



Social Planning
Council of Winnipeg

2004

Annual Report

“There was a child went forth every day. And the first object he looked upon, that object he became. And that object became a part of him for a day. Or a certain part of a day, Or for many years or many cycles of years...”–Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

our mission

To provide action oriented leadership in social planning and effecting policy changes.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg plays a unique role in the community by:

- | Identifying and defining social planning issues, needs, capacities, and necessary resources in the community;*
- | Developing and promoting policy and program options to policy-makers;*
- | Support community groups and the voluntary human service sector;*
- | Raising community awareness of and providing voice to social issues and human service needs, social policy options, and service delivery alternatives; and*
- | Facilitating communication and collaboration with government, business, labour, the voluntary sector and grassroots communities.*

our vision

A just, caring, inclusive and responsive society





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President's Report

This 85th year of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg has been a busy and productive one. In this report I will highlight a few of the initiatives that the Board and Staff have been involved in over the past year, starting with last year's very successful AGM. Our 84th AGM was held at the Manitoba Museum and featured Cindy Blackstock as our keynote speaker. The SPC also sponsored a two-day workshop entitled "Treaty Annuity Working Group" in June of last year. In July we released the Poverty Barometer focusing on Early Childhood Tooth Decay and the "Just Income Coalition" petition became available on-line.

October 2nd to October 10th was Just Income Week and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg sponsored several events throughout the week. November saw the release of the 2003 Manitoba Poverty Report Card and in December we hosted our Winter Open House. In January the SPC released a position paper, "Connecting the New Deal to Social Development" in response to Mayor Glen Murray's New Deal. February and March of last year were quite busy for the SPC as we took on a new project related to the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, which included sponsoring a Community meeting to select members for the Proposal Fund Allocation Committee.

I also had the honor of bringing greetings on behalf of the SPC in the official opening ceremonies of Black History Month. We also sponsored the Mayor's State of the City Address and Luncheon once again this year.

There are numerous other activities and initiatives that the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is involved with through both the staff and Board of Directors and these can be reviewed through our web site on an on-going basis. I would like to commend the staff, Board and the numerous committee volunteers for a job well done as it is their hard work and dedication that keep us strong.

Sincerely,



Darlene Hall, President



Executive Director's Report

After 85 years of service to the community in Winnipeg the Social Planning Council shows no signs of slowing down. We invite ideas about how to celebrate such a long and distinguished record of accomplishment for some significant event later in the year. As for my tenure of ten years I am proud to report yet another successful year of development. The small but amazing compliment of staff and the rich support from a strong and vibrant volunteer base have once again been the recipe for that success. The support of the community has been featured in many ways and our relationship to the United Way of Winnipeg has enabled us to strive for our vision of a "just, caring and responsive society".

We learned early in the year that the Center of Excellence for Child and Youth Centered Communities would be prematurely wound up. It was unfortunate that we were unable to complete the work we had initiated with partners from across the prairies. We have however negotiated with another Center of Excellence based out of Toronto for some of the work to be continued.

We learned a great deal from the project and have continued to advance the importance of community involvement in any research which intends to be applicable to or for the benefit of people at the grassroots level.



Another significant community initiative which we supported was Just Income Coalition which had a very successful week of activities in October. The objective essentially was to raise awareness of the consequences of a low wage economy and provide support for increasing of the provincially set minimum wage in Manitoba. In addition to our usual partners we were joined by some of Winnipeg's most prominent leaders from a wide diversity of faith groups. As part of the week of activities the visit from the leadership of The Canadian Council on Social Development and the Caledon Institute of Social Policy made our efforts in Manitoba a national story. The coalition is continuing and we hope to see more progress this October with the second annual effort.

This year we were very involved with the Urban Futures Coalition. This group of inner-city organizations has been requesting that the three levels of government reinstitute a tri-level funding agreement as has been of benefit to our inner-city in the past. In January a Memorandum of Agreement was signed and we expect the outcome to be an operational agreement soon. A new committee has been formed at SPC known as the Environment Committee. Linked to other environmental groups and with dedicated leadership this group has brought forward the issues and concerns of children's health and environmental risks forward for our support.

Much of this year's energy went into planning a conference on the issues called "Exposed for Life". This is the first ever environmental conference sponsored by the SPC and we are looking forward to building the capacity to achieve solutions in this emerging area. I would like to acknowledge our deep appreciation of the United Way of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Foundation for supporting our core activities.

