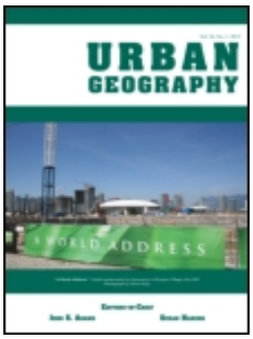

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Glenda Laws

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EMERGENCY SHELTER NETWORKS IN AN URBAN AREA: SERVING THE HOMELESS IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO[1]

Glenda Laws
Department of Geography
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802

A framework for analyzing the structure of urban emergency shelter networks is proposed. The shelter and service network consists of clients, shelters, support services, and a political context shaped by state policies and community attitudes. The example of Metropolitan Toronto shows that, while it might be true that there is a need for more permanent housing, there also exists a real need for emergency shelters. A problem exists for certain groups who might seek temporary shelter in suburban areas because of the unequal spatial distribution of shelters and support services between the inner City of Toronto and suburban municipalities. The recent suburbanization of some shelters has been dominated by shelters for women and children. Patterns of repeat usage of the shelter network suggest that certain client groups might not have access to all the support services they need. The conclusions argue that urban shelter networks offer an opportunity for geographers to consider more closely the links between housing, policy, and political ideologies.

The shift from institutional to community-based care for a variety of populations, including the elderly and the mentally ill, during the 1960s and 1970s has had a profound impact upon the urban landscape, most evident in the emergence of ghettos of the service dependent near downtown areas and in the demands being made upon suburban areas to accommodate former institutional residents. An increasingly important component of this "welfare landscape" is the growing network of emergency shelters, created to serve North America's apparently burgeoning homeless population. Traditionally these shelters (otherwise referred to as hostels and refuges) have been associated with the "skid row" areas of the downtown core, but there are mounting pressures to decentralize these facilities for both positive (community integration) and negative (e.g., the expansion of the central business district) reasons (Laws, 1989). Like other North American cities, Toronto, Ontario, has witnessed a significant growth in the number of shelters in the downtown and, to a lesser extent, suburban areas of the city. For the most part, shelters are seen as "last resort" housing, the option to be exercised only when nothing else is available. Thus, the housing situations of shelter residents are likely to be atypical and reflect extreme problems rather than being indicative of the full range of concerns facing victims of a housing crisis. Nonetheless, the sheer number of people utilizing shelters makes these facilities a vital link in the chain of housing options offered in modern cities. While many homeless people do not use shelters (HUD, 1984), either because there are no spaces available or because they simply choose not to, the residents of shelters do provide us

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with some clues as to the characteristics of, and problems facing, homeless people. Operators of emergency shelters, like those of other social services, must constantly confront the problems of limited financial resources and community opposition to the opening of facilities. A study of the shelter system therefore provides the opportunity to learn more about homeless people and the political geography of service provision.

Surprisingly, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Mair, 1986), geographers have paid relatively little attention to shelter networks. Geographers have, however, considered questions relating to the causes of homelessness (Laws and Lord, 1990; Wolch, Dear, and Akita, 1988), the time-space networks of individuals (Rowe and Wolch, 1990), community attitudes toward, and the spatial distribution of, the homeless (Dear and Gleeson, 1991; Dear and Wolch, 1987), and policy responses to homelessness (Laws and Lord, 1990; Wolch and Akita, 1988; Carter and McAfee, 1990). These studies, and many by nongeographers, highlight the spatial dimensions of homelessness. For the most part the empirical content of these studies draws upon the United States experience and little has been written on the situation in Canadian cities, especially with respect to emergency shelters designed to provide short-term accommodation for individuals and families in crisis situations (but see Ward, 1988; Fallis and Murray, 1990). Unfortunately, they operate in "the shadow of the poorhouse" (Katz, 1986) and thus there is a stigma attached to both the facilities and their clients. Locating emergency shelters is therefore problematic. To understand this problem it is important to note that emergency shelters do not operate in a vacuum. They are part of a shelter and service network made up of the built facilities, the clients themselves, and the support services used by the homeless. That network is, of course, situated within the context of a community that holds particular views of the role of welfare services in general, shelters and their related infrastructure in particular, and the state policies that regulate its operation. In any one locality the intersection of these components produces a local political geography of the shelter and service network.[2]

In Toronto there is a visible demand for emergency shelters. As is familiar in other jurisdictions, efforts to confront homelessness in Toronto are constrained by fiscal conservatism on the part of governments at all levels. The recent growth of shelters and support services has been built upon what was, at best, a rather flimsy historical foundation of housing for the indigent. The 19th-century view that hostels should discourage long-term stays, and 20th-century variations on this position, have meant that a mature support network for the homeless has never emerged. In particular, the Toronto situation shows the reluctance of policy makers to enforce an even distribution of shelters between the inner city and suburbs and points to the need for a detailed investigation of the political geography of emergency shelters, an investigation that takes into account not only the day-to-day operations of the shelters but also their role in the ideological evolution of the welfare state apparatus. The imbalance in shelter and service provision between the inner city and suburbs in Toronto is obvious. While this is not a particularly new finding, it seems often to be overlooked in North American policy documents. For example, *The 1988 National Survey of Shelters for the Homeless* in the United States (HUD, 1989) makes no mention of the spatial patterns of the location of shelters *within* cities.

This paper begins by identifying the major elements of a locally operating shelter and service network as a prelude to describing the different types and geographical

distribution of emergency shelter facilities in Toronto. Profiles of the clients of these hostels, analyzed though data collected by the Metropolitan Toronto Department of Community Services, suggest different patterns of hostel usage among various client groups. Support services available to Toronto's homeless are examined by focusing first on the degree to which services meet the needs of the homeless population, as perceived by the operators of emergency shelters, and second on the local geography of service provision. The paper concludes with a discussion of the broader context of the geography of social policy.

COMPONENTS OF THE URBAN SHELTER AND SERVICE NETWORK

Just as homeless individuals do not operate independently of other individuals (Rowe and Wolch, 1990), so too organizations that serve the homeless population are not independent of one another. Further, the lives of individuals intersect with the operation of organizations to form a complex network of interactions. Figure 1 reduces the complexity of such a network by highlighting the main components of an urban emergency shelter and service network. At the center of the network are the clients, a group composed of the chronically homeless and those individuals who seek shelter for only one night and never again come into contact with the network. Individual clients interact with two main organizational elements of the network: emergency shelter facilities and support services. Emergency shelters vary according to their size, location, the client group served, and the auspices under which they operate. For example, some hostels are small, privately operated facilities serving abused women within a suburban catchment area. In contrast, there are other shelters that are extremely large, public facilities which only serve men and are located in deteriorating neighborhoods in the inner city. To complement the emergency shelters, most large cities would offer, even if only at the most rudimentary level, organizations that distribute food (e.g., food banks, soup kitchens), clothing (e.g., thrift shops), and provide counselling (e.g., employment referral, crisis intervention). In most instances, these agencies are not directed exclusively toward the homeless. Psychiatric services, income maintenance programs, and job retraining schemes are targeted to a larger potential client base. While emergency shelters are solely for the homeless (whether chronic or short-term), support services are rarely so directed. Increasingly the homed poor, working or unemployed, are taking advantage of soup kitchens and food banks (Riches, 1985; Sosin, Colson, and Grossman, 1988; SPARC, 1986).

The heterogeneity of support services, like emergency shelters, can be measured on several dimensions including agency size, auspices (private or public), location (city, suburb), and funding mechanisms. Different programs also display variation in the time horizons within which clients will ideally interact with them. For example, shelters usually operate as emergency, transitional, or permanent accommodations. Similarly, some support services are emergency oriented (e.g., crisis intervention), transitional (e.g., job retraining), or long-term (e.g., ongoing psychiatric support, child care). Of course, it is not easy to slot individual programs into any of these categories. Income maintenance programs might be simply a stopgap measure between jobs for some people. For others (e.g., the elderly or the disabled) income maintenance may be the sole long-term source of funds.

