

The Toronto

report card

on

homelessness

2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN TORONTO	2
What is the current state of homelessness in our city?	2
Changes in homelessness	3
Factors that contribute to the rise of homelessness	9
III. REDUCING HOMELESSNESS: CURRENT INITIATIVES	17
Overview	17
Toronto's Homelessness Action Plan	18
IV. CONCLUSIONS	47
V. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	48
APPENDIX A	50
APPENDIX B	62
APPENDIX C	64
APPENDIX D	66

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Members, Staff Working Group

Chief Administrator's Office:

Phillip Abrahams, Strategic & Corporate Policy

Community and Neighbourhood Services:

Phil Brown, Shelter, Housing & Support

Anne Hertz, Shelter, Housing & Support

Nancy Matthews, Social Development and Administration

Susan Shepherd, Social Development and Administration

Alan Meisner, Social Development and Administration

Harvey Low, Social Development and Administration

Greg Suttor, Social Development and Administration

Kevin Lee, Social Development and Administration

John Jagt, Shelter, Housing & Support

Karen Mann, Shelter, Housing & Support

Fiona Murray, Shelter, Housing & Support

Barbara Emanuel, Public Health

Joe Manion, Social Services

Urban Planning & Development Services:

Ross Paterson, City Planning

Other staff assistance

Community and Neighbourhood Services:

Anne Longair, Shelter, Housing & Support

Liz Root, Shelter, Housing & Support

Peter Zimmerman, Shelter, Housing & Support

Arnie Rose, Shelter, Housing & Support

Gwynne Cheung, Shelter, Housing & Support

David DeLuca, Shelter, Housing & Support

Simon Liston, Shelter, Housing & Support

Sheryl Pollock, Shelter, Housing & Support

Eden Distajo, Shelter, Housing & Support

Mike Hussey, Shelter, Housing & Support

Jan Bangle, Shelter, Housing & Support

Jack Van Meggelen, Shelter, Housing & Support

Geraldine Babcock, Social Development & Administration

Cathy Smith, Social Services

Karen Smith, Social Services

Anne Hewitt, Toronto Social Housing Connections

Michelle Haney-Kileeg, Toronto Social Housing Connections

Joyce Bernstein, Toronto Public Health

Cathy Turl, Toronto Public Health

Alice Gorman, Toronto Public Health
Liz Janzen, Toronto Public Health
Katherine Chislett, City Planning

Chief Administrator's Office:

Lisa Salsberg, Acting Manager, Healthy City Office

*Members, Toronto Advisory Committee on Homeless & Socially
Isolated Persons Reference Group*

Councillor Jack Layton
Alison Kemper, 519 Community Centre
Richard Barry, Councillor Jack Layton's Office
Alicia Odette, Street Health
Evadne Wilkinson, Out of the Cold
Leslie Jardine, Scarborough Homelessness Committee
Bill Kerr, Salvation Army Maxwell Meighen
Cathy Crowe, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee

Thanks to:

Jennifer Ramsay, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Chris Slosser, Daily Bread Food Bank
Angela Shiga, Community Information Toronto
Denise Toulouse, Anishnawbe Health
Greg Rogers, Native Men's Residence
Dr. Bonita Porter, Office of the Chief Coroner
Dr. Stephen Hwang, St. Michael's Hospital
Richard DeGaetano, Scarborough Homelessness Committee
Sally MacBeth, Clear Language and Design

Art Direction and Design:

Colette Bessin, Graphic Designer, Community Outreach Support, Social Development & Administration

Editorial/Design Assistance:

Community Outreach Support Unit, Social Development & Administration

©2001 City of Toronto

Printed in Toronto, Canada, January 2001

♻️ Printed on recycled paper

For additional copies of the Toronto Report Card on Homelessness 2001, contact the
City of Toronto at 416-392-5388

1. INTRODUCTION

Homelessness continues to be a serious issue for Toronto. How can so many people be destitute in a city as rich as ours? This is the question that governments, community groups, faith communities and the general public keep raising.

It has been two years since the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force released its report, *Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto*. Since then, all levels of government have focused more energy and resources on homeless initiatives. Many of these initiatives are new and it is still too early to measure the impact. Much of the funding is aimed at services for homeless people. While this is important, we do not expect to see dramatic changes in the problem until the main causes of homelessness — poverty and the lack of affordable housing — are addressed.

The City of Toronto released the first Report Card on Homelessness in February 2000, based on a recommendation by the Mayor's Task Force. The purpose of the report card is to monitor the issue of homelessness over time to determine if the problem is getting better or worse and to help the city and its partners develop effective and responsive strategies.

This report card follows the same format as last year's. Its four main sections describe:

- the state of homelessness in Toronto
- current initiatives for reducing homelessness
- some conclusions on the effectiveness of our efforts so far
- recommendations for future action.

A staff group from several city departments produced the report card, in consultation with the city's Advisory Committee on Homeless & Socially Isolated Persons.

The report card focuses mainly on government action during 2000. While it is beyond the scope of this report to document the vast array of community-based homeless initiatives, it is important to acknowledge the key role these initiatives play in addressing homelessness.

II. THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN TORONTO

This section gives a summary of the current state of homelessness in Toronto using a variety of indicators that describe changes in both the profile of people who are homeless and the factors contributing to the problem. To ensure consistent monitoring over time, the indicators are generally the same as those used in the 2000 report card. Some have been improved, and a few new indicators have been added to increase our understanding.

Indicators on the profile of homelessness describe changes and trends in the use of emergency shelters and Out of the Cold programs, calls to the Street Helpline, people living on the street, use of food banks and homeless deaths. Indicators on the contributing factors to homelessness describe changes and trends in economic security, evictions, affordable and supportive housing.

The indicators are drawn from public, institutional and community sources. As much as possible they reflect the most current information although some data sources, such as the census, are not produced each year. This limits the amount of new data we can include. See Appendix A for a detailed description of each indicator and its data sources.

In this report, homelessness is defined as a condition of people who:

- live outside (for example, on the street, or in ravines and parks)
- stay in emergency shelters
- spend most of their income on rent or
- live in overcrowded, substandard conditions and are therefore at serious risk of becoming homeless.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN OUR CITY?

Homelessness in Toronto continues to rise — especially among families. Over the past few years, Toronto's economy has been growing strongly and unemployment rates have been dropping. But, the number of homeless and low-income people in our city continues to grow.

The fastest growing groups of emergency shelter users are now two-parent families and couples. People are staying in emergency shelters for longer periods of time. This, combined with the critical shortage of affordable housing, is creating a "bottleneck" because people simply have nowhere to go. In effect, more people are being forced to use shelters as housing.

Tenants in Toronto still face a very tight rental market. Rent increases are severely outpacing tenant incomes. This places many people at risk of rent arrears and eviction. It means that people, especially families, who land in the emergency shelter system, have a harder time finding housing and moving on. The housing shortage is worsened by the fact that almost no new rental housing is being built, and previously affordable units are being lost to rising rents.

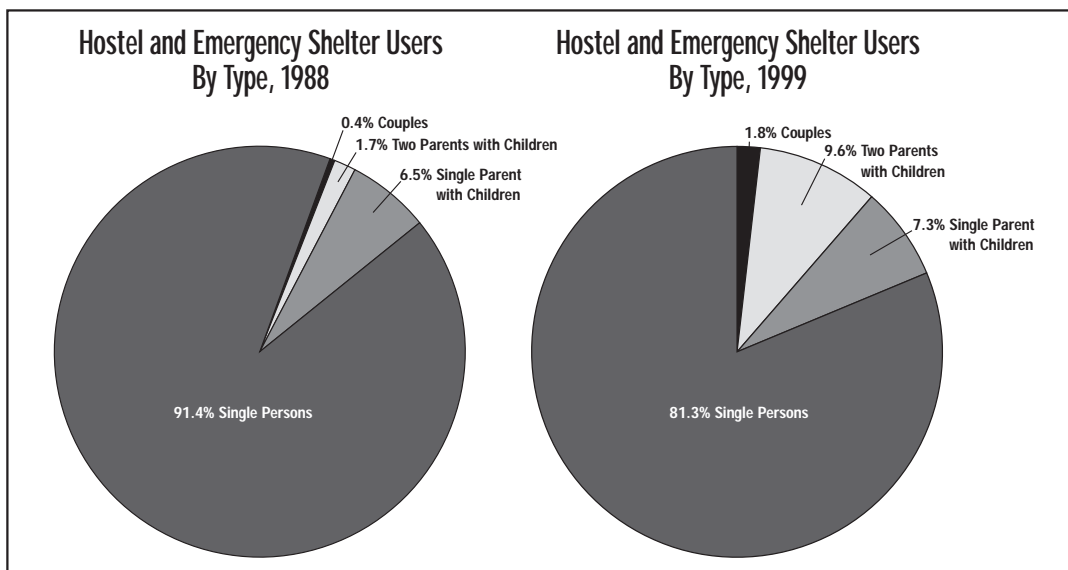
Over the past two years, there have been a number of new government initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness. These initiatives are in various stages of implementation and the impacts may not be felt in the short term. Much of the new funding is directed at homeless services and programs. While this is an important part of an effective homeless strategy, dramatic changes will not come solely from a service response. Adequate incomes and more affordable housing are needed to dramatically reduce homelessness.

CHANGES IN HOMELESSNESS

The changing face of homelessness

The majority of people staying in Toronto's emergency shelter system are still single men. However, two-parent families and couples without children are now the fastest growing group of shelter users. For example, in 1988, there were 320 two-parent families in the shelter system. By 1999, this number grew to 2,070. The average size of these families is also getting larger (Chart 1).

In 1999, over half of the people in emergency shelters were "first time users." This represents more than 15,000 people. A similar number of people left the shelter system and did not return. This trend continued in 2000.



Source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing and Support Division.

chart 1

Youth (age 15-24) are still a large group of shelter users. The proportion of youth has gradually increased from 20% of all admissions in 1998, to 23% as of September 2000. An estimated 6,000 youth stayed in Toronto's emergency shelters in 1999.

The following is a breakdown of the main reasons people gave for needing emergency shelter in 1999. They reflect the life circumstances that led them to lose their housing:

For families:

- Refugee claimant (24%)
- Eviction (18%)
- Abused woman (11%)¹
- Newcomer to the city (9%)
- General homelessness (family is without housing but reason is not given – 7%)
- Family breakdown (3%)

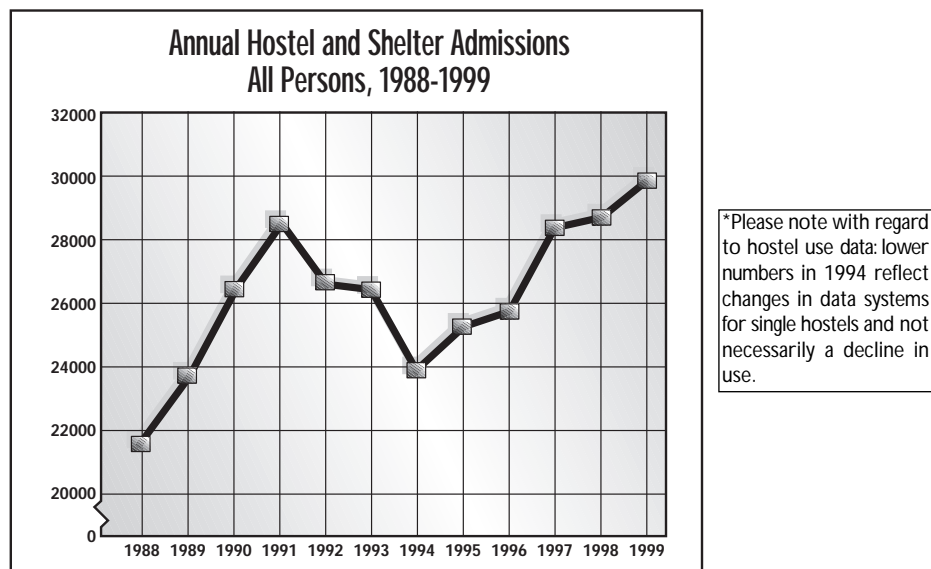
For singles:

- General homelessness (person is without housing but reason is not given – 72%)
- Family breakdown (7%)
- Newcomer to the city, refugee claimant, or eviction (3% for each)

The number of people citing “refugee claimant” as a reason for admission increased from 21% in 1998 to 27% in 2000. The increase was greatest in the family shelter system and the largest number of these families came from Eastern European countries. Refugee claimants are not eligible for federal settlement programs. If they arrive in Toronto without money or supports, they may end up in the shelter system.

More people need emergency shelter

Between 1988 and 1999, the number of people staying in Toronto’s emergency shelters rose from 22,000 in 1988 to nearly 30,000 in 1999 — an increase of 40% (Chart 2). The growing need for emergency shelter is also seen in the dramatic rise in calls to the Street Helpline and an increasing demand for Out of the Cold overnight shelter services.



*Please note with regard to hostel use data: lower numbers in 1994 reflect changes in data systems for single hostels and not necessarily a decline in use.

Source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing and Support Division.

chart 2

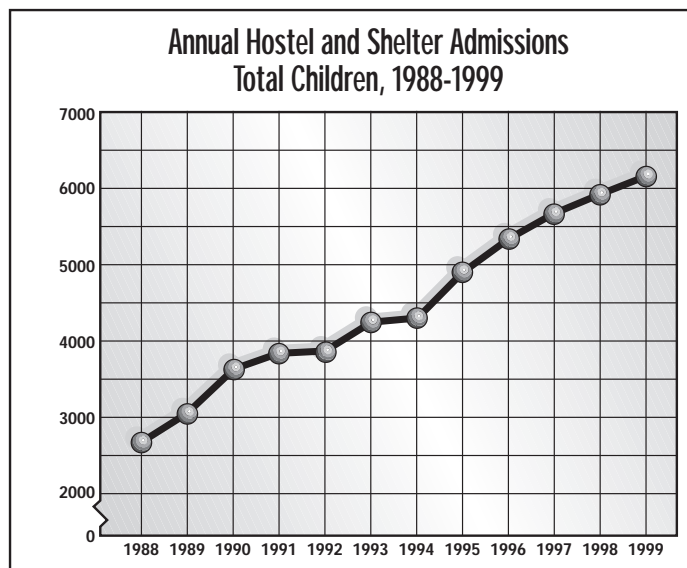
¹This percentage would be much higher if it included data from the provincially-run abused women’s shelter system.

The Out of the Cold program began as a single, temporary program in 1988. Today there are 47 winter programs in Toronto providing overnight shelter and sometimes meals for people who are homeless. Due to the high demand for these services, some programs now run year-round. Out of the Cold staff estimate that about 450 people a day will use the overnight programs during the winter. Meal programs will serve as many as 1,800 people a day. Staff also report that more young people and seniors are turning to Out of the Cold programs in 2000.

Calls to Community Information Toronto's Street Helpline rose from 6,300 in 1997 to over 65,000 in 1999. In 2000, the number of calls jumped by another 28% to over 91,000. Most calls are from people looking for shelter for the night. The rapid increase is partly because the Helpline expanded and promoted its services during these years. Nevertheless, Helpline staff report a growing demand for shelter and other homeless services. Calls to the Helpline peak during the winter months when the need for shelter becomes more urgent.

More children, especially young children, are in our shelters

A particularly alarming trend is that the dramatic rise in the number of children staying in shelters continues. The number of children has jumped by 130% — from about 2,700 in 1988 to 6,200 in 1999 (Chart 3).



Source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing and Support Division.

chart 3

Most of these children were very young. One-third were younger than four. More than half were school-age children, between five and 14 years of age. The stress and instability of being homeless can negatively affect a child's development. Of particular concern are:

- damage to developmental, psychological and social growth
- poorer health and nutrition
- academic difficulties.

