

***Evaluation of the National
Homelessness Initiative:
Implementation and Early Outcomes
of the HRDC-based Components***

Final Report

***Strategic Evaluations
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Executive Summary

In December 1999, the Government of Canada announced it was investing \$753 million over three years under the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) to help alleviate and prevent homelessness. Federal funding was intended to enhance community capacity to address local homelessness issues, foster investments in facilities and services for homeless people and increase knowledge about homelessness in Canada.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This is the final report of the formative evaluation of the following four NHI components¹ managed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC):

Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI): The main component of the NHI, the SCPI is a new initiative that contributes funding to homelessness services through community-based planning processes. Over the three-year initiative, \$305 million will have been allocated to 61 communities with demonstrated homelessness problems.

An important design feature of the SCPI required communities to undertake a process of consultation and joint planning around homelessness services. The planned approach allowed communities to allocate funds according to their particular needs and encouraged the establishment of a “continuum of supports” (i.e., prevention, emergency shelter, outreach, support services, transitional, supportive and permanent housing).

Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness: Two additional funding streams of \$59 million each over three years were dedicated to address the disproportionate level of homelessness among Aboriginal peoples and the significant problem of youth homelessness, respectively. The allocation of these funds was expected to be integrated into the community planning process in SCPI communities, but the funds remain separate from the SCPI allocation.

NHI Research Component: It was recognized that there were limited reliable data on homelessness in Canada. The NHI therefore devoted \$3.5 million to research activities.

EVALUATION APPROACH

Case study approach: The evaluation methodology is based primarily on a set of twenty community case studies that characterize the implementation, early outcomes and immediate incremental impact of the SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness components of the NHI. Case studies involved a review of documents (community plans, project reports, etc.) as well as key informant interviews with HRDC staff, community organizations, non-governmental service delivery staff, project clients, and officials from other levels of government.

¹ A more detailed description of the NHI components can be found in the evaluation report, chapter 2.

Other data sources: In addition, information on all 61 SCPI communities was collected through the analysis of program data and documents, and interviews with stakeholders.

Incrementality: Prior to the introduction of the NHI, there was substantial work underway to address homelessness in many of the participating communities. For this evaluation, an assessment of the incremental impact of SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness funding in the case study communities was conducted. The purpose of this analysis was to situate the federal government's expenditures in the context of existing investments, and to determine whether the program built upon, or displaced, these prior levels of activity.

KEY FINDINGS ON DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Limited inter-departmental coordination of NHI components: The evaluation found that the HRDC-based components of the NHI (SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth) were adequately coordinated. However, the non-HRDC-based components of the NHI have been managed for the most part independently of the HRDC-based components. The evidence does not indicate that the lack of coordination has had an impact on the success of the Initiative.

SCPI succeeded in striking an appropriate balance between flexibility and accountability: The evaluation found that the SCPI terms and conditions were sufficiently flexible to allow communities to fund projects according to their needs, while ensuring adequate accountability for federal funds. The SCPI also exhibited flexibility by allowing communities to choose a delivery model (entity or shared) that best suited their context and capacity. Through the analysis of project data, the evaluation found that project expenditures have been in keeping with federal objectives and in line with community priorities.

Community planning is a valuable exercise, although plans provide limited guidance: The planning process has provided communities with a basis for allocating homelessness resources. This basis is still limited in many communities (about half of the 20 communities examined requiring more time, direction and/or assistance to refine the planning process), but is nonetheless more solid than prior to the NHI.

Delays in Aboriginal communities: Aboriginal Homelessness funds were initially delivered through Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements. Under the terms of those agreements, only Aboriginal homelessness projects with an employment focus could be funded. This limitation was resolved in the second year of the Initiative with a change in Aboriginal Homelessness terms and conditions, providing more flexibility to allow non-employment-related projects to be approved. However, this change in terms and conditions also meant that planning had to be undertaken by Aboriginal communities, very late in the three-year cycle, without dedicated planning funds. The impact of the resulting delays was that only 20% of Aboriginal Homelessness project funds had been allocated by July 2002, as compared to 85% of SCPI project funds. The delays also meant that the types of projects that could realistically be developed would be limited by the time remaining in the initiative.

Integration of Youth Homelessness planning in SCPI communities: The separation of youth funding from SCPI funding, the limited initial terms and conditions, and the fact that HRDC maintained decision-making authority over youth funds, resulted in some inconvenience and delays in allocating Youth funds. The restrictive terms and conditions of Youth Homelessness funds had a negative impact on the implementation of YES projects in the first year. Consequently, only 34% of Youth project funds were allocated by July 2002. However, the delays in allocating Youth funds did not undermine the communities' ability to fund youth homelessness projects as an integrated part of the community strategy. Indeed, most communities used SCPI funds for youth projects, thus mitigating the impact that the initial restrictive terms and conditions may have had. With the changes in terms and conditions, it is expected that almost all Youth funds will be spent in the time remaining.

Research results are pending: The Research component has so far led to developments in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) data collection system. It has also been successful in setting a research agenda, according to which funds have been allocated to independent research projects. It is too early to assess the contribution of these projects, although they are expected to make a contribution to the development of basic knowledge concerning the nature and extent of homelessness.

KEY FINDINGS ON EARLY OUTCOMES

Enhanced community capacity: The evaluation found that the SCPI has made an important contribution to enhancing existing capacity to address homelessness in the majority of communities examined. This is evidenced by 1) the mobilization of service providers, governments and other stakeholders; 2) an increase in the number and kind of partnerships working to address homelessness; and 3) the community-based planning and decision-making structures that are now in place. However, there remains considerable work to be done in building capacity to address homelessness in Aboriginal communities.

SCPI/Aboriginal/Youth funding has had an incremental impact: The evaluation found that the program funding built upon, and did not displace, existing levels of municipal and provincial investments on homelessness. Moreover, the data indicate that considerable additional investment, over and above pre-NHI levels and the program contributions, occurred during the three years of the SCPI. NHI funding is also credited with making projects a reality or allowing them to go forward sooner than expected.

Expenditure allocation spanned the entire continuum of supports, but work remains in addressing transitional needs: The evaluation concluded that NHI funds have been spent on a wide range of projects across the continuum of supports, but have primarily focused on meeting emergency needs. More work remains to be done in the development of transitional facilities and services.

Multiple success factors: The following success factors have been identified as contributing to the NHI's generally positive outcomes to date:

- the devolution of control over the funding-allocation process to the community level under SCPI, and the flexibility of SCPI terms and conditions, allowed communities to target their priorities and needs;
- the requirement for community planning fostered a collaborative effort to address homelessness;
- local HRDC staff in the communities provided valuable guidance and support throughout the community planning and project selection processes;
- pre-Initiative consultations with other levels of government, the requirement for matching funding for SCPI, and the community planning requirement all contributed to the incrementality of funding under the Initiative.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation has found that there has been substantial progress made in most areas of the Initiative. While a few communities examined had already established processes to coordinate homelessness planning, the majority benefited from the NHI in terms of increased community capacity and the implementation of a planned approach to addressing homelessness. In every community examined, there are now more facilities and services in place to assist the homeless population, and new or enhanced structures to support the development of community capacity.

The following have been identified as areas for improvement in the eventuality of a continuation of a national homelessness initiative:

- a need to develop clear roles and responsibilities for senior management in federal departments and in the regions, to ensure a cohesive and coherent federal approach to addressing homelessness;
- a need for increased collaboration between the three orders of government;
- a need for a greater focus on transitional and supportive housing;
- a continuing need to build community capacity in Aboriginal communities;
- a need for a longer time frame that would allow communities time for capacity-building, consultation, planning, and implementation of projects;
- a need for continued support for community development initiatives;
- a need for clearer standards and guidance to help improve the quality of community plans; and
- a need for continued efforts to develop research on homelessness.

FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A FUTURE OUTCOME EVALUATION

The report includes an assessment of the feasibility of conducting an outcome evaluation of the NHI in the future. The study explored potential challenges, evaluation issues, approaches and design options. Three options for an evaluation of NHI outcomes are proposed, involving varying resource levels and providing corresponding levels of data.

Management Response

On the whole the National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH) agrees with the findings of the report and is encouraged by the results identified. In fact, the findings of the evaluation were critical in guiding the development of renewed program policy and contributing to the recently announced federal Budget allocation of \$405 million for a three-year extension of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI).

Given that this evaluation report has been central in designing the extension of the NHI, the NSH has largely begun to address the areas for improvement identified in the evaluation. Specifically, the NSH has responded, and will continue to respond, to the areas identified for improvement in the extended NHI in the following ways:

Recognizing the inherent difficulties in working horizontally without a shared accountability framework and formal Deputy Minister Accords, the NSH will continue its efforts to respond to the identified *need to develop clear roles and responsibilities for senior management in federal departments and in the regions, to ensure a cohesive and coherent federal approach to addressing homelessness*. As a first step, Treasury Board Submissions for both NHI and the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI) will clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of relevant federal departments. To ensure this understanding, the Treasury Board Submission for SFRPHI will require the signatures of HRDC and Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) jointly. Furthermore, in order to ensure better coordination and to avoid duplication among programs targeting transitional and supportive housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and HRDC clarified their specific client base prior to their respective cabinet presentations for program renewal. It was agreed that, in the case of capital projects, the SCPI will target the “absolute homeless” while CMHC programs will target the rest of the low-income population, also referred to as the “relative homeless” or those in core housing need.

The identified *need for increased collaboration between the three orders of government* will continue to be an ongoing objective of the extended Initiative.

- At the municipal level, upon publicly announcing the extension of the NHI on March 4, 2003, Minister Bradshaw, Federal Coordinator on Homelessness, called upon mayors to champion homelessness in their cities: to help engage the private sector and to provide employment opportunities for homeless people. The Minister will continue to work with mayors through bilateral meetings and through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- At the provincial level, federal/provincial consultations are scheduled to take place beginning in April 2003 to ensure continued provincial support and increased collaboration on the Initiative.

- At the federal level, the Minister has already begun consultations with other federal departments (e.g., Justice Canada and Health Canada regarding collaboration on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). The NSH will continue work with other departments to maximize use of existing programs and priorities to the benefit of homeless individuals and families and to develop concrete partnership activities (e.g., a Collaborative Research Agenda will be developed in partnership with other departments including, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, Health Canada, Justice Canada and Correctional Services Canada). Minister Bradshaw's staff will continue to work with the ministerial staff of other departments to further ensure political support across relevant departments. The NSH will also work to ensure an enhanced role for Regional Executive Heads and Regional Facilitators in making presentations to federal regional councils on the NHI.

Responding to the *need for a greater focus on transitional and supportive housing*, the extension of the NHI has increased emphasis on filling community gaps to address supportive and transitional housing needs so as to ensure that the NHI contributes to achieving a full continuum of supports. The Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF) of the Treasury Board Submission for the extended Initiative will include broader objectives and performance measures to this extent. These are also reflected in the logic model as well as program objectives and outcomes for the extended Initiative. To ensure that we are achieving progress in addressing this gap, one of only four key NSH Performance Measures set out in the 2003/2004 HRDC Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) will track capital investments in supportive and transitional housing versus emergency shelters so as to monitor the shift in community investments to address this gap. In addition, CMHC and HRDC, having worked out their respective client base, will ensure that programs targeting transitional and supportive housing are most effective.

Responding to the *continuing need to build community capacity in Aboriginal communities*, the NSH has made demonstrated Aboriginal representation a requirement for community planning and decision-making committees for the extension of the Initiative. Aboriginal participation in planning and decision-making will be publicly tracked as a key performance measure in the 2003/2004 RPP and will be tied to the Performance Agreements of Regional Executive Heads. Furthermore, in an effort to further enhance the effectiveness of Aboriginal Homelessness Programming, the NSH recently met with the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat of the Privy Council Office (PCO-Aboriginal) on the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. It was decided that the NHI and PCO-Aboriginal will develop a partnership arrangement, targeting eight pilot cities, to develop joint initiatives to demonstrate federal cooperation.

The recently announced \$405 million, 3-year extension of the NHI, will address the identified *need for a longer time frame that would allow communities time for capacity building, consultation, planning, and implementation of projects*.

Responding to the *need for continued support for community development initiatives*, capacity development will continue to be a key target area for community planning and project development under the extended NHI. In addition, the NSH will continue to address capacity issues at the community level by:

- Providing strategic advice and guidance.
- Sharing best practices/lessons learned.
- Streamlining administrative processes and reducing administrative burden.

Communities will be required to update their community plans for the extended Initiative. To address the *need for clearer standards and guidance to help improve the quality of community plans*, in the extended Initiative, the NSH will provide strategic direction, clear guidelines and a streamlined template to communities to assist them with updating their community plans.

Responding to the *need for continued efforts to develop research on homelessness*, the extended NHI will include the Research and the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) components for an additional three years to focus on identified gaps in available research on homelessness. In addition, a Performance Measurement Strategy will be developed for the extended Initiative to ensure that project and program data and information is collected and analysed effectively in order to monitor progress and identify effective approaches and best practices. Results of research projects funded at the national and regional levels are now made available in both official languages on the NSH website. Also included are brief abstracts of ongoing projects and links to a number of useful information sites and other resources for those engaged in homelessness-related research.

1. Introduction

In the late 1990s, there was increasing recognition that the federal government should play a role in helping to deal with the problem of homelessness in Canada. Following consultations with Canadian communities, the federal government launched the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in 1999. The NHI is a three-year demonstration initiative that aims to ensure community access to programs, services and support for reducing and alleviating homelessness² in urban and rural regions across all the provinces and territories.

This is the final report of the formative evaluation of four components of the NHI managed by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), namely, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), the Aboriginal Homelessness component, the Youth Homelessness component and the Research component of the Initiative. Evaluation findings on the overall design and coordination of the NHI are also presented.

1.1 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The original purpose of the evaluation was to meet Treasury Board requirements to assess progress in program implementation and to draw lessons from the design and delivery of the HRDC-based NHI programs, including identifying areas that are in need of improvement. The evaluation also aimed to satisfy the broader government interest in learning from the community-based delivery model and about how to approach similar initiatives in the future.

It was also important for program management to obtain as much information as possible to assist in decision-making regarding the future of the Initiative. As such, it was decided to expand the scope of the evaluation to examine the available evidence on immediate outcomes of the three program components (SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness). It was also decided to begin assessing the extent to which the investments made through these programs can be shown to be incremental to what was already taking place in communities.

The NHI was structured as an interdepartmental program with components managed by three different departments. The non-HRDC components are being evaluated separately by the departments responsible for them.³ However, the interdepartmental evaluation steering committee decided that this HRDC evaluation should also examine design and coordination issues for the NHI as a whole.

² In the context of the NHI, homelessness is defined as living on the street or in temporary shelters.

³ For details, see CMHC, “Shelter Enhancement Program Evaluation,” March 2002; CMHC, “Shelter Enhancement Program Evaluation Youth Component,” March 2002; CMHC, “Evaluation of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), Rental RRAP, Rooming House RRAP, Conversion RRAP, Homeowner RRAP, RRAP for Persons with Disabilities and the Emergency Repair Program Final Report,” November 2002; and CMHC, “Evaluation of the On-reserve Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program Final Report,” March 2003. PWGSC, “Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative Formative Evaluation Report” (pending).

In addition to the program components, the NHI included a small component devoted to research. The evaluation examines the progress achieved in developing a research agenda on homelessness under the NHI Research component managed by HRDC's National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH).⁴

And finally, the evaluation presents an analysis of issues related to conducting a future evaluation of the Initiative's long-term objectives of reducing and alleviating homelessness. This includes a discussion of measurement and data collection challenges, such as the lack of reliable baseline information on homelessness in Canada.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation began toward the end of the second year of the program (i.e. November 2001) and was concluded in the fall of 2002.⁵

The evaluation methodology is based primarily on a set of in-depth community case studies that help characterize the implementation, early outcomes and immediate incremental impact of the SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness components of the NHI. In all, 20 communities have been the object of case studies. In addition to the case studies, information on all 61 SCPI communities has also been collected through the analysis of program data and documents, and interviews with key stakeholders.

1.2.1 Community Case Studies

A case study approach is particularly useful in exploring start-up challenges in recently-introduced programs. It exposes issues and challenges related to the implementation of a program and it allows evaluators to understand unexpected outcomes. Case studies are also effective in addressing implementation issues where there is flexibility in the program's design.⁶

In this context, the case study approach was chosen for the evaluation of the NHI because it allowed for the in-depth analysis of the experiences of selected communities in implementing this new initiative. These case studies provide important information on the effectiveness of the program's design features, the problems and issues encountered during implementation, and indications of the progress made in particular instances. More specifically, the purpose of the community case studies was to characterize in detail what activities took place as a result of the NHI and to identify the factors that influenced the community's response to the Initiative. The goal was also to assess in those communities the early impacts of the Initiative, including the extent to which SCPI funding built upon pre-existing levels of investment in homelessness (i.e., the incremental impact of SCPI funding).

⁴ See Appendix A for the full list of issues addressed in this evaluation.

⁵ All quantitative data provided in this report reflects program implementation to July 2002.

⁶ United States General Accounting Office, Case Study Evaluations, November 1990, Chapter 3.

The case study sites were selected in such a way as to reflect the variations among the 61 SCPI communities. The variations were along the following lines: the extent of progress of community plans and projects, the size of community, the type of delivery model adopted, the presence of a significant Aboriginal population and the geographical location (see Appendix B for a complete list of criteria and selected case study sites).

This sampling strategy prohibits evaluators from making statistical generalizations of the evaluation findings to all 61 SCPI communities. However, given the similarities in relevant known characteristics between the case study sites and the other SCPI communities, it is reasonable to suggest that the findings from the 20 case studies are likely to be applicable to the majority of SCPI communities. At the same time, there was considerable variation in how communities proceeded with the implementation of the Initiative. Variations existed between communities as well as between provinces and regions of the country, and there was an equally diverse range of issues faced by communities in addressing homelessness. Consequently, it is important to note that any given finding presented below may not apply to all SCPI communities, or even to all case study communities.

Within each community case study site, one or two funded projects were identified for review. The purpose was to document the many kinds of projects undertaken, the extent to which they were being implemented as planned, and any preliminary indications of their benefits to the community. An effort was made to cover a diverse range of projects in terms of investment type, activity, size, scope, approach, and client group. At each site, HRDC staff and community planning leaders were consulted for the selection of projects.

Three research methods were used to obtain information for the case studies:

- *Review of documents*: community plans; project plans; community and project reports; documents describing community and government investments in homelessness-related facilities and services prior to the NHI, and since the start of the NHI;
- *Interviews*: community planning leaders; organizations participating in community planning; service delivery organizations, including those not directly involved in NHI projects; clients of the projects selected for project case studies; provincial and municipal officials in relevant policy areas; local federal government officials, including HRDC staff. A total of 478 key informants were interviewed. The great majority of interviews were conducted in person, often on site at shelters or other facilities, or in the offices of government and community planning leaders. (See Appendix C for the categories of informants that were interviewed.)
- *Review of data on project operations*: descriptive information on project operations; available information on demand and take-up of new/enhanced services.

Analysis of the incremental impact of program funding

There is considerable evidence that prior to the introduction of the NHI, there was activity underway to address homelessness in many of the participating communities. For this evaluation, an assessment of the incrementality of SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth

Homelessness funding was conducted in order to understand the magnitude of the federal government investment in relation to existing investments. The goal was to determine whether the program built upon these prior levels of activity, or whether it simply displaced, or substituted for, such activity as the federal initiative was implemented.

By assessing the actual contribution made by SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness funding and identifying any displacement effects that have occurred, the results of this analysis will help managers enhance future program design and ensure that adequate program safeguards are put in place.

The analysis of the incremental impact of SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth funding at the national level is based on information from 15 of the 20 communities that served as case studies for the evaluation of the SCPI. This information was obtained from various financial records, as well as through key informant interviews. While the 15 communities are not necessarily representative of the total 61 SCPI communities in every respect, the results provide a perspective on the likely incremental impact to date accompanying this program approach.

Only municipal and provincial expenditures related to homelessness are used in the calculation as they are the most accessible and reliable figures available. Therefore, investments made by the private or voluntary sectors are not included in this analysis. The analysis focuses specifically on expenditures that can be characterized as *program and grant/contribution expenditures on homelessness* (as opposed to expenditures on social housing, or on-going health and social service programs).

