
The Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS): Five Years After the New Deal for Cities

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Outline

- National Homelessness Initiative/
Homeless Partnering Strategy
 - Why Is It an Interesting Case?
 - What Are Its Origins?
 - How Has It Changed?
 - What Has It Accomplished?
 - Where Has It Fallen Short?
-

Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS)

□ Why look at this intervention given its relatively small funding envelope:



- 1999-2009 NHI/HPS total funding was approximately \$1.562 billion
 - In contrast to the Gas Tax Transfer which has been allocated \$13 billion dollars to cover the period 2005-2014.
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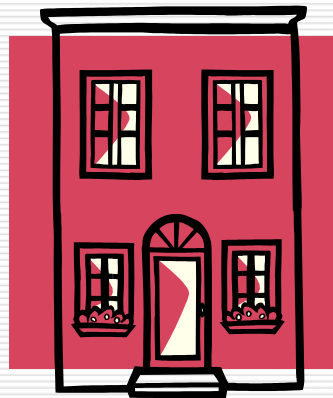
Not because it solved the problem...

The Speech from the Throne two months before the announcement (October 12, 1999) mentioned that the "government will continue working ... to address the *root causes* of homelessness." The minister further explained that the federal government would become "a partner in a national effort to eliminate homelessness." We now know that the program announced 5½ years ago and recently extended has nothing to do with the *root causes*, nor has it contributed to *eliminating* homelessness (J. David Hulchanski 2005)

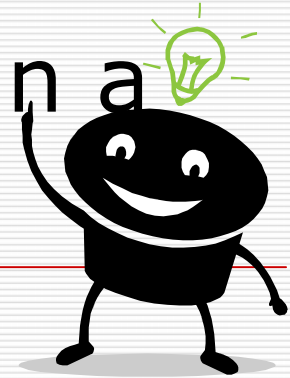
Too Much of This...



And not enough of this...



Innovative and effective (but in a very limited way)



Federal civil servant perspective:

Even though NHI was the smallest program representing the most disenfranchised, it generated the highest level of correspondence in the department -from individuals, stakeholders, agencies, municipalities, etc. The Minister in charge was initially very skeptical about the program, but he soon became a strong champion for it" (2008 interview with senior civil servant in Ottawa).

Local sector actor perspective:

SCPI or the Homelessness Partnering Strategy has [brought] players to the table that were not involved before.... (2009 housing policy consultant in Ottawa)

A Brief History of HPS

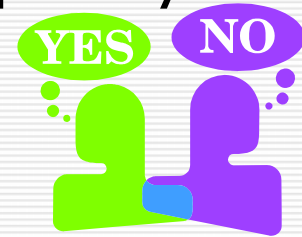


- Begin as the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in 1999
- Active engagement of :
 - Federal Minister Claudette Bradshaw
 - Senior civil servants with interest in social policy
- Response to widespread pressures from big city mayors, social forces, individuals
- Key innovation: Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)
- In 2006, switch from NHI to HPS and from SCPI to HPI but very little substantive change – much more evolution than radical realignment



Five Years After the New Deal on Cities?

Key question: did the Harper government introduce substantial changes in policy or programs?



Answer: both yes and no

- **Yes:** the Harper Conservatives did change the trajectory of federal involvement
- **No:** they did so by maintaining the status quo

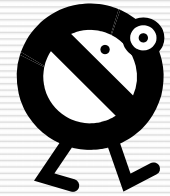
Impact Today: a growing crisis

“Yes – there were substantial changes”



- Switch from Bradshaw to Fontana in 2004
 - Brought together Housing and Homelessness under one minister
 - When government fell, was days away from tabling a much awaited 10 year national housing strategy with Cabinet
 - These initiatives were the result of growing evidence, also supported by NHI's support for research on homelessness
 - This trajectory of change was stopped when the Liberal government fell
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“No - the program remained the same”



NHI/HPS and SCPI/HPI were simply too popular to eliminate:

“it put in place a community process. Communities across the country were forced to get together and decide how to tackle homelessness in their community” (Kraus, Housing Policy and Research Consultant, Vancouver, 2009).

“There is some challenge around the shortness of that funding... but it has allowed government, citizens, service providers, and the development community... to come together and identify strategies for the whole continuum of social housing that is effective and relevant to our community (Weaver, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, 2009)

The situation today



From **Salvation Army funded poll conducted by The Strategic Council in late 2009**

“Approximately one in nine Canadian adults, or close to 3 million people, reported that they have either experienced or come close to experiencing homelessness... Rates were also highest (16%) amongst respondents, 45 to 55 years of age, and those with income levels less than \$40,000 a year (20%)”.



From **The Wellesley Institute,** **2010**

“The number of households on affordable housing waiting lists is at an all-time high of 141,635 across Ontario – a jump of almost 10% in the last year”



From **Canada West Foundation,** **2010**

“[Despite numerous studies identifying a clear link between affordable housing and homelessness, most Cdn jurisdictions... treat these issues as distinct, often dealing with them through different ministerial departments”



In Summary



The decision to stop the development of a national housing strategy and to continue to support the NHI/HPS on the same basis as in the past, was a decision based on an assumption that the status quo was sufficient.

However, the evidence is now clear that an adequate supply of decent affordable housing with appropriate supports would quickly end the homelessness crisis in Canada and that a national housing strategy with clear objectives would be a significant step in the right direction.
