specialists are employed as part of case management or mental health teams to help clients search for jobs. The program has proven to be highly successful and key components related to better outcomes include: competitive employment as a primary goal; integration of rehabilitation with mental health services; rapid job searches; continuous assessment; and unlimited support (Shaheen et al. 2003).

### **9.2.5 Social Enterprises and Affirmative Businesses**

The social enterprises approach is seen as having a dual purpose: to operate a viable business and help people facing multiple barriers achieve success and satisfaction in real work settings. The best practices in social enterprises include the following characteristics: market and profit-oriented; access technical expertise and capital resources; involve participants in the establishment and/or management of the enterprise; use a business planning approach; pay competitive wages and fringe benefits; consider workers as employees to clients; and provide either an integrated workforce or a community-integrated setting (Shaheen et al. 2003). In San Francisco a mix of private philanthropy, social activism and business practices

has been used to build businesses that employ and train homeless persons while earning enough of a profit to sustain and even expand their operations. A private family foundation funds ten non-profits as a partner rather than a charitable donor. Some of the enterprises that have been funded using the social entrepreneurship model include a restaurant, a catering business, a thrift store, a bicycle shop and restaurant (Van Slambrouck 1998).

In Toronto, the Transition to Work pilot project is trying to link with social purpose enterprises, and some shelters are interested in starting their own enterprises e.g. laundry, and bed bug eradication program.

### **9.2.6 Self-Employment**

Self-employment is another option for people who are homeless. According to one study, self-employment or informal activity is common, and activities may include: “peddling small articles such as shoestrings, pencils, and razor blades; making and selling rolled cigarettes by recycling tobacco from cigarette butts; selling discarded newspapers; washing and polishing parked cars; going house to house asking for odd jobs in exchange for money and/or food; gathering trash in alleys and selling the accumulations to junk dealers; wiping windshields of cars at traffic lights; and selling discarded goods at an informal flea market” (Balkin 1992). Balkin suggests that with some effort, homeless people could use their past work histories to help them engage in more remunerative self-employment activities. In a survey of shelter operators in Chicago, he found that while “wage work is preferred, there is substantial interest in self-employment” (Balkin 1992). The median response among shelter operators was that 10% of their clients could learn to operate a very simple small business. Suggestions for helping homeless people to own and operate their own businesses include formal business training, providing small loans, helping them obtain equipment and computers needed to start a business, finding mentors, helping clients to initiate a business under the auspices of a parent organization (sheltered linkage model), and assisting clients to purchase a franchise (Balkin 1992; Shaheen et al. 2003).

Street News, a monthly newspaper is an example of a sheltered linkage model. This is an enterprise in New York City initiated by Street Aid. People who are homeless receive the first ten papers free. If they are interested, they can buy an inventory of newspapers and sell them at a profit. A certain percentage of the profits are placed in a mandatory savings account for a security deposit on an apartment (Balkin 1992).

### **9.2.7 Community Development**

A much broader approach that illustrates the capacity of homeless persons to identify and take control of their situation is Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon. About 60 homeless persons, with a core group of 20, established a community that started with tents, cars and trailers on city-owned land. Over time, shanties and “miniature, cottage-style types of buildings” have been built and political structures, including a 12-member council have been set up. There are communal services offered such as shared bicycles and plans are being developed to assemble a windmill to generate electricity. Both educational and

employment needs have been addressed by the community. Technological literacy is deemed especially important and workshops are held every six months to respond to evolving needs in collaboration with a local university. This partnership also has led to research on development of micro-businesses or cottage industries, such as sales of leather goods, silk screening and furnishings made from recycled materials. The model of Dignity Village, it is proposed, is very different from the charity model and the dialogue with city officials and citizens of Portland have allowed residents to break away from the status of “other” and “participate directly in decisions which govern them, without acquiescing to a life of mere obedience based in obligation for charity” (Finley 2003).

### **9.3 Post Employment Support**

The importance of post-employment support is illustrated by the Job Links Program in New York, which facilitates entry into the workplace by providing individuals with vocational rehabilitation, job placement services and post-placement training and support. The program has found that maintaining close contact once people are employed reduces the chances that employees will quit or be fired. Once the client has been employed, Job Links staff maintain regular contact with the clients’ case managers, supervisors and employers in an effort to recognize and resolve work-place problems (New York State Office of Mental Health 2000). A study that included a database of 10,000 clients in London also found that there was a need for ongoing support once people were employed (Singh 2005).

