

**FALL 2009**



**Social Planning Council**  
of Cambridge and North Dumfries

20 YEARS

[www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org](http://www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org)



## Closer to the Pulse of the Community The SPC Introduces Its New Office 55 Dickson Street

On August 1, 2009, the Social Planning Council replanted its roots in a spacious, bright, street-front office space. Located at 55 Dickson St. Unit 14, the new office is directly across from Cambridge City Hall, with primary door access on Petty Place. Meeting space is an added bonus, while the main office is an open concept. The office design allows for a mix of collaboration and individual work space for planning groups and individuals. The new location enhances the SPC's visibility and access in the community, with neighbours from business and social services, to government and municipal offices.

The move from 150 Main Street was successfully completed with only minor disruption to the SPC's operation. With assistance from quality, local movers and contractors, the SPC is now ready to resume its lead in hosting community planning meetings. It is also hoped that adjacent space can be used in a similar community capacity, with collaboration amongst many community agencies, institutions, and other interest groups.

With the new space comes big plans, of which the SPC hopes the community can be a part. Friends and partners of the SPC are welcomed to drop in during business hours for an informal tour, an update on SPC projects, or to discuss community issues.



## Special Notice Some Contact Numbers Have Changed

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

### **Board of Directors**

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Marissa Mackie—Vice President  
Rosemary Dal Bello—Secretary  
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### **Staff**

Linda Terry—Executive Director  
Dina Etmanskie—Social Planner  
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## **Community Trends Report 2009 Set for October 26<sup>th</sup> Release**

The annual Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Trends Report takes on a new look this year, with added content and commentary. The Report aims to assess strengths, weaknesses, assets, and gaps through topics covered in two main sections: Community Profile and Community Organizations. Each section has expanded the topics covered in previous reports, and is complemented by additional interpretation of trends. The Community Profile section focuses primarily on the demographic information of Cambridge and North Dumfries, tracking population dynamics, economic conditions, and health and safety measures. Community Organizations concentrates on the services and supports that meet the needs of the areas. Although the Trends Report offers summaries on the many topics covered, the interpretation or meaning of a trend may be unique to the reader. The SPC welcomes feedback on the amendments, and looks forward to future connections with the community in the continued tracking of trends. The public release will take place on October 26, 2009, at 7:00 PM at the City Council Meeting.



## **Building Community Capacity in Rural Waterloo Region: Update**

In 2006 the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries (SPCCND) launched the Building Community Capacity in Rural Waterloo Region (BCCRWR) initiative in the townships of Woolwich, Wilmot, Wellesley, and North Dumfries. Rather than assume the role of passive recipients of change, the BCCRWR initiative encourages rural residents to become active participants in building a better future for themselves and their communities. We are pleased to report that this spring a total of 18 mini-grants were awarded to support a variety of initiatives throughout Waterloo Region. These include literacy classes, outreach to marginalized youth and projects undertaken by youth and seniors groups in the rural townships. Projects will run for the duration of the calendar year. These grants have been made possible through the generosity of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. Please watch our website for updates and additional information: [www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org](http://www.socialplanningcouncil-cnd.org).



LYLE S. HALLMAN  
FOUNDATION

## **Sign Posts and Expanded Community Social Profile Supplements to the Release of the Trends Report**

As complementary documents to the *Trends Report*, Sign Posts and the Cambridge Community Social Profile have been redesigned to meet the growing needs of organizations and the public for local data and information. The 2009 Trends Package will be a comprehensive overview of the Cambridge and North Dumfries communities.

## **Affordable Housing Momentum to Continue in the Fall**

To follow a very successful Cambridge Affordable Housing Forum hosting on May 13, 2009, which was attended by 100 community members, the SPC and the Affordable Housing Subcommittee of the Poverty Reduction Roundtable are planning to host a fall event. The event will take the look of a charette, and will transfer the knowledge and motivational gains from the Forum into practical planning. Housing providers and builders will be encouraged to collaborate with other service providers to make affordable housing in Cambridge happen. A partnership is planned with the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, located in downtown Cambridge, to incorporate coursework into affordable housing design. It is hoped that one or more projects will emerge from the charette, and will help meet the demand of populations affected by rising house prices and a shrinking affordable rental housing market.



## Local and Provincial News

### Region of Waterloo Seeking Input on Living Wage

Living wage discussions at the Region of Waterloo will resume with a public consultation to be held on September 16, 2009, at 6:00 PM. The consultation, to be housed at the Regional administrative headquarters at 150 Frederick St. in Kitchener, aims to gain insight from the public on whether the Region should be required to pay its employees, as well as Regional contracted services to pay employees, a living wage, current identified as \$13.62 per hour. The requirement would not be extended to businesses within the Region. A living wage is a gauge of what a single person working full-time must earn to remain above the poverty line.

