Housing for All

The Social Economy and Homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region

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Dr. Benjamin Isitt is an assistant professor of history at the University of Victoria. He specializes in Canadian social history, with publications in leading peer-reviewed journals including the Canadian Historical Review, Canadian Journal of Political Science, International Labor and Working-Class History, and Labour/Le Travail. Dr. Isitt has hands-on experience working with the Capital Region's street community and plays an active role in civic politics.

ABOUT THE OCCASIONAL PAPERS

The Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) will periodically publish research papers on the social economy. The papers will be by both scholars within the academy and by practitioners. CSERP hopes these papers will increase understanding of, and discussion about, the social economy and ideas, past, present and future.

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The Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships (CSERP) is a collaborative effort of six regional research centres across Canada, their community partners, and the national facilitating research hub. CSERP reaches out to practitioners, to researchers and to civil society, through the regional research centres and their community partners. It undertakes research as needed in order to understand and promote the Social Economy tradition within Canada and as a subject of academic enquiry within universities.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Abstract

Solutions to homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region already exist – in innovative and diverse social economy organizations that today house more than 7,000 Greater Victoria residents. This study illuminates the emergence of the region's homelessness crisis through personal stories, statistical data, and a broad interdisciplinary literature. It demonstrates how forward-looking action by non-profit societies and co-operatives, in partnership with supportive governments, has succeeded in providing reliable and safe non-market housing options for people in need.

Introduction

The social economy can eliminate homelessness and provide housing for all – in British Columbia's capital region and everywhere where the political will exists.

That is the premise that guides this study.

The 1500 homeless people living on the streets of Victoria, British Columbia confront a range of problems. They earn little if any income, grapple with mental illness and addictions, and face the daily experience of poverty and marginalization in the absence of social and economic supports. These people share the common condition of lacking adequate shelter.

This research study examines the problem of homelessness in British Columbia's capital region and the role of the social economy in ending homelessness. It is intended to inform the thinking of policy-makers and the general public, while contributing to the growing literature on the social economy. The voice of Victoria's homeless is provided alongside statistics, illustrations, and a historical snapshot of non-market housing options in the Capital Region. By placing homelessness and social housing in a broad context, it builds from work undertaken by the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness (founded in 2000 as part of the National Homelessness Initiative), the United Way, the Quality of Life Challenge, the Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, and the Greater Victoria Commission to End Homelessness, formed in February 2008.

Part One provides a ground-level view of homelessness, illuminating the struggles of Victoria's street community and a statistical picture of the scope of the problem. Part Two is more optimistic in tone and content, demonstrating how diverse social economy organizations – governments, charities, non-profits, and co-operatives – have succeeded in housing thousands of Greater Victorians.

According to the Co-operatives Secretariat of the Government of Canada, the social economy is a fluid concept with common attributes:

- The social economy is made up of foundations, co-operatives, mutual societies and associations that pursue activities that are both social and economic in nature.

- Social economy organizations pursue social objectives that are intended to meet the needs of members or a community. Any commercial activity on the part of a social economy organization is intended to serve social ends through the reinvestment of surpluses.

- The social economy is characterized by a democratic organizational structure that is based on the participation of all members in decision making.

- Social economy organizations rely significantly on paid work and emphasize job creation, but they are also supported by important volunteer resources, particularly in the delivery of services.[1]

Distinct from many Canadian studies, this work embraces a broad view of the social economy that envisions an ongoing and essential role for government. It is the belief of the author that the greatest advances in nonprofit and co-op housing have occurred in the context of supportive and interventionist government policy. As Swedish scholar Ann-Mari Sätre Åhlander argues, many theorists "assume that the social economy is a substitute to the public sector," but "partnerships between the public sector and the social economy actually can provide a tool for development."[2]

This study would not have been possible without the assistance and input of Ian MacPherson, Annie McKitrick, Sol Kinnis, Jorge Sousa and other colleagues at the B.C. Institute for Co-operative Studies and Canadian Social Economy Hub. I thank Rose Henry, of the Committee to End All Homelessness in Victoria, for her commitment and for introducing me to people living on the streets; Lisa Helps and Ryan George, for sharing their expertise on the history of homelessness and housing; Karen Kirby at BC Stats for helping me understand income trends; Alan Rycroft and Ken Neal at the Victoria Cool Aid Society and Sharon May at the Spring Ridge Co-operative Housing Association for providing access to their organizations' archives; and Paul Phillips, a pioneer in the field of community action who helped shape my interpretive framework in important ways.

Homelessness is a problem that appears to grow worse each day. However, I count myself among the optimists who believe that, together, we can provide housing for all.

Benjamin Isitt, Ph.D.

Victoria, British Columbia

May 2008

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1   *Co-operatives Secretariat Government of Canada, Co-operatives and the Social Economy (Ottawa: March 2008), 4.*
2. *See Ann-Mari Sätre Åhlander, "The Social Economy: New Co-operatives and Public Sector," Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics, 72:3 (September 2001), 415; International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy, The Social Economy in the European Union (2005); Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Social Economy: A report of the Swedish Government Office's work on a new concept (Spring 2001).*

PART I: THE PROBLEM

Mapping Homelessness in B.C.'s Capital Region

The past decade has witnessed a sharp rise in the number of homeless people on Victoria's streets. This is confirmed by anecdotal and statistical evidence. Mirroring trends in communities across Canada, growing income disparities and the "downsizing" of government services have contributed to a visible layer of marginalized people with no place to live. The problem is acute in Greater Victoria, where escalating real-estate prices and land values have edged out affordable accommodation.
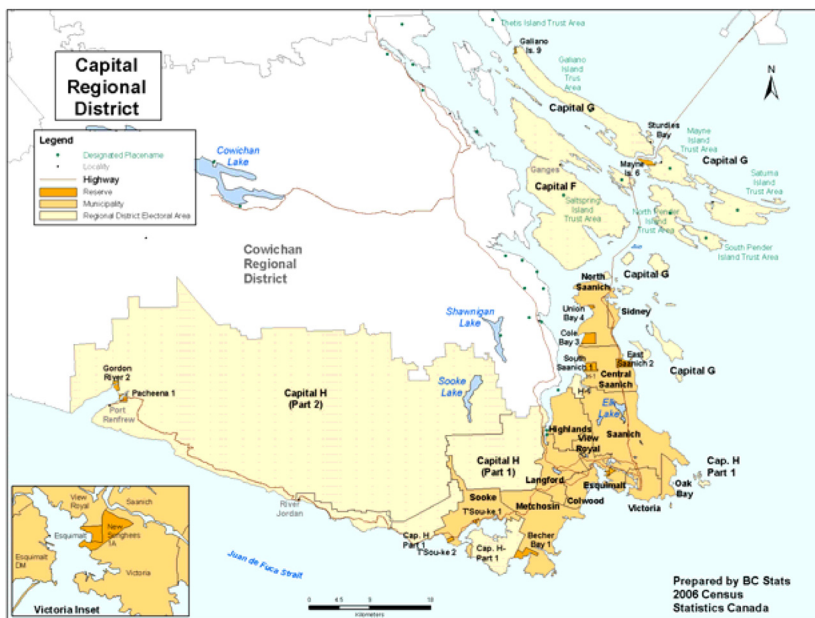
Source: BC Stats

Figure 1. British Columbia's Capital Region

Canada's market economy of the late 20th century produced some winners but many losers – industrial workers displaced by globalization; young people estranged from family, education, and the workforce; single parents lacking childcare and other social supports; indigenous people struggling against the legacy of residential schools and colonization; public-sector workers and ordinary citizens impacted by privatization. In the 1970s and 1980s, the policy of "deinstitutionalization" freed people with mental illness and addictions from impersonal, often oppressive facilities, but provided no shelter in their place.[3]

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3   *Between 1965 and 1981, the number of beds in BC psychiatric hospitals declined by 63.9%, from 6,371 to 3,372. From 1986 to 1999, the number of days of care in psychiatric hospital per 1,000 population fell from 214 to 77. See Statistics Canada, Canada Mental Health Statistics (1983-1994); The Daily, 12 July 2001, as quoted in Patricia Sealy, "Forty Years of Deinstitutionalization of Psychiatric Services in Canada: An Empirical Assessment," Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 40 (2004), 249-257.*

At its root, homelessness is an outgrowth of economic inequality and the abandonment of social housing as a public priority in Canada.

A study commissioned by the mayor of Victoria in 2007 estimated that 1,550 people lived on the city's streets, a figure consistent with an actual headcount of 1,242 homeless individuals earlier that year. The report pegged the costs of homelessness in the provincial capital at more than $50,000 per homeless person per year – totaling $62 million in annual public spending on healthcare, policing, and other service costs.[4]

In contrast, the Victoria report estimated that a homeless person managing major mental illness or addictions could be housed for $17,000 to $47,000 annually (depending on the level of service requirements). It recommended the opening of 1,550 new supported housing units by 2012. While this would "not address the growing demand for affordable housing," "it will address the highest need population who require the most support, are the highest cost to the system and divert much needed resources from other programs and services."[5]

1.1 A View from the Street

Billy Bob McPherson is 48 years old and lives on Victoria's streets. Born in Ontario, Billy Bob hit the road at age 14, finding himself homeless on the streets of Ottawa, the nation's capital. He began working odd jobs and settled into the eclectic life of a carnival employee – "a carnie" performing card tricks at fairgrounds across Canada and the United States. Billy Bob married and had a son. However, he grew estranged from the labour market and his wife fell ill. In April 2005, Billy Bob gave up his apartment and returned to a life on the streets.

"I guess I had blinders on," Billy Bob says. "I didn't realize the sheer volume of homeless out here until I actually got out here. I didn't realize how much harassment… what a low-level of society they placed us at…. how deep peoples' scorn could go. It was a real eye opener."[6] Billy Bob describes being beaten on two occasions by police.[7]

In autumn 2005, Billy Bob McPherson found himself at the centre of a confrontation between Victoria's homeless population and local authorities. Highlighting the lack of affordable shelter, a "right to sleep" movement took shape, demanding the right to sleep in local parks. Tent cities sprouted around the British Columbia capital. On October 5th, a Supreme Court judge issued an

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4   *Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, Final Report: A Look at the Numbers (October 2007); Victoria Cool Aid Society and Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, Housing First – Plus Supports: Homeless Needs Survey 2007 A Pathway to Home (April 2007); M. Patterson et al, Housing and Supports for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in BC (Vancouver: Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addictions, Simon Fraser University, 2007).*

5   *Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, Final Report: A Look at the Numbers (October 2007),*

6 *Interview with Billy Bob McPherson, September 2007, Victoria, BC; also "Right to Sleep Movement occupies St Ann's Academy in Victoria," StreetNewz (Victoria), 27 September 2005; Times Colonist, 6 October 2005.*

7 *"Police destroy bike," Monday Magazine (Victoria), 28 September-4 October 2006.*

injunction ordering homeless campers to vacate the grounds of St Ann's Academy, a former convent converted into provincial government offices. Most of the campers complied with the order, moving 50 metres across a road to city-owned Cridge Park. Billy Bob, however, held his ground under a tarpaulin shelter. "As a matter of conscience I can't leave here," he told a police officer. "I'm making a stand here. We've been moved around enough."[8]

Photo by Pete Rockwell

Figure 2. Billy Bob McPherson in front of the Victoria courthouse

Billy Bob was handcuffed and taken to Victoria headquarters, arrested for "breaching a supreme court order." A fellow camper expressed outrage as Billy Bob was hauled away: "Our families have already been taken away. Our rights are now being taken away." Another camper expressed the frustration felt by the city's homeless: "And we'll move on again. And we'll move on to another park and another park and another park."[9]

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8   *"Squatters ordered to abandon St. Ann's," Times Colonist, 5 October 2005; Times Colonist, 6 October 2005; for video footage of McPherson's arrest, see Love and Fearlessness web log, http://www.loveandfearlessness.com/tc_vid_3.html > Accessed 7 May 2008.*

9   *"Squatters ordered to abandon St. Ann's," Times Colonist, 5 October 2005.*

Billy Bob was released and returned to the new Cridge Park camp, which mushroomed into an embryo of community for the usually fragmented homeless population. While Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe cited "safety" and "public order reasons" and a city bylaw outlawing sleeping in public parks, the Cridge camp grew. McPherson took his message to City Hall, telling the mayor and council that "the homeless are residents of the city as we all live in Victoria."[10]

Like similar homeless "tent-cities" across North America, Victoria's Cridge camp was broken in a police raid on 28 October 2005. The homeless returned to the alleyways, nooks and crannies of Victoria, denied a communal space that helped smooth the roughest edges of life on the streets.