People are staying longer in the emergency shelter system

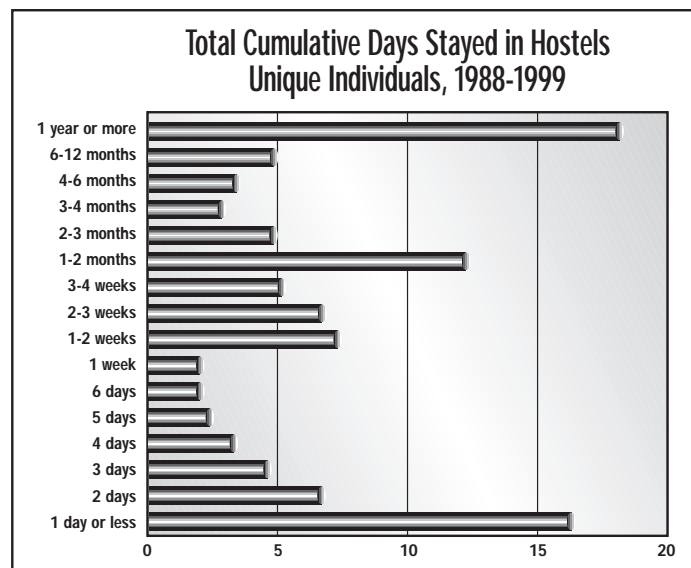
The length of time people are staying in emergency shelters has increased since 1988. Families in particular are staying longer — on average almost four times longer than in the late 1980s. Most one-parent families stayed between one and two months in 1999. For couples with children, the stay was even longer. Some families stayed as long as one year. This reflects the growing difficulty families face in finding appropriate affordable housing.

Single people tend to stay in shelters for shorter periods of time. Single men, on average, stay between two and three days. Single women tend to stay longer — about seven days. Staff in women's shelters attribute the longer stays to the complex needs (for example, mental health issues) of many women using their services.

In recent years, a number of special programs and transitional beds have been added to the shelter system. People do stay for longer periods of time in these programs. Overall, however, the trend toward longer shelter stays is likely due to the critical shortage of affordable housing. Without viable alternatives, more people are being forced to use shelters as housing.

Long-term shelter use continues to rise

“Long-term shelter use” refers to people who have stayed in the shelter system for one year or more. Between 1988 and September 2000, about 18% (or 31,450 cases — both individuals and families) stayed in shelters for at least a year (Chart 4). Most of these were single men. This is an increase over the number reported in the 2000 report card.



Source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing and Support Division.

chart 4

Some long-term shelter users are people with addictions or mental health issues, who do not have access to appropriate housing and services to help them leave the shelter system. Shelter staff report that long-term shelter use also means that people are getting “stuck” in shelters — there is simply nowhere for them to go. Toronto’s rental housing market is extremely tight and there is a declining number of affordable units. A single person receiving social assistance, for example, has a maximum benefit of \$325 per month for rent, making it next to impossible to find an affordable home.

More people are moving in and out of homelessness

“Episodic homelessness” means staying in a shelter more than five times in one year. The percentage of people who are episodically homeless grew from 10% in 1988 to 16% in 1999.

In its report, the Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task Force noted that the more times a person loses their housing the more likely they are to become “chronically” homeless. Such long-term instability puts significant stress on a person’s physical and emotional health.

People who are “episodically homeless” cite different reasons than other shelter users for needing emergency shelter. Among families, the largest numbers are women fleeing abusive partners (33%). Eviction is also listed as a key reason why families repeatedly return to shelters (11%). This points to ongoing issues of housing affordability.

For singles, the main reason for admission remains “general homelessness” (without housing but no reason given). The next most prevalent reason, however, is refugee claimant (23%) — again reflecting a lack of federal support services for this vulnerable group.

The number of people living outside remains high

Street outreach services continue to report a large number of people living on the street. While most people are still single men over 30, street outreach services are seeing more couples — especially young couples. The disproportionate number of Aboriginal people on the street continues.

About one-quarter of the people whom street outreach services see are women. This number is rising, as is the number of pregnant women. Street outreach staff also report more:

- gay people
- transgendered people
- people who abuse solvents
- “hard core” homeless people, or people who live outside year round (some people have been outside for so long that they are building encampments and makeshift housing).

Living outside can have serious consequences for a person's health, safety and well-being. Community workers continue to raise concerns over the lack of appropriate and adequate emergency shelter that meets the special needs of this group. There is a need for more harm reduction facilities and shelters with minimal rules and structure, services for transgendered people who may not feel comfortable going to existing shelters, and shelters for people who wish to keep their pets.

More people are turning to food banks

The number of people needing emergency food relief programs in the GTA increased by 12% during 2000, according to the Daily Bread Food Bank. For the first time in three years, numbers were higher at the end of the year than at the beginning. In the final quarter of 2000, more than 140,000 people relied on food relief programs each month in the GTA, up from 125,000 at the beginning of the year. Three-quarters of these people were from Toronto.

An improved labour market has helped some people. The number of people between the ages of 15 and 25 who used food banks fell from 15% in 1995 to 6% in 2000. However, the Daily Bread's 2000 client survey shows that use among vulnerable groups (for example, single parents and seniors) continues to grow. Almost half of all food bank users — about 65,000 — were children. About 24,000 people with disabilities used emergency food relief programs — up 10% since 1995.

More than 6,000 people — 11% of all food bank users — are over the age of 60, up from 6% in 1995. In 2000, 54% of seniors using food banks reported paying more than 50% of their income on rent. And 65% of all people using food banks in 2000 paid more than half of their income on rent. This likely reflects the fact that social assistance benefits have not changed since the 21.6% reduction in 1995, despite the rising cost of rents and other basic necessities.

We continue to track deaths among people who are homeless

The Office of the Chief Coroner runs project TIDE (Toronto Indigent Deaths Enquiries). The project tracks the deaths of homeless people. The project defines a homeless person as "any person who has no fixed address and dies in a public place (street or building), hostel, or in hospital, having been admitted from any of the above." It should be noted that the project likely under represents the number of homeless deaths as only cases that are under investigation or who are unclaimed persons reported to the Coroner are captured.

Between May and December of 1999, Project TIDE recorded the deaths of 27 homeless people. Almost all were men, aged 21 to 80. Seventeen died either in the hospital or on the street, and six died in a hostel. Thirteen died from natural causes such as stroke, heart disease, pneumonia and hepatitis. Seven died by accident. Two died by suicide and one by homicide. In four of the cases, the manner of death was undetermined. Alcohol and/or drugs was a contributing factor in 16 of the deaths.

Preliminary data for Project TIDE records 37 deaths for the year 2000.

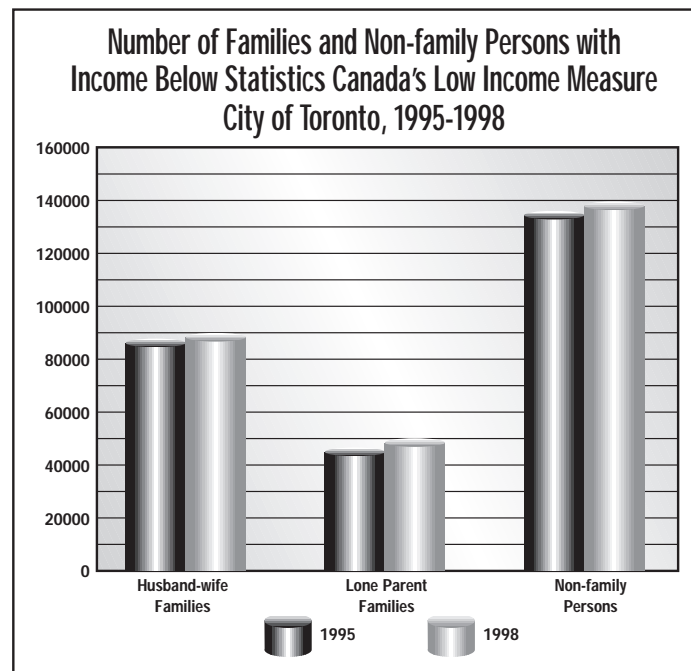
A recently published study² found that death rates among men using homeless shelters in Toronto were higher than for the city's general population. This is linked to high risk factors among people who are homeless such as renal, liver and heart disease, as well as injection drug use.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HOMELESSNESS

Not everyone is benefiting from Toronto's strong economy

Toronto's economy has made dramatic strides since the recession of the early 1990s. More people have found both full-time and part-time jobs. The unemployment rate for the first six months of 2000 was 6.1%. Although the number of jobs is increasing, the issues of low wages and underemployment continue. For example, some people hold down more than one job to try and make ends meet.

Median incomes for both families and single people improved between 1995 and 1998. But median incomes have not returned to pre-recession levels and have not kept pace with the rising cost of basic necessities, such as rent and utilities.



Source: Statistics Canada; Small Area Administrative Data Tax File

chart 5

Chart 5 shows that from 1995 to 1998, the number of low-income families and singles continued to grow. The growth rate is slower than during the recession in the first half of the 1990s.

²Hwang, Stephen W., "Mortality Among Men Using Homeless Shelters in Toronto, Ontario" *Journal of the American Medical Association*, April 26, 2000 — Vol 283, No. 16. This study is based on data of men who stayed in homeless shelters in Toronto in 1995.

In 1998, seventeen percent or 88,900 husband-wife families in Toronto had pre-tax incomes below Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure (LIM)³. So did 41% or 49,000 one-parent families, and 30% of single people (137,200). Between 1995 and 1998, the number of children in low-income families grew by 7%. The number of seniors rose by 22%.

Low-income people survive on incomes that are dramatically lower than the rest of the population. For people below the LIM in 1998, one-half of the husband-wife and one-parent families lived on less than \$11,900 and \$13,200 a year respectively. Half of low-income single people lived on less than \$7,000. In comparison, median income for all husband-wife and one-parent families was \$49,400 and \$24,400. The median income for singles was \$19,500.

Families still make up most of the social assistance caseload

The 2000 Report Card noted that Toronto's social assistance caseload is now primarily family-based. This new trend has emerged over the last five years. It mirrors the growth of families in the emergency shelter system. In November 2000, the proportion of families with children dropped to 54%, compared to 57% in the previous year. Toronto's overall caseload stood at just over 64,000 cases, down by more than 11,000 from a year earlier. Unlike previous years, more families are leaving the system than single people. In 2000, there were 18% fewer families and 11% fewer single people.

The reason for the decline in families, particularly one-parent families, is not clear. More full-time jobs due to the improved economy may be one reason. Recent provincial policy changes may have also had an effect, particularly the change to the STEP (Support to Employment Program) "variable exemption." This exemption allows social assistance recipients (referred to by the government as Ontario Works clients) to keep a part of their earnings after three months of employment. But starting in September 2000, families who have been Ontario Works clients for more than a specified period face a decrease in the amount of earned income they can keep without penalty. When their earnings exceed the new limits, some of these families are no longer eligible for social assistance.

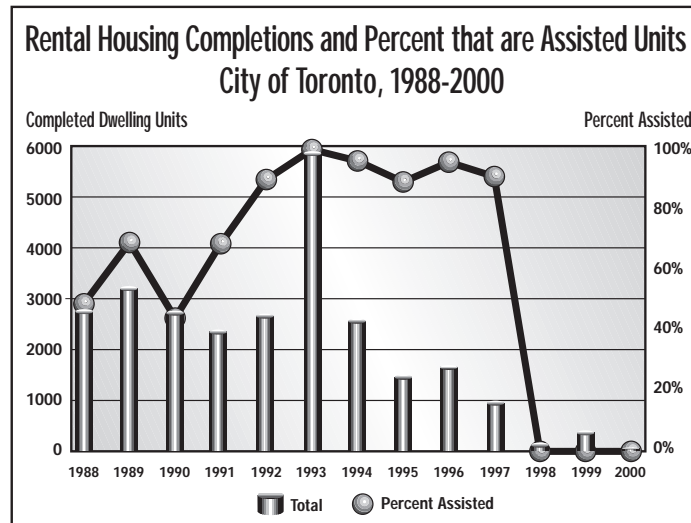
The supply of rental housing is not keeping pace with the demand

Greater Toronto is growing by more than 30,000 households annually. In each five-year period since 1981, the GTA has added 4,000 to 7,000 tenant households per year. This trend is expected to continue.

The supply of rental housing is not keeping pace with the increase in demand. Since 1998 there has been virtually no new rental construction. Chart 6 shows that there were 2,000 to 3,000 rental completions every year between 1984 and 1994 in the City of Toronto. In the 1980s, about two-thirds of all new rental units were funded by senior levels of government; in the early 1990s, it was over 90%. After the federal non-profit programs were cancelled in 1993, and the provincial programs were cancelled in 1995, only units "in the pipeline" were built. There have been no government-assisted rental housing completions since 1997.

³The LIMs (or Low Income Measure) are a relative measure for defining low income used by Statistics Canada since 1990. Each LIM represents 1/2 of the median income of households of different compositions. Please see Appendix A for a more detailed description.

We expect a slight improvement over the next couple of years, with small amounts of new private rental housing and the city's Let's Build housing development. But overall, the picture remains one of very little new supply to meet an ever-growing demand for rental housing in Toronto.

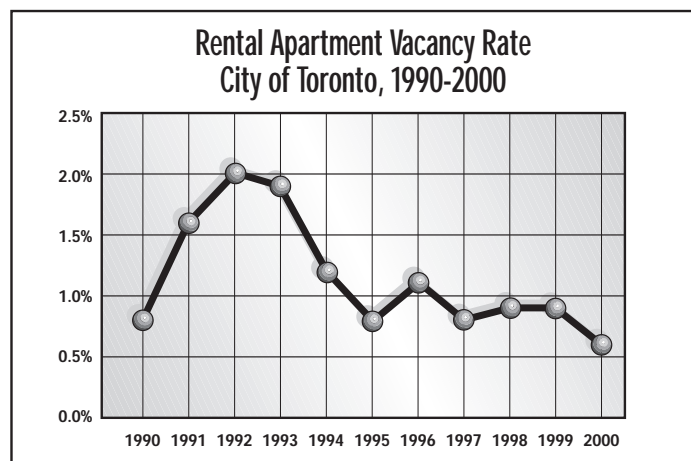


Source: CMHC Toronto Region Market Report

chart 6

Vacancy rates continue to drop

In October 2000, Toronto's rental vacancy rate was 0.6%. This means that only 6 of every 1,000 rental units in the city were vacant and available to rent. Chart 7 shows the steady decline in vacancy rates for all bedroom types since the recession of the early 1990s. Vacancy rates for bachelor units show the steepest decline. The city considers a "healthy" apartment vacancy rate for all units to be between 2% and 3%.

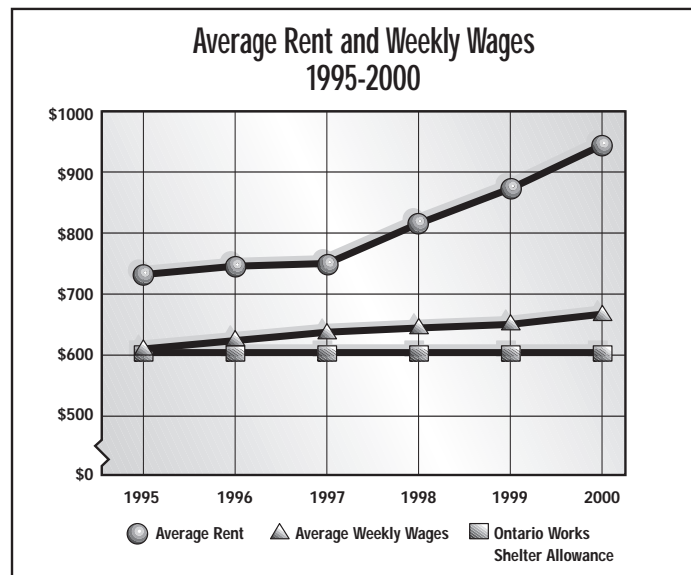


Source: CMHC Toronto Rental Market Housing Survey

chart 7

Rental housing is less affordable

Rising rents dramatically outpaced tenant incomes in the early- to mid-1990s, and this trend is likely to continue (Chart 8). The rising demand for rental housing, coupled with changes in rent legislation and little new supply, are causing sharp rent increases. Average rents for conventional private rental units are now over \$900 per month. For larger units in privately-owned buildings — those more suitable for families — average rents are now almost \$1,000 for 2-bedroom units and \$1,200 for 3-bedrooms or more.



