

Experiencing Homelessness

The Second Report Card on Homelessness in Saint John, 2010



Youth issues and initiatives are highlighted in this report card. Area high school students participated in a National Housing Day Event called H.E.L.P. last November (page 10). A youth housing program became a community priority at an at-risk youth forum in November (page 2, 7 and 10). An area youth is in school and living in an apartment after escaping a life of drugs and 'living rough' on the streets (page 5). Photo courtesy of Colin McDonald.

This year's edition of the report card includes statistics and stories from around the province, as well as Saint John. In the city section, we report on successes from the past year, and what still needs to be done. The provincial section contains statistics and stories about issues that affect homeless people across the province, and highlights from Bathurst, Moncton and Fredericton. The report card is produced by The Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee. Check out last year's report card online: sjhdc.ca. For more information, or to provide feedback, contact coordinator Mark Leger at 636-8541. E-mail: mark@sjhdc.ca

Homelessness Indicators	2009
Population of Saint John CMA (2006 census)	122,389
Number of individuals who stayed in a shelter bed	934*
Number of emergency shelter beds in Greater Saint John:	70*
For men	26
For women & children (domestic violence)	24
For Women (not domestic violence)	20
Number of food banks/meal programs	26
Number of soup kitchens	1
Number of NB individuals assisted Hunger Count	17,889
Housing Indicators	
Number of provincially subsidized housing units	2,042
Of these, # of units owned by the province	1,286
Of these, # of provincially subsidized private (rent supplement units)	756
Number on the provincially subsidized waiting list	1,339
New units in the Affordable Rental Housing Program	106
Number of transitional housing units	44
Number of second stage housing units	14
Rental vacancy rate	3.6%
Average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment	\$644
Income Indicators	
Social assistance for a single person	\$294**
# of individuals on social assistance in the Saint John CMA (includes those on disability assistance)	6,860
Minimum Wage in NB	\$8.25
*These numbers do not include the Gateway to Hope Transition House, which closed in the Spring of 2009.	
**The rate for a single person was raised to \$537 as of January 1, 2010	

Inside
<i>The City</i>
Page 2: Outflow expands
Page 3: The lasting legacy of Bob Dickison
Page 4: One homeless youth out of the woods
<i>The Province</i>
Page 5: Homelessness indicators
Page 6: Rooming Houses
Page 7: Youth Services
Page 8: Shelter Funding
Page 9: Provincial highlights



Ready! Fire! Aim! Outflow opens centre

Outflow is a Christian acts-of-kindness outreach that began in 2008 with a group of people taking to the streets and meeting the needs they found there.

It grew to serving a large meal once a week in a rented space, which now serves more than 150 people. As the Sunday meal continued to grow, Outflow took two major steps in 2009: becoming a registered charity, and opening a smaller storefront property on Waterloo Street.

Six more nights a week, the new Outflow location provides people a warm, safe, welcoming place to get a bite to eat and enjoy fellowship, whether it's through music, a game of cards, or a one-on-one conversation.

Outflow is an entirely volunteer-driven outreach that has seen many new relationships formed and lives changed. The No. 1 thing missing in ministry to the homeless, the poor and oppressed is someone willing to

build a relationship. Not only do Outflow volunteers provide food, they drive people to detox, talk to them about their problems, encourage them to fight addictions, follow up with them to hold them accountable, and point them to a more positive direction in their lives.

Much like some of the people it serves, Outflow is going through a stage of transition. Powered so far by the efforts of volunteers, with a "Ready! Fire! Aim!" approach, Outflow is beginning to become recognized as an important community service. The organization recently joined the Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee. As Outflow evaluates its plans for the future, the group plans to work with community resources to continue changing Saint Johners' lives for the better.

For more information, Outflow can be contacted by e-mail: outflowministry@gmail.com

New methadone clinic opens uptown

The Uptown Methadone Clinic opened in August 2009 and is already providing treatment to more than 170 people in the Greater Saint John area from Sussex to St. Stephen.

