



NEWSLETTER



**Poverty Symposium headlines
SPC's 20th anniversary events**

The Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries (SPC-CND) held its fourth annual Poverty Symposium on May 27th, 2009. For the first time, the Symposium was held over a full-day to allow for additional time and exploration of the presented issues. The theme of this year's event was "Building Inclusive Organizations: The experiences of new immigrants and refugees in Cambridge and North Dumfries".



The purpose of the 2009 symposium was five-fold: explore the experiences of newcomers to the area; raise awareness of local and provincial poverty issues as they affect newcomer communities; engage service providers in active reflection about the way in which services are currently delivered to our increasingly diverse communities; promote more inclusive service delivery; and to begin plans for a collaborative strategy to build more inclusive communities.

Keynote speaker Neethan Shan, Executive Director of the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, provided an orientation to the experiences of newcomers and the ways that we can respond as service providers. Neethan provided a personal account of the challenges faced by new immigrants and the strengths and resilience that newcomers demonstrate in order to settle successfully. He called for more effective settlement services, and the need to move beyond a charity model towards a social change agenda. He also highlighted the need to recognize the integrated issues of immigration and race, citing his work on the Colour of Poverty Campaign.

Following the keynote speaker presentation, there were five workshops that provided a local view on specific elements of the newcomer experiences. The sessions included workshops on mental health, employment, housing, newcomer youth, and on building inclusive organizations. Panel presentations included representatives from local agencies and associations, government, and newcomer communities in the region. Symposium participants ended the day with a renewed commitment to building more inclusive communities and services. Additional information is available on the SPC website.

We actively and impartially participate in building and strengthening our communities through social change, innovation, research, analysis and facilitation.

Board of Directors

- Stephen Gross—President
- Marissa Starling—Vice President
- Rosemary Dal Bello—Secretary
- Lynda Kohler—Treasurer
- Ben Benninger
- Kathleen Flint
- Monica Morrison
- Jim Estok

Staff & Volunteers

- Linda Terry—Executive Director
- Dina Etmanskie—Social Planner
- Kelly Breuls—Communications
- Reva Devendran—Manager, Information CND
- David Palmer—Social Planning Associate
- Shannon Balla—Social Planning Associate
- Laura VanderGriendt—Social Planning Associate
- Trish Benoit—Student Intern
- Saadiya —Volunteer, Information CND

Inside this issue:

SPC Events & Projects	1
Of Interest... Local	4
Of Interest... Provincial & National	5
SPC Messages	6

SPC EVENTS & PROJECTS

Cambridge Affordable Housing Forum

The Cambridge Affordable Housing Forum was held on May 13, 2009, co-hosted by the Affordable Housing Subcommittee to the Cambridge Strategy for Poverty Reduction Roundtable, the City of Cambridge, and Canada Housing & Mortgage Corporation. The event was inspiring and informative, giving attendees new ideas and hopes for affordable housing initiatives in the Cambridge area.



After morning greetings, Jeff Schumacher, a Housing Supply Initiatives Supervisor from the Region of Waterloo, outlined the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy and the need for affordable housing in Cambridge.

The event's keynote speaker, Roberta Martell from Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group in Victoria, BC, delivered an inspiring testimonial of community revitalization, social enterprise, and commitment to affordable housing. She described how Fernwood, along with hundreds of community volunteers, transformed a neglected warehouse into a hub of community spirit, providing living space and work for community members in need.

The event's panel featured three residents of south-western Ontario involved in affordable housing initiatives. Steve Cordes from Youth Opportunities Unlimited in London described his organization's success in negotiating the purchase of a downtown building and converting it into small apartments and a workshop for homeless youth. Joe Mancini from The Working Centre in Kitchener outlined various projects and renovations undertaken by his organization in the past 20-plus years, and the Centre's commitment to provide affordable housing in its downtown-Kitchener locations. Finally, Howard Rotberg, a private sector developer, mixed wit and information in describing the housing issues facing communities across Canada and his commitment to affordable housing projects. He described successful conversion projects, including one involving an underused church in Brantford, Ontario.

A key goal of the event was to facilitate connections between potential affordable housing collaborators. Many of the parties involved in affordable housing initiatives were represented, notably government, not-for-profit agencies, and private developers. It is hoped that lasting connections were made that will improve our collective ability to address the community's affordable housing needs.



Web 2.0 Pilot Project

In December 2008, members from the SPC and the United Way of Cambridge & North Dumfries completed an on-line training for Web 2.0: Social Network Tools. A committee has been formed to determine the ways in which the tools will be put into practice. An initial usage of the tools will be to create a social network among the SPC and UW partner agencies and their clients. The committee also plans to develop mini projects to maintain the momentum of the new toolset.

