

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee**
- **Profile of a member agency**
- **A look at homelessness in Saint John**
- **Upcoming events**
- **Canada VOTES**

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## Welcome to Our First Edition!

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

The Steering Committee was established as a result of the recommendations made in *A Portrait of Homelessness in Greater Saint John*, a report published by the Human Development Council in March 2008, depicting the state of homelessness in the region.

The first committee meeting was held in April 2008 and the membership includes: The Resource Centre for Youth (TRC), Pasage Saint John, Department of Social Development, Service Canada, Saint John Non-Profit Housing, ONE Change / ONE Life, Human Development Council, Gateway to Hope Transition House, Saint John Community Chaplaincy, First Steps Housing Project, Canadian Mental Health Association, Saint John Branch, AIDS Saint John, Housing Alternatives, Romero House, John Howard Society, Hestia House, Salvation Army, Coverdale Centre for Women, CMHC, BCIPI, and Paul Zed, MP.

This publication is one way that we hope to raise awareness in the coming years. Through it, we will keep you informed about new research, projects and upcoming activities that you might want to be involved in. We also hope to bring the reality of homelessness in Greater Saint John more onto the public agenda. We welcome your feedback!



## A Profile of the Rentalsman By: Brian Beckett



The Department of Justice and Consumer Affairs is a provincial agency that handles population-based inquiries into socio-economic issues. One of its divisions, the Office of the Rentalsman, handles issues associated with the Residential Tenancies Act. Stationed in the Justice Building on Charlotte Street, it is a hub of activity for all things housing.

The Office is responsible for investigating problems that are brought forward to them by tenants. It is not the duty of the Rentalsman to travel out into the public and investigate sub-standard housing; that responsibility is held by the City's Building Inspector (whom the Rentalsman frequently reference in their dealings with their case studies). Payment of security deposits, appeals to landlords about problems they are experiencing in their unit, and consultation and conferences with landlords are just a few of the items on their daily agenda.

The standard procedure for appealing to a landlord or tenant is to write a formal written complaint to the opposite party. If the problem is not resolved within one week, the Rentalsman may intervene. (Alerting the party in question that there is a restricted timeline to have things fixed, else they risk being fined or even evicted, is the most basic method in which they go about this.)

The Office also handles the refund or transfer of damage deposits after moving out of the building in which the tenant is currently living.

Unfortunately, the Residential Tenancies Act does not include rooming or boarding houses. An act to amend Chapter 5 of the Residential Tenancies Act has been passed, but has yet to be proclaimed. Upon proclamation, it is likely that the office will have its hands full with cases of minimum standard violation and housing issues.

The jurisdiction of the Office of the Rentalsman was transferred recently to Service New Brunswick. The Office is excited to see new online services and improved consultation resources made available to landlords and tenants. They are embracing the challenges and changes in the City with eagerness and compassion, ready to take on the challenges that the future may hold.

**canada**  
**VOTES!**

## Canada Votes

October 14<sup>th</sup> is Election Day in Canada and campaign promises are coming fast and furious from all political parties. On September 17<sup>th</sup> the Conservative government committed to renewing the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI). This stemmed from a cabinet motion passed just prior to the election announcement to renew these programs and they will be renewed regardless of which party forms the next government.

There is much at stake in this election. There are many social issues that require attention and the platform of each party should be analyzed to determine their impact on the most vulnerable in our communities. The HDC has joined a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC-BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, and Canadian Council on Social Development to produce *Canada Votes Papers 2008*. It can be downloaded from [www.sparc.bc.ca](http://www.sparc.bc.ca).

**FUNDING**.....Recently the Conservative government announced the renewal of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), and the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) for another five years. While we are happy to hear this announcement, this is just an interim measure. The overall dollar amount earmarked for these programs has not increased since the original programs were announced almost a decade ago, despite growing need and growing inflation. Our committee is calling for **permanent, fully funded programs** that address the needs of Canadians **today**.

Our committee urges the federal government to **develop a long-term National Housing and Homelessness Strategy** to ensure that all Canadians, including those in Greater Saint John, have access to adequate and affordable housing.

