

Years of Housing and Homelessness Research Underpin New City of Vancouver Plans



Homelessness and residential instability in Vancouver have been on the rise since the 1990s. Deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill and changes to British Columbia's welfare system have increased demand for the most basic and lowest-cost housing throughout the Greater Vancouver region. At the same time, the availability of low-income housing outside the downtown core has decreased with dramatically rising real estate prices and the loss of affordable rentals. The result is a concentration of need in the Downtown Eastside, and an erosion of its capacity to function as a viable low-income community. Meanwhile there has been a significant increase in market housing in the area, creating new opportunities for revitalization and fears of displacement through gentrification.

Nearly a decade ago the City of Vancouver began working on a housing plan for the Downtown Eastside that would preserve and improve the inner city's existing stock of low-income rental housing while still encouraging an increase in the market rental housing stock.

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About the National Housing Research Committee

The National Housing Research Committee (NHRC), established in 1986, is made up of federal, provincial and territorial, municipal, industry, social housing, academic community and consumer representatives.

Its objectives include:

- identifying priority areas for housing-related research or demonstration
- fostering greater co-operation, developing partnerships and minimizing overlap in research activities
- encouraging support for housing research
- promoting the dissemination, application and adoption of research results.

In addition to the Full Committee, the NHRC also operates through working groups to exchange information, discuss research gaps and undertake research projects. Currently, working groups meet on housing data, homelessness, sustainable community planning, seniors housing, and housing and population health. NHRC participants also contribute articles to the *NHRC Newsletter*, which is produced twice a year, and network with their online community: www.nhrc-cnrl.ca

The NHRC co-chairs are Leigh Howell of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Hélène Aubé of the Société d'habitation du Québec.

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Although the draft plan was completed in 1998, municipal resources were temporarily diverted to other inner city crises such as AIDS and substance abuse. By early in the new millennium, the city's homeless count began to skyrocket. Between 2002 and 2005 the number of homeless doubled in both Vancouver and the broader Greater Vancouver Region. In 2001 a B.C. Government study found that it was costing the public considerably more to provide services and shelter to the average homeless person than it would to provide permanent housing and support services.

Homelessness and housing affordability issues are closely intertwined, and in 2004 the City of Vancouver began work on a strategy to tackle homelessness city-wide. Intended to complement the City's Downtown Eastside Housing Plan, Vancouver's Homeless Action Plan is directed not only to street dwellers, users of shelters and transition houses, and "couch surfers," but also to those at risk of becoming homeless because their living situation is either not safe, not secure or not affordable. Another group targeted by the plan are people at risk of homelessness for reasons other than lack of income, such as women fleeing abuse or people with disabilities who lose services that allow them to maintain their housing.

To develop the plan, City staff engaged a consultant and gathered ideas and information from scores of existing reports and studies including homeless plans from other Canadian and U.S. jurisdictions and the Regional Plan for Greater Vancouver.

An initial draft plan integrated results from several stakeholder consultations and public forums held by Vancouver's mayor. More than 40 service providers and government representatives met in May 2004 and developed a set of proposed actions to reduce street homelessness. These actions were reviewed in an even

larger meeting of stakeholders two months later. The opinions of homeless people were gathered from numerous sources, including interviews at city shelters. More than 300 people, groups and organizations were invited to comment on the draft plan and the feedback obtained through meetings and written submissions was incorporated into the final version of the plan.

A handful of important findings prompted the City to focus on three strategic areas — income, housing and support services — or Three Ways to Home. One key observation was that 75 percent of Vancouver's street homeless people were ineligible to receive welfare. Without funds to pay rent, homeless people were destined to remain on the streets.

Meanwhile, studies from jurisdictions such as New York City and San Francisco were pointing to more cost-effective ways of using public money to fight homelessness. These studies demonstrated that when people at risk of becoming homeless are offered affordable housing linked to support services, they have a lower incidence of homelessness, use fewer expensive health-care services and are less likely to be hospitalized than their unsupported counterparts. New York City has been so convinced by the evidence that it recently began closing shelter beds and reallocating resources to supportive housing.

In Vancouver, the figures speak for themselves. The cost of a bed in a psychiatric ward can be up to \$500 per day, while the cost of supportive housing varies from \$20 to \$38 per day.

Finally, overnight searches by staff from the City's Tenant Assistance Program estimate that at least two-thirds of the street homeless have severe drug or alcohol addictions, and City staff have observed that at least a third of Vancouver's shelterless people show symptoms of mental illness.

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Sharing Best Practices in Affordable Housing and Urban Development

Two upcoming international conferences are expected to bring Quebec's social housing policies to an international audience in 2006 and 2008. These semiannual symposia of the Réseau Habitat et Francophonie (RHF) are part of a 20-year tradition of development cooperation involving foreign aid agencies in France and social housing project managers from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

In its modern incarnation, the network is an international non-governmental organization that brings together professional agencies and private and nonprofit organizations from the social housing and urban development sectors in French-speaking countries to encourage technical cooperation and the sharing of best practices in urban development, slum rehabilitation and social housing. The mandate of the network is to ensure that low-income individuals and families around the world have access to adequate and affordable housing in slum-free cities.

The group facilitates collaboration among French-speaking housing professionals, including developers, builders and bankers, in an international effort to address issues of housing, poverty and homelessness. It fosters twinning projects, builds expertise in affordable housing, and nurtures reflection and discourse on issues of international concern through its high-level symposia on such themes as social housing and urban integration; affordable housing production; mortgage guarantees and securitization programs; globalization; natural disasters; and human migration.

In June, Sherbrooke will play host to 175 delegates from Canada, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, who will convene around the theme *Our Commitment: Affordable Housing*.

RHF has institutional members in 19 countries on four continents. The Canadian membership includes Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Les Habitations du centre-ville, Regroupement des Offices

Logo

d'Habitat du Québec (ROHQ), the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) and, most recently, Quebec's cooperative housing association, Les Habitations populaires du Québec. The network also maintains regular contact with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

For more information, please visit www.habitatfrancophonie.org or contact Hélène Aubé, Société d'habitation du Québec, (418) 644-0145; e-mail: helene.aube@shq.gouv.qc.ca.

Years of housing and homelessness research underpin new City of Vancouver plans (continued from page 2)

Focusing on the Three Ways to Home (income, housing, support services) the City's new Homeless Action Plan concentrates its recommendations in three areas that will have the greatest impact in reducing homelessness in Vancouver:

- Create more jobs for the homeless and reform the Province's Employment and Assistance program to increase access by homeless people to social assistance.
- Create 3,200 additional supportive housing units — affordable housing linked to support services.
- Expand addictions services (including sobering facilities, withdrawal management, treatment and supportive

housing) and adopt a case management approach to mental illness and substance abuse-related problems.