The SPC plans to run a web dialogue group as a follow up to the recently-hosted fourth-annual Poverty Symposium.

Our Communities, Our Health and Our Future: Understanding and Changing the Built Environment

Prepared by the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries for the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, this publication provides a summary of the 2008 Healthy Communities and the Built Environment project and includes learnings and conclusions from the project. Additional information is conveyed through a collection of modules, each module relating to a particular aspect of how the built environment impacts health and containing a positive message of how communities can be designed to promote health. Case studies are used throughout to illustrate points made in the various modules. Regardless of our sector or profession, we all have a role to play. Key strategies for building healthier communities are outlined and a listing of tools and resources is provided.

The publication can be downloaded via the SPC-CND website, at <http://www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org/>

Temp Agency Forum & Blue Paper

The Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries, in connection with the Community Response to Fair Income Group, hosted the Temp Agency Forum on April 16, 2009, at the Newfoundland Club in Cambridge. The forum was held in response to the growing presence of temporary work in local industry, and focused on the effects of temporary work on those using temporary employment agencies (temp agencies).

To gather a local perspective, the SPC-CND consulted with 40 community members with local temp agency employment experience. The research explored the experiences, the perceived rights and barriers, and the prospective changes offered by the community members, who were both past and present temp workers. The results of this research commenced the Temp Agency Forum. A panel of diverse interest parties followed the presentation, which included: Matt Howell, a young, former temp worker seeking higher education; Ali Patel, an educated, new-immigrant former temp worker; Deena Ladd, a Worker's Advocate from Toronto's Workers' Action Centre; and Sandi Ellis, a Labour Representative from the Canadian Labour Congress. The forum was attended by approximately 60 community members, and local print and television media reported on the event and conducted interviews. Several audience members shared temp work experiences, and were able to be informed of up-to-date workers' rights and legislative information.

A Blue Paper was also released on the topic, entitled *Temporary Employment: Exploring the Experiences of Temp Workers in Cambridge*. The paper discussed the research and forum, and created a link with the recently-passed Bill 139, which amended provincial regulations of temp agencies. About 40 individuals or interest groups were sent copies, such as political ministers and ministerial critics, city officials, economic and business groups, and social service and advocacy groups. The paper is available on the SPC website, and for pick-up at the SPC office.



CAHG releases Myths & Facts Brochure

In an attempt to demystify the realities of populations experiencing homelessness or poverty, SPC's planning group, Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group (CAHG), has assembled a brochure entitled *Myths & Facts About Homelessness & Poverty*, which pairs common myths with facts, or realities, of these populations.

CAHG members will be presenting the brochure to Cambridge City Council in July 2009. It is hoped that the brochure will raise awareness of the presence of issues related to homelessness in our community.

The brochure is available for viewing on the SPC website.

Physicians in Cambridge & N. Dumfries

Check out the Information Cambridge and North Dumfries website at <http://www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org/information/index.php> for the information on "Doctors in Cambridge taking new patients". You can also find free on-line resources available for youth, seniors and people looking for work.

New Face at SPC...

Laura VanderGriendt joins SPC-CND for the summer as a Social Planning Associate. She holds a M.A. in Political Science from the University of Waterloo. She is primarily involved with work on the 2009 Trends Report, writing grant proposals and other projects as assigned. She is also interested in the publication design and editorial process, and has completed a Copyediting course at Ryerson University. She has previously worked as a researcher in the field of International Affairs, and has a keen interest in how global and local issues intersect, particularly with regards to refugees and immigration.

Local News

Ontario Works Caseloads Up by 13.4%

As a result of the current economic downturn and consequential layoffs, the Region of Waterloo's Ontario Works caseloads have increased by 13.4% since December 2008. Wait times for new applicants have also increased dramatically, up to a nine-day wait in the region. The Region will be using reserve funds of approximately \$10 million to pick up the added costs, rather than increasing taxation.



Layoffs have resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate from 5.1% in March 2008, to 10.1% in May 2009, a near doubling in 14 months. The new unemployment rate is also significantly higher than that of Canada, at 8.0%, and ranks third-highest in Ontario, trailing only Windsor, at 13.6%, and St. Catherine's, at 10.5%.