The Uptown Clinic provides comprehensive healthcare in partnership with other members of the healthcare community - care for the mind and the body.

People receive primary medical care, as well as methadone and addictions treatment. Currently, there are about 80 people on a waitlist.

In just over six months, the clinic has already had a major impact on the lives of many people and other community agencies. The needle exchange at AIDS Saint John has seen the number of needles they are providing to injection drug users drop by about 50%.

The clinic operates Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. To find out more about the Uptown Methadone Clinic, call 632- 5795.

Group seeks to open new women's facility

Saint John currently has no facility that can house women and children who are not victims of family violence. A new group, Fresh Start Services, is examining the possibility of starting one here. For more information, please contact Dorothy Shephard. E-mail: colour.centre@nb.aibn.com

Homeless advocate saw the best in people

On December 29, 2009, Saint John lost a member of its community who touched the lives of many people, in many different ways. Robert Dickison, commonly known as Bob, passed away quite unexpectedly at the age of 60. Bob was very active in his community and will be remembered for the work that he accomplished.

Employed with The Salvation Army Booth Residential Services, Bob took great pride in helping others. Bob had a special place in his heart for those suffering with mental illness, addictions or affected by poverty.

In addition to his regular work duties, Bob was a member of various committees in the Saint John area, including the Homeless Steering Committee, Saint John Mental Health Court, Skate to Care, Operation Jack Frost and MindCare.

Bob took a non-judgmental approach with his clients. He always saw the best in people and believed they deserved a second chance. Bob's work ethic was such that he would go above and beyond the call of duty and effectively found solutions to assist both his clients and colleagues.

After Bob's passing, a memorial site was posted on the internet social networking site Facebook,



Bob's heart, soul and compassion were shown in his daily interactions

where hundreds of people expressed their condolences and gratitude for the person Bob was. The comments illustrated what Bob meant to his family, friends, coworkers and his community. One post stated, "Bob was a faithful and dedicated member of the Salvation Army. His heart, soul and compassion were shown in his daily interactions with individuals." Another one states, "Saint John has lost one of its finest."

Although Bob is no longer with us, the impact he has left on our community will not be easily forgotten. One will be hard-pressed to find another person who will fill the role as effectively as Bob did.

Bob will be missed by all who knew him and the great work that he did. Rest in Peace Bob.

Contributed by Tara Parlee

Welcome alternative

One of Bob Dickison's legacies at The Salvation Army is BRS Alternatives, a transitional housing program for men. The Salvation Army has three housing programs. The Special Care Program is for men with psychological and/or physiological issues. The 40 residents are generally there for the long term.

The Community Housing Program is for men that need short-term emergency shelter or a longer-term residence while they wait for an affordable housing alternative to become available in the community.

There are 26 men in the program now, some of them eligible, or will eventually be eligible, for the BRS Alternatives program. In the past two years, Bob placed nine men in transition homes around the city. They live in one- or two-bedroom apartments in buildings operated by Saint John Non-Profit Housing or Housing Alternatives.

The program is designed to give the men a safe and affordable way of re-establishing their independence in the community. BRS and other partner organizations provide support, including financial management and health services. Bob is a sorely missed support for these men, but BRS is determined to carry on his legacy by expanding the program in the future.

Organizations

Shelters

Coverdale Centre for Women

Halfway House: 634-1649

Wet Shelter: 672-6285

The Salvation Army: 634-7021

Hestia House: 634-7571

First Steps Housing Project: 693-2228

Youth

The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC): 632-5531

Youth Choices: 634-0788

ONE Change - ONE L.I.F.E. Program: 635-2035

Housing

Saint John Non-Profit Housing: 658-1925

Housing Alternatives: 632-9393

Second Stage Safe Haven: 632-9289

Food Services

Food Banks: for a full list of food banks and food services please visit www.sjhdc.ca or www.saintjohninfo.ca

Outflow:

outflowministry@gmail.com

Romero House: 642-7447

Health

AIDS Saint John: 652-2437

Community Health Centre: 632-5537

Open Door Club: 658-3196

Ridgewood Addiction Services: 674-4300

Other

Family Resource Centre:

633-2182

Urban Core Support Network: 642-9033

John Howard Society: 657-5547

At-risk youth gets a new life through ONE L.I.F.E.