However, the issue did not die there. The campers formed a legal team and mounted a constitutional challenge to the city's actions, maintaining that Victoria's anti-camping bylaw violates Section 7 of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person, and to not be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice." In the absence of adequate shelter, outlawing camping was unjust, they claimed. British Columbia's Attorney General threw his weight behind the City of Victoria, while the campers' lawyers defeated attempts to quash the challenge and impose a permanent injunction against camping in public parks.[11] The landmark case is slowly winding its way through the courts.

Since his arrest in 2005, Billy Bob McPherson has had "a dozen backpacks" and other belongings seized by police and parks staff, including a bicycle that "was destroyed" by police.[12] Social-service agencies spoke out publicly against confiscation of homeless people's property, authorized under the "chattel goods" section of Victoria's Streets and Traffic Bylaw. "This bylaw is discriminatory and oppressive," declared street Reverend Al Tysick.[13]

Billy Bob McPherson belongs to the most vocal and high profile segment of Greater Victoria's homeless population – the tip of a social iceberg that extends deep beneath the region's skin; most homeless people are not visible. "The hidden homeless make up about 80 percent of those in Canada without a place to call home," the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness wrote; they move "from one friend's or relative's home to another, sleeping on couches or floors."[14]

1.2 Housing Crisis by the Numbers

In 2007, the median price of a single-family home in Greater Victoria reached half a million dollars. The region had the second most expensive housing in

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10   *Minutes of Victoria City Council, 13 October 2005; Times Colonist, 6 October 2005.*
11   *"Outdoor sleeping bylaw faces constitutional challenge," Times Colonist, 11 August 2006; "A Small Victory," Monday Magazine, 12 March 2008; "Court's decision a win for homeless," Times Colonist, 14 August 2008.*
12   *"Police destroy bike," Monday Magazine, 28 September-4 October 2006.*
13   *"Battle of the backpacks," Times Colonist, 6 May 2007.*
14   *Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness, http://www.ourwayhome.ca > Accessed 21 April 2008.*

Canada, behind Vancouver, having increased by an average of $55,000 in one year. A dozen luxury properties were listed at more than $10 million each. While 2,300 condominium units changed hands and 2,141 new dwellings were built in 2007, in this high-end real estate market, the option of purchasing a home remained out of reach of most of the region's citizens.[15]

Rental housing was also in high demand in Greater Victoria, leading to escalating costs for renters and a growing number of people in temporary and substandard accommodations. The percentage of renters in "core housing need" (paying more than 30% of their income on housing), stood at 27.5%, increasing to 37% among senior citizens, 41% among Aboriginal households, and 51% among female lone-parent households.[16] The meagre supply of single-room occupancy (SRO) hotel units, numbering 195 units in 2003, failed to meet growing demand for low-cost housing; waitlists for non-market housing were staggeringly high.[17]

Only 118 of the Capital Region's 21,688 rental units were vacant in October 2007 – a vacancy rate of 0.5% (the second lowest in Canada after Kelowna, BC). In the preceding six months, the number of rental units in Greater Victoria had actually *decreased*, despite growing demand, with 116 fewer units in the face of conversions to strata title and other forces.[18] The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the government crown corporation responsible for housing, projected a continuation of the region's tight housing market into the future.[19]

The Capital Region's housing shortage was further aggravated by wide (and growing) income disparities. While a portion of Greater Victoria residents earn adequate incomes or benefit from unearned family wealth, thousands of citizens lack the income or savings to purchase or rent housing. Median incomes in BC have fallen in the last quarter century, by 11% since 1980.[20] According to Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, Greater Victoria also has the highest incidence of poverty in the country. One in five residents lived in "low income" in 2005.[21] Only Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver approached this figure. One quarter of all men in the region lived

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15   *Victoria Real Estate Board, Statistics 2007 <http://www.vreb.org/mls_statistics/historical_statistics.html#2007> Accessed 25 April 2008; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CHS – Residential Building Activity: Dwelling Starts, Completions, Under Construction and Newly Completed and Unabsorbed Dwellings, 2007 (Ottawa: CMHC, April 2008), Table 9, p 21; "Our house is a very, very, very rich house," Globe and Mail (Toronto), 4 August 2007.*
16   *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need, Victoria, 2001," Canadian Housing Observer (2006, based on 2001 Census data).*
17   *City of Victoria, Programs and Services for the Homeless in Victoria – Database (June 2003), < http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/pdfs/currentprojects_homelessness_gapdtbs.pdf > Accessed 4 May 2008.*
18   *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CHS – Rental Market Survey 2007 (Ottawa: CMHA, December 2007), Table 27, p. 5.*
19   *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Housing Market Outlook: Victoria CMA (Ottawa: CMHC, Fourth Quarter 2007).*
20   *Statistics Canada, Earnings and Incomes of Canadians Over the Past Quarter Century, 2006 Census, Catalogue No. 97-563-X (2008); "Census Report: BC incomes in long-term decline," Times Colonist, 2 May 2008.*
21   *Low-income cut-offs (LICOs) vary from year to year, based on analysis of expenditure data for different communities and family sizes. The methodology is described in Statistics Canada, Low Income Cut-offs for 2006 and Low Income Measures for 2005, Catalogue No. 75F0002MIE - No. 004 (2007).*

in low-income, and the figure for the 0-18 male population surpassed 30%. British Columbia had the highest poverty rate of all the provinces, with nearly 18% of the total population living in low income (Figures 3 and 4).[22]

Poverty is tied to a high cost of living in the Capital Region, for shelter but also food and other necessities of life. In 2006, the Quality of Life Challenge and Community Social Planning Council pegged a "living wage" at $11.06 for a single person working a 40-hour week, and $14.88 for a two-parent, two-child family with the parents working a combined 60 hours weekly. British Columbia's minimum wage, in contrast, stands at $8 per hour, with a $6 "starting wage" for workers who are new to the provincial labour force (such as youth and recent immigrants). Living costs in the region were estimated at $3,480 per month or $41,763 annually for a two-parent family; for a single person, the estimated cost of living was $1,621 per month or $19,459 annually. Food cost $650 per month for a family or $208 for a single person, while transportation added an additional $183 or $81 to their respective budgets.[23] Faced with high housing costs, many people are forced to choose to rent and healthy food.

**Table 1. Persons in low income, by province and metropolitan area, 2005**

	Total			Male			Female		
	All	Ages 0-18	Ages 65 +	All	Ages 0-18	Ages 65 +	All	Ages 0-18	Ages 65 +
Canada	15.3	16.8	14.5	14.4	17.4	9.4	16.2	16.1	18.6
Atlantic Provinces	13.6	15.8	13.2	12.4	16.0	8.4	14.8	15.5	17.0
Newfoundland & Labrador	14.9	18.9	14.4	14.2	20.0	9.7	15.7	17.7	18.3
Prince Edward Island	10.0	8.9	14.9	8.8	9.8	10.3	11.3	7.8	18.6
Nova Scotia	13.2	15.3	13.0	11.9	14.7	7.5	14.5	15.8	17.4
New Brunswick	13.9	15.7	12.3	12.5	16.2	8.2	15.4	15.1	15.4
Quebec	17.0	15.0	21.6	15.4	16.3	13.2	18.5	13.6	28.1
Ontario	14.5	17.3	11.0	14.0	17.4	8.1	15.0	17.2	13.4
Prairie Provinces	13.8	15.4	13.1	12.9	15.4	8.0	14.6	15.3	17.3
Manitoba	17.0	20.1	18.4	16.2	21.0	13.4	17.7	19.1	22.3
Saskatchewan	16.3	20.7	14.8	14.7	19.2	10.0	17.9	22.4	18.5
Alberta	11.9	12.2	10.0	11.3	12.4	4.9	12.6	12.0	14.4
British Columbia	**17.6**	**20.9**	**13.8**	**16.6**	**22.9**	**8.5**	**18.5**	**18.7**	**18.3**
Metropolitan Areas - Total	17.2	19.6	17.4	16.3	20.3	12.6	18.1	18.9	21.2
Halifax, NS	14.0	17.5	10.2	12.5	16.5	..	15.4	18.5	12.7
Québec, Que.	16.5	12.4	25.0	14.7	10.4	22.8	18.3	14.7	26.2
Montréal, Que.	19.8	16.7	25.9	18.3	18.2	17.1	21.2	14.9	32.9
Ottawa-Gatineau, Ont.-Que.	15.1	17.7	12.2	14.3	15.5	6.2	16.0	19.9	16.8
Toronto, Ont.	17.5	23.0	15.9	17.8	24.0	15.5	17.3	22.0	16.3
Hamilton, Ont.	15.0	18.1	19.3	12.5	15.2	14.8	17.6	21.7	23.0
St. Catharines-Niagara, Ont.	14.2	16.5	6.1	9.8	13.5	..	18.1	20.0	9.7
Kitchener, Ont.	14.7	16.4	8.8	14.2	20.6	..	15.1	11.7	12.2
London, Ont.	16.2	24.0	3.7	16.0	25.3	..	16.3	23.0	..
Windsor, Ont.	13.5	16.4	18.1	12.6	22.3	..	14.5	10.0	25.1
Winnipeg, Man.	18.7	22.1	23.6	17.5	23.7	15.2	19.8	20.4	29.7
Calgary, Alta.	12.7	16.4	9.1	12.3	17.7	..	13.0	15.2	15.3
Edmonton, Alta.	13.1	10.8	15.1	11.2	8.8	8.4	15.0	13.2	20.7
Vancouver, B.C.	**19.8**	**25.8**	**17.5**	**18.1**	**27.6**	**12.8**	**21.5**	**23.7**	**21.3**
Victoria, B.C.	**20.0**	**25.5**	**13.4**	**24.7**	**31.1**	**11.8**	**14.8**	**..**	**14.8**
All other metropolitan areas	12.7	13.0	11.0	11.7	13.6	5.6	13.6	12.4	15.5

Source: Statistics Canada, Income Trends in Canada 1980-2005 (2007). Table 202-0802.

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22   *Statistics Canada, Income Trends in Canada 1980-2005 (2007), tables 202-0802.*
23   *Quality of Life Challenge and Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, Living Wage: Dialogue on the Real Costs of Living (Victoria, 2006); also Quality of Life in BC's Capital Region (Victoria, 2005).*

Table 2. Persons in low income, by province, 2005
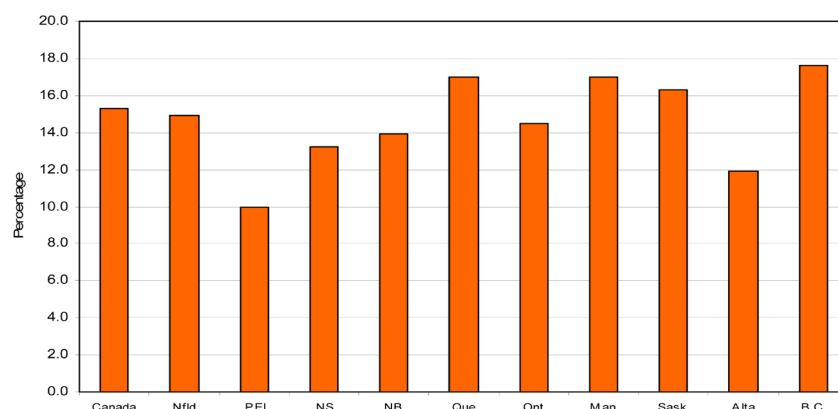
Source: Statistics Canada, Income Trends in Canada 1980-2005 (2007), Table 202-0802.

Homelessness and poverty contribute to a range of negative health and social outcomes. Poor people are more likely to die at an early age, suffer from seizures, pulmonary and musculoskeletal disorders, and skin and foot problems, and lack access to adequate health and dental care.[24] Homeless and poor people are often malnourished, lacking access to proteins and vitamins.[25] Marginalization related to poverty and homelessness contributes to a greater incidence of alcohol and drug use, with a corresponding risk of exposure to HIV-AIDS and other communicable diseases.[26]

There is also a proven correlation between lack of reliable shelter and psychological stress contributing to mental illness. As one researcher described the phenomenon in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*: "The street will drive you crazy."[27] The 2007 Homeless Needs Survey found that over 40% of Greater Victoria's homeless population suffered from major mental health problems. Such problems are exacerbated by the lack of safe and reliable shelter.[28]

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24 Stephen W. Hwang, "Homelessness and Health," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 164:2 (23 January 2001), 229-233; Bruce Wallace, *Brushed Aside: Poverty and Dental Care in Victoria* (Victoria: Vancouver Island Public Interest Resource Group, 2001); F. Cooke et al., "Meticillin resistant Staphylococcus Aureus in the Community: Homeless are Also at Risk," *Journal of Hospital Infection*, 68:2 (2008), 186 188; C. Ehrenborg et al., "High Bartonella Spp. Seroprevalence in a Swedish Homeless Population But No Evidence of Trench Fever," *Scandinavian Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 40:3 (2008), 208 215.

