

# Experiencing Homelessness

## The First Report Card on Homelessness in Saint John, 2009

### The Current Situation in Saint John

Homelessness Indicators	2008
Population of Saint John CMA (2006 Census)	122,389
Number of individuals who stayed in a shelter bed	1,160 *
Number of emergency shelter beds in Greater Saint John: (based on March 2008 data)	151
For men	79
For women & children (domestic violence)	24
For women (not domestic violence)	48 **
Number of beds for drug/alcohol detox:	19
For men	13
For women	6
Number of food banks / meal programs	22
Number of soup kitchens	1
Number of NB individuals assisted HungerCount 2008	15,636
Housing Indicators	
Number of provincially subsidized housing units	1,949
Of these, # of units owned by the province	1,259
Of these, # provincially subsidized private dwellings (rent supplement units)	690
Number on the provincially subsidized waiting list	1,064
New units in the Affordable Rental Housing Program (Based on Fiscal Year April 1 - March 31)	07/08 - 306 08/09 - 161
Number of transitional housing units	24
Number of second stage housing units	13
Rental vacancy rate (April 2008)	4.3%
Average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment (Apr 08)	\$604
Income Indicators	
Social assistance for a single person	\$294
# of individuals on social assistance in the Saint John CMA (includes those on disability assistance)	7,249 (Jan 2009)
Minimum wage in NB (April 2009)	\$8.00/hr



Photo Courtesy of Lauchlan Ough

### What is homelessness?

- Living on the street.
- Staying overnight in emergency shelters.
- Staying in places not meant for human habitation.
- Moving continuously among temporary housing arrangements provided by friends, family or strangers ("couch surfing").

### Who is at-risk of homelessness?

- Families and individuals can lose their housing for any number of reasons: fleeing abuse, losing a job, or having an income too low to stay in suitable housing.
- Some people are at-risk because of mental health issues or substance abuse problems or they lack life skills or the ability to live on their own.

**1,160 people were homeless and stayed in a shelter at some point in 2008.**

\* Does not include those who stayed at Gateway to Hope Transition House in 2008.

\*\* Includes 15 beds at Gateway to Hope Transition House which closed in the Spring of 2009.

This is the first Report Card on Homelessness in Saint John. It presents a profile of homelessness in the Saint John CMA, the City of Saint John, and some of the surrounding rural regions. Since this is Saint John's first Report Card, it will present a profile of homelessness and introduce many organizations that work to reduce the impact of homelessness here. Future progress or lack of progress will be measured using the indicators in the table above.

The Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee is an inter-agency committee representing agencies in Greater Saint John that work with the homeless population and those at-risk of becoming homeless.

The GSJHSC provides leadership and coordinates communication among stakeholders and service providers to ensure the implementation of the Greater Saint John Community Plan on Homelessness.

It also works to create public awareness about issues surrounding homelessness, poverty and housing.

# **Young and Homeless**



*Tara Parlee, Case Manager, ONE L.I.F.E.  
Photo Courtesy of Kate Robinson*

## **ONE Change - ONE L.I.F.E.**

The ONE L.I.F.E. (Living Independently for Education) provides housing, education, counseling, mentoring, support services, and life skills to homeless youth or youth at-risk of becoming homeless between the ages of 16-20.

The ONE L.I.F.E. Case Manager assists the youth in finding suitable housing, enrolling back in school, completing their schooling at the secondary level, and provide supervision, advice and guidance in all aspects of their life.

In 2008 there were **4 youth who were housed** and enrolled in school through the program.

**There were 32 clients referred to the program including the four who were housed (23 females, 9 males), and 19 (14 females, 5 males) who have participated in the Independent Living Program.**

The Case Manager checks on the physical condition of the apartments 3-5 times per week, assists the youth in achieving their school goals through tutoring and ongoing monitoring, in finding part-time employment, in accessing services and funds through the Department of Social Development, and teaching home skills such as cleaning, and cooking.

## **The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC) Oasis Room**

The Oasis Room is a service for youth aged 13-24 who are homeless or who are in need. The Oasis has a full size bathroom with a shower, washer and dryer, clothing closet, and a food pantry with basic "on the go" food items. The services are free of charge and completely confidential. After youth have utilized the Oasis services and they have stated that they are in need of more assistance, the staff can refer them to the TRC Switch 180 Case Management Program, Ridgewood Addiction Services, Mental Health and a number of other services in the community.