## Homelessness in Saint John

In September 2007, Belinda Allen was hired as Research Project Coordinator with the Human Development Council to update the community plan on homelessness and to prepare a report depicting the state of homelessness in Saint John. The report, *A Portrait of Homelessness in Greater Saint John*, was released on March 10, 2008 in conjunction with Saint John's first Homelessness Awareness Day.

Homelessness Awareness Day began with an information drop, elected officials and volunteers distributed fact sheets on homelessness and awareness ribbons in several high traffic location in the uptown. A press conference was held which included the release of the report,

service provider presentations, and the premiers of *The Faces and Voices of Homelessness* (an original video created by Hemmings House Pictures portraying the stories of individuals in Saint John who had or were experiencing homelessness).

The report provided an overview of available programs and services to assist those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. It also identified gaps, potential solutions and was able to provide quantifiable data to help the community realize the scope of the problem.

While it is not possible to offer a precise number when looking at how many individuals are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in Saint John, the following information was available:

- There are 151 shelter beds in the community. Shelter operators claim to be at or near capacity most nights;
- In 2007 the HDC undertook a homeless youth survey that revealed 45 youth who were "hidden homelessness."

Based on the foregoing information, the report estimated that there are at least 200 homeless individuals in Saint John. This number was not disputed and is believed to be a conservative estimate as it does not include adults who are "hidden homeless" or those who are at-risk of homelessness.

The report provided recommendations to all three levels of government, local service providers and organizations, the community, and to individual citizens.



~ Adapted from 2007-2008 Human Development Council Annual Report  
(For a copy of the report or video please visit <http://humandevlopmentcouncil.nb.ca/page4.htm>)

# ONE LIFE, ONE Change By: Brian Beckett

For several years now, ONE Change has been making the Old North End a better community to live in. ONE LIFE (Living Independently for Education), a program of ONE Change, advises students who would not be seen as a “typical teenagers.” Tara Parlee, Case Manager of the program, assures the youth that a solid foundation is paramount to success, and hopefully to breaking the cycle of poverty. By providing programs discussing the significance of proper housing, education, and life skills, this indispensable resource is a one-stop shop for all youth seeking to improve themselves and live independently. “Some of them have no choice,” says Parlee, “but to live on the streets because their homes are not fit for living.”

Located at the Resource Centre for Youth on Richmond Street in Uptown Saint John, this program is a safe-haven. However, it comes with strict expectations that the youth will actively participate in

their change. They must be willing to participate in employment programs or services and be enrolled in school full-time. With these two requirements fulfilled, the student can speak with Tara for a spot. She has received funding for six apartments: the students who are chosen for the program must wait on the long social housing list to find a single bedroom apartment. In the meantime, through career workshops, life skills development, and social activities hosted at the Resource Centre for Youth, the students are taught what the expectations are for them in the “real world.” Upon being given the chance to live in one of these apartments, the student is now faced with the difficult task of feeding themselves, working, attending school, and many things that most students in their early twenties do not even have to deal with; all this under the age of 18.

The truth of the matter is, with growing poverty and increased displacement in the city, youth are becoming the blind-sided victims of our poverty situation. They make themselves less visible than the stereotypical homeless, whether it be through living with friends or staying with family. Ultimately, the services provided by ONE Change and ONE LIFE facilitate the healthy changes that need to be made for these youth; subject to government grants, the future is uncertain for the program. However, the success it is having right now keeps it a strong resource in the City of Saint John.

*“Some of them have no choice but to live on the streets because their homes are not fit for living.”*



**Human Development Council**

**Send your comments, ideas and feedback to Belinda Allen, Research Project Coordinator**

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## Stay Tuned.....

### November 22, 2008 - National Housing Day

Join us the week of November 17th to celebrate National Housing Day. Events include a launch, profiles of our five priority neighbourhoods, and an evening awareness event which will include food, entertainment, and guest speakers. (For more information contact Belinda Allen at [belindaallen@rogers.com](mailto:belindaallen@rogers.com))

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