Source: CMHC Toronto Rental Market Survey Statistics Canada

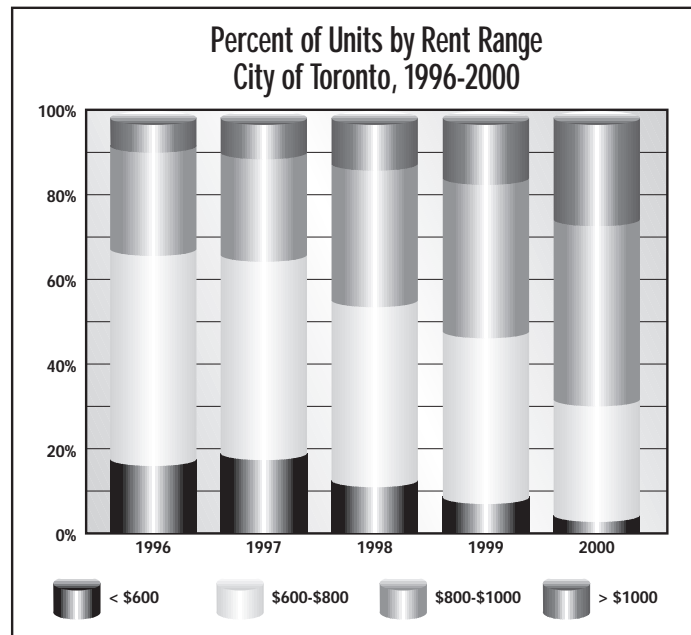
chart 8

In Toronto, the proportion of all tenant households in core housing need⁴ increased from 26% in 1991 to 37% in 1996. At that time, 91% of these households faced affordability problems. Since then, average wage gains have been steady but slow, increasing 9% between 1995 and 2000. Meanwhile, average rents rose much more quickly — 29% over the same period. These data strongly suggest that the proportion of tenant households in core housing need has risen in recent years.

⁴“Core housing need” is a term developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as part of the National Occupancy Standard. It is based on the standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability. See Appendix A for more details.

The supply of affordable rental housing continues to decline

As recently as 1996, units in Toronto renting for less than \$800 per month amounted to more than two-thirds of all units (Chart 9). They now make up only about one-third of the total. When units become available (turnover units), landlords can raise rents higher than the average, so average rents understate the difficulty in finding an affordable apartment. For low-income tenants, it is typical to spend between one-half and two-thirds of income on rent. This places many people at risk of arrears and eviction, and means people in the emergency shelter system may take a long time to find an affordable apartment.



Source: CMHC Toronto Rental Market Housing Survey

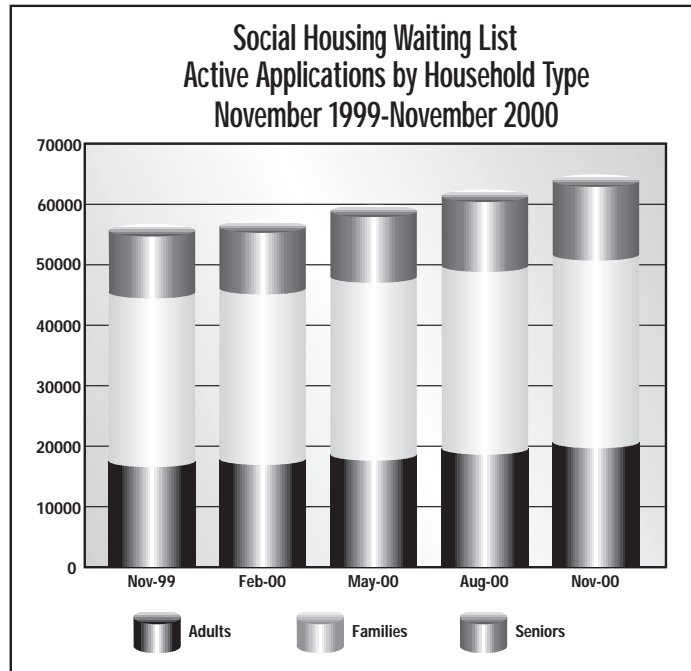
chart 9

Rental housing is not only found in rental apartments built for that purpose. The “secondary rental market” includes rented condominiums, rented houses, apartments above stores and second suites. These are a less secure part of the rental housing stock as they can easily change from being rented to owner-occupancy. They are important because they house about half of all tenant households. Rented condos house middle- to upper-income tenants who would otherwise compete with lower-income tenants for cheaper apartments.

The number of condominium apartments in Toronto grew by 17,144 between 1996 and 2000. But, over the same period owner occupied condos grew by 19,344. This represents a loss of 2,200 rented condos in just four years. Now, only about 26% of all condo units are rented, down from 33% in 1996, leaving tenants to compete for a shrinking number of rental units.

More people are applying for social housing

The Toronto Social Housing Waiting List is a consolidated list of all social housing providers in the city. It gives people in need of subsidized housing a single point of access to the more than 95,000 units of the Toronto Housing Company, Metropolitan Toronto Housing Corporation (formerly MTHA), non-profit co-ops and other private non-profit projects.



Source: Toronto Social Housing Connections

chart 10

The demand for subsidized units dramatically exceeds the supply. This situation has worsened over the past number of years, as low vacancy rates and rising rents have intensified competition for the shrinking number of affordable units in the private market. The waiting list grows steadily (Chart 10). There are, on average, 1,400 new applications every month. Between January 1999 and November 2000, an average of only 348 households were housed each month. As a result, the waiting list grew from 51,428 to 63,110 households — an increase of 23%.

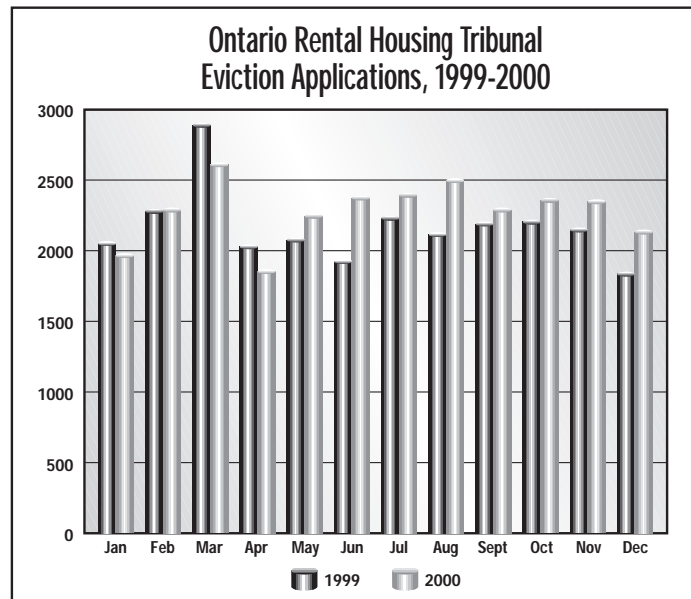
While the demand for subsidized housing has risen across all groups, applications from seniors and single adults have shown the fastest growth, both rising by 32% since January 1999. Applications from families with dependent children grew by 13%.

As of November 2000, the waiting list included 20,364 single adults, 30,563 families and 12,183 seniors. Most of the people on the waiting list have low incomes. Almost half report Ontario Works or some other social assistance program as their main source of income.

Eviction applications continue to rise

Eviction applications to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal have risen for the past two years, growing by 12% from 1998 to 1999 and by 5% from 1999 to 2000 (Chart 1). Over the past year, the three Toronto Area Tribunal offices received 27,336 eviction applications, an average of about 2,278 per month. Tenants receive the eviction notice from their landlords, and those who wish to do so must file a dispute in writing within five days. Almost half fail to contest their evictions. This may be the result of not receiving the notice in the first place, low literacy and other language barriers to understanding the notice and not realizing that only a written response will activate a hearing.

When there is no hearing, the Tribunal issues an order to evict the tenant by default. An average of about 1,200 eviction hearing dates are set by the Tribunal each month. Eighty-five per cent of these involve rental arrears. Among evictions due to arrears, 50% were for amounts of less than \$800.



Source: Ontario, Rental Housing Tribunal

chart 11

It is difficult to get a full picture of the number of evictions that actually occur. The Tribunal does not collect information on tenants who are evicted after disputing, or on those who left voluntarily after receiving the first notice from the landlord. We must have better information and research if we are to understand the full scope of the problem.

Not enough supportive housing is being built

The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force identified supportive housing as a key to reducing homelessness. The Task Force made a conservative estimate that about 600 people were on waiting lists and about 4,400 chronic hostel users need some form of supportive housing.

In 2000, the province funded 762 units of new supportive housing in Toronto for emergency shelter users and homeless people with serious mental illness. Most units are now occupied. Another 300 will come onstream in 2001. However, these are not newly constructed units — existing units have been converted for this purpose. These supportive housing units are much needed, but they do not meet the current demand, and will not meet the demand for this type of housing in the future.

III. REDUCING HOMELESSNESS: CURRENT INITIATIVES

OVERVIEW

Community and faith-based groups work incredibly hard to help the growing numbers of homeless people in our city. As front-line workers, they see the hardships and struggles first-hand. Their staff and volunteers are overloaded; many are "burned out." Although the community-based sector delivers most of the homeless services in Toronto, these groups are powerless to effect any dramatic change in this issue. Only aggressive action by all levels of government can address the main causes of homelessness — poverty and the lack of affordable housing.

There has been more collaboration among all three levels of government since our last Report Card. There appears to be some renewed government interest in the area of housing. The city's *Let's Build* program is up and running, and Council has set housing targets for the next few years. In the last five years, the federal and provincial governments have withdrawn from funding new housing. However, both have recently approached the City of Toronto with offers of land to build affordable housing. The recent federal election brought promises from the Liberal party for an assisted rental housing program. We are hopeful that commitments will soon be announced.

The federal government's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative is now underway. The city will administer \$53 million under this fund over the next three years. In consultation with the community, the city developed the *Community Plan for Homelessness in Toronto*. This plan outlines how the federal money will be spent. Priority has been given to capital funding. For example, 40% is earmarked to build transitional housing. Capital funds are also available for new emergency shelters and for physical upgrades to drop-in centres, shelters and other homeless services. Some funds will go to homeless programs and services and community planning and research. This will increase the capacity of vulnerable and under-served communities across the city to provide homeless services and develop viable affordable housing proposals.

Many of the homeless initiatives announced in the last couple of years are only now being implemented. It will take time to measure their progress. Much of the funding is targeted to homeless services. In December 2000, the province announced new funds aimed at helping people who live outside. This includes more funding for street outreach and emergency shelters. We need these services, but again we must stress that any dramatic change in homelessness will be the result of addressing poverty and increasing the supply of affordable housing.

TORONTO'S HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

Toronto's Homelessness Action Plan is based on the work of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. The plan consists of the following six strategies that, taken together, address the main barriers to solving the problem:

1. Reduce poverty.
2. Preserve and create new affordable and supportive housing.
3. Shift the focus from emergency to prevention responses.
4. Plan services and develop strategies for high-risk groups.
5. Implement a comprehensive homeless health strategy.
6. Collaborate with all levels of government.

In this section of the report card, we describe what each level of government has done in each of these key strategy areas over the past year. See Appendix B, C and D for summaries of government action to address homelessness since the release of the Mayor's Task Force report.

Strategy #1: What is being done to reduce poverty?

We know that addressing poverty is key to reducing homelessness. Federal and provincial governments, as the levels of government that have access to revenues from income tax, should be responsible for setting policies to address poverty. Despite the well-established link between poverty and homelessness and large federal and provincial budget surpluses, little action has been taken.

Policy decisions made by senior levels of government have caused some people to fall through multiple cracks and end up homeless. These include:

- changes to Employment Insurance eligibility rules have reduced the number of people who have access to this program.
- reduced access to the Ontario Disability Support Program, Canada Pension Disability and Workplace Safety and Insurance Plan. This is in large part due to tighter eligibility criteria as well as the complex application process and problems of documentation for continuing benefits. This leaves Ontario Works (social assistance) as a main form of income assistance.
- reduction in social assistance benefits by 21.6% in 1995. Benefit levels have remained the same despite a rising cost of living. Current benefit levels result in incomes far below the poverty line (LICO). Welfare Incomes 1999, the National Council on Welfare report, notes that a single parent with one child receives up to \$13,704 per year. The poverty line for this group is \$22,726, making social assistance benefits only 60% of the poverty line. The percentage is 55% for a couple with two children and 41% for a single employable person.

The federal government has...

➤ *Increased the National Child Benefit Supplement*

In 1998, the federal government created the Canada Child Tax Benefit, which combined existing programs that assist low-income families. At the same time, the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) was introduced. It is targeted to low-income families to help prevent or reduce child poverty and to "promote attachment to the workforce." The program is intended to help only the "working poor." The Province of Ontario deducts all income received by social assistance recipients from the National Child Benefit Supplement.

NCBS provides maximum yearly allowances to all families with a net family income of \$32,000 or less. This is an increase over the previous income level cut-off of \$29,590. As of July 2001, benefits will increase by a further \$100 per year per child. These increases, although moderate, will help more low-income, employed families.

The provincial government has...

➤ *Increased the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families*

The province created this program in 1998. It is funded in part with the money saved by deducting the National Child Tax Benefit. Families are eligible if they earn more than \$5,000, one parent works for pay and the other stays home to care for the children, or the parents are in school or a training program and have child care expenses.

Two-parent families receive a maximum annual benefit of \$1,100 for each child under age seven. The supplement is reduced as family income exceeds \$20,000. As of July 2000, single-parent families eligible for the supplement will receive up to \$210 more for each child under the age of seven, bringing their maximum annual benefit to \$1,310. The increased payment is meant to recognize the special circumstances faced by single parents.

Strategy #2: What is being done to preserve and create new affordable and supportive housing?

In addition to strategies aimed at reducing poverty, the other key element to an effective homeless strategy is affordable housing. In recent years, federal and provincial governments withdrew funding for new social housing and left the task entirely to the private sector. This strategy has failed. Canada is the only country in the developed world without a national housing program.

In 2000, each level of government took some steps to preserve and create new affordable housing. But this action still falls short of what is needed. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities National Housing Policy Options Team has proposed a viable national housing strategy that calls for 20,000 new rental units and 10,000 rehabilitated rental units across Canada each year for the next five years. The recent federal election brought promises from the Liberal party for a renewed role in affordable housing development. We look forward to concrete commitments in 2001.

Preserving existing affordable rental housing

The federal government has...

► *Maintained funding for the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)*

During 2000, the city delivered \$7.3 million in federal RRAP funding to upgrade the homes of low-income renters, rooming house residents and homeowners. The city is recommending 19 affordable rental housing projects for RRAP funding, for a total of 385 units. With a capital investment of about \$11,000 per unit, these affordable rental-housing units will be preserved for the next 10 to 15 years.

Among the projects are two rooming houses outside the downtown core for low-income, primarily single renters who are at risk of homelessness. RRAP and Let's Build funding has been combined to convert a vacant industrial site and create 74 new affordable units. Co-operation between the private sector and federal, provincial and municipal governments is making this project possible.

For the first time, the federal government has allocated RRAP funding to convert underused residential and non-residential buildings to affordable rental housing. Development sponsors may be eligible for forgivable loans of up to \$18,000 for each self-contained apartment, or \$12,000 for each rooming house bed-unit created. Prospective landlords of converted buildings must agree to rent at or below specified levels, to tenants with low and moderate incomes. In 2000, 83 units were created in three housing projects through the conversion program.

The City of Toronto has...

► *Worked to minimize the impact of rental housing demolitions*

The Ontario government repealed the *Rental Housing Protection Act* in June 1998. Since then, the city has received six redevelopment applications requesting more height or density. These applications affect 1,125 existing conventional rental units, and more applications like these are expected soon.

The impact of these applications is to demolish existing rental housing and replace it with more expensive units or condominiums. The City's Official Plan policies seek the replacement of rental units to ensure there is no net loss of conventional rental housing as a result of such applications. To date, the Ontario Municipal Board has approved two of the six applications. These replace only about 60% of the conventional rental units, but provide an assistance package for the former tenants.