The plan identifies 13 major areas of need, defines the City's role in addressing gaps in knowledge and services, and outlines 85 recommendations for action by various orders of government and community agencies. Six of the recommended actions deal with the lack of comprehensive locally relevant data on Vancouver's homeless population and the facilities and services they rely on. The recommendations urge governments and community agencies to fund various information-gathering tools and systems and to allocate resources for public education on homelessness.

Given the City's limited mandate and funding capacity, the plan emphasizes the importance of multi-sector collaboration and urges local authorities to build on the well-founded partnerships that already exist with other levels of government, service providers and the community

For more information, contact Jill Davidson, City of Vancouver, (604) 873-7670;

email: jill.davidson@vancouver.ca. To view a copy of the Downtown Eastside Housing Plan or the Homeless Action Plan, visit the City of Vancouver's web site. <http://www.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/housing/>

Laval University's School of Architecture: Probing the links between habitat, land development and local identity

Since the early 1980s, Laval University's School of Architecture has been cultivating links with academic institutions and communities in Canada and abroad. With research exchanges under way in Senegal, Vietnam, Lebanon, Mexico and China, the School has also tackled an array of housing and community design projects with First Nations communities in Quebec.

One such collaboration, in the autumn of 2002, involved 23 masters students and representatives from two Innu reserves on Quebec's North Shore. The two communities have high levels of unemployment and substance abuse and are governed by a single band council. Local housing and neighbourhood designs have been transplanted from suburban Quebec and are not particularly compatible with the Innu's values or lifestyles.

After a visit from School of Architecture faculty in the spring of 2002, the Uashat mak Mani-Utenam Band Council decided to have a group of Laval architecture students help them find culturally appropriate solutions to a number of design challenges facing the two communities. Specifically, the band council requested recommendations

for a new location and site plan for a major Innu music festival held each year in the region. It also wanted high-density solutions to the local housing shortage, and asked students to develop prototypes for singles' housing. In addition, the architecture students were asked to propose designs for youth centres, which are badly needed on both reserves.

The learning objective of the two workshops was to offer students opportunities for observation and discovery in a socio-cultural milieu different from their own. The explorations, while intended to be intellectually stimulating in their own right, were also designed to teach students how to conduct research in a manner sensitive to the local culture, including traditions and lifestyles, social issues, the environment and local building practices.

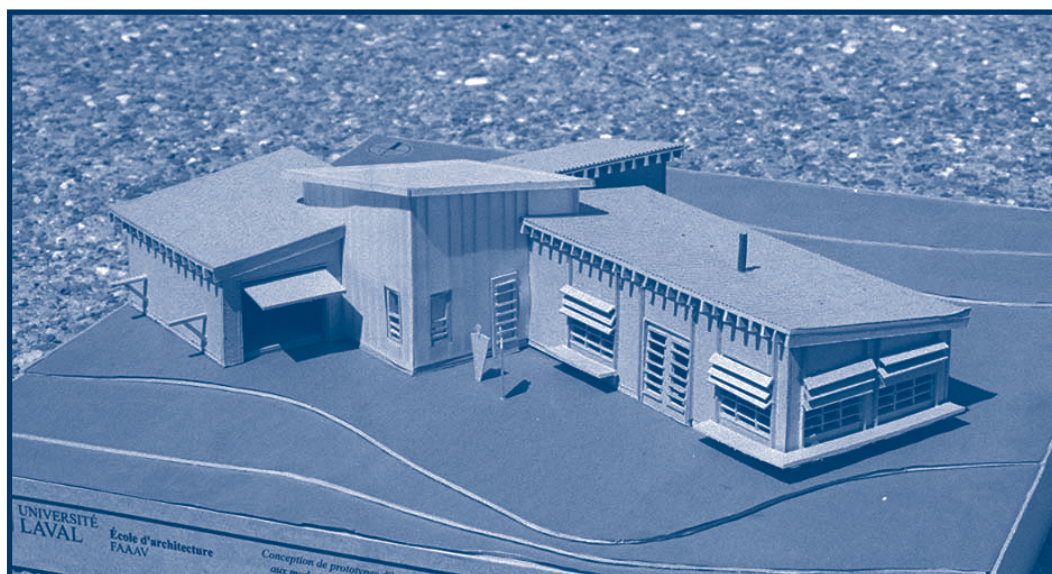
The students collaborated closely with their subjects in the two communities, visiting the reserves to collect data and later to solicit feedback on their proposed approaches. Before visiting the reserves, the students studied library and archive documents on Innu history; Aboriginal-government relations; the evolution of Innu territory;

Innu demographics and socioeconomics; the philosophy and values of indigenous architecture, and as well as precedents in indigenous community design.

Ultimately, the workshops afforded an opportunity to use urban design and architecture principles to better integrate form, function, cultural heritage and the natural environment in the two communities.

In a recent development, faculty and students from the School of Architecture received two-year research funding from Quebec's Ministère de l'Éducation, du loisir et du sport to collaborate with the Mamuitun Tribal Council on a new research initiative with the Innu of Uashat mak Mani-Utenam. The object of the new project is to develop affordable, sustainable and healthy adaptations to the post-1960 bungalows that make up a significant part of the housing stock in the two communities.

For additional information on the masters workshops or to obtain a copy of the report, please contact Geneviève Vachon, Laval University School of Architecture, (418) 656-2131, ext. 6762; e-mail: Genevieve.Vachon@arc.ulaval.ca.



Caption

Greening the Urban Landscape

Although recreational roof gardens have been beautifying cities for decades, their tremendous weight, high installation costs and considerable maintenance requirements make them impractical for most residential applications. But studies have found that green roofing can reduce heating and cooling bills by 10–20 percent, help manage urban storm water, and absorb airborne pollutants.

Last year, Montréal's Urban Ecology Centre decided to demonstrate these benefits, as well as the feasibility of replacing the blacktop on one of the city's characteristic flat-roofed triplexes with a green roof. In July 2005, after two years of preparatory research, the Centre installed the city's first ecological or extensive green roof at a housing co-op in the city's Milton Park neighbourhood.

In a report released in January 2006, the Centre documents every aspect of the Green Roof Demonstration Project. Complete with photos and diagrams, *Projet-pilote de toit vert* chronicles the entire installation process, from early planning to ongoing maintenance. The 60-page report also details the products used to build the garden and offers a step-by-step description of the construction process. While the report does not purport to be a definitive guide, it provides the level of detail needed to replicate the demonstration project,

including a description of the project team of architects, landscape architects, engineers, agronomists, roofers and suppliers of many specialized materials.

Traditional recreational roof gardens use a lot of soil, require frequent maintenance and, because of the significant weight and expense involved, are generally slated for use on commercial and institutional buildings. "Extensive" green roofs, on the other hand, use simple, robust vegetation that survives in soil depths of 150 mm; such roofing is ideal for residential applications since it requires minimal maintenance and is inexpensive to install. What's more, an extensive green roof costs only about twice as much as a conventional tar roof and preserves the surface of the building envelope more than twice as long as tar does.