In 2008 there were **300 client contacts**. Of these 129 were male and 171 were female. The clients range in age from 15 to 24 with the majority being between 18 and 21 years of age.

The most frequently accessed services were the shower and laundry facilities, as well as requests for food items.

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## **Switch 180 Case Management Program**

The Case Management Program works with youth ages 16-24 in the Greater Saint John area to meet needs in four dimensions: basic, personal, education, and employment. Their mission is to assist youth with developing their own goals and aspirations, and support and empower them through the steps to reach their goals and become a contributing member of the community.

Youth in this program are encouraged to look at the dimensions mentioned above and determine which are most relevant for them and to begin to set realistic goals. The case manager then works with them to find the resources they need to assist in change.

In 2008 the Program had **1,097** youth contacts.

## **John Howard Society Saint John Branch**

The John Howard Society, Saint John Branch has been actively involved in the area of justice / corrections in the Saint John area since 1952. It has offered and sponsored programs dealing with crime prevention, education, employment services, literacy training, and referrals to drug alcohol treatment programs and mental health referrals, among others, to both adults and young people.

A primary focus is the provision of community based services to offenders and their families, young offenders, victims, and community development. Due to a newly developed focus on more pro-active, preventative measures for the reduction of crime and victimization, the Society is able to provide community members and organizations with effective community based programs and services for troubled youth and their families ensuring a safer and healthier community.

The John Howard Society has a variety of facilities that provide services to youth who are homeless or at-risk. They have several existing and proposed facilities which include: Hart House, Grant Groupcare Home, Orange Street Youth Crisis Unit, Loch Lomond Young Adult Facility, Therapeutic Treatment Youth Facility, Multi-Dimensional Foster Homes, Skills Based Transitional Units for Homeless Youth, and a Parent Model Group Home Duplex.

These facilities provide services to youth who are street homeless, those coming out of the criminal justice system who have no housing, those sentenced to homes for custody, those with mental illness, addictions, or medical requirements, youth with complex needs, those couch surfing, and those who have frequently run away from home.

The John Howard Society also has a variety of programs for youth who are homeless or at-risk. They include, but are not limited to drug

awareness & education, school based programming, skills link, and a community re-connect program.

They served **343 clients** through their youth & family program services in **2008**. They provided residential care to 15 homeless, 42 youth in crisis, and 25 in youth groupcare.



*Formerly Homeless Youth  
Photo Courtesy of Lauchlan Ough,  
Hemming House Pictures*

## **Youth Homelessness Forum**

On March 19, 2009 the Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee, along with community partners, hosted a Youth Homelessness Forum. The forum provided an opportunity to bring together key stakeholders: youth, government, service providers, community based organizations, the faith community, and front line staff to discuss the issue of youth homelessness, review best practices and develop potential solutions.

The Youth Homelessness Working Group of the GSJHSC is going to take the information gathered at this forum to develop an action plan. Feedback from the forum indicated that it is time for action and that the community needs to take a preventative approach as opposed to reacting to the problem.

# Housing

## What is transitional housing?

Housing facilities that provide services beyond basic needs and that, while not permanent, generally allow for a longer length of stay than emergency housing facilities (up to three years). These facilities offer more privacy to residents than emergency housing, and place greater emphasis on participation. They are targeted to those in need of structure, support, and/or skill building to move from homelessness to housing stability, and ultimately to prevent a return to homelessness.



*First Steps Housing  
Photo Courtesy of Housing Alternatives*

## What is social housing?

Public, co-op or non-profit housing with long-term government subsidies paid to a housing provider (three or more years).



*Jenny's Spring Co-op  
Photo Courtesy of Housing Alternatives*



*Rehabitat Inc.  
Photo Courtesy of Kate Robinson*

## What is affordable housing?

Social housing or other housing that has been built under a government affordable housing program. Social housing includes public housing, non-profit housing, co-op housing and rent supplement units in the private rental sector. Housing is affordable if it costs less than 30% of before-tax household income.