25 Hans Wolf, "Homelessness and Malnutrition," *International Journal of Public Health*, 53:1 (January 2008), 7 8; D. Kubisova et al, "Absence of Protein Energy Malnutrition in Prague Homeless," *International Journal of Public Health*, 53:1 (January 2008), 57 63.

26 K. Stajduhar, L. Poffenroth, and E. Wong, *Missed Opportunities: Putting a Face on Injection Drug Use and HIV/AIDS in the Capital Health Region* (Vancouver: Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcomes Sciences, 2002); A.Y Walley et al., "Recent Drug Use, Homelessness and Increased Short term Mortality in HIV infected Persons with Alcohol Problems," *AIDS*, 22:3 (30 January 2008), 415 20; V. Volf et al, "A Survey of Hepatitis B and C Prevalence Amongst the Homeless Community of Prague," *European Journal of Public Health* 18:1 (2008), 44 47; M. Das Douglas et al., "Tripling of Methamphetamine/Amphetamine Use Among Homeless and Marginally Housed Persons, 1996 2003," *Journal of Urban Health*, 85:2 (2008), 239 249; J.B. Milby et al., "Toward Cost Effective Initial Care for Substance Abusing Homeless," *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 34:2 (2008), 180 191.

27 T.M. Luhrmann, "'The Street Will Drive You Crazy': Why Homeless Psychotic Women in the Institutional Circuit in the United States Often Say No to Offers of Help," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 165:1 (January 2008), 15 20.

28 Victoria Cool Aid Society and Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, *Housing First – Plus Supports: Homeless Needs Survey 2007 A Pathway to Home* (April 2007), 41.

1.3 Literature on the Social Economy and Homelessness

Research on the social economy and homelessness has shifted with the ebbs and flows of housing policy in Canada. During the "golden years" – bounded by changes in the *National Housing Act* in the early 1970s and ending with the emergence of neo-conservative and neo-liberal "restraint" in the 1980s and 1990s – scholars emphasized the innovative approaches of governments, non-profits, and co-ops to provide non-market housing for Canadians.[29]

In the 1990s, research shifted to the impact of economic restructuring and government "downsizing." Growing poverty and income disparities were documented as housing costs rose and government supports withered.[30] Edmonton publisher Mel Hurtig described the problem succinctly in the title of his book *Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids: The Tragedy and Disgrace of Poverty in Canada* (1999).[31] Other studies examined the correlation between gender, age, poverty and homelessness, which impacted women, men, single parents, seniors, children and youth in particular ways.[32] Homelessness among First Nations people also attracted scholarly attention, reflecting substantially higher incidence

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29   *John R. Miron, ed., House, Home, and Community: Progress in Housing Canadians, 1945-1986 (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).*

30   *Clarence Lochhead and Richard Shillington, A Statistical Profile of Urban Poverty (Ottawa: Centre for International Statistics and Canadian Council on Social Development, 1996); Armine Yalnizyan, The Growing Gap: A Report on Growing Inequality Between the Rich and Poor in Canada (Toronto: Centre for Social Justice, 1998); Kevin L. Lee, "Urban Poverty in Canada, 1990-1995: Preliminary Findings," Unpublished paper, (Centre for International Statistics and Canadian Council on Social Development, September 1998); Stephen Gaetz, Understanding Research on Homelessness in Toronto: A Literature Review (Toronto: York University, 2004).*

31   *Mel Hurtig, Pay the Rent or Feed the Kids: The Tragedy and Disgrace of Poverty in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999).*

32   *Sylvia Novac, Joyce Brown and Carmen Bourbonnais, No Room of Her Own: A Literature Review on Women and Homelessness (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1996); SPR Associates, Canadian Women and Their Housing, 1997 (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1998); Gerda R. Wekerly, "The Shift to the Market: Gender and Housing Disadvantage," in Patricia M. Evans and Gerda R. Wekerle, eds., Women and the Canadian Welfare State (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 170-194; Marge Reitsma Street et al., Housing Policy Options for Women Living in Urban Poverty: An Action Research Project in Three Canadian Cities (February 2001); E.L. Austin, R. Andersen, and L. Gelberg, "Ethnic Differences in the Correlates of Mental Distress Among Homeless Women," Womens Health Issues, 18:1 (January-February 2008), 26 34; A. Holmes et al, "Are Australian Men with Psychosis Spending More Time Homeless?," Australasian Psychiatry, 16:2 (April 2008), 114 8; Jennifer Lynn Schuster, "Prior Trauma and PTSD Among Homeless Mothers: Effects on Subsequent Stress Appraisals, Coping, Posttraumatic Growth, and Health Outcomes," Dissertation Abstracts International, 68:7B (2008), 4845; Elissa McCarthy, "Role of the Case Management Relationship in Helping Homeless Mothers with Addictive Disorders," Dissertation Abstracts International, 68:7 (2008), 4834; Darcy Varney and Willem van Vliet, "Homelessness, Children, and Youth: Research in the United States and Canada," American Behavioral Scientist, 51:6 (February 2008), 715 720; John C. Buckner, "Understanding the Impact of Homelessness on Children," American Behavioral Scientist, 51:6 (February 2008), 721 736; M. Shinn, "Long Term Associations of Homelessness With Children's Well Being," American Behavioral Scientist, 51:6, (February 2008), 789 809; N. Huntington, "Adaptation in Homeless Children," American Behavioral Scientist, 51:6 (February 2008), 737 755; M. Yu et al, "A Comparison Study of Psychiatric and Behavior Disorders and Cognitive Ability Among Homeless and Housed Children," Community Mental Health Journal, 44:1 (2008), 1 10; C.M. Worthman and C. Panter Brick, "Homeless Street Children in Nepal: Use of Allostatic Load to Assess the Burden of Childhood Adversity," Development and Psychopathology, 20:1 (2008), 233 255; L. Rew, "Caring for and Connecting with Homeless Adolescents," Family & Community Health, 31:1 (January-March 2008), 42 51; Kevin A. Yoder et al, "Dimensionality of Thoughts of Death and Suicide: Evidence from a Study of Homeless Adolescents," Social Indicators Research, 86:1 (March 2008), 83 100; M.R. Solorio, "Predictors of Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Newly Homeless Youth: A Longitudinal Study," Journal of Adolescent Health, 42:4 (2008), 401 409; K. Schwarz et al., "Positive Impact of a Shelter Based Hepatitis B Vaccine Program in Homeless Baltimore Children and Adolescents," Journal of Urban Health, 85:2 (March 2008), 228 238; Suzanne Zerger et al., "Homeless Young Adults and Behavioral Health," American Behavioral Scientist, 51:6 (February 2008), 824 841.*

of poverty a among this segment of the population.[33] The plight of single un-employed adults in British Columbia cities was highlighted in the 1995 report *Nowhere to Live*, while the disappearance of SROs and other forms of low-cost housing was examined in Hulchanski and Shapcott's *Finding Room: Policy Options for a Canadian Rental Housing Strategy* (2004).[34]

In the opening years of the 21st century, the increase in visible homelessness in the Capital Region spawned diverse studies. A group of University of Victoria researchers released *Poverty and Inequality in the Capital Region of British Columbia* (2000), highlighting the region's growing poverty gap.[35] The Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group examined the strengths and weaknesses of shared accommodation in alleviating housing shortages.[36] As the impact of social-welfare cuts became apparent following the election of the Gordon Campbell Liberal government in 2001, a group of researchers affiliated with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) argued that "many people are being 'diverted' to homelessness."[37] Another CCPA study documented the abandonment of social housing in British Columbia.[38]

Housing is "more than a roof over one's head," the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria argued in 2003. "It's about people's daily lives."[39] Another report, commissioned by the United Way, insisted that "traditional approaches to housing development are no longer enough. The private, public and non-profit sectors all need to look for alternative, innovative solutions to housing needs in the region."[40]

Governments also began to take notice. This reflected growing concern among segments of the business community to the negative impact of homelessness on tourism and commerce. In 2007, Victoria mayor Alan Lowe formed a Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, a blue-chip panel of civic leaders and housing experts. The group's final report, tabled in October 2007, made the case for public expenditure on support ser-

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33   Veronica Doyle and Colleen Kasting, *Closing the Gap: Housing Needs and Priorities for BC's Urban Aboriginal People* (Vancouver: Aboriginal Housing Management Association, February 2007).

34   Lower Income Urban Singles Task Group, *Nowhere to Live: A Call to Action* (Victoria: Ministry of Housing, Recreation and Consumer Services, 1995); J. David Hulchanski and Michael Shapcott, eds., *Finding Room: Policy Options for a Canadian Rental Housing Strategy* (Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies, 2004).

35   Chris Goldberg, "Housing in the Capital Region: Contributor or Cause of Poverty?" in Marge Reitsa-Street, Allan Hopper, Jane Seright, eds., *Poverty and Inequality in the Capital Region of British Columbia* (Victoria: University of Victoria School of Human and Social Development, 2000).

36   Tim Richards and Nicole Lindsay, *Viable Accommodations? Living in Poverty and the Dilemmas of Sharing Housing* (Victoria: Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group, 2003).

37   Bruce Wallace, Seth Klein and Marge Reitsma-Street, *Denied Assistance: Closing the Front Door on Welfare in BC* (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2006), 6; see also Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, *The Caring Community: Accounting for the Impacts of Provincial Government Changes* (Victoria, March 2005).

38   Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Tenants' Rights Action Coalition, *Home Insecurity: The State of Social Housing in BC* (August 2004).

39   Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, *Making Room: The Human Face of Housing in BC's Capital Region* (Victoria, October 2003), 2.

40   Colleen Kastin, *Housing Low Income People in BC's Capital Region: A Report Prepared for the United Way of Greater Victoria* (Victoria: Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, June 2007), 3; see also Al Kemp, *The Case for Portable Housing Allowances: Brief prepared for the City of Victoria Advisory Housing Committee* (March 2005).

vices and housing for the homeless, with the ambitious target of 1,550 new non-market units by 2012.[41] However, the initial zeal waned. A consensus emerged favouring "improved services" for the homeless, but there were few indications of a renewed commitment to a large-scale social housing program. Decision-makers appeared to be reluctant to invest the sums of public money required to eliminate homelessness in the Capital Region.

The following pages draw from earlier experiences of housing crises, demonstrating how diverse social economy organizations, in partnership with governments, have responded to the need for non-market housing.

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41   *Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, Final Report: A Look at the Numbers (October 2007); Victoria Cool Aid Society and Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, Housing First – Plus Supports: Homeless Needs Survey 2007 A Pathway to Home (April 2007).*

PART II: THE SOLUTION

The Social Economy Responds to Homelessness

Homelessness is a daunting problem in the Capital Region – but its solution can already be found on the ground. Thousands of individuals and families sleep every night in homes that were created outside the private real estate market.

These Greater Victoria residents live in the attractive townhouse units of M'akola, Pacifica, and kindred non-for-profit housing societies; downtown single-bedroom apartments and bachelor suites operated by the Victoria Cool Aid Society and Our Place; cottages and care homes run by seniors citizens' housing associations; and participatory housing co-ops such as Spring Ridge, Mitraniketan, and Tyee.

Since the 1970s, innovative grassroots action – in combination with supportive public agencies and officials – have succeeded in developing an impressive supply of non-market housing in Greater Victoria. At the time of writing, the total stock of public, non-profit, and co-operative housing in the region exceeded 7,500 units.[42] To be sure, the growth of social housing has followed an uneven "learning curve," through the trials and tribulations of urban renewal and homogenous projects such as Blanshard Courts to more integrated, democratic and diverse housing options. The ebbs and flows of government policy have either encouraged or restrained the social economy's advance.

The social economy can end homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region – provided governments at all levels assist with the acquisition of land, funds and regulatory approval to build upon the existing stock of non-market housing.

2.1 The Limits of Public Housing

The state is one of the few agencies with the fiscal and regulatory powers to help provide shelter for every Canadian. At key moments in Canada's history – after the two world wars of the 20th century and during the energy crisis and inflationary squeeze of the 1970s – the federal government embraced an interventionist approach to housing policy that put roofs over the heads of a million Canadians. Despite flaws in the public housing management model, the state will remain an integral partner is financing new social housing.

Acute housing shortages and mobilized citizens have always provided the impetus for government action. The *Soldier Settlement Act* (1919) and *Veterans' Land Act* (1942) provided low-cost loans to war veterans to buy land and build homes; over 165,000 veterans and their families attained private home owner-

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42   *Greater Victoria Non-Market Housing Database, compiled by author, April-May 2008.*

ship in rural suburban areas across the country.[43]   Before the Second World War was over, the *National Housing Act* (1944) created the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC, changed to 'Canada' in 1979), which spearheaded expansion of public and rental housing.

Postwar public housing coincided with the "urban renewal" zeal that swept North American cities in the 1950s and 1960s. While these projects alleviated housing pressures, they also generated new problems. "Ghetto" conditions were often replicated through the concentration of a homogenously low-income population in a high density environment. The flaws of urban renewal and public housing can discerned through a Victoria case study: Blanshard Courts.