# 10. What Works

Based on the research conducted for this study, a number of factors seem critical to be able to achieve successful employment programs for homeless persons.

## 10.1 Holistic Approaches Work Best

Studies generally seem to conclude that a single approach to employment programs for people who are homeless is not sufficient. In describing the needs of homeless persons with mental illness, researchers have found that “housing services alone will not help them find a job; mental health services alone will not put a roof over their heads; and vocational services alone will not help them manage the symptoms of their psychiatric disorders” (Pickett-Schenk 2002).

In Europe, FEANSTA (2005) reported that in France, 34-48% of homeless persons involved in subsidized employment contracts are able to obtain jobs in the mainstream labour market, usually after a period of supported employment. In Denmark, on the other hand, a policy of “more people into work” where the aim is “to bring people in or as close as possible to the labour market” has been deemed a success even if employment is not always achieved. The program has realistic objectives based on individual needs. *Koefoed Skole* in Denmark is an example of an initiative that while aiming to improve skills, etc. also seeks to strengthen social contacts and to generate a feeling of belonging. The policy statement suggests that it is important that success is recognized whether it is in mainstream employment, supported employment or employment in the social economy.

The Job Training for Homeless Demonstration Program (JTHDP), was based on the premise that job training and placement “work best when combined with the additional services homeless people need to overcome obstacles to employment” (Shaheen et al. 2003). Besides employment services such as job assessment, training, placement and post-placement services, JTHDP sites offered outreach, case management, substance abuse and mental health treatment, housing, and life skills training (Shaheen et al. 2003). A study of the experiences of 63 organizations that provided services under JTHDP found that core services, provided by the sponsoring agency or through other service providers, were needed to help homeless persons secure and retain employment. These were:

- Case management and counselling;
- Assessment and employability development planning;
- Job training services, including remedial education, basic skills training, literacy instruction, job search assistance, job counselling, vocational and occupational skills training, and on-the-job training;
- Job development and placement services;

- Post-placement follow-up and support services (e.g., additional job placement services, training after placement, self-help support groups, mentoring);
- Housing services (e.g., emergency housing assistance, assessment of housing needs, referrals to appropriate housing alternatives); and
- Other support services (e.g. child care; transportation, chemical dependency assessment, counselling, and referral to outpatient or inpatient treatment as appropriate; mental health assessment, counselling, and referral to treatment; other health care services; clothing; and life skills training)” (Kessler-Beck et al. 1997).

The study also found that it was critical for training and employment agencies to establish linkages with homeless-serving agencies such as shelters and transitional housing services to help with outreach, recruitment and screening for mental health or substance abuse problems (Kessler-Beck et al. 1997).

A study in British Columbia (B.C.) found that existing service agencies dealing with particular homeless or at risk populations seem to be best placed to address their training and employment needs holistically. The study recommended that, “the employment services that are able to deal most effectively with homeless clients are those that are embedded in larger organizations that provide comprehensive services to clients.” Fast Track to Employment and Strathcona 2005). One of the reasons for this is that they possess the resources and training to provide support that is specifically tailored to their client group. Examples were cited of two Vancouver service agencies that were able to arrange housing and support services for their clients prior to obtaining work for them. The new employment programs in British Columbia are expected to adopt this recommended approach by forming partnerships with agencies that serve specific populations such as youth, Aboriginal people, and people with mental illness etc., some of whom may be homeless.

Other studies have found that participants often had misconceptions about job expectations and responsibilities and that substance use and mental illness interfered with many participants’ ability to work. These conclude that employment programs for adults need to include treatment for alcohol and drug problems as well as behavioural therapy, support groups and other techniques to help with socialization (Zlotnick, et al. 2002).

A small Boston initiative under a U.S. Department of Education Life Skills demonstration program in Boston, developed a fourteen-week life skills and career program for persons who had issues of homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and/or post-incarceration. Most participants were repeat offenders. The program included using various instruments to assess and identify interests and skills, including introduction to information technology, addressing issues of image (e.g. hair, tattoos and the image that persons wanted to project in the community), development of communication skills, introduction to community resources, and community internships. Most of the participants completed seven weeks of the program, half graduated and all of these were able to find employment. The recidivism rate was greatly reduced and a reduction of exposure to dangerous and high-risk situations was recorded (Bellotti 2005).

## 10.2 The Approach should be Client-centred

A client-centred and long-term approach is especially important for people who may have experienced repeated failure and for whom concepts of a job path or career plan are new (Shaheen et al. 2003). In Scotland, results from an analysis of four projects found that training is a key route to employability – especially since they also found that employers were identifying the need for “core skills (Verve Associates 2004).