Randy is out of the woods – literally – but he still needs support to establish a foundation for a productive life.

The 19-year-old Saint John man (not his real name) grew up in and out of foster care from the age of seven. At his lowest point, he was living in the woods, experimenting with hard drugs, and getting to know local law enforcement officers.

“I went through a coke phase, acid, (ecstasy), I was always in trouble with the cops. I’m surprised I never went to jail,” Randy recalls from his not-too-distant past of hanging around crack houses and sleeping rough.

His father had substance abuse problems of his own and left when Randy was two. He rebelled constantly against his mother, and had little other family in the area to support him.

Fighting generally took priority over studying when he was in school, he dealt with a learning disability, and he never grew truly comfortable in any living situation.

"I never had a father figure and I was always looking for one," says Randy. "You start to wonder who actually cares about you and after a while you just want to reach out to someone."

‘My progress the last six months amazes me. It makes me want to keep going.’

The changes didn’t come overnight, and they’re ongoing, but Randy eventually sought help through the Oasis program at the Resource Centre for Youth. Through TRC he got connected with a GED program at the Learning Exchange. The ONE L.I.F.E. (Living Independently for Education) program set him up in a supported apartment and helps him manage his money.

He’s seen the lifestyle of living of the streets, with nothing more to look forward to than a next cheque. That’s not how he wants to live. Randy wants to work for a living, maybe taking a trade such as auto mechanic. He’s also worked to improve his relationship with his mother.

"Have you ever sat around one room, looked around and thought ... 'What have I lived for?' It makes you want to go somewhere," Randy says. "My progress the last six months amazes me. It makes me want to keep going."

Contributed by Nathan White

Experiencing Homelessness 2

The Second Report Card on Homelessness in New Brunswick, 2010

The Current Situation

Homelessness Indicators	NB 2009	NB 2008
Population of New Brunswick (2006 census)	729,997	729,997
Number of individuals who stayed in a shelter bed	2,048*	2,374*
Number of emergency shelter beds in NB:		
For men	90*	145*
For women (domestic violence)	70*	70*
For women (not domestic violence)	45*	61*
Number of mats/overflow beds (men and women)	25*	35*
Number of beds for drug/alcohol detoxification:		
For men	20*	33*
For women	10*	16*
Number of food banks	38	52
Number of soup kitchens (3 supplemental)	10*	10*
Number of individuals assisted HungerCount	17,889	15,638
Housing Indicators		
Number of provincially-subsidized social housing units	8,171	7,167
Of these, # of units owned by the province	4,989	4,213
Of these, # provincially-subsidized in private dwelling	3,182	2,954
Number on the provincially-subsidized waiting list	4,338	4,079
New units in Affordable Rental Housing Program	322	1,594
Number of transitional housing units	240*	159
Number of Second Stage Housing Units	123*	32
Rental vacancy rate	3.95%	5.2%
Average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment	\$640	\$635
Income Indicators		
Social assistance for a single person	\$294	\$294
# individuals on social assistance in NB	38,476	38,686
Minimum wage in NB (Sept. 2009; March 2008)	\$8.25	\$7.75

For people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in New Brunswick, the 2009 event that perhaps holds the most promise is the province's Poverty Reduction Initiative. Poverty is a major contributor to homelessness, and New Brunswickers had a chance to voice their views about how it should be reduced or eliminated. The strategy – *Overcoming Poverty Together: The NB Economic and Social Inclusion Plan* – was released following the Final Forum in Saint John in November.

Some proposed changes, such as elimination of the \$294 per month social assistance rate for single employable people, became effective January 1st, 2010. Others will be implemented over the next few years. The groups that put together this 2nd Provincial Report Card (see below) will actively monitor these changes to ensure that the impacts on the province's most vulnerable citizens are positive and as intended.