"As Executive Director of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg for ten years, Mr. Helgason has shown impeccable commitment to the improvement of the quality of life for First Nations, Inuit and Metis Canadians...Thanks to his enlightened leadership, [he] has earned the respect and appreciation of many people from the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community alike." Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada

This year we became involved in the situation with regard to Winnipeg's homeless. In the fall we researched and assessed the effectiveness of the three year federal investment announced in 1999. Once again we were able to determine that in the absence of significant community participation even the best intended programs fail to meet anticipated outcomes. Upon working with the Community Partnership on Homelessness and Housing we were able to scope out a model and a plan which provided a "shared delivery" concept on funds allocated by the Federal Government. This plan was accepted by the Minister of Homelessness and we are embarking on its implementation. It is truly gratifying to see members of the community at the decision-making table on issues as important as homelessness and housing.

They are true partners in our shared vision for Winnipeg. This support allows for us to capitalize on the tremendous talent and expertise of the citizens of Winnipeg who volunteer with us in many different ways. In particular, I would like to note the Board of Directors who provides leadership, guidance and accountability to the organization and to the community.

Finally the staff, both core and contract, have been stellar in their competence and dedication to this agency day in and day out. We look forward to continuing to shape an environment and a better future for everyone in this tremendous city.

Wayne Helgason
Executive Director



Poverty Advisory Committee

Once again I am pleased to provide a report on the work of the committee over the past year. As always, the Poverty Advisory Committee remains committed to the philosophy that poverty issues should be addressed in a way that recognizes poverty as a product of a wide spectrum of influences.

While income assistance rates were recently increased by \$20 for singles, couples with no children, and people with disabilities, the committee was disappointed that the increase was not more substantial. The Acceptable Living Level Report (A.L.L.), released in early January by Winnipeg Harvest and the Social Planning Council, emphasizes the need for income assistance rates that reflect the actual cost of living in Manitoba. The committee continues to be concerned over the hardship that low income assistance rates create for people living in poverty.

At the beginning of the summer, the committee had a planning workshop to help identify priority areas for the upcoming year. As a result of this workshop, facilitated by Dennis Lewycky, the committee identified three main areas in which to concentrate and coordinate their efforts: income assistance rates, housing, and education and training. The committee decided to develop three subcommittees in those areas to work on specific projects.

The income assistance subcommittee, with the guidance of Harold Shuster as chair, has been working on developing a review of the Employment and Income Assistance Program to identify ways that the system can be improved. One of the Social Work students placed with the Social Planning Council, Philip Evans, has been working with the subcommittee and the staff resource on this project.



In other areas, the committee met with a representative of the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ to express concerns about the negative portrayal of people who panhandle in their Change for the Better Help Key Program and campaign. The committee took part in a meeting at the Social Planning Council with the City about the New Deal.

The Poverty Advisory Committee continues to provide insight and direction to the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg Board of Directors on issues that impact low and fixed income Manitobans.

I would like to acknowledge the committee members who continue to dedicate their time, energy, and effort to the work of the committee. I would also like to thank the staff at the Social Planning Council for their ongoing support, with special thanks to Tara Rudy. We invite any and all SPC members and Board who are interested in this agenda to join the work of the committee.

We are looking forward to another busy year and a number of new projects to move Manitoba forward on the poverty agenda.

Harold Dyck, Chair

Wellbeing in the Workplace Committee

Our performance at work and the quality of our working lives are crucially influenced by our general health and well-being. Reciprocally, the extent to which health and well-being concerns are supported by policy and practice, and managed effectively within work organizations, is a significant determinant of longer-term organizational performance. In other words, a healthy workplace is a more productive one.

The Wellbeing in the Workplace Initiative was started by the Canadian Mental Health Association - Manitoba Division (CMHA) in 1996 to simultaneously assist in enhancing worker health and organizational productivity. The administration of the project, including the Wellbeing in the Workplace Advisory Committee, has been under the auspices of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg since 2001. The project receives its primary funding from The Winnipeg Foundation. The Committee represents business, labour, government and university interests.



Reporting to the Board of Directors of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Wellbeing in the Workplace Advisory Committee has completed a document entitled *The What, Why and How of Healthy Organizations* which is designed to educate employers and employees about the Wellbeing in the Workplace approach, and is in the final stages of a pilot study to test the approach.