The Region has already completed a public survey, as well as met with interest groups. Councillor support on the issue is mixed, with some councillors opposing the wage. Opposition claims of increased costs to business operations, specifically small business, suggest that the Region could lose not only businesses, but jobs as well. Conversely, proponents of the wage suggest that increased financial resource distribution would ease the stress on existing social services. If adopted, the living wage policy would be the first of its kind in Canada, although a handful of large communities are also exploring the wage. Of note, such policies in the United States have become widespread, with over 100 cities adopting a living wage. (Source: The Record, 9/1/2009)

### Workplace Injuries have Significant Public Costs

The Region of Waterloo estimates that, in 2004, workplace injuries in the area had associated costs of \$294 million. This figure was extracted from a recent report prepared by SMARTRISK, a national

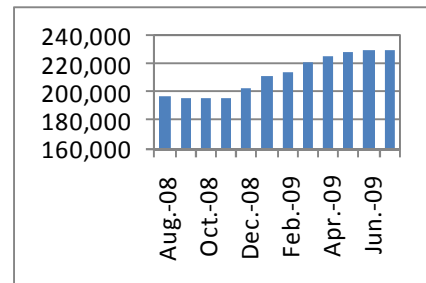
injury-prevention organization. Costs were comprised primarily of health-care and social service usage. SMARTRISK notes that costs are substantially less to prevent injuries, rather than treat them, and that most workplace injuries are wholly preventable. While the Region is mandated to work to reduce many outside-of-the-workplace injuries, individual worksites are required to support safe workspaces. Simple solutions are offered, such as ensuring worksites are well lit, having even and reliable flooring, and having suitable alcohol consumption policies. (Source: Region of Waterloo, 9/1/2009)

### Ontario Works Caseloads Show Large Increases

July 2009 observed the ninth straight month of Ontario Works caseload increases, whereby 229,805 cases and 424,327 beneficiaries relied on the social assistance in Ontario. Since October 2008, caseload numbers have increased by nearly 18%, with a slightly less increase of 14.6% in beneficiaries. This trend supports the fact that 70.7% of the new beneficiaries were singles, without other sources of income on which to rely temporarily. The added cases correspond to increasing unemployment in Ontario, which reached 9.3% in July 2009, equating to thousands of additional jobs lost. Especially for singles, the monthly amount allotted by Ontario Works, \$572, simply does not meet the various expenses. The financial shortcomings displace the fulfillment of demands onto local social service agencies, which are often already stretched for funding. As an example, the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank has experienced dramatic demand increases, which adds costs of not only food, but operational expenses.

As a positive, the increases in Ontario Works caseloads appear to be slowing as compared to previous months, with July 2009 showing only a modest increase of 428 cases from June 2009.

Though in Cambridge, manufacturing jobs lost may struggle to return, as companies seek to reduce labour costs. Creative retraining may become a requirement for many unemployed residents who wish to return to the labour market. (Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, Statistics Canada)



### The Costs and Benefits of Tax Harmonization

Harmonized Sales Tax will be implemented in Ontario on July 1, 2010, following the lead of the Atlantic Provinces with a single-tax system. The tax will combine the five percent GST and eight percent PST, unsettling some of the existing sales tax procedures. Utilities, professional services and real estate commissions will have the most noticeable increases in price, as these items were previously PST exempt. Children's items, groceries, and medical and living expenses will remain PST exempt. The Ontario government states the purpose of harmonization as increasing taxation efficiencies by reducing export costs, streamlining business tax administrative tasks, and increasing business tax credits. Yet while businesses reduce costs, citizens and households will be paying more for goods and services with fewer PST exemptions. The Ontario government states that cash payments and tax credits will be available to ease the burden on low and middle income-earning adults and families, as will planned general tax cuts. (Source: CBC,ca)

## National & International News

### Employment Insurance Failing Canadians

In a study released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Employment Insurance (EI) rates were found to be significant lower in Canada than the average of nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which comprises 30 of the world's most prosperous countries. The report suggests that Canadians fare worse-than-average in access, duration of benefits, and income replacement levels of EI, and also worse than Canadian levels in previous recessions. The shortcomings of EI at the federal level are coupled with weakening social assistance programs at the provincial levels, which has a compounding impact of the social safety net of Canadian experiencing the economic recession. Further, with the recession more likely to impact marginalized, low-income individuals, the absence of adequate social assistance simply extends and intensifies the already difficult circumstances. With the OECD predicting increases in unemployment prior to recovery, more Canadians will also be moving towards EI coverage.

The study does identify suggestions for amendments to EI, notably easing access requirements and creating separate benefits for those on EI for extended periods of time, although the suggestions have yet to find an audience with the federal government. (Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 6/30/2009).