Case Study: Blanshard Courts

Canada launched its Urban Renewal Program in 1949, guided by a land-use philosophy that sought to eradicate "slum" neigbourhoods – areas in need of repair, which also happened to nurture tightly-knit ethnic and working-class communities.[44]   In the late 1960s, Victoria's Blanshard-Rose neighbourhood fell victim to urban renewal. A total of 157 households were displaced, as old homes were razed to the ground to make way for the downtown extension of the Patricia Bay Highway, a new military Armoury, and the Blanshard Courts public housing project.[45]

The City of Victoria began investigating options for urban renewal in 1960, commissioning technical studies and a November 1961 final report that flagged 28 acres near Blanshard and Bay streets as urgently needing renewal. The area contained "a high concentration of the worst quality houses which are beyond rehabilitation," was needed for "a major road, Blanshard extension," and was "ripe for redevelopment for motels." The "need for low-rental housing" was included at the bottom of the list.[46]   The Blanshard-Rose area included strong Italian and South Asian communities, grouped around the Italian Community Hall and nearby Sikh Temple.

In 1966, the City signed a deal with the provincial government and the CMHC to "renew" Blanshard-Rose. Offers to purchase the land, initiated in early 1967 based on 1966 assessed values, were initially unsuccessful. Homeowners, par-

43   See Richard Harris and Tricia Shulist, "Canada's Reluctant Housing Program: The Veterans' Land Act, 1942-75," *Canadian Historical Review*, 82:2 (June 2001): 253-282.

44   In the program's first five years, a total of 51 land assembly and low-cost housing projects were undertaken across Canada, based on a 75-25 percent federal-provincial funding formula. See R.W. Robertson, "Anatomy of a Renewal Scheme," in Residential and Neighbourhood Studies in Victoria: Western Geographical Series Vol. 5 (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1973), 44; also H.W. Reynolds Jr., "Population Displacement in Urban Renewal," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 22 (January 1963), 113-128; M. Fried, "Transitional Functions of Working-Class Communities: Implications for Forced Relocation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 33:2 (1967), 90-103.

45   R.W. Robertson, "Anatomy of a Renewal Scheme," in Residential and Neighbourhood Studies in Victoria: Western Geographical Series Vol. 5 (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1973), 40-100; Hansard, Debates of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, 29 June 1976, pp. 3288-3290.

46   As quoted in Robertson, "Anatomy of a Renewal Scheme," 52.

ticularly seniors and social welfare recipients, lacked the financial means to obtain alternate accommodation. "Some of these residents…find it virtually impossible to rent from private owners of realty under any circumstances," a contracted relocation officer advised city officials in September 1967. Agreements of sale had been obtained for only 46 of 127 private parcels. More generous offers in 1968, combined with the development of Blanshard School and Blanshard Courts, helped motivate the "holdout" owners and the city obtained clear title to all properties by mid-1969.[47]   However, several renters refused to vacate the premises. In 1969, city officials, armed with a crowbar, forcefully entered a Blanshard Street home to evict the last "holdout" tenants (Figure 3).[48]

Source: Victoria Press Photo

Figure 3. City of Victoria officials, armed with a crowbar, evict the last "holdout" residents of the Blanshard-Rose neighbourhood, 1969

47   *Relocation Officer to City Hall, 18 September 1967. As quoted in Robertson, "Anatomy of a Renewal Scheme," 55-58.*
48   *See City of Victoria Archives, City Records Series (CRS) 23, City Manager operational files 2, files 9-21.2 and 10-21.2 "Urban renewal project #1: Rose-Blanshard project: general," (1964-1968); files 2-21.2d and 3-21.2d "U/R Project #1: land acquisition," (1968); file 13-20.33 "Blanshard Courts"; and files 3-21.2 to 11.21.2g (1966-1970).*

Blanshard Courts rose out of the ashes of the old Blanshard-Rose neighbour-hood, alongside the new four-lane Patricia Bay Highway extension. The former residents dispersed around Victoria and surrounding municipalities, with 84 % telling researchers in 1969-1970 that they would have preferred to have remained in their old neighbourhood.[49] A smattering of residents moved into Blanshard Courts, which consisted of 90 subsidized, townhouse-style units. Shortly after the public housing opened, the University of Victoria's Martlet student newspaper shed light on the project:

"Although this development has been successful for elderly people who are now able to spend enough money on food, it has resulted in the crowding of more than 400 children in a 1 ½ block radius. Welfare workers report that wide scale boredom, depression and other trouble results from this cramping of people." A grassroots social work facility called the Community Action Centre advised "eliminating the possibility of similar housing complexes being built in the future."[50]

As the last homes were bulldozed in Victoria's Blanshard-Rose neighbourhood to make way for the Pat Bay highway and Blanshard Courts, a federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Renewal, headed by Liberal cabinet minister Paul Hellyer, issued its final report. The 1969 Hellyer Report recommended an end to federal funding for the "wholesale destruction of older housing." The report dealt a deathblow to grandiose urban renewal schemes in Canada.[51]

In their place, Canadian housing policy moved in innovative directions in the 1970s, as urbanization intensified, undeveloped lands became scare, and infla-tion contributed to soaring housing costs.[52] As Marie Bouchard and Marcelin Hudon describe it, "the specific characteristics of community [co-op and non-profit] housing come simultaneously from the lessons learnt by previous gener-ations around social housing and the new aspirations of citizen movements."[53] In the innovative political climate of the early 1970s, the National Housing Act was substantially amended. The new sections expanded the CMHC's man-date by creating the Co-operative Housing Program, which assisted citizen groups in building tens of thousands of co-operative homes across Canada (see Section 2.3).[54]

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49 Robertson, "Anatomy of a Renewal Scheme," 70.

50 "Action Centre helps people break through welfare bureaucracy," *Martlet* (Victoria), 30 November 1972.

51 Paul T. Hellyer, *Report of the Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), 65. For an international perspective on the limitation of public housing, see Patrick Dunleavy, *The Politics of Mass Housing in Britain, 1945-1957: A Study of Corporate Power and Professional Influence in the Welfare State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

52 See "No answer to housing crisis," *The Victorian* (Victoria), 13 October 1975; "Housing Crisis: Bulldozers Push the Poor Aside," *Victoria Times*, 28 July 1976; "Demolition is hard to stop," *Daily Colonist* (Victoria), 9 June 1976.

53 Marie J. Bouchard and Marcelin Hudon, "Civil Society Generating Innovation: Co-operative and Association Housing," *Working Papers of the Canada Research Chair in Social Economy* (March 2006), 1; also John F. Koenig, *Alternative Forms of Housing: A Report Prepared for the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver* (August 1975).

54 Michael Dennis and Susan Fish, *Programs in Search of a Policy* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972); John C. Bacher, *Keep-ing to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); A. Black and M. Powell, *Non-Profit and Co-operative Family Housing* (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and

Regional governments also became actively involved in social housing in this expansionary period. The Capital Regional District, a federation of local municipalities, formed the Capital Region Housing Corporation in 1982, which over the next two decades built and operated more than 1200 units in 42 buildings.[55] Privately owned seniors' care homes were also incorporated into the social housing sector and provincial health system, either through direct ownership or long-term management agreements.[56] Across BC, there were nearly 26,000 social housing units by the early 1980s: 10,000 public housing units operated directly by government (4,150 seniors, 5,425 family, and 200 persons with disabilities) and an additional 16,000 units operated by nonprofit societies and co-operatives (Sections 2.2 and 2.3).[57]

However, in the cost-cutting climate of the 1990s, this interventionist period drew to a close. The federal Conservative government of Brian Mulroney and Liberal government of Jean Chretien restricted the CHMC to the narrow role of guaranteeing mortgages on private homes, abandoning the cause of social housing. Federal funds for new non-market housing projects were discontinued in 1992 and eliminated entirely in 1994.[58] Sweeping changes to social welfare, programs for the mentally ill, and government spending spurred the re-emergence of visibly homeless people on Canada's streets. A Commission of Inquiry into Social Housing in British Columbia, appointed in 1985 by the right-of-centre Bill Bennett Social Credit government, had anticipated the looming crisis: "Housing is simply not available from the private market within the budget of all low-income households."[59]

In British Columbia, the New Democratic Party (NDP) that governed from 1991 to 2001 attempted to offset the impact of federal offloading of social programs. A Provincial Commission on Housing Options, struck shortly after the party took power, recommended a "made-in-BC" housing strategy in response to "the federal government's disengagement from its traditional leadership and funding of housing programs."[60] The NDP encouraged non-profit delivery of social housing, targeted toward senior citizens, aboriginal people, persons with

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Housing Corporation, Policy Planning Division, 1970); Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *The Co-operative Housing Program* (Ottawa: CMHC, 1981); Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Startup Program for Co-op Housing: The Development Process* (Ottawa, CMHC, 1981); Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Section 56.1 Non-Profit and Co-operative Housing Program Evaluation* (Ottawa: CMHC, 1978);

55   *Capital Region Housing Corporation, < http://www.crd.bc.ca/housing > Accessed 3 May 2008; see also Alan Hopper et al, Housing Task Force Study (Saanich: Municipality of Saanich, May 1985).*

56   *Today, these properties are managed by the Vancouver Island Health Authority, arm's length administrative body responsible to the provincial Minister of Health. See Vancouver Island Health Authority, < www.viha.ca > Accessed 30 April 2008.*

57   *Data from December 1981, in British Columbia Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, A Housing Policy for British Columbia in the 1980's (Victoria, 1982), 4; also Susan Cogan and Debra Darke, Canadian Social Housing Managed by Provincial and Territorial Housing Corporations: Comparative Characteristics (Vancouver: British Columbia Housing Management Corporation, December 1983).*

58   *Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, British Columbia's Strategy for Affordable Housing (Victoria: Queen's Printer, April 1996), 18.*

59   *Commission of Inquiry into Social Housing in British Columbia, An Inquiry Into Social Housing for British Columbia: Common Ground in Meeting Core Need (Victoria, 1986).*

60   *Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, British Columbia's Strategy for Affordable Housing (Victoria: Queen's Printer, April 1996), 3.*

disabilities, and single-parent families.[61] Provincially-funded housing projects, built and operated in downtown Victoria by the Victoria Cool Aid Society, offered safe long-term housing for the "hard-to-house," the clientele of emergency shelters and hospital emergency wards who faced severe addictions and mental illness (see Section 2.2).

The year 2001 brought a major upheaval in British Columbia's public policy landscape. The BC Liberal government, led by real-estate developer Gordon Campbell, took advantage of a commanding 77 seats in the 79-seat legislature to implement the "lean state" in British Columbia. Funding was cut to women's centres and social assistance, the minimum wage was cut by $2 per hour, public assets such as the BC Railway were sold off, and collective agreements were opened to allow for privatization of health, education and social services.

A high-profile housing squat shook Vancouver's impoverished Downtown Eastside in autumn 2002, after the province cancelled social housing slated for the former Woodward's department store (in Canada's poorest neighbourhood).[62] Residential tenancy offices across BC closed, imposing barriers in the way of tenants and landlords seeking to resolve housing-related disputes.[63] Demonstrating the waning priority of social housing in Campbell's "New Era," responsibility shifted to the Ministry of Forests and Range and the unlikely Office of Housing and Construction Standards. Non-profit societies were urged to explore partnerships with the private sector in the absence of government funds.[64]

Faced with a growing crisis and frequent squats in Vancouver and Victoria by the militant "Anti-Poverty Committee," the province announced the purchase of 15 private buildings – single-room occupancy hotels and low-rent apartments threatened with conversion or demolition. Three Victoria properties were among BC Housing's new assets, purchased in 2007: the 28-unit Pandora Hotel, a single-room occupancy hotel in the downtown core; and two four-storey apartments, 20-unit Queen's Court and 28-unit Magdelaine Court.[65] Management of the downtown facility was vested in Cool Aid and the units dedicated for the "hard-to-house." While this succeeded in stemming the loss

61   *BC Ministry of Health Office of Health Promotion, Creating Housing for Healthy Communities (Victoria: Queen's Printer, January 1993); Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security, Supportive Housing in Supportive Communities: The Report on the Supportive Housing Review (Victoria: Queen's Printer, September 1999).*

62   *"Woodsquat," West Coast Line, 41 (Fall/Winter 2003/2004).*

63   *See David Beers, ed., Liberalized: The Tyee Report on British Columbia Under Gordon Campbell's Liberals (Vancouver: New Star, 2005); Benjamin Isitt and Melissa Moroz, "The Hospital Employees' Union Strike and the Privatization of Medicare in British Columbia, Canada," International Labor and Working-Class History, 71 (Spring 2007): 91-111; Alan Sears, "The 'Lean' State and Capitalist Restructuring: Towards a Theoretical Account," Studies in Political Economy, 59 (1999), 91-114; Kim Moody, Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy (London: Verso, 1997); Harvey Feigenbaum, Jeffrey Henig, and Chris Hamnett, Shrinking the State: The Political Underpinnings of Privatization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); John Shields and B. Mitchell Evans, Shrinking the State: Globalization and Public Administration "Reform" (Halifax: Fernwood, 1998).*

64   *"Province Ignores Need for New Social Housing, Diverts Federal Dollars to Health Care" and "BC Proactive in Homelessness Solutions," InfoLink (Vancouver), 11:5 (September/October 2004).*

65   *"BC buys up low-rent buildings," Times Colonist, 4 April 2007; also "Premier urges joint action on housing initiatives," News Release, 27 October 2006.*

of low-cost rental housing, it did not expand the supply of affordable housing in any way.