The city's ability to request replacement of rental housing is limited when the proposed redevelopment falls within current (or "as of right") planning permissions. In Ontario, applications involving the demolition of rental housing seem to be a problem particular to Toronto. For these reasons, City Council asked the province in October 2000 to approve special legislation on the demolition of rental housing in the city.

➤ *Worked with the community to help rooming house tenants*

Rooming houses make up about 2% (5,000 to 10,000 units) of the available rental housing in Toronto. There are a number of concerns related to this housing stock, including proposed property taxation, zoning limitations, lack of affordable insurance and inability to comply with management bylaws.

The city's Rooming House Work Group brings together landlords, tenants, community agencies and city staff to share views and strategize on how to maintain and promote affordable rooming houses and bachelor apartments in Toronto.

The City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund supports the following three initiatives aimed at supporting low-income single people in rooming houses:

- *The Critical Incident Working Group* is developing a co-ordinated response to emergencies in licensed and unlicensed rooming houses. In 2000, project staff have responded to 21 rooming house emergencies.
- *The Rooming House Licensing, Standards and Compliance Working Group* develops recommendations to improve standards and processes in this area.
- *The Licensing and Relocations Group* is developing a relocation contingency plan for rooming houses that face closure because the license has been revoked.

In 2001, the city will continue to work with community groups on issues identified through these working groups.

Creating new, affordable rental housing

The federal government has...

➤ *Made land available for housing development*

The city is negotiating with the federal government on the use of a federally-owned property in Toronto for affordable housing development. The site would also involve a provincial partnership. Details on this project have yet to be finalized.

➤ *Allowed use of funds under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative for transitional housing*

Under the new federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), Toronto will receive \$53 million over the next three years. The federal government left it to local communities to set priorities, but they did identify transitional housing as a key area for consideration. The Community Plan for Homelessness in Toronto, developed jointly by the city and the community, earmarks \$21.2 million for transitional housing over the next three years.

The provincial government has...

➤ *Provided PST rebates for multi-residential construction*

The province has allocated \$4 million province-wide in PST rebates on building materials for new, multi-residential construction since 1999. The incentive was to stimulate the production of new rental housing, not necessarily affordable housing. However, by stipulating maximum sizes for the units (a bachelor, for example, cannot be larger than 500 square feet), it is hoped that the smaller units will be affordable. All of the funds have been allocated, supporting construction of 2,000 units. The city has encouraged the province to continue this program, but no commitment has been made.

➤ *Agreed to make provincial lands available for at least 500 affordable units*

The province recently donated two sites to the City of Toronto for the development of new, affordable housing. One is a six-hectare site at Eglinton Avenue West and Black Creek Drive. The province estimates that a minimum of 100 units could be built on this site. The province has also donated the former Princess Margaret Hospital for use as an emergency shelter in the short term and potentially for housing in the longer term. One or both of these sites could facilitate new housing development under the city's *Let's Build* program. The city will make a decision on how to use the sites early in 2001.

➤ *Committed \$50 million in rent supplements*

Rent supplements cover the gap between market and affordable rents. A new provincial rent supplement program uses \$50 million in recent savings in federal housing subsidy to provide five years worth of geared-to-income rent in private rental units. Toronto's share is 1,841 units (1,300 approved so far by City Council) plus 436 units for people needing support services. The program will raise the number of private rent supplement units, including those already in place, to about 5,000 in Toronto. There will also be new units in the "905" GTA.

Delivery of the rent supplement program has been slowed by limited landlord interest in Toronto's tight rental housing market, City Council's concern about picking up the costs when the program ends in five years and uncertainty over who will administer the 436 supportive units. Nevertheless, by the end of 2000, about 500 new units had been committed.

DEVOLUTION OF SOCIAL HOUSING TO MUNICIPALITIES

The province is devolving social housing to municipalities. Between 1998 and 2000, the province continued to administer the system, billing municipalities for the costs, which were pooled across the GTA. In December 2000, the Social Housing Reform Act was passed. Under this legislation, ownership and operation of housing authorities was transferred to municipalities effective January 2001. Under the legislation, housing subsidies will be paid directly through the property tax base. City and provincial staff have started detailed planning for the transfer of program administration in late 2001 or 2002. This function involves setting annual allocations for each housing agency, flowing funds, setting rules and conditions such as those governing waiting lists, and monitoring program compliance. The city will plan carefully for the transfer to ensure there is not disruption to tenants or community housing agencies.

Like other municipalities, Toronto disagrees strongly with the decision to pay housing subsidies through the property tax base. There is concern about the potential long-term costs for capital repairs in the aging housing stock, subsidy pressure as federal dollars phase out over a multi-year period and geared-to-income rents cover a declining share of rising costs and mortgage interest hikes.

On a positive note, devolution is an opportunity to rationalize the publicly-owned stock. Under the new legislation, the provincially-run Metro Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA) has been transferred to the City of Toronto. Before devolution, the Toronto Housing Company and MTHA carried out similar functions with separate administrations and under different levels of government. Devolution lets the city integrate its strategies for providing a broad range of shelter and housing, from emergency shelters to homeless prevention services, to ongoing housing subsidy.

The city will keep looking to senior governments for funding and collaboration on strategies to address homelessness and the affordable housing crisis.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Continued to roll out the Let's Build affordable housing program*

Let's Build provides municipal land and capital for new affordable housing construction. Since it started, *Let's Build* has committed \$10.6 million in funding and five city properties for new development. Two more sites, provided by community-based groups, are being funded by *Let's Build*. These commitments will result in 384 units of new affordable housing over the next two years for more than 660 low-income people, including about 300 children.

Construction began on the first *Let's Build* project as the year 2000 came to a close. The city-owned building at 419-425 Coxwell Avenue is being developed by the Frontiers Foundation, an Aboriginal-focused charitable housing provider that has developed over 2,000 housing units across Canada. The Frontiers project will provide 74 affordable rental apartments for low-income families and singles — both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

The project is funded by *Let's Build* and the federal government, through Human Resources Development Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Frontiers will also raise \$370,000 to help reduce costs and keep the housing affordable over the long term.

As the Frontiers project demonstrates, *Let's Build* can harness the support of different levels of government as well as that of the community sector. A second round of funding for *Let's Build* has been approved for 2001 in the amount of \$11.8 million.

➤ *Set targets for affordable housing development*

City Council recently approved housing development targets for the *Let's Build* program as part of its affordable housing strategy. The city has made a commitment to provide funding for 400 new affordable housing units in 2001 and to increase annual levels of production to 500 units by 2003.

➤ *Dedicated federal SCPI funding to build transitional housing*

The Community Plan for Homelessness in Toronto outlines how the city will spend \$53 million in new federal funding under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. The largest proportion of funds — \$21.1 million — is dedicated to developing new transitional housing.

The first round of funding will be made available through a Request for Proposals (RFP) in February 2001. Funds will be combined with the city's *Let's Build* resources to maximize the number of housing units built and the affordability of rents. Funding will be targeted to transitional housing for people who are homeless or at significant risk of homelessness.

SCPI funding is not a substitute for *Let's Build*. SCPI funding is specific to transitional housing. *Let's Build* supports a broader range of affordable housing options. This collaboration, however, is an example of the multi-government partnerships that the city has been seeking.

➤ *Allocated funds through the Mayor's Homeless Initiative Reserve Fund*

This fund provides one-time capital support for transitional housing initiatives for homeless and high-risk groups. In 2000, a total of 12 projects were funded. Priority was given to projects that help people living outside or in shelters to move to stable housing. The projects will serve single parents, Aboriginal youth, single adults, and people with addictions and other health problems.

Two projects received capital support to renovate buildings and create 60 new transitional housing beds. This support helped to lever funding from other levels of government and the private sector. One project will provide housing by February 2001, the other in the spring.

The 10 planning grants approved under the Mayor's Fund give groups the additional financial and professional capacity needed to develop a housing project proposal. For example, some groups will use the money to develop architectural plans or determine the feasibility of a construction project. Of the projects approved, four are ready to move on to the development phase. The rest are nearing the end of the planning phase and will move forward in early 2001.

NEW HOUSING FOR NATIVE YOUTH

Native Child & Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) was funded under the Mayor's Homeless Initiatives Reserve Fund to develop transitional housing for Aboriginal youth. NCFST is unique, in that it is Ontario's only off-reserve child welfare agency under the direct control of the Native community. NCFST provides an ambitious program to Aboriginal youth (ages 16 – 24) using culturally-based healing methods, the values of self-care, respect for self and others, sobriety, cultural literacy and movement towards becoming a contributing member of the community. Like others facing the affordable housing crisis, youth involved in the NCFST have expressed frustration and fear of being homeless. One of the major obstacles to breaking destructive cycles is the lack of stable, affordable housing, which limits their ability to hold a job or finish school.

The Mayor's Fund will help the NCFST develop a proposal that, along with funds from the federal government, will make it possible for them to acquire and renovate a house. Ten Native youth will live there communally and work toward their goals in a personal development program. The NCFST transitional housing model addresses the youths' range of challenges with an integrated approach to personal development. Clean, safe and stable housing is a key ingredient in this. Once the youth have worked through the program successfully, they will move on to the next phase of their lives, moving out of the house and living independently.

➤ *Obtained approval from the Ontario Municipal Board for a second suites bylaw*

Second suites are a key source of affordable rental housing in Toronto. A second suite is a self-contained unit, generally in a single-detached or semi-detached house. Most are basement apartments.

In 1999, Toronto Council adopted a second suites by-law. A number of residents' groups and individuals appealed the by-law to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). After hearing the appeals, the OMB gave final approval to the city's by-law in July 2000, with amendments on building alterations and parking provisions in some downtown neighbourhoods.

➤ *Declared a National Housing Strategy Day*

November 22, 2000 was declared National Housing Strategy Day by the City of Toronto. The date was chosen as it marked the second anniversary of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Big City Mayors' declaration of homelessness as a national disaster.

The city partnered with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities National Housing Policy Options Team and the National Housing and Homelessness Network to hold a community rally calling for a national housing program.

This event sparked national support and media interest in the urgent need for a national housing program. Similar events were held in communities across the country.

Creating new supportive housing

The provincial government has ...

➤ *Added more supportive housing units*

In March 1999, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care announced \$45 million for new supportive housing units across the province. The housing is for people who have a serious mental illness and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The first phase (1999) allocations for agencies in Toronto were \$8.9 million in capital grants and \$10.7 million in annual operating grants for 762 units. Most of the units are now occupied.

In November 2000, the Ministry announced the second phase of supportive housing allocations. Toronto's share of this phase includes \$9.1 million in capital and \$3.5 million in operating grants for about 300 units. These will be put in place as buildings are leased or are purchased and renovated over the next several months. These are not newly constructed units — existing units have been converted for this purpose. These units are much needed, but will not meet the current or future demand for this type of housing.

➤ *Expanded the Habitat Boarding Homes Program*

Habitat Services monitors and funds private boarding and rooming house operators who house psychiatric consumer-survivors. Habitat screens and places tenants in the homes and does regular site visits to ensure that health, safety and support standards are being met. In 2000, a total of 140 new beds were added to the Habitat system, bringing the total number of beds funded through this program to 850. The provincial Ministry of Health pays 80% of the costs for this program. The City of Toronto pays 20%.

As of January 1, 2001, the province has increased the per diem (daily amount for food and shelter) for this program from \$34.50 to a maximum of \$40.00.

Strategy #3: What is being done to shift the focus from emergency services to prevention?

The City of Toronto supports a shift in emphasis from a "crisis" response to homelessness to prevention and longer-term measures. Over the last few years, the city has directed more resources to strategies that help people from becoming homeless in the first place. This continues to be a challenge as we also need to ensure that enough resources go to emergency services for people who need them.

Services are only one part of a prevention strategy. Resources to reduce poverty and provide affordable housing must be the key elements.

The provincial government has...

➤ *Allowed municipalities to direct hostel funds to prevention*

The province has given municipalities the option of directing a percentage of emergency shelter funding toward prevention programs and services. Action by the City of Toronto in this regard is described later in this section.

➤ *Maintained funding for the Provincial Homeless Initiatives Fund*

The province set up this fund in 1998 on the recommendation of the Provincial Task Force on Homelessness. Toronto's share is now \$4.724 million annually. The province stressed that funds were to be used to help people move from the street to emergency shelter, and from shelters into permanent housing, as well as for prevention strategies.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Funded community-based services under the City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund (CT-HIF)*

The province, through the Provincial Homelessness Initiatives Fund and the city, provides funding for the CT-HIF. This is the city's grants program for community-based homeless services. In 2000, this fund provided over \$6 million to 95 community agencies for 124 community-based projects.

CT-HIF funding priorities are based on the recommendations of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force and on consultations with community groups that work with homeless people. The priority areas are:

- drop-in programs
- street outreach and information services
- access to housing and housing help projects
- homelessness prevention
- housing and hunger initiatives
- harm reduction initiatives
- community economic development and skills development initiatives
- community/business homeless initiatives
- homeless innovations.

These priorities have evolved as community needs change and as new funding programs are established. A service planning process has helped to identify funding priorities for under-served geographical communities and for communities of "common bond" across the city.

Suburban communities, ethno-cultural and Aboriginal groups have been identified as under-served, and have been targeted for enhanced funding. Examples of this funding include:

- services designed to help Aboriginal people move from the streets to shelters to permanent housing, and services to support vulnerable people in their housing
- a new outreach and direct support project for Aboriginal people with addictions who are living outside
- a new program for at-risk tenants and homeless people, many of whom are new Canadians, in the under-served communities of Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Park.

➤ *Redirected some hostel funds to prevention initiatives*

This new initiative helps the city develop more effective long-term strategies to help prevent homelessness. In 2000, the approved funding for this program was \$5.6 million, cost-shared between the province and the city on an 80%/20% basis.

Three projects now operating under this program include:

- Project Going Home, which helps individuals and families voluntarily return to their own communities if they can demonstrate that they have a permanent address
- Housing Matchmaker, which provides co-ordinated housing support and follow-up to single youth and adults who have been living in the shelter system or on the streets for more than one year
- Housing/Community Follow-up, which has workers in 48 emergency shelter sites. They give high-level, one-to-one support to people trying to find and keep their housing.

When fully operational, these three projects will help over 7,000 people annually. Most began in March 2000. By the end of the first six months, 1,528 people had been housed.

➤ *Increased funding to eviction prevention programs*

The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) Early Intervention Program, tested as a pilot in 1999, is now funded by the city as an ongoing program. CERA gets a weekly list of eviction applications from the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. Trained volunteers contact tenants with information on their rights under the *Tenant Protection Act*.

More than 20,000 households have been contacted by CERA and given information about the Tribunal, as well as relevant community services. Early intervention has helped tenants keep their housing through the following strategies:

- negotiation with the landlord
- referrals to the Rent Bank and Shelter Fund to pay for rental arrears
- referrals to a legal clinics, concluding in a successful hearings at the Tribunal
- referrals to housing help groups so that evicted tenants make the transition to another home without resorting to emergency shelter.

HOW EARLY INTERVENTION HELPS

A landlord had applied to evict a Spanish-speaking, newcomer family of five for non-payment of rent. The father had been ill for six weeks and they had fallen behind. Although the father had returned to work, the family did not have the resources to pay off arrears of \$1,680. The family received an information package in the mail from the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA). The package was in Spanish and 25 other languages. It alerted the family to the landlord's eviction application and convinced them to seek help.

The family contacted the Etobicoke Housing Help Centre. A Spanish-speaking housing counsellor met with the family, contacted the landlord and mediated a settlement. The counsellor also arranged for a loan from the Toronto Rent Bank. The family paid the arrears and the landlord cancelled the eviction application.

The Rent Bank helps prevent families with children who are at imminent risk of eviction from becoming homeless. The program is operated through a partnership of Neighbourhood Information Post, Central Neighbourhood House and the Regent Park Community Health Centre. Supports include:

- short-term counselling
- legal advice and referrals regarding eviction
- negotiation with landlords
- help to find new housing
- where appropriate, interest-free loans to pay off rental arrears and stop the eviction process.