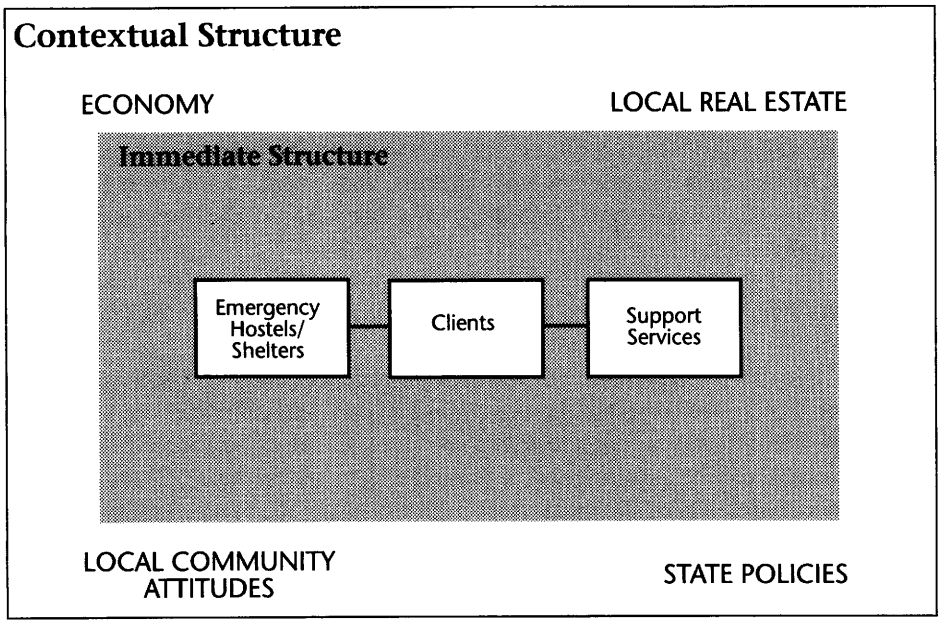

Fig. 1. The emergency shelter and support service network.

The clients, the shelter facilities, and support services define the immediate structure of the emergency shelter network. Here homeless individuals interact with organizations on a fairly routine, day-to-day basis. Rowe and Wolch (1990) illustrated some of these interactions by examining the daily time-space paths of homeless individuals. They described the peer (e.g., other homeless people) and homed (e.g., service providers) networks with which the homeless interact. By contrast, the overall operation of the shelter network as a city-wide system, comprised of interacting elements (including individuals and organizations), with an internal dynamic but always subject to outside influences, demands consideration of the contextual structure within which the immediate structure is situated. The dynamics of the immediate structure are influenced by local real estate markets, the condition of the local and national economies, state polices, and the degree of receptiveness of the local community to the presence of homeless people and the facilities they need.[3] Rising property values, for example, might cause more people to search out emergency shelters (Kasinitz, 1984). At the same time, inflation in the real estate market makes it difficult to acquire property to be used as new shelters. Restructuring of the economy results in job losses that can precipitate an episode of homelessness which subsequently increases demand upon the local shelter network. State policies are also an important element of the contextual structure because governments (at various levels) are involved in the provision, funding, and regulation of emergency shelters and support services. Depending on budget priorities, there may be more or less state funding available for the maintenance or expansion of the network. Attitudes dominant in potential host communities are also critical in determining the availability of services for the homeless. The NIMBY (not in my backyard) syndrome has

surrounded efforts to open facilities for the homeless as some communities resist the entry of shelters and other group living facilities into their neighborhoods (see references in Mueller, 1987). These issues of real estate markets, state policies, and community attitudes come together in zoning disputes which see local communities preventing the development of shelters by the manipulation of local government land-use zoning ordinances (Axelrod and Toff, 1987; Schonfeld, 1984; Steinman, 1986).

These components interact in space to produce a local emergency shelter and support services network. Fluctuations in the number of clients will cause changes in the stresses felt within the network during different seasons, depending upon the urban area. Variations also occur across space. Within any city, there is an uneven distribution of clients, services, and shelters for a number of reasons: the historical location of skid row means that the shelter network is particularly dense in that part of the city; policies in the form of land-use ordinances restrict where particular facilities can be located (exclusionary zoning practices are particularly conspicuous in the suburban areas of many North American cities); and some neighborhoods seem to be more tolerant of certain facilities than others. The urban welfare landscape is thus a palimpsest that is continually being reworked. So, not only do we need to know something about the individuals and organizations that make up the shelter network, but we also need to know more about the geography of that network.

A CASE STUDY FROM TORONTO

Several sources were used to analyze the Toronto case. The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (Metro) has prepared a directory of services for the homeless. It contains information on location, client groups served, and the capacity of individual shelters. Metro also has collected statistics on the nightly population of the city's hostels. Interviews and library research (especially of newspapers and local government documents) were used to complement these data sources. And a survey of shelter operators in Metropolitan Toronto was used to measure perceptions about how well homeless people's needs were being met. From these sources, the contextual structure in which Toronto's shelters and services for the homeless operate can be outlined, and the immediate structure defined by the hostel infrastructure, the clients, and the available support services can be analyzed.

The Context: State Policies and the Community

Urban organizations like the shelter network do not operate in a vacuum. Two of the most important contextual forces shaping Toronto's network are (1) a legislative structure defined by state policies and programs and (2) community support for, and resistance to, the homeless and the services they use. The policy structure in which the network is situated is indeed a complex one involving, to greater and lesser degrees, provincial, federal, regional, and local governments in the provision, regulation, and funding of services for the homeless. To simplify this discussion, I will focus on the state's role specifically in the functioning of emergency hostels. The state's role in other components of the shelter network (e.g., support services) is similar to the example of hostels.

As a direct provider of shelter for the homeless, the state plays a minimal, almost nonexistent, role in the metropolitan Toronto region. The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto (the regional level of government) operates only three of the 32 hostels in Toronto. While no other level of government directly provides emergency accommodation, each level of the state plays an important role in regulating and funding the facilities through a web of cost-sharing arrangements. For example, the Metropolitan level of government controls a large proportion of the beds available in the shelter network by way of purchase-of-service contracts with the nonprofit agencies that operate the other 29 hostels in the city. Funding comes via the Province of Ontario under the General Welfare Assistance Act. A per diem is paid for each person who stays at the hostel; 80% of the costs are covered by the Province and 20% by the municipality. The Province then recovers about 70% of its costs from the federal government under the Canada Assistance Plan. It should be noted that the per diem payment actually represents a provincial transfer payment "in kind" to the individual hostel user and the person is therefore not eligible to receive any monetary income maintenance payment under the terms of the General Welfare Assistance Act. In 1979, 2.4% of the Metropolitan Department of Community Services' gross expenditures went toward the operation of hostels. This figure rose during the 1980s, partly because of the creation of the Hostels Operation Unit as a separate entity within the department. By 1983, hostel expenditures as a proportion of total department expenditures were 3.9%; by 1988, 4.3%. About 30% of the operating costs of Toronto's hostels are recovered from the voluntary sector, including United Way grants and private donations. For some hostels, the proportion of the funding from the private sector may be much higher (Banham, 1985), a legacy of the 19th century emphasis on voluntarism that surrounded the creation of Toronto's first hostels. In general, however, the voluntary sector in Toronto became more dependent on government funding through the 1970s and 1980s (Laws, 1988). It is therefore likely that privately operated hostels have similarly come to rely increasingly on government funds, implying that service providers conform to government-defined regulations.

In the winter of 1983, the Province of Ontario introduced the Emergency Winter Shelter and Assistance Program (ESAP) as a temporary measure, allocating $1.25 million in total for short-term immediate responses to the problems of Ontario's disadvantaged populations. The plan was initiated as a cost-sharing arrangement between the municipalities and the Province under which funds were to be administered by local level municipalities which would in turn provide 20% of the costs. While the responses were meant to be "short-term," there were provisions for some of the beds provided under the program to be converted to long-term hostel spaces. In 1983, Metropolitan Toronto was allocated $600,000 but was responsible for contributing $120,000 of this total. Although the program was introduced as a temporary mechanism, it has continued; in 1988–1989 the total expenditure in Metropolitan Toronto had risen to $1,028,390, and Metro agreed to pay up to $205,678. Over the years since its inception, a small proportion of the money has been used to establish hostels for special groups (primarily women and youths) in the suburban municipalities (i.e., those other than the City of Toronto). However, the largest sums of money go to the City of Toronto, further reinforcing the concentration of hostels and services in that location (Commissioner of Social Services, 1988).