In January 2008, British Columbia's provincial cabinet minister responsible for housing, Forests Minister Rich Coleman, announced the construction or re-furbishment of 153 units in the Capital Region.[66] This represented the largest expansion of social housing in the Campbell era, but remained far below the threshold of need identified by the Mayor's Task Force and other groups.

Confronted with a growing homelessness crisis in the Capital Region – and ambivalent political will – non-governmental organizations are increasingly called upon to narrow the gap.

2.2 Non-Profit Organizations Fill the Gap

The re-emergence of visible homelessness and poverty in British Columbia's Capital Region – like elsewhere in Canada – spurred the expansion of non-profit social housing. In place of direct government involvement in the provision of shelter, public funds and charitable donations were increasingly channeled toward non-governmental organizations – such as the Victoria Cool Aid Society, M'akola Housing Society, and Pacifica Housing Advisory Association. Governments' increased emphasis on non-profit service delivery coincided with, and contributed to, the professionalization of formerly grassroots, voluntaristic entities.

Non-profit housing has deep roots in Canada and abroad – tracing its origins to the social gospel movement and "settlement houses" of the late 19th century.

These religiously-inspired responses to the ills of industrialism and urbanization sought to "build a new Jerusalem on earth," extending the solidaristic teachings of Christ to the worldly social system. Among Methodists, Catholics and kindred Christian faiths, strong volunteer organizations emerged to aid the "downtrodden" and feed, shelter and rehabilitate immigrants and the urban working class.[67] The Salvation Army, founded by a former Methodist minister in London in 1865, expanded rapidly across Canada and the globe, combining a strong emphasis on personal salvation and sobriety with recreational, educational and social services.[68]

The social gospel rose alongside the "settlement house" movement, a philoso-

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66   Media release, "New supportive housing for Victoria's homeless," 22 January 2008.
67   Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis. (Orig. Pub. 1907; New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971); Nancy Christie and Michael Gaurvreau, A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); Gregory Baum, Catholics and Canadian Socialism: Political Thought in the Thirties and Forties (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1980); E.F. Sheridan, ed., Do Justice: The Social Teachings of the Canadian Catholic Bishops, 1945-1986 (Toronto : Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, 1987); Dorothy Day, The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day (New York: Harper, 1952); Dorothy Day, Loaves and Fishes (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).*
68   For cultural aspects of the Salvation Army's early history, see Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).*

phy that aimed to serve the urban poor by "living among them and serving them directly" – the embryo of the present-day social work profession. Women were prominent in early settlement houses, such as London's Toynbee Hall and Hull House in Chicago. In Canada, the settlement-house movement inspired projects such as Winnipeg's All People's Mission, founded by Methodist preacher and socialist leader James Shaver Woodsworth in 1904.[69]

In British Columbia, the social gospel developed a strong presence, particularly in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches during the First World War, waging campaigns against government corruption and the sale of alcoholic drink. In 1918, the British Columbia Methodist Conference went on record favouring "the displacement of the profits system by a system of co-operation."[70]

The province's first non-profit society, the BC Protestant Orphan's Home, had been formed by Anglican leaders in Victoria in 1873 and operated a 100-bed orphanage in the Hillside area from the 1890s to 1960s. In the 1960s, as foster care replaced institutional arrangements, the society reinvented itself as the Cridge Centre for the Family. The centre developed a diversity of support services, including an emergency shelter and 30 townhouse units for women and children escaping abusive relationships.[71]

Other Christian-based non-profit organizations also expanded at this time, building from their origins in earlier social gospel activism. The Salvation Army Men's Shelter, located at the corner of Johnson and Government Streets, provided shelter for transient adult males. Destroyed by fire in 1981, the facility reopened as the nearby Addictions and Rehabilitation Centre, offering 145 short- and long-term units, including 45 units for former prison inmates through the federal half-way house program. Two other Salvation Army facilities, Sunset Lodge and Matson Sequoia Residence, provided a combined 138 subsidized housing units for seniors and families. Beacon of Hope House opened to provide transitional housing and treatment for six youth suffering drug addiction.[72]

Senior citizens housing was an early emphasis of these religiously-inspired non-profit societies, responding to widespread poverty among older persons. The Baptist Housing Society of British Columbia, founded in the Lower Mainland in 1964, established several facilities in the Capital Region: Marrion Village, which opened in Oak Bay in 1976 with 115 subsidized seniors units (expanded to 173 units in 2007 in partnership with BC Housing); Central Care Home, which opened downtown in 1979 with 146 assisted-living units; Mount Ed-

69   J.S. Woodsworth, *My Neighbour* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1911); Shirley F. Payment, "The Big Project: James M. Shaver at All Peoples' Mission, Winnipeg, 1921-1941" (MA thesis, University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg, 1999); Kenneth McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); also Judith Ann Trolander, *Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).
70   Sheila Patricia Mosher, *The Social Gospel in British Columbia: Social Reform as a Dimension of Religion, 1900-1920* (MA Thesis: University of Victoria, 1974), 24.
71   Cridge Centre for the Family, "History," < http://www.cridge.org/history.htm > Accessed 30 April 2008.
72   Information provided by Salvation Army Addictions & Rehabilitation Centre, 1 and 6 May 2008; also Salvation Army British Columbia Division, < http://www.salvationarmy.org/can/www_can_bc.nsf > Accessed 1 May 2008.

wards Court, also downtown, with 83 units; and a second Oak Bay facility, 43-unit Elgin Gardens, which opened in 1987. The Baptist Housing Society expanded to 13 seniors "communities" across BC, with more than 1000 apartment and townhouse units and several hundred assisted-care beds.[73] The Anglican Diocese of British Columbia also offered seniors' housing in the Capital Region, building cottage-style units in the Cedar Hill area in the 1960s through its Twilight Homes Ltd. subsidiary, and expanding with two new apartment buildings in the 1990s under the new name Dawson Heights.[74]

In 1962, the Capital Region Housing Board had identified the need for "low-rental housing" for people over the age of 65 – who accounted for 20% of the population of Oak Bay and Victoria, more than three times the provincial average.[75] Secular non-profit societies such as the Victoria Senior Citizens Housing Society and the Kiwanis Club became leaders in responding to this need. The Victoria Senior Citizens Housing Society (today called the Greater Victoria Housing Society), founded in 1956, developed 565 seniors (and, later, family) units in 10 buildings across the region.[76] Kiwanis established "villages" at Victoria and Sidney, with 183 cottage-style units, and three care homes in Victoria and Oak Bay with a total of 264 assisted-care beds.[77]

Case Study: Cool Aid

In the 1960s and 1970s, non-profit societies expanded in new directions. As thousands of hippies converged for "Love-Ins" at Victoria's Beacon Hill Park, a group called the Victoria Youth Council launched a campaign of "youth empowerment" in the region. The council, affiliated with the federally-funded Company of Young Canadians, opened youth centres and two "co-op houses," staged Friday night "happenings," and launched the underground newspapers Humanitas and Wine Press.[78]

In July 1967, two transient youth were arrested by Victoria police in recently refurbished Centennial Square, on charges of "vagrancy," which outlawed idleness. One of the young men was sentenced to ten days in prison. United Church minister L.D. Wallwork described the jailing of the hippies as "corruption of the law," while the local Chamber of Comerce launched an investigation into

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73   Baptist Housing Society, < http://www.baptisthousing.org > Accessed 2 May 2008; BC Housing, "Assisted living units open to benefit Victoria seniors," Press Release, 6 September 2007; Information provided by Marrion Village (Baptist Housing Society of BC), 2 May 2008.

74   Dawson Heights Ltd (Anglican Diocese of British Columbia), < http://www.dawsonheights.ca/accomodate.htm > Accessed 3 May 2008.

75   Capital Region Planning Board of BC, Senior Citizens' Housing in the Capital Region (Victoria, April 1962).

76   Greater Victoria Housing Society, < http://www.vschs.org/index.html > Accessed 1 May 2008.

77   Kiwanis Village Society, < http://www.kiwanisvictoria.com/kvillage.html > Accessed 1 May 2008.

78   See "News from Canadian underground youth," Humanitas, 9:2 (June/July 1967) p. 17; "Company of Young Canadians Sees Possible Project in City Youths," Victoria Daily Times, 4 March 1967; "Flower Power Invasion to Wilt Before Reaching City," Victoria Daily Times, 15 September 1967; "Hippies Listen, Enjoy at Love-In," Daily Colonist, 16 May 1967 for an overview of the Company of Young Canadians, see "Corps for Reform," The Martlet (Victoria), 6 January 1966.

Victoria Youth Council activities.[79] Catholic Bishop Remi de Roo proposed "open forums" to air the conflicting views.[80] "It's my opinion that the business community feels threatened," said 22-year-old Colin Constant, after he was detained for sitting on the side of the Centennial Square fountain.[81]

On 10 June 1968, the Victoria Youth Council launched the "Cool-Aid" emergency telephone line to assist youth in need. "Primarily aimed at finding low-cost housing for transient young people, the service will also help find legal aid, medical and psychological assistance," the Victoria Daily Times reported. Youth council organizer Charles Barber described the 24-hour service as a "working-model." Faced with an acute housing shortage, "if something is not done, there could be hundreds of perfectly respectable and innocent kids arrested for vagrancy this summer," Barber warned.[82]

In late 1968, the Victoria Youth Council opened a hostel geared to providing low-cost housing for transient youth at 953 Balmoral Road, on the edge of downtown. Three years later, the group acquired the Emmanual Baptist Church (now the Belfry Theatre) in the Fernwood district, moving the "Streetlink" hostel to the new facility on 29 July 1971 (Figures 4 and 5). For 50 cents per night, youth received dinner, breakfast, a shower, and a dormitory bed. The next year, a dental clinic opened and two years after that, a medical clinic, funded by the provincial health ministry to service the youth staying at "Streetlink." The Victoria Cool Aid Society was incorporated as a non-profit society on 28 October 1976.[83]

Photo: Victoria Cool Aid Society archives

Figure 4. Emmanuel Baptist Church (now Belfry Theatre), Fernwood and Gladstone, purchased to build a youth centre, 1971.

79   *"Hippy-Type Pair Jailed On Charges of Vagrancy," Daily Times, 8 July 1967; "Jailing of Hippies 'Corruption of Law' Claims City Cleric," Daily Times, 10 July 1967; "Chamber Digs Deeply Into Youth Periodical," Colonist, 22 July 1967.*
80   *"Bishop Calls for Action To Ease Tension in City," Daily Times, 9 August 1967.*
81   *"City Hall Resting Place for All," Daily Times, 3 August 1967.*
82   *"'Cool-Aid': Hot Line to Help," Daily Times, 10 June 1968.*
83   *Certificate of Incorporation, 28 October 1976, Victoria Cool Aid Society archives.*

Photo: Victoria Cool Aid Society archives

Figure 5. Cool Aid's "Streetlink" shelter, at Emmanuel Baptist Church (now Belfry Theatre), Fernwood, ca. July 1971.

Over time, Cool Aid's clientele shifted, away from the restless young travelers toward an older, more hardened demographic. This reflected growth of a permanent marginalized underclass in Canada – estranged from both the labour force and the private real-estate market. "Most hostel users today are residents of the local community who need to use the hostel for emergency shelter," a Cool Aid bulletin noted in the mid-1970s. The Victoria Cool Aid Society retooled into a social service agency offering short-term (and later long-term) housing for the Capital Region's homeless population.[84]

In the 1980s, governments came to rely increasingly on non-profit societies to deliver non-market housing to people in need. The Mulroney Conservative government's 1985 review of housing policy stated that "assistance will be provided to public and private nonprofit organizations…to construct, acquire, own, and manage housing units for households in core housing need and special purpose groups."[85] A survey conducted by the provincial Commission of Inquiry into Social Housing in British Columbia found that "non-profit and co-operative residents expressed the highest levels of satisfaction…and participated in project meetings and management to a greater extent than public housing tenants or rent supplement tenants."[86]

84 "Welcome to Cool Aid," n.d. c. 1975, Volume 3, Victoria Cool Aid Society archives.
85 As quoted in Peter Deier and J. David Hulchanski, "The Role of Nonprofit Housing in Canada and the United States: Some Comparisons," Housing Policy Debate, 4:1 (1993), 54.
86 Commission of Inquiry into Social Housing in British Columbia, An Inquiry Into Social Housing for British Co-

Growth of the non-profit housing sector encouraged the trend toward professionalization in previously grassroots groups. Tasks formerly undertaken with volunteer labour were transferred to permanent paid staff. This process sometimes generated tension between founding volunteer members and non-profit managers, and contributed to a distance between low-income tenants and non-profit landlords.[87] However, in comparison with the impersonal management structures of traditional public housing, even professionalized non-profit societies were characterized by a greater responsiveness and accessibility to specific needs.