The calculation is performed by averaging the levels of investments in the communities during the two years prior to the federal program (i.e. 1998-1999 and 1999-2000). This average is taken to be the minimum level upon which the SCPI would build in the following three years. This minimum level is then compared to the average levels of actual investments for each of the three SCPI years (i.e. 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003). The conclusion is then made as to whether SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness funding supplemented or displaced prior levels of investment in homelessness.⁷

1.2.2 Analysis of Project Data from the National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH)

The NSH has developed and maintained a set of databases to keep track of, among other things, the projects funded and expenditures made through the SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness. The evaluators analyzed this data to characterize the types of projects being funded and the proportion of total expenditures being allocated to different project types. As well, evaluators created a separate database based on a review of the community plans, which characterized the plans and the communities themselves according to key variables including the substantive nature of

⁷ Additional information on the data sources and the method used to calculate the incremental impact of SCPI funding can be found in Appendix E.

the priorities, the number and specificity of the priorities that were set in the plans, the size of the communities, and other variables that allowed for analysis of the linkages between community priorities and actual expenditures.

1.2.3 Review of Community Plans

The community plans were reviewed to analyse their content, to identify characteristics and trends in the plans that might assist in understanding evaluation findings, and to prepare the evaluators to conduct the community case studies.

1.2.4 Interviews with Key Informants at the NSH and Other Federal Departments

At various points throughout the evaluation, interviews were conducted with senior management, heads of sections and staff at the NSH, as well as managers and staff at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) and the Privy Council Office (PCO). These interviews focused on the design and operations of the NHI and its component programs, coordination of the Initiative, the activities being undertaken by the NSH and by HRDC staff in the regions, and respondents' assessments of the progress being made and the factors influencing progress. Most NSH managers were interviewed several times during the evaluation. In addition to these formal interviews, evaluators met frequently with NSH managers and staff to discuss particular issues that arose, to present and discuss preliminary findings at various stages, and to arrange for access to NSH data. Finally, evaluators took part in regular Evaluation Steering Committee meetings, and those meetings were often occasions to discuss evaluation and operational or policy issues with key participants.

1.2.5 Review of Research Literature and Available Evaluation Methods

The evaluation included an assessment of the feasibility of conducting an evaluation of the longer-term impacts of the SCPI at some future date. This involved a review of available research literature on the nature and extent of homelessness, with a focus on potential methods for the evaluation of impacts, and the identification of issues to take into account and potential barriers to overcome. Regional and NSH officials were also consulted with regard to the policy implications of possible evaluation approaches, and the practical considerations involved in conducting an outcomes evaluation.

1.2.6 Note on the Reporting of Findings from Key Informant interviews

Unless otherwise stated, the findings presented in this report represent the views of the majority of the relevant key informants interviewed for the evaluation, ranging from community service providers, municipal government representatives to federal government officials. The strength of the findings that are based on key informant views is found in the convergence of opinions from these diverse sources, and in the fact that the evaluation consulted with a large sample of the individuals and organizations active in addressing homelessness.

1.3 Organization of the Report

Chapter Two provides a brief overview of the National Homelessness Initiative and its various components. The third chapter presents the findings on the overall design and coordination of the NHI. Chapters Four, Five and Six present design- and delivery-related findings for the SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness components, respectively, while the findings on the progress of the Research component are discussed in Chapter Seven. The eighth chapter presents the evaluation findings on the outcomes to date for the HRDC-managed components. Chapter Nine summarizes the main findings and conclusions from this evaluation, and Chapter Ten presents an overview of the feasibility study on evaluating program impacts in the future.

2. Program Background and Descriptions

This chapter presents a brief overview of the National Homelessness Initiative, including its rationale, objectives, scope, and program components.

2.1 The National Homelessness Initiative

On December 16, 1999, Cabinet approved a three-year demonstration initiative to contribute to reducing homelessness in Canada. Overall the Government of Canada is investing \$753 million over three years to help alleviate and prevent homelessness across Canada. The National Homelessness Initiative has at its core the following set of strategic objectives:

- Facilitate community capacity by coordinating Government of Canada efforts and enhancing the diversity of tools and resources;
- Foster effective partnerships and investment that contribute to addressing the immediate and multifaceted needs of the homeless and reducing homelessness in Canada; and
- Increase awareness and understanding of homelessness in Canada.

These objectives are pursued through seven components⁸ managed through various federal departments and Crown Corporations.

- The **Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)** is a new initiative which is the responsibility of the National Secretariat on Homelessness (NSH), a unit created specifically for the NHI and housed within Human Resources Development Canada.
- The **Aboriginal Homelessness** component is channelled through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, an existing program which is overseen by the Aboriginal Affairs group at the Privy Council Office, and implemented through the NSH.
- Funds targeted to homeless youth are channelled through the **Youth Employment Strategy (YES)** managed by HRDC.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation received additional funding for existing renovation programs for low-income persons, including the homeless and those at risk of homelessness: the **Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)** and the **Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP)**. The existing programs were revised and expanded to include a new Conversion RRAP component and SEP was extended to include youth who are victims of family violence.
- Public Works and Government Services Canada has responsibility for the **Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI)**, which makes surplus federal properties available to communities for homelessness related projects.

⁸ A more detailed description of all seven NHI components and the logic models developed for both the NHI and the SCPI are provided in the NHI Evaluation Framework.

- And the NSH is responsible for the **Research and Accountability Functions** for the NHI.

While most of the components are managed as separate initiatives, the NHI was intended to promote a coordinated federal effort to address homelessness based on common objectives and compatible approaches.

2.2 The Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative

The SCPI, the largest component of the NHI (\$305 million), is based on the premise that communities are best placed to devise effective strategies to both prevent and reduce homelessness locally. Therefore the SCPI is designed to support communities in building the capacity, resources and incentives to develop and implement comprehensive strategies.

The SCPI is guided by the following operational objectives:

- to alleviate the hardship of those who are absolutely homeless by increasing, for example, the number of beds available in shelters (either indirectly through providing alternative housing for current long-term shelter residents or directly by providing additional shelter space);
- to promote a "continuum of supports" approach to reducing homelessness⁹;
- to strengthen the capacity of communities to address the needs of homeless people and reduce homelessness by responding to the needs of individuals in a holistic way;
- to promote the development of collaborative processes and broad-based partnerships among all stakeholders, including the private sector, the voluntary sector, labour organizations and all levels of government to address the issue of homelessness at a community level; and
- to develop a base of knowledge, expertise and data about homelessness, and share it among all concerned parties and the general public.

The SCPI made funds available to a total of 61 communities across Canada. Eighty percent of the funding was allocated to ten communities that were identified through consultations as having the most serious problems with absolute homelessness. These are: Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, and Halifax. The remaining 20% of the funding was allocated to another 51 communities that had a demonstrable need to address homelessness.

In order to obtain SCPI funds that had been allocated to them, communities were required to develop a community plan to address homelessness. The plans incorporated a number of elements including the plan objectives and the identification of funding priorities to

⁹ The NSH defines a continuum of supports as “a holistic approach to addressing the needs of homeless individuals within a community plan. It includes all supports and services that would be needed to assist a homeless person or someone at risk of becoming homeless to become self-sufficient, where possible” (Glossary of Terms). The continuum includes homelessness prevention services, emergency shelter, outreach, transitional housing and support services (such as addictions counselling and employment training).

address service gaps. A community plan was submitted and approved for all 61 communities designated as eligible for SCPI funding.¹⁰

Communities were able to choose between an *entity* or *shared* administrative model for implementing the SCPI. In the ***community entity model***, an incorporated organization receives SCPI funding and is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of the community plan, including deciding which projects will be funded. The community entity is responsible for ensuring an inclusive community planning process and transparency in the decision making and administrative processes and practices. The entity is also accountable for funding decisions. In the ***shared delivery model***, HRDC staff, in partnership with community groups co-ordinate the development of an inclusive community plan and, based on recommendations from community groups, negotiate funding arrangements with project proponents. In this model, a community advisory board recommends acceptance of individual SCPI projects, but the Minister must give final approval.

2.3 Aboriginal Homelessness Component

Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in the homeless population across Canada. NHI resources (\$59 million) were made available to urban Aboriginal communities through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, an existing federal mechanism that brings together federal departments through the Regional Councils of Senior Federal Officials.

The Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat of the Privy Council Office serves as the main coordinating body for the Aboriginal Homelessness funding. However, it was decided that the most effective way to channel the resources to Aboriginal communities was through the terms of the existing Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs). As such, the responsibility for the administration of the Aboriginal Homelessness funding was given to regional HRDC offices, which managed the AHRDAs. Unlike the SCPI, funding was not limited to identified urban areas.

In SCPI-designated communities, Aboriginal Homelessness projects are intended to be a part of the community plan, but the funds remain separate from the SCPI allocation for that community.

On April 5, 2001, Treasury Board approved an amendment to the SCPI terms and conditions to allow for an expansion of Aboriginal Homelessness funding to activities that have a non-labour market focus. This amendment was brought forward as a result of the need for more flexibility that would allow Aboriginal communities to direct Aboriginal Homelessness funds toward homelessness projects.

¹⁰ On Prince Edward Island, it was decided that Charlottetown and Summerside would develop a joint homelessness plan, consequently there were only 60 community plans submitted and approved.

2.4 Youth Homelessness Component

Youth constitute a significant component of the homeless in Canada. In most city studies, they account for 10%-30% of the homeless population. Under the NHI, \$59 million over three years was allocated to address homelessness among youth. This component is delivered through existing HRDC Youth Employment Strategy (YES) programs.

Canada's YES is designed to help young people make the transition into the labour market. HRDC regional and local staff who operate YES programs, under the NHI, are able to fund projects that have a youth employment aspect, but which can be seen to contribute to the alleviation of homelessness or the risk of homelessness.

On April 5, 2001, Treasury Board approved an amendment to the SCPI terms and conditions to allow for an expansion to youth activities that have a non-labour market focus. This provides an alternative mechanism through which Youth Homelessness funds under the NHI can be allocated.

3. Evaluation Findings on the Design of the NHI

The NHI is a multi-departmental federal initiative that has a set of common long-term objectives and some agreed upon shorter-term outputs and outcomes, but no central management function. The evaluation examined whether this multi-departmental approach enabled managers to deliver the Initiative effectively, and helped to establish a coordinated federal effort to address homelessness at the local and national levels.

To make this assessment, evaluators interviewed senior managers at the NSH and managers responsible for inter-departmental liaison for policy development and partnership development purposes. As well, they attended interdepartmental evaluation meetings, where they participated in discussions with officers from the NSH, CMHC and PWGSC about how homelessness funding was being integrated as part of their existing programs. They reviewed documents from CMHC and PWGSC that described their homelessness-related activities. Finally, in conducting the community cases studies, they inquired of HRDC facilitators, community planning leaders and provincial and municipal government representatives as to the nature of the federal presence in the communities in relation to homelessness.

Coordination of HRDC-based programs

The evaluation found that the HRDC-based components of the NHI were coordinated. Community facilitators in the regions were responsible for the SCPI, Youth and Aboriginal components together. Officers assigned to the three components were seen to be working very closely in the great majority of communities, attending the same regular staff meetings, jointly attending community planning sessions, and following largely the same procedures for the administration of projects. For their part, managers responsible for the Youth component (at HRDC) and the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (at the Privy Council Office) attended regular meetings, including evaluation steering committee meetings to coordinate the three components. In addition, at the NSH, project expenditures for all three components were jointly maintained and monitored in common databases, and financial and other management reports routinely included all three components. As a result of these practices, program managers were able to identify a need to adjust the terms and conditions of the Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness components in the second year, to allow SCPI funding guidelines to be used.

Coordination among all NHI components

Efforts have also been made to coordinate the “non-HRDC” based components of the NHI with the SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness components, through management and staff-level meetings. These have focused in particular on developing common approaches to evaluate the various components of the Initiative and to report in other ways on what has been achieved. In the case of the Surplus Federal Real Property

for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI) at PWGSC, there has been active and on-going coordination between the NSH and program managers and staff at PWGSC and CMHC in the development of three specific real property transfer projects and preliminary discussions about other potential real property transfer projects. Coordination in this sense was project-specific, as opposed to a senior management level strategic coordination of the two components.

Local or regional CMHC officers in particular were reported in eight different communities to have been active in working with steering committees through the provision of advice and some services in relation to engineering, property management and other housing-related issues. Key informant interviews indicate that such collaboration has been dependent largely on pre-existing working relationships (e.g. between municipal program officers or community leaders and local CMHC officers or their provincial/territorial counterparts) or the initiative of those same people as the NHI began to unfold. Extensive interviews with local HRDC officials and community planning leaders make clear that no systematic, management-driven coordination took place at the local level. It was reported that the NHI is seen largely as an HRDC initiative, with funding and other support from some other federal departments or agencies at the individual project level.

At the national level, the evaluation found no evidence of interdepartmental agreements, policies or plans that might have constituted a collaborative mechanism. Furthermore, there were no regular senior level meetings taking place at the federal level to coordinate NHI departments.

Coordination with other federal departments

Within this review of federal coordination, the evaluation also observed that there has been very limited integration of other (non-NHI) federal departments and agencies into the homelessness initiative thus far at the community level. Attendance by federal officials other than those from NHI departments at community planning meetings or other meetings related to homelessness has been almost non-existent. In two communities examined, meetings were called by HRDC specifically to encourage participation in the homelessness initiative by other federal departments, but in both cases no on-going involvement occurred. The evaluation did not include interviews with non-HRDC federal government officials unless they were identified as participants in community planning (as was the case with several CMHC officials). Evaluation findings in this regard are therefore limited to evidence of the lack of participation in community planning (the focal point for federal involvement in the Initiative) and reports of participation by local HRDC managers. Those respondents uniformly reported that federal managers and staff at the community level who do not see the direct relevance of their programs to homelessness issues are reluctant to devote time to homelessness-related meetings or planning exercises, because they are perceived as peripheral to their core functions. No instruction to participate in the homelessness initiative has been forthcoming from their senior managers, and they are therefore not accountable to do so, or rewarded for such efforts. This too was cited as a factor in their lack of participation.

Conclusion

The analysis of reported participation at the community level and key informant interviews suggests that the goal of formal national and local coordination between NHI partners has not been realized. Key informant interviews indicate that this may have resulted in part from the lack of clarity in the Minister of Labour's mandate as federal coordinator for homelessness. Despite her title, the Minister had no authority to institute cross-departmental management strategies. Consequently, there was no formal mechanism through which to encourage a broader commitment to the homelessness initiative among federal departments and agencies (whether or not they were receiving NHI funds).

While interdepartmental collaboration did occur in places at the local level, this collaboration was not the result of a planned approach at the national level. Key informants have suggested that greater collaboration could have resulted in additional partnerships and project opportunities, and that such collaboration may have strengthened community perceptions of the federal commitment in this area. However, no attempt was made in this evaluation to assess the actual impacts of the lack of coordination.

4. The SCPI Model and Implementation

The SCPI design is based on the premise that communities are best placed to identify priorities, and plan and develop local solutions to their particular situation. Community control over planning and fund allocation is an important feature of the program's design.

In examining design and implementation issues, the evaluation focused on whether the principal design features within the SCPI model have established an appropriate balance between flexibility for communities and the need to account for federal government spending. The evaluation also examined issues related to the effective implementation of this component of the NHI. This section presents the evaluation findings related to the SCPI terms and conditions, the entity and shared delivery models, community planning and decision making, and HRDC support in the community.

4.1 SCPI Terms and Conditions

The terms and conditions of the SCPI set out very broad parameters for the expenditure of the funds. Federal funds can be used for any purpose decided upon by the community provided they conform to the following terms:

- funds are to be spent on projects that demonstrably relate to homelessness;
- funds are not to be spent on projects that constitute the provision of housing, health services or other basic services that are the traditional responsibility of the provincial government; and,
- investments are to be linked to priorities in a community homelessness plan.

Flexibility

The point of view expressed by community respondents was that the SCPI terms and conditions were sufficiently flexible and allowed the communities to fund projects (or aspects of projects) for which funding had not been available through other sources.¹¹ In some communities, this meant that there was now funding available for capital projects. In others, it meant that funding was now available to initiate programs or services. In a majority of communities, the unsolicited description that was most frequently applied to SCPI funding was that it provided the missing piece of the funding puzzle for numerous projects that had been planned but had not previously been practicable with existing funding.

¹¹ The one caveat to this broad endorsement of the SCPI terms and conditions that was expressed by the large majority of respondents was that they did not permit spending on affordable housing.

Accountability

A number of safeguards ensured that the federal funds would be spent in the pursuit of the SCPI objectives. The objectives are broad in nature, and relate more to the development of capacity, to awareness and understanding of the homelessness problem in communities, and to the types of interventions that are needed, than to specific project-related objectives. Several categories of activities were ineligible under SCPI terms and conditions, including affordable housing. However, for the most part, the objectives were broadly defined in recognition of the fact that, among 61 diverse communities, there would be many different approaches to addressing homelessness along the continuum of supports. This minimized the likelihood that projects would not be in line with program objectives.

Other safeguards are more administrative in nature. For example, local HRDC offices or the community entities that took responsibility for the administration of SCPI funds under contract, had to verify project contribution agreements to ensure that they met the terms and conditions. In the case of communities where HRDC is the administrator, all project agreements were also reviewed by HRDC and approved by the Minister. The agreements were monitored on an ongoing basis, and recipients of funding were accountable to provide regular financial statements and to report on project results. In addition, communities as a whole (through the entity or core planning group) were responsible to report back to the federal government on progress against objectives in the community plans.

The SCPI terms and conditions, broad and flexible as they are, were therefore still targeted sufficiently to prevent expenditures outside the scope of the SCPI objectives. Indeed, through its analysis of project data, the evaluation has found evidence that project expenditures under SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness have been in keeping with federal objectives (see section 4.3.2).

4.2 The Entity and Shared Models

The NHI allowed communities to choose between an entity model (in which the municipal government or a designated community entity is responsible for administering SCPI funds) and a shared model (in which HRDC administered SCPI funds). Evaluators examined the take-up of those two approaches and the extent to which the flexibility of the choice of approaches enabled communities to move forward while ensuring that federal objectives would be met.

The table below shows how the 61 communities were distributed, among the larger (80%) communities and the smaller (20%) communities. It shows that both larger and smaller communities were distributed across the three possible approaches, with the shared approach being predominant and the community entity approach being the least frequent.

Table 1
Administrative Model Distribution

Type of Community	Municipal Entity	Community Entity	Shared Model	Total
Large - 80%	3	2	5	10
Smaller - 20%	11	5	34	50
Total	14	7	39	60 ¹²

Factors in choosing a delivery model

The choice of a delivery model has been governed primarily by the extent of pre-SCPI community planning on homelessness and the extent of engagement of the municipal government in the issue of homelessness.

In cases where a municipal government had an established strategy and structure and committed resources to address homelessness, the involvement of the federal government through a shared model was viewed as unnecessary. Of the twenty communities observed for the evaluation, three had a well-established pre-SCPI community approach to homelessness and all three chose a municipal entity model. In 11 other communities that had a less advanced starting point, a municipal entity was chosen because they deemed their municipal government to have sufficient capacity to lead and administer the SCPI process.

In cities such as Red Deer, Alberta, the municipal government had a housing committee that provided some funding for homelessness-related services, but no specific homelessness program. However, because of the committee’s experience on housing issues and its close working relationship with service providers, the municipality was deemed the appropriate entity to administer SCPI.

In seven of the 61 SCPI communities, a community entity independent of the municipal government has been established.¹³ There is no evidence of strong similarities between communities that adopted a community entity model—they range from major centres such as Edmonton and Calgary, to smaller communities near major cities, such as Barrie, Ontario, to communities in predominantly rural areas such as Charlottetown/Summerside, PEI.

In the majority of communities, homelessness had not been addressed in a coordinated way, nor had it been taken on as a municipal priority. In such communities, the prospect of establishing an entity to manage and administer the SCPI was usually not considered feasible by most community members. Key informants interviewed in those communities cited one or more of the following reasons for this determination:

¹² Includes the combined Charlottetown/Summerside community plan.

