



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
- 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

Update Poverty Reduction Strategy

Changes became effective January 1st

The province's poverty reduction strategy – *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan* – was released last November. Some immediate changes took place, effective January 1, 2010. These include the following:

- The Interim Assistance Program was eliminated. This program was for single employable people and families awaiting employment insurance, and the rate was \$294 per month. Of the 4,170 people in Greater Moncton living on social assistance at the end of December 2008, 3% (130 people) fell into this category. These people have now been moved to the Transitional Assistance Program, the rate for which is \$537 per month. A two-person unit receiving \$560 on the Interim Rate Program now receives \$827.
- Secondly, the Minister announced the extension of the health card from one to three years. The extended health card is a benefit provided to social assistance clients who find employment and go off social assistance. They will be able to keep the card now for up to three years.
- Some changes were made to the Household Income Policy. Social assistance clients who were on social assistance as of January 1, 2010 can now share accommodations with another social assistance client without losing part of their cheque. This applies ONLY to people who are NOT in a conjugal relationship, and who WERE on social assistance as of January 1, 2010. Except in some circumstances, it does not apply to new applicants (i.e. after January 1, 2010). This is an interim measure until the Household Income Policy is fully reviewed.

These changes are a step in the right direction, and help New Brunswickers currently living in poverty and homeless or at risk. We will monitor the changes, and keep you updated on changes as they happen.

Reading between the lines of the Poverty Reduction Strategy – Common Front critique

The Common Front for Social Justice's January 2010 report, *Reading between the lines of "Overcoming Poverty Together – The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan"*, includes some criticism of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The report says three major groups of poor people were left out of the plan: 1) social assistance clients in the Transitional and Extended Benefits programs; 2) workers holding part-time jobs; and 3) seniors, especially if they have medical problems. It notes that the report does not take into consideration the fact that not everyone can be employed fulltime. It also expressed concern about the delivery structure for the plan, that things will be off-loaded onto the non-profit sector. Read the full report on the GMHSC website at www.monctonhomelessness.org

**The 3rd Report Card on Homelessness
in Greater Moncton will be launched
Thursday, March 25th
at a Community Breakfast at
Le Rouge Resto, 189 Robinson Crt
Downtown Moncton
7:30 – 9am
Reserve your place!
2nd Provincial Report Card will be
launched at the same time.
scalhoun@nbnet.nb.ca 877-2343**

In from the Margins: A call to action on poverty, housing and homelessness

A major Senate report tabled in December is declaring that Canada's system for lifting people out of poverty is substantially broken and must be overhauled. "We began this study by focusing on the most vulnerable city-dwellers in the country, those whose lives are marginalized by poverty, housing challenges and homelessness." stated Senator Art Eggleton, Chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology's Subcommittee on Cities. "As our research evolved, so too did our frustration and concern as we repeatedly heard accounts of policies and programs only making living in poverty more manageable – which essentially entraps people.

The recommendations in the report, ***In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness***, are the summation of a two-year cross-country study. Committee members heard testimony from more than 170 witnesses, including people living in poverty, several of them homeless, as well as universities, think tanks, provincial and local government and civil society organizations. Based on their findings, the Committee's first and fundamental recommendation is that Canada and all provinces and territories adopt the goal of lifting people out of poverty. Included among the vast range of measures recommended by the Committee to realize this core goal are the coordination of a nationwide federal-provincial initiative on early childhood training; the development of a national housing and homelessness strategy; and the creation of a basic income floor for all Canadians who are severely disabled. Read more at <http://senatorarteggleton.ca/>

Touched by homelessness

"Helping one person is worth it!"

There are many reasons that people decide to volunteer in their community. Some have lived charmed lives, feel privileged, and want to give back. Others have lived "not-so-charmed" lives, have faced challenges – serious problems even – and want to do what they can to help others in the same situation.



Johanne Petitpas, 51, of Moncton falls into the latter category. Johanne grew up in Shediac, in poverty, in a home where alcohol abuse was the norm. She learned early to take care of herself, and she also took care of her siblings. "I remember what it's like to fight with my sister over a clean pair of socks," she says.