While the Province (and indirectly the federal government) might fund the shelter network, it is surprising how little formal regulation there is from that source. Hostels are just one among many welfare assistance services covered by the General Welfare Assistance Act and specific regulations for each are not articulated within the Act. Local levels of government are left the responsibility of regulating the shelters that operate within their jurisdiction. As with any building in the city, shelters must conform to local zoning ordinances and building codes for safety and public health. Zoning ordinances have been particularly problematic for groups trying to open new shelters in the suburbs where demand goes unmet. Most of the shelters in Toronto are relatively new; 17 were opened during the 1980s. Their location cannot therefore be explained by historical location at earlier city outskirts since engulfed by a sprawling city. They have evolved at a time when planners and policy makers have been only too well aware of the need for suburban shelters, but when restrictive zoning has made it difficult to rectify the suburban deficit in emergency accommodation. Only in the City of Toronto can shelters be established without the need for site-specific rezoning. Metropolitan Toronto has made attempts to decentralize another form of special-needs housing, group homes, via "as-of-right" land-use zoning legislation under which group homes can legally locate in any residential neighborhood since they are classed as residences (Dear and Laws, 1986). Shelters, however, are not covered by this legislation and any effort to locate a new shelter in the suburban municipalities is still stifled by the need for site-specific amendments to the official plan. This means that opponents to the opening of shelters have the right to express their opposition through formal, and often quasi-legal, channels. For example, residents in North York successfully blocked the opening of a youth shelter in that municipality in 1986. Eventually, as a matter of expediency and compromise, the coalition trying to open the facility, Youth Without Shelter, opened a shelter in northern Etobicoke so that the North York community could be served as well.

These local government ordinances which make it difficult for homeless people to find accommodation in the suburbs have evolved in response to vocal opponents of shelters. Community attitudes toward the homeless are therefore critical in facilitating or obstructing the extension and decentralization of the shelter network. It is instructive to review the Metropolitan Commissioner of Social Services' summary of allocations under the Emergency Shelter and Assistance Program for 1987-1988 (Commissioner of Social Services, 1988). Under the entries that pertain to the suburban municipalities, expenditures are shown to be for "research/develop youth hostels," or to "develop support and strategies to establish a youth hostel." It is clear that public funds have been used to prepare the community for the opening of, rather than for establishing, hostels. Of course, changes in land-use planning alone cannot overcome the problems associated with homelessness. More lenient legislation might make it possible to locate drop-in centers in suburban areas but there would also have to be commitments by senior levels of government to provide funding for such programs and by "social" planners to deal with the "short-term" crises as well as the longer-term, more visible problems of the chronically homeless or the chronically unemployed.

Other forces at work in the community also shape the local context in which the shelter network operates. For example, the state of the local economy might cause a

rise or fall in demand for services for the homeless. Metropolitan Toronto is a case where a relatively strong economic base has worked to increase the demand for shelter as people from other parts of the province and country move to the city in search of jobs that are not always available. Local real estate markets also impinge upon the demand and availability of emergency shelters. The extremely high costs of housing in Toronto are often blamed for the crisis in low-income housing. Gentrification, the expansion of the Central Business District (CBD), and the loss of rental apartments as they are converted to owner-occupier units, are also held responsible for the erosion of affordable housing (Fallis, 1990). Finally, local and national political climates make a difference in how much public money will be provided to the shelter network (Mishra, 1990).

Toronto's Emergency Hostels

Whereas the 19th-century "poorhouse" served a potpourri of clients, current developments in Toronto's shelter network recognize the diversity of needs among the city's homeless population. In the last decade or so there has been a tendency for newly opened shelters to serve specialized populations for the "new homeless." Six of the 11 shelters that serve women and children, and three of the four youth shelters, have opened since 1980. Such trends are partly a reflection of the politicization of domestic conflict. Shelters for abused women and their families, for example, became more visible during the 1970s as the women's movement forced the issue of spouse abuse onto the political agenda. Women's post-war entry into the labor force and their more visible political assertiveness meant that it was becoming increasingly acceptable (though not necessarily common) for women to leave abusive domestic situations. In the late 1980s, shelters for youths (serving people under the age of 24) were under the political spotlight in Toronto as the number of unemployed and transient young people became a more conspicuous problem. This attention resulted in the opening of two youth shelters after 1985.

There are also important variations in design and locational attributes. Shelters serving single men are dormitory style, house large numbers of residents, offer little privacy, and are located close to the downtown core, a vestige of their origins in the 19th-century poorhouse. For example, one shelter for single men operates over 700 beds; four can accommodate between 55 and 130; only one shelter houses fewer than 12 men. In contrast, the shelters opened during the 1970s and 1980s (aimed at women and children) are smaller (between 20 and 30 beds in several cases) and are increasingly likely to be found in the suburbs, in part reflecting a community-integration view of the benefits of having shelters located in residential neighborhoods. Toronto's six suburban shelters have all been established since 1975, a period in which community-based approaches to care gained support in Ontario. This was also a period, however, in which property values in the inner city rose and lands once thought appropriate for marginal uses such as hostels became prime sites for urban renewal, including the spread of the CBD and for the in-movement of gentrifiers. It is premature, then, to suggest that the only forces at work to decentralize Metropolitan Toronto's shelters are those concerned with community integration of the homeless.

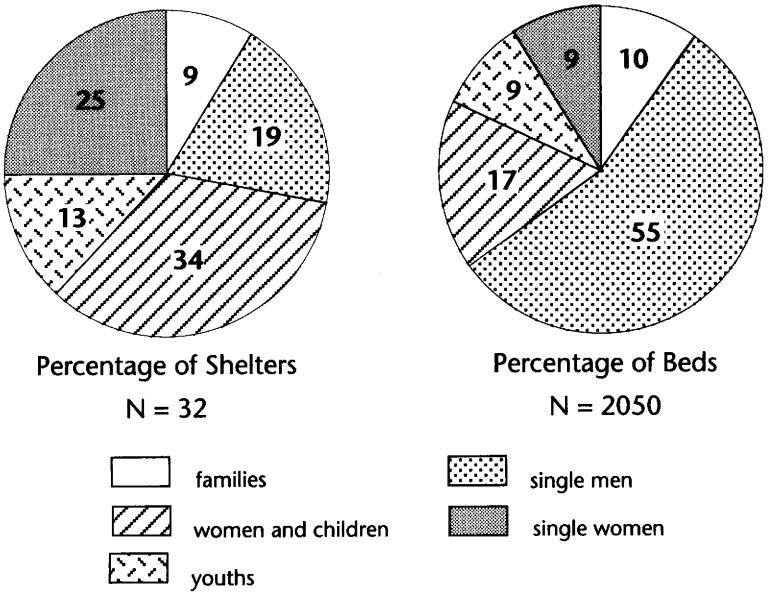

Fig. 2. Shelter availability by client group, METROPOLITAN TORONTO, 1988.

The links between the struggle over the use of inner-city property and the move to suburbanize the welfare landscape need further attention (Laws, 1989).

The structure of the shelter network is illustrated in Figure 2. Reflecting their large size is the fact that, while only six (19%) of Metro's hostels are designated for single men, they constitute 55% of all spaces. Twenty-seven percent of available beds are designated for families with children (either single or two-parent), even thougn 43% of all shelters are designed for either families or women with children. Only 10% of all spaces are allocated specifically to families; there is little "housing of last resort" for Toronto's low-income families. Similarly, only 9% of all spaces are designated specifically for youths (people under 24 years). This latter figure represents a significant increase since 1983 when less than 3% of all hostel spaces were specifically for youths (Metropolitan Toronto Planning and Community Services Department, 1983).