In this edition, we address some of the key issues: the need to give rooming house tenants some legal protection; the need for government assistance for emergency shelters, which by and large depend on donations for survival; and youth homelessness, a growing problem in New Brunswick. We welcome your feedback!

2,048 people were homeless and stayed in a shelter at some point in 2009.*

* In NB, there are four designated communities under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy: Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton and Bathurst. All data marked "*" is the total for these communities; data for the remainder of the province is unavailable.

This is the Second Report Card on Homelessness in New Brunswick. Using 2009 data, it presents a profile of homelessness in the province and, in particular, in the four designated communities under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (Bathurst, Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John). The Community Homelessness Network Inc. (Bathurst), the Fredericton Community Action Group on Homelessness, the Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee and the Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee have come together to create this publication. These organizations represent and work with agencies throughout the province that work with homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Focus on rooming houses

Big changes coming for roomers & boarders in NB

New Brunswick is currently the only province in Canada that offers no protection under the law to people living in rooming and boarding houses. Such tenants are specifically excluded from the Residential Tenancies Act. This legislation was amended in 2006 to include roomers and boarders but was never proclaimed. Soon, this will change. Service NB Minister Victor Boudreau told CBC Information Morning in Moncton that he is committed to seeing Bill 35 passed in the spring session of the legislative assembly.

What does it mean when roomers and boarders have no legal rights? In 2009, the Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee held a workshop that brought together rooming house tenants and landlords.

Tenants told stories about:

- Being evicted several days after paying their monthly rent, and having no place to go and no money for the rest of the month;
- Being threatened with eviction because they complained of a safety or health hazard (e.g., bed bugs);
- Having to share kitchens and bathrooms that are unsanitary, where appliances are often faulty, if they work at all, and food is often stolen.



The Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee organized a workshop in 2009 where rooming house landlords and tenants had a chance to share their issues and concerns.

No one knows how many rooming houses there are in NB. In Fredericton, for example, there are an estimated 165 units, mainly in the south-side area of the city. People who live in rooming houses do so, for the most part, because they cannot afford an apartment. They are the most vulnerable among us. If they are living on social assistance, they most likely receive \$537 per month. A rooming house in most NB cities will cost them between \$300 and \$400 per room, depending on location, leaving little money for food and other essentials. This new legislation will give them some measure of protection under the law.

But it will undoubtedly be an educational process. It will take time for both landlords and tenants to understand their rights and their responsibilities, and to be able to act on them. This will require a concerted effort by the Rentalsman's Office (www.snb.ca/irent/) as well as non-profits whose clients live in rooming houses.

"I think it's important that people have a recourse ...you need to have that process in place where people's interests are protected."

-Service NB Minister Victor Boudreau,
on CBC Information Morning,
December 2009



Joe (not his real name) leaves home each morning with all his worldly possessions on his back. When you live in a rooming house, you're never certain that your things will be there when you get home.



Saint John is the only city in NB that actively enforces the Municipalities Act, which allows municipalities to fine property owners for derelict properties. Such properties are often rooming houses.

Focus on youth homelessness

N.B. needs enhanced services for homeless youth

Last November, community leaders in Saint John hosted a forum entitled, “Pathways to Education and Employment for At-Risk Youth.” Nearly 100 people from various sectors gathered to discuss ways to improve the lives of youth, in the short- and long-term. At the end of the day, the group assembled a list of 10 priorities, from enhanced education and skills training, to mentoring programs and community engagement initiatives. The top priority, though, was opening a transition house with support services for homeless youth.

There is a range of youth services in Saint John, some targeting the homeless. The Resource Centre for youth has day facilities that include a kitchen, laundry facilities and a shower. There is no emergency shelter, however, or transition housing.

Yet, there are homeless youth who need comprehensive housing and support services. In 2007, the Human Development Council conducted a count of homeless youth, and found 45 young people (23 females and 22 males) without a home in Saint John. The study discovered homeless youth were getting by in various ways, including staying at adult shelters and “couch surfing,” a commonly used phrase that means temporarily staying with friends or relatives. Youth in the 16-18 age group are especially vulnerable because they are too old for child-protection services, yet too young to access support services for adults.