*Second Stage Housing  
Photo Courtesy of Housing Alternatives*

## What is long-term supportive housing?

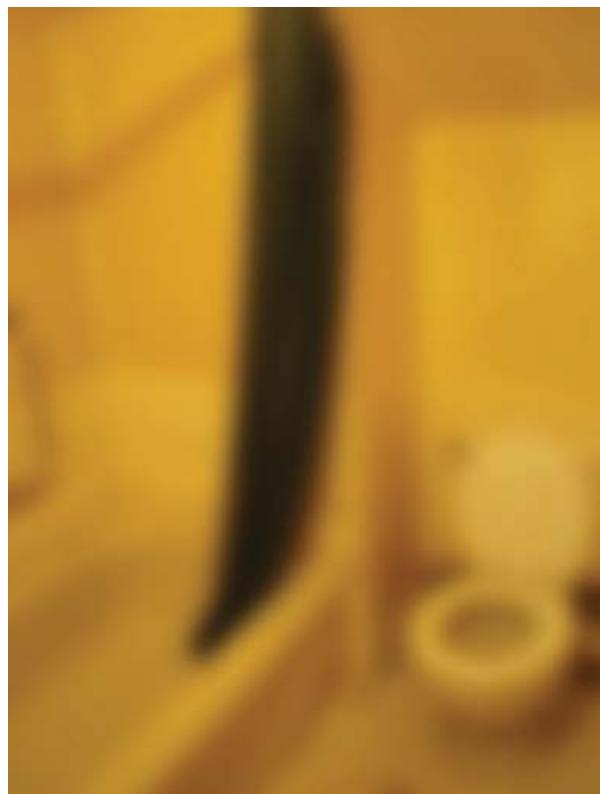
Housing for individuals and families that includes supports and services integrated into the housing, with no length of stay duration. Services depend on clients' needs and are provided to help residents maintain independence and stability to promote social inclusion.

## **Rooming Houses**

New Brunswick is currently the only province in Canada that does not include roomers and boarders in its Residential Tenancies Act. Roomers and boarders have no legal protection regarding the conditions of the rooms they inhabit; their damage deposits are not secured by the Rentalsman (who acts as a mediator in disputes between tenants and landlords). Amendments to the NB Residential Tenancies Act were passed by the Legislature in 2006, but no date has been set by government for these proposed changes to become law.

Rooming or boarding houses are often the most affordable places for people on a limited income to live. Prices vary according to the size and condition of the room. Conditions can vary from clean and orderly to decrepit and unsafe.

Homelessness committees from the three urban centres, Saint John, Moncton, and Fredericton, have been working to encourage government to proclaim the Act and put these changes into effect.



Shared washroom facilities in a local rooming house  
*Photo Courtesy of Brian Beckett*

## **Low Income Households**

Low income cut-offs (LICOs) are intended to convey the income level at which a family may be in straitened circumstances because it has to spend a greater portion of its income on the basics (food, clothing, and shelter) than does the average family of similar size. The LICOs vary by family size and by size of community.

In Saint John the LICO in 2006 for a 1 person family was \$18,144; for a 2 person family - \$22,588; for a 3 person family - \$27,769; and, for a 4 person family - \$33,716.

### **What is meant by core housing need?**

According to CMHC, core housing need refers to households which are unable to afford shelter that meet adequacy, suitability, and affordability norms. The norms have been adjusted over time to reflect the housing expectations of Canadians. Affordability, one of the elements used to determine core housing need, is recognized as a maximum of 30 percent of the gross household income spent on shelter and heat.

In 2001, 11.2% of all households in the Saint John CMA were in core housing need - 25.4% of renters and 4.6% of owners.

### **Households in Receipt of a Monthly Social Assistance Cheque by Accommodation Type (2008)**

	<b>City of Saint John</b>	<b>Saint John CMA</b>
Boarding	632	726
Parental Home	358	484
Subsidized Housing	924	940
Mortgaged Dwelling	86	147
Rented Dwelling	1,648	1,812
Movable Dwelling	24	44
Residential Facility *	11	11

\* Residential facilities include special care homes, transition houses and hospitals.