By sharing the Centre's experience with the building industry, public administrators, property owners and the public at large, the Centre hopes to cultivate a favourable public policy environment and contribute to the development of local expertise in residential green roof installation. It also hopes to demonstrate the viability of green roofs and their ecological and environmental benefits with an eye to encouraging their widescale uptake in Montréal, where the housing stock consists largely of flat-roofed duplexes and triplexes.

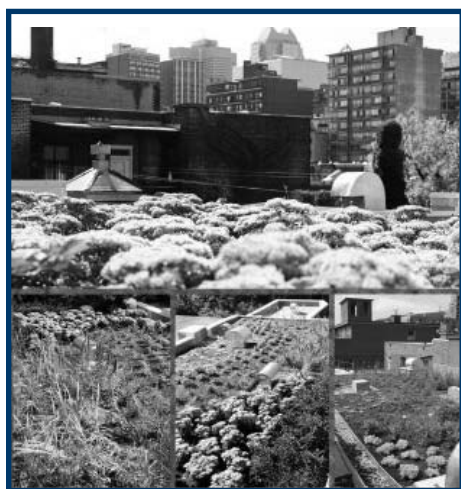
To help make their case, the project organizers teamed up with the National Research Council, which took a variety of measurements over the course of the construction project to evaluate the impact of the roof on rain water retention, indoor temperatures and energy consumption of the residence below. About 80 percent of Montréal consists of buildings and paved surfaces that don't absorb rainwater. Like many other cities, Montréal's storm water runoff capacity is frequently overwhelmed. On heavy rain days, a green roof can absorb more than 50 percent of the rainwater that would normally run off the building into the storm sewer system.

Much of this water currently overflows untreated into the St. Lawrence River.

Paved urban landscapes also tend to exacerbate summer heat waves, pushing city temperatures above those of surrounding areas by 2–3° C. Rooftop greening is considered a viable solution to this so-called urban heat island effect, which is likely to worsen with ongoing climate change. Environment Canada estimates that if Toronto were to convert just six percent of its roof space into vegetation, it could reduce summer temperatures by 1–2° C and save up to five percent in energy costs.

Green roofs also improve air quality by absorbing greenhouse gases and airborne pollutants. And thanks to the shading, sunlight reflection and evapo-transpiration of plants, green roofs dramatically reduce temperatures in the building below, reducing or even completely eliminating the need for air conditioning. This reduces both greenhouse gas emissions and neighbourhood noise pollution.

For more information, please contact Jacob Nerenberg, Urban Ecology Centre Green Roof Info line (514) 281-8381; e-mail: info@ecologieurbaine.net. To order a copy of the report, please visit [www.urbanecology](http://www.urbanecology.net) (in French <http://www.ecologieurbaine.net/>). Or visit <http://www.ecosensual.net/drm/portfolio/projet-pilote1.html> to view the construction project in action.



Caption

The Smart-Growth Gap: CMHC-sponsored study examines municipal growth-management objectives and achievements

By Carla Guerrero and Fanis Grammenos

Although many municipalities in Canada have incorporated smart-growth principles and goals into their plans and priorities, actual performance and accomplishments lag considerably behind. This is the chief conclusion of a landmark study on smart growth in Canada conducted by Dr. Ray Tomalty and funded by the External Research Program of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

"Until now, no comprehensive research had been done to measure what is happening in municipalities across Canada in terms of smart growth," says Dr. Tomalty, a Montréal-based research consultant in urban sustainability. "This study shows that there is a large gap between municipal growth-management objectives and real accomplishments."

Despite the absence of reliable research on this concept of urban development, most planners in Canada are thoroughly familiar with the primary aspects of smart growth, and many have for years trumpeted the worthy objectives at its core—preventing urban sprawl, reducing pollution and decreasing dependence on car travel.

Not surprisingly, this integrated approach is attractive to countless urban planners, academics and consultants across the country. The research found that smart-growth principles lie at the heart of an increasing number of municipal-planning documents across Canada; and smart-growth organizations operate in several provinces and have established a national coalition.

Gauging the State of Smart Growth in Canada

Given this groundswell of activity, the study sought to gauge the current state of smart growth in Canada by examining how municipalities implement its principles, whether these methods had been successful, and whether they could be applied in cities across the country. To do

so, the research team looked at six urban areas—Halifax, Montréal, Toronto, Saskatoon, Calgary and Vancouver—that have a history of incorporating smart-growth principles into planning models.

In particular, he reviewed each municipality's growth-management goals, evaluated progress toward these objectives, and identified factors that might explain successes and failures. To sharpen the analysis, the researchers established a detailed framework of ten indicators accepted by urban planners as being the smart-growth measures of record:

- incorporation of dense, mixed-use development in greenfield areas;
- intensification of urban areas to moderate greenfield development;
- exploitation of specific intensification opportunities;
- increased transportation choice and reduced car usage;
- increased supply of affordable new housing;
- broader range of housing types;
- preservation of agricultural lands;
- preservation of lands essential to regional ecosystems;

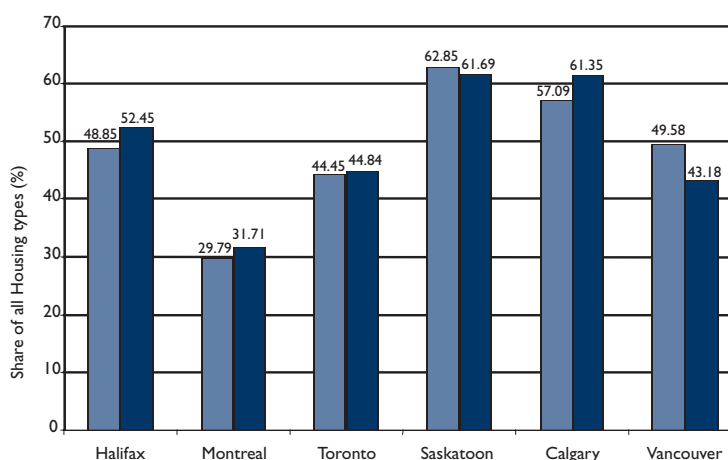
- increased direct employment through core areas and designated sub-centres; and
- provision of infrastructure to reduce the environmental impacts of development.

Analysis based on these indicators suggests that progress is largely absent in terms of mixed-use development and nodal concentration of employment; minimal in terms of density increases; and retrograde in terms of intensification, housing affordability, range of housing types, environmental protection and transportation options. For example, the findings show that the share of detached houses of the total housing production is increasing in most centres (see chart).

The researchers argue that the results reflect not only a lack of political will at all levels of government, but also constraints such as regulations that stifle innovation in planning and development, a lack of widespread interest among developers in non-conventional designs, the financial impacts of municipal taxation and development charges, and strong consumer preference for lower-density urban neighbourhoods.

