

the INDICATOR



A joint publication of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE and the Community Council

LEADERSHIP PARTNERS



HOMELESSNESS - A GROWTH INDUSTRY

"Its kind of spinning our wheels isn't it?" says Robin Krause, volunteer chair of the Open Door Society. Homelessness around here used to be a bad memory from the "dirty thirties". Now it's the new normal - in spite of 1.2 million dollars of Federal government money granted to projects in Victoria from 1999 to 2003 through the National Homelessness Initiative. Another round of similar funding starts this winter. And the National Research Program will disburse approximately \$7 million over the next three years to fill identified gaps in homelessness research nationally and regionally.

Robin Krause knows people who have lost their livelihood and their hope. He played a key role in getting funds from the National Homelessness Initiative to buy a building for the Open Door. But this retired physician says that "homelessness is not going away

because we can provide shelter from the rain and a cup of coffee. A roof over your head does not make a home".

"3 Ways to Home" – that's what Vancouver calls its plan to deal with homelessness. It wants to get to the root of the problem through a holistic approach that deals with basic human needs: adequate income, support and prevention, and housing.

We won't end hunger and homelessness by improving homeless shelters and filling the food bank shelves. Let's create jobs that pay a sustainable livelihood. Let's support governments that provide adequate assistance for the hard times. Let's make sure there is enough adequate housing for the 22,000 households in BC's Capital Region who pay more than 30% of their incomes on shelter costs. Let's work together for a community that shows how to care for each other.

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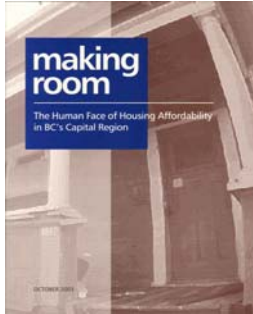


Members of Stages Dance Company perform on stage to celebrate the stories that make our community strong. Read about Community Celebration 2003 on page 4.

IF YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE YOUR NEWLETTER ELECTRONICALLY PLEASE EMAIL
info@communitycouncil.ca

TAKE UP THE HOUSING CHALLENGE

By 2006, 1000 more low-income households
have a safe, decent & affordable place to call home.



The Community Council's new publication, "Making Room: The Human face of Housing Affordability in BC's Capital Region" was launched in October in Housing Affordability Week.

Important new findings are based on in-depth interviews with 90 people – more than three quarters were living on annual incomes of less than \$14,999. Housing, more than a roof, is intricately linked with how we get around, our chances of earning a sustainable income, the food we can afford, our health and safety – our quality of life.

The impacts and the challenges of inadequate housing in this region are staggering!

Read "Making Room" on the website – www.qolchallenge.ca. Over 1000 free copies have been distributed. More are available free of charge while copies last.

OUTCOMES 2003:

The community is working together toward the target.

240 more households
now have a safe decent affordable place to call home

Each housing project has its story. Someone with a dream takes action and weaves together collaboration and support from the neighbourhood, financial institutions, municipal councils and planning departments, and then the construction team brings in the bricks and mortar. A few people are proving that it can be done.

One of our biggest challenges is the cost of land – equity to house families who do not have the income to pay even the lowest market rental rates. Some municipalities have housing reserve funds, built up through property tax levies or special development changes. Other options are non-profit Housing Land Trusts, similar to The Land Conservancy for the acquisition of parkland.

Read about options for Housing Trusts - www.qolchallenge.ca.

Today there is no national housing strategy and very limited government money for housing. The Rental Renovation Assistance Program (RRAP) assists property owners to upgrade units so that rents remain low. The Vancouver Island Health Authority supports projects for people needing assistance to live independently.

During October those who took action to move this community toward the housing target received recognition and a special Quality of Life CHALLENGE decal for 2003. Some of those projects included:

Aboriginal Housing Transition Fund:

property owners and residents are supported to provide stable housing for families. As of 2003 the project placed 42 families in new homes

Habitat For Humanity – major investment of sweat equity:

Two houses finished in Sidney, with another near completion. Three more houses for the Sidney area are planned with more plans for 2004.