A total of \$200,000 is available for loans. Between December 1999 and October 2000, 177 families received loans from the Rent Bank. Of these, 169 families (247 adults and 340 children) managed to keep their housing and stabilize their housing situations.

Single people are not eligible for assistance from the Rent Bank or the Shelter Fund described below. Community groups continue to stress the need for a similar kind of support to help prevent evictions among single people.

➤ *Assisted families through the Shelter Fund*

This fund, set up by Toronto Social Services in 1999, uses the municipal savings from the National Child Tax Benefit to help families receiving social assistance maintain their housing. Experience this past year shows that the fund has been extremely effective in helping families keep or find more suitable housing.

In 2000, more than 2,000 families per month were given assistance through the Shelter Fund. Social Services expects to have issued approximately \$13 million dollars as of the end of 2000.

The Shelter Fund policy has been expanded to support families leaving emergency shelters. Families receive additional funds for shelter costs for three months after leaving the shelter. This supports and increases their ability to maintain housing. Families can receive additional funds for shelter costs for up to six months when they are participating in an approved Ontario Works activity.

Toronto Social Services is conducting a thorough review of the Shelter Fund, and will use the evaluation information to develop a long-term program plan.

HELP TO START OVER

A woman with two children had been living with an abusive husband. She had to be hospitalized after a serious assault. The husband also damaged the family apartment, and had not been paying the rent, so the landlord started eviction proceedings. The family ended up staying in a shelter. The shelter staff, along with Toronto Social Services, negotiated the payment of rental arrears through the Shelter Fund. The woman and her children moved back into their home. The family was also able to gain access to Community Start-up Benefits to help replace their damaged belongings.

► *Created a new Shelter Support Strategy*

Toronto Social Services has also implemented an overall Shelter Support Strategy. The focus of the strategy is to make improvements to policies, service planning, service delivery, community linkages and inter-divisional and departmental service partnerships.

One of the key initiatives in 2000 was the introduction of a Shelter Support Liaison in the local Social Service offices. These new staff:

- promote local initiatives to maximize the use of the Shelter Fund, including eviction prevention strategies
- establish key contacts with community agencies and services
- identify community resources where clients with housing issues can be referred, and ensure this information is shared with other social services staff.

► *Set up a Tenant Defence Fund*

Under the *Tenant Protection Act*, landlords can raise rents above the annual rent increase guideline (AGI) to help pay for major repairs, security services or increased operating costs such as property taxes.

The costs to tenants to dispute an AGI are quite high, especially if expert advice is needed. In response to these concerns, the city created a Tenant Defence Fund to help tenants dispute above-guideline increases.

The fund has two parts:

- Tenant Support Grants, a fund of \$153,000, provides financial assistance to groups of tenants disputing an AGI
- An Outreach and Co-ordinating Team of rental housing workers, funded with \$147,000, help tenants organize and prepare disputes, analyze trends and prepare test cases.

Ninety-five applications have been made to the Tenant Defence Fund since the program began in February 2000. About \$151,500 was either committed or disbursed for grants. In total, support through the Tenant Defence Fund helped over 14,000 tenant households in Toronto.

➤ *Set up a Rental Housing Program*

This city-run program co-ordinates information and support services for tenants, including:

- administering the city's Tenant Defence Fund
- monitoring trends affecting tenants and landlords, including impacts of the *Tenant Protection Act*, and producing statistical analyses on key issues
- gathering, producing, updating, translating and distributing a wide range of information for tenants and landlords
- operating a web site with publications of interest to tenants and landlords, as well as links to agencies involved in rental housing services
- operating a telephone and e-mail information referral service
- co-ordinating, with the city's Finance Department, a tax notification program for tenants and landlords about property tax decreases and automatic rent reductions
- funding a revision of the *Tenant Survival Manual* for release early in 2001
- co-ordinating the Rental Housing Advisory Committee.

➤ *Facilitated a Rental Housing Advisory Committee*

This committee brings together a range of rental housing stakeholders to network and discuss the key issues in rental housing. Members include tenant and landlord organizations, community agencies that serve landlords and tenants, political representatives, city staff and representatives of other government levels.

To date the committee has:

- initiated a large public education campaign on the rights and obligations of tenants under the *Tenant Protection Act*, scheduled for launch in March 2001
- developed information kits and workshops for homeowners interested in creating a second suite (the first kits were released in November and December 2000, and the promotion program and workshops are scheduled to start in the spring of 2001)
- evaluated the Tax Notification Program.

A word about emergency responses

Until we have more supportive and affordable housing, homelessness is only expected to get worse. In the meantime, the city is faced with a growing demand for emergency shelter. Front-line workers continue to raise serious concerns about the lack of emergency shelter beds and shelter programs that meet the diverse needs of people who are homeless. More harm reduction facilities are needed, as are services for transgendered people. We also need more shelters that can accommodate couples, and shelters where people can bring their pets.

The city has to balance these needs with the concerns of local residents, some of whom do not want emergency shelters or affordable housing developments in their area. This section describes the main emergency strategies implemented in 2000.

The provincial government has...

► *Donated the former Princess Margaret Hospital for use as an emergency shelter*

In November 2000, the province donated the former Princess Margaret Hospital to the City of Toronto for use as an emergency shelter. The province is also providing \$60,000 for a day program in the shelter over the winter. This is to include counselling on pre-employment and employment skills, interpersonal skills, referrals to permanent housing, help with housing searches, help with getting to appointments and help in obtaining identification documents.

The city opened the site as a 120-bed emergency shelter for adult women and couples in December and is assessing the site's potential for permanent housing development.

► *Increased hostel per diems across the province*

In December 2000, the province said it would increase its funding to municipalities for emergency shelter operation by 10%. This has been a longstanding issue for the City of Toronto, which has struggled with the rising costs of operating shelters without an increase in support from the province. As of January 1, 2001, the province has increased the per diem (daily amount for each shelter user) from \$34.50 to a maximum of \$38.00. While the city welcomes this increase, the actual cost of running shelters in Toronto is closer to \$45.00 per day. Therefore, there is still a shortfall of about \$14 million to the city for the cost of operating the emergency shelter system.

► *Set up the Off the Street, Into Shelter Fund*

The province also announced plans in December 2000 for a new fund aimed at helping people to get off the street and into shelters. Funding was made available to municipalities as of January 1, 2001. Toronto is expected to receive \$3.2 million under the new Off the Street, Into Shelter fund. Specific details are only now being provided.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Developed an emergency shelter strategy*

Emergency shelters are a key part of the city's response to homelessness. Toronto Hostel Services has initiated a number of changes to expand and improve shelter services. Shelters have moved beyond simply providing food and a bed toward a model that recognizes the diversity of people who are homeless, provides a range of support services, and integrates a prevention approach. The current priorities for Toronto Hostel Services include:

- continuing to ensure adequate shelter space is available for homeless individuals and families
- reducing reliance on seasonal and temporary facilities
- ensuring that all shelter services meet minimum standards for physical environment, case management services, resident rights and harm reduction principles
- developing services for high-risk groups such as women, Aboriginal people and people with addictions
- developing more transitional housing options for people who cannot live independently and need a higher level of support.

Key initiatives in 2000 included:

- a commitment to add 675 permanent new beds by the end of 2001 to ensure the occupancy level does not exceed 90%
- redevelopment of Seaton House and the addition of three satellite locations that will provide specialized services, including harm reduction programs, a program for senior men, and a recovery program for men who are in sobriety
- a Housing and Community Follow-up Worker Program, with staff to help people find and keep their housing
- a new 80-bed shelter for refugee families, operated by World Vision.

Key initiatives planned for 2001 include:

- Seaton House transitional housing project will include independent units for those who have begun work and an employment centre for men moving toward employment
- new family shelters will expand the number of beds for homeless families and reduce the use of motel space on Kingston Road
- Eva's Satellite Program for Youth will construct a new site for the transitional housing program
- a 25-bed transitional housing program for women is targeted to open in May 2001
- two new shelters for Aboriginal youth and adults are under development.

Strategy #4: What is being done to develop strategies and plan services for high-risk groups?

Strategies for High-risk Groups

The common issues for people who are homeless are poverty and the lack of supportive and affordable housing. But some groups are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and need specially targeted strategies. This next section highlights progress in responding to the needs of the following high-risk groups as identified by the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force:

- families
- abused women
- youth
- aboriginal people
- immigrants and refugees.

Community groups also identify the need for more targeted strategies for people who are gay, transgendered people, and for people with mental health issues. Mental health strategies are discussed under Strategy #5 of the Report Card.

(a) *Strategies for families*

Two-parent families and couples are now the fastest growing groups of emergency shelter users. Most end up homeless because of abuse or affordability issues. Families tend to stay in shelters for longer periods of time, primarily because of the lack of affordable rental housing. Effective strategies to help homeless families include:

- prevention strategies to help families from becoming homeless
- help finding and keeping affordable housing
- ensuring emergency shelter services fit the needs of homeless families.

The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force called on the province to:

- create new affordable housing
- increase the shelter component of social assistance to reflect Toronto rents
- create a shelter allowance program for the working poor.

To date, the province has not implemented these recommendations.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Taken steps to help homeless families*

The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force identified the need to reduce the concentration of family shelter in motels along Kingston Road and to relieve pressure on local schools. A steering committee was set up to review the use of motels as family shelters. Since the committee made its final report to Toronto Council in April 1999, Toronto Hostel Services has done the following:

- established standards for using motels as emergency shelter
- enhanced the level of monitoring and compliance for motels used as emergency shelters
- reduced the number of motels with whom the city contracts emergency shelter services from 12 to eight
- continued to support and work with local schools where children living in motels are enrolled
- negotiated the purchase of new, 160-bed family shelter.

Hostel Services has also set targets to further reduce the use of motels as family shelter as new capacity comes on stream. We can meet these targets if:

- the city can find alternate sites for family shelter
- family shelter admissions stay at current levels
- 50:50 cost-sharing with the province is secured for capital construction.

For other city strategies targeted to homeless families, such as the Housing Contacts Program, Rent Bank, Social Services Shelter Fund and Social Services Shelter Strategy, please see Strategy #3 in this Report Card.

(b) Strategies for abused women

Many women turn to shelters to escape abuse in their homes. About 380 beds are available in the abused women's shelter system, which is 100% provincially-funded. Women who cannot find space there must turn to the city's emergency shelters. The city estimates that at least as many assaulted women and their children stay in emergency shelters as in abused women's shelters.

The city continues to advocate to the province for more beds in the abused women's shelter system. This would ensure that women fleeing violence have access to safe, confidential shelters with appropriate supports. The province has taken no action to date.

The federal government has...

➤ *Allocated additional funding under the Shelter Enhancement Initiative*

The Shelter Enhancement Initiative, under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, provides grants to repair and improve shelters for abused women and children. In December 1999, the federal government announced \$43 million in additional funding for this program, nation-wide, over three years.

For the year 2000-2001, \$1 million was granted for six existing women's shelters in Toronto. Funds may also be approved for one new youth shelter and one new women's shelter.

(c) *Strategies for youth*

Youth are still a significant group of emergency shelter users, and effective strategies must take into account that many youth do not yet have the life skills needed to live independently. Young people who do not have references or previous experience find it hard to get housing and employment. For these reasons, homeless youth often need higher levels of support.

The federal government has...

➤ *Allocated additional funds under the Canada Youth Employment Strategy*

Late in 1999, the federal government announced an extra \$59 million (nation-wide over three years) for the Canada Youth Employment Strategy. About \$3 million was allocated for youth-serving agencies in Toronto in 2000. Community agencies are still in the process of applying. To be eligible, agencies must provide services for unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 29. Programs must lead to employment or involve community service work.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Continued support for the Squeegee Work Youth Mobilization Program (SWYM)*

A group of community-based agencies, led by Youth Link, runs this successful program. Funding comes from the city and Human Resources Development Canada. This unique employment preparation program targets the unmet and complex needs of street-involved youth, to provide them with an alternative to the squeegee trade. The program assists with basic needs (such as housing, food and health care), helps them stabilize their lives, and includes activities to increase employability. The second stage of the program connects the youth to employment skills development programs, jobs, and further education.

In 2000, 140 youth took part in the program. Of these, 83 (61%) finished the program. A number of youth who did not formally graduate left for full-time employment, other training opportunities or for drug and alcohol treatment. SWYM has also been successful in reaching young women who are pregnant and have a history of drug addiction.

Youth were also helped with getting basic identification and health cards. They were paid for the work they did in the program, so that they did not need to squeegee or panhandle to support themselves. Many found housing, but affordable housing remains an especially difficult challenge for these youth and the number one barrier in moving on to employment, training and educational opportunities.

➤ *Helped develop Eva's Phoenix — transitional shelter for youth*

Eva's Phoenix, a transitional shelter and employment facility for youth, was opened on May 31, 2000 by its parent organization, Eva's Initiatives. Eva's Phoenix works with 50 youth at a time in a combined employment and life skills program in which their basic needs of food and shelter are met while they take part in employment programs. Human Resources Development Canada paid for the very successful training program, in which homeless youth were trained by the construction crews to help build the facility.

Eva's Initiatives and the City of Toronto received the Peter J. Marshall Innovation Award from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario for this project. The model is being developed for replication both provincially and nationally, and has garnered international interest. The Toronto Board of Trade report *Building Solutions to Homelessness* cites Eva's Phoenix as a model of what can be accomplished when the business community partners with government, labour and the community to create long-term solutions to homelessness.

Capital funding for the project included contributions from all levels of government, the Canadian Auto Workers and considerable private donations.

➤ *Increased support to young homeless parents*

According to a 1998 Public Health report, *No Fixed Address: Young Parents on the Street*, more than 300 children are born in Toronto each year to women who are homeless or marginally housed. About half of these children are taken from their mothers before age two, with devastating consequences for both mother and child. The report highlights the urgent need to reduce the stress experienced by young parents (usually single mothers) who are in constant danger of losing their housing, and thus, custody of their children.

The group *Young Parents, No Fixed Address* includes representatives from Toronto Public Health and more than 20 agencies working with homeless young parents. This three-year-old group's mandate is to address the urgent problems of Toronto's growing number of vulnerable young families. Achievements to date include:

- increased case planning, co-ordination and information-sharing among agencies
- advocacy to add beds for pregnant teens to Robertson House, previously available for families only
- a part-time nurse for prenatal care at Robertson House
- advocacy for increased parent relief services, described in more detail below.

Young Parents, No Fixed Address has funding for a demonstration project to provide overnight respite care for young parents without family support — a need identified in the Public Health report as vital to stabilizing the lives of young people in their efforts to become loving and nurturing parents.

The City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund funds a new project at the Yonge Street Mission's Evergreen Centre drop-in for homeless youth. The program is designed to relieve young parents five afternoons per week, so that they can gain access to housing supports, health care, employment and life skills training.

The City's Homeless Initiatives Fund also supports projects for young parents through agencies such as Agincourt Community Services (at the Scarborough Housing Help Centre), Massey Centre and Oolagen. These projects help young parents find and keep housing, and refer young families to services that address issues such as substance use and parenting support.

(d) *Strategies for Aboriginal people*

The Mayor's Task Force and community-based agencies agree that Aboriginal people are over-represented among Toronto's homeless population. Over the years, results show that the most effective strategies for this group are developed and delivered by Aboriginal groups.

The federal government has...

➤ *Continued to participate in the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee*

Representatives from several federal ministries have attended meetings of the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee. This Toronto group of city staff and Aboriginal representatives was set up in 2000 to develop strategies to address the needs of Aboriginal people who are homeless. The progress of this committee is discussed later in this section.

➤ *Allocated the increased funding to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy on Homelessness*

In December 1999, the federal government announced an extra \$59 million nation-wide over three years to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

In 2000, over \$1.2 million was allocated to address urban Aboriginal homelessness in Toronto. The funds were administered through Miziwe Biik and used to address a variety of critical needs of Aboriginal people who are homeless including:

- food and shelter services
- employment services
- outreach services.