The Region's Ontario Works budget is based on a monthly caseload of 6,400 for the year, whereas the average monthly caseload thus far has been 7,209, and is expected to rise as Ontario Works cases are increasing by hundreds every month. Caseloads have not been at the current level since 2000. Regional councillors have prepared two scenarios that aim to predict the added Ontario Works costs. One scenario, based on stabilizing caseload numbers, predicts added costs of \$5.25 million until the end of 2010, whereas a growing-caseload prediction estimates added costs of \$12.1 million over the same span. Additional staff will also be required, which could add an additional expense of about \$1 million. (Source: The Record, 4/18/09)

Rapid Transit a "Go" in Region of Waterloo

Waterloo Regional Council has approved a plan to bring light rail to the region in 2014, but Cambridge politicians have opposed the deal, citing that regions south of Highway 401 will miss out. The plan proposes electric trains for Kitchener-Waterloo, whereas Cambridge will be upgraded to fast buses. Projected ridership in Cambridge justified the transit choices, as Cambridge reportedly will not have the passenger numbers to justify the added cost of electric trains. Cambridge residents will, however, be proportionally responsible for the cost of the expected \$790 million project.

Senior governments are also expected to contribute heavily to the project, which could cover up to two-thirds of the project costs. Now that project approval has been reached, Regional council will enter into talks with the governments of Ontario and Canada to determine exactly how much will be contributed.

The plan is cited as effective in reducing the region's dependency on car travel, and the resulting public transit will lessen the requirement for added car lanes to accommodate a growing population. Greenhouse gases will also be significantly reduced with less cars on the road, and economic develop near the rail and bus stations is expected to flourish.

Criticism has been drawn to the expense of the project in communities with existing driving cultures, which may be difficult to change. (Source: The Record, 6/18/09, 6/25/09)



HHUG Report Card Launch assigns the Region a "B-"

On May 29th, 2009, the Homelessness & Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG) launched its annual Report Card at the Trinity Community Table in Cambridge, and allocated the Region of Waterloo a grade of "B-" in overall housing stability.



The grade was a slight improvement from last year's "C", and the slight positive change was attributed to a decrease in the use of shelter beds and increases to the minimum wage. However, HHUG noted that housing still remains unaffordable and unavailable for many.

The launch featured an overview of the many report card components, which included four key indicators: Absolute Homelessness, assigned a grade of "B-", and was marked by a decrease in shelter activity; Housing Affordability (B-), whereby minimum wage, Ontario Works and ODSP increases were offset by large increases to housing costs; Housing Availability (C), in which rental vacancy rates fell to 1.8%, well below the ideal of 3%; and Housing Supports (B-), whereby housing spaces with supports slightly increased.

Of significant concern, the stock of privately-owned apartments is at a veritable stand-still, which cannot address the region's significant rate of population increase. Keynote speaker Chris MacNabb, who is a private developer, spoke to the many difficulties of building and maintaining affordable rental housing, and called for changes to governing regional and municipal policies and procedures. (Source: HHUG 2009, Waterloo Chronicle, 6/3/09)

Provincial & National News

Provincial Government Consults with Public on Housing Strategy

The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has begun public consultations on a long-term affordable housing strategy. The Ministry is noting that public input will help shape the vision, principles, and goals of the strategy, and initiatives will be sought that will guide the strategic directions. In association with the provincial child poverty initiative, the stated goal of the strategy is to make accessing and maintaining affordable housing easier for Ontario families.

Thirteen consultation sessions will be held province-wide, including in Kitchener-Waterloo on July 16, 2009, and prospective attendees are asked to register online in advance. The Ministry is also accepting input via online questionnaire, and is seeking feedback on the consultation document. (Source: Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 6/3/09)

Food Bank Usage Way Up

According to Food Banks Canada, approximately 20% more Canadians are turning to food banks each month to access one of the most basic of all needs. The affected food banks are reportedly facing challenges in meeting the step increase in demand. As expected, food bank usage rates have increased most dramatically in places where job losses have been most significant.

Food Banks Canada is asking the public to consider donating food items, or to sign an online petition at www.hungerawarenessday.ca to promote government action. The proposed action includes streamlining the eligibility criteria and lengthening the benefits length for Canadians access Employment Insurance, Increasing the Child Tax Benefit, and

making early learning and child care more accessible and affordable. (Source: Food Banks Canada, 6/1/09)

Gov. of Canada says "No" to UN Recommendations

With respect to the 68 human rights-related recommendations made by the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Government of Canada will adopt 32, reject 14, and partly rejected 22. The recommendations were made as part of the Universal Periodic Review, which is a United Nations peer-evaluated assessment of a country's human rights situation. An important rejection is recommendation #17, which proposes the development of a national strategy to eliminate poverty. The government has stated that adopting the measure would undermine the work of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), as well as several Senate committees and sub-committees.