*Source: Department of Social Development, Planning, Research and Evaluation*

## **Low Income = Risk of Homelessness**

Perhaps your neighbour is a male senior (age 65+) living on \$941.87 monthly from the Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement for a single person. Your senior neighbour might pay \$519 to rent a 1-bedroom apartment, spend \$155 for food each month\*, and have only \$267 left for all “other costs”\*\*.

Do you know a young single mother (aged 19-24) with a full-time minimum wage job with a son between the ages of 7-9 who live in a 2 bedroom apartment? With a gross monthly earned income of \$1,280, rent of \$604 has to be paid, food would be \$262\*, leaving only \$414 for everything else.

### **Is this someone you know?**

Perhaps your neighbour is an unemployed woman between the age of 25-49, who receives \$1,269 Employment Insurance monthly payment based on a \$30,000 income at her last job. Suppose she's living in a one bedroom unit at \$519. If \$140\* is spent on food there would only be \$610 for all “other costs” while she looks for work.

Do you know a disabled person (male aged 50-74) living on a monthly social assistance disability (extended) benefit payment of \$618? Rent might be \$415 for a bachelor unit and if food is \$170 a month, only \$33 is left for all “other costs.” Imagine a single man (aged 50-74) on a social assistance benefit of \$294.00 monthly. If the rent for their room is \$300, it leaves no money for food and “other costs” (the Cost of A Nutritious Food Basket recommends \$170\* for food). They can't even cover the cost of their room.

\* The Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Saint John, New Brunswick, 2006-2007

\*\* Other costs: utilities, clothing, child care, telephone, transportation (bus tickets, gas, car payments, etc.) income tax (where applicable), over-the-counter medication, toiletries, hair cut, etc.

## **The Minimum Housing Wage**

The Minimum Housing Wage is the hourly income required to pay April 2008 rents in Saint John:

Bachelor Apartment: \$7.98  
One Bedroom: \$9.98  
Two Bedroom: \$11.62  
Three Bedroom: \$12.19

NB Minimum wage is currently \$8.00/hour. It is set to increased to \$8.25/hour effective September 1, 2009.

This is based on a full-time worker, 40 hours per week for 52 weeks. The Minimum Housing Wage is based on spending 30% of gross income on accommodation (anything over 30% is said to be not affordable).

Currently, an individual working 40 hours per week at minimum wage would have to pay 41% of their gross salary for an average one bedroom apartment.

## **Food Security**

Food security refers to the availability of food and one's access to it. A household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation.

According to HungerCount 2008, food bank use has persistently remained above 700,000 people per month in Canada since 1997.

### Did you know?

- The average food bank in Canada provides about five days' worth of food per household, once per month.
- Nationally, more than 8% of those assisted can be considered homeless - living on the street, in shelters, or temporarily with family or friends.

### In March 2008:

- 15,638 New Brunswickers were assisted through food banks.
- 11.2% reported employment income.
- 62.9% received social assistance.
- 7.7% received disability income supports.
- 33.2% were children.

# **What is Greater Saint John Doing to Help?**

## **Shelters**

Coverdale Centre for Women Inc.

Halfway House - 634-1649

Emergency Wet Shelter - 672-6285

The Salvation Army - Booth Residential Services - 634-7021

Hestia House - 634-7571

First Steps Housing Project (pregnant and parenting mothers age 16-29) - 693-2228

## **Youth**

The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC) - 632-5531  
(The Oasis Room, Switch 180 Case Management)  
Youth Choices - 634-0788

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

## **Housing**

Saint John Non-Profit Housing Inc. - 658-1925

Housing Alternatives Inc. - 632-9393

Second Stage Safe Haven - 632-9289

## **Food Services**

Food Banks (for a full list of food banks and those who provide food services please visit [www.sainjohninfo.ca](http://www.sainjohninfo.ca) or [www.sjdc.ca](http://www.sjdc.ca))  
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

Saint John Community Chaplaincy - 634-8218

PASAGE Saint John - 642-4035

**There is currently no facility in Greater Saint John that can house women and children who are not victims of family violence. Likewise, there is no youth specific facility other than First Steps Housing Project which is for pregnant and parenting young mothers (16-29).**

## **Needle Exchange**

AIDS Saint John delivers a needle distribution program through community partnerships and volunteers. In 2008, 188,140 clean needles were distributed and 137,934 used needles were returned. There was a total of 2,668 client visits, and 358 clients served.