Currently, Saint John has one housing program for homeless youth called ONE L.I.F.E. (Living Independently For Education). Four area youth are placed in one-bedroom apartments and provided with educational and life-skills support services. However, there is waiting list of about 70.

“We must accommodate them. We can’t let them sleep in the snow.”

Services for homeless youth vary throughout the province. Moncton has a drop-in centre called Youth Quest Central that offers programming and facilities much like the TRC in Saint John. It also has a transitional housing program for eight youth (four males and four females) between the ages of 16-20.

They stay for three months to a year and receive life-skills and job preparation training. There is also a four-month follow-up support program after they leave the transition house.



Youth Quest Central provides day services for homeless youth in Greater Moncton.

In Fredericton, Chrysalis House is a transition home with eight beds for females between the ages of 16 -19; there is no facility for males.

In the past, youth from the Chaleur region have had to go the transition home in Moncton

or Miramichi Youth House. They can now be accommodated at the new Emergency Shelter in Bathurst, but there is still no supportive housing for youth.

Miramichi Youth House is a six-bed facility for males and females, ages 16-19. Case Manager and Staff Supervisor Gail McKinley says young people come there from across the region for their housing and support program. We must accommodate them, she says. *“We can’t let them sleep in the snow.”*

Focus on funding for shelters

NB Homeless Shelters Funded Inconsistently

It's hard enough to run a business with an expected monetary return to keep your business growing, but imagine running a business that is not focused on money-making yet plays a valuable role in the community. Homeless shelters, like many non-profit organizations face this challenge because their "profits" are social rather than revenue generating.

In 2009, there were only five homeless emergency shelters operating for the whole province (see below) located in just three southern communities. While no one wants homelessness addressed by building more shelters, emergency services must be available throughout the province in enough communities so that people do not have to leave family and friends behind – social networks can be important during hard times.

Emergency homeless shelters in New Brunswick do not receive stable funding from any level of government. The provincial government has provided limited funds on a year-to-year basis, but there has been no formula in place to assure shelters that they will receive support in following years. Municipal governments do not provide social service funding as that is the mandate of the provincial government. So, how DO the shelters in New Brunswick stay open?

Each shelter operates independently, and each has varied funding sources such as donations, the provincial government, fundraising, donations and the United Way. Funding breakdowns from the House of Nazareth and the Fredericton Men's Shelter are provided as examples.

Funding Sources:	
Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc.	
Provincial Funding	\$60,000
Fund Raising	\$250,000
Client Rent	\$40,000
United Way	\$50,000
TOTAL	\$400,000
House of Nazareth Inc.	
Provincial Funding	\$60,000
3 Municipalities	\$8,000
Fundraisers	\$71,701
Donations	\$65,736
<i>Boutique</i>	
<i>Encore Sales</i>	\$43,454
Other	\$10,674
TOTAL	\$259,565

Looking Ahead:

- Service in northern NB: Bathurst opens a family shelter in early 2010.
- Province's Poverty Reduction Plan indicates stable shelter funding to be established within five years.

Shelter Name	City	Beds	Population
Fredericton Men's Shelter	Fredericton	40	Men
Grace House	Fredericton	9	Women
Salvation Army Booth Centre	Saint John	76	Men
House of Nazareth	Moncton	30	Co-ed
Harvest House	Moncton	30 (mats)	Co-ed

What's the difference between a homeless emergency shelter and a transition house?

Length of stay and services provided define the categories of shelter. Homeless shelters are for single men and women (not families) with a variety of challenges. Transition houses in New Brunswick serve women and children leaving domestic violence.