In cooperation with the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba, the committee participated in the development of a Community-University Research Alliance proposal for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to conduct further research and training. This proposal was not funded. However, the committee is currently examining other avenues of funding for this initiative.

The committee is also exploring potential areas of future activity at a time when the workplace is becoming identified as a priority area for health improvement, and policy and practice has evolved to include the promotion of mental health and well-being in the workplace.

We encourage you to contact the Social Planning Council for more information on these initiatives, or to request a copy of the publication once completed.

Sid Frankel, Co-Chair



Winnipeg Census Data Consortium

Once again, the Social Planning Council has facilitated the Community Data Network Association's efforts to obtain extensive data from each Census, in this case Statistics Canada. Population Census for 2001. Initially focussing on the 230 City of Winnipeg Neighbourhood Areas, other 'geographies' focus on Ward and Community Committee Areas, the Inner City, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Cluster and Community Areas and various other ways of looking at the City of Winnipeg.

Outside of Winnipeg, other area profiles cover Municipalities, Villages, Towns and Cities, as well as Reserves and Tribal Council Areas. Custom Tables allow for a focus on various populations plus cross-referencing of incomes to population groups, housing conditions and expenditures, to name a few issues of interest.

As a member of the Community Data Network Association, SPC's interest in obtaining this data is not only to support the work and reports of its various committees but to support enquiries coming from community groups wishing to facilitate their work or funding proposals with the most recent information about their community.





Housing and Homelessness Initiative

Homelessness is a result of a wide variety of personal and community factors. The solutions are not just about providing housing. The solutions are about individuals having access to resources to develop the capacities to make changes in their lives and about communities having the capacities to provide these resources to individuals and families.

Addressing the issues of homelessness is both a national and local priority which requires the engagement of government, private and voluntary sectors who each have unique roles and resources. It also means the involvement of people who are living the conditions of homelessness as well as those who are working to mitigate those conditions. In addition to service responses an important component is increasing knowledge and understanding of homelessness through data collection and assessing effective interventions to build a greater body of knowledge which will lead to sustainable solutions.

The Social Planning Council has been involved in a key role of implementing the National Homelessness Initiative since 1999 when the Community Plan was developed to guide the first phase of funding. During the past year the Social Planning Council coordinated the assessment and the development of the Community Plan Update for the second phase of funding which was approved by the Federal Minister of Homelessness in November, 2003.

A key component of the Community Plan Update was the establishment of a community based body which would be responsible for the distribution of the National Homelessness Funds and for recommending a model for addressing the homelessness issue on an ongoing basis.

Under contract to Human Resource and Skills Development Canada the Social Planning Council has been supporting the establishment, and development of the Proposal Fund Allocation Committee (PFAC) which is working under a shared delivery model in partnership with the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative.

Fourteen committee members were selected through a community meeting in February, 2004 in which more than 400 community members participated. Because of the volume of work, the PFAC has been working through day long weekly meetings since it was established. Policies and processes for reviewing applications have been developed and funding recommendations are continuing on an ongoing basis. The committee has also recommended an enhanced shared delivery model for the future, which has been endorsed by the community. The model continues to partner with the WHHI, and also includes supports to community groups to increase their involvement in creating solutions to homelessness issues in Winnipeg.

Campaign 2000 Continues

2003 has been another busy year for the Campaign 2000 Continues Steering Committee. The committee continues to work in close collaboration and partnership with National and local partners to keep the child poverty agenda at the forefront of government policy. Despite local, provincial, and national efforts, child poverty is still a serious problem in our province and country.

During 2003-2004, the Committee released two Poverty Barometers, one focusing on Recreation and the other on Early Childhood Tooth Decay. Mickey Emmons Weber, a dental hygienist with the Manitoba Dental Hygienist Association and the University of Manitoba School of Dental Hygiene, worked closely with the committee in developing the July 2003 Barometer and played a valuable role in the media release. The release was held at the Brodie Centre Atrium and featured a performance by the award winning children's/family entertainment group Just Kiddin. It also included a panel presentation by Ruth Diamant, Campaign 2000 committee member, Mickey Emmons Wener of the School of Dental Hygiene in the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Howard Cross of the Dental Clinic at the Children's Hospital in the Health Sciences Centre; and Dr. Charles Lekic of the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Manitoba.