In December 2008, the Department of Health contributed more than \$100,000 for the purchase of needles, syringes and related supplied to AIDS New Brunswick, AIDS Saint John, and AIDS Moncton. They also provided each organization with \$50,000 so they could hire dedicated staff for the distribution programs.

## **Outflow Ministry**

The purpose of Outflow (as it is known on the street) is to feed and help the homeless, low income, and marginalized in the City of Saint John. They started in October 2008 by serving a hot meal every Sunday night in the Kent Theatre on Coburg Street. There is also a worship gathering after the meal for those who are interested (this is not mandatory). On average they serve 200 people every week and are able to do so entirely by donations and volunteers.

Thursday evenings are spent uptown doing anything from free BBQs in King's Square, buying groceries or a meal, handing out hot chocolate and blankets, finding housing, paying rent, helping with renovations, and filling any other need they are able to meet.

They have recently rented a storefront on Waterloo Street and are renovating to get ready to open as a drop-in centre where they will provide food and necessities, someone to talk with, internet and computer access, resume help, as well as a safe, relaxing environment for anyone to come to. Their goal is to be in operation 7 days a week!

For more information visit:  
[www.outflowministry.com](http://www.outflowministry.com).

## **What can YOU do?**

- Educate yourself and others about the problem of homelessness.
- Volunteer your time to work directly with people experiencing homelessness.
- Advocate on behalf of people who are homeless and organizations that work with people who are homeless.
- Contribute to and help organizations that work to end homelessness.
- Become aware of the language you use and refrain from using words that refer to people experiencing homelessness in derogatory ways.
- Be aware of and help change attitudes about homelessness among your friends, family and people within the community to help reduce NIMBY ("Not in My Backyard") reactions.
- Be inclusive and promote inclusive communities throughout the city.

## **What can GOVERNMENT**

### **do?**

#### **Federal**

- Put in place long-term and sustained funding to support our community's capacity to end homelessness.
- Create a National Housing Strategy that clearly defines federal responsibility for funding affordable housing.

#### **Provincial**

- Enact the proposed changes to the NB Residential Tenancies Act into law so that rooming house residents have protection.
- Increase social assistance rates and act on their Poverty Reduction Strategy.

#### **Municipal**

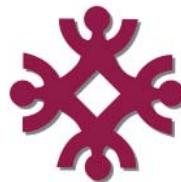
- Take a proactive approach in the municipal planning process on affordable housing.
- Commit resources to support community non-profit housing projects. (Example: support non-profit housing providers through project grants, tax and fee exemptions, and land donations.)

**We are interested in expanding our committee to include representatives from rural New Brunswick (Sussex to St. Stephen) - do you or your organization work with individuals who are homeless or at-risk? Contact us today!**

## **Beyond Shelter in Saint John**

Shelter is the first but not the only need of people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. They have a variety of needs, including outreach, drop-in programs, health and education services, advice and counselling. The Human Development Council has an online database of community services available in Greater Saint John.

Visit the Community Services Database at: [www.saintjohninfo.ca](http://www.saintjohninfo.ca) or [www.nbinfo.ca](http://www.nbinfo.ca) or contact the INFO-Line at (506) 633-4636.



**Human Development Council**

## **Resource Links**

[www.saintjohninfo.ca](http://www.saintjohninfo.ca) / [www.nbinfo.ca](http://www.nbinfo.ca)

[www.homelesshub.ca](http://www.homelesshub.ca)

[www.raisingtheroof.org](http://www.raisingtheroof.org)

[www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca](http://www.endhomelessnessottawa.ca)

[www.monctonhomelessness.org](http://www.monctonhomelessness.org)

[www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/tore/lere/lere\\_013.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/tore/lere/lere_013.cfm)

<http://www.evasinitiatives.com/>

<http://www.peelregion.ca/ow/ourservices/community-program/housing/pyv/>

Check out Perspectives of Homelessness, our local homelessness newsletter at [www.sjhdc.ca](http://www.sjhdc.ca) under Products and Services.

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