John Alfred Manor:

99 new units of supportive housing for seniors and people with disabilities including 20 with rent subsidies from the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

St. Joseph Residence:

Redevelopment of old St. Joseph's hospital into 70 rental housing units.

Vance House:

Upgrade single family home in Colwood to accommodate 5 single deaf persons with on-site support services.

TAKE UP THE SUSTAINABLE INCOMES CHALLENGE

By 2006, 5000 low-income, unemployed or underemployed people have sustainable income from paid work.

In BC's Capital Region

Of the more than 1 in 6 people who live below the poverty line:

4010 work full time year round,

2105 work part time year round.

(based on 1996 Census data; 2001 data available January 2004)

NEW EMPLOYER E-NEWSLETTER

Some local employers want to do something to reduce poverty. They have formed a Task Force to look at barriers faced by the working poor, and to create tools that will lead to solutions.

An e-newsletter for employers will feature case studies of exemplary local employment practices that are improving quality of life for employees. There will be step by step information about how to implement good policies. The e-newsletter will link employers who want to discuss human resource management and poverty reduction.

To be on the distribution list contact jane@communitycouncil.ca.

DENTAL CARE

For a lot of people to be work-ready, dental treatment is important. How you look matters a lot, but it goes much deeper than that for people suffering with abscesses. I know the tourism industry in particular wants their staff to be presentable, acceptable and have nice bright smiles to welcome tourists with.

But it does go beyond cosmetic to be a whole health issue also.

Norma Strachan, ASPECT
"Towards a Downtown Community Dental Clinic in Victoria"

The Action Plan of the Dental Task Force includes outreach to dentists, dental hygienists and the community at large, as well as further work on prevention of dental care problems. The Task Force is supporting the Cool Aid Community Dental Clinic.

MENTORSHIP

Mentoring is one way to personally support people who are seeking employment, or are trying to retain employment. The Mentorship Task Force is looking at existing mentoring programs and networks. A meeting is scheduled in the new year for people interested in starting mentorship programs or improving existing ones.

WORK CLOTHING

The Clothing Task Force solicits work clothing primarily for men, in response to an identified need. Do you know an organization that could organize and house a depot for free men's work clothes? The Wear 2 Start Society provides a similar program for women.

TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Task Force is working on a free bicycle distribution pilot program to help people with job searches and work transportation. They encouraged people to participate in the recent public consultation of the Victoria Regional Transit Commission on service plans and funding. The Community Council's submission to the Transit Commission is on the web - www.communitycouncil.ca

*A person working 35 hours per week at \$8 per hour makes \$1120 per month
If their net pay is \$900 and they spend \$325 on rent, then this person has \$575 for living expenses.*

A bus pass costs \$55 per month - 9.6% of this person's living expenses.

In April 2003 employers, employment agencies, government officials and concerned citizens, including unemployed and underemployed people, met to identify some Priority Areas for Action to help move people into sustainable incomes through paid work. From that starting point to today, five Task Forces are up and running.

To get involved or to read the Feasibility Study on the Priority Areas for Action, check www.qolchallenge.ca

TAKE UP THE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS CHALLENGE

By 2006, 1000 stories are shared of people working together to enhance our quality of life.

Comments from some of the 500 people who came to Community Celebration on October 25th in the MacPherson Playhouse.

This community is alive!

I learned so much I didn't know.

It is possible to change for the better, if you only want to.

Integrating performance art in story-telling is brilliant

This event reinforced the power of the arts and social issues working together.

If I'd known it was going to be that good I would have brought all my friends.

Community Celebration 2003

This year's Community Celebration reached a new high because of Community generosity and support. Cooperation from the 6 community groups that are recipients of 2003 Quality of Life Awards, and the collaboration of a creative team of dancers, multi-media artists, and choreographers demonstrated that the arts can lead the way to help us understand the challenges of social change.

March 26, 2004 is the closing date for nominations for 2004 Quality of Life Awards. Submit your story. Check www.qolchallenge.ca for information and the story submission form.



Young beginners in the Victoria elementary school strings program perform on stage with the alumni who worked so hard to Save Our Strings.

volunteer profile

The talent, energy and time of local professional artists made Community Celebration 2003 possible. Their combined vision and skills seemed magical as they worked for months with each of the groups whose stories were selected. The Creative Team were **Kim Breiland, artistic director of Stages Dance Theatre Society; Jeani Reynolds, multi media visual artist; Lori Hamar, dancer and dance instructor; Ryan James Murphy, film editor and videographer; and dancer, Jack Horne.**

Louise Rose was part of the group that started the idea of Community Celebration. The dream took life when she performed at the first event in 1999. She has been a major part of every Community Celebration since.

Louise gets people singing. She insists on having fun, and leads all of us to have fun with her. Beneath it all, Louise understands and lives celebration and community. The long-time commitment of **Louise Rose** to Community Celebration has shaped and nurtured it to become an outstanding annual community happening.

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES REDUCE POVERTY

Capital Region The First Trailbuilder In Canada

Vibrant Communities is a comprehensive initiative to reduce poverty in Canada. It is based on the premise that all sectors take some responsibility for quality of life. BC's Capital Region is a partner in Vibrant Communities through the Quality of Life CHALLENGE. Representatives from 15 Canadian cities learn from each other about poverty reduction. 531 days passed between the first and second Face-to-Face Forum. We've come a long way since 65 people gathered first in Guelph, Ontario. This September, **nearly 100 people met** in the same place to celebrate those 531 days and to plan for our common future. Five people went this year from this region. At the forum this year RBC International announced their partnership with Vibrant Communities by giving both cash and professional time.

The Quality of Life CHALLENGE is the first of the Vibrant Communities to move into the Trailbuilder Phase with a commitment from the McConnell Family Foundation for \$100,000 annually for three years. **Over 100 people helped to develop our community plan** before it was reviewed through a constructive peer input process with other Vibrant Communities and the national partners. Funds are conditional upon raising matching dollars locally to be used to build a more vibrant community.

Local leadership partners and supporters from all sectors are engaged in working toward common goals. Coast Capital Savings won the prestigious 2003 Ethics in Action – Community Care award for its commitment to work in partnership with the community. Corporate social responsibility is being taken seriously by more businesses, large and small in this region. There is interest in the Employers' Task Group (see page 3) and a new network of Values Based Businesses. To learn more see www.qolchallenge.ca and www.vibrantcommunities.ca

Measuring Quality Of Life

Everyone agrees that our quality of life is important and should be maintained and improved. But what is it? What are its critical components and their relative importance? Is quality of life rising or falling? Answers to these questions are as important as they are difficult. These answers can provide private and public organizations and individuals with essential guideposts on how their actions affect the quality of life for all of us.

In 1999, the Community Council released the report *Quality of Life in BC's Capital Region*. This report, which deals primarily with social measures, will be updated in late 2004. However, quality of life is based upon many inter-related social, environmental and economic factors. Informed by the work of the CRD Roundtable on the Environment, the Greater Victoria Enterprise Partnership Society (developing the regional economic strategy) and the Community Social Planning Council, **organizations who measure the various aspects of quality of life have begun to take a cooperative approach to consultation and reporting within an overall regional sustainability framework.**

Throughout November, the three sets of proposed measures of quality of life were presented to the community for review. **Over 80 people participated** in the consultation process. The feedback is being compiled, and the results will be on the website early in 2004. Thank you to everyone who participated.

**IN REMEMBRANCE
KATIE COOK 1919 TO 2003
A FORCE AND A MENTOR FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FOR WOMEN.**

Former President, Director, valued member and supporter of the Community Council.
Founding president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
Founding member of Bridges Society for Women.

The New SNACC

By Karasima Brands

A group of people living on low incomes recently organized the Community Action Team. We believe our voices must be heard for the rest of the community to understand and effectively address the needs of so many people with limited income. This is essential for changes to be made that increase the quality of our lives, not create more challenges.

Meetings follow the SNACC model, designed by one of the members. Many of us are hungry for so much in our lives whether it is for enough food on the table, affordable housing, or connections in our community. Sometimes a full meal isn't possible, but by breaking down our needs into small "snacks" we can find meaningful solutions.

Success: Sharing a success from participating in the Quality of Life CHALLENGE focuses the meeting on positive change.

Need: This model is not meant to ignore or diminish unmet needs – it breaks them down individually into smaller "bite" sized pieces to be looked after.

Action: What can be done to get the need met? As a group we share the wealth of our knowledge to brainstorm ideas.

Commitment: What is our commitment individually and as a group to ensure that action is taken to meet our needs? For example, joining a working group to have our voices heard.

Community: Who in the community can share our successes as we commit to taking action to getting our needs met?

Find out how you can participate in or support the Community Action Team, info@communitycouncil.ca or 383-6166.

During Community Celebration members of the Healthy Harvest Workers Cooperative and Stages Dance Company grew a garden on stage of the MacPherson Playhouse.

They reminded us that our community is more vibrant when each person has the opportunity to do work that is valued and to be remunerated.



HEARTS
(Horticulture Enterprise and Related Training Society) is one of six recipients of the 2003 Quality of Life Award.

Read the story of H.E.A.R.T.S. under Community Connections on the website: www.qolchallenge.ca

FOOD SECURITY – MAKING FOOD MATTER

At recent Food Access Forums – Making Food Matter – people were connecting the dots between health and social costs, the growing gap between the cost of a nutritious food basket, and the low incomes of 15% of the population. Meanwhile, the Economic Development Blueprint recently designed for the Capital Region identifies agriculture and the food related industry as having significant potential to grow our local economy and create more jobs. This will lead to lively public debate about land use for two important matters: agriculture or housing developments.

In Toronto and Vancouver, Food Security Councils take an integrated approach to food, health and the economy. The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) is working toward the same end.

Social Policy Changes

Excerpts taken directly from Marge Reitsma-Street, "A Response to the Two Year Welfare Limits in British Columbia", a Paper presented to the B.C. Association of Social Workers Fall Conference "The Power of Social Work"; Vancouver, Nov. 15, 2003. The full paper is on www.uvic.ca/spp

The provincial government has changed the law to place **time limits on welfare and reduce benefits**. Victoria and Vancouver City Councils have passed resolutions urging the government to rescind the law. Other municipalities and Boards of neighbourhood houses, social agencies, churches, social planning councils, professional associations and women's groups across BC are passing similar motions to repeal the time limits.

If enacted, the two year welfare limit will be instituted for singles and couples as of April 1, 2004. Those affected will already have spent 24 months proving their need and eligibility by completing Employment Plans, seeking employment, going for training, and reporting monthly on their activities. In addition, as of April 2004, there will be reductions of 10 to 15% in monthly incomes of parents who have been on assistance for 24 months and whose youngest child is over three years. **BC is the only Canadian province to institute a time limit**, with its two year rule; no European country has time limits on assistance; in the United States the federal law of 1996 limits family welfare to five years, while some states have three year limits.

Those who argue in favor of time limits and reductions, state that BC will thereby "save" thousands of persons and families from welfare dependency. The assumption in this argument is that to be "saved" from dependency, people, especially poor citizens, need to bend to the discipline of employment and compassion of family and neighbours in times of temporary need. But, they will not voluntarily seek employment or the compassion of family. Thus, the state needs to push them into salvation from dependency by ensuring there are serious restrictions on assistance eligibility and low benefits, geared only to the truly "deserving" (defined by authorities), as well as significant surveillance and penalties, minimal support and flexibility, and imposition of two year time limits.

The evidence is confusing and contradictory about whether time limits make sense. Do time limits on welfare promote accountability and effectiveness? Are the time limits and deductions legal? Are the time limits and deductions humane?

Surveys of front-line community social service agencies are carried out by the Community Council twice a year to track the impact of government

changes. Findings of the Community Reconstruction Project show **significant increases in the demand for food, shelter and transportation – basic human needs - in BC's Capital Region**. Agencies also report increased concern and stress among their clients because of uncertainty and fear associated with the pending cut-off of government assistance from their only sources of income.

The next report of the Community Reconstruction Project will be released early in 2004.

Gender and Poverty

BC's Capital Region is one of five communities in Canada participating in a Vibrant Communities' research project, Gender Analysis for Community-Based Poverty Reduction, funded by Status of Women Canada through the Caledon Institute for Social Policy.

A number of local groups working to improve the quality of life are looking at how women and men experience poverty differently in our communities, homes and workplaces. Gender analysis has started to be integrated into Quality of Life CHALLENGE and Community Council research and programs already.

Some facts about this region:

- 56% of people living below the Low Income Cut Off Line are women.
- The need has been identified for free work clothing for men who are looking for employment.
- 82% of lone parents in this region are women. There are no local employment programs targeted to lone parents; very few provide child care for participants.
- More than two thirds of bus tickets distributed through the BC Transit Ticket Assistance program are given to men, an indicator of the size of agency and type of services participating in the program.
- There are significant differences in housing needs by gender as well as by age and family type.
- Most services for homeless people are used mainly by men. Generally women seeking emergency shelter and services are not at ease in male dominant environments. Such services can be inappropriate for children.

An all day workshop led by the principal researcher of the national gender project helped deepen our understanding of the connection between gender and the barriers and opportunities facing people living in poverty. The people involved in the CHALLENGE and the Community Council will explore ways to incorporate our learnings into our work.

Websites hit!

www.qolchallenge.ca

On average the site gets over 13,000 hits per month, with over 21,000 in October. Most popular is the constantly updated "What's New?" on the home page.

Contains local information and links about the 3 priorities – housing, sustainable incomes, and community connections; coming events; and how you can take up the CHALLENGE. The website provides a thorough overview of what the CHALLENGE is all about.

www.communitycouncil.ca

Reliable local information and links on a variety of issues and initiatives related to social trends, issues and quality of life.

COMING

January 1 2004,
Community Council Virtual Tea
Party – see insert for details

January

Launch of Employers E-Newsletter

Community Reconstruction Report #2, impact of government changes

Release of CR-FAIR's Baseline
Food Security Assessment

Workshops on Gender and Disability

March 2, 2004 – workshop *Making
Your Voice Count: A Primer on
Health Policy and How to Influence
It*

March 26, 2004 – Closing date for
2004 Quality of Life Award
Nominations.

**CHECK THE WEBSITES
FOR DETAILS**

Support Your Community Council

The purpose of the Community Council is to improve the quality of life for everyone in BC's Capital Region, particularly the people who are disadvantaged due to poverty.

The Community Council is a catalyst and leader in bringing people together to create a just and vibrant community.

Membership is open to concerned citizens, public agencies, private businesses and community organizations who share our mission and values.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Business/organizations \$50
Individuals \$25
Low income \$3
Charitable tax receipts are issued.

CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS



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VanCity
Ann Geddes
Thrifty Foods
Shine*Ola Communications
Crystal Garden Conservation Centre
Susan Stovel
Stages Dance Company
WCG International Consultants Ltd.
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Bringing people together to create effective community solutions.
Supported by members, the United Way of Greater Victoria, contracted services
and the municipalities of Esquimalt, Oak Bay, Saanich and Victoria.

Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria

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