



# Homelessness & Poverty: A Frontline CEDTAP Cluster

*National statistics on homelessness are inconclusive. While big-city task forces have estimated the number of homeless Canadians living on their downtown streets, a comprehensive Canadian picture does not exist. The definition of homelessness itself is much debated but, since 1999, has broadened to include the “literal” homeless, those who live without a roof over their heads, and those who are vulnerable to homelessness in the near future. CED is more closely linked with an alternate definition: “homefulness”-- a concept that emphasizes the role community plays in creating an individual’s sense of place and their capacity to build sustainable livelihoods.*

**Organizations – co-operatives, non-profit organizations, and religious charities – are delivering support services to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to low-incomes.**

**These organizations are working in both urban environments (Ottawa and Edmonton) and in smaller regions (the West Kootenays in British Columbia and Niagara Region in Ontario).**

**CED initiatives include:**

- a local newspaper, distributed and written by street-cultured individuals
- a charity that distributes clothing, furniture, toys, and food to families in need
- a laundry co-operative owned and operated by street-cultured and low-income individuals
- numerous social agencies using one co-operative management structure to deliver their services
- and an “asset-based” approach to bringing women out of poverty through financial and personal assets savings

**CEDTAP support ranges from :  
\$10,000 - \$16,000**

**CEDTAP offers a variety of technical services to organizations at different phases of development. The types of technical service accessed in this cluster include evaluation and control capacity, governance training and development, and strategic planning and visioning.**



*"Through CEDTAP assistance, we have a solid blueprint for beginning to effect changes in the lives of individuals and help them focus on personal achievements. As well, the technical assistance helped the Co-op to demonstrate the feasibility of 'good works' businesses in Centretown, Ottawa."  
Norman Ball, Chair, First United Church Council (a project partner of the Centretown Laundry Co-operative), November 2002*

## Case Studies:

### The Bissell Centre, Edmonton, Alberta

*Our Voice* is an Edmonton "street newspaper" established in 1995 by the Bissell Centre, a non-profit organization. The goal of *Our Voice* is to provide an opportunity for economically marginalized people in the city to obtain employment and income while communicating their own issues to the public. Independent vendors buy the papers for 50 cents a copy from the Bissell Centre, and then sell their copies on the street for a donation. There is no set price, but most people pay between \$1 and \$2. Seasoned vendors receive job training during evenings and weekends to become distributors. This publication is modeled on a similar Vancouver publication, *Spare Change*.

### Centretown Laundry Co-operative, Ottawa, Ontario

Founded in 1998 as a joint partnership project involving two Ottawa United churches and a downtown community health-care centre, the Centretown Laundry Co-operative is a community facility for low-income and street-cultured residents to do their laundry at low cost. Users pay a \$1.00 membership fee and \$1.00 to wash and dry one load. The Co-op also has three small-business contracts that generate income for the co-op workers. The 300-strong membership grows at about 12 members each month. A dedicated team of 10 volunteers provides valuable mentorship, professional services and leadership.

## Other Community Partners:

### 2001-2003:

Kootenay Community Services Cooperative, British Columbia  
Stratford House of Blessing, Ontario  
Women and Economic Development Consortium, National

## The CEDTAP Contribution

CEDTAP is providing support to investigate why the publication is still not self-sufficient (the Bissell Centre continues to subsidize the publication and provide a high degree of staff support to the vendors). The technical assistance provider will examine methods for increasing the publication's circulation and devise strategies to increase advertising in the paper.

CEDTAP provided comprehensive start-up support through a feasibility study, a business plan, and extensive research on CED, funding sources and an evaluation framework.

The feasibility study indicated that there is a strong market for 'good works' laundry in the area, the group is showing strong CED capacity given the number of machines, and the goal of 35% capacity was exceeded by 3% in 2002.



The donation room at  
Stratford House of Blessing

*"We are deeply appreciative of the opportunity afforded to us through CEDTAP. We now have workable strategic and fund development plans to guides us for the next three years."*

*Florence Kehl, Executive Director, Stratford House of Blessing, November 2002*