Several new non-profit organizations took root in the Capital Region to fill the housing vacuum vacated by government, while existing non-profits expanded their operations in new directions. The Victoria Native Indian Housing Society, incorporated in 1984 and renamed the M'akola Housing Society in 1988, leveraged federal Urban Native Housing program funds. M'akola built targeted housing for aboriginal people, expanding to 174 unit in 19 small- and medium-sized buildings in the Capital Region, with 748 units across Vancouver Island.[88]

The Pacifica Housing Advisory Association, a nonprofit society founded in 1988, offered an even greater number of non-market homes, over 500 units in 20 facilities geared toward family housing. Pacifica tenants ranged from the hardest-to-house to persons with disabilities and families earning gross annual incomes up to $55,000 per year. The 374 "family" units provide market-based affordable housing and include 21 units dedicated for persons with disabilities. Pacifica also offers supported housing for the homeless and homeless-at-risk populations, at Medewiwin, Georgian Apartments, and The Pacifica. The organization operates a housing referral service to help match the homeless and homeless-at-risk population with local landlords and housing providers.[89]

Existing non-profit societies, such as the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, affiliated with the Catholic Church, expanded into the housing field. The organization had traditionally been oriented toward visiting low-income families with food and clothing (valued at $500,000 in 2006, dispensed to 1000 fami-

lumbia: Common Ground in Meeting Core Need (Victoria, 1986), 84.

87   Hokyu Hwang, "Professionalization of Nonprofit Management," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montréal, Quebec, 10 August 2006; Adnan Türegün, "Professionalization of the Settlement Service Sector," INSCAN: International Settlement Canada, 18:4 (Spring 2005), 12-15; Jennifer R. Wolch, The Shadow State: Government and the Voluntary Sector in Transition (New York: The Foundation Centre, 1990); Beverly A. Cigler, "Public Administration and the Paradox of Professionalization," Public Administration Review, 50:6 (November-December 1990), 637-653; Peter Frumkin and Mark T. Kim, "The Effect of Government Funding on Nonprofit Administrative Efficiency: An Empirical Test," Paper published by the Innovations in American Government Program (Harvard University) (Fall 2002), < http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu/Ash/PAQ.pdf >, accessed 1 May 2008.

88   M'akola Housing Society, "About Us," < http://www.makola.bc.ca/Makola_Group/About_Us.html > Accessed 30 April 2008; BC Ministry of Health Office of Health Promotion, "M'Akola Housing Sociey," Creating Housing for Healthy Communities (Victoria: January 1993), 44-46. Debates around segregation in ethnically-based social housing are considered in R. Alan Walks and Larry S. Bourne, "Ghettos in Canada's cities? Racial segregation, ethnic enclaves and poverty concentration in Canadian urban areas," The Canadian Geographer, 50:3 (Fall 2006), 273-297; see also Joël Thibert, Inclusion and Social Housing Practice in Canadian Cities: Following the Path from Good Intentions to Sustainable Projects (Montreal: Canadian Policy Research Network, August 2007).

89   Pacific Housing Advisory Association, http://www.pacificahousing.ca > Accessed 2 May 2008.

lies), through a team of 150 "active" volunteer members – part of a movement of 10,500 volunteers in 980 "conferences" and "councils" across Canada. The organization also operated four thrift stores in the Capital Region, In 2004, Saint Vincent de Paul opened 43 non-market units in downtown Victoria.[90]

Smaller nonprofit organizations, such as Anawims Companion Society and the Canadian Community Housing Foundation, offer additional supported non-market units for the Greater Victoria's "hard-to-house," while group homes operated by an array of nonprofit groups including the Victoria Human Exchange Society provide specialized housing for women escaping abusive relationships, youth-at-risk, and people with head injuries, addictions, and developmental disabilities.

As the Capital Region's street population swelled in the 1990s and 2000s amid globalization, neoliberal "restraint," and deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, the Victoria Cool Aid Society was increasing called up to shelter the hardest to house. Leveraging provincial capital and operating funds, Cool Aid opened Swift House in 1991, in Victoria's Chinatown, with 26 long-term units for the "hard-to-house" and 45 (now 80) short-term emergency shelter beds. The Pandora Project added 32-additional long-term supported units in 1997 and eight targeted youth-at-risk units. In 1999, the society opened Mike Gidora Place, named after a spirited employee who had coordinated the 45-unit affordable "market-priced" project for the working poor (later transformed into supported "hard-to-house" units as street problems worsened). By the turn of the 21st century, Cool Aid was working in close proximity with multiple government agencies in the health and criminal justice fields, diverting mental ill persons from institutions to supported homes staffed 24-hours per day. Johnson Manor opened in a residential neighbourhood near downtown Victoria in 2001, with 20 units for the "hardest to house."

Cool Aid also assumed management of several pre-existing facilities: Merriman House, a 25-bed women's emergency shelter opened by the Women's Shelter Society in 1995; Cedar Grove, a 21-unit motel-style complex owned by the nonprofit Canadian Community Housing Foundation; and Desmond House, a 27-unit single-room occupancy hotel (formerly the Pandora Hotel) in Victoria's downtown core. Cool Aid expanded into the field of senior citizens' housing, opening Fairway Woods in suburban Langford in 2004, with 32 independent-living units for the mentally ill that included a daily hot meal, and Hillside Terrace in 2006, offering 45 supported seniors' units jointly managed with the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA).[91]

Today, the Victoria Cool Aid Society operates 257 long-term units in the Capital Region, providing safe, stable and non-judgmental ("wet") housing for the

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90   Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Vancouver Island, < http://www.svdpvictoria.com > Accessed 2 May 2008; Society of Saint Vincent de Paul of Vancouver Island, Annual Report 2006 < http://www.svdpvictoria.com/pdfs/Annual%20Report%202006.pdf > Accessed 2 May 2008.

91   Victoria Cool Aid Society, "Backgrounder" (n.d. circa 2008); "Supported Housing for Adults," < http://www.coolaid.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=104 >, accessed 1 May 2008; BC Housing, "Victoria Seniors' Housing Health Complex Opens," Media Release, 30 March 2006.

"hard-to-house" – homeless and homeless-at-risk people managing major addictions and mental health issues, with previous contact with police and an array of institutions. Cool Aid is also the principal provider of emergency shelter in the region, with 80 mixed-gender and 25 women's only shelter beds. The non-profit society occupies a key point in a "continuum of care" that includes a downtown health and dental clinic and employment and addictions counseling.

Photo: www.ourplacesociety.com

**Figure 6. The new Our Place centre, at 909 Pandora Avenue
in downtown Victoria, with 45 supported housing units,
a library, and several hundred meals per day, 2008.**

Governments' preference for non-profit delivery of supported non-market housing was demonstrated in spring 2008 with the opening of Our Place, a 45-unit facility in the downtown core formed through a merger of the Open Door and Upper Room street ministries. Spearheaded by Reverands Al Tysick and David Stewart, the Open Door includes a cafeteria with the capacity to serve tenants and several hundred drop-in clients daily; a modern shower and locker facility geared toward the homeless; a multimedia library with eight high-speed internet terminals; a large courtyard to accommodate the shopping carts and chattels of the eclectic street community; and sunny meetings rooms and lounges.

Such facilities demonstrate the most straightforward route to eliminating homelessness in the Capital Region – building safe and stable long-term housing for every person who requires shelter, combined with a range of support

and recreational services to assist people in finding community and rebuilding their lives. Non-profit societies have proven their ability to reach the homeless population in ways that public agencies cannot. However, the essential ingredient in this equation – capital and operating funds – remains the purview of government.

2.3 The Role of Co-operatives

Alongside non-profit societies are housing co-operatives, innovative and democratic organizations that are operated directly by residents. Co-ops occupy a key location in the affordable housing continuum. They buffer low-income families from the volatile private real-estate market, helping ameliorate desperate social conditions that drive many young and old people toward lives on the streets. While housing co-ops require a degree of self-management that often evades the "hardest-to-house," the model is integral to a forward-looking homelessness and housing strategy.

Today, more than 30 housing co-operatives in the Capital Region house about 2,500 people in 1,100 homes. Across British Columbia, 266 co-ops provide nearly 15,000 homes. Canada's 2,200 co-ops provide 91,000 homes and house a quarter of a million Canadians.[92] Housing co-ops "provide much more than a roof over people's heads," serving as nodes of inclusive, mutually supportive community where otherwise marginalized people can play an active role in determining their lives.[93] According to Ian MacPherson, co-ops "differ from tendencies in other Social Economy organisations to foster dependency rather than encourage self-help: they can provide ways in which people confronting difficulties can take responsibility for changing situations."[94]

Housing co-ops trace their lineage to the Rochdale movement of mid-19th century England, when 28 weavers and artisans near Manchester, England responded to rapid industrialization by opening the world's first successful co-operative food store.[95] Co-ops quickly spread around the world, developing a strong Canadian presence in the agrarian west, Atlantic Canada, and Québèc. The utopian communities of early British Columbia history – such as the Finnish settlement of Sointula on remote Malcolm Island – gave way to more modest, yet no less important, co-operative enterprises such as credit unions, retail stores, fish canneries, children's playschools, and housing co-ops.[96]

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92   *Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Statistics, 2008 < www.chfc.ca > Accessed 28 April 2008.*
93   *Co-operatives Secretariat Government of Canada, Co-operatives and the Social Economy (Ottawa: March 2008), 6.*
94   *Ian McPherson, "Cooperatives and the Social Economy: Reflections on a Century of Engagement," Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics, 79:3 (September 2008), 24.*
95   *George Jacob Holyoake, The History of the Rochdale Pioneers, 1844-1892 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1893); Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The Consumers' Co-operative Movement (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921); William Brown, The Rochdale Pioneers: A Century of Co-operation (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd., 1944); Keiko Miyake, Rainbow over Rochdale: The Story of the Birth of the Cooperative (Tokyo: Ienohikari Shuppan So go Service, 1991).*
96   *Ian MacPherson, Each for All: A History of the C-operative Movement in English Canada, 1900-1945 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979); Kevin Wilson, Practical Dreamers: Communitarianism and Co-operatives on Malcolm Island (Victoria: BC Institute for Co-operative Studies, 2005); Gordon Fish, Dreams of Freedom: Bella Coola, Cape Scott, Sointula*

Co-operative housing experienced its most impressive Canadian expansion during the "glory years" of Canadian housing policy – when the interventionist Trudeau government (backed by a New Democratic party opposition that held the balance of power) amended the National Housing Act in 1973 to create the "Section 61" Co-operative Housing Program.[97] The idea of co-op housing was not new. As early as 1960, the CMHC had commissioned a report on co-op housing. However, many administrators and politicians renounced the model as disruptive to the single-family home, considered a pillar of social stability.[98]

With political and social allegiances in flux in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and public housing discredited by grandiose urban renewal schemes such as Victoria's Blanshard-Rose and Toronto's Regent Park, co-op housing flourished in Canada. Grassroots community action coincided with a sympathetic public policy environment. Ordinary citizens co-operated with CMHC staff and sympathetic local, provincial and federal government officials to build co-op homes.[99]

In British Columbia, the UBC Campus Residence Co-op, built with federal funds, opened in 1967. It was followed by the Abbotsford Villa Co-op two years later and De Cosmos Village in 1970.[100] Victoria's first housing co-op took shape in the early 1970s at Rochdale Place, honouring the pioneers of the movement.[101] In 1972, the United Housing Foundation formed in Vancouver to promote the development of co-op housing across British Columbia, helping spawn 20 new co-op housing projects during its brief four-year existence (77% of all new housing co-ops in the province).[102] Nationally, the Co-operative

(Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1982). For international studies of housing co-ops, see M.L. Khurana, Readings in Co-operative Housing, 3rd edition (New Delhi: National Cooperative Housing Federation of India, 2002); Gregory Andrusz, The Co-operative Alternative in Europe: The Case of Housing (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999); Paul McCafferty and David Riley, A Study of Co-operative Housing (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1989).