She also learned to use alcohol at an early age, and in retrospect, considers that she became a "full-fledged alcoholic" by the age of 15. She dropped out of school, had two children, and spent decades trying to deal with her alcoholism. Many of those years are a blur.

But Johanne has a big heart. She always made sure that her children were well taken care of, and opened her home to people in need. She was never homeless because the people she helped returned the favour, on the odd occasion that she was kicked out of her rooming house.

Fast forward to 2010. Johanne has been sober for six years. She is an active participant in the Common Front for Social Justice. "Johanne has a keen sense of justice," says Sister Auréa Cormier, also a member of the Common Front. "This is true at the individual level as well as at the community level. If she knows a person in need, she will go out of her way to share what she has or set aside things for these needy people."

"There were many times over the years that I thought I would die because of the stupid things you do when you're drinking," says Johanne. "God saw fit to let me live so He must have had a plan. This is it. If I can help one person, it's worth it." Johanne has spoken to social work classes at the university, and been on the front line of many events organized by the Common Front.

"Johanne is a born leader," says Sister Cormier. "She was this way, even as a little girl. At the Common Front and at the soup kitchen, she has a way of rallying people to her cause."

Johanne is also an advisor to the Mental Health Commission project on chronic homelessness and mental illness, both at local and national levels. She is a good cook and an excellent gardener. She brought many people into the Common Front's community garden last summer. Johanne is also living proof that everyone has something to give to their community.

ReConnect program helps homeless to re-connect, re-integrate

The YMCA's ReConnect program provides outreach to youth and adults who are homeless or at-risk of being homeless, in an effort to increase their knowledge of available resources (i.e. food, clothing, shelter, education, employment and counselling) and to provide support in accessing them. ReConnect staff do street interventions in the downtown core on a regular basis to meet individuals where they are at and to offer services to them directly in order to decrease loitering and pan-handling, and to provide an increased sense of security in the city's downtown.

Last December, 359 people accessed this drop-in service, which is offered four times a week at ReConnect. During the same month, Reconnect had 34 new clients:

- 9 males and 5 females were homeless;
- 1 male was in transitional housing;
- 6 males and 1 female were staying in shelters.

ReConnect help takes many forms:

- 17 emergency food packages;
- 12 clients with hygiene products;
- 13 clothing (hats, mittens, socks, sweaters, boots, and coats);
- 10 were provided identification (birth certificates);
- 10 clients were provided bus tickets for work or employment;
- 9 received help finding housing (rooming house guides or apartment search);
- 1 client was helped with medication;
- 4 were helped with rent or damage deposit;
- 1 client was provided bus fare out of province;
- 1 client was provided a car seat for her baby.

ReConnect is located at 150 Queen Street. Tel: 506-856-4362



Book review:

Ragged Company. Richard Wagamese. Toronto, Random House, 2008. \$21.95

Reviewed by; Mireille Roy

In *Ragged Company*, Richard Wagamese, offers a deep insight into the complexities of the lives of four homeless individuals who slowly learned, over their years on the streets, to trust and take care of each other.

Wagamese, an Ojibway from the Wabaseemoong First Nation in Ontario, evokes, with deep understanding and knowledge of the street life, each of the characters' history, thoughts and feelings through their own eyes and memories. The story begins when these four homeless people – *the Ragged company* – decide to see a movie in order to shield themselves from a descending Arctic cold. While watching this first movie, and then a series of others, they get to touch for the first time, and slowly share with the others, some strange, uncomfortable and yet liberating feelings and experiences they never dared visit in the past. When the story jumps into the deepest parts of their lives, each character gets defined and becomes just an ordinary human being. This work of fiction, though revealing brutal realities, sets me up to more deeply understand who these people are and how truly similar and connected they are to all of us.

This book is an excellent read for people wanting to understand the issue of homelessness in more depth. Brimming with rich and accurate details, Mr. Wagamese's vibrant characters and spontaneous dialogue makes this a book you will not be able to put down!

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