Over the next three years, a total of \$8.7 million has been designated under the Urban Aboriginal Strategy on Homelessness to support programs in Ontario.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Targeted funding to Aboriginal services*

Aboriginal people have been identified under the City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund as an underserved community, and have been targeted for enhanced funding. In 2000, this included:

- a range of services designed to help Aboriginal people move from the streets, to shelter, and from shelters to permanent housing services to support vulnerable people in their housing
- a new outreach and direct support project for Aboriginal people with addictions who are living outside.

➤ *Supported the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee*

The Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee began meeting in January 2000. The Steering Committee has a two-year mandate to advise on a plan to prevent and reduce homelessness among Aboriginal people in Toronto. The committee is also expected to monitor the implementation of the plan and to evaluate the results.

In October 2000, Toronto Council received the Steering Committee's first annual report. It outlines a framework for reducing Aboriginal homelessness with three strategic components:

- housing and homelessness
- health, mental health and addictions
- employment and training.

The report contained 31 recommendations, based on consultations with Aboriginal agencies. City staff will respond to these in April 2001. During 2001, the Steering Committee will implement some of the recommendations and develop a monitoring and evaluation process. The city is providing \$5,000 to help with this stage.

(e) *Strategies for immigrants and refugees*

Immigrants and refugees face the same fundamental challenges as others who have become homeless — poverty and the lack of affordable housing. This is compounded by the fact that they are learning the language and customs of a new country. Refugee claimants are most at risk of becoming homeless because of the lack of supports and opportunities available to them. Refugee claimants are not eligible for federal settlement programs. The city continues to advocate to the federal government for more support to help refugee claimants secure income and find housing upon arrival in Canada, reducing their risk of homelessness.

The federal government has...

➤ *Established the Ontario Points-of-Entry Pilot Project for Refugee Claimants as an ongoing program*

In December 1999, the federal government began a three-month pilot project involving four of the busiest points-of-entry in Ontario. This project led to a federal policy, providing refugee claimants with an "Acknowledgement of Refugee Claim" letter.

This crucial letter allows refugee claimants to:

- get medical treatment through the Interim Federal Health Program
- gain access to social assistance to help secure housing, rather than relying on the emergency shelter system
- enrol children in school right away.

Prior to this initiative, refugee claimants had difficulty gaining access to income support programs until their claim for refugee status was determined, a process that can take several months.

The City of Toronto has...

► *Targeted funds to services for immigrants and refugees*

The City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund identifies ethno-cultural groups as under-served, and therefore eligible for enhanced funding. In 2000, this included a new program for at-risk tenants and homeless people in the communities of Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Park, where many immigrants and refugees live.

Service Planning

The City of Toronto has...

► *Continued to enhance the planning of homeless services*

The city works with the community-based sector to plan services for homeless people. This ensures that services and funding:

- make the best use of resources
- meet the needs of homeless people
- contribute to prevention wherever possible.

A number of initiatives are underway through the service planning process. These include:

- **People living outside:** Helping people who are homeless gain access to services and leave the street is a high priority for the city. The community is increasingly concerned about the consequences of people living outside. When people lose their connections and start living outside, it takes a great investment of time and resources to help them become stable and secure in permanent housing. Intensive support services that foster trust and rebuild social connections are the most effective. Transitional and supportive housing for people with complex needs is also essential.

To identify the best approaches to helping people living outside, the city is working with the community-based sector in several ways. This includes a Commissioner's Roundtable that brought together street outreach and service workers with city staff to share ideas and get the planning process started. Based on this work, several city initiatives are underway including:

- *Service planning with street outreach and service workers:* This work uncovered a need for more intensive outreach to help people leave the street, without losing the focus on survival services. There is also a need to improve links between outreach workers and emergency shelter providers. The new provincial *Off the Street, Into Shelter* fund may provide opportunities to act on these suggestions.
- *New Shelter Development:* Plans to develop new emergency shelters are underway to ensure that the city meets its target of a 90% occupancy rate.

- *A Harm Reduction Working Group:* This subcommittee of the city's Homeless Health Reference Group identified the need for more harm reduction services in the shelter system to reach people with addictions and mental illness (see Strategy #5 in this Report Card for more details).
- *Street Count:* A street count, discussed later in this section, is planned for the spring of 2001 to measure and monitor the scope of street homelessness across Toronto.

Key action needed by the province to help meet the needs of people living outside include:

- more funding for mental health and addictions services.
 - more funding for supportive and transitional housing for people with mental health and addictions issues.
- **Drop-in Services:** The city started planning in this area because drop-ins, although they suffer from inadequate and unstable funding, are a key component of the homeless service system. Levels of service vary across the city. The ability of drop-ins to maintain their facilities, make capital upgrades or appropriately staff critical programs and services has been limited.

The city is working with a reference group of drop-in providers to develop funding recommendations, both for the city and for other levels of government. To help with this work, the city commissioned two extensive surveys of more than 400 drop-in service users and about 30 agencies. The surveys helped the city and the reference group understand how people who are homeless use drop-ins, and identified gaps in services and funding. During 2001, the city will finalize the recommendations, while we keep working on the longer-term issues identified through this process.

- **Housing help services:** Housing help services refer to a range of programs that help vulnerable tenants find and maintain housing. Funding for these services comes from a number of sources. Recognizing that housing help services can prevent homelessness and the need for emergency shelters, the City of Toronto Homelessness Initiatives Fund increased funding for housing help services in recent years.

In 2000, the city began a review of services funded through the Community Partners Program, working with a consortium of agencies. Reviewing this particular program was a priority, because it had recently been downloaded from the province. In 2001, the city will continue planning through a review of other housing help funding to ensure that, as these services expand, they remain effective, co-ordinated and accessible to people who need them.

➤ *Initiated a project to count people living outside:*

The Streetcount Project is a new project that will try to estimate the number of homeless people living outside — for example, in parks, ravines or on the street — on a given night. Such a project was recommended in the 2000 Report Card and approved by Toronto Council. It will help the city to support anecdotal amounts from community-based services that the number of people living outside is rising and to help ensure appropriate resources are targeted to this group.

The Streetcount Project is using a community-based process to develop its methodology. Local agencies, outreach workers, municipal employees and others who work with people who are homeless will help shape the methodology, as will the experiences of other cities and the available literature on this topic.

The Streetcount is planned for March 2001, with subsequent counts planned for late winter of 2002 and 2003. The results of the count will be presented with data on the number of people in emergency shelters. This will give a snapshot of homelessness on a given night in Toronto.

► *Set up a community planning process for the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)*

The Community Plan for Homelessness in Toronto, a document that outlines how Toronto will spend the federal SCPI funding over the next three years, was developed by the city in consultation with a reference group of more than 50 community groups and organizations. The city will continue to meet with this Community Reference Group, both to evaluate the process for developing the Community Plan and to discuss how best to plan for the second and third years of the SCPI program.

HOMELESSNESS IN SCARBOROUGH

Homelessness in Scarborough looks quite different from homelessness in the downtown core, but it is a serious issue all the same.

Scarborough has a high concentration of low-income people in spread-out pockets of low-cost housing, built on Scarborough's less expensive land. Vast parkland areas isolate one neighbourhood from another. Community services are few and far between. There are relatively few "absolutely" homeless people (people living on the street), in part because few people could survive in the cold, open expanses of parkland or large thoroughfares.

By far the most pressing issue for the Scarborough area is a large number of "hidden homeless" people. Many people move from place to place, relying on an informal network of relatives and friends to find floor space, couches — even closets — to sleep in. Families double and triple up in overcrowded accommodation. There are reports of homes being rented out by the bedroom: one family to each. There are also reports that superintendents demand forms of illegal "key money," and discriminate against people on social assistance and members of ethno-racial minorities.

Scarborough has high numbers of immigrant, single-parent and low-income families. Although the city is now taking steps to build family shelters in other parts of Toronto, until recently about 92% of these shelter spaces were in Scarborough. A 1998 needs assessment estimated that 31,000 people live on the verge of homelessness in Scarborough.

Strategy #5: What is being done to meet the physical and mental health needs of people who are homeless?

The city supports the recommendation of the Mayor's Task Force for a comprehensive strategy to address the health needs of people who are homeless. There is considerable evidence that health and socio-economic status are linked. People living in poverty tend to have more health problems than the rest of the population. This is particularly true for the homeless population.

A recent report⁵ from a physician at St. Michael's Hospital documents medical problems frequently experienced by homeless people, including seizures, heart disease, arthritis, and skin and foot problems. There is also an increased risk of TB for this group. Not surprisingly, people who live outside tend to be in worse health than people in emergency shelters.

To compound these health problems, people who are homeless often have difficulty gaining access to health services, because:

- they may not have health card identification
- traditional approaches to treatment do not always meet their complex needs
- the system does not have the resources to meet their needs.

One critical area not yet addressed, despite the evident need, is the shortage of detox centres, especially for women and Aboriginal people. This results in inappropriate use of the emergency shelter system, and requires immediate funding by the province.

The federal government has...

- *Continued to fund the Partners for Access and Identification program*

In 1999, Human Resources Development Canada funded a consortium of community-based agencies across Toronto for a pilot project to help ensure homeless people have access to health care. Seven outreach workers across the city help people get identification such as birth certificates, landed papers, health cards, convention refugee letters, refugee eligibility letters, Indian status and Social Insurance cards. With this identification, they have access to health care and other services. In 2000, this successful pilot was given approval to continue.

The provincial government has...

- *Continued to fund homeless health services in targeted Community Health Centres*

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care provides \$6 million province-wide to Community Health Centres (CHCs) for enhanced health care services for people who are homeless. The program funds identification clinics to help people get birth certificates, landed status papers, SIN cards and health cards. However, the program only reaches people who use these particular centres, and resources are used up quickly.

⁵Hwang, Dr. Stephen. *Homelessness and Health*, publication pending.

➤ *Continued to fund Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams*

The province has continued to provide \$12 million to fund 12 community-based ACT teams across Toronto. These clinical teams provide treatment, rehabilitation and support to people with severe and persistent mental illness. The program emphasizes outreach and relationship building and provides support for as long as the client wants it. Most of this work is done in the community, reaching people where they live rather than through institutional support.

➤ *Continued to fund "Shared Care" teams*

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care funds seven Shared Care teams, which provide on-site services for homeless people in emergency shelters and in one of the city's detox centers. Each team consists of:

- a psychiatrist
- a primary care physician
- a psychiatric nurse or social worker
- mental health and outreach workers.

The psychiatrist acts as a resource to service providers and team members. This health care model is designed to overcome three barriers to serving homeless people with mental illness:

- fear of mental health practitioners
- inability to gain access to specialty psychiatric services
- problems linking medical treatment to community and social services.

The shared care approach is cost-effective and provides health care to some homeless people who might otherwise never be served.

The City of Toronto has...

➤ *Taken action on the Homeless Health Strategy*

Toronto Public Health has brought together many stakeholders to create a Homeless Health Reference Group. Its mandate is to identify pressing health issues for people who are homeless, and to develop strategies for action.

The reference group includes representatives from:

- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto District Health Council
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- St Michael's, St Joseph's and Toronto Western Hospitals
- Toronto Community Care Access Centre
- Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

Three work groups were set up to focus on the areas described below:

- The Discharge Planning Working Group: This group has identified service issues and opportunities to improve discharge planning and follow-up for homeless people discharged from Toronto hospitals. Some actions are already underway; others will be considered over the next few months.

The actions include identifying best practices and community resources needed when planning for the discharge of homeless people. This information will be put into a tool kit for hospital emergency department staff when discharge planners and social workers are not available. It will then be distributed to all hospitals in Toronto for pilot testing. At the end of the winter season, hospital staff who have used the tool kit will be invited to provide feedback on the kit before it is finalized and redistributed.

The best practices and the guide were presented to the Ontario Hospital Association Conference last November. The working group is also pursuing funding to create a training video on the health issues of homeless people and best practices. There are more issues to be addressed at a systems level, including long-term care and rehabilitation.

The working group's final report will be presented to the Toronto Board of Health, and will be distributed to the Toronto District Health Council, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, hospitals, Community Care Access Centres, Community Health Centres and community agencies.

- The Harm Reduction Facilities Working Group: This group defines harm reduction as “a holistic philosophy and set of practical strategies that seek to reduce the harm associated with drugs.” It recognizes that quitting drugs may not be realistic for everyone, and that substance use and its consequences must be addressed as public health and human rights, rather than criminal, issues. Harm reduction places priority on giving accurate information and unbiased support to people who use drugs, so they can make and carry out their own, informed decisions.

The working group has developed a “continuum model” to describe facilities that use harm reduction principles, including shelters, drop-ins and housing. It has conducted focus groups with homeless people who use substances, to find out what harm reduction services are needed and how these services should be offered.

This working group is linked with organizations such as the United Way of Greater Toronto and the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau. The city's grants programs are using the group's research and expertise to look at funding priorities related to harm reduction.

Future recommendations from this work group will focus on strategies to enhance existing facilities through capacity building (training, strategic planning), multiple harm reduction responses to meet diverse needs, and policy recommendations.

- The Infirmiry Working Group: This group has developed a preliminary model for a homeless infirmary. This health facility would be viewed as part of the health care system, not as a panacea for all of the health needs of people who are homeless. It would give shelter to homeless people while they recover from surgical procedures or non-infectious diseases. It would be staffed by workers who have experience with homeless people and also be supported by medical personnel. Additional support would come from social service workers who could refer clients to shelter, job training and other resources. The infirmary would operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day and be barrier-free in its design. It should strive to be comfortable and home-like.

The working group stresses that available resources should be used, rather than duplicating or re-inventing services. A number of institutional and community partners are involved in discussions with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care in implementing the proposed model and seeking an appropriate site. The Infirmiry Working Group has focused mainly on the needs of homeless single adults. The needs of youth and families must still be addressed.

➤ *Started a process to assess the mental health needs of homeless youth*

A small work group of community-based youth services and city staff have been meeting since September 2000 to discuss the apparent increase in mental health issues among homeless and street-involved youth. As a first step, the work group is organizing a forum in the spring of 2001 for front-line workers across the city to:

- assess needs
- collect information
- identify gaps in service
- identify best practices
- strategize about potential solutions.

Strategy #6: What is being done to ensure that all levels of government work together to address homelessness?

The Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force stressed that all levels of government must be on board if we are to solve the homeless crisis. There has been more collaboration and co-ordination among the three levels of government on homeless initiatives. The evidence of this is woven through this Report Card. Most recently, all three levels of government came together to work out the details for getting the federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative up and running in Toronto.

The Mayor and members of Council continue to advocate with the federal and provincial governments for action. The city is currently in negotiations with both governments on potential sites to develop affordable housing. This renewed partnership is important to recognize in light of the fact that both the provincial and federal governments have withdrawn their support in the area of housing over the last five years.

This Report Card describes some remarkably successful initiatives involving partnerships among all levels of government. The city will continue to pursue this collaborative governmental approach. At the same time, the city and its community partners will keep advocating for more aggressive federal and provincial action to address the fundamental problems: poverty and the need for more affordable and supportive housing.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

We began this Report Card by documenting the continued rise of homelessness in Toronto. The trend continues despite a long list of government and community initiatives. How is this possible?

The answer to this question is as complex as the issue itself. The solutions for people with multiple issues like poverty, mental illness and addiction need time and intensive support. Refugees from war-torn countries face a host of challenges, not the least of which is securing income and a place to live. Still, the vast majority of people who are homeless simply need two things: an adequate income and an affordable place to live. These remain the fundamental barriers to solving the homeless crisis.

The Mayor's Task Force was confident that we could solve our homeless crisis if all levels of government worked together. Each level of government has introduced homeless initiatives over the last couple of years. Because many are only now being implemented, it will take time to see their progress. Funding targeted to homeless services, such as the province's recently announced funds to help people living outside, are welcome. But crisis services do not prevent homelessness. Much more must be done to address poverty, and to increase the supply of affordable housing.