Furthermore the approach should be culturally and linguistically appropriate and recognize the individual’s strengths and potential (Shaheen et al. 2003). The importance of cultural sensitivity is illustrated in the description of an Aboriginal job fair in Winnipeg. A cultural awareness workshop for employers was organized before the fair opened because some employers had dismissed some native job-seekers in the past. Reasons were that native job-seekers had offered weak handshakes or did not make eye contact: employers didn’t realize that in native culture those habits are made out of a sign of respect and deference (Winnipeg Free Press 04/06/2006).

## 10.3 Integrate Employers into the Process

Experts also have suggested that employers must be involved from the outset so that the training corresponds to employers’ needs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2000). The desire to be involved seems to be shared by employers as well. A qualitative study found that employers were empathetic to working with persons who have been homeless although over-involvement by employers can lead to “inappropriate, co-dependent” relationships with employees (Ratcliff and Shillito 1996).

The Homeless Employment and Related Training (HEART) Project in Oregon, sought to integrate industry-based training and job search assistance with intensive case management. It recognized that stable housing was a primary need and that participants “could not be expected to concentrate on their training if they were worried about where they would sleep each day or how their family would survive” (Goetz and Schmiede 1996). Shelter and food were therefore provided as well as medical and dental care. Furthermore substance abuse treatment, psychological counselling and anger management were offered where needed. The training was offered to 30 individuals and consisted of basic construction skills and an opportunity to find employment in the homebuilding industry. A vast majority (87%) completed the program, and of the 26 who graduated, 21 found jobs during the training but only 16 were still employed when the project ended. The reasons for not completing the program were related to severe drug and alcohol problems. While trainees were confronted by discrimination, it was the identification as homeless, rather than gender or race, that seemed to cause the most problems. Housing seems to have been a successful outcome of the program: nearly two-thirds moved into permanent housing. The positive outcomes of the program are attributed to industry-validated and supported job training, the availability of entry-level jobs that paid a living wage and provided an opportunity for advancement, backing from local contractors who were willing to hire graduates, and provision of a comprehensive program with diverse and flexible case management. Finally

the provision of a stable structured environment that included housing and job training was deemed essential (Goetz and Schmiege 1996).

## **10.4 Integrate Housing and Employment**

The New York Top Opportunities Program (TOPOP) illustrates a gradual and holistic approach that recognizes the importance of stable housing. The program is targeted to homeless and formerly homeless men and women diagnosed with a mental illness who wish to rebuild their lives through work. When an individual starts coming to the program, staff work with them to secure housing. Jobs are the basis of training and assessment positions, many of which are within the sponsor organization's residential program. If a client is interested in progressing, there are level 2 jobs that are more complex, with less supervision. All of these are within the Program. Once an individual has obtained permanent housing and they are psychiatrically stable, they are referred to level 3 jobs, which are competitive wage positions in the community. When an individual is initially placed in a position, TOPOP staff provide job coaching, if necessary. They also make themselves available to the employers, communicating with them, making sure people are doing well, and catching problems if they occur. There is also a weekly ongoing support group that everyone in a competitive wage position must attend. The program has a 95% success rate in clients passing their job probationary periods, and many maintain their jobs for a year or more. The program sponsor attributes the program's success to its "holistic approach" – the fact that clients receive housing and other supports in addition to just vocational services. "The program works in unison with other programs to address an individual's varied needs...One of the things that just comes back to us is that treatment changes lives...When people begin working, we really see a dramatic change in their level of functioning as they start getting reconnected with the community" (New York State Office of Mental Health 2000).

Common Ground, a not-for-profit organization in the heart of Manhattan, provides another example of an initiative that integrates housing with employment initiatives. Founded in 1991 to help the city's low paid and homeless find health care and work, the organization provides housing for about 1,600 people. Job-finding services and health and social care are provided on the premises at each project. The organization rents properties to Ben & Jerry's, Starbucks and local delicatessens that, in return, employ residents. About a third of Common Ground's 180 staff were formerly homeless. Residents who are unable to take a job often work voluntarily. For example, they may serve as advocates, offer testimony to government and city officials and work on voter registration and health campaigns (Philpot 2005).