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Single Detached Houses as a Percentage of All Types, 1991 and 2001



Canada to Host World Urban Forum 3

In a rapidly urbanizing world where half the global population already lives in cities, there is much to be gained from sharing ideas and best practices on how to solve the critical problems facing today's urban centres. The World Urban Forum (WUF) is a UN-sponsored gathering, where experts, government officials and members of civil society from around the world convene biennially to learn first-hand from one another how their counterparts in other jurisdictions are dealing with such issues as the lack of affordable housing, waste management, crumbling infrastructure, pollution and social exclusion.

Since its inauguration in 2002 at UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, the Forum has become a magnet for academics, policymakers, municipal authorities, community activists and NGOs committed to the quest for more inclusive, just and environmentally sound cities.

With its Third Session convening in Vancouver from June 19 to 23, the WUF will afford an ideal opportunity for Canada's

housing research community to learn what colleagues and counterparts around the world are doing in the areas of housing finance and affordability, energy efficiency and urban development. The Forum will strengthen partnerships, build new networks and serve as a launching pad for new ideas and activities to improve the quality of life in urban centres.

Entitled *Our Future: Sustainable Cities—Turning Ideas into Action*, WUF3 will explore three major themes:

- urban growth and the environment, with a focus on urban planning, land use management and energy consumption;
- partnership and finance, with an emphasis on promoting vibrant local economies and urban safety; and
- social inclusion and cohesion, with a spotlight on affordable housing, upgrading slums, and galvanizing public engagement and participation by city dwellers across the socioeconomic spectrum in urban policies and strategies for sustainable development.



The five-day program will feature plenary sessions, debates, roundtable discussions, caucus meetings, special sessions for municipal government representatives and more than 100 networking and training events. A highlight of the Forum will be an exposition showcasing the latest urban sustainability projects, ideas, case studies, experiences and best practices from around the world. The exposition will also provide facilities for informal meetings, lectures, discussions, debates and award ceremonies.

WUF3 will be held at the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre on the waterfront of one of the most beautiful cities in the world. There is no fee to register for the Forum but participants must pay for their own travel and accommodation. Registration and accommodation requests for WUF3 can be made online at www.wuf3-fum3.ca.

The Smart-Growth Gap (continued from page 6)

The Future of Smart Growth

Despite these discouraging findings, Dr. Tomalty contends that there are several signs that the need to manage urban growth is rising rapidly on the agenda of public priorities. "The federal government has taken an increasingly active role in urban issues and many provincial governments have placed a spotlight on urban sprawl."

In terms of further study, the research team believes a two-pronged strategy is needed. "We must continue to point to those cases where progress is apparent, in the expectation that successful innovations can be repeated elsewhere. And more in-depth research is required into specific mechanisms that enable policy intentions

to move forward to tangible changes on the ground," Tomalty says.

The study author also concedes that bridging the smart-growth gap—translating smart-growth principles into actual development—is a work in progress for many municipalities. "Like other major public policy issues such as removing lead from gasoline, prohibiting smoking in public places and addressing the causes of climate change," he says, "it will take some time to create the public awareness and then the consensus required to make fundamental changes in the way our cities grow and develop."

The author hopes this study will spur public interest in and awareness of smart growth, inspire even more research on the issue,

and encourage municipalities to bridge the smart-growth gap. "The challenge for municipal officials is clear: take the smart-growth principles that exist in current municipal plans and translate them into action."

The Research Highlight for Smart Growth in Canada: A Report Card can be obtained online through CMHC's Order Desk at www.cmhc.ca or by calling 1-800-668-2642 (product number 64931). For additional information, please contact Dr. Ray Tomalty, 514-847-9259; e-mail: tomalty@corps.ca

Housing in Canada Online — New database and browser will revolutionize housing research

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has created a new interactive information resource that will facilitate access to its data on housing conditions in Canada. Using the database will be free and of particular value to anyone who conducts housing analysis — academics, advocacy groups, urban planners and municipal policymakers.

The easy-to-use database contains more than 3 million pieces of housing data. Derived from information collected by Statistics Canada during the 1991, 1996 and 2001 Censuses, the database profiles households in each of 194 communities by basic household types, average household income, type of tenure (owned or rented), and the age of the head of household. The database also contains information about average shelter costs, average shelter-cost-to-income ratios and whether housing meets CMHC standards for adequacy, suitability and affordability.

Housing in Canada Online is powered by an online browser that allows users to extract source data and create customized tables. Online instructions and tutorials are available in help files, providing detailed guidance on how to change and manipulate rows and columns to generate customized data tables incorporating the desired variables. Any table can also be viewed as a bar graph or chart. Once constructed, customized tables can be downloaded for use and further manipulation on a desktop computer. Now, virtually anyone will be able to produce a credible housing report using CMHC data.

The custom data included in the Housing in Canada Online database were generated by applying CMHC's housing standards to the Census database. Therefore, not all Canadian households are reflected in the database, since not all households supplied the data needed to assess housing adequacy, suitability and affordability — the three

standards underlying acceptable housing.

Data are available for each of Canada's census metropolitan areas, census agglomerations, communautés urbaines, regional municipalities and regional districts. Together, these communities account for about 85 percent of Canadian households. Data for households in rural jurisdictions (areas under 2,500 in population) are aggregated and presented by province and territory, as are the data for urban centres smaller than CAs but larger than 2,500 in population.

Housing in Canada Online recently began its pilot test phase and will soon be made available through CMHC's Canadian Housing Observer Web page.

For more information, please contact John Engeland, Policy and Research Division, CMHC, (613) 748-2799; e-mail: jengelan@cmhc.ca.

Number and distribution of households by population size of area of residence, Canada, 2001

	Count	Distribution
CANADA	10805615	100.0%
Canada - Total Urban (pop. 2,500+)	9228015	85.4%
Canada - Total Rural (pop. under 2,500)	1577600	14.6%
Canada - Total Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)	7048910	65.2%
Canada - Total Census Agglomerations (CAs)	1700790	15.7%
Canada - Total Small Urban Communities (outside of CMAs and CAs)	577150	5.3%

Source: CMHC (census-based housing indicators and data)

HiCO provides Canadians with essential information on housing conditions no matter where they live. For the 80.9% or just over 7.1 million households that lived in Canada's 27 CMAs, 45 Regional Municipalities or 113 CAs in 2001, HiCO profiles housing conditions, individual community by individual community. For small town Canadians, who lived in the 5.3 per cent of all households in communities from 2,500 to 10,000 in population in 2001, HiCO profiles housing conditions for the communities as a group by province and territory. For rural Canadians, the 14.6% of all households living in rural areas under 2,500 in population, HiCO profiles rural housing conditions by province and territory.

2004 Survey of Household Spending: More Housing Content

By Willa Rea and Pina Lanovara

On December 12, 2005, Statistics Canada released the results of the 2004 Survey of Household Spending (SHS). Data from this survey are now available to the public.

This is the third year that the SHS has included extra housing questions sponsored by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, such as whether the dwelling was a condo or a farm, whether the unit was rent-geared-to-income, the presence of a secondary apartment, the reason for a move within the last six years, and several questions about the previous dwelling. Since 1998, the SHS has also included questions formerly found on the terminated HIFE (Household Income, Facilities and Equipment) database.