Upcoming Barometers will focus on child care, summer programming for children in poverty, and food security. The committee has been successful in bringing those most knowledgeable in their field to the table to provide important information and insight into the development of the Poverty Barometers. This trend will continue in the upcoming years.



The Manitoba Child Poverty Report Card was released in November, in conjunction with National Campaign 2000 and provincial partners. Unfortunately, Manitoba has slipped through the ranks and currently finds itself yet again the child poverty capital of Canada. In Manitoba, more than one in five children, or 22.5%, live in poverty, a figure that is almost 7% higher than the national rate.

Campaign 2000's National Child Poverty Report Card reminded us that economic growth alone will not substantially reduce the rate of child poverty, and that strong social investments are crucial. The Campaign 2000 Continues Steering Committee has been following the National Plan of Action for children, currently being undertaken by Senator Landon Pearson. The Plan of Action is the result of a commitment by the Government of Canada at the United Nations Special Session on Children in May 2002. The committee prepared a submission calling for a Plan of Action that focused on improved income for families, early childhood education and care, safe and affordable housing, and supportive community environments. Some committee members also attended a meeting that was held in Winnipeg and pressed for more emphasis on child poverty and long term supports for children in care.

There were significant announcements in 2003, including the end of the claw back of the National Child Benefit Supplement, an increase in employment and income assistance benefits, and an increase in the minimum wage. A further increase was announced for April 2004. The committee applauds the government of Manitoba for their efforts to improve the incomes of families in Manitoba, yet will continue to press for further improvements that will strengthen the ability of families to escape poverty once and for all 2004 marks the 15th anniversary since the 1989 all party resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000 and is already shaping up to be a busy year. A new project with the National Campaign 2000 will focus on strengthening and expanding local and regional partnerships to promote social inclusion of children, youth, and families living in poverty across Canada.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg's involvement will be through the Campaign 2000 Committee and the Campaign 2000 Network. Committee membership has expanded this year, and as always, Campaign 2000 Continues is open to new members who are committed to addressing the needs of children and families living in poverty. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Campaign 2000 Continues steering committee members, Network members, Campaign 2000 partners, and others who have contributed their time and expertise to the work of the committee. Your dedication to improving the circumstances for children living in poverty is at the core of the committee and the reason it has continued to thrive over the years. In particular I would like to thank Wayne and the staff at the Social Planning Council, especially Tara Rudy for her assistance in organizing us and her report writing. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Mike Owen,
Chair

Environment Committee

The Social Planning Council Environment Committee was initiated in December 2003. Its purpose was to create awareness about and to take action on the connection between social justice and the environment. Committee members represent a diverse spectrum of agencies, organizations and special interest groups. All remain committed to their original mandate of developing policy recommendations and actions that seek to improve social issues and the physical environment. Committee members represent environmental, health, academic and Aboriginal groups in Manitoba. As a committee they are focused on addressing how environmental issues intersect with child poverty, child health, community and individual capacity, and civil society.

During the past year SPC Environment Committee was involved in a number of City of Winnipeg's "New Deal" Workshops. Issues examined by the Committee included how the New Deal would impact on our environment and what initiatives would be taken by the city to create awareness of and act on the connections between social justice and the environment. As well, the committee submitted a formal response to the City's environmental plan.

The two-day conference will discuss issues such as everyday exposure to toxic substances (including pesticides), impacts of climate change and air quality, differential impacts on Aboriginal and low income communities and the importance of urban greening. The Committee has planned the conference in such a way that it will be of interest to a wide range people: policy makers and analysts, healthcare professionals, urban planners, landscape architects, parents, students, educators, childcare workers and concerned community members. Key objectives of the conference are to raise awareness and affect policy change. The conference will:

- Examine a number of specific environmental health risks to children,
- Address ways to translate science into action; and
- Identify research gaps and successful measures to improve children's health and well-being.

The conference comes at a time when children's health and the environment is emerging as a major issue in countries around the globe. Solutions to complex environmental health problems require the on-going communication and collaboration of affected communities and many disciplines. It is the Committee's belief that creative solutions can be reached through inter-disciplinary problem solving and coalition building.

"Only as a child's awareness and reverence for the wholeness of life are developed
can his humanity to his own kind reach its full development."