## **10.5 Remedial Programs are Successful**

American experience with remedial/pre-employment programs seems to have been successful. For example, the U.S. the Federal Adult Education for the Homeless program, started in 1988 dealt with over 320,00 homeless persons by 1995. (The program was ended in 1996). The Family Literacy, Employment, Service to Disabled Adults, and Life

Management Skills, a component of the program, was felt to be especially effective as a welfare reform program that helped ensure that poverty and homelessness were not transmitted from generation to generation. The program was found to not only prepare people for employment but offered direct economic benefits to employers and communities in the process (U.S. Department of Education 1998). In Florida, the Adult Homeless and Literacy and Basic Skills Assistance Project was found to have good results: a 1993 evaluation of the first year of operation found that 3,180 adults participated in the program and that 1,358 improved their basic skills, 2,207 acquired literacy and numeracy skills, 371 went on with education or training, 169 obtained a job and 23, a better job (US Department of Education 1993). Furthermore, services to homeless adults and families were found to be cost-effective; they were far less expensive than other public training programs that were serving homeless persons and virtually paid for themselves “in reduction of welfare costs and increased tax revenue” (U.S. Department of Education 1998).

## **10.6 The Quality of Work is Important**

Mixed results were reported in a randomized, controlled trial of a clinician-supervised, performance-based work program that linked paid work opportunities (i.e. hours, wages and responsibilities), to performance (i.e. productivity, punctuality, and reliability) and health behaviours (i.e. sobriety and use of addiction services) among homeless, substance dependent veterans in the U.S., who had expressed a desire to work. The study found that the compensated work therapy (CWT) approach was associated with fewer problems with substance use, periods of homelessness and incarceration. However, the study found no impact on psychiatric status and CWT participants reported more inpatient days and outpatient visits “suggesting that these outcomes may come at the price of higher health costs”. The results of the study raise issues of the impact of the quality of work on persons with substance use issues – issues revealed by other studies. Thus studies have found that “boring, stressful, and isolating work can in fact contribute to substance use behaviors, while alcoholic subjects who returned to work were likely to remain sober, but only when the job discouraged drinking behaviours and offered structures supervision” (Kashner et al. 2002). The authors do acknowledge that it is difficult to identify what aspects of the CWT program are related to outcomes: structured work, pay incentives for mandatory substance screenings, adherence to addiction treatment schedules, clinician supervision or improved access to care. They also underline that future studies need to consider varying outcomes between clinical and competitive employment settings as well as the long-term impacts of programs.



# 11. Conclusions

## 11.1 The Canadian Context

While this review was not comprehensive, the authors found that there is no federal employment strategy targeted to people who are homeless. At a national level, federal government offers mainstream employment and training programs to unemployed people. However, these programs are available only to those workers who qualify or have qualified for Employment Insurance i.e. those who are already attached to the labour market. While some people who are homeless may qualify, the majority do not. The Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA) have the potential to address this issue, but it is unclear whether these agreements will be pursued beyond the three provinces that have already signed on. At the national level, Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) funding is, of course, targeted to people who are homeless or at risk. In Toronto it is clear that some of this funding is being used for employment and pre-employment initiatives, education and support. However, this study was not able to determine the extent to which SCPI funds outside of Toronto are being used to assist people who are homeless to transition to employment.

This study did not find any evidence of employment programs in Ontario, British Columbia (B.C.) or Quebec that are targeted specifically to people who are homeless. In Ontario, employment initiatives available through Ontario Works and ODSP were developed for people most in need. While people who are homeless are generally eligible to participate in most of the employment support initiatives, the programs were not specifically developed for them, and there is some question about the extent to which homeless people access these programs. The Ontario government recognizes that increasing numbers of clients are living with multiple barriers to employment and has been working to develop programs that meet their unique needs. This approach of working to make mainstream programs more accessible to homeless people is similar to that of the U.S. – although the U.S. does also have some programs specifically targeted to homeless people. Another strategy in Ontario is to fund homelessness initiatives that are geared to helping homeless people obtain and maintain housing. The underlying philosophy is that once these people become stable, they will be better able to make use of the mainstream programs. At the same time, the City of Toronto has piloted an initiative specifically to work with homeless people in their shelters to help them improve their employment situations. Shelter staff believe that if they can help clients achieve their employment goals, they will be able to move out of the shelter.

In B.C. employment programs are targeted to income assistance recipients, and many people who are homeless do not receive income assistance. However, this may change with implementation of the Direct Access to Housing outreach project, which aims to link homeless people directly with income assistance and housing. The *Case Coordination Service* demonstration program is intended to provide pre- and post- employment supports to 450 *long-term unemployed* persons in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver. While this program will assist people with a wide range of pre-employment issues with support

needs, clients must be on income assistance, and it is not clear how many of them are actually homeless.