### Poverty Reduction in N.B.

A public engagement initiative is underway in New Brunswick to develop a provincial poverty reduction plan. A public dialogue campaign has recently wrapped up, where community members were able to offer their narratives of poverty. The report written on the campaign, *A Choir of Voices – The “What Was Said” Report*, details many of the areas of public concern that often result

in poverty. New Brunswick residents identified the high cost and lack of educational opportunities as a primary source of poverty, as was the cost and difficulties in obtaining suitable housing and child care services. Employment opportunities were also listed as scarce, but importantly, residents spoke to the pervasive nature of poverty; how growing up poor can limit most other opportunities, and may result in mental and physical health problems that reinforce the poverty cycle. The nature of the social assistance system, in which a benefactor will lose health subsidies when off assistance, provides disincentive to stop the support, as a lack of benefits in employment was also a mentioned issue. These issues will contribute to the poverty strategy, but can reach beyond the provincial border to provide insight to other areas of Canada. (Source: Gov. of N.B.)

### Impact of Recession has demographic disparity

The economic recession does not appear to be sparing any particular segment of the Canadian population, yet a new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) suggests that some populations are harder hit than others; specifically, men. Of those losing their jobs as a result of the recession, 71% are men, which has driven the employment gender gap to near-equal levels.

The recession has also been particularly hard for young worker under the age of 25 years, likely in positions of low seniority, and without the significant knowledge gains to be indispensable to employers. As such, this population has 2.5 the job-loss rate as compared with its labour market proportion, while unprecedented numbers of employees over the age of 55 years continue working.

Further, Ontario has experienced the majority of all job losses, as the province relies heavily on the hard-hit manufacturing sector. Ontario has 38% of Canada's labour force, yet has accounted for two-thirds of all jobs lost in the recession. Unemployment

in Ontario is also the highest level in 15 years.

Caution is offered to young working males in Ontario, without foreseeable improvements to job prospects. (Sources: CCPA, and Statistics Canada)

### Other Federal Governments Support Non-Profits, Why Not Canada?

In an attempt to develop a stronger relationship with the non-profit sector, the Australian Government has introduced the “National Compact”, which is an agreement outlining how the two sectors will work together at present and in the future. The Compact is also designed to provide a framework for capacity-building and strengthening the non-profit sector, and how the two can create positive change in communities. A gathering was held in July 2009 to finalize the agreement.

Comparatively, the United States has initiated the Office of Social Innovation under the Obama administration. This Office will provide funding to innovative non-government social services, and plans to promote non-traditional, bottom-up, and widely impactful initiatives. New outcome measurements will also be a focus of the Social Innovation Office, to provide feedback of service effectiveness and goal-achievement.

The new government agencies in Australia and the United States complement the existing Office of the Third Sector in the United Kingdom, created in 2006. The U.K. Office is a support to non-profit employers in helping in the delivery of services, advocacy for change, promotion social enterprises, and strengthening communities. These initiatives are done through government funding, policy support, and research.

With the role that the third-sector plays in supporting programming cut by government in Canada, federal interest or support would be not only nice, but necessary. (Sources: SPNO)

## New Faces — SPC Board of Directors:

**Xuan Pan** studied politics and society in China before immigrating to Canada ten years ago. Xuan has since studied economics and accounting at Wilfred Laurier University. Xuan is interested in immigrant issues and is connected with community multicultural radio station, 98.5 FM.

**Gord Zielstra** has been a Cambridge resident since 1998. He has worked in many different capacities within the technology sector, including serving as National Director of the career site, Monster.ca. Gord has been an active member of the community with involvement in various fundraising activities and volunteer work, and was the local Liberal party candidate in the last federal election.

**Monica Morrison** has vast board experience and has demonstrated a great passion as an advocate for the needs of the most vulnerable populations in our community. Most recently, she has been a board member at Greenway Chaplin Community Centre. Monica has also worked for many years in the not-for-profit sector. She is currently the Cambridge Site Manager for Community Support Connections, an agency that provides support services to older adults with disabilities.

**Jim Estok** has over a decade of board experience with local organizations such as Cambridge Youth Soccer, Cambridge Home Support, as well as participation in the St. Andrews Terrace Family Council. Jim has a strong sense of community and is interested in contributing to the effectiveness of SPC in addressing and advocating for key social issues in our community. Jim's career has focused on human resources and organizational management, in which he has acquired a diversified skill set.

**SPC Staff Update:** Summer Intern Laura VanderGriendt has accepted a full-time position as a Social Planner with the SPC starting September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Laura will be taking on a leadership role with the 2009 Trends Report, as well as a Youth Coordinator role with the Community Access Program, among other projects. Laura will also be an SPC participant in several community working and planning groups. Congratulations Laura!



## Upcoming Events: Fall 2009

<u>October 26th</u> Release Trends Report Package 2009	<u>October/November</u> Affordable Housing Charette	<u>November 4th to 6th</u> SPCCND hosts SPNO Provincial Conference	<u>November 5th</u> SPC 20 <sup>th</sup> Anni- versary Event
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## Special Reminder Mark Your Calendars

### Region of Waterloo Seeking Input on Living Wage

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**Public Consultation**

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