Rachel Carson, *Edge of the Sea*

In 2003- 2004, the Committee has been busy coordinating and planning for the June 2004 conference called "Exposed for Life": Children's Health and the Environment. A major focus for the Committee has been the health of children and the extent to which it is affected by environmental conditions. Growing research suggests that children are adversely affected by exposures to environmental hazards and that they are uniquely vulnerable to health effects caused by such exposures because they are still growing and developing. The health of children should be of top priority when governments develop policies, legislation and regulations.

The Committee plans to produce a resource manual following the conference. The manual will provide information for parents; school trustees, and administrators and teachers; and policy makers on how to protect our children from environmental hazards and develop policies to guarantee a sustainable future.

Steve Rauh,
Chair

Empowerment Project for Women by Women

The North Point Douglas Women's Centre was officially opened to the public on June 14, 2003. It was a memorable event for the group of women based in the community who had been working on this project since 2000. The Centre is becoming a meeting place in the neighbourhood for women and their families to access information, chat over a cup of coffee or tea and join in to do crafts, participate in discussions or watch a movie.

Some of the services provided in the Centre to support women are: telephone access; computers provided by Community Connections for the use of women to write resumes and to do research on the web for employment, housing, recipes, and so on; washer and dryer are available for laundry service; a resource directory that includes information on programs available to women that are provided by the neighbourhood agencies; and information on housing vacancies in the community. Childcare is available to women who are enrolled in programs offered at the Centre.

These services and supports provided by the Centre make a difference to the women and their families in the neighbourhood. By generating opportunities for women to identify their issues and develop solutions to the challenges they face, women are becoming empowered to help themselves and their community grow and prosper.

The West Central Community Project for Women was founded to address gender and specific issues related to poverty in the West Central neighbourhood of Winnipeg, which is an impoverished area. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and Health Canada, in conjunction with Community Mobilization, Culture and Heritage, and Neighbourhoods Alive! joined with the women of the West Central area to implement a grassroots program that would benefit the whole community. Over a span of over 4 years, the project has grown into a self-governed non-profit society that is community based and inclusive of all.

The focus of our work is on community development and community economic development, while at the same time recognizing the specific needs of women in the community. The support from Social Planning Council has been a key part in assessing and implementing a program that has shown benefit to the women of the community and the community as a whole. The Project has continued to grow and meet women's and community needs through Social Planning Council's support and the support of the stakeholders within the community.



Committee for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination

SPC is well known for its work in support of diverse grassroots community groups and the development of collaborative partnerships among various sectors. The role of the Committee for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination within the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is to design strategies to work towards ensuring the acceptance, recognition, and economic and social integration of the various communities within Canadian society. The committee works on the issues of equity in education, training, and employment, equity in the justice system, appropriate portrayal of all ethno cultural groups in the media, equitable access to housing services and human resources, and encouragement of the full participation of Aboriginal people and all ethno cultural groups in all matters that affect their lives.

In the Social Planning Council's 85th year, it is an opportune time to reflect on the important work that the committee has done over the years as well as to recognize the volunteers who continue to dedicate their time to improve circumstances for diverse communities. Since 1991, the Committee for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination has been active in conducting projects aimed towards the elimination of systemic racism and discrimination in Manitoba. Following is a brief chronology of some of the major activities the committee has undertaken in this area:

- Education in a Multicultural Society(1995)
- Multicultural/Anti-Racism education study in Winnipeg School Division (1995)
- The Rights Path booklet produced as a joint project between SPCW, Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, and Canada Human Rights Commission (1995)
- Aboriginal Persons with a Disability: Training and Employment Challenges(1996)

- Media Watch: A Study of How Visible Minorities and Aboriginal Peoples are Portrayed in Winnipeg's Two Major Local Newspapers and the Effects of These Portrayals(1996)
- Submission on Employment Equity to City Council on behalf of fifty-nine groups (1997)
- Achieving Employment Equity for Aboriginal People and Visible Minorities(1998)