New to the 2004 SHS is an expansion of the section on homeowner repair and renovations, with specific questions about a variety of repairs and renovations such as roof repairs, painting, furnace replacement and landscaping. Since the termination of the Homeowner Repair and Renovation Survey, the SHS is now the only source of detailed information about expenditures on repairs and renovations made by homeowners.

Shelter Costs Rising

Average spending on shelter increased five per cent to \$12,200¹ in 2004, according to the SHS. This was mostly the result of a seven per cent increase in spending on mortgage payments, a five per cent increase in property taxes and a four per cent rise in fuel costs.

The increase in mortgage spending was the result of both: more households having mortgages and also higher average payments per household. There was no significant increase in the cost of mortgages in 2004, according to the Consumer Price Index.

Energy Spending Up

Spending on natural gas and oil was up four per cent to \$760, while spending on electricity remained largely unchanged at \$1,100. These estimates represent annual spending averaged over all households (including households with no payments). More than 27 per cent of households reported having central air conditioning in 2004, up from 25 per cent for each of the previous three years. Seven out of ten of these households were in Ontario.

Canadians on the Move

Just under half of Canadian households reported that they had moved in the last six years. For 14 per cent of these households, the move involved tenure change—from owning to renting or vice-versa. An estimated 22 per cent of households wanted or needed a larger dwelling, while only six per cent wanted a smaller dwelling. Sixteen per cent stated that they had moved for family reasons such as a birth, death, marriage or divorce; five per cent cited health reasons.

Information from the SHS is now available on standard tables and on Statistics Canada's CANSIM database. The public-use microdata file is slated to be released in June 2006. Special tabulations can also be requested on a cost-recovery basis.

For more information, please contact Statistics Canada's Client Services, 1-888-297-7355; e-mail: income@statcan.ca.

New weights for SHS

The estimates in the 2004 Survey of Household Spending (SHS) are based on new weights derived from the 2001 Census. Revised data for the 2003 SHS were released with the 2004 SHS, and revised data for previous years will be released soon. We recommend that data users making historical comparisons take the new weights into account.

¹ All dollar values and increases/decreases in this article are based on current Canadian dollars.

New CMHC Study Sheds Light on Household Income, Net Worth and Housing Affordability

Canadian homeowners hold a disproportionate share of the country's wealth, according to new research published by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in March. The study found that just under two-thirds of Canada's 11.6 million households — specifically, those that own their own homes — hold more than 90 percent of the country's net worth. Renters, meanwhile, who accounted for a little more than a third of Canadian households in 1999, own less than 10 percent of the country's net worth.

Based on data gathered during Statistics Canada's 1999 Survey of Financial Security, the study confirms that homeownership plays an important role in the net worth and financial health of Canadians. The survey, which gathered data on what Canadians earn, own and owe, found that home equity was the most broadly held asset in Canada — 64 percent of Canadian households own their homes — and the second largest contributor to Canada's net worth. (Retirement savings, including pensions, RRSPs and RRIFs, accounted for about a third of Canada's \$3 trillion in net household worth, while home equity made up 26 percent, or \$800 billion.)

The CMHC study also found that home equity represented the largest single component of net worth among households with incomes of less than \$30,000 and figured significantly on the balance sheets of higher earning households as well. Almost all high-net-worth households owned homes, and homeowners generally had considerably higher incomes and net worth than renters. The higher incomes of homeowners allowed them to accumulate far more assets than renters; in fact, the typical homeowner's net worth in 1999 was 16 times that of the typical renter.

In addition to having lower incomes, lower net worth and fewer assets than their homeownership counterparts, renters also had a much higher incidence of shelter affordability problems. In 1999, three out of ten renter households spent at least 30 percent of their before-tax income on shelter and could not find suitable, alternative local housing for less than 30 percent of their before-tax income. Among homeowners, this figure was only one out of twenty.

Some types of renter households were particularly prone to shelter affordability problems. Elderly unattached individuals, non-elderly unattached individuals and non-elderly lone parents, many of them one-adult households, were overrepresented in this category. (The term "elderly" applies to economic families in which the major income earner was aged 65 or older and to unattached individuals aged 65 or older.) Not surprisingly, very few households with shelter affordability problems have significant net worth. In 1999 most of the households exhibiting both of these characteristics owned their homes, typically without any mortgage.

The Research Highlight can be obtained online through CMHC's Order Desk www.cmhc.ca, product number 65006 (English) 65007 (French) or by calling 1-800-668-2642. For additional information, please contact Roger Lewis, Housing Indicators and Demographics, CMHC, (613) 748-2797; e-mail: rlewis@cmhc.ca.

Age group	All households				Homeowners			
	Median		Average		Median		Average	
	Home equity (\$)	Net worth (\$)	Home equity (\$)	Net Worth (\$)	Home equity (\$)	Net worth (\$)	Home equity (\$)	Net worth (\$)
Under 25	0	6,000	22,000	58,000	75,000	137,000	129,000	293,000
25-34	0	41,000	28,000	98,000	35,000	94,000	58,000	162,000
35-44	30,000	107,000	57,000	202,000	60,000	162,000	88,000	276,000
45-54	60,000	198,000	90,000	344,000	95,000	285,000	122,000	438,000
55-64	80,000	283,000	104,000	462,000	100,000	421,000	137,000	582,000
65 +	74,000	216,000	91,000	337,000	110,000	306,000	134,000	439,000
All ages	35,000	124,000	69,000	263,000	80,000	226,000	109,000	377,000

For details about the determination of household age and tenure, see the Definitions at the end of this Highlight.

Source: CMHC, adapted from Statistics Canada (1999 Survey of Financial Security)

Research Contributes to New “Positive Aging” Strategy for Nova Scotia

In December 2005, Nova Scotia's Seniors' Secretariat, the provincial government agency responsible for seniors, released its Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia. The product of a somewhat unconventional process, the strategy was informed by a year-long public consultation that elicited input from hundreds of Nova Scotians. It also benefited from an extensive literature review that examined research and preferred practices in jurisdictions across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

More than 700 participants attended 34 public meetings across the province to discuss the contents of a draft framework that had been developed from feedback obtained through numerous earlier national, provincial and community-based initiatives. Scores of other people submitted written responses to the discussion paper, which outlined nine goals and 90 “societal actions.”

After the public consultations, the province's Task Force on Aging hosted 11 topic-specific roundtable discussions attended by experts, volunteer leaders, and program-specific government staff in relevant fields. The stakeholders were also asked to recommend books and research papers that would help inform the final strategy.

An advisory committee oversaw the creation of both the discussion document and the final strategy and guided the consultation process. Its 24-members included senior government officials from key departments and agencies, representatives from seniors' organizations, and a cross-section of Nova Scotians selected for their geographic, cultural, age and gender representation.

