



For Immediate Release

## National youth homelessness conference wraps up with six actions for Canadians and governments The Homeless Youth Action Agenda

**St. John's, Newfoundland & Labrador –October 4, 2006** – Over 250 delegates at Canada's first youth homelessness conference have unanimously agreed on six priority actions for Canadians and their governments to tackle rising youth homelessness - dubbed the Homeless Youth Action Agenda.

*Beyond the Street* provided the first national platform for young people to work with community leaders, business, labour and faith organizations and governments to recommend solutions for the estimated 65,000 youth living on Canada's streets. Delegates decided major steps must be taken to build on the conference's momentum, and agreed on a Homeless Youth Action Agenda.

“Young people living on the street cannot wait patiently for governments to make homelessness a priority,” said Jill Pitman, youth panelist at the conference. “Tonight in St. John's, Vancouver, Toronto, and in communities across Canada, hundreds of young people will sleep on the street, or sell themselves for food or drugs – it's happening now, and we need to do something about it.”

The Homeless Youth Action Agenda includes the following priorities:

- 1. Fully Recognize Homeless Persons:** *Canadians and governments must fully recognize homeless persons, including homeless youth, and respect their rights as citizens*
- 2. Make action on youth homelessness a top priority:** *All groups and individuals, including our governments, must immediately make comprehensive and supportive action on youth homelessness a top priority in Canada*
- 3. Action for Governments:** *Governments must maintain and enhance all homelessness programs, including the National Homeless Initiative, affordable housing and youth support programs*
- 4. Reverse Federal cuts to youth programs:** *We urge the Federal government to reverse the \$55.4 million in cuts to youth employment and support programs*
- 5. Follow-up National Youth Conference and Advocacy:** *A National Steering Committee has been formed to plan a follow-up National Youth Conference, to organize future advocacy and information sharing and to promote access to youth resources*
- 6. Action for Conference Participants:** *Conference participants are asked to take back and share what they have learned and experienced in St. John's with their local communities and to support the “Homeless Youth Action Agenda”*

“It was critically important for conference participants to turn their words into action,” said Sean Gadon, President of Raising the Roof. “In adopting a plan of action, the conference has set in motion a national agenda to address the urgent needs of Canada's homeless youth.”

A key concern among conference delegates is the uncertainty over the future of the

Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). The Initiative is slated to end in March 2007 unless action is taken immediately.

"The National Homelessness Initiative has been recognized by the United Nations as an effective program, and we know at the community level that it works," said *Beyond the Street* co-chair Bruce Pearce. "We call on the federal government to extend and expand the program."

For further information, please visit [www.youthhomelessness.ca](http://www.youthhomelessness.ca).

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