¹³ One of those has a blend of the community entity and shared models, where HRDC maintains administrative responsibility for certain types of projects that do not fit within the entity’s mandate.

- they recognized early on the heavy workload associated with the Initiative and determined that the local capacity and resources required were not available
- there were concerns about potential conflict of interests on the part of the organization that took on the entity role (given the organization's past roles in the community and given the existing affiliations and relationships it may have with some service providers);
- an inability on the part of community groups to identify an entity that could be seen as sufficiently neutral and independent; and,
- no organization was willing to take on such a delicate task or to remove itself from access to SCPI funding.

In Fredericton, New Brunswick, the municipal government had not had a role in addressing homelessness prior to the NHI, and emergency and other services were limited. Service providers all wanted the opportunity to develop projects in their areas of expertise, and there were concerns about conflicts of interests and the heavy workload associated with the entity role. A shared delivery model was adopted.

Role of delivery model in meeting program objectives

The SCPI allowed communities to choose a delivery model that best suited their context and capacity. This choice is reported to have been a positive design feature since it gave communities the flexibility to deliver the Initiative according to their circumstances. However, the evaluation found no evidence that one particular model was more effective than the other in meeting community and federal objectives. Rather, based on the analysis of detailed descriptions of pre-SCPI and SCPI community action on homelessness, supported in every case through extensive interviews with many participants, the following factors appear to have been determinant of progress:

- the kinds of pre-SCPI relationships that existed among service providers;
- the role of the three levels of government and relationships among their representatives in the community;
- the extent of direct government involvement in social planning and service delivery;
- the kinds of planning and decision-making structures developed for the SCPI; and
- the presence of dynamic individuals to help lead the process.

4.3 Community Planning and Decision-Making

One of the intentions of the SCPI design was to promote a planned approach to resource allocation based on reliable information and broad-based community consensus about priorities. In order to obtain SCPI funds that had been allocated to them, communities were required to develop a community plan to address homelessness. The community planning guidelines were formulated by the NSH to allow communities sufficient flexibility to plan their homelessness strategy and fund projects according to their own priorities, while ensuring that resources would be allocated in a way that addresses SCPI objectives.

4.3.1 Community Planning

The evaluation examined issues related to the development and implementation of the community plans. It assessed the quality and usefulness of the plans in providing clearly defined objectives and priorities to help make funding allocation decisions. It also examined the project selection processes and how expenditures were made relative to the priorities.

The planning process

A community plan was developed and approved in all SCPI communities. The process typically took six months or more from the time the first community meeting was held until the community plan was finalized and submitted. Participants in all the communities examined for the evaluation described the planning process as very time-consuming and stressful, and cited the following reasons:

- the complexity of the homelessness problem;
- the breadth of participation in the planning process,¹⁴
- the amount of work inherent in collecting and collating information about assets and gaps;
- the need to consult on possible approaches; and
- the need to reach agreement as a community on the priorities to be adopted.

The inherent demands of the planning process and the amount of volunteer work involved for participants over and above their daily responsibilities were not anticipated in the program's original design. Funds were allocated evenly over the three years of the SCPI, but for most communities there were only two or three months remaining in the first year once the community plan had been approved. The above factors, combined with the overall brevity of the three-year Initiative, placed considerable pressure on communities in their efforts to develop their plans and allocate funding.

¹⁴ In the larger communities, typically 50 or more organizations participated initially, and 20-30 were very actively involved throughout. In the smaller communities, it was common for 25 or more organizations to attend initial planning meetings, and for 10-15 organizations to remain very active throughout the planning process.

Quality of community plans

In terms of the quality of the community plans, the evaluation found variations in the degree of detail they contain and the extent to which they set out a clear path for decision-making. In 6 of the 20 communities examined by the evaluation, there was a strong consensus on the part of key informants that the community plan provided very clear guidance on the directions the community needed to take, and a clear set of priorities for the allocation of resources. In the remaining 14 communities, the plans were seen as providing a comprehensive view of the communities' assets and gaps and what was needed, but were seen by informants as less clear in terms of priorities and how resources should be allocated.

The priority-setting aspect of the 60 community plans were assessed by evaluators according to three criteria:

1. whether the priorities were specific or general in nature;
2. how many priorities there were; and
3. whether or not the priorities were ranked in some way.

Plans that had priorities that were specific in nature,¹⁵ had a low number of priorities and/or had rank-ordered priorities, were considered by the evaluation to be of high quality.

The evaluation found that in 10 of the 61 communities, the plans contained a set of 10 or fewer specific, rank-ordered priorities. The remaining 50 community plans¹⁶ fell short in at least one respect, and 18 of the plans had priorities that were both general in nature and not rank-ordered. These figures suggest that, while the plans represented, in the majority of cases, a significant step in developing the capacity to address homelessness in a planned way, in most cases, they did not in themselves provide detailed guidance on how to allocate available resources.

Factors leading to variation in quality of community plans

There were several factors at the community level that led to variations in the quality of community plans:

- *The availability of information on the assets and gaps in the community, and the capacity of the community to collect and analyze that information:* about half the communities (mostly larger communities) had already conducted some background research on assets and gaps prior to the SCPI, and a number of others were able to do so early in the SCPI planning process. A thorough assessment of needs, the setting of priorities and an implementation plan are all dependent on having reliable information on assets and gaps.

¹⁵ An example of a specific priority might be “a new facility and staff to provide short-term housing and counselling for homeless people with dependency problems”. A general priority might be “to deal with the problem of additions in the homeless population”.

¹⁶ Includes the combined Charlottetown/Summerside community plan.

- *The extent to which the steering committee included active representation from all stakeholders:* in every community the representativeness of steering committees was found to be very wide, although in a small number of communities, provincial and municipal government involvement and/or Aboriginal involvement was limited.
- *The extent of pre-SCPI planning:* pressure to complete the community planning process and begin the expenditure of available SCPI funds meant that communities that were already ahead of the game were more likely to have good information available upon which to base the community plan. In Toronto and Ottawa, detailed community plans were already in place prior to the NHI, and while these had to be adapted to meet the SCPI terms, they provided a strong basis. In the nine communities examined that had some degree of pre-NHI planning, four produced a plan that was in the higher range in terms of providing guidance on how to allocate resources. Among the 9 communities with little pre-NHI planning, only one produced a plan of that quality in the time available.

In Chapter 8, the overall benefits of the community planning process are elaborated. From the evidence presented in this section, it is possible to conclude that the planning process has encouraged a systematic approach to defining issues related to homelessness. It has also allowed the assessment of assets and gaps in services and initiated the process of setting priorities. This has provided communities with a basis for allocating SCPI and other homelessness resources. This basis is still limited in many communities, but is nonetheless more solid than it was prior to the NHI. The analysis of the quality of the plans also provides evidence that about half of the 20 communities examined require more time, direction, and, in some cases, assistance to refine the planning process.

4.3.2 Funding Decisions

Data on priorities and expenditures from all 61 communities indicate that for the most part expenditures are in line with major priorities. Particularly in the area of capital expenditures on shelters and supportive and transitional housing, funding allocation is in keeping with the extent to which they were identified as priorities. In less tangible areas, such as capacity building and public awareness, expenditures have been below what might have been expected, based on their frequency as priorities in community plans. Similarly, health and education and training services appear to be funded below what the priorities indicate. The opposite has occurred for food banks and soup kitchens, and for information and referral services—neither of these were frequently identified as priorities, but they each were accorded significant levels of funding (see Table 2 below).¹⁷

¹⁷ Some community plans included priorities falling outside the SCPI terms and conditions. The analysis conducted as part of this evaluation focused only on priorities and expenditures that met the SCPI terms and conditions.

Table 2
Priority target areas for NHI Projects, and Project Expenditures

Target Areas	Proportion of communities that have target area as a priority	Proportion of communities with at least 1 project in target area	Proportion of communities with 3 or more projects in target area	Percent of total allocated expenditures	Percent of total number of projects
Shelters	63%	73%	40%	21%	8%
Supportive	38%	33%	12%	11%	2%
Transitional	62%	62%	28%	21%	7%
Drop-in Centres	18%	42%	12	3%	4%
Food Banks/ Food Kitchens	5%	33%	7%	3%	2%
Clothing/ Furniture	40%	7%	2%	1%	0%
Housing Support	40%	68%	35%	5%	9%
Material Support	30%	67%	28%	3%	7%
Info/Referral	15%	73%	40%	5%	11%
Psych-social Supports	30%	57%	33%	5%	9%
Health	35%	48%	15%	2%	5%
Education/ Training	43%	63%	40%	5%	9%
Capacity Building	72%	55%	32%	7%	8%
Public Awareness	42%	38%	15%	2%	3%
Other	NA	NA	NA	6%	16%
Total	NA	NA	NA	100%	100%

The funding allocation process at the community level

The evaluation found that, through the community planning process, communities set priorities across a range of types of expenditures, and therefore had plans that covered almost the entire range of the continuum of support. At the same time, there are some discrepancies between community priorities and fund allocation patterns. There are two main explanations for these variances, relating first of all to the community funding allocation process, and secondly to the funding of urgent needs projects.

Community funding allocation processes

The predominant approach to project selection has been a formalized request for proposal process, leading to the selection of the proposals that are deemed to be the best, in keeping with community priorities. The evaluation found that, in most communities, this has established a somewhat reactive process in which funding is dependent on the proposals submitted.

In contrast, five communities hired community development workers or built an active project development function into their funding procedures. In Winnipeg, for example, funding applicants work closely with HRDC project development officers to ensure that their project ideas meet the SCPI terms and conditions, and to be connected with other groups doing similar work. The homelessness staff has actively sought proposals to be submitted in priority areas.

The desirability of a community development function to support the development of specific projects and to promote collaboration is widely recognized by community members. At the same time, key informants noted that most communities do not have the necessary resources, and were reluctant to use SCPI funds for anything other than direct services for homeless people. The result is that project proposals did not necessarily address all of the priority areas identified in the community plans. This helps to explain the observed discrepancies between priorities and funding allocations.

Funding of urgent needs projects

A comparison of community priorities and funding allocation shows that spending on emergency services was disproportionately high relative to their ranking on community priority lists. For instance, food banks and soup kitchens were absent from the priority lists of 57 of the 60 community plans, but 20 of these communities nevertheless funded at least one project in this category. This appears to be in part the consequence of the “urgent needs” funding process established at the outset of the Initiative, and partly a reflection of the early stage of planning in most communities.

The terms of the SCPI allowed communities to spend a limited amount of their allocation in the first winter of the Initiative, outside the scope of a community plan, so that urgent needs could be addressed during the cold weather months. By the time priorities had been established, outlining the longer-term needs of the community, significant funding had already been spent on “urgent needs” projects. As a result, there were discrepancies between community priorities and funding allocations in these communities.

Furthermore, the majority of communities – especially smaller communities – were in the early stages of addressing homelessness in a planned way. Therefore, there was a tendency to begin by funding some basic, emergency facilities and services such as food banks, and soup kitchens. Projects addressing emergency needs (such as soup kitchens) were relatively easy to implement once funding had been allocated, compared to services meeting more long-term needs (such as mental health or employment services). As the planning process evolved, communities paid greater attention to the longer-term needs of the homeless population. But by that time, significant funds had already been allocated to urgent needs projects.

The impact of the ‘urgent needs’ funding process on community planning

‘Urgent needs’ projects were often funded directly through the local HRDC office in consultation with some community leaders, but were usually not the result of extensive community consultation. As a result, a number of these projects were viewed negatively by a small number of community participants interviewed and, in two particular cases

caused some initial divisiveness among community participants. The issue was never that the projects themselves were a poor use of the resources. Indeed, the early focus on emergency needs and the fast-tracking of urgent needs projects has had the desired effect of applying SCPI resources quickly to badly needed projects, primarily for emergency shelters and other services deemed most critical. However, in three communities, there were concerns regarding the fact that some significant allocation choices were made prior to the community plan being completed. In those communities, service providers (and, in one case, community planning leaders themselves) stated that, through community planning, better choices might have been made or more refined projects might have been funded. In this light, the urgent needs funding process was perceived by those people as a circumvention of community authority.

The problem of ‘urgent need’ decisions being made prior to community planning was exacerbated in one community due to misunderstandings about how SCPI money could be used, or whether first-year funds could be rolled into year two. In this case, choices were made quickly under the pressure to avoid lapsing funds (rather than as a result of an agreement that an urgent need had to be addressed). It was later understood that funds could be rolled into the second year. According to service providers interviewed for the evaluation, this situation created some serious tensions that worked for a period of time against a concerted community effort against homelessness.

As it did in the case of regular projects, capacity also appears to have been a factor in determining which emergency projects would be approved for urgent needs funding. In many communities, including 80% communities, urgent needs funding tended to go to organizations that already had a project developed and needed only some additional funding to proceed. Most typically, the proponents were larger organizations that were very well established in the community and had a relatively high internal capacity to develop projects, write strong proposals, and mobilize support.

These problems with the urgent needs funding are of interest because they point to both the perceived strength and value of the community planning and decision-making processes that were developed, and some challenges that still exist in optimizing those processes. However, these challenges were relatively infrequent, and do not represent a major flaw in the overall implementation of the SCPI.

4.3.3 Community Plan Reviews

Part of the SCPI design had been for communities to integrate a periodic review of progress into their community planning and priority-setting process. This was seen as a means of reassessing what remained to be done relative to the goals and priorities that were established in the plans. At the time of the evaluation, about half the communities examined had either undertaken such a review or had one planned for the period prior to the end of the Initiative. The other half were aware of the importance of doing so, but had been unable to plan such a review, largely because of the heavy workload, often in volunteer time for the participants, of community planning and project selection.

The review and updating of community plans has not taken place as consistently as was expected. This poses an increased risk that funds allocated later in the three-year period may not be targeted as effectively as they might have been. This risk was identified by community planners in several of the larger communities. Also, the amount of work involved in community planning and project selection appears to have been greater than anticipated in the program design. Community planning guidelines indicated that plans should include a commitment and a process for reviewing and updating the plan on at least an annual basis. However, these expectations on the part of the NSH proved unfeasible within the time frame, and the requirement was removed informally in favour of a review process at the end of the three-year period.

4.4 HRDC Support in the Community

Finally, in its assessment of the design and implementation of the SCPI, the evaluation examined the activities undertaken by the federal government to support community planning and the funding of homelessness projects. The purpose was to assess the extent to which those activities contributed to the completion of community plans and the funding of projects, and to identify any other areas in which more or different kinds of support may be required.

HRDC has designated Regional Facilitators who manage the SCPI at the regional level, provide management and administrative support to City facilitators and act as a liaison between regions and the Secretariat. In larger communities, a City Facilitator is also designated, who supports community planning and builds partnerships among stakeholders and other levels of government, in many cases with the assistance of other HRDC staff. The various regions across Canada have taken different approaches to the appointment of the Regional and City facilitators, so that 11 communities of the 20 examined have dedicated HRDC staff and the other nine have partial staff time.

Factors leading to varying levels of support from HRDC offices in communities

The degree of support that local and regional HRDC offices have provided varies according to a number of factors:

- *Capacity of community* – In a few larger communities the municipality had already established itself as the lead player in addressing homelessness. Consequently, the role for HRDC facilitators was reduced, with a focus on managing the entity agreement, urgent needs projects, and the Youth Homelessness fund, and in participating as an observer and advisor in community meetings. In the great majority of communities, however, the HRDC facilitators played a major role in supporting the community planning and decision making processes. Facilitators helped to plan and undertake community consultations, prepare reports, organize workshops and other information sharing events, work with municipal and provincial officials to coordinate efforts, and participate actively in community planning.

- *Delivery model* – Where an entity delivery model was chosen, HRDC staff necessarily had a diminished role in terms of administering and monitoring projects. However, the type of delivery model in itself did not necessarily govern the overall level of effort and participation of HRDC facilitators and other staff. In three of the eight “entity” communities examined, facilitators were just as fully involved in community planning as their “shared” counterparts.
- *Pre-SCPI relationship* – A minority of local HRDC offices had pre-existing working relationships with some service providers and relevant municipal and provincial government officials, and those relationships helped to integrate the facilitators more easily into the community planning process.
- *Level of local federal resources applied* – A major factor in the role of HRDC staff was the human resource commitment to the NHI. In eight of the communities examined, four or five HRDC staff members worked full-time on the Initiative, while in four communities one staff member devoted part of his or her time to the Initiative, with the office manager playing a small additional role. Sometimes this human resource allocation was influenced by the apparent demand for HRDC involvement (as per the factors above). However, there was clearly a major difference in the level of participation and the actual and perceived role of the federal government according to the number of staff devoted to the Initiative.
- *Enthusiasm of individual managers and staff* – HRDC staff members in the great majority of communities were frequently described by community members as extremely enthusiastic, energetic and creative in their work on the homelessness file. There were very few reports that were not complimentary of HRDC facilitators and project officers in the majority of the communities. This factor was therefore a question of degree rather than the presence or absence of reported “quality” in the performance of the facilitators.

Effects of the involvement of HRDC staff in the community planning processes

The assessment of the support provided by the federal government at the community level is based on the following sources:

- interviews with all HRDC managers and staff who played a role in all 20 communities examined;
- interviews with all leaders and many key participants in community planning in the 20 communities; and
- interviews with provincial and municipal government representatives from relevant departments.

The evaluation has found that HRDC support for the full inclusion of the community, and for the process of bringing groups together and facilitating planning, has been greatly appreciated and widely seen as critical to the progress thus far. In the smaller communities in particular, HRDC has brought planning and administrative skills, knowledge of federal government operations and requirements, awareness of

federal-provincial relations issues and often a working relationship with relevant provincial officials. These relationships have fostered greater provincial participation, and access to information and resources. These were not needed for the most part in the larger communities.

Beyond the recognition of the important contribution of HRDC staff in the communities, the SCPI has brought what was frequently described as a new face of the federal government to communities. In the recent past, HRDC was seen primarily as an employment office, where clients went if they needed services. Now HRDC is viewed as more pro-active, with staff going out into the community and working collaboratively to address social issues such as homelessness. Since HRDC is often the most visible federal department in communities, this new view of HRDC has presented a new face of the federal government as a whole. This new role for the government is welcomed by the community leaders and service providers interviewed for the evaluation.

4.5 Summary and Conclusion

The evaluation findings relative to the design and implementation of the SCPI indicate that almost all of the principal design features within the SCPI model have helped to establish an appropriate balance between flexibility for communities and accountability for federal government spending.

The SCPI terms and conditions were flexible enough to allow communities to direct resources where they deemed fit, while ensuring that spending would be in line with SCPI objectives. The SCPI also exhibited flexibility by allowing communities to choose a delivery model (entity or shared) that best suited their context and capacity.

The community-based planning and decision-making processes, for their part, gave communities the flexibility to decide how best to address the problem of homelessness locally. At the same time, these processes also ensured that funding decisions would be guided by a collective plan that set out priorities (albeit in varying degrees of quality and precision) that are in keeping with SCPI objectives.

Finally, through its support, HRDC helped develop and reinforce the capacity of communities (especially small ones) to develop their responses to homelessness, while ensuring that communities understood federal government operations and requirements.

5. Aboriginal Homelessness Delivery

The Aboriginal Homelessness component of the NHI initially constituted an enhancement to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), an existing program. Announced in January 1998, the UAS brings federal departments together to ensure that their programs more effectively serve urban Aboriginal people. In most communities, NHI Aboriginal Homelessness funds to be delivered through the UAS were assigned to local holders of Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDAs) after lengthy consideration by federal regional councils about how best to disseminate the Aboriginal homelessness funds.

This decision created two important disparities between the level of flexibility given to SCPI communities and the one given to Aboriginal communities¹⁸ through the AHRDAs. First of all, the AHRDA funding guidelines were more limiting than those under the SCPI, in that funded projects had to relate to human resource development in some fashion. Another important difference is that the Aboriginal communities, unlike mainstream SCPI communities, did not have access to dedicated planning funds.¹⁹

Terms and conditions

The first limitation was resolved in the second year of the Initiative through a directive that allowed Aboriginal Homelessness projects to be approved using the SCPI terms and conditions, provided that the projects were in keeping with a community homelessness plan.