97   Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation, Co-operative Housing Programs Evaluation (Ottawa: CMHC Audit and Evaluation Services, 2003); also Matthew Cooper and Margaret Critchlaw Rodman, New Neighbours: A Case Study of Co-operative Housing (Toronto: Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1992); Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, "Bookmarks in Our History," < http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/about_1_4.asp > accessed 25 April 2008.

98   John C. Bacher, Keeping the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 213; Ryan George, "Canadian Housing Policy and the B.C. Co-operative Housing Movement: A Sketch of the Early Years, 1969-1983," (Unpublished paper, Victoria, 2001), 1; see also Co-operative Union of Canada, Co-operative Housing in Canada (Ottawa: CUC, 1959); Co-operative Union of Canada, Brief on Housing: Presented to the Federal Minister of Transport and the Task Force on Housing (Ottawa: CUC, 1968).

99   E. G. Rodgers, "The Co-operative Housing Alternative," M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1977. The experience of managing and living in a housing co-op is illuminated in Matthew Cooper and Margaret Critchlow Rodman, New Neighbours: A Case Study of Co-operative Housing in Toronto (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); also Mark Goldblatt, "Canada's Nonprofit Co-operative Housing Sector: An Alternative That Works," in Brett Fairbairn, Ian MacPherson and Nora Russell, eds., Canadian Co-operatives in the Year 2000 (Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 2000), 143-54.

100   Shirley C. Schmid, "De Cosmos Village, Vancouver, BC: The Ingredients of One Successful Voluntary Housing Development," Housing and People, 5:2-3 (Summer-Fall 1974), 12-13; "BC's co-operative housing history," Scoop (Vancouver), Spring 2007, pp. 16-17. See also Ryan George, "Canadian Housing Policy and the B.C. Co-operative Housing Movement: A Sketch of the Early Years, 1969-1983," Unpublished paper, Victoria, 2001.

101   J. Tate, "Rochdale Place: Victoria's First Housing Co-op," Living Places, 12:4 (1976), 6-11.

102   Elizabeth Cull, "The Rise and Fall of the United Housing Foundation," M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976; "Group Seeks $22M for Co-Op Housing," Victoria Times newsclipping, c. 1975, in Paul Phillips Collection (private papers); John F. Koenig, Alternative Forms of Housing: A Report Prepared for the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver (August 1975), 34.

Housing Federation of Canada knit together the diverse local initiatives.[103]

This grassroots spirit and favourable public policy environment is evident in the inspiring story of a unique Victoria institution, the Spring Ridge Housing Co-op.

Case Study: Spring Ridge

In 1973, the Fernwood neighbourhood of Victoria was in a state of flux. A large number of turn-of-the-century wooden homes were in disrepair, providing necessary but substandard housing for seniors, low-income people, and youth. A robust real-estate market was driving up land values, prompting developers to demolish older properties and build high-end housing.

Fernwood was a hotbed of the local counter-culture, which had emerged in the 1960s and combined utopian visions of "flower power" with stronger political tones. Among a motley crew of hippies, yippies, anarchists and kindred rebels and dreamers, Fernwood served as the incubator of a spark that challenged conventional wisdoms and addressed a range of social ills.
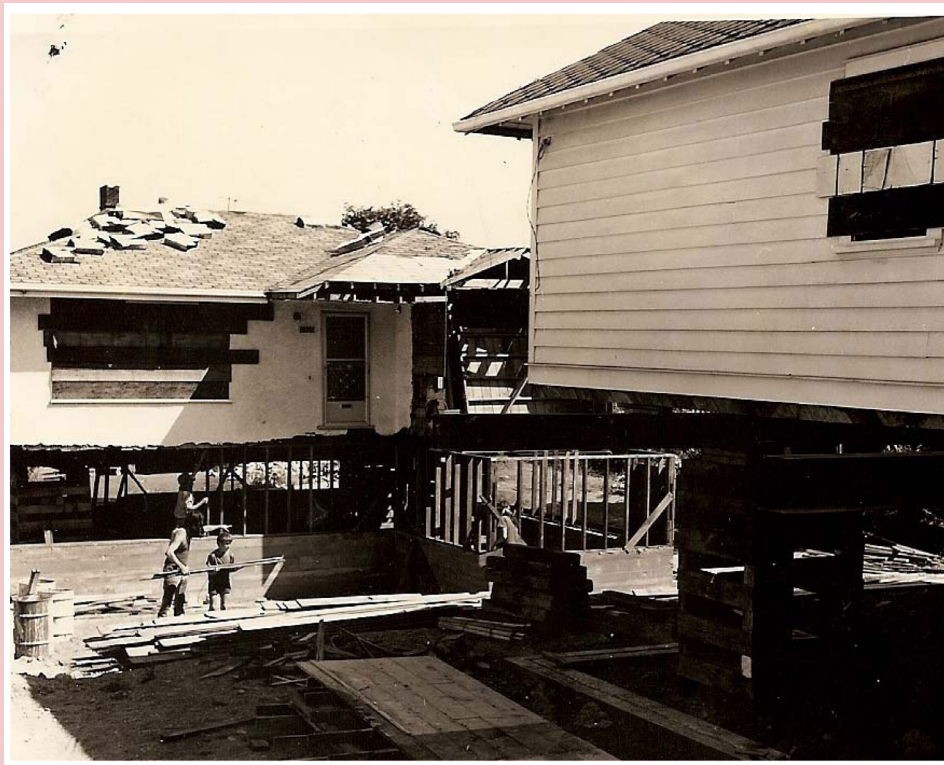
Photo: Spring Ridge Co-operative Housing Association archives

Figure 7. Homes slated for demolition are given a fresh lease on life at Fernwood's Spring Ridge Housing Co-op, 1974.

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103   *See Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Building on Common Ground: Our Vision of the Canadian Co-operative Housing Movement (March 1993).*

One day in 1973, a group of Fernwood activists, with roots in the co-operative food movement, witnessed the demolition of an old home on Pembroke Street near Fernwood Road. Real-estate company Block Brothers had an option to buy the adjacent property, a large overgrown tract of vacant land. The activists mobilized. They pressured the provincial New Democratic party government of Dave Barrett to purchase the land, through its policy of "land-banking." Fernwood resident Paul Phillips recalls these heady times: "They got an onslaught of people saying, 'Buy it! Buy it! Buy it!'" In November 1973, these efforts paid off. The Block Brothers option lapsed and the province bought the land for $38,000. "I got a call from a provincial government official saying "Your efforts have paid off. So call off your dogs!"[104]

Concurrently, the province had acquired a block of old homes along the Oak Bay border for seniors housing (the Baptist Housing Society's Marrion Village on Bee Street, see section 2.2). The homes were slated for demolition to make way for the new housing project. Phillips and other Fernwood co-operators intervened. They convinced Fernwood social-welfare officer John Shields (future head of the BC Government Employees' Union) to provide an additional $100 per month to welfare recipients willing to undertake construction work. Human Resources Minister Norm Levi, a long-haired social worker, approved the plan. Housing Minister Lorne Nicholson granted the hippies one of the Oak Bay homes on the condition that they "demo" the materials in one month. "House Savers" was born.

"We did it in three weeks," Phillips recalls. The province agreed to sell all 17 Bee Street homes to the "House Savers" for $1 a piece, who commissioned the CMHC-funded Urban Design Centre of Vancouver for expert advice. In the dead of night, activist Nick Orton transported the four sturdiest homes by truck to the Fernwood property. "They were moved without permission of the government of the day," Phillips recalls. "[Orton and his friends] were playing music on the homes on the truck as they moved through the streets."

Spring Ridge Housing Co-op rose on the overgrown lot. A dozen former welfare recipients were employed converting the four homes into eight duplex units, aided with a one-year CMHC grant of about $50,000. The remainder of the homes were recycled and sold for building materials. "Talk about community development," Phillips suggests. "People learned how to put in flooring, which they are still doing today. People learned a lot. Those same people who were on welfare were suddenly faced with having to do everything themselves. They had to learn how to insulate, how to gyp-roc, how to do everything connected with building a house."

The former welfare recipients became fully participating members of the Spring Ridge Co-operative Housing Association, with stable homes in an inclusive

104   Interview with Paul Phillips, 4 May 2008, Victoria, BC; Hansard, Debates of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, 15 February 1974, p. 250; "NDP footwork irks critics," The Victoria Express, 21 February 1974. According to a legislature speech of Newell Morrison, Social Credit MLA for Victoria, the province bought the Pembroke property for $36,750 on 8 November 1973.

community. When the right-of-centre Social Credit government defeated Barrett's NDP in 1975, Spring Ridge co-operators weathered a financial and political storm, successfully buying the Pembroke property from the government; the Social Credit MLA for Victoria had earlier speculated in the legislature about "what will happen when the houses are no longer of any value."[105] Today, Spring Ridge has expanded to 22 units, housing 36 people who maintain strong ties to a plethora of community projects.

Spring Ridge is just one of the Capital Region's innovative housing co-operatives, each with their own story of Herculean grassroots effort in the context of progressive government policy. The Barrett NDP government's policy of "land banking" and provincial operating funds for the United Housing Foundation spurred a massive expansion of British Columbia's co-op housing stock – from 158 units when the party took power in 1972 to 1,108 units when it was voted out of office in 1975 (climbing to 1,855 units by 1977 as projects approved by the NDP were completed).[106] This generation of housing co-ops relied on an elaborate formula of amortized land and building costs, provincial "land-banking," CMHC mortgage financing, and cost-sharing by individual co-operators who paid a start-up "share purchase" of roughly $2000, refundable if they ever left the co-op.[107]

In the 1980s, a deep economic recession in British Columbia and worsening housing crisis spurred the second major wave of co-op housing. With support from the right-of-centre Social Credit government, the number of co-op units nearly doubled in BC – from 3,300 to 6,000 units in the years 1981 to 1983. In the Capital Region, 30 housing co-ops took shape in the 1970s and 1980s, providing 1,000 homes for low-income families.[108] As researcher Shirley Schmid observed at the time: "The history of co-op housing development in a history of the efforts to secure land."[109]

In 1982, a 5-hectare tract of industrial land on the former Songhees aboriginal reserve in Victoria was transformed into the Tyee Housing Co-op, with 75 family units in six townhouse buildings.[110] Designed by award-winning architect Arthur Erickson, and financed with CMHC and provincial funds, Tyee demonstrated the value of collaborative partnerships. However, a quarter-cen-

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105   Hansard, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia*, 15 February 1974, p. 250. For political controversy over Spring Ridge co-operators' plans to expand their "house recycling" program throughout Fernwood, see "Spring Ridge warning: Block radical 'grab,'" *Daily Colonist*, 10 March 1976.

106   Ryan George, "Canadian Housing Policy and the B.C. Co-operative Housing Movement: A Sketch of the Early Years, 1969-1983," (Unpublished paper, Victoria, 2001), 9-10.

107   Koenig, *Alternative Forms of Housing*, 37-39.

108   Greater Victoria's supply of co-operative and non-profit family housing is enumerated in BC Housing, < http://www.bchousing.org/resources/Housing_Listings/zone8_family.pdf > Accessed 1 May 2008; for a snapshot of one co-op, see "Mitraniketan: A small co-op with big ideas," *Scoop* (Vancouver), Winter 2005, 14-15.

109   Shirley C. Schmid, "Housing Co-operatives in British: Land – the Critical Component," in David J. Hulchanski, ed., *Managing Land for Housing: The Experience of Housing Co-operatives in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Centre for Human Settlements, 1983), 13.