The final strategy outlines 190 societal actions that are meant to guide provincial government planning for an aging population over the next 10–15 years. The strategy also cites more than 100 papers and a dozen books uncovered in the literature review. Statistical highlights and summaries from numerous research papers appear in the Context and Background sections of the strategy, affording a solid foundation for further work by a wide range of groups with an interest in aging.

Among the research initiatives cited is a \$1.2-million project called Projecting the Housing Needs of Atlantic Canadians, which produced a database containing detailed projections of seniors' housing needs based on such variables as age, wealth and state of health. One piece of information generated by the database is a projection that 16,416 Nova Scotians aged 50 and older will require “institutionalized care” by 2026 — more than 2 1/2 times the number of beds currently available in licensed nursing homes and residential care facilities.

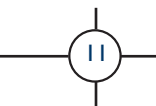
The strategy advocates further research on seniors' housing, as well as more sharing of best practices in planning, design and development of housing, care facilities, community environments and enabling technologies in support of universal design.

For more information, please contact Valerie White, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Seniors' Secretariat, (902) 424-0065 or 1-800-670-0065 (toll free); e-mail: whitevj@gov.ns.ca. The Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia can be accessed from the Secretariat's Web site at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/pubs/Strategy-positive-aging.pdf>.

Nova Scotia seniors and housing

- Seniors will comprise 25 percent of Nova Scotia's population by 2026.
- The vast majority (95 percent) of Nova Scotia seniors live at home in owned or rented accommodations (70 percent own, 20 percent rent from the private market, 4 percent live in non-profit seniors apartments). Less than 1 percent live in licensed residential care facilities and 4 percent live in licensed nursing homes.
- Most Nova Scotia seniors living in a private household live with their family (62 percent with spouse or common law partner; 6 percent with extended family, 2 percent with non-relatives). Thirty percent of seniors live alone.

*Seniors' Statistical Profile
Seniors Secretariat Nova Scotia*



Framework for Cost-benefit Analysis: Measuring improved quality of life for seniors' home renovation programs

A five-year pilot project has resulted in the development of a cost-benefit analysis framework for two Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) programs offering financial assistance for home renovations to seniors and people with disabilities.

The Home Adaptations for Senior Independence Program (HASI) is aimed at low-income persons over 65; the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities (RRAP-D) provides support to disabled people of all ages and their landlords. Both programs offer forgivable loans for home renovations to allow seniors and disabled people to remain in their own homes.

The cost-benefit analysis of home renovations report presents the results of

the joint CMHC–Health Canada project that was carried out from 2000 to 2004. The framework was based on a literature review that included examining Treasury Board's cost-benefit analysis policies and existing frameworks for similar programs; a focus group of health care, economics and housing professionals that considered issues related to the framework; and trial questionnaires for a case study sampling of 15 urban and rural program recipients.

The report examines the technical aspects of a cost-benefit analysis methodology; ways to measure the effects of major and minor home renovations over time on the programs' beneficiaries, their caregivers and their community; and how to calculate costs of the programs. It concludes with recommendations on a general approach to a broader study.

The effects of renovations over time

The research team developed a logic model (see Figure 1) that shows possible effects of modifying a dwelling on the local community, the applicant (beneficiary), the caregiver; and professional/commercial services needs. A quantitative model explores the programs' benefits over time and the key parameters needed to calculate them.

The report describes two methodologies for estimating the benefits of HASI/RRAP-D. Direct estimation combines estimating quality of life along with costs avoided by participating in the program. Contingent value analysis focuses on the beneficiary's willingness to accept cash compensation in lieu of the program. The second method

continued on page 13

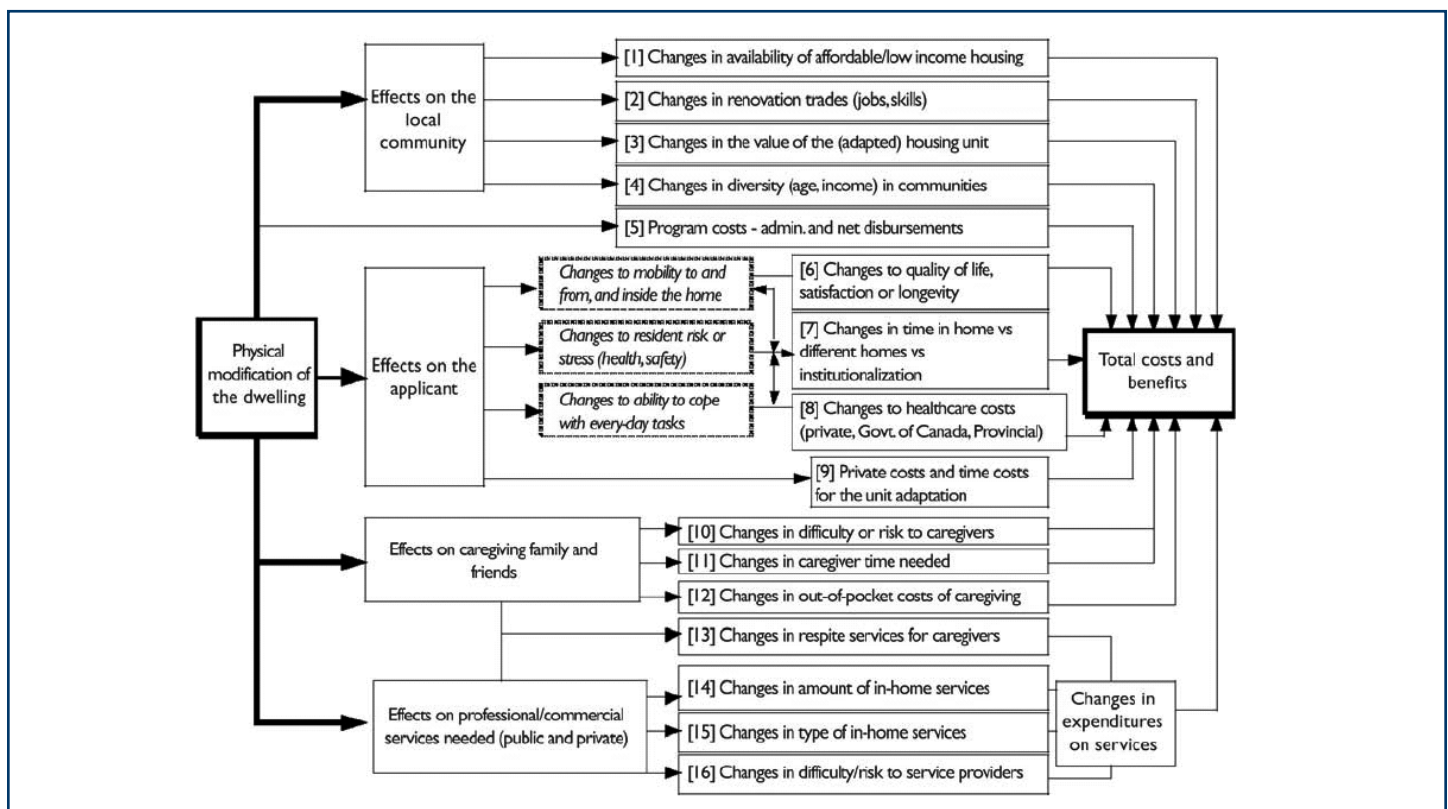


Figure 1: RRAP-D and HASI Effects

Researching New Residential Care Models for Quebec Seniors

An aging population will eventually translate into a growing demand for long-term institutional care facilities, but the availability of public funding is not expected to keep pace with the growing demand for nursing homes. As the size and severity of the impending crisis became apparent a few years ago, Quebec's ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux began funding research designed to generate alternative housing resources for the aged.