However, for the Aboriginal communities examined, the change in terms and conditions brought new complications. Because there was no requirement under the AHRDA terms and conditions to develop a community plan, and because the Aboriginal Homelessness component did not include dedicated funding for planning, these Aboriginal communities had not set out early on to conduct such planning. The change in terms and conditions meant that planning had to be undertaken, with no dedicated planning dollars, very late in the three-year cycle. It also meant that the types of projects that could realistically be developed and funded would be limited. For example, large capital projects could not be completed within the time frame of the Initiative.²⁰

Data available on expenditures to date indicate that only 20% of project funds available through the Aboriginal Homelessness component had been allocated by July 2002, as compared to 85% for SCPI funds. This indicates that the delays in implementing the Aboriginal Homelessness component, and the restrictive terms and conditions, have had negative consequences for the implementation of homelessness projects under this funding stream.

¹⁸ The Aboriginal “communities” referred to in this report were those groups and individuals who came together to plan and apply for funding under the NHI, and the Aboriginal people they represented who lived in the SCPI communities. In two of the 20 communities no significant urban Aboriginal population existed.

¹⁹ \$2 million was made available to SCPI communities on a scale proportional to their overall SCPI allocations up to a maximum of \$250,000, to assist with the cost of community planning.

²⁰ The deadline for the expenditure of SCPI funds was subsequently extended to September 2003.

With respect to the terms and conditions under which funds were dispersed, about 61% of Aboriginal Homelessness expenditures had used the AHRDA terms and conditions, and the remaining 39% had used the SCPI funding guidelines. This means that much of the funding allocated to Aboriginal communities was channelled towards projects with an employment or human resources component. This picture may change given that the SCPI terms and conditions are the more flexible terms and are therefore being used most frequently. It is likely that the SCPI portion will climb considerably as funds are spent in the final year of the Initiative.

Nonetheless, the low Aboriginal Homelessness expenditure rate, together with the fact that such a large proportion of Aboriginal Homelessness funding was spent under the limiting AHRDA conditions, is indicative that progress in addressing Aboriginal homelessness was held back at least in the first year of the Initiative. This conclusion is borne out in interviews with HRDC officers responsible for the Aboriginal Homelessness component across the country, who indicated that there was an incongruity between the initial terms and conditions and the projects submitted by Aboriginal organizations. Indeed, informants stated that most initial Aboriginal Homelessness project proposals were returned to sponsors for revision because they did not comply with the employment aspect required under the AHRDA terms and conditions. Project designs were then either altered or abandoned (the evaluation did not track individual projects and project proposals, so it is not known how many were abandoned).

Planning

The evidence shows that the majority of Aboriginal communities undertook some form of homelessness planning that resulted either from collaboration with mainstream planners or the requirement under the new SCPI terms and conditions in the second year.

Table 3 Planning in Aboriginal Communities	
COMMUNITIES	EXTENT OF PLANNING
9 communities	Aboriginal community contributed to overall community planning (no separate plan or funding process developed)
6 communities	Distinct Aboriginal community plan developed (some Aboriginal Homelessness projects selected based on plan) 5 communities – Aboriginal plan linked to mainstream plan (good collaboration) 1 community – Aboriginal plan developed very late in process, very limited collaboration with mainstream
3 communities	No significant Aboriginal planning on homelessness
2 communities	No sizeable Aboriginal population (no Aboriginal Homelessness funds)

As indicated in Table 3, the evaluation found that in six of the 20 communities examined, the Aboriginal community developed its own community plan, and selected at least some Aboriginal Homelessness projects on that basis. In five of these communities, the Aboriginal plan was linked to the mainstream plan and the groups worked closely together. In the remaining community that had a separate Aboriginal plan, it was

developed very late in the process, and attempts at collaboration with mainstream planners have been limited. Consequently, Aboriginal plans have not been integrated with the mainstream plan and there is no coordination regarding project selection.

In nine communities, Aboriginal planning was an integrated part of overall community planning, and no separate plan or funding process was developed. This included a number of the larger communities in the West, with large Aboriginal populations, as well as a number of smaller centres with relatively few Aboriginal people. The degree of participation in community planning has varied as well. In most cases, Aboriginal representatives brought information about Aboriginal assets and gaps, consulted actively within their community, and brought an Aboriginal perspective to the overall planning process. In three communities, participation was more limited, comprised mainly of representation at planning meetings.

In three of the 20 communities, there was no apparent Aboriginal planning on homelessness other than relatively superficial needs assessments and agreement on how the Aboriginal Homelessness funds should be allocated. Finally, in two communities, there was no sizeable Aboriginal population, so no Aboriginal Homelessness funds were allocated.

These results show that in three of the twenty communities examined, Aboriginal Homelessness funds have been spent without the benefit of the type of planning that has characterized spending under the SCPI. In three others, the Aboriginal community was part of the mainstream community planning but did not conduct any significant planning of its own to feed into the mainstream plan. In one other community, Aboriginal planning was conducted very late in the second year of the Initiative, and collaboration with mainstream planners was weak. By the end of the evaluation period, Aboriginal populations in the other eleven communities with a significant Aboriginal population were choosing their projects in accordance with some existing plan.

The evaluation was not able to find a clear pattern as to why some Aboriginal communities have been able to work successfully with the overall community, while others have not. Factors such as size of community, progress of mainstream homelessness planning, and relative size of Aboriginal community do not explain the differences. Even the three communities with no significant Aboriginal planning included one 80% community, a smaller community in the West with a sizeable Aboriginal population, and a smaller Maritime community.

In Saskatoon, three levels of government and Aboriginal groups had established the Saskatoon Community Partnership Committee in 1999, to facilitate joint planning on housing and other social issues. This integrated planning approach was adopted under the SCPI as well. The local HRDC office manages the available Aboriginal Homelessness funds, but all projects need to be in keeping with the community plan, and are approved by the community Steering Committee, which has representation from mainstream and Aboriginal community groups.

Integrated versus independent planning

The question of whether planning on Aboriginal homelessness should be conducted independently or integrated into the broader community planning process has been front and centre in several communities, and has raised a number of related issues and some tensions in those communities. The non-Aboriginal planning groups in those communities, and some Aboriginal service providers interviewed, draw a clear distinction between Aboriginal groups that are service-oriented and those that link homelessness and the NHI to broader political and socio-economic issues.

From the perspective of those Aboriginal groups with a broader political interest, it does not make sense to address homelessness in isolation from a host of other pressing socio-economic issues. Furthermore, efforts to take planning on Aboriginal homelessness out of the hands of Aboriginal political leaders represents a subversion of efforts towards increased Aboriginal control and responsibility, and ultimately Aboriginal self-government. For the service-oriented groups, this focus on the broader issues diverts attention and resources from badly needed work on Aboriginal homelessness.

The great majority of both Aboriginal and mainstream observers interviewed for the evaluation recognized that Aboriginal capacity to provide independent Aboriginal services for homeless people is low. Many Aboriginal services, including most visited during the evaluation, attempt to fulfill a wide range of functions, including overnight sheltering, supportive housing, counselling, and day services such as day care, meals and drop-in services. They are operating with very limited resources and are very often threatened with closure and reliant on new project funding every year. Service providers in the majority of communities accept the need, as a first step, to work with mainstream service providers to integrate Aboriginal components and Aboriginal staff, and to encourage the adoption of culturally appropriate practices for Aboriginal clients. From this point of view, the benefits of integrated planning with the mainstream community were recognized by those Aboriginal communities that did so. They also recognized, however, that the lack of an independent Aboriginal planning process carried a risk that the community might not develop an independent capacity to address homelessness.

Separate funding stream

The evaluation has found that while there is wide agreement that it was appropriate to dedicate some homelessness funding to Aboriginal homelessness, the mechanism chosen at the outset delayed progress in addressing Aboriginal homelessness. It also limited the ability of Aboriginal communities to conduct community planning to the same extent as was possible for mainstream communities. In Chapter 8, the impacts of the Aboriginal Homelessness component on capacity building in Aboriginal communities are addressed in more detail.

6. Youth Homelessness Delivery

Terms and conditions

The Youth Homelessness component of the NHI was similar to Aboriginal Homelessness in that funds were initially directed through two existing Youth Employment Strategy (YES) programs that required funded projects to have an employment aspect. As with Aboriginal Homelessness, SCPI terms and conditions were applied to Youth Homelessness starting in the second year of the Initiative. At the time of the evaluation, about 35% of total Youth Homelessness funding had been spent under the YES terms and conditions, and the balance had used SCPI terms and conditions.

The initially restrictive terms and conditions did have an impact on the implementation of YES projects, as only 34% of project funding had been allocated by July 2002, as compared to 85% for SCPI project funds. The ultimate impact on youth was mitigated, however, because most communities used SCPI funds for high priority youth projects, over and above the Youth Homelessness allotment, during the first year. With the changes in terms and conditions, the Youth Homelessness fund became the main source for other youth-related projects (or a partial source for projects with a youth component). It is expected that almost all Youth project funds will be spent in the time remaining.

The initial use of the YES funding guidelines demonstrated the limits of an employment-focused strategy. HRDC officials in the communities examined all pointed to the fact that most homeless youth require considerable and varied basic support before they would be in a position to take advantage of employment-related support. Many have addiction problems and other psycho-social problems that are contributing to their homeless state, and that would prevent them from benefiting in any long-term way from employment-related support. Others require basic life-skills training in a supported living environment.

When SCPI terms and conditions were introduced in the second year, youth serving agencies were able to fund a broader range of projects, and this reportedly represented a major improvement.

Community planning

The shift to the SCPI terms and conditions was in parallel with the same shift for Aboriginal Homelessness funding, but there was a significant difference in that the youth sector did not constitute a unique political and cultural entity. Consequently, there was never an expectation that the youth serving sector would establish an independent plan to address youth homelessness.

In fact, youth serving agencies were already a part of the mainstream community planning process under the YES terms and conditions, and youth homelessness needs were integrated in the majority of communities into the overall plan. The evaluation found that in only four of the 20 communities examined, the youth sector did not integrate into overall community planning. In these communities the youth serving agencies maintained a more separate relationship with HRDC with regard to the administration of the youth homelessness funds. This was reported by community planners in those communities to have reduced the involvement of youth serving agencies in community planning, and to have limited the development of new partnerships and a planned approach to addressing youth homelessness. However, the youth serving agencies interviewed did not concur with this assessment. They were accustomed to working directly with HRDC to obtain project funding, and for them this was simply a continuation of a well-established practice, and did not diminish their ability to assess youth needs and respond appropriately. The evaluation had no way at this early stage to assess the relative outcomes of this approach versus the integrated approach.

Separate funding stream

The separation of youth funding from SCPI funding, and the fact that HRDC maintained administrative and decision-making authority over youth funds, resulted in some administrative inconvenience. Rather than approving projects and administering the funding in the same way as all other SCPI projects, communities needed to meet with HRDC youth officers to discuss the plans for youth-related projects, gain approval for the projects from HRDC, and fulfill different administrative requirements for those projects.

This was not, however, seen by community planning leaders as having undermined the communities' ability to fund youth homelessness projects as an integrated part of the community strategy. HRDC officers were reported to have succeeded in making the link between the Youth Homelessness funding and SCPI funding as seamless as possible. HRDC officers have also made themselves available to collaborate in the planning of youth homelessness projects when needed. Because HRDC had been funding youth projects under the YES and other previous youth-targeted programs for many years prior to the NHI, they had well-established relationships with youth serving agencies. This reportedly facilitated the collaboration.

7. NHI Research Component

At the time of the Initiative's design, it was recognized that there was limited reliable data on the nature and extent of homelessness in Canada. Also, there remained considerable debate in Canadian communities about how homelessness was best defined for purposes of planning remedial action. While some funding streams under the NHI allowed for research at the community level, the NSH recognized that most communities would be reluctant to spend much of their NHI allocation on research, given the extent of unmet basic needs among homeless people. In this context, a budget of \$3.5 million was set aside at the NSH for research related activities.²¹

The evaluation examined the extent to which the NHI succeeded in developing a research strategy and research projects in keeping with overall objectives.²² It was also interested in the extent to which the research component had contributed so far to increased knowledge about the nature and extent of homelessness and how to address the problem. This chapter describes the research activities undertaken, and assesses what has been accomplished to date.

NHI Research Agenda

In August 2000, the NSH Research team undertook extensive consultations within the NSH and with academics, homelessness experts, representatives of relevant HRDC branches, including regional offices, and other federal government departments.

These consultations led to the development of a research agenda which was finalized in November 2000. That agenda posed the following broad research questions:

- What are the structural/systemic issues in Canada that contribute to homelessness and what changes could lead to the long term reduction and prevention of homelessness in the long term?
- Who are the homeless, what are their numbers and what is needed by particular homeless populations (such as families, youth and Aboriginal people) to get them out of homelessness and prevent them from falling into homelessness in the long term?
- How can approaches to governance as well as particular initiatives strategically contribute to the growth of community capacity to prevent and reduce homelessness in the long term?

²¹ A total of \$9 million was targeted for research, accountability-related functions, planning and capacity building (including training). Ultimately, about \$3.5 million was available for research on homelessness.

²² The evaluation focuses on research projects funded through the NSH's research program, as opposed to research projects funded by communities through SCPI funding.

Given the \$3.5 million budget allocated to research, as well as the short three-year program period, it was unlikely that these broad research questions would be addressed fully before the end of the NHI. However, proponents of the Initiative expressed hope that the funds spent on specific research projects would contribute to building knowledge about homelessness.

In the end, the \$3.5 million budget covered independent research projects, as well as support to the activities of the NSH Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) team that inherited the homelessness database from CMHC in 2001. CMHC had developed HIFIS in 1995 to assist service providers to collect information about the homeless using the shelter system across Canada. The NSH took on this project under the research component. Since that time, the major concern has been to identify shelter providers, and expand and update the list of HIFIS and non-HIFIS users who are interested in sharing their data with the NSH. A user support line and a web help desk assure on-going support to existing HIFIS communities. Nine of the 10 major cities are participating in HIFIS and the team hopes to build a system that will involve all 61 communities.

On the basis of the research agenda, the NSH issued a call for proposals to assist in identifying priority research areas. The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) was subsequently hired to produce a report and annotated bibliography examining the structural and systemic determinants of homelessness. With the annotated bibliography and accompanying recommendations for research, the NSH team invited academics, consultants and researchers to submit research proposals. Interested public servants from other federal government departments were also invited to participate.

Researchers were invited to submit proposals for national as well as regional projects. Consultations with regional NSH staff led to the NSH's decision in early 2001 to set aside \$500,000 for research in the regions for each of the last two years of the Initiative, but budget constraints limited the amount to \$250,000 in the final year.

Progress on the research agenda

To date, the NSH research team has funded 31 research projects (see Appendix D). Long-term research proposals (national or regional) were discouraged because of the 3-year limitation. The NSH's approach for the selection and approval of research projects was to involve all ten regions collectively in the project selection, regardless of whether they were national in scope or more regional.

Three regions submitted proposals for local research: Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Edmonton, Toronto and the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) contributed to some research projects with SCPI funds. The funding and monitoring of local research projects was conducted by local research committees with representatives from all levels of government.

The majority of the research to date has been national in scope. Six projects have been completed and reports are available, and another six have been completed but were still being reviewed at the time of the evaluation. The remaining nineteen projects are still to be completed.

To date, the focus of NSH research has been on HIFIS, and on the 31 research projects that have been initiated. About \$3.5 million has been spent on the projects themselves and on the salaries and administrative costs to manage the research component. Dissemination of available research is in the early stages. The NSH plans to integrate a research website into its main website. The purpose of the research website will be to offer a “research highlights” series as well as user-friendly research summaries. In addition to the research website, NSH research staff have developed partnerships with other research groups across the country, such as Canadian Policy Research Networks and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, to maximize the sharing of homelessness-related research.

Because most of the NSH research findings are not yet available, it is too early to assess the extent to which progress has been made toward answering the questions in the research agenda. It is also too early to determine the progress made toward increasing knowledge about homelessness and developing better research tools and methodologies. To date, the objective of enhancing access to information on homelessness has not been pursued.

8. Findings on Immediate Outcomes

The immediate intended impacts of the Initiative were to help build the capacity of communities to address the problem of homelessness while making an immediate, incremental contribution to facilities and services for homeless people. This chapter presents the evaluation findings on the progress of the Initiative in meeting these objectives. It includes a section that examines community capacity-related issues, as well as sections on the impacts of the SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness funding, respectively.²³

The analysis of the evaluation issues that have a community focus takes into account the major variations in the pre-existing circumstances of the participating communities, including:

- Community size;
- Existing capacity to manage, coordinate and undertake effectively the required community planning and allocation of resources;
- Extent to which local government was engaged in addressing homelessness, and took an active role in responding to the NHI;
- Local/provincial economic circumstances and government fiscal policy directions;
- Extent to which service providers had already established a coalition to address homelessness.

When variations in outcomes have been observed, the evaluation looked at the possible role these characteristics may have played.

8.1 Community Capacity Related Issues

This section examines the extent to which the NHI components being evaluated have contributed to increases in community capacity to address homelessness. The assessment results primarily from the 20 community case studies conducted for the evaluation, and is based on the stated views of the key informants consulted within each community. Evidence was also derived from the analysis of documents describing both pre-SCPI activities related to homelessness and activities during the SCPI period.

²³ As noted in Chapter 7, the implementation of the Research Component of the NHI was still in the earliest stages at the time this evaluation was conducted; therefore, there are no preliminary outcomes on which to report for this component.

8.1.1 Community Mobilization

Based on key informant interviews and the evaluator's review of documents, there is evidence that only two of the case study communities, Toronto and Ottawa, had already conducted an extensive community consultation and planning process on homelessness prior to the SCPI. Nine other communities (including four 80% communities) had come together as a broad community to examine the problem of homelessness, and had begun a planning process. However, they had not produced a plan similar to what they ultimately produced for the SCPI and had not agreed on a set of priorities for the community. In the remaining nine communities, no formal community planning had taken place, and formal consultations with service providers had been limited. In these communities, ad hoc meetings and informal collaboration among service providers were common, but the community as a whole had not come together prior to the SCPI to address homelessness in a systematic way. The review of community plans and the analysis of other community documents indicate that all 61 participating SCPI communities now have a concerted, coordinated focus on homelessness.

The SCPI design allowed communities to decide how the funds would be spent (within the broad limits of the funding criteria). This is widely viewed by key informants as having been critical to communities agreeing to invest the time and energy in community planning and project selection. This is especially true for the communities that had not undertaken any pre-SCPI planning. In the nine communities with some pre-SCPI mobilization, the SCPI funding and the community-based approach are widely reported to have brought the community planning process to a new level of inclusiveness and collaboration that would not likely have been reached otherwise.

8.1.2 Enhanced Awareness in Communities

A presumption of the SCPI was that more broad-based knowledge and understanding of homelessness, and of community assets and gaps to address the problem, would contribute to better decision-making. A major benefit of the SCPI planning process that was reported in every community other than the two with extensive pre-SCPI planning has been an increase in awareness of available resources, expertise and services in the community. Interviews with participating service providers in the large majority of communities indicate that this has led to more directed and regular client referrals, and new working relationships so that referrals tend more to be followed up by exchanges of information and an informal case tracking approach.

Awareness of the nature and complexity of homelessness among service providers and other stakeholders is also reportedly increasing directly as a result of groups coming together to discuss homelessness and the continuum of supports approach. Community planning leaders in almost all the case study communities volunteered this information, and the claim was corroborated by at least some service providers in almost every community. In part, the planning process and the community plans themselves brought increased awareness because planning in all but a few communities included background research on the nature and extent of homelessness, and the communication of this

information to participants. The plans themselves detail the extent of the homelessness problem, the specific assets in place, and the gaps in facilities and services. In addition, service providers reported that discussions at community meetings, both in the broader group context and informally among participants, led to a broader awareness for many participants. Key informants indicated that this increased awareness is reflected, in particular, in:

- greater sensitivity to Aboriginal cultural issues in communities with a significant Aboriginal population (all the Western communities and about half of the other communities visited);
- better understanding of mental health and other health issues that front-line and shelter workers need to be able to recognize and respond to (this was raised in every community by service providers and planning leaders, to varying degrees); and,
- greater recognition of the need for supportive housing, supported training and employment, and other “transitional” services, particularly in smaller communities. According to community planning leaders and federal government facilitators, the extent of the need for these services became apparent in all communities as the limitations of emergency services came to light.

