



**Current members of
GMHSC:**

- AIDS Moncton Inc.
- Atlantic People's Housing Ltd.
- Blanket Drive
- BUILT Network Moncton Inc.
- CMHC
- Codiac RCMP
- Community Chaplaincy for Ex-Offenders
- Elizabeth Fry Society of NB
- John Howard Society of Greater Moncton Inc.
- MAGMA
- Maison Nazareth House
- Mobile One Community Services Inc.
- Moncton Youth Residences Inc.
- New Life Mission Inc.
- The Salvation Army
- Ville de Dieppe
- YMCA
- YWCA

MANDATE

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

Established in 2000, the GMHSC provides leadership and coordinates communication among stakeholders and service providers to ensure the implementation of the Greater Moncton Community Plan on Homelessness. It also works to create public awareness about issues surrounding homelessness, poverty and housing.

www.monctonhomelessness.org

Second Report Card on Homelessness in Greater Moncton launched
2008 good news, bad news year for homelessness

The year 2008 was a 'good news, bad news' year for homelessness in Greater Moncton, according to the Second Report Card on Homelessness in the tri-city area recently released by the Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee (GMHSC).

Some progress was made. The Mental Health Commission of Canada chose Moncton as one of five communities in Canada that will participate in a research demonstration project on chronic homelessness and mental health. The province launched a Poverty Reduction Strategy, and a Mobile Mental Health Crisis Team was established to improve service to those in crisis.

But some homelessness "indicators" were worse. The number of people staying in homeless shelters increased. There is a desperate shortage of emergency, transitional and supportive housing for women, although nothing was done to improve the situation in 2008. And the number of people on the waiting list for New Brunswick housing increased by almost 12% in 2008.

"The results of the Second Report are really a mixed review," says Joanne Murray of the John Howard Society of Greater Moncton, one of the member agencies of the Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee.



At the community breakfast in downtown Moncton, Moncton mayor George LeBlanc (second from right) with several members of the GMHSC.

Like many homelessness committees across the country, the Greater Moncton Committee

produced a First Report Card in 2008 (using 2007 data) to establish baseline data for homelessness in Greater Moncton. The objective is to use the Report Card to measure progress on the issue from year-to-year. The data in the Second Report Card are as of December 31, 2008.

Greater Moncton's "inventory" of emergency shelter beds, transitional and supportive housing did not change between 2007 and 2008. Only 32 units of affordable housing were built in all of Metro in 2008, compared to 69 in 2007. Almost 14% of the Greater Moncton population lives in poverty. On the positive side, it is expected that the results of the province's Poverty Reduction Initiative will address poverty, a major contributor to homelessness in Greater Moncton. Both the First and Second Report Cards are available on the website. More photos <http://mail.google.com/mail/?shva=1#inbox/123cb4e99888e709>

Province studying changes to “economic unit” rule

By Ben Curties, UNB law student

The New Brunswick government is looking at possible changes to its controversial *Household Income Policy* (commonly called the “*economic unit*” rule), which can see social assistance recipients lose part or all of their monthly cheques if they live together or with other people.

A representative from the province’s social development department has joined the Homelessness Framework Working Group, which also includes a representative of the Greater Moncton Homelessness Committee. Among other things, the group plans to examine the *Household Income Policy*.

The policy, which dates back to 1995, was ostensibly intended to head off abuse of the system and to avoid discriminating on the basis of gender, marital status, etc, when determining social assistance. People who live together, whether they are spouses, siblings or roommates, are deemed to be part of a single “economic unit” and are subject to reductions in their assistance cheques. Critics say the policy penalizes recipients who try to stretch government money by pooling their meagre benefits.

While the government looks at reform, recently enacted exceptions to the policy have made it easier for some clients to live with other people without taking a hit to their cheques (although some anti-poverty advocates say that these exceptions have never been widely advertised and that some Social Development caseworkers seem to be often unaware of them or don’t make clients aware of them).

These new exceptions – subject, of course, to their own exceptions – include breaks for elderly parents who live with their children, victims of abuse, and single parent families who rent together. Other exceptions, also subject to numerous conditions, include:

- Social assistance recipients who have adult children returning to live with them or living with them and starting to earn income;

(Continued on page 3)

People touched by homelessness

The human face of the “economic unit” rule

This column by Brian Duplessis appeared in the Daily Gleaner in April of 2009. Edited for space, with permission.