This past year, the activities of the committee included: Monitoring of the Medical Licensure program; providing feedback on the Framework for a Manitoba Strategy on Qualifications Recognition; meeting with the Diversity Officer with the Winnipeg Police Service; and development of a subcommittee on racial profiling. Recently, the committee met with United Against Racism (UAR), a project of Ka Ni Kanichihk, to discuss potential collaboration between our two groups. This looks like a promising new relationship. Upcoming on the agenda for the committee is a planning workshop to help identify key issues for the next year and a community consultation to expand membership to include an even broader and more diverse perspective in the work and direction of the committee. Currently, we are working on plans to promote the Anti-Discrimination policy as a template for other organizations within the voluntary sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, students, and volunteers at the Social Planning Council for their support to the committee. I would also like to acknowledge the following member organizations for their ongoing commitment to the Committee for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination: the Association of Foreign Medical Graduates, Direct Employment Projects of Winnipeg, Inc., Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, Success Skills Centre, Citizen Outreach Equity Office, Corporate Services – City of Winnipeg, Department of Women's Studies – University of Manitoba, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, National Council of Visible Minorities, Manitoba Education and Training, and West Broadway Neighbourhood Housing Resource Centre. I look forward to working with many of you in the years to come.

Marty Dolin, Chair

Just Income Coalition

Throughout the year, the Just Income Coalition (JIC) has worked tirelessly to push for a significant increase in Manitoba's minimum wage. Established in the fall of 2002, the JIC has grown from a dozen groups to over twenty partner organizations and 60 members. The Social Planning Council continues to be a member and strong supporter of the Coalition.

Early in 2003, the Just Income Coalition developed a petition calling upon the leaders of Manitoba's provincial parties to commit to increase the minimum wage to a level that ensured minimum wage and low wage workers would not earn poverty wages. The petition, widely circulated by Coalition members, was available in both French and English and was also available on the web.

In support of the petition the faith group of the Just Income Coalition devised "Just Income Week" as an opportunity to gain media attention, engage in public education, and collect more signatures for the petition, demonstrating overwhelming support in Manitoba for a living wage.

During Just Income Week, the Social Planning Council co-sponsored an event with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba called Minimum Wage in Canada: National and Local Perspectives. The event took place at the Red River College, Princess St. Campus and featured a presentation by Ken Battle, President of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, from his comprehensive report, *Minimum Wages in Canada: Statistical Findings and Policy Implications*. The event was well attended and Mr. Battle's presentation sparked much interest and debate on the issue.

The media attention for Just Income week was overwhelming and the petition grew to over eight thousand signatures as the word got out. The petitions were presented by representatives of the Just Income Coalition, including Wayne Helgason, Executive Director of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, to Honourable Steve Ashton, then Minister of Labour and Immigration. The opportunity for one of the Coalition members to participate on a CBC call in show, Questionnaire, was an effective way to encourage more debate and discussion about Manitoba's minimum wage and a fitting way to end the week.



"In 2002, 31% of Manitoba workers – fully one third of women workers and one quarter of men – earned low wages"

(From Scarth, Todd, and Black, Errol (2003). *Rising Job Tide not Lifting Low-Wage Boats: Job growth over past five years has barely affected wage inequality in Manitoba*. Review of Economic and Social Trends in Manitoba. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – MB, 2003).

During October 2nd to October 10th, 2003, "Just Income Week" featured twelve events throughout the City of Winnipeg designed to draw attention to the inadequacy of the minimum wage and the impact of low wages on Manitobans. The events of the week included street theatre and music, a faith leaders news conference, a kit developed by the faith group to guide worship services, roundtable discussions with national speakers, a forum on women, health, and the minimum wage, poverty workshops, a child poverty vigil, a benefit concert, and the presentation of the petitions to the Minister of Labour at the Manitoba legislature. All of the events were well attended with thousands of people showing up throughout the week, including community activists, academics, students, government representatives, members of the business community, and community residents.

Currently the Coalition is planning meetings with members of the Provincial Caucus to press for a minimum wage increase that will improve the lives of Manitoba's 26,000 minimum wage workers, the majority of whom are women. The Coalition is also continuing to push for the minimum wage to be indexed to some measure such as 60% of the average industrial wage to ensure that the minimum wage increases by the current government over the past three years will not be eroded due to inflation.

The Social Planning Council is pleased to continue to be a supporter and partner in this unique Coalition in the upcoming year. For more information on the Just Income Coalition, please visit www.just-income.ca



Student Report

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg provides a dynamic and welcoming environment for students undertaking their field placement in social work. It offers opportunities for students to work with a degree of independence on a variety of issues related to social policy, community development and organizational dynamics. Students quickly become integrated into the SPC work group and experience the challenges of being involved in the Winnipeg community.