8.1.3 New or Enhanced Processes and Structures

The benefits of the mobilization stimulated by the SCPI are reported to be not only in the planning process, but also in the consultative processes and decision-making structures that have been established as a result. In the large majority of communities, new committee and sub-committee structures have been put in place. This has resulted in on-going plenary, and often sector-specific, discussions about what is needed in the community and how available resources would best be allocated.

In the large majority of communities, the mobilization has also resulted in new formal processes for joint decision-making on the allocation of resources that incorporate conflict-of-interest guidelines. In about half of the communities, particularly but not exclusively the larger ones, those processes are supported by “funding tables” or other similar functions that promote a creative approach to finding and allocating sources of funding.

Calgary offers an example of the kinds of new structures that were put in place in response to the SCPI. There, an ad-hoc steering committee (consisting of service providers, local philanthropists and government representatives) existed prior to the NHI, but SCPI funding for community planning and the prospect of SCPI project funds led directly to an expanded structure that includes eight distinct sector groups (Aboriginal, youth, mental health, addictions, singles, seniors, families and family violence). These groups are represented on a Sector Council that reviews sector recommendations and sets overall project priorities. A Community Action Committee (the former ad hoc committee) then selects the projects to be funded (subject to the formal decisions of the Calgary Homelessness Foundation Board and HRDC). A funder's table has been established in Calgary to allow government and not-for-profit funders (including the United Way, as an example) to review project proposals and coordinate the allocation of their available funds.

Sustainability

The NHI is a three-year initiative (ending in March 2003) that requires communities to build sustainability into its planning and funding processes. As stated above, the SCPI has stimulated the development of community-based structures and processes in most participating communities. A key evaluation question, therefore, concerns the sustainability of these new structures and processes.²⁴

Based on the interviews and a review of the pre-SCPI and current community coalitions and planning structures and processes, the evaluation has found that communities fall into three categories concerning the predicted sustainability of what has been developed:

- five of the communities (including three 80% communities) have strong, representative, and collaborative coalitions in place that are very likely to endure in a similar form beyond the life of the SCPI;
- thirteen communities (including four 80% communities) have built coalitions that are representative and collaborative, and that will be sustained beyond 2003 but will likely be reduced in scope if there is no significant source of new resources at that time;
- in two communities, it appears that the community coalition formed to respond to the SCPI has encountered significant difficulties in arriving at a consensus on how to address homelessness, and is not yet strong enough to sustain itself without the kind of focal point that the SCPI has provided.²⁵

²⁴ For this evaluation, only the sustainability of *community-wide decision-making structures and processes* was assessed. While SCPI funding required *projects* to provide a sustainability plan for the post-Initiative period, an assessment of these project-level sustainability plans was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

²⁵ It is interesting to note that one of these communities is an 80% community. Key informants from this city indicated that the community has long been politically divided on social issues. This factionalism has prevented various elements in the community from collaborating in a lasting way on efforts to combat homelessness. This case demonstrates that, even with an infusion of resources and the requirement for a planned approach, other factors may impede the development of sustained community capacity to address homelessness.

These findings indicate that there remains work to be done in firmly establishing what has been built to date, and in providing support to those communities that require it.

8.1.4 New/Enhanced Partnerships

Another benefit of the community-based approach of the SCPI that was foreseen by its architects was the fostering of new and enhanced partnerships among stakeholders with an interest in homelessness. The presumption was that community mobilization for purposes of planning and funding allocation would result in a broader recognition of the opportunities for, and potential benefits of, partnership.

To varying degrees in different communities, the evaluation has identified new or enhanced community-based partnerships on four distinct levels that have been fostered directly as a result of the SCPI.

- *Community-wide partnerships* have been developed or enhanced in the great majority of communities by virtue of the communities coming together to develop the community plan and allocate resources. Where these community-wide partnerships have been newly established or enhanced, they vary somewhat as to the breadth of stakeholders involved. In all cases smaller groups of service providers existed prior to the SCPI, and in all but two very large communities these small groups have since banded together to form a broader partnership. In the majority of communities new stakeholders have joined, including provincial and municipal government officials in about one-third of the communities, but also service providers in specific areas such as addictions, mental health, youth services or Aboriginal services.

In the Greater Vancouver Regional District, a unique partnership has developed among the municipalities in the region. Vancouver and the 21 other municipalities were invited to participate, and most have to some degree. Nine municipalities became actively involved and endorsed the community plan. Until SCPI, municipal activities related to homelessness were predominantly in Vancouver, but through this partnership new facilities and services are being developed in the outlying communities, and municipal governments have formally recognized their role in addressing homelessness.

- *Sector-partnerships* were found by the evaluation to have expanded in the majority of communities as a result of the SCPI, often through the establishment of sub-committees of the broader steering committees. These sub-committees have been created to consider community assets and gaps in particular areas (such as addictions and mental health services, transitional housing, youth homelessness, or Aboriginal homelessness) and to coordinate planning in those areas. In a few communities, these sub-committees have also had a formal role in recommending the allocation of funds within their areas of expertise. The twenty communities varied somewhat in regard to the creation of formal sector groups, but the finding in the majority of communities was that at least one new “sector” had organized formally as a result of the SCPI, and that several existing sectors

had added new members. In the great majority of communities, the individual sectors reported stronger linkages with other types of service providers than before the SCPI, and a greater propensity to share information and refer clients as a result.

Even where formal sub-committees have not been formed, service providers with similar areas of interest have frequently reported collaborating as a result of the SCPI planning process. They also reported cooperating where previously they tended to compete for scarce resources in their areas without consideration for what was most required in the community. Service providers in about half of the communities reported having benefited in terms of their capacity to develop project ideas and produce project proposals. This has occurred in part because of mentoring with more experienced agencies and in part through workshops and one-on-one assistance provided through HRDC or local universities.

- *Project partnerships* have been established in specific instances, as a result of efforts to encourage collaboration among agencies with similar expertise and clientele. In such cases, when two organizations have submitted similar project proposals, rather than choosing one proposal over another, the project selection committee has encouraged the two groups to collaborate on the project. Six of the twenty communities had reported at least one example of a project-specific partnership resulting directly from the SCPI planning and fund allocation process.

In Halifax, four community groups came together in 1996 to establish a supportive housing project – the Black Community Work Group, the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, Harbour City Homes and the Metro Non-profit Housing Association. The goal was to work toward the revitalization of part of a city block in a way that would be sensitive to the community’s existing usage. The initiative proposed five separate projects involving non-profit, co-operative and private groups within a city block. SCPI and CMHC made substantial contributions to help bring this project to fruition.

- *Partnerships with government:* while service providers often had a working relationship with some provincial and/or municipal governments prior to the NHI, new or enhanced working relationships with provincial and municipal officials have been established in the majority of communities as a result of the NHI. Where provincial and/or municipal governments have been very active participants in community planning (10 of the 20 communities), benefits are reportedly accruing at the community and project levels. For example, in Edmonton the direct collaboration of provincial and municipal officials in the SCPI process and in the establishment and support of a non-governmental entity to coordinate homelessness activity into the future has improved the anticipated sustainability of community planning on homelessness. Also, in at least half of the communities examined, creative approaches to project development and funding have been developed as a result of governmental collaboration with service providers. As an example, the Creighton Gerrish Development Association in Halifax has established a major new supported housing

facility in the downtown core as a result of support and innovative financial and in-kind contributions from many community groups and all levels of government.

It is premature to assess the impact of this collaboration on government policy and program directions. Service providers and planners in the majority of communities have reported, however, that participation by all levels of government is helping to integrate homelessness planning with existing government policy and program directions. Planners are better informed about current government policies and programs, and the planners also cited the potential to influence policy directions when government officials are active participants.

At the same time, provincial government officials in almost every community have expressed fears that their departments will ultimately face community pressures to provide on-going funding for projects initially funded through the SCPI. In about a quarter of the communities examined, community planning leaders and local provincial government officials themselves have reported that this fear has circumscribed the extent of provincial government participation in community planning.

8.1.5 Capacity in Aboriginal Communities

Interviews with Aboriginal homelessness leaders in the 20 case study communities indicate that, at the outset of the Initiative, Aboriginal communities began with a lower capacity to address homelessness than other communities.²⁶ They pointed to the lack of dedicated services and facilities, the relative lack of experience and resources of those services that do exist as compared to many mainstream services, and the lack of formal education and training of many service providers. This perspective was shared widely by Aboriginal leaders and service providers interviewed, and by mainstream planners in the eighteen communities with a sizeable Aboriginal population.

As previously mentioned, there was no requirement and no dedicated funding for community planning under Aboriginal Homelessness. Furthermore, there were early delays in the initial implementation of the Aboriginal Homelessness component under the auspices of local AHRDA holders. These delays and the lack of dedicated planning funds in the Aboriginal funding stream were widely perceived by key informants in Aboriginal communities to have limited the kind of capacity building and partnership development that community planning was able to produce in the mainstream communities.

The separate Aboriginal Homelessness stream was intended to ensure that Aboriginal communities received targeted funding and could work independently of the broader community processes to the extent that they chose. Mid-program correction through the application of the SCPI terms and conditions has helped encourage Aboriginal service providers and political leaders to collaborate in planning homelessness strategies (either within the context of mainstream community planning or

²⁶ The Aboriginal “communities” referred to in this report were those groups and individuals who came together to plan and apply for funding under the NHI, and the Aboriginal people they represented who lived in the SCPI communities. In two of the 20 communities no significant urban Aboriginal population existed.

independently). The majority of Aboriginal communities, however, had not completed an independent plan to address Aboriginal homelessness at the time of the evaluation.

In mainstream communities the community planning process itself has reportedly contributed greatly to an increased capacity to address homelessness. In half of the SCPI communities with a significant Aboriginal population, Aboriginal agencies and political leaders have participated actively in mainstream planning. Those representatives reported that their participation has been positive in that project funding has been allocated in a more planned way, based on an assessment of needs and priorities. As well, they frequently pointed to new working relationships they had developed with mainstream service providers. Most of them also noted, however, that the lack of an independent Aboriginal planning process limited the extent to which the Aboriginal communities developed their own capacity to address homelessness.

In six communities, there was some degree of independent Aboriginal homelessness planning. This meant that large and diverse groups of Aboriginal organizations and individuals (mainly service providers but also some community leaders) came together periodically to discuss homelessness and to plan how to make best use of the Aboriginal Homelessness resources available. This kind of community-wide consultation on homelessness had not previously taken place, and was seen as beneficial in itself. Even in these communities, however, capacity building was viewed by participants as being greatly limited by the lack of dedicated planning funds (for example, to hire outside consultants for background research and facilitation, as about half the mainstream communities did). Based on reported assessments of staff education and training, experience, and existing resources, capacity building was also constrained by the existing capacity of Aboriginal organizations to plan and implement major homelessness initiatives.

Thus, whether or not an independent Aboriginal approach was taken, the evaluation has found that there remains considerable work to be done in building capacity and partnerships, and in developing comprehensive Aboriginal community homelessness plans.

8.1.6 Summary and Conclusion on Capacity Building

The evaluation found that the SCPI has made an important contribution to enhancing existing capacity to address homelessness in the majority of communities examined. This is evidenced by 1) the mobilization of service providers, governments and other stakeholders; 2) increase in the number and kind of partnerships working to address homelessness; and 3) the community-based planning and decision-making structures that are now in place. These results stem from the combination of the availability of SCPI funding and the SCPI design, which entrusts communities with the responsibility for planning and decision-making around homelessness. Even in Ottawa and Toronto, where the evaluation has observed a more limited impact of the SCPI on community capacity, the SCPI was reported by local service providers and municipal representatives to have helped refine the existing community plans, increase inclusiveness, and fine-tune priorities.

The twenty SCPI communities investigated for the evaluation varied considerably in their capacity to address homelessness prior to the Initiative. While a few already had well

established structures and processes, the majority had a greater need to build their capacity. In those communities, planners and service providers routinely pointed to a continuing need to further refine and update community planning, improve project development capacity, and build expertise in a range of service delivery areas.

8.2 Impacts of SCPI Funding²⁷

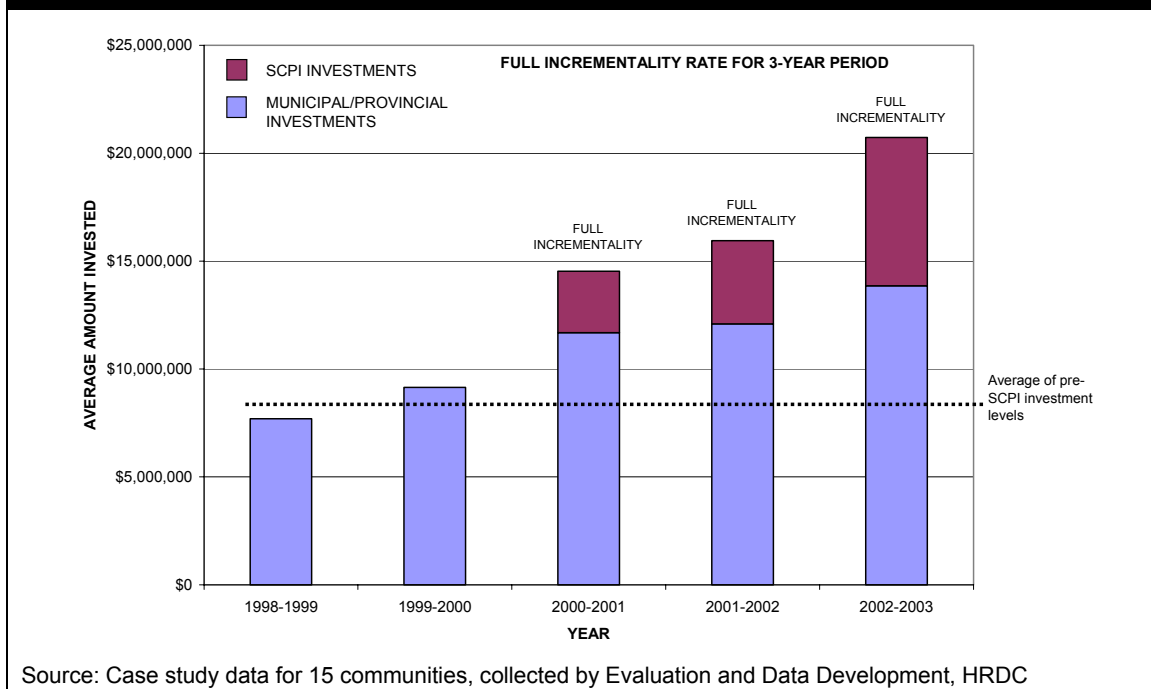
While the previous section addressed the impacts of the SCPI on community capacity building, this section presents the available evidence on the immediate, incremental impacts of the program funding itself. The evaluation measured the impacts of program funding in two ways. First, it examined the incremental nature of the funding, by looking at the extent to which it represented new investment over and above existing investment from other sources (rather than displacing existing investment). It also considered whether it allowed some projects to go forward that would not have otherwise. Second, the evaluation looked at how the funds were spent, to see the extent to which expenditures were in keeping with the federal objective to foster a continuum of supports approach.

8.2.1 Incremental Impact of SCPI Funding

Based on the methodology described in Chapter 1, the evaluation found that the program funding built upon, rather than substituted for, existing levels of municipal and provincial investment in homelessness immediately prior to the Initiative.

²⁷ Throughout section 8.2, “SCPI funding” refers to all three funding streams (SCPI, Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness) unless otherwise noted.

Figure 1
Estimated Incremental Impact of SCPI Funding Relative to Municipal/Provincial Homelessness Investments in Selected Communities in Canada



The graph above shows that the federal program funding under the SCPI was fully incremental for each of the three years of the Initiative. This indicates that the program was successful in avoiding the displacement of existing levels of investment by provinces and municipalities. Moreover, the community data indicate that considerable additional investment, over and above pre-NHI levels, has occurred on the part of provinces and municipalities during the three-year period of SCPI activity. Some of this additional investment may also have been leveraged as a result of the federal initiative.²⁸

Information from the case studies and from key informant interviews suggest that a number of design features of the SCPI, and some other factors, may have played an important role in safeguarding against displacement and fostering increased investments from other sources:

- The requirement that communities identify matching funds from non-federal sources in order to qualify for their SCPI allocation provided a safeguard that SCPI funds were not coming into a community that had no other significant funding sources.²⁹ The presence of other funding sources indicated that the community had some background in, and demonstrated commitment to, addressing homelessness.

²⁸ The evaluation did not address the issue of leveraging of non-federal investments. New non-federal investments in the three-year SCPI period may constitute leveraging by the SCPI, but may also be the result of other factors. Further research is needed to assess the leveraging impact of the SCPI.

²⁹ The requirement for matching funds applied to SCPI only, and not to Youth Homelessness or Aboriginal Homelessness funding.

- The requirement that projects receiving SCPI funding be able to demonstrate sustainability beyond 2003 was instituted to ensure that projects were not reliant solely on federal investments.
- The requirement for a community plan, and the broad-based nature of the coalitions that formed to develop strategies and allocate resources, reportedly fostered a more collaborative approach than had previously existed in most communities, and the strength of these coalitions and their support for the planned approach may have influenced the maintenance or enhancement of funding from other sources.
- Consultations at senior levels between federal officials and their provincial and municipal counterparts prior to the announcement of the SCPI and on a periodic basis thereafter may have helped to maintain a focus on the issue and a continued commitment from all sources.
- The nature and extent of the homelessness problem in Canada, and the high profile that the problem has had in recent years, may have mitigated against the withdrawal of funds for homelessness related programs and services that could perhaps have otherwise occurred in the face of other pressing government budgetary priorities.

None of these factors are permanent features in the participating communities. With the exception of the last factor, they were design features of the SCPI or the result of a deliberate effort by NHI planners and managers.

Other incremental benefits

The evaluation sought the views of observers in the 20 case study communities about the role of SCPI funds in moving projects forward and realizing projects previously not contemplated in any concrete way. These consultations indicate that the large majority of SCPI-funded projects would not have taken place in the foreseeable future. SCPI funding is most often described as having filled gaps in existing funding streams, thereby allowing projects to go forward that may not have, or that would have taken longer to develop without these funds.

The Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ) – Hamilton House Refugee project in Toronto received SCPI money to renovate a house and convert it to transitional housing for refugees. The FCJ had been planning to try to raise public funds, but had no idea how long that would take, and had seen it as a long-term venture. SCPI funds allowed them to establish the shelter immediately, and the apartments are now occupied.

The community of Kelowna had known for some time that a women's shelter was badly needed—it had been identified as a need prior to SCPI and was designated as a top priority when SCPI funds came available. But there had been no plans to build the shelter and its sponsoring agency, the Servants Anonymous Society, had not considered taking on the project when no capital funding was available. SCPI funds allowed this shelter to be built.

The flexibility of the SCPI component in particular was seen by the great majority of those consulted, in all twenty communities visited, as a considerable asset that allowed communities facing a variety of circumstances to fund the projects they required.

Impact on other funding sources

In each of the twenty communities examined for the evaluation, there were examples of provincial and local government in-kind commitments arising from the SCPI, such as 1) the provision of office space and other resources for community planning, 2) the provision of housing, real estate, architectural and engineering expertise, 3) tax exemptions, and 4) the secondment of part- or full-time staff. In a small number of communities, the municipal government has provided grants for projects funded in part through the SCPI, although these tend to be financed through on-going community grant programs that existed prior to the NHI.

According to key informants, provincial commitments that were identifiable as a result of the SCPI have largely consisted in agreements to increase per diem expenditures for health or social services resulting from new or enhanced facilities funded by the SCPI. Additionally, in Alberta and Ontario, the provincial governments increased direct financial commitments to homelessness during the period that SCPI was being implemented. Some informants in those provinces believed that the increases were at least partly a result of the federal commitments and the ensuing community focus on homelessness, but the evaluation was unable to validate this point of view. However, it should be noted that provincial government commitments to homelessness are reported by local provincial officials and by service providers to be contingent on provincial economic and fiscal circumstances, and cannot be assumed to remain at current levels in the long term.