The spatial concentration of facilities in the City of Toronto is revealed in the fact that 81% of hostels and 92% of beds are found there. Only six shelters were located in the suburban municipalities in 1988; five of these served women and children and one served youths (Fig. 3). Given that only about 30% of the total Metro population lives in the City of Toronto it is hard to imagine that between 80 and 90% of the demand for these services originates in the City. While population distribution might be one surrogate measure of potential demand, a more accurate measure is the incidence of poverty, since there is a high correlation between poverty and homelessness (Rossi, 1989). Poor people are more vulnerable to the pressures of the housing market and so are more likely to lose their home than those who are not poor (see Fallis and Murray, 1990). In 1970, 47% of Metropolitan Toronto's poor families lived in the City of Toronto; by 1980, this figure fell to 32%, and in 1985 the figure stood at 31%, as the

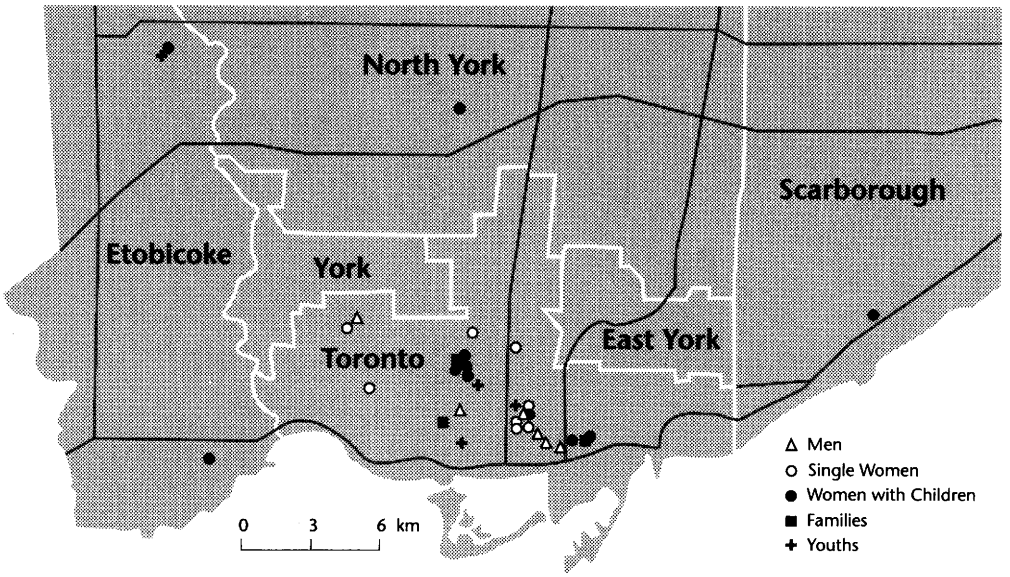

Fig. 3. Location of emergency shelters, METROPOLITAN TORONTO, 1988.

suburban municipalities became more and more susceptible to poverty. Fifty-seven percent of Metro's poor families lived in the suburban municipalities of North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough in 1985. The picture is somewhat different for poor unattached individuals. In 1985, 49% of Metro's poor individuals lived in the City of Toronto and another 39% lived in North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough (SPCMT, 1988). Interestingly, even though York has a low proportion of Metro's poor individuals (7%), it has the highest incidence of poverty among its unattached individuals (38% compared with a Metro average of 34%). Popular accounts in the press and discussions with people involved in the shelter network suggest that a substantial number of the homeless who take refuge in inner-city shelters once had homes in suburban areas. One estimate suggests that 372 North York teenagers live on the streets because there is no shelter for them in the suburban areas; in East York the same study identified "83 different students who, in the course of one year, could have benefitted from youth housing and family mediation services" (Shelters for Youth, 1988). Only 25 of a total of 185 youth beds in Metropolitan Toronto are found in suburban shelters. For the overall picture, less than 8% of all spaces (160 beds) in Metro are found in the suburbs. This pattern is not surprising to people familiar with attempts to locate other built forms of the welfare state: group homes, homes for the elderly, and hospitals, among other "public facilities," all conform to this pattern of inner-city concentration. The lack of facilities in their home areas forces the homeless, whether they are young or old, to migrate in search of shelter. The ghettoization of homeless men and teenagers in the inner city is therefore reinforced by the lack of facilities outside this area.

Clients of the Toronto Shelter Network

Over the last five years, local governments and non-profit agencies in Canada have conducted surveys to glean a more accurate profile of the hostel population. However, the reliability of much of the data collected has been questioned, and recently a more sophisticated method of data collection has been implemented in Metropolitan Toronto. The Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department now collects statistics on a monthly basis from the shelters that operate in Metropolitan Toronto. The data collection sheets have been modified several times to reduce inaccuracies and to minimize the burden placed upon shelter staff whose primary role is clearly not that of collecting statistical information. The data compiled between July 1, 1987, and June 30, 1988, are used in this discussion. There are, however, several limitations to the information. First, these data do not allow comparisons over time. The data are presented as annual aggregations so variations within the year cannot be identified. Second, the information that describes reasons for admissions is based upon client reports to a staff person at the hostel at the time of admission. It does not reflect the results of long interviews and identifies the major reason only. It is therefore possible that reasons like parental abuse or histories of mental illness are seriously under-reported since there may be some reticence on the part of hostel clients to admit such problems. Finally, for some categories there are large numbers of "missing data." Shelter workers have more immediate tasks to deal with than collecting data for statistical manipulation. Nevertheless, given the paucity of information on Toronto's shelter population, these data do provide us with some important insights.

The data show that in 1987-1988, shelters in Metropolitan Toronto admitted approximately 45,000 people (Table 1), an astounding figure in terms of the stress that is placed on a shelter system that has only 2,050 beds. The figure that more truly indicates the extent of the need for emergency shelter in Metro is the figure of 25,316 different individuals who used the shelter system in the twelve-month period (Table 1). By far the greatest users of the hostels are males over the age of 25 (42%) followed by males under 25 (18%). The next single largest user group comprises children who accompany parents: 15% of all users of Toronto's hostels were in this category. Five percent of all individuals entering the shelters are single female parents, whereas single male parents make up only 0.2% of all those entering.

When the proportion of individuals admitted is compared with the proportion of all admissions, it is easy to see that the group most likely to experience repeat admissions is that of "older males," who represent 41% of all individuals but 57% of all admissions. The final column in Table 1 gives a ratio of number of admissions to the number of individuals for each of the user groups. This shows that males are more likely to have multiple admissions than females and that older men and women are likely to be admitted more often than their younger colleagues. The first four user groups in the table represent unaccompanied individuals. The remaining categories represent admissions of various family units. The table shows clearly that the unaccompanied individuals, on average, experience higher numbers of admissions than do family units among which the ratio of admissions to individuals approaches one.

TABLE 1.—CHARACTERISTICS OF USERS[a] OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO HOSTELS, ADMISSIONS AND INDIVIDUALS, JULY 1, 1987 TO JUNE 30, 1988

	Admissions		Individuals		Ratio of admissions to individuals
	No.	%	No.	%	
Older males	25788	57.2	10568	41.7	2.44
Young males	9792	21.7	4626	18.3	2.11
Older females	4201	9.3	2064	8.1	2.03
Young females	2956	6.6	1584	6.3	1.86
Single parent families, female-led	1559	3.5	1304	5.2	1.19
Two-parent families	598	1.3	538	2.1	1.11
Childless couples	123	0.3	110	0.4	1.11
Single parent families, male-led	43	0.1	43	0.2	1.00
Children			3831	15.1	
Dependent spouses			648	2.6	
Total	45060	100.0	25316	100.0	

[a]Clients are defined as young if they are under 25 and unaccompanied. The "old" population comprises unaccompanied adults over the age of 25.

Source: Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department, Hostel Operations Unit, Statistical Package July 1, 1987-June 30, 1988.