110   British Columbia Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing, *A Housing Policy for British Columbia in the 1980's* (Victoria, 1982), 5.

tury later, Erickson's buildings are crumbling, the victims of an untested building technology that failed to allow the structures to breathe. Tyee members are now scrambling to develop a financial model to rebuilt their homes – like other "leaky co-op" members across BC – in the absence of the sympathetic government policies that created the homes in the first place.[111]

To be sure, co-operatives are not perfect. Like non-profit societies and other human organizations, they confront challenges of process and democratic governance, management and participatory decision-making. They have often been motivated by the strong idealism of their founding members. Co-ops have therefore experienced difficulties of leadership succession and day-to-day operations once the initial period of mobilization ("the golden age") has passed.[112]

However, housing co-ops stand out as a compelling example in the contemporary housing crisis. Canada's federal minister of housing extolled the "dual objective" of the Co-operative Housing Program in a 1985 program review: "a social objective and an objective of providing security of tenure as an alternative to home ownership."[113]

Unfortunately, the expansionary period ended as the political climate soured in Canada, around the catchword "restraint" and the retrenchment of social programs and interventionist government. The Mulroney Conservatives cancelled the Co-operative Housing Program in 1992 after two decades of operation. Rental subsidies continued to flow to individual co-op tenants, but funding for new co-op development ceased. Federal-provincial Affordable Housing Agreements signed in the early 2000s provided public capital subsidies for private developers of affordable housing, precluding the financial model upon which Canada's non-equity housing co-ops had been forged.[114]

The Co-operatives Secretariat of the Government of Canada continues to acknowledge the important role of housing co-ops in "correcting market imbalances" and "filling market gaps." As the 2004 report on Co-operatives and the Social Economy noted, "Co-operatives fill essential gaps in the marketplace and provide goods and services to thousands of hard-to-reach Canadians, often when other forms of enterprise don't find it profitable enough to do so."[115]

111   *"Good news for BC's leaky co-ops," Scoop (Vancouver), Spring 2007, 9-10; "Living with construction turns out well for formerly leaky co-ops," National Newsbriefs (Ottawa), 15:2 (May 2007), 8-9. The fiscal challenges confronting today's housing co-ops are considered in Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Securing Our Future (March 2001).*

112   *Berit Lakey et al., Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership: A Guide for Organizations in Changing Times (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1995); Janice Dineen, The Trouble with Co-ops: The Political History of a Non-Profit Co-operative Housing Project (Toronto: Green Tree Publishing Company, 1974); see also Marie-Clair Malo and Martine Vezina, "Governance and Management of Collective User-Based Enterprises: Value-Creation Strategies and Organizational Configurations," Annals of Public and Co-operative Economics, 75 (March 2004), 113-137.*

113   *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, A National Direction for Housing Solutions (Ottawa: CMHC, 1985), 30.*

114   *Co-operatives Secretariat Government of Canada, Co-operatives and the Social Economy (Ottawa: March 2004), 6; for a discussion of equity co-operatives, see Veronica Doyle, Equity Co-operatives in British Columbia: Development and Operation (Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1993).*

115   *Co-operatives Secretariat Government of Canada, Co-operatives and the Social Economy (Ottawa: March 2008), 11.*

2.4 Integrated Service Delivery

The diverse organizations and histories examined in the preceding pages show how the social economy has succeeded in housing thousands of residents of the Capital Region. Long-term shelter must be the basic element of any homelessness and affordable housing strategy. However, in addition to shelter, innovative community action can help provide a spectrum of support services for Victoria's homeless and homeless-at-risk population: food, recreation, access to health and dental care, employment assistance, alcohol and drug counseling and treatment, laundry, childcare, eldercare, education, and a range of auxiliary services.

Recent research points to the benefits of an integrated delivery model for social services.[116] European jurisdictions have moved further in this direction, though projects such as Vancouver's Portland Hotel and Insite demonstrate the portability of such approaches to North American soil.[117] Harm-reduction strategies have been implemented in Victoria and other urban centres, mitigating the impact of substance misuse and addictions on individuals and communities. Social economy organizations have been the leading providers of harm-reduction services.[118] While such strategies generate controversy in their host communities, from neighbours and critics reluctant to accept deviant behaviours, harm-reduction has become an essential component of rational responses to homelessness.

The experience of the Victoria Needle Exchange, a service operated by AIDS Vancouver Island (AVI), a non-profit society founded in 1985, demonstrates the challenges confronting social economy organizations when they attempt to address desperate social problems. In recent years, the Capital Region's growing homelessness crisis has swelled the clientele at AIDS Vancouver Island's Cormorant Street facility – which distributes about three-quarters of a million clean needles annually to intravenous drug users (and collects a greater number of used needles). The organization lacks the resources to provide 24-hour services, resulting in a large number of addicted homeless people congregating outside the building at all hours of the day and night.

Creeping gentrification of adjacent streets contributed toward a growing NIMBY outcry against the needle exchange and its clients. Spearheaded by several entrepreneurs, the critics successfully forced the eviction of the facility. On 1

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116   I. Van Laere and J. Withers, "Integrated Care for Homeless People: Sharing Knowledge and Experience in Practice, Education and Research: Results of the Networking Efforts to Find Homeless Health Workers," *European Journal of Public Health*, 18:1 (February 2008); 5 6; K. Ferguson, "Feasibility Study of the Social Enterprise Intervention with Homeless Youth," *Research on Social Work Practice*, 18:1 (January 2008), 5 19.

117   L. Evans et al., "The Portland Hotel: A Unique Housing Perspective," *International Conference on AIDS abstracts* (July 1996); L. Evans and S. Strathdee, "A Roof is Not Enough: Unstable Housing, Vulnerability to HIV Infection and the Plight of the SRO," *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 17:2 (March 2006), 115-117; Dan Small, Anita Palepu, Mark W. Tyndall, "The Establishment of North America's First State Sanctioned Supervised Injection Facility: A Case Study of Culture Change," *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 17:2 (March 2006), 73-82.

118   K. Stajduhar, L. Poffenroth, and E. Wong, *Missed Opportunities: Putting a Face on Injection Drug Use and HIV/AIDS in the Capital Health Region* (Vancouver: Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcomes Sciences, 2002); C. Magee and E. Huriaux, "Ladies' night: Evaluating a drop in programme for homeless and marginally housed women in San Francisco's mission district," *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 19:2 (2008), 113 121.

June 2008, the Victoria Needle Exchange will become homeless, displaced into mobile vans around the city. An eleventh-hour attempt to relocate the service to a publicly-owned building several blocks away, near existing homeless services but also a private school, failed when confronted with a strong NIMBY backlash.[119] Aids Vancouver Island will move into a new Victoria facility in partnership with Cool Aid, but the future of the organization's needle exchange remains uncertain.

A different tack to integrated service delivery has been taken with the Woodwynn Farm initiative, the brainchild of community worker Richard Leblanc. A former coordinator of the Youth Employment Project in the downtown core, Leblanc proposes an integrated healing centre for the addicted hard-to-house on 78 hectares of agricultural land on the Saanich Peninsula, just north of Victoria. Leblanc projects a remarkably high success rate at his proposed facility, which is modeled after San Patrignano, an acclaimed drug-recovery community in Italy. Leblanc anticipates a 70-80% recovery rate at Woodwynn, compared with 5-10% for conventional 28-day addiction treatment programs. Despite these lofty hopes, Woodwynn Farm faces substantial financial hurdles. In early 2008, the provincial minister responsible for housing advised Leblanc to pursue fiscal self-sufficiency.[120]

For integrated service delivery and harm reduction to succeed in the Capital Region, public funding and regulatory space are essential. The social economy can succeed in delivering a range of essential services for the region's homeless people, but these organizations require the backing of public opinion and all levels of governments. Such partnerships can effectively mitigate the personal and collective impact of addictions and social problems, while helping homeless people find community and rebuild their lives. Integrated services can at best complement a "housing first" strategy – building a safe long-term home for every homeless person.

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119   *"Needle exchange proves a tough sell," Times Colonist, 6 April 2007; "Needle exchange expected to move to Pandora, next to Our Place," Times Colonist, 6 March 2008.*
120   *"BC government declines support for project to tackle homelessness," Media Release issued by Richard Leblanc, 21 February 2008.*

Conclusion

This study has examined the problem of homelessness in British Columbia's Capital Region and demonstrated how the social economy – non-profit societies and co-operatives in partnership with governments – has succeeded in housing thousands of people excluded from the private real-estate market. The author situates homelessness in a broad historical context to show that the problem is neither inevitable nor irreversible.

Homelessness is not a fact of nature. It is a social problem created by inequalities in our market economy, a gap between rich and poor that has widened against the backdrop of globalization and neoliberal government "restraint." This gap can be narrowed through the taxation system and "policies that empower civil society to do more."[121]

Solving homelessness requires a renewed political will, a fresh optimism to replace the cynicism generated by a quarter century of public policy "downsizing." Indeed, the expectations of many citizens, decision-makers, and activists in the social economy tradition have been effectively "downsized." Belief in the urgency of government action has been displaced by false hope in a neo-charity model – the myth that private charity is capable of solving the world's social problems. Government can and must play a positive role in helping civil society narrow economic inequalities.

Civil society will end homelessness in the Capital Region when citizens force their governments to make social housing a priority again:

1. The public treasury must be opened for large-scale capital and operating investments in the non-profit societies that have already proven their effectiveness on the ground. Federal funds (through the CMHC) and provincial funds (through BC Housing) will enable non-profit societies to build and manage a sufficient supply of supported long-term homes for every "hard-to-house" person in the Capital Region.

2. Public funds must also be directed toward **prevention**. Learning from the 1970s and 1980s, civil society can leverage federal and provincial land, capital grants, and mortgage financing to fuel a renaissance of new co-operative housing construction. This will provide low-income families, at-risk-youth, and working people with security of tenure and social inclusivity – the surest antidotes against a downward slide to the streets.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a federal crown corporation with a proud history of nurturing the social economy's growth, aspires to "help ensure that the Canadian housing system remains one of the best in the

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121   Ian McPherson, *"Cooperatives and the Social Economy: Reflections on a Century of Engagement," Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics, 79:3 (September 2008), 22.*

world."[122] But the agency now operates from the flawed assumption that every Canadian is capable of – or interested in – owning a private home. Faced with the reality of a legion of homeless people on the streets of every Canadian city, a more interventionist approach is urgently required.

Armed with the inspirational examples described in the preceding pages, decision-makers at all levels of government can provide the space and the resources that will enable innovative and mobilized communities to provide housing for all.

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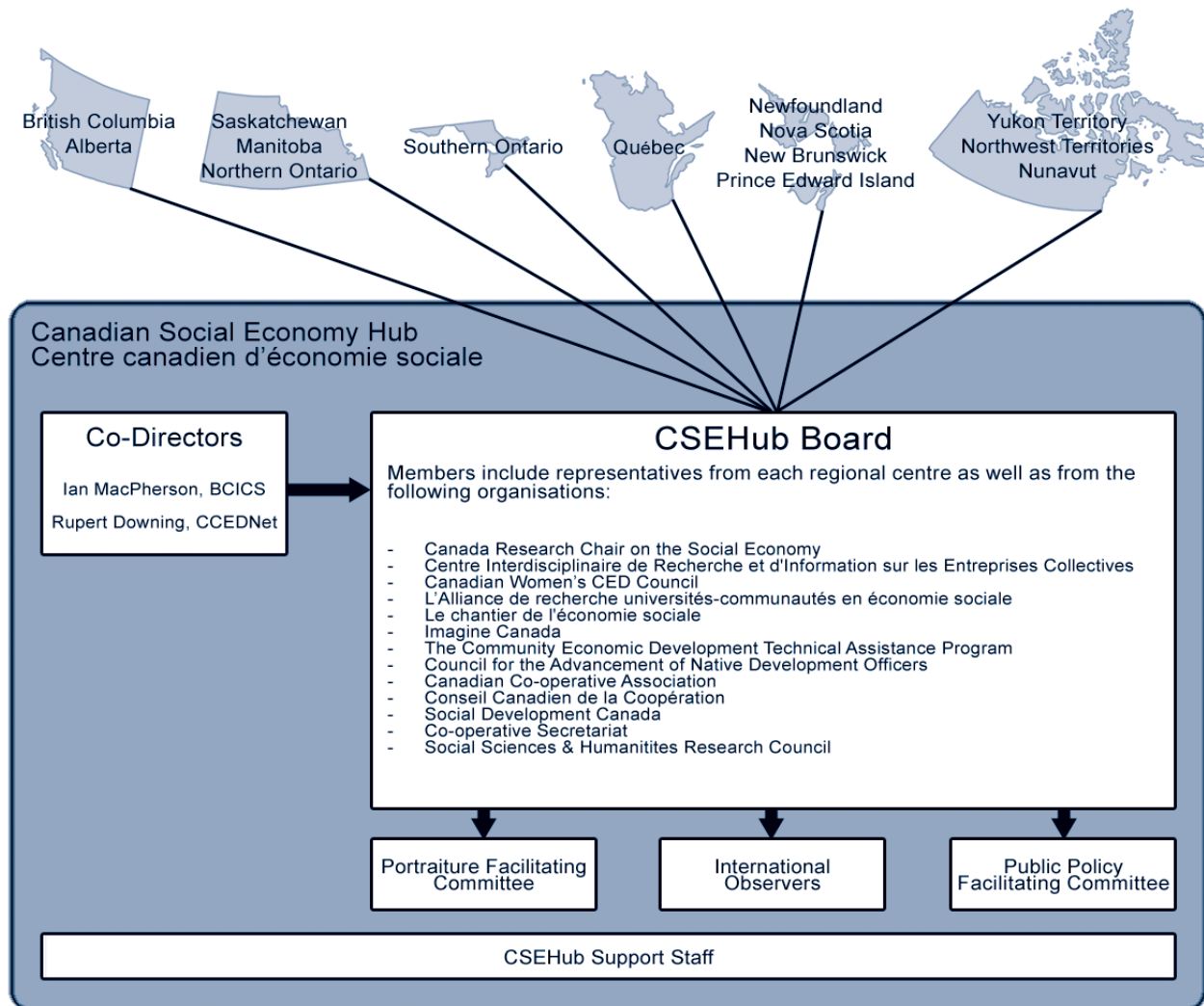
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