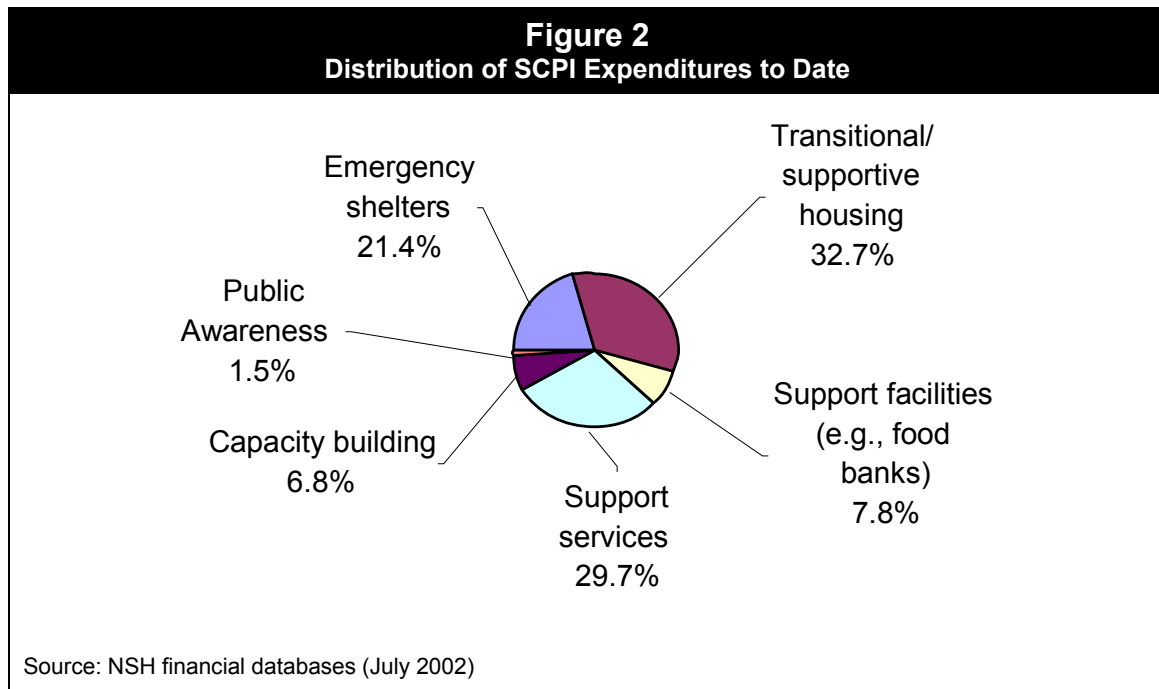
New financial commitments from the private sector in the great majority of communities visited are very limited. This was most often explained from the perspective of service providers and community planners as having to do with the profit orientation of the private sector, and the perception that businesses were reluctant to be associated with the homeless. As well, these same respondents noted that public perceptions of homeless people as being “primarily responsible for their situation” were not conducive to private sector involvement. Private sector investment is widely recognized at the community level and by HRDC and NSH officials as “an area that still needs to be developed”. Furthermore, there is considerable pessimism among the great majority of service providers concerning the idea that private commitments will ever represent a substantial proportion of overall funding requirements.

8.2.2 Impacts of Project Expenditures

The most tangible short-term benefit that was expected to derive from the SCPI was the funding of new or enhanced facilities and services for homeless people. This section examines the nature of the expenditures, and how they reflect the program’s objective to foster the “continuum of supports” approach to alleviating homelessness.

SCPI spending patterns

Figure 2 below describes the distribution of SCPI expenditures in all 61 communities across the country. It is based on available figures for actual funds allocated at the time of the evaluation, drawn from the NSH financial databases (a total of \$222.6 million, or about 85% of the \$260 million available for project funding).



Of SCPI funding allocated to date, about 54% of approved expenditures across the country have been for capital spending on shelters of various types, including emergency shelters and transitional housing (21% each), and supportive housing (11%). At the community level, funding allocation varies greatly in terms of the proportion of expenditures on shelter facilities (from very small proportions in some small communities, to as high as 100% in one community). The majority of communities spent in the middle range (between one-quarter and three-quarters of their funds) on shelter facilities, but a substantial number (20%) spent more than three-quarters, and about 28% spent less than one-quarter of their allocation on sheltering facilities.

NSH figures provide a further breakdown of SCPI shelter-related capital spending: 16% of all sheltering projects (emergency, supportive, transitional) paid for land or building purchases; 8% was allocated to pre-development (site planning, architectural services, environmental assessments, etc.); 10% was spent on new construction; 31% paid for renovations; 13% was devoted to direct operational costs; and finally, 22% paid for equipment and supplies (furniture, mobile vans, etc.).³⁰

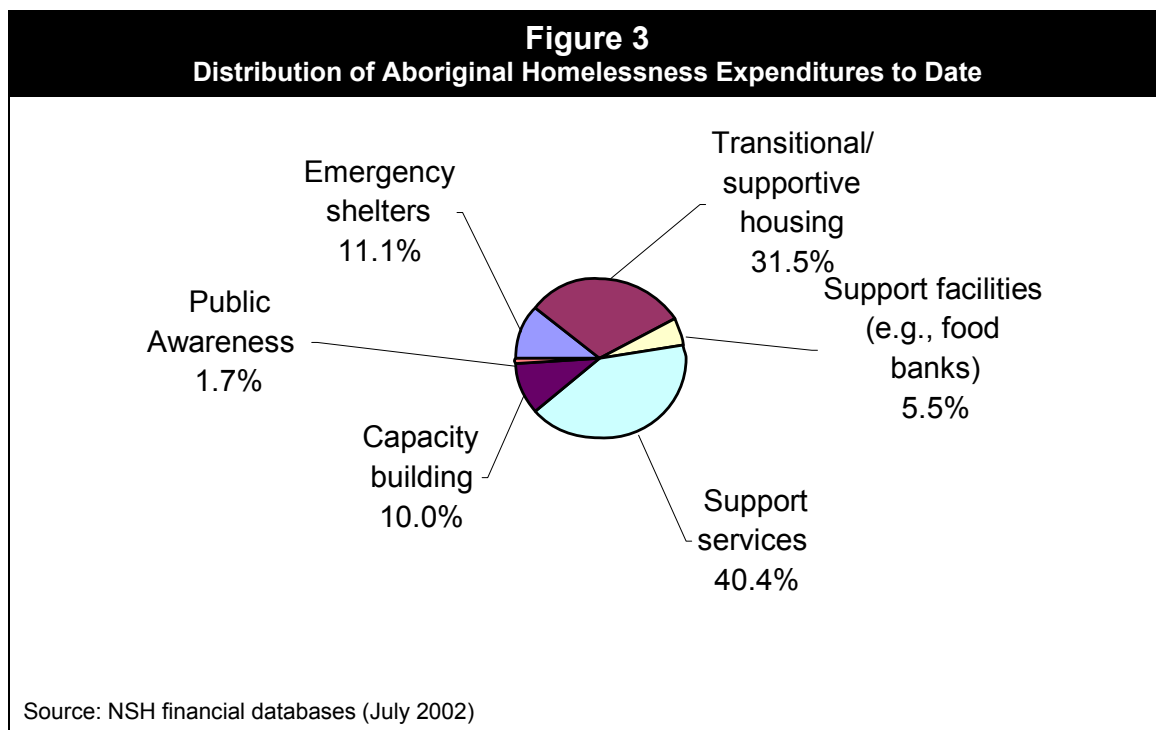
³⁰ National Secretariat on Homelessness, "National Investment Analysis National Investment Analysis: Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative, Youth Homelessness Under YES/SCPI Authorities, and Aboriginal Homelessness Under AHRDA/SCPI Authorities, December 17, 1999 - March 31, 2002."

Aside from shelter-related capital expenditures, about 8% of SCPI project funding has been targeted to other types of support facilities such as food banks, drop-in centres, soup kitchens and a limited number of facilities for addictions and health programs. Thus, the total expenditures at this point on capital projects are about 62% of overall expenditures under the SCPI component.

The second largest area of expenditure is for the provision of services, including housing supports, information and referral, counselling, health, and education and training. These comprise about 30% of total expenditures. Research, project planning and coordination, training and other capacity building project expenditures have totalled about 7% of expenditures, and public awareness projects have comprised about 1.5%.

It was frequently noted during community consultations that, while a significant amount of funds has been invested to date in transitional housing facilities (either independent facilities or a part of a multiple use space), there remains considerable unmet need in this area. This situation has arisen because transitional and supportive housing are much more expensive to establish and operate than emergency shelters or larger multi-purpose facilities. They require a much higher ratio of paid staff to clients, and there are greater space requirements to support a client living in a more independent environment, and staying for a considerably longer period of time. Thus, while expenditures on transitional and supportive housing have been considerable, most community planners report that relative to need and comparative cost, these expenditures have been relatively modest.

Community planning leaders also pointed to the relatively small expenditures on research, training and other capacity building activities, and on public awareness, as resulting from the critical need for immediate support for homeless people. In light of this critical need, communities chose to direct SCPI resources to services.



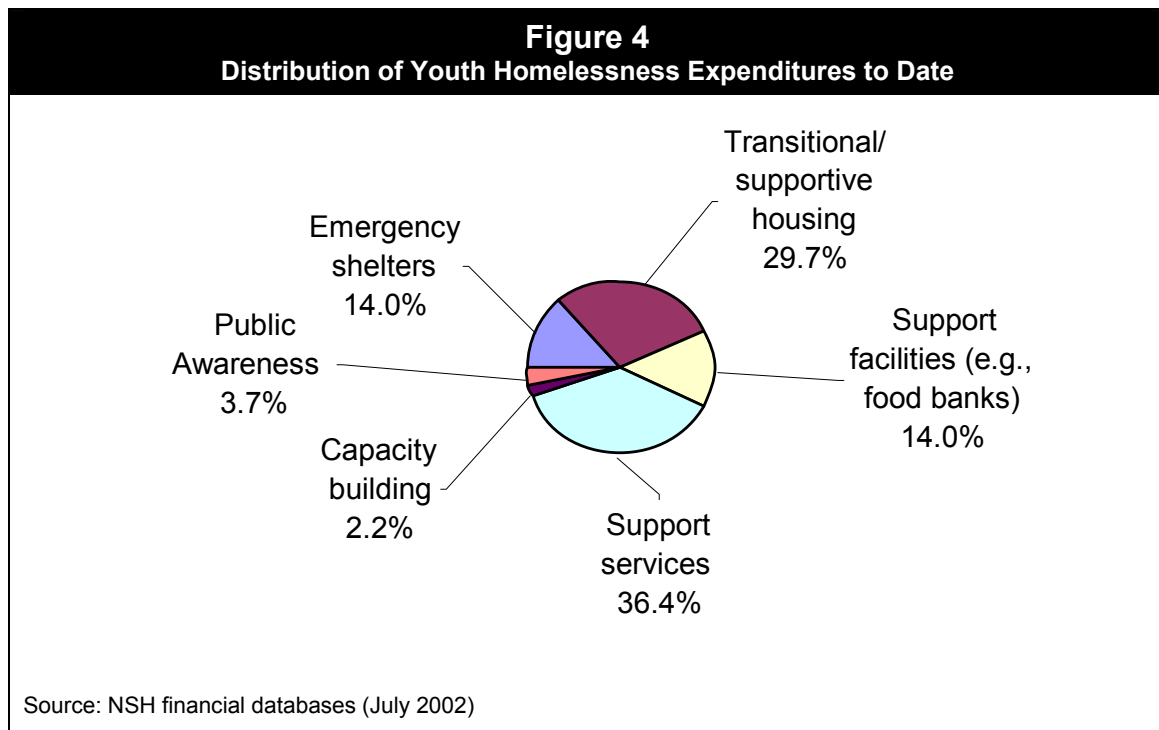
Aboriginal Homelessness spending patterns

As Figure 3 indicates, about 43% of the \$16 million in Aboriginal Homelessness funds allocated to date was devoted to shelter facilities. Of the shelter allocations, nearly three times as much funding had been dedicated to transitional/supportive housing as to emergency shelters. This differs somewhat from the SCPI allocation pattern, which showed about one-and-a-half times as much funding going to transitional and supportive housing as to emergency shelters.

The other major allocation of Aboriginal Homelessness funds has been for the provision of services (about 41% of total expenditures). Client education and training services received more funding (14%) than other types of services because of the terms under which much of the funding was provided through the employment-focused AHRDAs.

An interesting observation about Aboriginal Homelessness expenditures is that 10% of allocations have been targeted to capacity building activities, with the great majority of that going to community planning and coordination functions. This is explained by the fact that unlike the SCPI communities, which were provided with a total of \$2 million in additional funds to carry out these functions (not included in the project expenditure figures), Aboriginal communities did not have dedicated resources for these purposes. Some project funding was therefore used to pay for costs associated with planning and coordination.

Drop-in centres, soup kitchens and other types of support facilities accounted for about 5% of Aboriginal Homelessness spending, and 2% was spent on public awareness within Aboriginal communities.



Youth Homelessness spending patterns

The allocation of Youth Homelessness funds paralleled SCPI spending generally, as shown in Figure 4. Of the \$17 million that had been allocated at the time of the evaluation, shelters comprised 44% of all spending. Twice as much Youth Homelessness funding went to transitional and supportive housing facilities as to emergency shelters, falling in between the SCPI and Aboriginal Homelessness allocation patterns in this respect. About 36% of Youth funding was allocated to the provision of services, especially education and training services (in keeping with the fact that much of the youth spending was allocated under the terms of the YES programs). This proportion of expenditures also included a wide range of other services such as housing supports, information and referral, the provision of clothing, furniture and other goods, and health and personal counselling.

Youth spending differed somewhat from both Aboriginal Homelessness and SCPI spending in its emphasis on drop-in centres, food banks and other support facilities—these comprised about 14% of total spending, close to double the proportion spent under the other programs. Capacity building was not a spending priority for youth homelessness—only about 2% of spending was allocated in this area, mainly for the training of service providers. (Key informants noted that there are many well-established, experienced youth-serving agencies in Canadian urban centres, and these were typically the agencies that received youth homelessness funds.) Public awareness accounted for almost 4% of youth homelessness spending.

New and enhanced NHI-funded facilities and services

The following table offers an indication of how many of each type of project was funded by SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness.³¹ The data complements the funding allocation charts presented above, and they demonstrate how many facilities and services were created or enhanced in Canadian communities as a result of the NHI.

³¹ It is important to note that for some of these projects, SCPI was the only source of funding, and in others, SCPI was one of numerous funding sources (e.g., other federal department, provincial government, municipal government, private sector, non-governmental organisations) supporting the project's realization.

Table 4
Number of projects funded by stream and project type (Total expenditures to July 2002)

Project type	SCPI-funded	Aboriginal-funded	Youth-funded	Total
Emergency shelter projects	175	16	14	205
Transitional housing facilities	138	15	16	169
Supportive housing facilities	54	4	2	60
Mixed (emergency, transitional, supportive)	45	3	4	52
All shelter projects (sub-total)	412	38	36	486
Drop-in centres	73	2	9	84
Food banks	11	0	2	13
Soup kitchens	23	2	0	25
Combined drop-in/ soup kitchen/ food bank	17	0	1	18
All other capital projects (sub-total)	124	4	12	140
Housing support projects	241	29	18	288
Information & referral projects	297	29	19	345
Psycho-social support projects (counselling)	237	19	16	272
Health support projects	124	11	13	148
Education & training projects	355	59	52	466
All support service projects (sub-total)	1,254	147	118	1,519
Total # of funded projects	1,790	189	166	2,145

Summary

The analysis of available data on project expenditures suggests that SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness funds have been spent on a wide range of projects across the continuum of supports. However, there is a reported need at this point (as indicated in the community plans and supported through key informant interviews) for communities to expand significantly on the existing base of second-stage support facilities, and to move away from the funding of emergency facilities and services in future fund allocations.

9. Key Findings and Conclusions

This Chapter summarizes the main findings of the evaluation. It also highlights key factors leading to the success that has been achieved and some areas for improvement in any future federal government activity on homelessness.

9.1 Key Evaluation Findings

In reviewing the evaluation findings in light of the strategic objectives of the NHI and the operational objectives of the SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness components, the evaluation has found that there has been substantial progress made in most areas.

The review of the design, implementation and early results of the SCPI indicate that there are no apparent major flaws in the SCPI delivery model and that the premises underlying the community-based approach have been borne out thus far. The design features of the SCPI have allowed an appropriate balance between the flexibility communities require and the government's need for accountability. The combination of program funding and the planned, community-driven approach to allocating that funding has resulted in a considerable enhancement of community capacity to address homelessness in the great majority of the communities examined.

The Aboriginal Homelessness component of the NHI faced significant design and implementation challenges. There were initial delays and restrictive funding guidelines, a lack of dedicated planning funds and a generally lower capacity to conduct research and develop community plans in Aboriginal communities. These factors had an impact on the progress of most Aboriginal communities and caused delays in the implementation of the initiative, as evidenced by the low level of project expenditure allocations to date. While there have been some gains in terms of Aboriginal community planning around homelessness, on the whole there has been considerably less progress in addressing Aboriginal homelessness than in the mainstream communities.

Despite their similarities, concerns about the design and implementation of the Youth Homelessness component were less significant than those of the Aboriginal Homelessness component. The separation of Youth funding from the SCPI funding, the limited initial terms and conditions, and the fact that HRDC maintained administrative and decision-making authority over youth funds, resulted in some inconvenience on the part of community members and a delay in allocating Youth funds. However, in most cases, youth serving agencies were integrated into the community planning process, which enabled communities to fund youth homelessness projects as an integrated part of the community strategy.

One of the most positive evaluation findings comes from the analysis of the incremental impact of SCPI funding. The analysis shows that federal resources have significantly built upon pre-existing investments in homelessness and that the Initiative may have

helped to generate additional investments from non-federal partners. This finding is reinforced by evidence that the investments in facilities and services are in keeping with the continuum of supports approach that the federal government sought to encourage.

While there was some success in coordinating the SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness and Youth Homelessness components of Initiative, the non-HRDC components were, for the most part, managed separately both nationally and locally. The evaluation concludes that, overall, the NHI did not succeed in establishing a coordinated federal response to address homelessness.

The Research component has not yet produced the results initially anticipated. It has been successful in setting a research agenda, and developments have been made with respect to the HIFIS data collection system. However, a relatively small budget commitment to research and to the dissemination of information on homelessness has meant that Canada is still at an early stage in the development of basic knowledge of the nature and extent of homelessness.

9.2 Key Success Factors

- The SCPI model of devolving control over the funding allocation process to the community level, with safeguards to ensure that federal objectives are addressed, has been an important factor in fostering a wide-reaching mobilization of communities to address homelessness.
- The SCPI requirement for community planning has resulted, in most communities, in increased partnerships, and planning and decision-making structures and processes. Together, these represent a significant increase in community capacity to address homelessness.
- The support provided by local HRDC staff in implementing the Initiative was widely viewed as critical to its success in most communities, and presented a renewed proactive, collaborative face of the federal government that was welcomed by service providers.
- The flexibility of the SCPI terms and conditions allowed communities to make a wide array of investments that were not possible previously, and at the same time provided adequate assurance that expenditures were in keeping with SCPI objectives.
- Consultations with provincial governments prior to the SCPI, the requirement that communities find matching funds, the wide-reaching, collaborative approach to community planning that often included other levels of government, the severity of the homelessness problem and communities' desire to address the problem, all appear to have contributed to SCPI funds being 100% incremental, relative to pre-existing investments on homelessness.