Criticism for Canada's dismissal of the anti-poverty recommendation has been undermined by the United Nations recommendations messengers: a committee featuring Iran, Russia, Algeria, and Cuba, all of whom have poor human rights records. Yet supporters of anti-poverty measures have suggested that adopting the recommendation could set an example to human rights abuser states, and to then make these states accountable to human rights recommendations made by Canada.

Of note, Canada also rejected recommendations delivered by "allied" states, such as Norway and Denmark, which indicates that messenger partisanship was not overtly apparent. Canada's closest relative, the United States, delivered praise, noting that Canada sets a high standard for its human rights practices. (Source: Canwest News, 6/9/09, Canada Without Poverty, 6/6/09)

State of Third Sector in Canada

Canada's third sector, comprised of non-profit organizations servicing community members, is facing significant structural obstacles. This crucial sector employs two million Canadians, and is an economic force representing \$79.1 billion or 7.8% of Canada's GDP.

The third sector, once considered a thriving component of Canada's make-up, is seeing its regulatory and legislative bodies lag behind that of neighbouring states, which has inhibited the sector's bid to coordinate and modernize. The sector now presents an image of independent silos, rather than shared, coordinated services and information. The economic downturn has also had a significant impact on the sector, which prompted Liberal MP Lise Zarac to warn that one-in-five Canadian non-profits are at risk of closing. This would have dire implications for those who depend upon the sector for support.

Revenue streams are central to the sector's obstacles. Non-profits are becoming more dependent upon fee-for-service work, rather than relying on government and charitable funding, which has implications on the type of services that a non-profit can offer. Also, strict revenue generating regulations disallows non-profits from finding creative sources of funding when revenue is cut. In addition, non-profits without charitable status find themselves without the perks of charitable and for-profit enterprises.

The status of the third sector remains uncertain, but with several initiatives underway, it is hoped that sufficient pressure will result in regulatory improvements. (Source: Wellesley Institute, 5/09, Imagine Canada, 6/15/09)

SPC Board President's Message:

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank our Executive Director Linda Terry, our staff and students for the excellent and quality work over the first six months of the year. The SPC-CND continues to provide our communities with excellent information, support and leadership on many of the important issues in our community. This 20th anniversary year continues to showcase the intelligent and skilful work of our staff and students. Congratulations on a continuing excellent job.

As the new Board President, it is probably helpful if you know something about me. I am in my second term on the board and have served as the vice president the last two years. In my day life I am the Clinical Director (director of programs and services) for the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre. I am a resident of Ayr. It has been my privilege to work with many committed board members over the past years and I look forward to this new role.

With the completion of the Annual meeting, the Board begins a new cycle of planning. We recently said goodbye to three Board members-Steve Silveira, Margaret Green and Stu Holdam. We thank them for their commitment and enthusiasm and we are sorry to see them go. We welcomed two new board members, Monica Morrison and Jim Estok.

The Board has begun a process to better understand and develop its governance process and begin to learn how we can better engage the for-profit sector of our community. We will be focusing our fall retreat on those issues.

I want to thank the current board members for their hard work, enthusiasm and their commitment to the work of the SPC. We have been working hard over the past several years to build a strong and creative board. What we have accomplished to date is in no small part to the offering of skills, talents and insights by the individual board members that has allowed us to move forward with this goal. Thank you.

As I close I would like to recognize our Executive Director more specifically for the work she has done. Linda has become a respected and recognized leader in our communities and because of her skills and intelligent approach to community relations, SPC-CND is seeing new and exciting opportunities arising. Thank you Linda.

Till next time.

Stephen J. Gross

Upcoming Events:

September 2009

Release of Trends 2009
document

October 2009

SPC website update

November 2009

Social Planning Network of
Ontario event



Social Planning Council
of Cambridge and North Dumfries



Social Planning Council of
Cambridge and North Dumfries

150 Main Street, 2nd floor
Cambridge ON, N1R 6P9

Phone: (519) 623-1713

Social Planning Council of
Cambridge and North Dumfries

150 Main Street, 2nd floor
Cambridge ON, N1R 6P9

Phone: (519) 740-3030

The SPC promotes the "democratization of data" to build a healthy community with active citizens involved in multi-sector networks and accessible organizations.

The role of the SPC is to collect and analyze local trends and data, and to engage the community in dialogue and active planning leading to positive social change.

www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org

Information and Referral Services

Information Cambridge and North Dumfries is committed to providing accurate and timely information to our community members. For information on human and social services in Cambridge and North Dumfries.

www.informationcnd.org