This year the Social Planning Council welcomed three students: Pre-MSW students Carmen Lazarus and Philip Evans, as well as BSW student Suzanne Gessler. These placements extended over an eight-month period and allowed the students to gain experience in a policy-focused field placement. Over the past academic year, students have been engaged in a variety of exciting projects from conference planning to community consultations. Some of the specific projects that students actively participated in were: the Housing and Homelessness Initiative; the Social Planning Council Environment Committee; the Well-being in the Workplace Committee; the Poverty Advisory Committee; and the Committee for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination.

The SPC is one of only a few field placements that offer students hands-on experience in the complex social policy environment. During these experiences students observe first hand and interact with the three levels of government, non-government organizations and community representatives. Students who are looking for a solid grounding in community-based social development will certainly find it at SPC.

Suzanne Gessler, Philip Evans,
Faculty of Social Work
Student Placement



Governance Youth Secretariat

In 1996, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People recognized the important contribution of First Nations youth by listening to their voices and recognizing the vital messages and fresh perspectives that youth bring to the discussion on the future of their lives and their communities.

During the 19th Annual General Assembly of First Nations held in Toronto, Ontario on June 1998, the former Chief of the Sagkeeng First Nation, Ron Fontaine moved that First Nations Youth establish an Advisory Working Group. The motion stated that First Nations youth need to participate on a national and international level; that the Assembly of First Nations recognize the capability and ability of First Nations youth; and the Assembly of First Nations consult with First Nations youth in developing a formal youth entity in accordance with tradition, history and inherent rights. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs itself has recognized the importance of the inclusion of First Nations youth in the decision-making arena.

The Governance Youth Secretariat (GYS) was founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the fall of 2003 to encourage the participation of First Nations youth in decision-making. The GYS set out to identify and articulate the needs of First Nations youth regarding governance; to discuss their principals and values in relation to positive leadership skills and accountability; and their ideal world as it relates towards First Nations people.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPCW) recognized the need to ensure that First Nations youth across the country were engaged with discussions on the development of Bill C-7 - an Act relating to leadership selection, administration and accountability of Indian bands. After all, the future leadership of First Nations is embodied in the youth and it is critical that youth not only be aware and informed of the proposed government policy, but to have an opportunity to participate in discussions with the Federal government. As part of the activities of the GYS, youth were brought together to attend information sessions and round table discussions held in specific regions across Canada. The SPCW partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) was essential to achieving the goals and objectives of this initiative.

First Nations youth spoke on many issues from unique perspectives, but many youth shared common concerns. They expressed hope and apprehension in regards to the preservation and rejuvenation of their cultural heritage, and to the elimination of racism and poverty. They recognize that the challenges that most First Nations youth face on a daily basis are of such depth and scope, that at times they appear to be insurmountable; they embrace freedom of choice and the ability to exercise their opinions. They welcome the opportunity to take on the responsibility of working to resolve many of the social issues that have overwhelmed their communities.

First Nation Youth are concerned about the future of the relationship between themselves, First Nations Governments and the Federal Government. Their concerns are not unique - across Canada each region has First Nations youth who are well informed and aware of the rising issues regarding the Indian Act and challenges that face First Nations people. To achieve their vision, many First Nations youth view education as the foundation. This involves educating First Nations people about the history of Aboriginal people and the traditional way of life as well as sharing this knowledge with others. At the same time many youth were committed to becoming more politically active and vocal regardless of ideology and with the objective of promoting First Nations youth issues in Canada's mainstream body politic.

Difficult choices lay ahead for the future leadership of Canada's First Nations communities. The inclusion of First Nation youth in the political process is to give them a head start in developing the tools needed to successfully navigate through the political environment, to give them a clear understanding of the ever-changing political landscape. Their engagement with this process will also allow them to put forth a fresh perspective on solving the ever-present dilemmas and building stronger relationships between their communities and the rest of Canada.

Thanks goes to our team Sherri MacPherson and Darren Courchene for their excellent work and dedication to this initiative.

Maeengan Linklater





Manitoba Voluntary Sector Initiative

The challenges facing Manitoba's voluntary sector suggest to community leaders that it's time to plan for the future; to come up with a fresh approach and more assertive voices, and to define our own future and our role in sustaining healthy communities.

