

Federal homelessness cuts: Bad now, worse to come

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Summer 2006 cuts: Homeless funding cuts in 7 communities (so far)

The federal government committed \$134.8 million in funding in fiscal 2006 for its national homelessness program (called the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative). Most of the money is assigned to 10 large communities; with the rest shared among more than 50 other areas. To date, cuts to 2006 funding have been reported in:

- Peel (Ontario) - \$144,000 cut
- Guelph (Ontario) - \$22,000 cut
- London (Ontario) - \$367,000 cut
- Windsor (Ontario) - \$187,000 cut
- Ottawa (Ontario) - \$1,000,000 cut
- Yellowknife (NWT) - \$416,000 cut

The single biggest 2006 cut is \$5,890,000 in Toronto. Federal officials committed \$17.29 to Toronto for fiscal 2006. As of this week, the actual allocation is \$11.4 million.

Winter 2006 cuts: Entire \$134.8 million program to be shut down

The homelessness program, launched in 1999, will die in March of 2007 unless it is renewed by the federal government. ***If the funding is not renewed by the fall of 2006, then services across Canada will start to wind down programs and lay off staff.*** Hundreds of valuable services delivered by thousands of experienced staff people will be terminated. It will be a bleak winter for the homeless.

Services / programs funded by federal homelessness program

The National Homelessness Secretariat reports that in the first four and one-half years of the program (from December of 1999 to March of 2004):

- more than 9,000 beds in transitional housing were created
- 725 homeless shelters received funding for necessary upgrades, plus 403 food banks, soup kitchens and drop-in centres
- 49 federal properties were made available for the creation of 203 new homes
- 3,600 services (including housing placement, food and clothing distribution, transportation, information/referrals/follow-up, psychosocial services, emergency health and addiction services, education/life skills, training/employment, legal/financial services, identification acquisition) were funded
- more than 1,000 capacity activities (local research studies, training, project development and management support, enhanced service coordination) were supported, and
- 29 knowledge and research activities were completed at the national and regional levels.

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