There has been some renewed government interest in housing. The city's *Let's Build* program is up and running, with targets set for the next few years. The federal and provincial governments have both approached the City of Toronto with offers of land to build affordable housing. The federal government's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative will help to build some transitional housing. But these initiatives are simply not enough to meet the current or future demand.

The 2000 federal election brought promises from the Liberal party for an assisted rental housing program. We look to the federal government both for leadership and for concrete commitments in the upcoming budget. What we require are realistic targets and the means to achieve them, so that we can build the affordable housing that so many people so desperately need.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the City of Toronto:

1. Forward this report card to the federal and provincial governments, municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area and community stakeholders including funders and service providers.
2. Forward this report card to all of the federal, provincial and territorial housing ministers with a request to join the City of Toronto in pressing for a National Housing Strategy.
3. Request that the Mayor present this report card to the Big City Mayors' Caucus and the Prime Minister at their meeting scheduled for February 25, 2001.
4. Continue to participate in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities National Policy Options Team and provide the necessary support for the Big City Mayors' efforts.
5. Urge all Toronto City Councillors to bring together groups in their communities to explore ways in which to provide further assistance in the city's efforts to help people who are homeless.
6. Reaffirm its commitment to maintaining a maximum 90% occupancy rate in the emergency shelter system as established by City Council in June 1999.
7. Continue to develop emergency shelter services for high-risk and under-served groups including couples, gay and transgendered people, people with pets and people requiring harm reduction facilities.
8. Continue to support community participation and active involvement of homeless and socially isolated people in city committees.
9. Urge the federal government to:
 - a) Fund the proposed Assisted Rental Program at the level suggested in the FCM National Affordable Housing Strategy (October 2000), while maintaining the production volumes suggested in the election platform;
 - b) Recognize all non-federal sources as matching contributions in the proposed Assisted Rental Program, including provincial and municipal tax reductions targeted to affordable housing, provincial funding of supportive housing and private contributions.

10. Urge the provincial government to:
 - a) Collaborate with the federal government, the municipal sector and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, to ensure delivery of the Assisted Rental Program as soon as possible;
 - b) Provide funding for more hospital and community-based mental health supports and addictions services;
 - c) Provide additional funding for supportive and transitional housing for people with mental health and addictions issues.
 - d) Restore rent control legislation to help protect affordable rental housing stock in Toronto.

APPENDIX A: INDICATORS ON HOMELESSNESS

INTRODUCTION

The authors of this report selected a range of indicators that describe:

- changes in the profile of homelessness
- factors contributing to homelessness.

The city intends to monitor these indicators for trends and changes over time. This will tell us about pressure points in the system and help us develop strategies to respond. In future report cards, we will review and add to these indicators as needed, to reflect and respond to current issues.

The report card staff group chose the indicators with input from the reference group of the Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons. The indicators are drawn from public, institutional and community sources. As much as possible, they reflect the most current information although some data sources, such as the census, are not produced each year. This limits the amount of new data we can include.

A note on emergency shelter data

This report card includes data for the emergency shelter system between 1988 and 1999. We have also reported on some data to September 2000 in the narrative sections. Most of the charts, however, do not contain the 2000 data as it is not a complete year and is therefore not comparable to previous years.

In 1998, the responsibility for abused women's shelters was taken over by the provincial government. Consequently we have been unable to get detailed data on women and children using these shelters. The estimates of the number of abused women and children are based on previous trends as well as more general data available from the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

CHANGES IN HOMELESSNESS

Changing profile of emergency shelter users

This indicator describes the demographic composition of people who used emergency shelters, over the entire period of available shelter data (1988 to 1999).

- The number of two-parent families with children increased by 545% between 1988 and 1999.
- The number of couples increased by 440% between 1988 and 1999. This is in part due to an increase in shelter beds for couples since the late 80s.
- Single-led families increased slightly by 31% between 1988 and 1999.
- Over half (57%) of all emergency shelters in 1999 were "first-time users" (based on the number of first-time users each month that have never been in the shelter system before). This represents more than 15,000 people or on average 920 new cases per month (this does not include data from the abused women's system). Equivalent numbers of people leave the system and never return, suggesting a high degree of turnover in the system. This trend continued in 2000.

- Youth (age 15-24) are still a large group of shelter users.
- The proportion of youth has gradually increased from 20% of all admissions in 1998, to 21% in 1999, and 23% as of September 2000.
- An estimated 6,000 youth stayed in Toronto's emergency shelters in 1999. This number is even higher if we include youth staying in shelters with their parents.

Data source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing & Support Division.

Total number of people staying in emergency shelters

This indicator describes the number of different people who use emergency shelters, based on time series data for the period 1988 to 1999. It provides a conservative estimate (only people using the shelter system) of the number of homeless people in Toronto.

Trends from 1988 to 1999:

- Between 1988 and 1999, the number of people in emergency shelters rose from 22,000 in 1988 to nearly 30,000 in 1999 — an increase of 40%.
- The number of children jumped by 130% — from about 2,700 in 1988 to 6,200 in 1999. Most of these children were very young. One-third were under four. More than half were school-age, between five and 14 years of age.
- Families using shelters are also getting larger, increasing from an average of 2.9 individuals in 1988 to 3.7 in 1999.

Data source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing & Support Division.

Use of the Out of the Cold Program

This indicator shows the number of people using the Out of the Cold overnight and meal programs. Out of the Cold is a volunteer-operated interfaith initiative. The overnight program gives us information on the number and profile of people who are homeless and in need of food and shelter. The demand for the meal program gives us information on people who are at risk of becoming homeless due to lack of income to meet basic needs.

Trends in the use of the program:

- In the winter of 2000/01 there are 47 winter programs in Toronto providing overnight shelter and/or meals for people who are homeless.
- Due to the high demand for these services, some programs now run year-round.
- In 2000, summer meal programs served over 300 people a day.
- Out of the Cold staff estimate that about 450 people a day will use the overnight programs over the winter of 2000/01. The meal programs will serve between 1,100 and 1,800 people a day.
- More youth and seniors are using Out of the Cold programs in 2000.

Data source: Out of the Cold Central.

Calls to the Community Information Toronto's Street Helpline

This indicator reports changes in the number of calls made to the Street Helpline since 1998. The Helpline is an information and referral service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It is staffed by peer counsellors (people who have experienced homelessness themselves). The Street Helpline co-ordinates with street outreach services to dispatch help to people on the street. Monitoring the trends and changes in calls to the Helpline helps us to understand who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Trends included:

- The total calls for 1998 were 12,745. This number jumped to 65,972 in 1999. Calls in 2000 rose by another 28% to 91,312.
- Most calls are from homeless people looking for emergency shelter.
- Calls to the Street Helpline tend to peak during the winter months when the need for shelter becomes more urgent. In January 2000, there were 9,395 calls as compared with 5,113 in June 2000. The June total was higher than the January 1999 winter figure of 3,809 calls.

Data Source: Community Information Toronto, Street Helpline.

Length of stay in an emergency shelter

This indicator describes how long people stay in emergency shelters. It is based on the average number of days spent in a shelter. It should be noted that due to limitations in the way data are processed for administrative reasons, the actual length of stay is likely higher than what is presented in this report. Together with the long-term shelter use indicator, it provides a measure of "chronic" use of the shelter system.

Trends in length of stay:

- The length of stay for people in emergency shelters increased since 1988.
- Families in particular are staying longer — on average almost four times longer than in the late 1980s.
- In 1999, most single-parent families stayed between one and two months. Couples with children stayed even longer.
- Some families stay as long as one year.
- Singles tend to stay in shelters for shorter periods of time. Single men stay an average of two or three days. Single women stay about seven days.

Data source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing & Support Division.

Long-term shelter use

Long-term shelter users are defined as people whose accumulated length of stay is one year or more and may involve several shelter admissions over the course of the year. The total number of days is calculated over the entire period of available data (1988 to September 2000).

Trends in long-term shelter use:

- Between 1988 and September 2000, about 18% (or 31,450 cases — both individuals and families) stayed in shelters for at least a year. Most long-term shelter users are single men. This represents an increase over the number reported in the 2000 Report Card (17% or 27,000 cases).

Data source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing & Support Division.

Episodic use of the emergency shelter system

This indicator counts the number of shelter "cases" that had five or more stays in an emergency shelter during one year. It gives us a measure of the number of people who go through multiple episodes of homelessness.

Trends in episodic use:

- The percentage of people who are episodically homeless grew from 10% in 1988 to between 16% and 17% in each of the years since 1995.
- People who are "episodically homeless" cite different reasons than other shelter users for needing emergency shelter. For families, the largest numbers are women fleeing abusive partners (33%) followed by evictions (11%).
- Single episodic users cite "general homelessness" (without housing but no reason given) followed by refugee claimant (23%) as their primary reason for using shelters.

Data source: City of Toronto, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Shelter, Housing & Support Division.

People living on the street

This indicator gives a profile of people who are living on the street. Street life is transient by nature, making it hard to count the number of people accurately. Street outreach services offer homeless people food and drinks, clothing, sleeping bags, referrals and transportation to emergency shelters, Out of the Cold programs and medical services.

The contact information and observations of street outreach staff, although not a definitive measure of the number of people living on the street, helps to enlarge our understanding of the nature and extent of street homelessness.

Trends reported by street outreach staff:

- There continues to be a large number of people living on the street.
- The profile is changing. While most people are still single men over 30, street outreach staff are seeing more couples especially among youth.
- There continues to be a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people on the street.
- Women represent about a quarter of the people seen on the streets. But, this number is growing as is the number of pregnant women.
- There are more gay people and transgendered people, more solvent abuse and an increase in the number of "hard core" homeless people, or people who live outside year round.

Data Source: Anishnawbe Health Street Patrol and Na-Me-Res Street Help.

Use of food banks

This indicator reports the average number of people using food banks each month. It gives a measure of how many people do not have enough income to meet the basic needs of food and shelter, and are therefore at risk of becoming homeless.

Trends in food bank use:

- In 2000, the number of people using emergency food relief programs in the GTA increased by 12%.
- In the last quarter of 2000, more than 140,000 people relied on food relief programs each month in the GTA, up from 125,000 at the beginning of the year — 75% of people were from Toronto.
- The number of people between the ages of 15 and 25 who used food banks fell from 15% in 1995 to 6% in 2000.
- Almost half of all food bank users — about 65,000 — were children.
- About 24,000 people with disabilities used emergency food relief programs — up 10% since 1995.
- More than 6,000 people — 11% of all food bank users — are over age 60, up from 6% in 1995.
- In 2000, 65% of all users and 54% of seniors using food banks reported paying more than 50% of their income on rent.

Data Source: Daily Bread Food Bank.

Number of deaths among people who are homeless

This indicator describes the number of homeless deaths that are under investigation or who are unclaimed persons that are reported to the Office of the Chief Coroner's Project TIDE (Toronto Indigent Deaths Enquiries). The project defines a homeless person as "any person who has no fixed address and dies in a public place (street or building), hostel, or in hospital, having been admitted from any of the above." The indicator under represents the number of homeless deaths as only deaths reported to the Coroner's office are captured.

However, it provides some reflection of the extreme risk factors associated with homelessness.

- Between May and December of 1999, the deaths of 27 homeless people were recorded. Almost all were men, aged 21 to 80.
- Seventeen died either in the hospital or on the street, and six died in a hostel. Thirteen died from natural causes such as stroke, heart disease, pneumonia and hepatitis. Seven died by accident. Two died by suicide and one by homicide. In four of the cases, the manner of death was undetermined.
- Alcohol and/or drugs was a contributing factor in 16 of the deaths.
- Preliminary data for Project TIDE records 37 homeless deaths for the year 2000.

A study by Dr. Stephen Hwang, a physician at Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital, found that death rates among men using homeless shelters in Toronto were higher than for the city's general population. This is linked to high risk factors among people who are homeless such as renal, liver and heart disease, as well as injection drug use. (Hwang, Stephen W., "Mortality Among Men Using Homeless Shelters in Toronto, Ontario," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, April 26, 2000 – Vol. 283, No. 16.)

Data Source: Office of the Chief Coroner.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HOMELESSNESS

These indicators are presented in order of their importance as causes of homelessness. There are three categories of indicators, influencing:

- economic security (Part A)
- affordable housing (Part B)
- supportive housing (Part C).

A. ECONOMIC SECURITY

Median income for families and singles

This indicator shows the median household income in Toronto from 1990 to 1998. Median income is the midpoint of the income distribution. It gives an indication of the relative economic position for households and individuals and the change over time.

- Median incomes for families and single people improved between 1995 and 1998.
- Median incomes have not returned to pre-recession levels and have not kept pace with the rising cost of basic necessities, such as rent and utilities.
- Median income for all husband-wife and one-parent families was \$49,400 and \$24,400 respectively. The median income for singles was \$19,500.

Source: Statistics Canada, Small Area Administrative Data – Tax File 1995 – 1998

Households with incomes below the Low Income Measure (LIM)

This indicator provides a measure of the number of low-income families and singles in the city and the change over time. LIMs are a relative measure for defining low income adopted by Statistics Canada in 1990. Household distribution in relation to the LIM is available on an annual basis as part of the standard reporting of data from income tax filings. For this reason, LIMs provide an accessible measure that can be easily compared on a year-to-year basis. The measure is based on median income levels, and unlike the Low Income Cutoff (LICO), does not consider expenditures for food, clothing and shelter or community size. Each LIM threshold represents 1/2 of the median income of households of different compositions.

According to the Canadian Council of Social Development, using the LIM instead of the LICO may underestimate the number of low-income households by about 2% to 3%. LIMs for 2000 are estimated to be as follows:

One adult	\$13,492
One adult, one child	\$18,890
Two adults, one child/one adult, two children	\$22,937
Two adults, two children/one adult, three children	\$26,984
Two adults, three children/one adult, four children	\$31,032
Two adults, four children/one adult, five children	\$35,079

Trends from 1995 to 1998:

- Between 1995 and 1998, the number of low-income families and singles continued to grow. The growth rate is slower than during the recession of the first half of the 1990s.
- In 1998, 17% or 88,900 husband-wife families in Toronto had pre-tax incomes below the LIM. So did 41% or 49,000 one-parent families, and 30% of single people (137,200).
- Between 1995 and 1998, the number of children in low-income families grew by 7%. The number of seniors rose by 22%.
- For people below the LIM in 1998, one-half of the husband-wife and one-parent families lived on less than \$11,900 and \$13,200 a year respectively. Half of low-income single people lived on less than \$7,000.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Small Area Administrative Data – Tax File 1995 – 1998*

Change in social assistance caseload by household type

This indicator looks at changes in the composition of Toronto's social assistance caseload over time.

Trends in the social assistance caseload:

- Toronto's social assistance caseload is now primarily family-based. This new trend has emerged over the last five years.
- In November 2000, the proportion of families with children dropped to 54%, compared to 57% in the previous year.
- Toronto's overall caseload stood at just over 64,000 cases, down by more than 11,000 from a year earlier.
- Unlike previous years, more families are leaving the system than single people. In 2000, there were 18% fewer families and 11% fewer single people.

Source: City of Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services, Social Services Division

B. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Number of new rental housing completions

This indicator is defined as the number of new private and assisted rental units built each year from 1988 to 2000. It shows trends in purpose-built rental supply over time.

Trends in rental housing completions:

- Since 1998 there has been virtually no new rental construction. A total of 30 units were constructed in Toronto in 2000.
- There were 2,000 to 3,000 rental completions every year between 1984 and 1994 in Toronto.
- In the 1980s, about two-thirds of all new rental units were funded by senior levels of government; in the early 1990s, it was over 90%.
- After the federal non-profit programs were cancelled in 1993, and the provincial programs were cancelled in 1995, only units "in the pipeline" were built.
- There have been no government-assisted rental housing completions since 1997.

Source: CMHC Starts and Completions Data, 1988 – 1999. Note: does not include life lease units.

Average rental vacancy rate

This indicator is defined as the average vacancy rate for Toronto buildings with three or more rental units. It measures the supply of rental housing. A rate of 2.5% is considered to be a healthy vacancy rate, because tenants are able to find housing in affordable rental ranges.