Bob is a 50-year-old man from Fredericton who has never stayed in a homeless shelter in his life. Last August, he developed heart problems to go along with his diabetes. Later, in December, his doctor told him he needed further tests and treatment and unfortunately, he would have to have his driver’s license suspended. Since the work he had been doing for more than 20 years required this license, he lost his job.

For two years, Bob had been sharing a two-bedroom apartment with a friend. It wasn’t a fancy place at \$450 per month but it was comfortable and met his needs. But now he couldn’t pay his rent.

He applied for Social Assistance, and was told he wouldn’t qualify because of his living arrangements. You see, under the rules, you can’t “rent from a renter.” His caseworker told him that the best solution was to move to the Fredericton Homeless Shelter, and he would be able to get an “address letter” from the shelter.

Bob had no other options. He moved to the shelter, his former apartment mate rented out the room to someone else, and Bob got his Income Assistance of \$294. He has now been in the shelter for more than two months. Because of his medical conditions, he will probably qualify for what the province calls “basic,” \$537 per month, and that will help him find another room somewhere.

One of the sad points of this story is that it would not have cost the province or any of us as taxpayers a single penny to have left Bob where he was in his apartment, living independently.

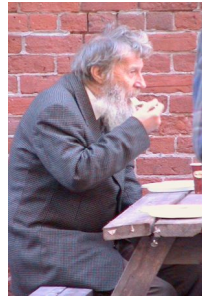
The second story is about a man I will call Steve. He is a 57-year-old man who lives about an hour outside of Fredericton. He has worked all of his life but in recent years has developed multiple medical problems. A few months ago, he moved to Fredericton to be able to access his medical appointments. A relative offered to put him up on a couch to help him out.

His Social Development worker told him that in order to keep his Income Assistance he would have to show a different address. The solution proposed? Go to the shelter to get an “address letter.” When I met him, he was petrified. He had never been in a homeless shelter in his life. He stayed overnight and got his letter. But what happens next month if his worker calls to check if he is here? He has to come back again to continue to qualify. Just as in Bob’s case, this would not have cost any of us a penny to let him stay where he was.

United Nations official says Canada should make housing a right

Although Miloon Kothari, the United Nations special rapporteur on adequate housing, has completed his term, he recently filed an addendum to his reports on his mission to Canada in 2007. The visit focused on four areas: homelessness; women and their right to adequate housing; Aboriginal populations; adequate housing and the possible impact of the 2010 Olympic Games on the right to adequate housing in Vancouver. Kothari recommended that the right to adequate housing should be recognized in law, and that Canada should adopt a comprehensive and coordinated national housing policy. Given the discrimination faced by women, and their lack of adequate living conditions, he also recommended that the mandate and funding of Status of Women Canada be fully reinstated including funding for advocacy for women's equality. Read the full report: www.straight.com/article-205006/united-nations-official-says-canada-should-make-housing-right

Community breakfast in photos



“Economic unit” rule penalizes welfare recipients who pool resources

(Continued from page 2)

- Sixteen-to-18-year-old single parents who live with parents who are not social assistance recipients; recipients who are certified blind, deaf or disabled;
- Recipients who are grandfathered in under the Extended Benefits or Special Designation status;
- Recipients living in what the government deems boarding or rooming house-type conditions or other very specific rental conditions;
- Recipients who have recently left a mental-health institution and are part of the province's Deinstitutionalized Project unless living with a spouse or in a conjugal relationship;
- Recipients who are designated Long-Term Needs clients due to mental or physical disabilities;
- Certain recipients who are sharing rental accommodations in low-income housing through certain non-profit groups;
- Student roommates, unless they are eligible for student funding at a married rate;
- Clients receiving the “transitional assistance rate” of welfare who are living in their parental home; and,
- Youths 16-18 who are living with someone 21 or older or single parent youths who are living with other youths.

For more information on the policy, see Ben's full report at www.monctonhomelessness.org, contact New Brunswick Social Development or view their policy manual online at <http://www.gnb.ca/0017/Policy%20Manual/POL-E/INDEX1.HTM>.

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS, IDEAS AND FEEDBACK.

SEND TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER SUE CALHOUN moncton.homelessness@gmail.com

If you have questions about the Homelessness Partnership Strategy,
contact Mireille Roy at Service Canada 506-851-3554 or mireille.roy@servicecanada.gc.ca

The Second Report Card on Homelessness in Greater Moncton now available at
www.moncton.homelessness.org