Community highlights

Bathurst opens new Emergency Shelter

The big news in Bathurst in 2009 was that approval was given for the emergency shelter, and renovations began during the year. The Department of Social Development totally renovated the building at 753 Assaff Street. The shelter has eight beds (four for women, four for men), a kitchen, living and dining room, a small office and waiting area. Thanks to the Bathurst Youth Centre, the Community Homeless Network Inc. and federal and provincial partners, the shelter opened for services to the Chaleur Region in February of 2010. It is staffed by three full-time guardians and two on call, all of whom are fully trained. Bathurst had been without an emergency shelter to help homeless people aged 16 and up since 2006.



Fredericton: Homeless services stay the same in 2009

Services for people experiencing homelessness or who are at-risk of homelessness in the Fredericton area have remained basically unchanged over the past year. Fredericton Homeless Shelters Inc. continues to operate two single-gender emergency facilities. This is unique in the province, and is one way to protect the safety of women experiencing homelessness.

Long term solutions:

The Fredericton City Government chairs an Affordable Housing Committee that has worked to debunk myths, and to create municipal policies on affordable housing development, contributing to the increase of units in the City each year since 2007. An example of a successful provincial non-profit housing program is the Skigin-Elnoog Housing Corporation of NB, whose office is based in Fredericton. In 2008, its Off-Reserve Aboriginal Home Ownership Program (ORAH) won a “Best Practices in Affordable Housing” Award from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. ORAH gave out 42 mortgages in the Greater Fredericton Area; 75 in total across the province. The average income of homeowners participating in the program is \$39,485.

Health and Homelessness:

Located in the heart of downtown Fredericton, the Community Health Clinic (CHC) managed by the UNB Faculty of Nursing was initially opened to improve access to healthcare for the homeless and near homeless populations and for people with an addiction. The CHC offers a wide range of primary health care services from a single site. Looking forward, the CHC hopes to expand its office space, services and possibly create residential units also.

Emergency Homeless Services:

- *Fredericton Men’s Shelter*
- *Grace House for Women*
- *Community Health Clinic*
- *Fredericton Food Bank*
- *Fredericton Community Kitchen*

Community highlights

Moncton mental health project making a difference

- Greater Moncton was one of five sites in Canada chosen to participate in a research demonstration project on chronic homelessness and mental illness. Based on a “housing first” strategy, the objective is to place 100 participants in their own apartments, with a support team built around them. By the end of 2009, 31 people had been accepted into the program, of whom 16 had been placed in an apartment. Another 25 people with mental health challenges in rural areas around Moncton will be helped to find and remain in housing.
- 737 individuals used shelter beds at the House of Nazareth for a total of 4,550 nights.
- 200 individuals slept on mats on the floor at the Harvest House Outreach Centre for a total of 4,759 nights.
- 4,355 people in Greater Moncton were living on provincial Social Assistance at the end of 2009, up from 4,170 a year earlier. Some 640 people were on the waiting list for NB Housing.
- Tannery Court Co-operative II was constructed throughout 2009. It opened in early 2010 with 50 subsidized units for non-elderly singles.



Moncton Youth Residences Inc. re-located its Youth Transition House to MacBeath Street in Moncton, and added two more units, for a total of eight beds (four male, four female).

Saint John hosts youth events

- A new treatment clinic for people addicted to drugs such as heroin and Dilaudid opened in August. The uptown methadone clinic was launched to help deal with a waiting list of 180 people at the Ridgewood Addictions Services Treatment Centre.
- Outflow, an outreach organization for homeless people, opened a drop-in centre in the uptown area. It serves a hot meal each day from Monday to Friday, and organizes a Sunday supper at an uptown church.
- Saint John hosted events that both engaged youth and addressed their concerns. On November 3, the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI) hosted a community forum called, “Pathways to Education and Employment for At-Risk Youth.” The group identified transition housing for homeless youth as a top priority. On November 22-23, youth from area schools took part in a National Housing Day



Youth at area high schools built sculptures out of tin cans as part of the Tin Cup Challenge. The 4,000 cans used to make the various sculptures were donated to area food banks.

Event called HELP (Housing Education Learning Party). They learned about becoming more active in their communities through listening to guest speakers, and volunteering with organizations that work with homeless people. They also collected more than 4,000 cans of food for area food banks.

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