

Spryfield Chosen to Participate in National Project

For Immediate Release

May 31, 2005, Halifax, NS – Action for Neighbourhood Change, a pilot learning initiative that will support local community development activities, announced today that Spryfield is the Halifax neighbourhood selected to participate in the national project.

Spryfield is the first community in Nova Scotia to be chosen for this exciting national project. Spryfield is in the Mainland South area, which begins at the Armdale Rotary and extends to Pennant Point. The diverse area of urban, suburban and rural areas encompasses a shopping district, parks, housing developments, fishing villages and wilderness areas.

As part of the selection process, over 30 interviews were conducted in neighbourhoods and agencies to assess the potential of the neighbourhood to undertake the project. A review of crime, poverty, education levels, employment, income distribution and demographics – along with one-on-one interviews – helped narrow the list of seven neighbourhoods to one.

“It was a tough decision, but [Spryfield] met all the criteria we were looking for,” said Peter Mortimer, Director of Community Resources for United Way of Halifax Region. “We’re confident we can work in cooperation with the Board of the Captain William Spry Community Centre and neighbourhood citizens to help make the community a better place to live.”

Funding for the project is being provided through numerous federal programs within Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Health Canada and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and is being led by United Way Canada. United Way of Halifax Region’s role is to manage the project at the local level. This includes facilitating community input to find long-term solutions to homelessness, drug abuse, crime and learning challenges.

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Studies have long shown that as poverty concentrates in particular neighbourhoods, housing tends to deteriorate, while the incidence of difficulties like unemployment, illiteracy, substance abuse and crime tends to rise. Left unchecked, these increased stresses on a neighbourhood can lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of decline and decay. By building on strengths and leadership at the local level, the Action for Neighbourhood Change initiative will help communities strengthen their ability to build healthy, vibrant neighbourhoods.

“United Way of Halifax Region is very pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to such a positive, community-based initiative,” said Peter Doig, Chair, United Way of Halifax Region Board of Directors. “Action for Neighbourhood Change represents a strong commitment to neighbourhood revitalization strategies that build on the existing strengths of communities and individuals.”

Action for Neighbourhood Change involves stakeholders coming together to identify strengths and then develop a vision for neighbourhood renewal. Part of the program’s mandate is to document activities, processes and outcomes and use that knowledge to improve the way Canadians address and manage complex social issues.

All partners recognize that neighbourhood renewal is a long-term process and approach Action for Neighbourhood Change as a first step and guide to future policy direction. Sustainability of projects will be a focus of the program with the hope that the scope of the pilot initiative will be expanded to include additional communities in the future.

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Backgrounder is attached.

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United Way – Action for Neighbourhood Change

Background

Action for Neighbourhood Change is a unique learning initiative that will explore approaches to locally-driven neighbourhood revitalization projects that can enhance the capacity of individuals and families to build and sustain strong, healthy communities. Working with local residents, not-for-profit agencies and public and private sector partners, this new initiative combines resources in new ways to develop local solutions for community development and revitalization.

Action for Neighbourhood Change will begin in the cities of Surrey, Regina, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Halifax. Neighbourhood sites were selected by the local United Way in consultation with residents, community leaders, government and key community organizations. Based on the results of this learning initiative, *Action for Neighbourhood Change* may be expanded to a number of additional communities.

Background

Since 2003, the National Secretariat for Homelessness (NSH) has been working with federal colleagues and community development experts to develop a clearer understanding of the linkages between distressed communities, concentrations of poverty, homelessness prevention and housing stability.

To understand these linkages better, NSH recently joined together with the Office of Learning Technologies and the National Literacy Initiative (both Human Resources and Skills Development Canada), Canada's Drug Strategy (Health Canada) and the National Crime Prevention Strategy (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada) to launch the new initiative.

Key Partners

Action for Neighbourhood Change is an initiative funded by the Government of Canada and coordinated by United Way Canada-Centraide Canada in partnership with their local affiliates, as well as the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Tamarack: An Institute for Community Engagement and the National Film Board of Canada. Working with local United Way coordinators and engaged citizens from all sectors of the community, these partners bring with them the necessary blend of knowledge, expertise, networks and hands-on experience to make *Action for Neighbourhood Change* a meaningful success.

The National Film Board of Canada's role is to provide video cameras and training for youth in all five pilot neighbourhoods. This will help establish communications linkages and capture important lessons learned in a personal, creative and meaningful way.