

# **Critical Needs in Canadian Social Reform: Responding Together, and In Time**

**Queen's Summer Institute  
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August 26, 1998**

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# New preoccupations in the 90s

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- Social cohesion, social capital, underclass, civil society, social deficit, social inclusion are new “buzzwords”
- Search for a way to capture social and economic impacts of radical restructuring: of governments, workplace, and families.
- Can't measure the problem; can't write neat equations showing cause, effect, projections.

# Fragments of evidence in 1994

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- B.C. studies show large numbers of young men cycling from work to UI to welfare.
  - ▶ Spells are short.
  - ▶ No obvious attachments to family.
  - ▶ No evidence about how or whether they exit the cycle.
- Ekos segmentation of public:
  - ▶ 41 % economically distressed.
  - ▶ 19 % outsiders – angry and alienated.
- How to generalize from these fragments?

# Comprehensive evidence on the '80s

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Social distress highly concentrated in nine largest cities

- In 1990, 507 urban census tracts were very poor, up from 334 in 1980 [Hatfield, 1997]
  - ▶ 17 % of population, up from 12% in 1980
- Also identified most distressed neighbourhoods:
  - ▶ Not just poor but other evidence of marginalization
  - ▶ Best indicator is low number of men working full time
  - ▶ 60 of the 106 in Montreal, Quebec City, Winnipeg
  - ▶ Another 219 are near distressed.

# Concentration of Poor Families

In nine major cities

		1990(1)	1990(2)
Montreal	30.1	40.1	20.4
Winnipeg	23.5	39	15.7
Edmonton	4.1	28.3	12.8
Calgary	6.4	20.3	8.9
Quebec City	20.8	26.6	11.2
Vancouver	7.2	15.5	6.1
Toronto	14.7	21.4	7.9
Ottawa-Hull	27.5	24.1	8.4
All cities	19.5	25.1	14

1) Percent of poor families in the metropolitan area who live in the poorest neighbourhoods. Source: Hatfield, 1997

2) Low income rate for the city

# Comprehensive evidence on the 90s

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Waiting for the 1996 census to be analyzed

- Mendelson has reported a sharp increase in poverty in Toronto in the 1990s
- Anecdotal evidence of marginalization – via homelessness, panhandlers, squatters etc
- Some cities with “no go” areas
- Concentration of poverty means multiple pathologies – low income plus weak social supports, and high risk environments

# Has the problem become systemic?

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And how much proof do we need?

- To stop the cancer we need a mix of interventions
  - ▶ Public infrastructure – community schools with health clinics, public transit, social housing, recreation, community policing, etc
  - ▶ Income supports
  - ▶ Targeted individual services: job training, internships, mentoring.

# Critical Needs of Canadian Reform

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Focus on the social and economic setting

- Learn how to design integrated policy responses
- Identify needs of the community *and* the family/individual
- Build capacity of population to respond
- Three case studies:
  - ▶ 1 2 3 GO in Montreal. Parents decided to feed the kids
  - ▶ Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction program
  - ▶ National Child Benefit

# Closing comments

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Systemic problems need systemic responses

- Both governments and communities have trouble reacting in systemic fashion
  - ▶ Linking federal and provincial responses is essential – the Social Union is part of the solution.
  - ▶ Governments are experimenting with integrated decision making. Need to know what works.
  - ▶ Communities can mobilize more easily along class lines, or along political lines. Need a wider coalition.
  - ▶ Difficult to build partnerships with Aboriginal leaders - -but they have a big stake in this.