9.3 Areas in Need of Improvement

- Clarification of roles and responsibilities is needed at the most senior level in relevant federal departments and agencies, to establish a more cohesive pan-federal approach to addressing homelessness.
- Federal government senior management in the regions need clear direction to participate in the federal homelessness initiative, to ensure that relevant programs and policies are informed by the federal and community strategies, and to present a coherent federal presence in communities in relation to homelessness.
- There is potential to increase collaboration between the federal government and some provincial and municipal governments, particularly at the community level.
- In partnership with governments, communities will need to address the continuing demand for more transitional and supportive housing facilities and services, to enable people living in shelters to progress toward greater independence when they are ready, and to free shelter space for others who need it.
- Capacity to address Aboriginal homelessness may be enhanced in future by the allocation of funds dedicated to community planning, research, and other capacity building functions. Aboriginal communities would continue to benefit from having the choice between joint planning with mainstream communities on one hand, and independent community planning on the other.
- The brevity of the SCPI's three-year time frame placed pressure on communities (and on the NSH and regional HRDC staff) to carry out an exhaustive community consultation and planning process, build decision making structures, allocate project funding, monitor progress, and reassess priorities, all in a very short timeframe. The "urgent needs" funding process was often in conflict with the planned and consultative approach. Especially for communities at an earlier stage in dealing with homelessness, a longer time frame would take into account the time required to build capacity, consult widely, plan accordingly, and implement projects effectively.
- Communities with dynamic community development initiatives and strong project development capacity in relation to homelessness have been better able to target spending in line with their priorities. Continued support for community development initiatives will help communities to address homelessness.
- There is room for improvement in the quality of some community plans, particularly in the availability of comprehensive background information and in the setting of clear priorities. Clearer standards, guidance and assistance in this regard may be needed for future community planning exercises.

- Investment in research on homelessness has been insufficient to make progress in establishing baseline data on the nature and extent of the problem. Research conducted to date is inadequately developed to support communities and the federal government in their efforts to monitor progress and identify effective approaches to alleviating homelessness. Given the time required to develop solid research, communities and governments would benefit from a continued effort to develop research on homelessness sooner rather than later.³²

³² Appendix F presents elements that should be part of any future research program, as identified by key informants.

10. Future Evaluation of Impacts

The present evaluation has focused primarily on program design and implementation issues. Given the short program period, it included an assessment of only some of the immediate outcomes of the Initiative. While it was not possible to assess longer-term impacts on communities and on homeless individuals, it is clear that such an assessment would be needed should the federal initiative be renewed. This section explores some of the challenges that a future evaluation of outcomes would face. It also discusses potential evaluation issues, approaches and design options.

10.1 Anticipated Evaluation Issues

The issues that a future evaluation would address are drawn from the long-term policy objectives of the NHI and the SCPI. The issues identified relate to the following four areas: 1) community capacity building and sustainability; 2) incremental and leveraging impacts of federal funding; 3) impact on homeless individuals; and 4) progress of communities in reducing homelessness. These issues are discussed below, along with evaluation methods, potential data sources, and anticipated challenges.

10.1.1 Community Capacity and Sustainability

One of the policy objectives of the NHI is to help communities develop sustained capacity to address homelessness. It will therefore be important to develop appropriate methods to measure community capacity and sustainability, and to determine the extent to which the NHI has contributed to their development.

Through the present evaluation, a number of indicators of community capacity have already been identified. These include the extent to which community-based planning and decision-making processes have been put in place; increases in partnerships, service coordination, and community awareness; and mobilization of service providers, governments and other stakeholders. One of the challenges in evaluating the NHI's impact in terms of sustained community capacity will be to refine measures of community capacity.

New indicators

In the literature on the well-being of communities, the concept of “social capital” is often used in place of “community capacity” to try to explain differences in well-being between communities. The extent of civic involvement in communities and the strength of civic associations are two frequently used measures of social capital. These in turn are measured by such factors as voter turnout, memberships in clubs and other organizations, and trust in public institutions.

It is possible to use these concepts to examine the extent to which the development of associations related to homelessness, and the extent of public involvement on homelessness, has changed over time. Defining a concept such as “social capital” or “community capacity” in relation to homelessness involves attaching relative values to community assets and liabilities, and there are bound to be disagreements as to how this is done. However, the NHI has developed some operational definitions that serve as a starting point. The community plans themselves can be seen as an important asset, and their quality and support in the community can be measured in various ways. The extent to which the planning process has helped establish new community planning and decision-making structures that are sustained over time can be measured once those terms are clarified. Other measurable assets could include the number of agencies serving homeless people or participating on homelessness coalitions; and the number of staff and volunteers working within those agencies on the problem.

Sustainability

It will be important to measure the sustainability of homelessness-related activities in communities. Sustainability can be seen as the degree of stability of community-based associations working to address homelessness. It may also be important to measure levels of public involvement, relative to the extent of the homelessness problem (since public involvement might be expected to diminish as the problem is reduced), as a related indicator of sustainability.

Attribution

It will be necessary to examine the extent to which change in community capacity over time can be attributed to the investments made by the NHI. It may not be necessary to measure the NHI’s contribution in absolute terms, but the Initiative’s contribution should be measured relative to inputs from other sources, taking into account qualitative assessments of their relative value.

10.1.2 Incrementality and Leveraging

Based on data collected from 15 case study communities, it has been determined that the national impact of federal SCPI funding is fully incremental. This indicates that all of SCPI funding added to, rather than displaced, municipal and provincial investments in homelessness that existed in the community prior to the implementation of the Initiative.

Given that the current incrementality picture is based on only governmental investments, a future outcomes evaluation should provide a more complete picture of the investment levels before and during the program period by including non-governmental investments in the calculation.

In addition to demonstrating the full incrementality of federal SCPI contributions, the figures from the 15 communities also indicated that further additional municipal/ provincial investments have occurred. In other words, both provincial and municipal governments invested more funds in homelessness-related activities during the SCPI period than

they did in the pre-SCPI period. The initial analysis of incrementality, however, cannot confirm whether those additional investments were actually leveraged by the federal Initiative, i.e. that the additional investments were attracted as a direct result of the program, or whether they would have occurred regardless of the SCPI. It is possible that the SCPI may have had a leveraging effect. The implication is that further evaluation work should draw a more complete picture of the full impact of SCPI funding on communities by including an assessment of the leveraging effect of the Initiative.

10.1.3 Impacts of Specific Projects/Programs on Individuals

An outcomes evaluation of the NHI will focus primarily on assessing the extent to which, and how, homeless and at-risk people have benefited from facilities and services funded through the Initiative. This could include focusing on the outcomes of specific projects and programs, for example, by measuring outcomes for individuals as one indicator of overall progress. Additionally, the evaluation could test assumptions about the continuum of supports approach and identify effective approaches with a view to planning future interventions.

Most evaluation research on homelessness focuses on the evaluation of specific programs, rather than a broad multi-program initiative. This has the obvious advantage of making the scope of the research narrower, and making the attribution of benefits more feasible. A future outcomes evaluation of the NHI could incorporate the evaluation of a sample of projects of various types, across a sample of communities. Project/program selection would be based on representativeness of communities and investments, and on the availability of reliable information. The purpose of this type of research would be to examine improvements for individual clients as a result of the programs that are being funded through the NHI, and to assess the sustainability of progress over time.

It is apparent from homelessness research that program participants tend to vary greatly in personal histories and characteristics. Consequently, measures of “success” need to be designed carefully. For an evaluation of a federal homelessness initiative, it will be important to focus on measures that are meaningful to a range of clients and that pertain directly to homelessness, rather than to the complexities of broader social problems or psycho-social conditions. Measures such as increasing independence of living circumstances, or stability in maintaining a housing arrangement, might be appropriate types of measures that could apply across a range of program types.

Evaluations of programs for homeless people typically involve multiple lines of evidence, including quasi-experimental quantitative approaches and qualitative methods that assist in the interpretation of quantitative findings. Experimental designs are theoretically ideal in that they present the possibility of more direct attribution of benefits. As in many social service environments, however, ethical considerations would mitigate against withholding services to some individuals in order to establish a control group.

It would also be possible to conduct a “pre/post” analysis, examining changes over time with individual clients, provided that the measures pertained directly to homelessness. These, too, must be carefully planned and pre-tested, however, because of the challenges of tracking homeless people, and the increased risk that non-program influences may be responsible for changes identified over the period of study.

Homelessness interventions often work in close connection with other interventions. Emergency shelters or transitional housing facilities often have programs such as addictions treatment, psycho-social counselling, life skills training and other services that help clients move out of the shelter system and into more independent living situations. Jointly evaluating a group of interventions that share clientele can be an effective way to determine what works best under which circumstances, and to identify factors that contribute to change in individual clients. This approach allows for the study of different combinations of interventions within one research strategy. Such research is more complex and expensive and requires considerable planning and pre-testing. In the context of the NHI, however, where new and enhanced services are being introduced into patterns of existing services, this approach would be appropriate for both research and program assessment purposes.

A challenge in undertaking research is the capacity of service providers to collect data of sufficient quality for analysis, and the inevitable tension between research requirements and service and administrative considerations. For example, intake forms for shelters or specific services are usually limited in scope, in part because clients may be reluctant to provide information, but also because staff are concerned about privacy issues and building the client-staff relationship. On the other hand, the intake process is the most obvious point at which to collect critical “pre-program” information, without which evaluation is difficult. The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) offers an opportunity to establish some national standards for the recording of intake data, service provision, program participation and exit data, and the system has the potential for expansion beyond its current focus on shelters.

10.1.4 Impacts of Community Efforts as a Whole

The NHI emphasizes community-driven planning to address homelessness, and NHI funds are being spent mainly on facilities and services across the continuum of supports. It would be of interest in evaluating NHI outcomes to broaden the perspective from individual interventions and groups of collaborative interventions, to look at how communities as a whole are progressing. Such research would focus on indicators such as:

- numbers of homeless people;
- numbers of people moving from the shelter system to transitional and supportive housing and then on to more independent living situations;
- numbers of new clients at emergency shelters;

- the role of mainstream programs (social services, health, housing, justice) in preventing/alleviating homelessness, and the interaction between homeless service providers and mainstream agencies; and
- other such measures of the extent to which the system of services for homeless people is helping to reduce the prevalence of homelessness (as opposed to the impacts of programs on specific individuals).

The research literature in Canada and the U.S. has documented the challenges in counting homeless people, but there are well-accepted methods available, including methods for “street counts” to include those not making use of shelters. These methods may not be perfect, but they would provide a reliable indication of the overall prevalence of homelessness. Initial research through the NHI has already begun to adapt some approaches to the Canadian context in some communities. Other studies focus more on housing availability, evictions, applications and take-up at rent banks and other measures related to the “entry point” into homelessness.

In the case of the NHI, the selection of communities for the research would need to take into account the objective of obtaining results that would be generalizable nationally. Given the range of circumstances even within the current 61 SCPI communities, sampling would have to be carefully conducted to take into account key criteria such as community size, geographic distribution, maturity of community planning, and the state of homelessness services prior to the federal initiative and at the time of the research.

A drawback to these macro-level studies is that they do not provide information that can establish a causal link between changes in homeless rates, for example, and the NHI. To increase the reliability of the chosen indicators as measures of success for the NHI, evaluators would need to develop an approach that recognized local economic factors and the potential impact of non-NHI related government policies and programs. Furthermore, many community interventions not funded or only partially funded through the NHI will have had an impact on homelessness rates. Attributing observed changes to particular interventions will inevitably be a subjective process at this macro level of analysis.

10.1.5 Impacts of Research and Communications

It will be important to assess the extent to which a future initiative will have contributed to the broadening of knowledge about homelessness through research, and the communication of that knowledge to increase awareness across the country. Areas of interest relating to the impact of research include the research strategy adopted and the specific research projects; the quality of the research conducted; and the extent to which key research questions are answered by the research findings.

With regard to communications, the evaluation would focus on the following measures:

- activities undertaken to compile, organize and disseminate research findings;
- the reach of those dissemination efforts in terms of communities and target audiences;
- the extent to which information has been made accessible to its target audiences; and

- the extent to which knowledge from the research has been integrated into planning, resource allocation, and service methods for homeless people.

The evaluation may also wish to assess the extent to which the general public, or specific groups in Canada, are more aware of homelessness than they were prior to the Initiative.

Evaluation methods to address research issues run a wide gamut, from simple reviews of activities and strategies, to peer reviews of research reports, to content analyses of research findings in the context of key research questions. On the communications side, research would likely focus on surveys of potential users of the research to assess awareness of findings and to examine how the information was accessed. It could also involve a review of community plans, projects and programs to assess whether they reflect research findings, accompanied by qualitative research to determine the extent to which the research was taken into account. Public opinion survey research may also be required.

10.2 Options for Future Evaluation

Based on the evaluation issues and possible approaches outlined above, three options for a future evaluation of NHI outcomes are proposed. The first option presents a basic evaluation model, involving the least expense and effort, and providing a basic amount of data. The second builds on the first model, and outlines a more elaborate evaluation approach. This second model requires more resources, but also provides stronger data upon which to base future homelessness program strategies and draw conclusions about the link between observed benefits and the NHI. Likewise, the third evaluation option builds on the first two models, and provides even more extensive data, with a corresponding increase in required resources. Within each option, there is a considerable range as to the number of programs and communities that could be involved.

Option 1 – Focus on investments, community capacity and research

This option builds on the current evaluation, but would provide substantially more detail on the community capacity outcomes of the NHI, and the extent to which communities' allocation of investments followed the continuum of supports approach. It would also strengthen the analysis of incremental impacts, and include an analysis of the leveraging effects of the NHI. Finally, it would allow the evaluators to assess the extent to which any future research program has contributed to increased knowledge and awareness. It would not attempt to measure the impacts of expenditures on homeless individuals. It would be the least expensive and labour-intensive of the three options. It would require some design work prior to the evaluation, but not an intensive period of research design and pre-testing. The methods would include:

- Qualitative assessment of progress in reviewing and updating community plans, and in community planning and decision-making processes;
- Analysis of the evolution of community plans over time as a measure of progress in addressing priorities;

- Analysis of changes in community capacity over time based on specific measures of capacity;
- Analysis of project expenditures against community priorities;
- Analysis of community priorities and expenditures in addressing the continuum of supports;
- Analysis of the incremental nature of federal investments based on a national set of definitions and data collection methods;
- Analysis of the sustainability of investments, and the amount of leveraged funds per NHI-funded project;
- Analysis of research results and peer review to assess the research quality;
- Survey, qualitative review and key informant interviews to assess awareness and use of research findings.

Option 2 –Focus on macro-level measures of homelessness

The second option would incorporate the analyses in Option 1, but would have as a primary emphasis a macro-level assessment of the impacts of the NHI on the prevalence of homelessness in participating communities. It would involve community-wide assessments of change over time in the number of homeless people and the types of people who are homeless, and targeted assessments of selected sub-populations such as Aboriginal people, youth and (in some communities) immigrants. It would require at least one year of research design and planning and substantial pre-testing in several communities. It would need to be undertaken in a sizable sample of participating communities, including a mix of communities by size and by stage of progress in community planning and implementation. This option would be substantially more expensive than Option 1 but would provide the first national-level data on the extent of homelessness and progress in reducing the prevalence of homelessness. Attribution of any progress to the federal initiative would be examined qualitatively, relying on the assessments of key informants and the prima facie evidence of new facilities and services intended to reduce homelessness. It would include:

- Pre-post counts on various measures of homelessness in selected communities, overall and for selected sub-populations;
- Analysis of macro-level economic indicators and policy and program factors (i.e., major non-NHI related factors) and application of that analysis to changes in homelessness rates;
- Qualitative review and financial analysis of investments to assess the role of the NHI in changing homelessness rates relative to other homelessness-related inputs.

Option 3—Focus on specific programs and services

Option 3 would include the elements described in the first two options, but would also include a major element focusing on the evaluation of the effectiveness of individual

programs and services. This would further the analysis of changes in the prevalence of homelessness, to try to identify specific interventions and sets of related interventions that appear to be effective. It would provide a greatly enhanced indication of the linkages between NHI investments in facilities and services and success in alleviating homelessness for individuals. It would also provide much enhanced guidance about the kinds of interventions that appear to work for different groups of clients, and the types of circumstances that appear to be conducive to successful intervention.

This option would be the most comprehensive, time consuming and expensive. It would require an intensive period of at least a year of research design and planning. This stage would involve numerous service-providing agencies across the country, pre-testing of methods, and several years to conduct the research itself. Ideally, it would be designed to carry forward into the future to provide longitudinal data for longer-term analysis.

Appendix A – Evaluation Questions

NHI Design and Delivery

- Does the multi-departmental NHI management model promote an effective, coordinated federal effort to address homelessness, based on common objectives and compatible approaches?
- Does the SCPI delivery model, with community control of planning and fund allocation, provide communities with sufficient flexibility to delivery appropriate services while maintaining sufficient control and accountability for the federal government to ensure it achieves its objectives?
- Do SCPI terms and conditions ensure that incremental activity results from funding?
- Is the current Aboriginal Homelessness delivery model an appropriate mechanism to achieve NHI objectives related to Aboriginal homelessness?
- Has the decision to allocate and disperse Aboriginal homelessness funding separately from other homelessness funding been of benefit in addressing Aboriginal homelessness and homelessness generally?
- Has it been possible through this model to integrate Aboriginal and mainstream homelessness strategies at the community level to the extent that is considered desirable?
- Do the three SCPI delivery models all enable communities to plan and allocate NHI resources in a way that addresses community needs and NHI objectives, including representativeness of the planning process?
- Do the various models allow communities to build sustainable capacity to continue addressing homelessness once SCPI funding is no longer available?

NHI Coordination

- Have participating federal responsibility centres, including those housed at HRDC and CMHC and PWGSC, coordinated their homelessness activities at the national and community levels so as to further NHI objectives effectively?
- To what extent does the NHI represent a unified federal government initiative with a shared set of goals and objectives and coordinated approaches?
- What efforts are being made to coordinate NHI activities with homelessness related program and policy areas in other federal departments and agencies at the national and local levels?
- To what extent has the NHI succeeded in coordinating its homelessness activities at the provincial and community levels with those of provincial/territorial and municipal governments?

Program Implementation (SCPI, Aboriginal Homelessness, Youth Homelessness, Research)

- What activities are being undertaken by the federal government at the community level to support community capacity building, partnership development, community planning, and individual projects?
- To what extent have these activities resulted in the development of community plans and projects in keeping with NHI objectives?
- What activities are being undertaken by the federal government at the community level to support activities directed specifically to Aboriginal homelessness?
- To what extent have these activities resulted in Aboriginal community plans or sections of broader community plans, and projects, to address Aboriginal homelessness, in keeping with NHI objectives?
- What activities are being undertaken by the federal government at the community level to support activities directed specifically to youth homelessness?
- To what extent has this activity resulted in community plans and projects that address youth homelessness?
- What activities have been undertaken to develop a national research agenda to support efforts to address homelessness?
- To what extent has this activity resulted in a planned research agenda and research projects?

Outcomes to Date

SCPI/Aboriginal/Youth

- To what extent has SCPI (Aboriginal and Youth Homelessness) had an incremental impact in these areas, over and above what was already in place?
 - New/enhanced local needs assessments, skills, partnerships and networks
 - Improved sharing of lessons learned and best practices
 - Increased awareness of community planning and projects within communities
 - Revised/updated community plans
 - Actual and planned investments in services and facilities for homeless people
 - Increased community knowledge and capacity to target local emerging sub-populations
 - New knowledge about homelessness and how to address the problem

NHI outcomes

- To what extent has the NHI as a whole resulted in the following desired outcomes?
 - Increased awareness of NHI, homelessness issues
 - Better research tools and methodologies relating to homelessness

- Increased inclusion of homelessness in government policy options
- More coordinated response to homelessness
- Increased local and national capacity to deal with absolute homelessness
- Meeting of urgent needs
- Improved decision-making around investments
- Enhanced knowledge on homelessness; increased access to this information
- Increased commitment and broader response to homelessness
- Enhanced community ownership of process and solutions

Feasibility of Future Evaluation of Outcomes

- What baseline information is currently available on the nature and extent of homelessness in Canada?
- What types of information are still required to be able to make a meaningful assessment of progress over time in alleviating homelessness?
- What do experts and the existing literature tell us about ways to measure community capacity, attribution of outcomes, and overall progress in addressing homelessness?

Appendix B – Criteria for Selecting Community Case Study Sites, and List of Case Study Communities

The following are the selection criteria used to select case study communities:

- community plans and projects at a sufficient level of progress to warrant review;
- mix of community entity, municipal entity and shared models;
- mix of 80% and 20% communities;
- some communities with significant pre-NHI homelessness planning and activity;
- some communities with significant Aboriginal population;
- some communities with youth homelessness activity;
- representation across Canada.