Quebec programs are especially strong in using community organizations in local regions to deliver programs. However, the scope of this study did not allow further examination of the application of these initiatives to homeless persons. The use of SCPI funding in Quebec, however, is clear – employability programs are not included. In all likelihood individual initiatives do combine various sources of funding and incorporated employability programs but the extent of this and the sub-groups included cannot be determined (e.g. initiatives dealing with youth homelessness often incorporate employability, but the extent of this with older populations is unclear).

## **11.2 Structural Factors that Contribute to Social Exclusion**

While there still may be some debate about the causes of homelessness and the significance of structural versus personal factors, it is clear that these same structural factors make it especially challenging for people who have been excluded from housing, education, and/or work to reintegrate into society. The trends that have been identified, notably the overall increase in educational levels, the growth of non-standard employment, and the increased polarization in terms of education and income underline the enormous challenges faced by those who have multiple problems that can extend to physical and mental health difficulties, addictions and lack of skills or education. These challenges are further compounded when housing instability and extreme poverty are added. Thus, to promote social inclusion of homeless people through employment related activities and skills development, it is necessary to take a holistic approach that also addresses housing and support.

## **11.3 The Role of Housing**

This study makes it clear that stabilization of the housing situation is a critical first step for homeless persons. In Ontario, for example, the approach being taken is that it is best to have housing stability before getting on with employment. Once someone has stable housing, they can engage in the full range of employment initiatives. Research with homeless persons also indicates that until immediate issues such as housing, health, and income are stabilized, people cannot think about longer term issues. At the same, some shelter staff in Toronto believe that their clients will be able to move out of the shelter system if they can achieve their employment goals. Experience elsewhere, notably in Scotland, also indicates that the issue of employability must be addressed if sustainable solutions to homelessness are to be found.

## **11.4 The Employment Continuum: Pre-employment, Employment and Post-employment**

Canadian experience demonstrates that a continuum of programs is needed to address the diverse needs of people who are homeless. This includes pre-employment initiatives and addressing underlying issues that can affect employability, such as a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, mental health and addictions issues, and a lack of literacy, general skills, and ability to manage anger. Related to this are support services that are essential to some sub-groups, such as childcare. Some people who are employed may require access to on-going coaching and support, and some employers need education as well assistance to support their employees. There also is need to recognize that long-term funding and support are critical. Multiple studies of different homeless populations, but especially those with multiple barriers and long-term homelessness, demonstrate that the process is long and that “relapses” are part of the process.

## **11.5 A Holistic Approach**

A holistic approach, by definition, implies co-ordination and integration. In Canada the divide between employment programs and policies and those programs dealing with homelessness make this type of approach challenging. Canada, as many other countries, has focussed primarily on the housing aspect of homelessness. The first round of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) dealt with immediate issues such as providing shelter. The second round that ends in early 2007 has focussed on longer term solutions such as transitional housing. There is perhaps room, with the evolution of homelessness policy, that the wider issues will be addressed and that more sustainable solutions will be implemented, if the NHI initiative is renewed.

## **11.6 Mainstream Versus Targeted Programs**

The question of how to serve individuals who are furthest from the labour market is of concern in Canada. In Ontario, work is being done to try to serve more homeless people within the mainstream programs and B.C. appears to be moving in this direction as well- to focus on the long-term unemployed, “people with multiple and persistent barriers” or the excluded. However, there is little data available to show the extent to which these programs are serving homeless persons.

However, experience in England with Jobcentre Plus and New Deal indicate that employment programs need to be tailored to the needs of homeless persons and some of the multiple problems that may confront them. It also is clear that specialized services are necessary for pre-employment and support – at the early stages of the employment continuum. As illustrated by the City of Toronto, pre-employment support can start in the shelter. Shelters can be well-positioned to start working with clients to become employment-ready – provided they have the necessary resources.

## 11.7 A Living Wage

Critical in the approach to employment of this population, but not exclusive to it, is the issue of a decent wage: this seems to be critical in stabilization and in maintaining this stability. There are indications that apprenticeship programs that can lead to jobs in trades such as plumbing, carpentry, and electrical can help to ensure that participants will be able to earn a living wage. Social purpose enterprises also hold promise.

## 11.8 Meaningful Activity

Finally, while much of the debate/discussion/research undertaken has focussed on employment, there is a need for program and policy objectives to better reflect the capacities of the homeless population. The diversity of the homeless population, and with this diversity, the capacity to engage in employment needs to be carefully assessed. For some populations the benefits of working, such as creation of a social network and integration into mainstream society, might be better addressed through volunteer work or social programs, such as those that have been developed for senior citizens. The expectation of economic self-sufficiency is unrealistic for some.