The statistics compiled by the Community Services Department identify emergency, periodic, and chronic users based upon number of admissions and length-of-stay information. Emergency users are defined as people who "either stay in the system a total of 31 days or less, regardless of the number of times they are admitted or stay in the system 31-120 days, and are admitted 1 or 2 times." Periodic users are people who "either stay in the system a total of 31-120 days, and are admitted 3 or more times, or stay in the system 121-180 days and are admitted 1-5 times." The chronic users are defined as those who are in the system between four and six months and who are admitted six or more times, or any person who stays longer than six months regardless of the number of admissions (Community Services Department, 1989, p. 4). Table 2 shows that according to these criteria, 90% of the users of Toronto's hostels are "emergency" users. Several factors could be contributing to this finding. First, since shelters live "in the shadow of the poorhouse," few people see them as anything more than a short-term response to a crisis situation. Second, the figures do not give any indication of the number of clients who may have been turned away during the 12-month period for which data are available, i.e., *real demand* is not captured in these figures and so there may be inaccuracies that cannot be measured. A 1982 survey showed that several of Toronto's shelters were operating at or beyond capacity, which was especially true for shelters serving families and youth (MCSD/PPD, 1983). Third, people do not like shelters. Possibly the high number of emergency users reflects the decision by many people to find alternatives (for which there is no information in the current study) rather than return to the shelter network. Finally, the

TABLE 2.—EMERGENCY, PERIODIC, AND CHRONIC USERS OF METROPOLITAN TORONTO HOSTELS, JULY 1, 1987 TO JUNE 30, 1988

	Type of use							
	Emergency		Periodic		Chronic		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Older males	9341	50.0	1005	55.0	222	56.0	10568	51.0
Young males	4190	22.0	388	21.0	48	12.0	4626	22.0
Older females	1786	10.0	187	10.0	91	23.0	2064	10.0
Young females	1423	8.0	141	8.0	20	5.0	1584	8.0
Single parent, female-led	1228	7.0	65	4.0	11	3.0	1304	6.0
Two-parent families	512	3.0	24	1.0	2	0.5	538	3.0
Childless couples	109	0.5	1	0.0	0	0.0	110	0.5
Single parent, male-led	43	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	43	0.2
Total	18632	90.0	1811	9.0	394	2.0	20837	100.0[a]

[a]Does not add to 100 due to rounding.
Source: See Table 1.

proportions might well be a function of the categories used to divide the data. For example, it is possible that someone who stays in the system for 31 days on 31 separate occasions is described as an emergency user. But such a person clearly exhibits a chronic pattern of instability in her/his living situation.[4]

The data show that different client groups experience different length-of-stay patterns and numbers of repeat admissions. Single, older men are the most chronic users of the hostel system, accounting for 56% of chronic users. Older, single females account for another 23% of the chronic users, a very high proportion given that these women only account for about 10% of all users. These figures suggest that Toronto's older homeless population does not have, or does not make use of, the support networks used by younger people and that they must continually return to hostels for shelter. There are several possible explanations for this. Younger people might remain in touch with friends and relatives more than older homeless people and so can find alternatives to the shelter network. Or younger people might be more willing to tolerate less formal alternatives to an emergency shelter, a park bench or a doorway, for example. While relatively low as a proportion of all chronic users, the figures for young users of Toronto's hostels are disturbing. In the 1986 census, men between the ages of 15 and 24 made up about 17% of Metro's male population and yet they account for almost 30% of male users of shelters for the homeless. The situation for women is more marked. Women between the ages of 15 and 24 account for about 16% of Toronto's female population but they represent 35% of all female admissions. It is difficult to predict what these figures mean for future patterns of hostel usage but such a large number of young hostel users suggests that the number of chronic older users might swell as the cohort ages. The table also shows that families, on average, have shorter stays in the hostels and are less likely to experience repeat admissions, a point that is also illustrated by the ratios reported in Table 1. When the admissions

TABLE 3.—LENGTH OF STAY PER ADMISSION, METROPOLITAN TORONTO HOSTELS, JULY 1, 1987 TO JUNE 30, 1988

Number of days	Number of admissions	Percentage of admissions	Cumulative percentage
1-5	28098	62.3	62.3
6-14	9058	20.1	82.4
15-30	4757	10.6	93.0
31-90	2634	5.8	98.8
91-150	335	0.7	99.05
>150	211	0.5	100.0
Missing	53	n/a	
Total	45103		

Source: See Table 1.

data are broken down by month (not shown in this paper), it is possible to see "distinct bulges" in the times at which families are admitted (Longair, 1988, personal communication). In several instances these bulges coincide with the arrivals of large numbers of refugees, a group that often includes intact families.

Toronto's shelter users then, are not "on average" long-term residents with a long history of repeat admissions. A large majority (62%) of all admissions are for periods of five days or less (Table 3). Less than 20% of admissions are for periods of more than two weeks, a function of length-of-stay policies which have traditionally limited stays to less than two weeks. Caution must be also be exercised in interpreting the data in Table 3 since there is no indication of repeat admissions. An individual who has many short admissions clearly has a less stable living arrangement than someone with one or two long stays. Given that 25,000 different individuals accounted for only 45,000 admissions, it is possible to conclude that the number of repeat admissions is not high. But it is likely that the number of repeat admissions is skewed. For example, the 45,000 admissions could be accounted for by 20,000 individuals with one admission each and 5,000 individuals with five admissions each The way in which the Community Services Department presents the data makes it impossible to determine the accuracy of such conclusions.

Some of the experiences that drive people to the hostels are shown in Table 4. These are the data over which the staff responsible for their collation have the most reservations with respect to accuracy. It is easy to see that the categories are not mutually exclusive and some are so all embracing that they hide some of the primary causes of the homeless episode. However, given the conditions under which they are collected, they provide a useful and large, albeit preliminary, database that may not otherwise be available. The largest single user group is that classed as "transients," people who have no fixed address in the community. This is a particularly broad category that gives no indication of the causes of this transiency. One-third of all admissions are accounted for by this reason and it probably accounts for a high proportion of the repeat admissions. This large number that reveals little of the actual

TABLE 4.—REASONS FOR ADMISSIONS TO HOSTELS, METROPOLITAN TORONTO, JULY 1, 1987 TO JUNE 30, 1988

Reason Given	No.	%
All admissions		
Transient	14055	32
Other, not elsewhere listed	6969	16
Missing data	1166	3
Detailed reason cited below	22870	49
Total	45060	100
Admissions for which detailed information available		
Moving to city	8335	36.5
Eviction	4697	20.5
Stranded in city	4080	18.0
Family problems:		
Family breakdown	1715	7.5
Spouse abuse	1419	6.0
Parental abuse	211	1.0
From treatment:		
Psychiatric	294	1.3
Other	963	4.2
From corrections	1000	4.0
Fire/unsafe premises	156	1.0
Total	22870	100.0

Source: See Table 1.

causes of homelessness probably reflects the fact that many of the individuals are hesitant to reveal the real reason for the homelessness. For example, embarrassment might prevent people from admitting parental abuse, substance abuse, or a history of mental disorder. Data from a national survey reveal that up to one-third of those in Canadian shelters are alcohol abusers and 15% use drugs (McLaughlin, 1987). A 1983 Toronto survey, again reporting 60% of its sample as "homeless, transient or unemployed," found that alcohol and drug abusers accounted for 9% of the surveyed group (MCSD/PPD, 1983). Approximately 2% of the *total* population (or 4.2% of those for which we have detailed information) described in Table 4 are listed in the original data set as having recently been discharged from "other treatment," which includes hospitals and drug rehabilitation programs, but unfortunately that is the only insight that can be gleaned. Given the findings of many studies in the United States and the findings of the Canadian national survey, it is not unreasonable to speculate that a significant proportion of the "transient" category could be accounted for by people with substance abuse problems. Among females over 25 years of age, transient status accounts for almost 44% of admissions. This reinforces the earlier speculations regarding the shortcomings of support networks for older people. Transiency is lowest among single-parent families led by females. There is pressure on such families to find a "permanent" address so that children can remain in school. Also, it is likely that

these families will find more support among families and friends than men or women who do not have children.

To make more sense of these data, it is useful to exclude the information under the headings "transient," "other reasons," and "missing data," since such categories shed little light on the causes of admission. Excluding these entries leaves information on approximately 51% of the admissions or 22,870 cases. The largest proportion (36%) of these admissions is accounted for by people "moving to the city." This captures both domestic and international refugees who come to Toronto in search of employment and other opportunities. For example, 38% of couples and 22% of two-parent families are recorded under this category, as is one-quarter of the younger male shelter population.[5] The next most frequently cited reason for admission is "eviction," accounting for 20% of cases. This includes eviction by landlords or relatives and friends. Being "stranded in the city" is the reason cited by another 18% of admissions.

The remaining reasons for admission to the hostels include a group of family-related problems (parental or spouse abuse or general family breakdown) which together account for almost 15% of admissions. When these data are disaggregated by user group (Community Services Department, 1988), they show that 49% of admissions of female-headed single-parent families are accounted for by spouse abuse, even though this reason is cited by only 3% of all admissions. The figures on family problems probably represent underestimates given that some domestic problems could be hidden in the figure that covers family evictions and because some people are not likely to admit to this as a cause of their homelessness. Less than 10% of the admissions can be accounted for by reason of recent discharge from a correctional facility, hospital, alcohol rehabilitation program, or a psychiatric facility. Again, there may be some hesitancy to declare this information and so this category might also suffer from an undercount. Only 294 admissions involved individuals reporting movement from a psychiatric hospital or ward. This is an important point to note since many studies in the United States show high proportions of mentally ill individuals among the homeless population (Farr, Koegal, and Burnam, 1986; HUD, 1989). At least one study in Toronto shows that a very low proportion of the city's homeless have a history of mental illness (MCSD/PPD, 1983). A national study in Canada, however, reported that about 20% of shelter clients were current or ex-psychiatric patients (McLaughlin, 1987). But the low figure in Table 4 does not mean that only 294 of the admissions involved mentally ill people. It means that 294 of these admissions were just discharged from a psychiatric facility, i.e., there may be many more people with a history of mental illness among the shelter population but many of them may have passed through some intermediary step between discharge from an institution and admission to a hostel. Or it may be that Toronto provides a more successful network of support for the mentally ill and so their presence among the homeless population is actually significantly lower than is the case in U.S. cities or for the Canadian national picture.

These figures report on people who *are using* Toronto's shelters and give some ideas about why they seek admission to a shelter. However, it should be remembered that the data do not give any indication of the homeless who do not find their way to a shelter (the true "street people"), the families who are doubling up with friends and relatives, or those turned away from the shelter network on any one night because it is operating

at capacity. The extent to which these data reveal the need for shelter and affordable housing must therefore be questioned. They reflect more the supply of a service than real demand. Studies in Toronto in the early 1980s showed that shelters were operating at or above capacity and so we might speculate that there is much demand going unmet (MCSD/PPD, 1983).

The Service Component of Toronto's Shelter and Support Service Network

It is widely recognized that, although the provision of housing is the necessary common denominator in working toward a solution for homelessness, other services need to be integrated into the community. As Hartman (1987, p. 16) put it: "We need a range of programs and approaches that match in complexity the causes and manifestation of the problem itself—income supports, food and nutrition needs, education and job training. . . ." In light of the recognition of this need for a range of programs, a survey of shelter operators' perceptions of the needs of their homeless clients was conducted in the summer, 1988.[6] The survey was constructed as two multi-dimensional variables. The first variable measured the level of need of homeless people for shelter, food, employment, medical and psychiatric services, and income. The second variable was designed to measure how well each of these was being met. The areas of need that were studied were adapted in part from Lipton and Sabatini (1984) and Dear, Bayne, Boyd, Callaghan, and Goldstein (1980). Both studies identified residential, vocational, social, medical, and psychiatric services as needs that should be met for an environment to be deemed "supportive." Food and income are obviously important considerations and were included as dimensions of need. All items were measured on a four-point Likert scale. The survey was mailed to 30 shelters providing short-term accommodation in Toronto. Twenty surveys were returned yielding a 66% response rate. The absolute numbers are small and so the following discussion is confined to a descriptive analysis.

Table 5 shows what service providers feel is the need for services for their homeless clients and how well they feel these needs are being met; thus it provides some measure of demand and supply as well as an assessment of the adequacy of supply. There are, of course, problems with accepting the shelter providers' view of supply and demand; they are not the homeless and they naturally have a vested interest in the community's perception of the needs of the shelters and their clients. However, given that shelter operators are at the frontline, their opinions are probably more valuable than a simple numeric count of the number of services available, or the perceptions of more distant bureaucrats. Not surprisingly, most shelter operators believe that the main need of their clients is affordable housing. Nearly 75% of the respondents felt that "almost all" their clients had a need in this area. The other area in which a relatively high number of respondents felt that "almost all" their clients had a need was emergency shelter. For the most part, shelter operators felt that this need was being adequately met; only 21% felt that it was being poorly met. This low figure might reflect the belief that short-term housing is widely available in Toronto. One operator of a women's shelter noted that her hostel turns away between 10 and 20 women per night. There is then an unmet need and the degree of severity of this need varies among client groups. The reported low level of need for emergency shelter may

TABLE 5.—CAREGIVERS' BELIEFS REGARDING THE NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS CLIENTS USING HOSTEL SERVICES, SUMMER, 1988

	In your view, how many of your clients have a need in this area? (percentage)					How well is this need being met? (percentage)				
	No. resp.	None or very few	Some	Most	Almost all	Not at all	Poorly	Fairly well	Very well	No. resp.
Shelter										
Emergency overnight shelter	0	15	30	15	40	0	21	58	21	0
Transitional housing	0	5	50	25	20	16	37	26	21	0
Day or drop-in centers	0	25	55	10	10	10	32	48	10	0
Affordable low-income housing	0	5	10.5	10.5	74	16	79	5	0	0
Food										
Nutritious meals	0	0	21	21	48	0	53	37	10.5	0
Daily meals	0	5	47.5	37	42	0	37	42	21	0
Enough food	5	10.5	42	0.5	32	0	47.5	37	16	5
Employment										
Employment opportunities	0	0	21	53	26	5	58	26	5	5
Job referral	5	5	47	37	5	5	47.5	32	10.5	5
Skills training	5	0	37	37	21	10.5	42	37	5	5
Medical/Psychiatric										
Emergency medical care	0	16	63	10.5	10.5	5	26	58	10.5	0
Regular medical care	0	10.5	42	37	10.5	5	32	53	5	5
Emergency psychiatric care	0	21	74	5	0	16	74	10.5	0	0
Regular psychiatric care	0	32	63	5	0	5	58	37	0	0
Drug/alcohol rehabilitation	0	10.5	79	0	10.5	5	32	47.5	10.5	5
Ongoing counselling	5	5	32	42	16	0	47.5	37	16	0
Income										
Social security benefits	10.5	0	53	16	21	5	32	37	10.5	16
Local government assistance	0	0	32	47.5	21	5	32	42	16	5
Wages from employment	0	0	47.5	27	27	52.6	3.2	21.1	5.2	5.2
Pensions	0	37	42	10.5	10.5	0	37	47.5	5	5

Source: Author's survey results

also be a reflection of the biases of people providing short-term emergency accommodation. Predictably, it is the need for affordable housing that shelter operators feel is being most poorly met. This concern is complemented by the need to improve the availability of transitional housing and drop-in centers. More than half the respondents (53%) felt that the need for transitional housing was being poorly met or not met at all, while 42% had a similar view of the availability of drop-in centers. However, while the respondents were prepared to say that the supply of day centers could be improved, note should be made of the fact that there is a relatively low level of need for these facilities. Only 20% of respondents suggested that "most" or "almost all" of their clients need this form of support. This can be partly explained by the fact that homeless individuals need employment and other opportunities if they are to find their way out of the shelter system. Drop-in centers will not provide them with the income that will allow this transition to be made.[7]

Along with shelter, one of the most often cited of human needs is food. The survey results suggest that the nutritional needs of Toronto's shelter population are being poorly met. While 63% of respondents felt that their clients' needs for *daily meals* were either "fairly well" or "very well" met, 53% believed that the need for *nutritious meals* was being poorly served and almost half suggested that clients were not getting "enough food." A network of foodbanks has evolved in Toronto since the early 1980s in response to the food needs of the homeless and poor and the demand for this service has continued to grow, both within the inner city and in the suburbs (Laws, 1988).

To house and feed oneself and family, it is clear that a regular income is needed. Two sets of questions dealt with the issue of employment and income. Income was defined as being from four sources: social security, local government assistance ("welfare"), wage, and pensions. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that the need for wages from employment was being poorly met or not met at all, pointing to the high incidence of unemployment among the shelter population. This is further emphasized by the fact that 79% of respondents answered that most or almost all of their clients were in need of employment and 63% felt that this need was being poorly met or not met at all. Access to labor markets requires certain skills, often lacking among the homeless population. More than half the answers indicated that the needs for skills training were not being adequately met. Similarly, 53% indicated that there was room for improvement in the area of job referral. The fact that such a high proportion of respondents felt that employment and job training were needed should be interpreted in light of the earlier results regarding the low level of need for drop-in centers. There seems to be the suggestion that there are certain daily activities that will help people out of the homelessness cycle better than others. The need for employment and job training are thus given a higher priority than other activities.

Questions regarding medical and psychiatric care were asked because of the emphasis in the literature on the links between mental illness and homelessness. In keeping with the findings discussed in the previous section, the survey reveals that, contrary to popular opinion, a majority of the shelter residents are not in need of emergency or regular psychiatric care. Only 5% of respondents said that "most" of their clients were in need of either emergency or regular psychiatric care. But, *even though the medical and psychiatric needs of Toronto's homeless may not be great, they are being poorly met.* Ninety percent of respondents reported that demand for emergency

psychiatric treatment was either not met or poorly met, and 63% expressed the same dissatisfaction with regular psychiatric care. One respondent noted that while there were "lots of counselling services available," there were deficiencies in other support areas, such as affordable housing and job opportunities.

The responses show that service providers feel that there is room for improvement in the provision of support services in Toronto. One common barrier to the use of services is their accessibility, often a function of their location and the mobility of the client group. Because the homeless population has a limited degree of spatial mobility (given a lack of transport and money) an attempt was made to uncover the geographic dimension of the *supply* of support services as an indicator of accessibility. In 1988 the Department of Community Services in Metropolitan Toronto compiled a directory of services available to all homeless people (MMT, 1988). Table 6 and Figure 4 were constructed from the information in the directory and illustrate the distribution of services available to Toronto's homeless. The imbalance between the city and suburbs in terms of service provision is striking. Suburban food programs are grocery based and thus assume that the client has access to facilities for the preparation of a meal and thus seem not to be aimed at the "absolute" homeless who do not have a roof over their head (Fig. 4). Those in need of a prepared meal must make their way into the City of Toronto. Similarly, Table 6 shows that facilities for daily bathing are not available in the suburbs. Personal hygiene is an important consideration when an individual is searching for work, but only in the City of Toronto are baths available. The suburbs are also underserviced when it comes to counselling services, both personal and employment. This means that the homeless individual must incur transportation costs, both in terms of time and money, to reach the support services that can assist in breaking out of the cycle of homelessness. The "chicken and egg" question that so often is raised with respect to the concentration of service-dependent people and the services that they use is once again illustrated. However, it is not true that the continuing concentration of homeless people in the inner city is because that is where these people originate. The causes of homelessness do not respect local government boundaries. There does exist a demand for services in the suburbs, a demand that is not adequately being met (e.g., Shelters for Youth, 1988).

CONCLUSIONS: SHELTER, POLICY, AND IDEOLOGY

Understanding the form and function of emergency shelters means seeing them as part of a complex network rather than as isolated services. Shelters have been established in particular historical contexts shaped by economic, political, and community forces. These emergency accommodations are closely connected to other support services for homeless clients and so must be studied in terms of the immediate and contextual structures in which they are situated. There is a very real need for an integrated system of emergency accommodations and support services.

Some advocates might argue that emphasizing the need for emergency hostels will detract attention from the more fundamental issue of the need for affordable housing. In 1985, a report presented to the Metropolitan Community Services and Housing Committee claimed that "The lack of affordable housing in Metropolitan Toronto is the single most important factor impacting on the hostel network, both in terms of the

TABLE 6.—COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES FOR HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS, METROPOLITAN TORONTO, 1988

Service Type	Number of Services	
	City	Suburbs
Food programs		
Light snack	4	0
Hot meals	6	0
Groceries	10	5
Food vouchers	1	3
Free clothing	10	3
Day programs		
Drop-in centers	20	1
Baths	5	0
Employment counselling[a]	25	8
Legal clinics	8	7
Crisis intervention units[b]	5	3
Personal counselling	23	3

[a]Excludes Employment Canada Offices.
[b]Excludes telephone services.
Source: MMT, 1988.

way it is utilized and its growth" (WCESTH, 1985, p. 14). There is no doubt that Toronto needs affordable housing and that politicians and planners must come up with some low-cost alternatives to the seemingly unlimited expansion of the "luxury" end of the local housing market. But there is still a need for emergency, short-term housing in the city. Many of the users of Toronto's hostels are not repeat users and they do not stay for a long period of time. They are the kids who get stranded in the city at night without enough money to go home; the women who have left their spouses and just need a place until an apartment becomes available at the first of the month; the traveller who has missed a connecting bus and is not allowed to stay in the terminal until the first bus leaves the next morning. There is a definite need to have some "last resort" housing available in the city. Given that it is increasingly acceptable for a child or an adult to leave an abusive domestic situation, we are likely to see the continued rise in demand for this kind of service in all parts of the city, including the suburbs. It is critical that such facilities be available in the home community so that, for example, children do not have to leave their schools and friends when their family situation breaks down. So, while it is true that "we need homes, not hostels," researchers and planners must not lose sight of the demand in the Toronto community for short-term housing. Evidence shows that, especially in the case of young people, this demand is not being properly met. Even if there were more permanent and affordable houses, there would still be crises that require an overnight response. Houses do not stop people from abusing their spouses and children.

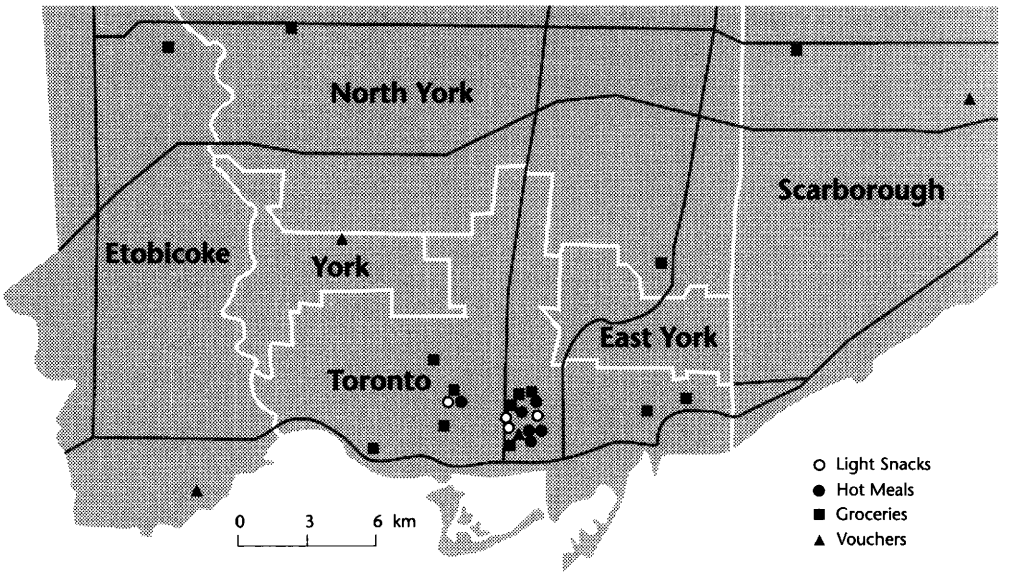

Fig. 4. Location of food services, METROPOLITAN TORONTO, 1988.