In 1999, the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg began discussing ways of addressing these challenges. The focus was on answering the urgent questions needed for sustaining the voluntary sector. The Manitoba Voluntary Sector Initiative (MVSI) recognized the value of the people who contributed time, money, and good will which makes Manitoba a vibrant place to live. These people may be working and volunteering in charities, nonprofit groups or informal grassroots groups.

The MVSI was funded as a three-year project with work concluding in the spring of 2003. The MVSI operated under the auspices of the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg and was overseen by an Advisory Council representing its core partners. Research sponsored by the MVSI has been unprecedented in Manitoba. Through qualitative and quantitative studies this research provides a recent and comprehensive description of the characteristics of the voluntary and non-profit sector. Just as important, this research also provides keen insights into the challenges currently facing the sector in Manitoba.

Although the MVSI as a distinct initiative concluded in March of 2003, it has been a catalyst for further development of the voluntary and non-profit sector throughout Manitoba. During 2003, building on the progress achieved and based on the pan-Manitoba philosophy that has underpinned MVSI activities, community leadership groups were formed throughout the various regions of Manitoba. Supported with funding from the Canada Volunteerism Initiative, each leadership group has been working on capacity building strategies that reflect the unique needs of the sector within their geographic communities.



As well, the groups meet as a collective to discuss developmental activities which would show benefit across the province.

In 2004, the MVSI Secretariat has undertaken a re-engagement process with communities across the province in order to share the results of the final report from the MVSI evaluation. This process has also served as a catalyst for dialogue on the practical benefits a pan-Manitoban umbrella organization can offer the sector as a whole. This organization – the Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector Organization of Manitoba – is currently in process of incorporation, and a Steering Committee with representation from across sectors and communities has been established. A member of the Canadian Federation of Voluntary Sector Networks, this organization is developing strategies to re-engage government, business and labour on a number of fronts. As well, the VNPSOM has representation on the National Human Resource Voluntary Sector project; the National Learning Initiative; and the Information Management and Information Technology Advisory Committee of Industry Canada.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is a founding member of this work, and is represented on the Steering Committee for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector Organization of Manitoba. Both staff and Board members have been actively engaged in supporting the developments within the MVSI and the voluntary sector in Manitoba.

For more information on the MVSI, please visit www.voluntarysector.mb.ca or contact Martin Itzkow, Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector Organization of Manitoba Animator, at 204.941.9414.



Marketing and Membership Committee

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg has a solid network of members in Winnipeg and across Manitoba which includes interested citizens, community and service delivery agencies, labour groups, and academic and research communities. Our members' participation and commitment to the SPC enables the Council to promote social programs and policies that serve children, families and communities.

Members' continued support is invaluable and enables us to continue to promote positive social change in our communities. By working directly with communities and concerned citizens, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is able to expand the potential of communities, families and individuals to identify problems, offer policy options and raise awareness of issues that ultimately impact us all.

As well as supporting our activities throughout the year, member support is a good investment in the future of our community. In producing resource information like the *Poverty Barometer* we are able to foster and promote public awareness of those who may be vulnerable or marginalized. Through projects such as the *Governance Youth Secretariat* or the *Housing & Homelessness Initiative*, the Social Planning Council works directly with communities to take action and develop strategies on areas they identify as priorities.



This past year the Membership and Marketing Committee has been focusing on the area of examining our communication tools to better serve our membership and our communities. We are reviewing the format of the SPC newsletter, and are considering adding elements such as highlighting a different committee for each edition. This committee report will highlight activity of that committee, who is represented and some of the initiatives/discussions that they have been undertaking. Other suggestions have been to include articles on other events or issues that would be of interest to our membership and our communities. We are also working on the creation and maintenance of consistency in all communications materials that are released through the SPC – including our website - with the goal to develop accessible tools that will continue to be a valuable resource regarding issues of concern to our membership and community.

The committee is also engaged in supporting various public events through the SPC. From the Provincial Candidates Debate on social policy in May of 2003; Just Income Week events; our Winter Open House and the SPC's Annual Mayor's State of the City Address; the committee works with other members of the SPC's team of staff and volunteers to host events of interest to our members and raise awareness of persistent or emerging issues in our community.

One final note – this is the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg's 85th year of serving the community of Winnipeg. We are planning an event later in the year to celebrate this significant accomplishment, and we welcome ideas on how to recognize such a long and distinguished record of achievement.

Marcy Richard, Chair

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Student Placement

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*Angela Saskosky
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