

# Family Services à la famille Ottawa

## Newsletter

SPRING 2009

### **Possible Impact of the Economic Downturn for Family Services à la famille Ottawa**

By Dr. Timothy Simboli, Executive Director

With the economic storms swirling through North America what might happen to our clients and to our organization? The media is constantly reporting on the impacts to corporations and government but has not focused on what this means for the not-for-profit sector. This sector includes social services, health, the arts, recreation and the environment. Programs and services dealing with a range of issues from managing stress and mental health issues to food banks and credit counselling are and will become more important than ever<sup>1</sup>.

The collapse of the market and resulting recession will likely have an impact that could last for a year or more and come in waves. Through discussions amongst our management team, our Executive Board, and in the community with other charities we looked at the possible impact on our clients and the agency.

The first wave of the market's collapse affects those who are in the market and where the sale of equities is required. Those of our clients who are affected may become more financially cautious and attentive to the basic needs of job, food, shelter and clothing. However the constant media reports are distressing and may result in increased worry and stress for many. We have not seen a significant increase in demand for services at this time. The impact on our organization has not been strongly felt either.

Our budget is stable for the coming fiscal year, what may be jeopardized is new and unexpected funding. Our funding and finances do not rely heavily on market investments and most of our funders are not dependent on the market. We have some endowed funds which are suffering but we don't rely on them and should see a recovery, given a couple of years. Our ability to meet both rising costs and any rising demand will be hampered.

The second wave will occur when the recession resulting from the market meltdown starts to affect businesses, and employment is threatened. As some of our clients become unemployed or under-

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## Living Wisely Through Challenging Economic Times

By Lucille Smeltzer-Legault ,  
Employee Assistance Program, Counsellor

In recent months a day does not pass without disturbing financial news. Like dominos, one institution after another has fallen leaving the appearance of chaos and loss behind. Headlines point to lost homes, jobs, and savings. They prepare us to expect the worst. This constant flow of news is difficult and our emotional reactions to it often make it worse.

Most of us have heard the story about “Chicken Little” and remember his hysterical response to a falling object; running through the forest crying, “The sky is falling, the sky is falling”. This exaggerated response to what was actually an acorn was echoed as many of the forest’s inhabitants overreacted to his overreaction. Finally, one “wise soul” stopped, examined the facts and pointed out that what they thought to be the sky was, in fact, a fallen acorn. The constant media reports and coverage sometimes function as our “Chicken Little”, and we can get drawn into the fear and drama of these disaster stories.

It is true that present financial situations are more serious than falling acorns. It is also true that there have been many real and painful losses. At the same time, most Canadians remain at work, and the fundamental aspects of our economy are functioning. Many of us may have to tighten our belts and re-examine our personal financial situations, so we need to remember that by overreacting we may increase the risk of loss. We all need ways of staying in touch with our “wise soul” who reminds us to check out the facts and determine what we need to do to address the situation as a whole. We need to shift from reaction to action. If we are unable to do this ourselves, it is important to reach out and get help.

### ***Step One: Dealing with Your Emotions***

Financial security is a core need we all have. Thoughts of losing our job or that our retirement savings are at risk, may cause a strong emotional reaction. It is important to pay attention, listen to and fully acknowledge our emotional responses or they may intensify. For example, a job loss may require time to grieve. An awareness of our emotional reactions is also important in seeking help with ongoing fear, panic, grief and anger. If you feel overwhelmed with these feelings you may wish to seek counselling assistance.

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## **Living Wisely Through Challenging Economic Times**

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### ***Step Two: When and How to Respond***

It is important to realistically evaluate the source of the problem or situation. This will help you determine when and how to effectively respond; make a plan and initiate your action. For example, if you lose your job, how much of a financial buffer do you have to pay rent, utilities, food and other bills? This will help you to plan the most effective course of action and time frame necessary to find other employment.

### ***Step Three: Analyze the Facts & Get Help***

The current financial situation and upheaval is complex. It may impact us personally, it may affect our family, friends, communities and as a nation. How we deal with each of these situations may require a different response and different coping strategy. Careful analysis of the “facts” is crucial. If the situation is outside our immediate expertise, consulting with professionals may help to evaluate the situation, find resources and plan appropriate responses. Accessing resources helps us to make informed decisions. Often an outside person can see a pattern that we fail to notice when we look at things on our own. If you have been laid off you may need to consult someone to help with job search, résumé writing or retraining. If you have lost financial assets, it may be useful to consult a financial advisor.

### ***Step Four: Ways to Cope***

We have all been through difficult times and crises in the past and have developed skills for dealing with them. In times of trouble, we need to look within and see what has worked in the past. Whether it is spending time with friends and family, developing creative outlets to lessen anxiety, eating well, exercising or proper rest - all may help us to cope. Remember “self-care”; in times of stress we forget the basics because our energy is focused elsewhere. Self-care may help us learn to deal better with the stress brought on by the present financial situation.

- Get sufficient rest and sleep.
- Deep-breathing or exercises, such as yoga, help to relax the body and mind.
- Maintain your connections to significant others in your life.
- Daily exercise is one of the most powerful antidotes for stress, anxiety and depression.
- Keeping a watchful eye on nutrition will help maintain good health and high energy in times of stress.

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## Living Wisely Through Challenging Economic Times

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### **Step Five: Take Action**

To resolve the stress cycle it is essential that we choose a course of action and follow through. Following steps one to four will help in making this choice. It is important to base your actions on the information available and allow yourself to move on. If you are finding that you are avoiding taking action that seems rational and appropriate, you may want to seek counselling or coaching assistance to help you follow through. