



# ENHANCING DELIVERY MODELS AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS

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## Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	1
2.0	Project Terms of Reference .....	2
3.0	The National Homelessness Initiative, The Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative and Complementary Components .....	3
3.1	Objectives .....	3
3.2	Components .....	4
3.3	Outcomes and Achievements.....	5
4.0	Delivery Models Under NHI and SCPI .....	9
4.1	The Nature of the Models .....	9
4.2	Why Did Communities Choose a Particular Delivery Model?.....	10
4.3	Was One Model More Effective Than Another? .....	11
4.4	Did the Models Contribute to Success of the Program? .....	12
4.5	Strength of the Partnership Models.....	13
4.6	Challenges of the Partnership Models .....	14
5.0	Partnerships and Their Role in Planning, Policy Development and Program Delivery.....	16
5.1	What is the Definition of Partnership?.....	16
5.2	Did NHI Models Incorporate Sound Partnership Principles?.....	16
6.0	Conclusions: Building A Better Model! .....	19
6.1	Enhancing Models and Strengthening Partnerships .....	19
6.2	Are There Other More Appropriate Models? .....	25
6.3	Summary .....	27
	Appendix A: Questions for Discussion.....	28
	Endnotes and References .....	29

# **ENHANCING DELIVERY MODELS AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Recent years have witnessed a shift in the nature of models to deliver housing and support services for low income and marginalized groups in society. This shift has been prompted in part by a change in the role governments play – from that of “provider” to “facilitator.” This has necessitated more involvement by community-based organizations. There has also been a growing recognition that program assistance, in many circumstances, can be more effective if community is actively involved in identifying needs, establishing priorities, planning and delivering programs. In addition more limited levels of funding from government have required the collaboration, involvement and funding participation of more groups, organizations and government departments to make initiatives work. Partnerships are much more prominent and playing a greater role in planning, development and delivery.

Changes to accommodate these trends and circumstances have resulted in new delivery models and program practices. These new models and program practices are best characterized by those used under the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) and the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). This paper will examine models and best practices under these initiatives with a view to how they might be improved to ensure more effective delivery of program assistance and improved quality of life for the homeless.

This paper also incorporates some “key questions” that have to be addressed to enhance delivery models and program practices. These questions, attached as Appendix A, will help focus the discussion at the stakeholder roundtable on September 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **2.0 PROJECT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The overall objective of this project is to:

- Prepare a paper and presentation to support a focused breakout discussion on how to best align policy and program development and delivery to respond to and prevent homelessness in the current environment.

This particular discussion paper will:

- Offer a perspective and rationale for enhanced delivery models and partnerships;
- Identify potential enhanced delivery models, program and delivery best practices for various populations, communities and regions;
- Identify needs related to enhancing delivery and program models – such as needs that support partnerships and partner capacity; and,
- Conclude with recommended enhanced models for program delivery and partnerships that can solicit stakeholder feedback and discussion.

This paper has been prepared using a number of evaluation reports, interviews with people involved in the NHI programs and partnerships and general literature on delivery models and program practices.

### **3.0 THE NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE, THE SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENTS**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

In December 1999 the Government of Canada launched the National Homeless Initiative (NHI). With an initial budget of \$753 million, the initiative was designed to engage all levels of government as well as the non-profit and private sectors in developing effective approaches to help homeless people make the transition from living on the streets and in emergency shelters to a more secure life. The program had a three-year time frame but SCPI, which was part of this broad initiative, was given an administrative extension until March 31, 2004 and subsequently the NHI was extended for an additional three-year period to 2006 with a further investment of \$405 million. More recently an additional extension to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2007 was granted.

The broad objectives of the NHI were noted as<sup>1</sup>:

- 1) to work with communities to develop the tools to plan and implement local strategies to help reduce homelessness;
- 2) to alleviate the hardship of those without shelter by increasing the number of beds available in shelters;
- 3) to develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help homeless Canadians move out of the cycle of homelessness and prevent those at risk from falling into homelessness;
- 4) to coordinate new and existing programs and initiatives that address homelessness;
- 5) to ensure sustainable capacity of communities to address homelessness by enhancing community leadership, broadening ownership through collaborative partnerships of the public, non-profit and private sectors, developing partnership capacity; and,
- 6) to develop a base of knowledge and understanding of issues related to homelessness.

Certain characteristics of the NHI initiative set it apart from other programs: greater integration of housing options with various support programs for both housing and individuals; the comprehensive approach to community planning and the development of a community plan; and, the extensive partnerships that were part of planning, development, delivery and, in some cases, management of housing and support services for the homeless.

## 3.2 Components

The National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) included a number of component programs. The main program was the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). Also included were the Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH), the Regional Homelessness Fund (RHF), the National Research Program (NRP), the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) initiative, and the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)<sup>2</sup>.

The nature and objectives of the specific components of the broader program are briefly outlined below.

Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI): A community-based approach to addressing the needs of the homeless and those at risk of being homeless. SCPI was designed to achieve a number of outcomes: increase the well being of the homeless; reduce the number of people requiring shelter and transitional housing; help move people from homelessness through to self-sufficiency; and, strengthen community capacity to address homelessness. Designated centres were Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montréal, Québec City and Halifax. These centres were considered to be the “most effected” by homelessness.

Urban Aboriginal Homelessness (UAH): Designed to address the needs of homeless Aboriginals and those at risk of becoming homeless through the development of an integrated, culturally appropriate and community driven service delivery system. UAH is available to both SCPI funded and non-funded communities and coordinated with the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS).

Regional Homeless Fund (RHF): Designed to provide support to small urban and rural communities experiencing homelessness not funded by SCPI.

The National Research Program (NRP): Research to increase understanding of the magnitude, characteristics and causes of homelessness and facilitate knowledge transfer.

The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS): A system designed to respond to the technological and information needs of service providers. The system records and synthesizes data for tracking, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives and assists the daily operation of service providers.

The Surplus Federal Real Property for Homeless Initiative (SFRPHI): Under this component, surplus federal property was made available to municipal, provincial/territorial and non-profit organizations for initiatives to address homelessness, provided the location and characteristics were appropriate for such initiatives. As of the end of 2003, fifty properties valued at over nine million had been transferred.

The SCPI, UAH and RHF components adopted a continuum of supports approach where initiatives were built on, and integrated with, existing programs, facilities and services already available in the community. Funds came with the understanding that they should be matched with a community contribution from various resources including funding from partners, charitable donations, in-kind services, private sector contributions and funding from municipal and provincial/territorial levels of government. The federal contribution generally did not exceed fifty percent. UAH initiatives did not require matching funds although they were encouraged. A community plan was required to access NHI funding, ideally a comprehensive and long term strategic plan developed by the community. Plans were required to capture the priorities of all affected population groups including youth and Aboriginals. Communities were strongly advised to allocate a level of funding for Aboriginal homelessness commensurate with the percentage of Aboriginal people in the community. It was also recommended that, where possible and practical, these funds should be administered by Aboriginal community groups.

The NHI and particularly the SCPI, UAH, and RHF components represent one of the most integrated, community-based and driven initiatives ever introduced in Canada. With requirements of comprehensive planning, extensive community partnerships and a need to demonstrate a continuum of supports approach, the initiative was also very complex, requiring considerable consensus building, community consultation and integration of a variety of service sectors and programs involving all orders of government. Was it effective? Was it too complex? Were the delivery models appropriate? How could the delivery models have been enhanced? These are key questions that need careful study.

### **3.3 Outcomes and Achievements<sup>3</sup>**

#### ***Geographical Distribution***

- SCPI has funded projects in 61 different communities across Canada ranging in size from Toronto with over four and a half million people to Iqaluit with just over 5,000 people.
- Ten major Canadian cities have received eighty percent of the funding: Toronto, Vancouver, Montréal, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Québec City and Halifax.
- Toronto has received the highest proportion of funding followed by Calgary, Vancouver, Ottawa-Hull, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Edmonton.
- In addition to centres such as Calgary, Winnipeg and Edmonton that have high numbers and proportions of Aboriginal People, other centres with this characteristic that have received considerable amounts of funding included Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Brandon and Thompson.

- Approximately 36 percent of the projects were initiated in Ontario, followed by Québec with 27 percent, British Columbia 12 percent, Alberta ten percent, Manitoba 4.5 percent and Saskatchewan 4.3 percent with smaller percentages in other jurisdictions.

With a focus on major cities where the number of homeless is highest and a reasonably broad distribution by province that roughly matches the distribution of population, SCPI can be considered an initiative where expenditures certainly approximated the distribution of needs. Funding was well targeted to cities with the most serious homeless problems.

### ***Project Numbers and Nature***

- Close to 3,000 projects were funded under SCPI, UAH and the Youth components of NHI programs. Nearly all projects fall into one of the following five categories:
  - a) Sheltering Facilities: shelters, transitional and supportive housing;
  - b) Support Facilities: food banks, clothing/furniture depots, drop-in centres and soup kitchens;
  - c) Provision of Support Services: types of services include housing placement, transportation services, health and counselling services, education and life skills training, and employment and legal/financial services;
  - d) Capacity Building: local research and studies, community plan development, development of training material and activities, delivery of training, support for development and management of projects, and coordination of services amongst organizations;
  - e) Public Awareness: production of tools, documents and other public awareness activities that promote awareness of homelessness and homelessness related issues.

### ***Distribution of Funding by Type of Project***

- The SCPI Program is a broad initiative that has incorporated a range of support programs that strengthened the housing provided while also addressing other material, social, psychological and educational needs of individuals and families who were homeless or at risk of being homeless.
- Thirty-three percent of the projects approved have fallen in the support services category, twenty percent in capacity building, 26 percent under sheltering



facilities, fourteen percent in support facilities and 7.5 percent in public awareness.

- Approximately fifty-three percent of the funding has been expended on accommodation: 21 percent on shelters, 21 percent on transitional housing and eleven percent on supportive housing. More than 9,000 new beds have been created and 725 shelter facilities improved and renovated.
- About seven percent has been spent on support facilities, most of it on drop-in centres and food banks. Approximately 403 support facilities such as food banks and soup kitchens have been improved or renovated.
- Approximately twenty-five percent has been spent on support services with funding reasonably equally distributed between housing support, education and training, information and referral and psych-social supports, with slightly less on health and material supports. There has been a strong focus on development of specialized services for youth and Aboriginal homeless persons.
- Capacity building has received about seven percent of the funding while only two percent has gone to public awareness.

#### ***What Type of Projects Did Communities Sponsor?***

- Developing or renovating sheltering facilities has been a high priority for communities: 73 percent focused on shelters, 62 percent on transitional housing and 33 percent on supportive housing.
- Provision of support services has also been a high priority area with 68 percent of communities providing housing support, 67 percent material support, 73 percent information and referral support, 57 percent psych-social support, 48 percent health and 63 percent education and training support. These activities have consumed much smaller proportions of the total expenditures than development of shelter options.
- Fifty-five percent of centres have provided capacity building, 38 percent public awareness, 42 percent drop-in centres and 33 percent food banks. Again these activities represent only modest levels of expenditures.

#### ***Serving Sub-Populations and Special Needs Groups***

- Serving sub-population and special needs groups has been a particular challenge for SCPI. There is a wide range of such groups. Prominent among them are Aboriginal persons, immigrants and refugees, and youth. Aboriginal people illustrate high levels of socio-economic disparity, recent immigrants face discrimination, foreign credential recognition problems and other structural barriers in accessing the labour market, and youth have difficulty accessing

income support. These and other characteristics of these groups make access to affordable, secure housing difficult.

- The services provided to these groups under NHI funding are noted below

Group	Percentage of Initiatives Identifying Groups as a Major Client			
	Shelters	Support Facilities	Support Services	All NHI Funded Projects
Aboriginal	12.7	9.2	14.5	12.8
Immigrants and Refugees	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.2
Youth at Risk	12.6	15.7	20.1	16.5

Source: National Homelessness Initiative: National Investment Report Phase I 1999 to 2004

- Little evidence is available to indicate if these groups have received support commensurate with their proportion of the homeless population. It has been estimated, however, that one-third of Canada’s homeless population are youth<sup>4</sup> although only seventeen percent of initiatives targeted youth. Aboriginal people constitute a major portion of the homeless population in selected centres. The level of “hidden homeless” amongst Aboriginals in prairie cities is also pervasive<sup>5</sup>. The homeless do include immigrants and refugees in some centres but solid evidence on their numbers is lacking.
- Projects focusing specifically on immigrants and refugees have been developed in Halifax, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Hamilton and Toronto, all major destination points for immigrants and refugees. Youth focused projects have been developed in many centres including Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa, Halifax, Saskatoon, Victoria, Vancouver and Charlottetown. Aboriginal initiatives have occurred in all major western Canadian cities and several cities in the east including Toronto and Thunder Bay.

***Leveraging and Lasting Effects***

- The program has leveraged close to 560 million dollars of funds from contributing partners: municipalities, provincial governments, foundations and the private sector. In-kind contributions of over \$15 million have also been provided; and,
- The development of hundreds of partnerships across the country. Many continue to work to address homelessness.

The NHI has an impressive record when outcomes are considered. These outcomes represent tangible physical facilities, support services and less tangible or obvious outcomes such as better integration of programs, capacity and awareness building in communities and better quality of life for homeless people.

## 4.0 DELIVERY MODELS UNDER NHI AND SCPI

### 4.1 The Nature of the Models

Two basic delivery models were used under the NHI – the Community Entity Model and the Shared Delivery Model<sup>6</sup>.

Community Entity: In consultation with HRSD the community designated responsibility for delivery of the Plan to one Entity. The Community Entity, usually an incorporated organization, was responsible for implementing the plan. When groups came forward to request funding they could do so only with the approval of the Entity, which was responsible for project selection, contracting and monitoring and accountability of funds on behalf of the Government of Canada. The Community Entity worked with the Community Advisory Board (CAB) to prioritize the projects that were put forward for funding using the Community Plan to determine those that should be funded.

A subset of the Community Entity model was the Municipal Entity model. This approach was adopted where a municipal government had an established strategy and structure, had committed resources to address homelessness, and was deemed to have sufficient capacity to lead and administer the process. Selection of the municipality as the entity was generally strengthened if there was no other organization in the community with the capacity and credibility to manage the process.

Shared Delivery Model: Where a Community Entity model did not exist, HRSD and the community groups worked in partnership to implement the plan. This was a joint selection and decision-making process. HRSD was responsible for project approval, and contribution agreement preparation and monitoring. Community groups worked within the context of a CAB to come to agreement on priorities within the community plan. Service providers within the community then applied through the CAB, which prioritized the projects that went forward to HRSD for funding.

Local Community Advisory Boards (CABs): The CABs were comprised of a range of partners including public, private, not-for-profit organizations and Aboriginal and Youth organizations or representatives. CABs worked with the broader Community Planning Group, the Community Entity and/or the City Facilitator (HRSD staff person) to ensure priorities identified in the Community Plan are met through the funding process. They were advisory in nature, providing guidance to responsible parties under both models.

The Province of Québec chose a very different model. The model, first negotiated in 2000 for implementation off NHI Phase 1, is used to deliver two NHI components – SCPI and RHF under the formal Canada-Québec Agreement. Under the Model:

- working with its regional agencies for health and social services, Québec is responsible for community planning and project development;

- a joint committee of federal and Québec officials is responsible for recommending projects to be funded;
- in making their recommendations this committee draws on project analysis provided by an advisory committee comprised of representatives from umbrella community groups who are involved in development of community plans and priorities; and,
- the federal government is responsible for signing, announcing and managing the funding agreements with the community groups. The province gives these community groups blanket authorization to receive federal funds issued in accordance with the Canada-Québec Agreement.

What is unique about the Model:

- the strong federal/provincial partnership and the active role the joint federal/provincial committee plays in recommending projects for funding; and,
- the strong role the province plays in working with community advisory committees. Some major municipalities have also been very active in partnerships and the initiatives introduced.

The Model and the Canada-Québec Agreement under which it functions reflect the Province’s strong role in social housing. Both governments have described the Agreement as an example of a constructive working relationship. With the strong provincial role projects may be more sustainable over the longer term. When the levels of government play the significant role they do, some people suggest that the role of community organizations is less prominent

#### 4.2 Why Did Communities Choose a Particular Delivery Model?

Fifty percent of large communities and 68 percent of small communities chose the shared model: thirty percent of small and 22 percent of large communities chose the municipal entity. The community entity model was chosen by very few centres – only twelve percent in total (large and small)<sup>7</sup>.

<b>Administrative Model Distribution</b>				
Type of Community	Municipal Entity	Community Entity	Shared Model	Total
Large	3	2	5	10
Smaller	11	5	34	50
Total	14	7	39	60

Note: only 60 communities indicated their choice of models

There were a number of reasons behind the choice of a particular model in the 61 communities<sup>8</sup>:

- The extent of pre-NHI planning around the issue of homelessness. In some cities a broad partnership of diverse stakeholders had already undertaken some planning, strategy development, needs assessment and prioritizing prior to the announcement of NHI funding. They were in a better position to assess the extent of resources locally, develop a community plan, assess the strengths and weaknesses of organizations within the partnership, develop some sense of possible community entities, formulate an understanding of what role the municipality might play, and assess possible tensions between organizations. In such communities it was often easier to identify an entity – community or municipality – to lead the process.
- In some centres municipal governments had already established a policy strategy, delivery structure and allocated resources to address homelessness so a municipal entity was a logical choice. Even in centres, particularly smaller communities, where municipalities had not undertaken this preliminary work, the municipality was often still considered the organization with the most capacity to lead and administer the process.
- In communities where no preliminary work had been done and municipalities had not made homelessness a priority the prospect of establishing an entity, municipal or otherwise, was generally not considered and most such communities opted for the shared model.
- Other factors influential in choosing a model included:
  - a) A recognition of the heavy workload involved and the determination that no one entity in the community had the capacity, resources or expertise to manage the initiative;
  - b) Concerns over the potential conflict of interest on the part of the organization that took on the role given their existing affiliations and relationships with service providers;
  - c) The inability of community groups to identify an entity that could be seen as sufficiently neutral and independent; and,
  - d) No organization stepped forward to take on the task, perhaps because they felt it would remove them from access to funding.

### **4.3 Was One Model More Effective Than Another?**

Evidence from the evaluations completed and interviews with those involved suggests there was little indication that one model functioned more effectively than another<sup>9</sup>. The

success or failure of either approach seemed to vary from one community to another. There were, however, a number of factors that made the models work better:

- The chemistry between NHI staff and community people;
- The relationships between the three orders of government and their willingness and ability to work together;
- The level and sophistication of planning and decision making that existed around the issues of homelessness in the community prior to the introduction of the NHI;
- The sophistication and capacity of organizations in the community working with the homeless prior to NHI;
- The nature of relationships that existed between the various organizations providing services for the homeless prior to the introduction of NHI; and,
- The presence or absence of credible, dynamic individuals in the community prepared to lead the process and work to develop consensus in the community.

#### **4.4 Did the Models Contribute to Success of the Program?**

Although the models and associated partnerships have not been without their problems, they have made positive contributions in the community and to the delivery of programs and success of initiatives. Models and the associated program criteria:

- provided considerable flexibility to allow communities to fund projects according to their needs. The SCPI design has provided communities with more control over how funds could be spent within the broad funding criteria. This was critical to communities agreeing to invest significant amounts of time in developing partnerships and community plans.
- have enhanced community capacity in a number of ways:
  - mobilization of a broader range of service providers able to work with governments, foundations, and other stakeholders
  - increased the number of agencies working to address homelessness
  - developed broad community-based planning and decision making structures better able to identify community needs and priorities
  - enhanced awareness of available resources, expertise and services in the community; awareness of the complexity and nature of homelessness among service providers as community plans detailed the extent of homelessness, the assets in place and the gaps in facilities and services

- enhanced awareness led to greater sensitivity to Aboriginal cultural issues and the needs and priorities of other special needs groups
- led to a better understanding of mental health and other health issues that front line shelter workers need to be able to recognize and respond to
- led to a greater recognition of the need for supportive housing, supported training, skills development and other transitional services.
- the requirement for models to incorporate the community planning process also fostered a more collaborative and informed effort to address homelessness
- the groups coming together in partnerships led to more directed and regular client referrals and new working relationships between service agencies meant referrals were more likely to be addressed.

#### **4.5 Strength of the Partnership Models**

The success of the models was due in large part to the strengths of the partnerships formed to address homelessness. Evaluation studies and interviews with people participating in planning and delivery of NHI initiatives highlighted a number of these strengths including<sup>10</sup>:

##### ***Strengthening the Strategic Planning Process***

- Collaborative partnerships strengthened the strategic planning process through the development of a better understanding of needs, gaps, and resources available.
- Partnerships brought grass roots involvement to a community plan and a more community-based approach to identifying and addressing the problems.
- Organizations acting on their own can make a difference but they are not able to develop the community-wide perspective that addresses needs the way partnerships can. A partnership or broad coalition can bring the evidence to the table to structure a community plan necessary to make a case for funding and applying the political pressure necessary to achieve funding.

##### ***Building Community Capacity***

- Collaborative partnerships are effective when it comes to educating those around the table about the broader community perspective.
- Without a coalition or partnership the community is ill prepared to make their wishes known, they are not speaking with one voice or from a position of strength.

- The most positive outcomes are the “richness of the community voice” that partnerships provide and the “people connections” that are generated by coming together, and the development of social capital and networking capacity.

### ***Strengthening Inter-Sectoral Relationships***

- Partnership arrangements were effective at “breaking down the silo mentality” and bringing organizations out of an isolated mode of operation. They lead to a better understanding of services available, facilitate pooling of expertise and ideas, and increase the possibility of referrals among agencies.
- Good partnerships initiate some good linkages between service agencies, which lead to things as simple as sharing of information or more sophisticated arrangements where agencies share services.
- Sector partnerships were also developed or enhanced in most communities. Organizations from particular sectors came “to the table” as part of the larger committee and then often set up subcommittees within their sector.
- Project partnerships were established in some centres where collaborating agencies with similar clientele chose to collaborate on a project as opposed to submitting separate project proposals.

### ***Enhancing Funding Potential and Political Strength***

- A partnership or broad coalition is better positioned with greater strength to “tap into the leadership” at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government.
- Collaborative partnerships, when they have broad community representation carry considerably more weight with funders and decision makers at all levels.
- Good partnerships contain people in credible influential positions, from organizations with a stake in the issue and people “who are on the ground.”

#### **4.6 Challenges of the Partnership Models**

The partnership models were not without their challenges and several difficult issues are worth noting:

- Accountability was sometimes a problem in partnerships. Who takes responsibility in a partnership? Are individual members responsible? Reluctance to take a leadership role often delayed program activity.



- Developing partnerships, often resulted in delays, lengthy discussions and time-consuming meetings even though the end result is a better community plan of action.
- In the development of sustainable partnerships consensus building can be a challenge – it can take a great deal of time.
- Members of partnerships often had to place community priorities ahead of those of the organizations they represented – they wore two hats a “day job hat” and a “community wide hat.” This can be a difficult position for some people.
- Conflict that occurred was usually issue centred – revolving around prioritization of issues, setting priorities and the position the group took with various government departments.
- In some centres with a high proportion of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal based organizations developing partnerships in which these groups participate fully in the activities of the partnership has been a challenge. In Winnipeg, where Aboriginals constitute a significant component of the homeless, there was some on-going tension between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations, particularly around the issue of priority setting, that was never fully resolved. However, there was a general consensus that working within the partnership was more beneficial to all than going it alone.

At the end of the day not everyone goes away happy, even if they agreed to a united front and supported the consensus position.

## **5.0 PARTNERSHIPS AND THEIR ROLE IN PLANNING, POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM DELIVERY**

The models used under SCPI incorporated broad community partnerships including all levels of government, a range of government departments, non-profit and community-based organizations, foundations, charities and private sector organizations. These partnerships were so important to the success or failure of SCPI that a discussion of the nature, nurturing and characteristics of partnerships is necessary.

### **5.1 What is the Definition of Partnership?**

Partnerships are traditionally defined as an association of two or more people or organizations who contribute money or property to carry on a joint activity and share profits or losses.

Today the term partnership has taken on a broader meaning, particularly in the context of social policy. Property and money remain important contributions to a partnership, but knowledge, expertise, relationships and a range of services have been added to the contributions. Profit and loss remain important outcomes but just as important are improved shelter, quality of life and life changing circumstances – changing and improving people’s lives.

To be effective, members of true partnerships have to share a common vision, agree on common outcomes and put their individual assets on the table. Notwithstanding this, individual partners have their own system of accountability, their goals and objectives, strengths and limitations that have to be recognized and respected by all members of the partnership. Good partnerships have to articulate ways to work independently as well as collectively. Partners have to agree to common outcomes and also accept each other’s individual strategies and objectives<sup>11</sup>.

A partnership must also be seen as an ongoing process with flexibility to adapt and change.

### **5.2 Did NHI Models Incorporate Sound Partnership Principles?**

“Community wide” partnerships were developed or enhanced in the 61 communities involved in the NHI initiative. These partnerships provided a number of strengths in the planning, funding and program delivery areas for the NHI program. Partnerships also have their challenges. The strengths and challenges of the partnerships in the NHI models were detailed in Section 4.0 but examining key characteristics of effective partnership models helps to put the NHI partnership models in perspective and to assess their strengths and weaknesses.

The literature and comments from interviews suggest that partnerships work best when they<sup>12</sup>

- 1) are flexible enough to attract and incorporate funds from a range of sources;

*Evidence suggests this was a successful outcome. NHI projects leveraged 560 million dollars plus fifteen million in in-kind support from twelve different sources. The most significant contributions were provincial/territorial/municipal governments, followed by the non-profit sector. If there is a weakness in this area it is that only a modest amount of the money leveraged came from non-governmental sources.*

- 2) incorporate a broad range of stakeholders who can affect but are also affected by the issue;

*The NHI model with its insistence on broad partnerships generally met this objective. Some felt, however, that some partnerships were too often dominated by large, well-established service organizations and did not incorporate grass roots neighbourhood organizations to the extent they should have. This may have limited the grass roots perspective so important in assessing community needs.*

- 3) incorporate a democratic process of consultation that invites participation from all concerned and that leads to decisions and action as opposed to stalemates and inaction;

*Case studies and interviews provide evidence of broad participation but achieving consensus on decisions and actions was often slow. Tension and conflict within some partnerships raised doubts about the democratic process and slowed the delivery process.*

- 4) identify clear roles and responsibilities for all the stakeholders involved and leadership in the various sectors and jurisdictions;

*Roles and responsibilities were generally well defined but leaders in the various sectors and jurisdictions did not always quickly step forward to provide leadership.*

- 5) have the capacity to link with other sectors that deal with the same households. Programs for the homeless, for example, need to be coordinated with other social and economic policy initiatives;

*Certainly a strength of the NHI initiatives with a focus on continuum of supports but integration at the inter-government level was sometimes criticized as being weak. It has been suggested that the federal government should have made a greater effort to engage municipal and provincial governments in strategic planning.*

- 6) provide the necessary capacity building and expertise to guarantee adequate involvement by all sectors;

*This has to be an on-going process. There was a consensus that more time, training and funding have to be focused on capacity building.*

- 7) deliver housing and service outcomes that are sustainable over the long term;

*Sustainability is the issue most commonly called into question regarding NHI programs. This was the issue of greatest concern for partnerships. The concern focused more on sustaining operating funds than capital.*

- 8) complement other community and quality of life building exercises and respond to broader community needs;

*The continuum of supports approach encouraged collaboration with other community and quality of life building exercises and addressing the issues of homelessness automatically responds to broader community needs in a number of areas – health, security, law enforcement, education, etc.*

- 9) incorporate the flexibility necessary to accommodate local needs but ensure accountability to funders and other stakeholders; and,

*There was general agreement that flexibility was adequate but addressing accountability criteria was time consuming and accountability within partnerships was often called into question and considered weak by some. This, it seems, was due to competing interests and competition for funds.*

- 10) facilitate the delivery of shelter and integration and delivery of support services.

*Integration of shelter and support services was considered a strength, due in part to the planning process. However, there is concern about the sustainability of this integration.*

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS: BUILDING A BETTER MODEL!

All things considered the NHI was an overall success. It incorporated innovative features, encouraged long term community-based strategic planning, developed effective and, in some cases, lasting partnerships, encouraged better integration of a range of support services and improved the quality of life for homeless individuals and families.

However, not everything was “sunshine and roses.” There were problems. The problems should not generate a “throw the baby out with the bathwater” reaction, but instead work to strengthen the partnership models and approach. The final sections of this paper highlight some of the major difficulties of NHI Programs and provide suggestions on ways these difficulties could be addressed.

### 6.1 Enhancing Models and Strengthening Partnerships

**Sustainability:** One of the basic concerns is that NHI funding initiated partnerships, activities and established facilities that are not sustainable without additional continued funding. Key questions include: Will the association between partners allow for continued funding of program operating costs once NHI funding has lapsed? Did the program develop the tools to build sustainable and long-term partnerships? With the end of NHI, other levels of government are expressing fears that their departments will ultimately face community pressure to provide on-going funds for projects after NHI funds lapsed. With no guarantee of long term sustainable funding, this is a very real possibility. These fears, it appears, have been enhanced with a change in political leadership at the federal level and comments on a “leaner, less ambitious central government” and possible further federal withdrawal from housing.

The models and associated partnerships did build on existing community assets. However, many of these assets already depended on government support to continue. Better integration of government activities and plans for long term funding after NHI ended might have prevented this situation.

Providing shelter for the homeless and services to reduce the likelihood of a return to the street are activities that cost money as opposed to making money. Where does sustainable funding to continue the activity of partnerships come from? There are a number of options: a) **fees, but not all can afford to pay them**; b) **integration of existing programs**; c) **private sector funding**; d) **foundation funding**; e) **charity fund raising**; and, f) **government funding**.

How sustainable are these sources? **Fees** are not a realistic source of funds for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Incomes are too low and fees generally have to come from other government programs. Those who cannot afford fees are generally on social assistance or other forms of government support.

**Private sector funding** is not always a good source of sustaining funds. The focus of private funding is generally on capital for projects, as opposed to sustaining subsidy

funding of on-going programs. The Calgary Homeless Foundation who created the “Funders Table” has been able to access considerable amounts of private sector funding but in most cities it is not a replacement for government funding on an on-going basis.

**Foundation funding** is characterized by the same difficulties: limited and unlikely to be sustainable over long periods of time. In Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Foundation and the United Way contribute annually to organizations that provide shelter and services to the homeless but their funding alone is insufficient to sustain programs over any period of time.

**Fund raising** is playing a greater role and forming a larger component of most organization’s budgets, but again the sustainability of these funds are never guaranteed and raising such funds requires extensive time and expertise that many organizations do not always have.

**Integration of existing programs** to support activities does yield considerable benefits beyond targeted funding itself, but as a source of sustaining funding present problems. The programs often have other objectives that have to be addressed and many of them have limited timeframes.

**Government funding** is also not a guaranteed source. The level of government funding changes, programs come and go, and long-term sustainability is rarely guaranteed. Given the nature of government, long-term commitments are unlikely.

Community partnership models can help plan, deliver, manage and fund raise but the sources they have to depend on are often unreliable over the long term. The important question is how best to address this unreliability as a regular, reliable source of funds is required to make partnership models and programs work on a long-term basis. The NHI added to existing facilities and it initiated new ones. The current funding base is insufficient to sustain all these activities on an on-going basis.

What is required is a guaranteed source of funding that provides an annual flow, preferably representing contributions from all orders of government that can then be combined with funds the partners and organizations are able to raise from other sources.

Greater integration of funding from all levels of government, agreements to fund on a longer-term basis and integrate design and planning from the beginning would strengthen models but are no guarantee of long-term sustainability. When asked if they could survive without government funding for most the quick answer was ‘no’. Government funding has to be the basic component of sustainability.

The sustainable funding issue has to be attacked on two fronts: basic funding from government to ensure long-term sustainability; and, funding from other sources to supplement this basic component.

**A Housing Trust or National Housing Foundation** has been suggested as an alternative to enhance funding. Although funded largely by government, it would operate at arm's length and be governed by a multi-sectoral board of experts. The foundation or trust would work to increase the sources and availability of funding, work with local partnerships and model entities to build capacity, technical expertise and broaden their sources of funding. There are local examples in a number of cities, but a national organization would have some additional advantages in terms of capacity building and accessing funds from a wider range of sources. However, without strong leadership and funding from all orders of government "sustainability will be an elusive objective."

### *Partnership Development and Program Timeframe*

A common concern with SCPI was the long development period involved to structure the Community Advisory Board (CAB), develop the partnership framework(s) required to identify the model approach, and develop and finalize a community plan. Broad partnership development was extremely difficult and time consuming with few guarantees that partnerships will be sustainable over a longer period of time.

Despite the concerns surrounding the development time needed for partnership building, it has been suggested that a longer time frame for community planning, capacity building and consultation is necessary. Considerable time is required to ensure grass roots neighbourhood organizations are adequately involved and represented. The importance of these three aspects is acknowledged, but overall program timeframes are often too short to accommodate these aspects then follow up with effective delivery.

Perhaps one should not start with the assumption that players in the partnership will come to a consensus on a plan to use the funds – particularly after the funds are announced. Consensus building, however, does pay dividends in the long term. It leads to greater solidarity on the issues, allowing partnerships to speak with a stronger voice and with greater certainty that their actions and ideas are a true reflection of community needs, wishes and priorities.

There is also the assumption that it is possible to develop a partnership that could come to a consensus for an entire geographic community made up of diverse demographic communities. This was a faulty assumption particularly for communities with centres containing an Aboriginal community.

Community meetings and consultation are needed, they raise issues and identify priorities but consensus building is difficult in large groups, particularly as their membership changes with each meeting. To solve this a small group, or an organization such as the Proposal Fund Allocation Committee (PFAC) in Winnipeg (see next section) committed to working together with time to develop a "plan" based on the consultation meetings, which can then be reviewed and considered by the larger group, may be a more effective approach.

## ***Resources and Capacity Building***

An expanded development and program timeframe has to be combined with a greater emphasis on capacity building for partnerships. Evaluations suggest that approximately half of initiative respondents surveyed felt they did not have the necessary resources to deliver the program as set out in their business plan. Internal capacity to deliver the program was also at risk in many situations. Many commented they needed training in negotiating with partners and recruitment of financial partners. Partnerships need nurturing to develop. Resources are not only needed to help them carry out strategies but to develop and sustain their partnerships.

There are other ways NHI partnerships could be strengthened beyond more funding for development as well as ongoing sustainability. Evidence from some centres suggests there may be value in a broker who is not directly involved in servicing the client but whose primary focus is development, nurturing, managing the process of allocation of funds, monitoring and evaluation – hence the overall process. Usually the biggest problem and most tension revolve around issues related to control and allocation of resources to address particular outcomes and accountability. Having a broker (separate entity), without a vested interest in accessing resources, to manage this process and resolve conflicts seems useful. This organizing group or entity has to have adequate and ongoing support to carry out the process.

Winnipeg started with a Shared Model of Delivery but, because of tensions within the group and difficulty arriving at a consensus, moved toward an Entity Model with the development of a Proposal Fund Allocation Committee (PFAC) a committee of fourteen people with a mandate to<sup>13</sup>:

- Consult with the community
- Develop and propose a structure for a community entity
- Develop policies and processes for assessing and making recommendations on funding proposals
- Review and make recommendations on funding proposals
- Communicate the work of the committee to the community at large.

If the broker can play a role as a **Technical Resource Group (TRG)** this might be another way of strengthening delivery models. Capacity and technical skills are a very important aspect of successful delivery. The use of TRGs may help address this concern. Montreal neighbourhood associations work with TRGs who provide the technical skills to develop proposals, work through the regulatory and planning process and provide construction management services. The PFAC helped play this role in Winnipeg to a limited extent.

What is being suggested in this section is a variation of the Entity Model but the entity has a slightly more arms length relationship with the partnership (working for instead of part of the partnership) and a higher level of skills in selected areas important to consensus building planning and delivery.



### ***Addressing Systemic Problems***

Hostels, shelters and transitional housing reduced the number of homeless who had to live on the street. Food banks, clothing banks and other associated services kept the homeless fed and warm. These are laudable outcomes. Achieving such outcomes helps stabilize the lives of homeless people. This is necessary before more systemic problems can be addressed.

People involved in initiatives, however, were quick to point out that addressing the effects of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and drug addiction is a long-term process that involves many programs, departments, time and funding. NHI was a good beginning. However, partnerships must include some service agencies able to play a more active role in addressing the systemic problems that result in people being homeless in the first place. If this is not the case, the initiative could be accused of just “warehousing” the problem. Addressing systemic problems requires more long-term sustainable partnerships, with long-term programs that have adequate sustainable funds.

There are also systemic housing market problems that have to be addressed. Did the partnership models provide the broader continuum of housing that is necessary? Without affordable shelter for the “hidden homeless” and those households “at risk” market pressures will continue to “push” people on to the street. Partnerships are needed to take people off the street but also keep more people from hitting the streets. This requires a broader continuum of housing initiatives.

### ***Integration of Aboriginal Organizations and Other Sub and Special Needs Groups***

Partnership models quickly realized that it was a big challenge to incorporate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, needs and priorities into the same plan. There was, and continues to be, some on-going tension between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups revolving around the allocation of funds and the efficacy of a separate role and facilities for Aboriginal organizations and homeless Aboriginal people. The important question is how best to address the needs of Aboriginal people in a culturally sensitive fashion. The plan is a big challenge – the need to incorporate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups into a single entity. The many Aboriginal service organizations that have developed also raise the issue of parallel versus integrated services.

Is it better to develop two separate models/delivery mechanisms and community plans? Should services for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals be delivered in a parallel mode or integrated fashion? One has to approach these issues from a practical perspective. In large centres where there are significant levels of demand, separate facilities and delivery models may be justified. However, integration of needs, priorities and long term strategies should be part of the same community plan because both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people use many of the broad social services – income security and health, for example.

In smaller communities with limited levels of demand from Aboriginal people, integration of facilities and delivery models seem to be the most practical approach.

Incorporating other sub-groups or special needs groups raised similar challenges. The homeless are a very diverse population and diversity is growing. With growing diversity there is a need for broader partnerships, broader range of services and skill sets. There is also the challenge of levels of demand – do they justify separate facilities? Can sub-groups be adequately served in the same facility? Are there organizations that can provide the range of services required by a mix of sub-groups? This again raises the issue of parallel versus integrated services – separate versus integrated projects, etc.

With growing diversity amongst the homeless and the need for a broader range of services, it will be more and more difficult for single purpose/single client organizations to effectively address the needs and priorities of the homeless population. Partnership organizations and models will be more effective in addressing this diversity.

### ***Better Integration of Orders of Government***

Greater collaboration, particularly between federal departments might have resulted in the development of additional partnerships or the strengthening of existing partnerships, and the development of more project opportunities. There was a sense that this coordination and collaboration should have been stronger. However, the need for better integration does not end at the federal level. It has to extend to all orders of government and their respective departments. Homelessness involves a set of circumstances, which to be effectively addressed, require the involvement of many departments (in all orders of government) if satisfactory solutions are to be developed.

**Inter-sectoral Committees** could be structured to more effectively integrate the many key housing support services and policy areas that are instrumental in addressing problems of the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless. In recent years some cities and provinces have formalized inter-sectoral committees to try to break down the “silo” mentality that often characterizes program delivery and policy development. Examples of such committees are present in Regina and Saskatoon in the Province of Saskatchewan and in some cities in the Province of Alberta. The federal government can play an active role in these inter-sectoral committees in an attempt to better coordinate policy and program delivery and improve the interface between various policy areas.

Although these inter-sectoral committees would not “deliver” programs *per se*, they could help coordinate policies and programs that serve the same clients. Housing, income security, health, education, justice, immigration, community economic development, employment assistance and social development are other policy and program areas that have a role to play<sup>14</sup>.

Inter-sectoral committees should be encouraged – not necessarily to get involved within the “hands on” delivery of programs, but to more effectively coordinate policy and programs, particularly at the macro level, that are important to partnerships working at

the community level. Inter-sectoral committees that include representatives from the three orders of government, community-based organizations and the private sector could more effectively integrate program and policy areas, improving the effectiveness of budgeted funds.

## **6.2 Are There Other More appropriate Models?**

A variety of models have been used in Canada to deliver shelter and related support services. There may be other models that could be used to deliver NHI initiatives. A few options are explored below.

Delivery through **non-profit and cooperative community-based organizations**, that provided much of the non-profit and cooperative portfolio in the late '70s and early '80s. Although many of the groups involved do not always represent the broader community, this community-based approach can provide good links between housing policy, broader community development initiatives and other social support programs. Many of these organizations, with their knowledge of housing, also have the ability to view and address homelessness within the broader housing framework.

These organizations also have the ability to respond to special needs groups. For example, Aboriginal housing and service-based agencies are a component of the non-profit sector. They deliver a range of housing and housing support services. They represent an example of delivery models that operate to address special needs groups in both large and small urban centres, providing housing and support services that are culturally appropriate and delivered in a manner that makes Aboriginal people feel comfortable<sup>15</sup>.

Despite certain advantages such organizations generally do not encompass the broad partnerships of stakeholders that have contributed to the outcomes under the NHI.

**Tri-Partite Agreements:** some major urban centers (Winnipeg, Toronto and Vancouver, for example) have delivered a range of programs, including housing, on the basis of partnerships between the three orders of government. This approach does help facilitate coordination between the three orders of government who are funders and when delivered through a “single window” does provide community groups, the private sector and other organizations with a “point of contact” that provides information and accepts proposals for many government programs<sup>16</sup>. However, this approach would not necessarily guarantee broad community consultation or the development of broad partnerships of stakeholders.

**Housing Trust Models:** the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund is a working example. Founded in 1999, the Trust assists a diverse range of people by working with non-profit and private sector agencies and service providers, builders and Aboriginal groups. Funding is provided by the three levels of government along with the private and non-profit sectors. The Trust becomes the focal point or conduit for the distribution of funds with an emphasis on serving those most in need. The Trust also raises a significant

amount of money from philanthropic organizations, the corporate community, and the general public through fund-raising activities. The seven Trustees of the Trust include representatives from the Province, the City of Edmonton, the Homebuilders and community based non-profit associations. The distribution of funds is based on a community plan developed after wide consultation<sup>17</sup>.

**The Homeless Foundation Model:** the Calgary Homeless Foundation is a working example. The Foundation was conceived in 1998 by successful Calgary businessman Art Smith. With the support of the Province (the Premier), the Mayor of Calgary, provincial, municipal and business representatives, the Chamber of Commerce and the United Way of Calgary and Area, the Foundation was established.

The Foundation created the “Funders Table” a partnership of all three levels of government, the United Way, private organizations, philanthropic agencies and individuals. The “Table” brings contributors “to the table” to fund affordable housing initiatives. They make decisions on the basis of a Collaborative Granting Process to ensure the desires and priorities of the community are part of any decision making process. The Funders Table is a mechanism to tap additional sources of funds and the Collaborative Granting Process helps to coordinate funding for the homeless<sup>18</sup>.

These two organizations, as well as similar organizations in other cities, have certain characteristics in common:

- they represent broad based community partnerships, operate on the basis of community plans developed through a broad consultation process and incorporate a collaborative decision making process
- they are arms length from government but incorporate representatives of all three orders of government
- they prioritize and coordinate community housing projects, allocating funds on the basis of need
- their broad representation allows them to tap funds and areas of expertise from sources that have not traditionally been involved in affordable housing initiatives, including the private sector
- their broad representation also allows them to tap the voluntary sector and incorporate the resources provided by many volunteer individuals and organizations.

Do organizations characterized by these types of models in Calgary and Edmonton have the capacity to deliver NHI initiatives? Would they be as effective as the models developed under the NHI initiative? In certain centres the answer may be “yes.” Both the Calgary Homeless Foundation and the Edmonton Housing Trust played effective roles in delivering NHI funding. However, these organizations do not exist in all cities, they are generally a ‘big city’ phenomenon. Despite their broad based community representation, they may not always represent the broad range of stakeholders appropriate in the delivery of initiatives for an increasingly diverse homeless population.

**Delivery through Neighbourhood Development Corporations and Neighbourhood Resident Associations.** At no time in recent history have communities and community based organizations ever been asked to take on the level of responsibility they are today. The shift in the role of governments from “provider” to “facilitator” has had a great deal to do with adding to responsibility at the community level. Most people in housing view this as a positive shift. The expanded community role includes assisting with development of neighbourhood plans, neighbourhood needs assessments, decision making on allocation of funds within local neighbourhoods, playing a role in program delivery, working to develop the necessary partnerships, applying for other sources of funds and, for some community based housing organizations, project ownership and management<sup>19</sup>.

Such organizations can certainly incorporate a grass roots perspective and are well placed to capture “the voice of the people.” When they are effective, the end result can be more effective policy and program outcomes and better linkages with other initiatives that are part of community building and revitalization. However, if they do not have the capacity and expertise to adequately perform such roles, the consequences can be disastrous. In addition, such organizations represent neighbourhoods as opposed to broader communities. Local neighbourhood objectives may often take precedent over broader community objectives.

### **6.3 Summary**

In summary the NHI resulted in many positive outcomes.

There are many other models that could be considered. Like the ones above they all have their strengths and weaknesses. The complex circumstances that NHI initiatives had to address, the many agencies required to prevent homelessness, serve the needs of those who are homeless, and help those who are homeless make the transition off the street probably preclude the adoption of any one particular model. Many different models working within the NHI framework can contribute to effective policy and program practices. The partnership approach and program practices adopted under the NHI achieved a great deal. This paper has highlighted a number of ways that the models and program practices could be strengthened, but building sustainability into the initiative is perhaps the most crucial. There are no magic solutions to developing sustainability. It requires funding from many sources, good program integration and inter-governmental cooperation and planning, but most of all, a guaranteed source of ongoing funding. The NHI went a long way toward broadening the sources of funding and improving sustainability but on-going support from all levels of government is key to achieving this objective over the long term.

## **Appendix A: Questions for Discussion**

- 1) From people's experience is there one particular model used under the NHI that works better than another? What aspects of the particular models could be combined to provide an enhanced model?
- 2) Is delivery by community-based models the most effective approach? Are there models that focus more on interventions that place more responsibility on individuals that might be more effective? (individual vs community based models).
- 3) What outcomes are we really trying to achieve? How will we know when we have achieved these outcomes? Completed capacity building? What indicators should we be using?
- 4) What does a project need to be effective? Does a project need to be sustainable over the long term to be effective?

## ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Terms and Conditions For the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), 2005, National Homelessness Initiative, Ottawa.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Most figures are drawn from the National Report on Investments and Accomplishments: December 1998 to March 31, 2004 as prepared by the National Homelessness Initiative.

<sup>4</sup> Youth Works News, Spring 2006, a publication of Raising the Roof, Toronto.

<sup>5</sup> Distasio et. al., 2005, An Examination of Hidden Homelessness Among Aboriginal Peoples in Prairie Cities, Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg.

<sup>6</sup> The discussion on the models drew material from the publication entitled “Audit of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative,” July 2004, Internal Audit, Strategic Policy and Planning, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Some of the material on the effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of the models was taken from “Evaluation of the National Homelessness Initiative: Implementation and Early Outcomes of HRDC-based components,” 2003, Human Resources Development Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Helgason, W., 2005, Creating Government-Community Partnerships: The Art of Balancing Responsibility and Control, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

<sup>12</sup> Carter, T. and Urban Aspects Consulting Limited, 2003, Governance in Organizations to Address Homelessness, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Ottawa.

<sup>13</sup> Helgason, W. 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Carter, T., 2005, Delivery Models: National Consultation on Developing a Canadian Housing Framework, prepared for National Secretariat on Homelessness.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.