## 11.9 Next Steps

There appears to be growing recognition of the need for housing, employment, and support to work together. Employment is a way out of homelessness but housing and support are also necessary. A national strategy is needed as well as more work at the community level to help the more vulnerable people in society participate in the labour market.

While this review was not comprehensive, most Canadian federal and provincial employment and training programs are considered mainstream by virtue of the fact that they are available to a broad range of people. Some however, although available to all populations, are restricted to Employment Insurance or Income Assistance recipients. In fact, Ontario policy, like in the US, asserts that mainstream programs are the best place to meet all needs, including those of the homeless, and it has begun to make those programs more accessible to a wider range of groups, including homeless persons.

We have been able to find no evidence of federal or provincial training, employment or skills development policies or programs *targeted* for homeless persons in Canada. At the same time, the federal homelessness program, SCPI has fostered partnerships with local agencies and government, at least in Ontario, around the provision of specific targeted employment programs for homeless persons, where needs have been identified and there is a local capacity to develop these.

Provincial income security programs have begun to move along a “continuum” of sorts as they seek to direct attention to those farther away from the labour market or with more challenges to employment such as the long-term unemployed, “people with multiple and persistent barriers” or the excluded. Although getting closer to the homeless population,

these do not necessarily serve homeless persons. The lack of data makes it difficult to assess the extent to which they are serving homeless persons.

There appears to be recognition at the provincial (to some extent) and local level, that people who are homeless will need employment if a sustained exit out of homeless is to be achieved. And there is some movement in this direction, on a project basis, particularly in Toronto, where several unique initiatives are underway, through SCPI program funding. It is perhaps understandable after several years of homeless policies, programs and initiatives focused on other important aspects of the exit from homelessness, namely emergency and transitional housing and supports, that attention is beginning to turn to training and employment.



## *12. Further Research*

The scope of this study did not permit examination of initiatives undertaken by organizations and agencies working with homeless persons. The policy and program divide in Canada between employment and homelessness resulted in few integrated programs – other than those in Ontario/Toronto. However, these undoubtedly exist at the level of initiatives and a survey of these as well as some in-depth analysis of what is being done and the rationale would be highly instructive in furthering the understanding of the needs and challenges.

More research is needed to better understand what works for persons who are homeless – especially sustainable and long-term solutions. Pilot projects with an up-front research component that permits a proper evaluation could yield valuable information and could permit those working closely with the issues and barriers confronting homeless persons to put some innovative ideas into practice.

There is a need to undertake work on the measurement of outcomes. Both in Canada and in other countries short-term outcomes are the basis of “success” or “failure” of initiatives. Yet research is clear that a long-term perspective is needed to realistically gauge the progress of someone who is homeless towards a sustained stable life. It should be noted that this issue is not only in respect to employability but to all of the issues that confront many homeless persons.

While the study has found that holistic and targeted employability programs work best for homeless persons, there is relatively little known about Canadian mainstream programs and their ability to meet the needs of people who are homeless. A study of some of these and the population they serve (e.g. housing situation), as well as an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses for this group could offer short-term solutions to better respond to the needs.



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# *Appendix B: Key Informants*

## **Montreal**

Norma Drolet  
Coordonnatrice, Initiative de partenariats en action communautaire (IPAC)  
Agence de développement de réseaux locaux de services de santé et de services sociaux  
de Montréal

Francine de Guay  
Directrice Générale  
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## **Toronto**

Julie Western Set  
Policy Development Officer  
Toronto Shelter, Support & Housing Administration

## **Ontario**

Glen Padassery  
Manager, Program Design, Ontario Works Branch

## **Vancouver/B.C.**

Jeff Sommers  
Strathcona Research Group

Sharon Belli  
MEIA

Jill Porter  
BOB, formerly of Vancouver Agreement

## **Federal government**

Michael Farrell  
Promoting Participation - Labour Market Policy - Strategic Policy and Planning  
HRSDC

## **United States**

Ruth Samardick  
Director of Homeless Initiatives  
U.S. Department of Labor

Neil Donovan  
National Alliance to End Homelessness

## **Scotland**

Robert Aldridge  
Director  
Scottish Council for Single Homeless  
President FEANTSA

Geraldine Wooley  
Co-ordinator  
Scottish Homelessness and Employability Network (SHEN)

## **England**

Contacted but not interviewed:  
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