Under Quebec's current nursing home regime, the health and social services system does more than simply provide health care and social services for the province's elderly. It also oversees the management of beds, food services, laundry and other housekeeping services for institutionalized seniors. Thus, the ministry's goal in encouraging research into alternative models is to enable the province's health and social services providers to focus on their core mandate and delegate to third-party partners the management of issues related to seniors' lodgings.

Quebec funds innovative housing-related projects

In 2003 the province began funding innovative housing-related projects that sought to respond to the needs of elderly clients by establishing partnerships between health organizations and private or nonprofit residential facilities. The program is intended to generate care that is equal to or better than that currently available in traditional seniors' facilities in terms of quality, efficiency and effectiveness. It fosters experimentation calculated to produce innovative models that are both affordable to the targeted clientele and viable in the long term. And it focuses on enabling dependent seniors to maintain meaningful relationships with their loved ones and with the community, including spousal cohabitation if desired.

To date three rounds of projects have been approved — in 2003, 2004 and 2005. A little more than \$11.4 million has been allocated to 31 projects across the province. These projects are testing a variety of management approaches, including private, nonprofit and social housing models, with facility sizes ranging from 6 to 50 residents. The pilot projects provide housing services to a wide variety of clients. The targeted clientele varies by age, health status and income. An evaluation of the innovation fund, slated to begin in June 2006, will be available in March 2008.

For more information, please contact François Renaud, Société d'habitation du Québec, (514) 873-9619; e-mail: francois.renaud@shq.gouv.qc.ca.

Framework for Cost-benefit Analysis (continued from page 12)

requires respondents to answer abstract questions and place dollar values on the effects of renovations—often a lengthy, difficult process that calls for additional resources. For this reason, the research team suggests the direct estimation method as the more practical approach.

Implications for a broader study

Detailed findings from the pilot project support carrying out a more extensive study. In developing the framework, a small number of case studies were conducted to test it in its primary form.

Although the case study sample was non-representative, the findings suggest that there are quality of life benefits from both programs. In all 15 case studies, beneficiaries were disabled, but both beneficiaries and caregivers reported an improvement in their quality of life. Caregivers found that tasks were easier due to the renovations, and it was clear that beneficiaries will try to stay in their homes as long as possible.

Researchers observed from the widespread interest in the pilot project that a cost-benefit analysis would be useful for other

similar programs related to the physical environment of the elderly or disabled.

The report, A Framework for Cost-Benefit Analysis of HASI and RRAP-D, can be obtained on-line through CMHC's Order Desk www.cmhc.ca, product number [64944] or by calling 1-800-668-2642. For additional information, please contact Luis Rodriguez, Senior Researcher, Policy and Research Division, (613) 748-2339; e-mail: lrodrigu@cmhc.ca.

Preventing Youth Homelessness: Study looks at adapting English model

A Canadian study has found that a youth homelessness prevention model developed in England could be adapted to the Canadian context. Montréal researcher Luba Serge looked at the transferability of a model used in two projects to prevent youth homelessness in England: Safe in the City (SITC) and Safe Moves. The study was supported by a grant from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's External Research Program.

The Projects

SITC was launched in 1998 by the Peabody Trust and Centrepoint, a charity working with youth who are homeless and socially excluded, and operated in eight London boroughs. It had three goals: to help young people stay safely at home, to find alternatives for young people who couldn't do so, and to smooth young people's transition to independence by developing their employability and life skills. An evaluation by Centrepoint and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that some of the youth participating in SITC returned home, and that others still at home said they were less likely to leave.

Because SITC ended in 2004 due to lack of funding, Serge also looked at Safe Moves, a similar project also based in England that is still operating. Launched in 2002 by the Foyer Federation, Safe Moves began with an 18-month pilot that adapted the SITC model to youth aged 13 to 19 in two urban and two rural locations. Now a permanent program, Safe Moves is developing new projects in other locations.

The Model

Serge found that the model developed by SITC and used by Safe Moves could be adapted to the Canadian situation. This model has several key characteristics:

- *Clusters*—To tackle the multiple factors that lead to homelessness, separate agencies are joined together in "clusters." All clusters have three common elements: family support (including family mediation and crisis resolution); personal development (including improving self-esteem, communication and independent living skills); and skills and employability (developing tailored learning plans to increase young people's employability). Some agencies involved with the SITC clusters planned to incorporate the SITC approach into their own work, expand their mandate to include work undertaken by other partners in the cluster, or continue the partnerships.
- *Localized application*—Projects target neighbourhoods especially vulnerable to youth homelessness. Operating in a local community makes it possible to bring together local partners, who often have credibility in the community and can more easily attract youth. Working locally also helps the project recognize and adapt to particular situations, such as a significant proportion of ethnic and minority youth.
- *Understanding of homelessness prevention*—Both SITC and Safe Moves had to develop and communicate to partners an understanding of

homelessness prevention in theory and action. This was challenging, but beneficial; key informants at participating agencies said they better understood the factors that lead to homelessness and the need to take a holistic approach to prevention.

- *Assessment/gatekeeping tool*—The model uses a tool to assess whether a young person is at risk for homelessness and therefore eligible for services. The tool helps identify agencies suitable for youth not eligible for services under the project.

More Canadian Research Required

According to Serge, the major challenge to adapting the SITC model to Canada is a lack of research in the following areas: understanding the pathways and risk factors for Canadian youth; understanding family reconnection and support/mediation; and understanding what youth and their families believe would have helped when young people were first thinking about leaving home or had already left home.

The Research Highlight can be obtained online through CMHC's Order Desk at www.cmhc.ca or by calling 1-800-668-2642 (product number [65017]). For additional information, please contact Luba Serge at (514) 525-0827, email: l.serge@videotron.ca

Homeless People in the Laurentians Need More than Just Housing

Tackling the problem of homelessness in rural areas requires a multipronged approach that includes the creation of more affordable housing units, a more holistic approach to social services delivery, and a case management model that enables service providers to treat each person as an individual. Such are the findings of a recent study by Prof. Paul Carle of the Université du Québec à Montréal that examined the plight of homeless people in one of Canada's most popular resort areas.