The survey of Toronto's shelters showed that the presence of emergency housing is in itself not enough. Respondents revealed the need for an environment offering the support networks that might resolve the crisis that precipitated the homeless episode to begin with. For example, a teenager who decides to leave the parental home will not only need advice on a how to find a home, but also counselling as to how s/he might be able to continue school or how to find a job. Victims of domestic violence will also require appropriate counselling. Service providers might be expected to be somewhat biased in their assessment of how well needs are being met and the shelter operators were less critical of the emergency shelter supply than of other elements of the support service network. Nonetheless, their responses reveal a perceived need for improvements in Toronto's shelter and support service network.

Throughout the discussion, attention has been drawn to the spatial dimension of the shelter and service network. The concentration of shelters and services in the area close to Toronto's downtown and the lack of suburban services for the homeless were illustrated. This reflects the political geography of the network: the use of local government planning ordinances has effectively "sheltered" suburban municipalities from any rapid encroachment of shelter facilities. Local opponents can use a formal legislative mechanism to restrict the locations of shelters. In doing so, they exclude certain people from residential neighborhoods and create obstacles to a decentralized approach to planning for the homeless.

The evolution of the shelter system, its geographic manifestation, and its ability to serve its clients are all closely linked to politics and ideologies. How can an understanding of an emergency shelter network in an urban area contribute to current debates in human geography? There are several key issues at hand: the potential contribution of geographers to an understanding of human shelter, the relevance of

geography to policy, and the use of space in promoting political ideologies. First, consider the question of human shelter. Geographers have made a substantial contribution to the understanding of the meaning and significance of housing, documented in the careful review by Bassett and Short (1980), but this has tended to be only a partial analysis of forms of human shelter, focusing primarily on home ownership (either private or cooperative) or public housing. Long-term housing has received the most attention, especially by those who point to its important political role. For example, Agnew (1981) argued that home ownership is of primary importance in maintaining a disciplined workforce. But this does not apply to the full spectrum of housing opportunities available in any city. Allen and McDowell (1989) have recently analyzed the role of the rental market, but again the focus is on longer-term housing. "Temporary" forms of housing that exist outside the "market" or the welfare state *per se* are important features of the urban welfare palimpsest; in fact, they are conspicuous in their presence on the latest layer of urban development (see Winchester and White, 1988). To be thorough in our understanding of housing, geographers therefore need to attend more closely to the case of emergency shelters.

There are opportunities for questions to be asked from many corners of the discipline. Are the housing "preferences" of shelter residents so different from those in more regular forms of housing? Do the preferences differ among various shelter clients? Where are shelters best located, not just in terms of some notion of efficiency, but also in terms of being able to be as homelike as possible? What are the longer-term functions of shelters? Are they merely a means of social control where the indigent are warehoused? Or can they play a political role whereby they allow people with a common plight to come together and begin to organize themselves rather than being forced to be dependent on others (see Ward, 1988). Perhaps this is why the state has been so hesitant to get involved in the provision of shelters in a more visible fashion. Is it because the concentration of homeless people in spaces called shelters might in fact promote a challenge to welfare policies as people share their experiences? The whole time-space operation of shelters is interesting: the restricted hours of shelters and their spatial distribution means that not only are people separated by space but also by time, since few shelters allow residents to remain inside during the day. Here is an opportunity to link some of the early work on time geography with more recent interests in how political organizing can influence the form of the urban built environment. Perhaps more opportunities for organizing would mean a different landscape; successful lobbying might result in more low-income housing, for instance.

There are possibilities for geographers to become involved in debates about emergency shelter policies. Because of their important role in the current phase of urban restructuring, and the apparent growing demand for their services, shelters are high on the policy agenda; whether or not they are being provided in the numbers required is questionable, but politicians and planners are being forced to debate their existence because of the pressure being exerted by political lobbies. As a policy-relevant discipline, geography should be involved in this debate. Much energy is spent on arguing for permanent affordable housing. But the availability of more houses will not necessarily stop parents from abusing children, spouses hurting one another (although more houses might reduce the stress that is sometimes associated with domestic violence), or a sudden loss of income. There exists a need to develop policies

that ensure the availability of emergency shelters and which use some notion of territorial justice in siting these facilities. This does not mean that geographers should become responsible for the justification of shelters. Rather, a useful contribution can be made to current debates by placing them within their broader context as well as showing the ways in which existing local policies may encourage or hinder the development of a satisfactory alternative to long-term housing. The spatial distribution of the homeless, and their support network, measured at national, regional and local levels, means that geographers have an important role to play in formulating and refining policies.

Finally, in reviewing the state of the geography of social policy, Smith (1989, p. 124) pointed to the lack of analyses that "deal adequately with the relevance of space, place or location to analyses of, or prescriptions for, the restructuring of welfare." One important question to be addressed in accepting Smith's challenge is that concerning the relationship between welfare ideologies and the manipulation of urban space. Debates about the social construction of space and place are now familiar. Such social constructions of places obviously reflect dominant ideologies and there are, of course, limits to how far certain ideologies can be taken. For example, socialist local governments in the United Kingdom were limited in their attempts to create welfare landscapes that reflected their political ideology. Similarly, those on the extreme right who would advocate minimal state intervention are limited by the needs for reelection and the reproduction of social relations that are dependent upon some form of state intervention. Shelters, in Ontario at least, seem to represent a political compromise. They are often operated by the non-profit sector and so cannot be seen as meddling by the state, yet they are dependent upon the state for funding. Shelters are also a built reminder to urban residents that something is wrong with the welfare state, but simultaneously act as a symbol that "something is being done." Just as careful analyses of the political-ideological role of home ownership are available, so we need more thorough investigations of the political significance of an urban emergency shelter and service network together with an analysis of the politics that surround the current confrontation between those who would see the network decentralized and those who would see it contained.

NOTES

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[2]At the outset I should make it clear that I use the term shelter and service network purposefully to avoid the image of a downtown area called skid row. This is important since one of the ongoing battles in metropolitan areas concerns the possible decentralization of facilities used by the homeless, i.e., the shelter and support service network has a city-suburban dimension that might be overlooked if the term skid row is used. There is, of course, no reason to assume that skid rows necessarily cannot form outside the inner city. However, because of the popular image associated with the term it is important to avoid confusion.

[3]See Lee, Jones, and, Lewis (1990) and Lee, and Link and Toro (1991) for discussions of attitudes toward homelessness as revealed through survey research.

[4]An attempt was made to get access to the original data set to evaluate the accuracy of the categories used in the aggregation of the data. However, because of some of the information contained in the files and because of concerns of service providers and advocates over the confidentiality of client information, the Metropolitan Toronto Community Services Department would not release the original data set. Discussion with the individual responsible for the information suggested that the categories were arrived at after careful consideration of the trends identified.

[5]Information is available on the location of an individual's home community one year prior to admission to the shelter. This shows that the greatest number (60%) come from within Metropolitan Toronto, a figure comparable to that reported by Farr, Koegal, and Burnam (1986), who found that about two thirds of the homeless they identified in Los Angeles were from the city. Another 16% of the cases reported in this paper are from elsewhere in the Province of Ontario; 17% come from another province and 7% are from outside Canada.

[6]This survey was carried out in conjunction with Sharon Lord (who designed the instrument), a doctoral candidate in Cornell University's Department of City and Regional Planning. As well as the Toronto hostels, the survey was sent to agencies in upstate New York. However, in this paper only the results from Toronto are reported.

[7]The low priority for drop-in centers suggested by this result could also be a function of the timing of the survey. Like shelters elsewhere in North America, many of the Toronto shelters have a policy of not allowing clients to stay during the day. Over the summer months, when this survey was conducted, this might not be as much of a problem as during the winter. Had the question been asked during January, more operators might have perceived a need for drop-in centers to protect homeless people from the dangerously cold weather conditions in Toronto. While the numbers are small, it should be noted that three of the four operators that reported that there was a relatively high level of need for day centers were representing large shelters that are older and more typical of those that have the "no day stay" policies.

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