Trends in average rental vacancy rates:

- In October 2000, Toronto's rental vacancy rate was 0.6%. This means that only 6 of every 1,000 rental units in the city were vacant and available to rent.
- There has been a steady decline in vacancy rates for all bedroom types since the recession of the early 1990s. Vacancy rates for bachelor units show the steepest decline.

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMA Rental Market Housing Survey, 1991 – 2000.

Average rent compared to average weekly wages

This indicator measures the increase in rental housing cost and its relative change in relation to wages and Ontario Works Shelter Allowance between 1995 and 2000.

Trends in average rent:

- Average rents for conventional private rental units are now over \$900 per month.
- For larger units in privately-owned buildings, average rents are now almost \$1,000 for 2-bedroom units and \$1,200 for 3-bedrooms or more.

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMA Rental Market Housing Survey, 1991 – 2000.

Core housing need

Core housing need is a term developed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as part of the National Occupancy Standard. It is based on the standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability. An adequate dwelling does not, according to its residents, require major repairs. A suitable dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the occupying household. To be affordable, shelter costs should consume less than 30% of before-tax household income. (Some households may live in social housing, which requires tenants to pay 30% of their income as part of a rent-g geared-to-income program.)

A household is said to be "in core housing need" if:

- its housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and
- it would have to spend 30% or more of its income to pay the average rent for housing that meets all three standards in the local market.

Trends in core housing need:

- The proportion of all tenant households in core housing need in Toronto increased from 26% in 1991 to 37% in 1996.
- In 1996, 91% of these households faced affordability problems.
- Between 1995 and 2000, average wage gains have been steady but slow, increasing 9%. Average rents rose 29% over the same period. These data strongly suggest that the proportion of tenant households in core housing need has risen in recent years.

Data Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 1996.

Rental costs for private rental housing

This indicator compares the numbers of rental units in selected rental ranges for the Toronto CMA, 1996 – 2000. It provides an indication of the number and change in the supply of affordable rental units for households at different levels of income.

Trends in the number of affordable rental units:

- In 1996, units in Toronto renting for less than \$800 per month accounted for more than two-thirds of all units. Such units now represent only about one third of the total.
- When units become available (turnover units), the rents are raised higher than the average.
- For low-income tenants, it is typical to spend between one half and two thirds of income on rent.

Source: CMHC Toronto Region Rental Market Survey – Apartment with 3+ units.

Loss of rented condominium units

This indicator measures the changing availability of rental accommodation in the secondary rental market (this includes accommodation in rented condominium apartments and townhouses, rented houses, apartments above stores and second suites).

Trends in rented condo units:

- The "secondary rental market" includes rented condominiums, rented houses, apartments above stores and second suites.
- These are a less secure part of the rental housing stock as they can easily change from being renter to owner-occupancy.
- The number of condominium apartments in Toronto grew by 17,144 between 1996 and 2000. But over the same period, owner-occupied condos grew by 19,344. This represents a loss of 2,200 rented condos in just four years.
- Currently, only about 26% of all condo units are rented, down from 33% in 1996.

Source: CMHC Condominium Survey, 1996 – 2000

Waiting list for social housing

This indicator describes the number of applications for placement in social housing units. It provides an indication of the demand for affordable housing over time.

Trends in the waiting list for social housing:

- The demand for subsidized units dramatically exceeds the supply.
- The waiting list grows steadily. There are, on average, 1,400 new applications every month.
- Between January 1999 and November 2000, the waiting list grew from 51,428 to 63,110 households — an increase of 23%.
- Between January 1999 and November 2000, an average of only 348 households were housed each month.
- The demand for subsidized housing has risen across all groups, but applications from seniors and single adults have shown the fastest growth, both rising by 32% since January 1999.
- Applications from families with dependent children grew by 13%.
- As of November 2000, the waiting list included 20,364 single adults, 30,563 families and 12,183 seniors.
- Almost half of the waiting list applicants report Ontario Works or some other social assistance program as their main source of income.

Data Source: City of Toronto, Toronto Social Housing Connections.

Applications for eviction

This indicator describes the trend in evictions resulting from applications filed by landlords with the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal between 1999 and 2000. It gives only a partial picture of the overall eviction experience of Toronto tenants.

Trends in eviction applications:

- Eviction applications have risen annually for the past two years, growing by 12% from 1998 – 1999 and by 5% from 1999 – 2000.
- In 2000, the three Toronto Area Tribunal offices received 27,336 eviction applications, an average of almost 2,278 per month.
- Once an eviction application is filed with the Tribunal, tenants are required to file a dispute in writing within five days of receiving the notice of hearing in order to bring the matter to a hearing.
- Almost half of all tenants served with eviction notices do not contest them.
- When there is no hearing, an order is issued by the Tribunal to evict the tenant by default.
- In an average month, almost 1,200 eviction dates are set by the Tribunal and 85% of these result from rental arrears.
- Among evictions due to arrears, 50% were for amounts less than \$800.

Data Source: Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal

C. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Number of new supportive housing units

This indicator measures the number of new supportive housing units that have been added to the overall supply in Toronto.

Trends in new supportive housing:

- In 2000, the province funded 762 units of new supportive housing in Toronto for emergency shelter users and homeless people with serious mental illness. Most units are now occupied.
- Another 300 will come on stream in 2001.

Data Source: Province of Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF THE CITY OF TORONTO

RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR'S HOMELESSNESS ACTION TASK FORCE

Note: These are estimates of key municipal spending in response to the recommendations of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. It is not a definitive accounting of all municipal spending on homeless or housing initiatives.

STRATEGY	1999 INITIATIVES	1999 FINANCIAL COMMITMENT	2000 INITIATIVES	2000 FINANCIAL COMMITMENT
1. Reduce poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility of senior levels of government. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibility of senior levels of government. 	
2. Preserve existing affordable housing Create new affordable housing Create new supportive housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condo conversion and demolition policy. Adopted Housing First policy for surplus lands. Set up Capital Revolving Fund. Set up Mayor's Homeless Initiative Reserve Fund. Launched Let's Build housing program. Hired special advisor on housing development. Approved second suites (under appeal at OMB). Exemption from development charges. Special property tax for multi-res rental housing. Conducted Single Room Occupancy Study. Responsibility of province. 	<p>\$ 11,000,000</p> <p>\$ 5,000,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked to minimize impacts of demolitions. Developed strategies to help rooming house tenants. Dedicated seven city sites to housing. Allocated \$10.6 million in capital funding for housing. Allocated 10 projects under Mayor's Fund. Set housing development targets. OMB approval of second suites bylaw. Dedicated \$21.1 million over three years under the federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) for transitional housing. Responsibility of province. 	<p>\$11,800,000</p>
3. Shift services away from emergency response to prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded range of prevention strategies through municipal funding sources including savings from National Child Tax Benefit, general grants, homeless initiatives funding, and redirecting hostel funds. Programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent Bank Shelter Fund Eviction Prevention programs Tenant Defence Fund Rental Housing Office Housing help services Hostel follow-up program. 	<p>\$ 10,045,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded funding for prevention strategies through several municipal funding sources, including savings from the National Child Tax Benefit, homeless initiatives funding and redirecting hostel funds. Programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent Bank Shelter Fund for families on social assistance Shelter Support Strategy Eviction Prevention programs Tenant Defence Fund Rental Housing Office Housing help services Hostel follow-up program. 	<p>\$14,749,000</p>

<p>b) Emergency responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity of emergency shelter system. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed emergency shelter strategy to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase capacity of shelter system • Enhance services for high-risk groups • Add transitional housing option. 	
<p>4. Adopt service planning approach</p> <p>b) Address needs of high-risk groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed service planning process. • Increased funding for rent bank and shelter fund (see Strategy #3). • Began to distribute family shelters across the City of Toronto. • Helped develop Eva's Phoenix transitional housing for youth. • Initiated development of Squeegee Diversion program. • Increased funding to Aboriginal services. • Set up Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee. • Targeted provincial funding to housing help services for refugee claimants. • Sought partnership with federal government to develop services for immigrants and refugees. 	<p>\$250,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to enhance planning for homeless services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for people living outside • Housing help services • Drop-in services. • Initiated process to count people living outside. • Set up ongoing community planning process for SCPI. • Taken steps to help homeless families including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set standards in motel hostels • Reduced number of motels used as hostels • Continued work with local schools • Purchased 160-bed family shelter. • Continued to fund Squeegee Diversion Program. • Helped develop Eva's Phoenix transitional housing for youth. • Increased support to young homeless parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for action through <i>Young Parents, No Fixed Address</i> group • Funding for parent relief, housing and addictions services (under Strategy #3) • Supported Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee and funded implementation of recommendations. • Targeted funding to Aboriginal homeless services (under Strategy #3). • Targeted funding to services for immigrants and refugees (under Strategy #3). 	<p>\$103,000</p> <p>\$250,000</p> <p>\$5,000</p>
<p>5. Address the health needs of people who are homeless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a homeless health reference group to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More harm reduction facilities • Discharge strategy for people leaving hospitals • Infirmary for homeless people leaving hospital. • Maintained strong public health role in homeless services. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taken action on the homeless health strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge planning • Homeless infirmary • Harm reduction • Started process to identify mental health needs of homeless youth. • Maintained strong public health role in homeless services. 	
<p>6. Ensure all levels of government work together to address homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy to senior levels of government to work with the city. • Convened meeting with all levels of government at Mayor's Homelessness Summit. • Co-sponsored National Symposium on Housing and Homelessness. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong advocacy to senior levels of government to work with the city. • Worked with federal government and province to get SCPI up and running in Toronto. 	

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR'S HOMELESSNESS ACTION TASK FORCE

Note: These are estimates of key provincial spending in response to the recommendations of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. It is not a definitive accounting of all provincial spending on homeless or housing initiatives.

STRATEGY	1999 INITIATIVES	FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO TORONTO	2000 INITIATIVES	FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO TORONTO
1. Reduce poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families (max. benefit \$1,100/child under 7) 	No estimate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Ontario Child Care Supplement to max. benefit of \$1,310 per child annually. 	No estimate
2. Preserve existing affordable housing				
Create new affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided PST grants for new multi-residential construction (for 16 units). Promise to dedicate land for housing for 500 new units. Commitment of \$50 million in rent supplements, province-wide. Promise to reallocate \$2.5 million for special needs rent supplement. Promise to commission an affordable housing design study. Changed Ontario Building Code to support efforts to create smaller, more affordable units. 	No estimate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocated all funds available for PST grants. Made two sites available to city for housing. Based on 1999 announcement, 1,841 rent supplement units approved in Toronto. Based on 1999 announcement, 436 units approved in Toronto for special needs rent supplements. 	\$4,000,000 (province-wide)
Create new supportive housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$24 million allocated for supportive housing across province for people with mental illness. As of Sept., 762 beds in Toronto. Funded 100 additional Habitat boarding home beds (included in above supportive housing funding). 	No lands dedicated Toronto's share to be determined Toronto's share to be determined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second phase of allocations resulted in 300 units for Toronto. Increased per diem to Habitat boarding homes (now fund max. of \$40 per person per day). 	\$9,100,000 (capital) \$ 3,500,000 (operating)
3. Shift services away from emergency response to prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Provincial Homeless Initiatives Fund for homeless services. Allowed municipalities to redirect some hostel funds to prevention. 	\$ 4,700,000 \$ 7,163,000 (maximum funding envelope available to Toronto)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained levels for Provincial Homeless Initiatives Fund. Supported redirection of hostel funds to prevention programs. 	\$4,700,000 \$5,600,000 (actual funds spent)

Emergency responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferred Community Partners Program and Supports for Daily Living Program to municipalities. • Provided space and funding for a temporary winter shelter. 	\$ 250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced new "Off the Street, Into Shelter" street outreach funding. • Increased funding to hostel per diem (now to max. of \$38 per person per day) • Donated winter emergency shelter site and day programming funds. 	<p>\$3,200,000</p> <p>No estimate available</p> <p>\$ 60,000 (day program)</p>
<p>4. Adopt service planning approach</p> <p>Address needs of high-risk groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated municipalities as local service managers. • Increased Community Start-Up Benefits for families leaving shelters. • Toronto targeted Aboriginal homelessness as priority under Provincial Homeless Initiatives Fund. 	No estimate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility of municipal governments. • Maintained increase to Community Start-Up benefits for families leaving shelters. 	No estimate available
<p>5. Address the health needs of people who are homeless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded homeless health services in targeted Community Health Centres. • Funded Assertive Community Treatment Teams. • Funded Shared Care Teams in emergency shelters. 	<p>\$ 6,000,000 (province-wide)</p> <p>\$12,000,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded homeless health services in targeted Community Health Centres. • Funded Assertive Community Treatment Teams. • Funded Shared Care Teams in emergency shelters. 	<p>\$2,385,000</p> <p>\$12,000,000</p>
<p>6. Ensure all levels of government work together to address homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended Mayor's Homelessness Summit and National Symposium on Homelessness and Housing. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operated in implementing federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative with both municipal and federal partners. 	

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR'S HOMELESSNESS ACTION TASK FORCE

Note: These are estimates of key federal spending in response to the recommendations of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force.

It is not a definitive accounting of all federal spending on homeless or housing initiatives.

STRATEGY	1999 INITIATIVES	FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO TORONTO	2000 INITIATIVES	FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO TORONTO
1. Reduce poverty	Increased National Child Benefit (\$350 per child).	No estimate	Increased National Child Benefit by an additional \$100/child.	No estimate
2. Preserve existing affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased one-time funding for Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) — \$50 million nation-wide • Announced plans to maintain RRAP funding at enhanced levels for next four years (\$65 million nation-wide). 	\$6,500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded RRAP at enhanced levels and expanded criteria to allow for conversions. 	\$ 7,300,000
Create new affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced plans to make federal lands available for housing (\$10 million nation-wide). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In negotiation with city on one federal site for housing in Toronto • Encouraged use of new Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative funding for transitional housing (see below). 	
Create new supportive housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility of province. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility of province. 	
3. Shift services away from emergency response to prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced new Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) — \$300 million nation-wide over three years. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated \$53 million to Toronto over three years under Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. Priorities for funding to be determined at local level*. 	\$17,700,000 (for 2000)
Emergency responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-time RRAP funding for Toronto shelters. • Funded start-up of hostel registry. 	\$1,200,000		
4. Adopt service planning approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility of municipal governments. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility of municipal governments. 	
Address needs of high-risk groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced increased funding for abused women's shelters (\$43 million nation-wide over three years). • Announced increased funding to Canada's Youth Employment Strategy (\$59 million nation-wide over three years). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated increased funding to abused women's shelters. • Allocated funding under Canada's Youth Employment Strategy. 	\$ 1,000,000 \$ 3,000,000

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announced increase in funding to Urban Aboriginal Strategy (\$59 million nation-wide over three years). • Funded Aboriginal Homeless programs. • Agreed to participate in Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee in Toronto. • Initiated Ontario Point-of-Entry Pilot for refugee claimants. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated funding through Urban Aboriginal Strategy. • Funded Aboriginal homeless programs. • Participated in Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee in Toronto. • Established Ontario Point-of-Entry for refugee claimants as an ongoing program. 	\$1,200,000
5. Address the health needs of people who are homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded Partners for Access and Identification in Toronto. 	\$ 450,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued to fund Partners for Access and Identification in Toronto. 	
6. Ensure all levels of government work together to address homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed minister responsible for homelessness. • Participated in Mayor's Homelessness Summit. • Funded and participated in National Symposium on Homelessness and Housing. • Announced collaborative approach to Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. 	\$ 50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated a collaborative approach to implementing the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative with municipal and provincial partners. 	

*Please note: For purposes of consistency with the charts in the Toronto Report Card on Homelessness 2000, we have put the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) under Strategy #3. However, the scope of this fund is much broader. In Toronto, there are five funding envelopes under SCPI including:

- Transitional Housing Capital
- Emergency Shelter Capital
- Small Capital improvements
- Homeless Programs and Services
- Community Planning and Research.