Funded by the National Secretariat on Homelessness and the Centre de santé et de services sociaux d'Antoine-Labelle, the research consisted of in-depth interviews with 75 individuals recruited from across the Laurentians with the help of local community organizations, social service agencies and a shelter for the homeless in Saint Jérôme, Quebec. (Centre Sida-Amitié de Saint Jérôme).

The participants, 55 men and 20 women, were asked to describe the events leading up to their housing problems and were questioned about the barriers that had prevented them from getting back on their feet. Interviewees were also asked about the key figures in their personal lives — friends, acquaintances, extended family, neighbours, co-workers — and about their interactions with the often-numerous support agencies they relied on during their period of instability. Finally, participants were invited to share their hopes and dreams for the future.

The 90-minute interviews uncovered a picture of profound human suffering. Physical and mental illness, addiction, loneliness, anger, disillusionment, rejection, despair and self-loathing were endemic. Most of the interviewees had suffered family trauma resulting in estrangement from siblings, parents or children. Marital breakdown, physical and sexual abuse, rejection by foster parents and intervention by child protection agencies also made frequent appearances in the 75 personal narratives. For many of these people, the region's overburdened social services system was their only real source of human connection.

These findings suggest that publicly-funded interventions designed to prevent or remediate homelessness in rural areas should also provide supports to help people rekindle and nurture familial bonds.

Earlier Laurentian studies have suggested that more than 1 000 affordable housing units are needed to help households at immediate risk. The author concludes that further quantitative studies should be conducted to determine more precisely the type, location and number of lodgings needed. He also asserts that the region is urgently in need of crisis centres, emergency beds, halfway houses and other transitional housing units for single people. He asserts that this need has been well documented for years and the government's failure to take action is unnecessarily prolonging the suffering of people who are already marginalized and

isolated. Finding stable housing was the single greatest preoccupation of everyone who participated in the study, and this despite the fact that all of them were also struggling with major social and personal issues. It would appear that having a place to call home is a prerequisite for every other aspect of human development.

Another important conclusion of the study is that far more cohesiveness is needed among the various agencies and organizations charged with helping homeless and transient people. Participants spoke at length of the runaround they experienced in their efforts to avail themselves of various publicly-funded resources. The author recommends that housing-related support services be integrated with medical and psychiatric supports, food and clothing banks, and other organizations charged with providing education, training, and employment and transportation assistance.

Finally, the study concludes that housing and other social support services need to be tailored to the needs of individuals and that the adoption of a case management model is the best assurance that every player in the support network will be focused on returning clients to meaningful participation in society.

For additional information, please contact Paul Carle, Université du Québec à Montréal, (819) 322-3294; e-mail: carle.paul@uqam.ca

Improving Indoor Air Quality: New software from NRC simulates VOC concentrations

New software developed by the National Research Council's Institute for Research in Construction (IRC), with industry and government partners, is intended to take some of the guesswork out of measuring and predicting the effects of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) on indoor air quality.

Although it has been known for some time that indoor VOC concentrations often exceed outdoor levels, and that some VOCs have adverse health effects, it's been difficult to address the issue from the building design/renovation stage. There has been little guidance for manufacturers interested in creating low-VOC building materials and furnishings, or for builders and designers who want to make the right choices for low-VOC environments.

The Indoor Air Quality Emission Simulation Tool (IA-QUEST) estimates the quantity and composition of VOC emissions based on a choice of materials, furnishings and ventilation strategies.

IA-QUEST is expected to benefit manufacturers of building materials interested in developing and evaluating products, as well as builders, designers, renovators and building managers interested in creating low-VOC environments. It can be used to determine whether a particular combination of materials and ventilation strategies will immediately meet a specific air quality guideline, as well as how long it would take to do so (e.g., following renovation activities).

The software draws from a database of more than 2,600 combinations of materials and chemicals. Emission characteristics were derived from precisely controlled laboratory tests in which each material was evaluated for emission of 90 "target" VOCs. In addition to running simulations of VOC emissions, users can browse, query and search the database, review chemical properties and current knowledge of their health/irritant thresholds, and generate reports on emission characteristics.

The database, which currently contains around 70 common building materials, will be expanded as new products are tested and more is learned about the specific health effects of VOC concentrations.

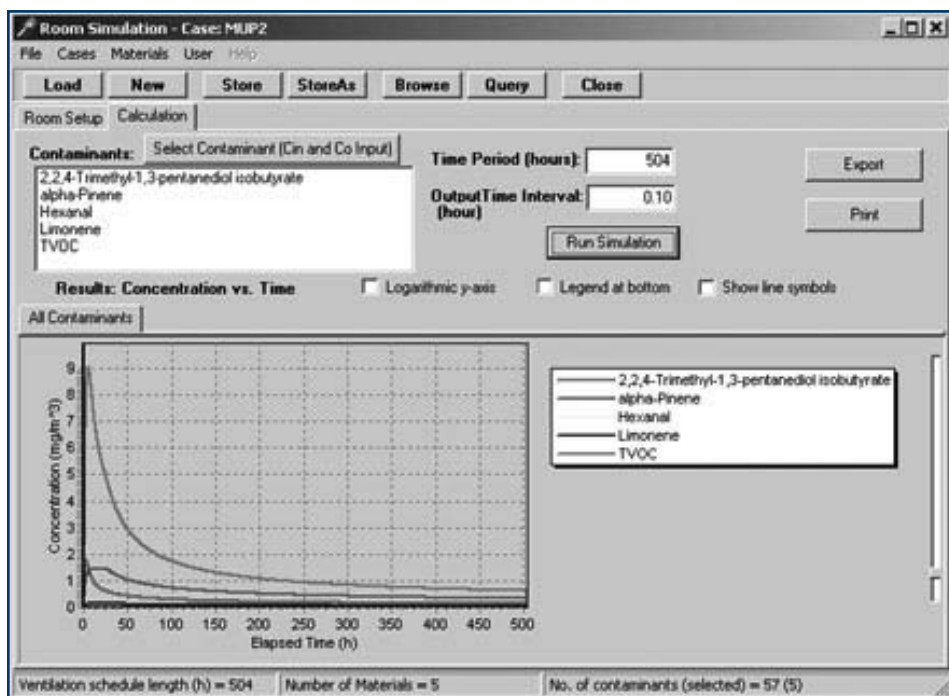
For more information, please contact Dr. Doyun Won, (613) 993-9538; e-mail: doyun.won@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca. IA-QUEST can be downloaded from the IRC Web site at http://irc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/ieliaq/iaquest_e.html.

Best practice guide for managing indoor air quality

The National Research Council has developed a guide for building owners, property managers and building operators responsible for managing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and air quality in office buildings. The guide includes information about:

- VOCs and their sources;
- the causes of occupant complaints;
- emissions from office furniture;
- strategies for improving indoor air quality;
- techniques for diagnosing potential indoor air quality and ventilation problems; and
- the balancing of ventilation and energy use.

The guide is currently available in technical report format at <http://irc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/fulltext/rr/rr205/> and will be available in a simplified booklet form by the end of 2006.



IAQuest Software