List of case study communities

Barrie, Ontario
Calgary, Alberta
Charlottetown & Summerside, Prince Edward Island
Drummondville, Québec
Durham, Ontario
Edmonton, Alberta
Fredericton, New Brunswick
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Hamilton, Ontario
Kelowna, British Columbia
Ottawa, Ontario
Red Deer, Alberta
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
St. John's, Newfoundland-Labrador
Thunder Bay, Ontario
Toronto, Ontario
Vancouver, British Columbia
Victoria, British Columbia
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Appendix C – Key Informant Interviews by Category and Community

Community	HRDC	Provincial	Municipal	Other federal government	Service providers (not Aboriginal or youth)	Aboriginal representatives	Youth representatives	Total
Barrie	2	0	3	0	17	3	1	26
Calgary	1	2	1	0	16	2	1	23
Drummondville	5	0	1	0	11	0	1	18
Durham Region	5	0	4	0	13	0	1	23
Edmonton	2	2	3	1	11	3	2	24
Fredericton	3	3	1	0	13	0	1	21
Halifax	4	1	1	0	11	2	1	20
Hamilton	2	2	7	0	13	1	2	27
Kelowna	2	2	2	0	8	2	4	20
Ottawa	3	1	3	3	10	5	1	26
PEI	2	1	1	1	13	2	1	21
Red Deer	3	2	2	0	11	5	0	23
St. John's	5	3	1	0	3	2	1	15
Saskatoon	3	2	1	0	16	4	1	27
Thunder Bay	2	1	1	0	7	1	2	14
Toronto	5	4	6	3	22	9	5	54
Vancouver	3	6	3	0	10	8	1	31
Victoria	2	3	1	0	8	2	1	17
Whitehorse	1	1	3	1	5	3	3	17
Winnipeg	5	1	2	0	16	6	1	31
Total	60	37	47	9	234	60	31	478

Appendix D – List of Research Projects

NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS		HIGHLIGHTS		PARTNER or RESEARCHER		STATUS	
<i>Structural and Systemic Determinants of Homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A report and annotated bibliography examining the structural and systemic determinants of homelessness. 	Canadian Council on Social Development	Completed and Approved				
<i>Counting the Homeless</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two reports examining the feasibility of undertaking street counts of the homeless in Canada. 	Statistics Canada	Completed Evaluation in progress				
<i>Indian City: The Journey Home</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four hours of interviews with aboriginal homeless persons and an accompanying report. 	Blonde Indian Productions	Completed Evaluation in progress				
<i>Shelter Costs and Income in Canada: Social and Geographic Dimensions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelter cost/income ratios as a measure of affordability. A look at households that spend more than 30% and more than 50% of income on shelter and whose income fall below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off. 	E. Moore & A. Skaburskis	Completed and Approved				
<i>Households at Risk of Homelessness: Distributional Patterns Within Eleven Canadian Metropolitan Regions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal distribution of 'at-risk' households across different metropolitan areas. Examination of all tenant households allocating 50% or more of their income to rent. Examinations of one-family, lone-parent families single individual households and multi-person non-family households. Evidence relating to goodness of fit between the locations of services for the homeless and the location of households at risk of homelessness. 	T. Bunting & P. Fillion	Completed and Approved				

NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS		HIGHLIGHTS	PARTNER or RESEARCHER	STATUS
<i>Fund Raising Feasibility Study and Development of a National Fund-Raising Toolkit</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of the capacity of a community based housing campaign undertaken by the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund. Based on this feasibility study, development of a tool-kit with elements that will enable organisations to assess the feasibility of fund-raising strategies within their communities. 	Edmonton Housing Trust Fund	Completed Evaluation to be undertaken	
<i>Possible Relationship Between Child Welfare and Foster Care Systems and Homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotated bibliography of work examining link between homelessness and experience in the child welfare system. Based on a sample of 3 sub groups in 4 cities (40 youth in total), identification of what policies or practices in the system may have contributed to incidences of homelessness among those exiting the child welfare system, and how the use of different practices may effectively assist in the prevention of homelessness. 	Luba Serge et al.	October 2002	
<i>Review and Synthesis of Street Counts in Canada</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of counts/analyses of homeless populations in Canada undertaken in the last ten years. Review of studies that discuss who the homeless are and the factors that have contributed to their homelessness. 	Tracy Peressini	October 2002	
<i>'Why Cities Matter' Conference Background Paper</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roundtable consultation project focusing on the theme "Why Cities Matter: Canadian City-Regions in a Global Age". Production of a research report on this theme and of a roundtable discussion document designed to encourage discussion among participants (policy, NGO, academic) at the roundtable session. 	Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)	Completed	
<i>Governance in Local Partnerships to Address Homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through case studies, examination of governance within complex partnerships at the local level. Focus on organisations such as community based agencies, coalitions, municipal governments and philanthropic organisations that work on homelessness issues to identify tools and strategies for problem solving and decision making. 	T. Carter and C. Warne (Joint project with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC))	November 2002	

NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS	HIGHLIGHTS	PARTNER or RESEARCHER	STATUS
<p><i>Involving Homeless and Formerly Homeless Clients in Projects and Programs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of client involvement in the programs and services offered by agencies that address homelessness. Case studies of agencies practising client involvement in 12 cities across Canada. Interviews with 48 front line staff and 114 clients. 	<p>J. Ward (Joint project with CMHC)</p>	<p>Completed Evaluation to be undertaken</p>
<p><i>Home\$ave: Feasibility Study of Individual Development Accounts for Increased Access to Affordable Housing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study to determine the feasibility of adapting the IDA model to encourage homeless people and households at risk of homelessness to move into secure housing in either the homeownership or rental market sectors. 	<p>Social & Enterprise Development Innovations (Joint project with CMHC)</p>	<p>November 2002</p>
<p><i>Translation of L'errance Urbaine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation of L'errance Urbaine, a compendium of research on homelessness, poverty and social exclusion. 	<p>Le Collectif de recherche sur l'itinérance, et l'exclusion sociale (CRI)</p>	<p>To be determined</p>
<p><i>Study of the Aboriginal Transient Population in Vancouver</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth research in several Aboriginal urban and rural communities examining the nature of Aboriginal victimisation to provide information to the government and communities. 	<p>Ray Coraddo (Joint project with Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND))</p>	<p>Fall 2002</p>
<p><i>Governing the Homelessness Initiative</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study of the municipal model in Hamilton. Advice on how to evaluate the pertinence of the municipal model in other municipalities where it might be chosen as the approach for governance of local homelessness initiatives. 	<p>K. Graham & S. Phillips</p>	<p>October 2002</p>
<p><i>Potential Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs of homelessness for the episodically homeless population of Toronto (focusing on the sub-populations of youth, families and new Canadians). 	<p>M. Eberle & T. Zizys</p>	<p>December 2002</p>

NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS	HIGHLIGHTS	PARTNER or RESEARCHER	STATUS
<p><i>Best Practices at Work: Putting Homelessness Prevention Practices to Work Across Canada</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a comprehensive set of Internet resource materials to support and enhance the work of Canadian communities and help organizations with practical programs, ideas and tools for addressing and preventing homelessness. • Will include a resource database, a practical reference guide, a Web site and a communications plan relating to the homelessness issue in Canada. 	<p>Raising the Roof</p>	<p>October 2002</p>
<p><i>Development of Homelessness Indicators for the Quality of Life Reporting System (QoLRS)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of two measures of homelessness for each of the 18 municipalities participating in the QoLRS. • These measures will be comparable across all of the municipalities and integrated into the next iteration of QoLRS report in March 2003. 	<p>Federation of Canadian Municipalities</p>	<p>March 2003</p>
<p><i>Symposium on Health and Homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fall symposium is being proposed to identify research themes and explore avenues of collaboration between the NSH, the CIHR, researchers and community representatives. • In addition to fostering research collaborations, the research symposium would aim to achieve a broad consensus on research priorities around the issue of health and homelessness that would include a significant community action research component. 	<p>Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)</p>	<p>November 2002</p>
<p><i>Health Disparities and Homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection and funding of research projects under the theme of health disparities and the sub-theme of homelessness. Tentative timeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Request for proposals (May 15, 2002) – Deadline for proposals (October 2002) – Selection of projects (December 2002) – Completion of projects (to be determined) 	<p>Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)</p>	<p>To be determined</p>

REGIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS		HIGHLIGHTS		RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
BRITISH COLUMBIA					
Sub-standard Housing Problems Faced by Immigrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study of the extent of sub-standard housing problems among immigrants and refugees in the Lower Mainland. Based on the study, identification of policy directions and community strategies incorporating effective and comprehensive action plans to address the problems. 	MOSAIC	Completed Evaluation to be undertaken		
Systemic & Structural Barriers of Social Housing & Aboriginal Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative and quantitative study of public (government) and private (providers) social housing policies as they relate to the Aboriginal Community in Vancouver. Examination of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies, rules, or regulations that contribute to Aboriginal homelessness in Vancouver - Current knowledge about Aboriginal social housing tenants in Vancouver - Identification of knowledge gaps - Experiences of Aboriginal Housing tenants during tenancy and post tenancy - Experiences of Aboriginal People who have successfully accessed housing and of those who have not Supports and services necessary to prevent homelessness among Aboriginal Housing tenants. 	Lu'ma Native Housing Society	Fall 2002		
Structural Barriers to Independent Living for Adults Living with FAS/E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation of discussions with adults living with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects (FAS/E) to gain insight into experiences of homelessness, and the structural issues contributing to their homelessness. Quantitative analysis of prior housing stability. All participants are residents of the Options for Independent Living housing project in Whitehorse. 	Up North Training Services	Completed Evaluation to be undertaken		

REGIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS	HIGHLIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
<i>Effects of Homelessness on School Children</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with teachers, school children and their families, and social service providers to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent children identified as living in poverty are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless - The best approaches for ensuring this population is in receipt of the services that would prevent their homelessness - How to develop partnerships to provide consistent and coordinated services to assist this population - Whether or not enhanced educational interventions could benefit this population. 	Nanaimo Community Housing Services	Completed
<i>Developing a Profile of the Homeless from a Rural/Regional Perspective in West Kootenay</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional survey to gather qualitative and quantitative information including estimates of the numbers of homeless and at-risk persons, as well as the demographic characteristics of this population. 	Nelson District Community Resources Society	October 2002
<i>Emergency Shelter and Support Needs of Seniors at Risk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of the 'at risk' and homeless senior population with a focus on client outreach services for this population, shelter needs and barriers to emergency and temporary housing. 	Seniors Housing Information Program	March 2003
Ontario			
<i>Preventing Homelessness by Addressing Unique Needs and Barriers for Cultural Groups</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study based on the use of surveys, interviews of key informants, service providers and homeless people, field observations and agency records. • Identification of the key structural/systemic issues that lead to homelessness among particular linguistic/cultural groups in the homeless population. • Analysis of the needs of particular subgroups within these cultural groups. • Development of strategies for reducing and preventing homelessness in the future. 	Social Planning Council of Sudbury	March 2003

REGIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS	HIGHLIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITY	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
<p><i>Pathways from the Street: Identifying Readiness Amongst Street Youth to Re-enter Mainstream Culture</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-depth, tape-recorded interviews of street youth to identify the life events, causes and factors that led them to homelessness. Interviews conducted with youth aged 16-25 that are in the Getting Back from the Edge clinical intervention program aimed at assisting youth to leave the street culture. 	C. Bryne, McMaster University	March 2003
<p><i>The Impact of Downloading on the Capacity of Ontario Municipalities to Address Homelessness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the governance model(s) that arose in Ontario after the recent downloading of housing responsibilities. Identification of the models found to be the most effective at contributing to the enduring growth of capacity within communities, to prevent and reduce homelessness. 	Social Housing Strategists Inc	October 2002
Alberta			
<p><i>Literature Review</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues of Homelessness, Domestic Violence and Women 	Violence Information and Education Centre	October 2002
<p><i>Assessment of Housing Needs & Social Housing Availability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examination of demographic information and other relevant data to develop a profile that will be useful for planning housing and related support services. Population survey (Red Deer) to determine needs, attitudes and choices regarding affordable housing; barriers to affordable housing; and options for housing solutions. 	Red Deer Housing Committee	Completed

Appendix E – Method for Calculating the National Incremental Impact of SCPI Funding

Data Collection Method

Sources of data/information

- Figures were extracted from community plans that outline non-federal contributions to homelessness in the 1998-2003 period (2001-02 and 2002-03 data were generally projected). This data varied in quality and detail by community, from annualized, detailed breakdowns of all funding sources, to simple totals from major source groups (provincial government, municipality etc.).
- Documents from provincial and municipal governments, outlining their expenditures on homelessness for the period in question, were also reviewed. These documents were typically available as a result of the 50% matched funding requirement. In cases where official figures were not available, a confirmation of the amount invested - or to be invested - was obtained via letters (affidavits) from provincial offices.
- Annual SCPI figures are taken from NSH documents. The "SCPI" data include Aboriginal and Youth allocations in order to be consistent with the figures obtained from the provinces and municipalities (which do not differentiate between the 3 "pots"). In Ontario, the regional HRDC office allocated Aboriginal funds, so figures for Aboriginal Homelessness expenditures were obtained from the Ontario regional office of HRDC.

Filling the gaps and validating/analysing data

- Local HRDC facilitators helped to fill any gaps in provincial and municipal data.
- When information was acquired from the provinces/municipalities, the data were reviewed, and any amounts that did not clearly conform to the type of expenditures we were seeking were discussed either with the HRDC facilitator or the provincial/municipal official to decide whether to include the item or not.
- During community case study interviews with HRDC officials and local leaders, with provincial and municipal government officials and with service providers, the availability of homelessness-related funding was discussed. The goal was to identify trends in funding, expectations of funding, and local/provincial factors that may be influencing funding levels, to better understand the incremental impact at the community level, and to be aware of any circumstances that may have had a significant impact on the level of incrementality.

Method of Calculation

- The investments were totalled and the average level of municipal and provincial activity per community prior to SCPI was determined for each year of the 3-year SCPI program period.
- It was then determined, for each year, whether SCPI funding *built upon* past municipal and provincial levels of investment or whether SCPI funding *substituted* part of those investments. A lower level of municipal and provincial activity during the SCPI period would indicate some displacement; a higher level of activity would point towards an incremental impact of SCPI funding.

Rationale behind the Method of Calculation

- Excluding private funding from calculation: Since non-governmental levels of activity were difficult to obtain for many of the 20 communities and/or were not available for all years, it was decided to focus strictly on governmental (municipal, provincial) investments. **Note:** It is very difficult to determine the impact that the exclusion of non-governmental funding from the calculation may have had on the results, given that much data on non-governmental funding is missing for many communities.
- Pre-SCPI period: why look at two years only? Since information on past municipal and provincial government activity on homelessness is not easily acquired, the evaluation was limited in terms of its ability to observe the spending patterns of those levels of government beyond a certain number of years preceding the SCPI. Two years (1998-1999 and 1999-2000) was judged to be the minimum number of years required to obtain a sound estimate of the level of municipal/provincial investment prior to the SCPI. As such, great effort was made to acquire numbers for that period.
- Comparing the level of investment for each SCPI year with the average of 1998-1999 and 1999-2000, instead of comparing it with the level in 1998-1999 and then with the level in 1999-2000: The second option would have given us a *range estimate* for each SCPI year (e.g. 40 to 60% incrementality range for Year 1, with 40% representing the level as compared to the 1998-1999 level and 60 % representing the level as compared to the 1999-2000 level), whereas the first option gives us a *point estimate* for each year (which essentially represents the mid-point in the aforementioned range estimate). The lowest and highest values attained during the 3-year SCPI period would represent the incrementality range for the entire program period.

The decision was made to compare the levels of investment during the SCPI years with the *average* of past investments for two reasons:

- the purpose of the incremental analysis was to obtain a general range estimate for the entire three-year program period; we did not need to know the range on a year-by-year basis;

- it was necessary to account for the possibility of “freak” pre-SCPI investment levels. For example, in the case of one community, a comparison with each of the two pre-SCPI years would yield a range of 62 to 135%. The 62% being in comparison with 1999-2000 figures, and the 135% being in comparison with 1998-1999 figures. It was clear that the investment levels were very high two years before SCPI and then took a plunge the next year (immediately before SCPI came into effect). But, since we did not have investment figures prior to 1998-1999, we had no indication as to which figure would most likely have been maintained had SCPI not been implemented. Therefore, averaging out the pre-SCPI figures seemed a just method of extrapolating the level of activity that would have been maintained in the absence of SCPI.
- Averaging out investments from all communities (and calculating a national incrementality rate based on “national” figures) instead of averaging out the incremental rates from all communities: It became apparent very early on in the data collection process that, for a few communities, it would be impossible to obtain the level of investments that occurred in 1998-1999. For these communities, the average of pre-SCPI investment levels would be estimated based on a single year, which could yield an either very high or very low incrementality rate for the SCPI funding during the program period. By adding up the investment figures for all communities, and averaging out the amounts for each category of investments, for each year, the evaluation aimed to minimize the effect that missing values could have on the net incrementality rate for the entire country.
- Averaging out figures from all the communities instead of using cumulative figures (i.e. simply adding up the available figures): Since there were missing data for some communities, for some categories of investment, for some years, averaging out the figures for all available communities would yield a better estimate of the ‘national’ levels of investment. In addition, since the problem of missing data is more prevalent for the two pre-SCPI years than for the program years, cumulative values during SCPI would tend to be higher than those before, yielding a greater incrementality rate. For these reasons, averaging out the figures for each SCPI year and comparing the value obtained with the average of the two pre-SCPI years provides us with a better estimate of the actual incrementality rate. (The calculation of averages was adjusted according to the number of communities for which data was available, for each category of investment.)

Appendix F – Elements of Future Research Program

The NSH and regional HRDC officials involved in developing the research agenda and moving it forward indicate that the following elements should be part of any future research program:

- adequate resources to cover the cost of staff and the research required for a more comprehensive and planned approach to homelessness research;
- to expand consultations with services providers, to partner with the research community, and to encourage this community to share responsibility for homelessness research with the NSH;
- to make research opportunities more accessible to communities and encourage a community-based infrastructure to support on-going research;
- to develop an on-line library of existing research and a forum for researchers to provide input on making the information and data relevant to them;
- to identify and focus on specific domains of research, such as Aboriginal and youth homelessness and mental health issues;
- to determine the true cost of homelessness and the benefits of prevention at the national and regional levels;
- to measure the impact of mainstream programs and policies (social security, health, housing, social services) on homeless populations;
- to develop a profile and an accurate count of homeless people in Canada;
- to obtain better information on “best practices” through well-designed empirical research.

Appendix G – Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal communities –include groups and individuals who came together to plan and apply for funding for projects with a focus on Aboriginal people under the NHI, and the Aboriginal people they represented who lived in SCPI communities. They may include First Nations organizations, status and non-status Indians, Métis and other Aboriginal individuals living in urban areas.

Absolute homelessness – refers to people living on the street or in temporary shelters.

Affordable housing – permanent housing that is affordable to low-income households. While affordable housing should form part of a community’s continuum of supports plan, it cannot be funded through the SCPI.

Continuum of supports –includes all supports and services that would be needed to assist a homeless or at-risk person to become self-sufficient, where possible. The continuum includes prevention, emergency shelter, transitional housing and services, supportive housing and permanent housing.

Emergency shelters – communal shelter intended for tenures of a few nights up to six months, for people who have no other available accommodation.

Incrementality – for the purpose of this evaluation, federal funding is considered to be incremental if it adds to, rather than displaces, existing funding contributed by provincial and municipal governments to homelessness-related programs and services.

Leveraging – funding from non-federal sources is considered to be leveraged by federal funding if the federal investments *caused* other funding sources to contribute funding to homelessness-related programs *that they would not have invested otherwise*. The leveraging effect of NHI funds was not within the scope of the evaluation.

Supportive housing – public, private or non-profit housing with some form of support component, intended for people who cannot live independently in the community, where providers receive funding for support services. The tenure may be long-term.

Sustainability – the long-term viability of a project, organization or coalition. The evaluation examined the sustainability of community coalitions, but not that of projects.

Transitional housing –housing and services intended to facilitate self-reliance and self-sufficiency. This housing is intended for an individual’s use for up to three years.

Urgent need – refers to projects undertaken before a community plan is in place. In order for a project to qualify as an ‘urgent need,’ a community would have to show that homeless people would suffer extreme hardship if the project did not begin immediately.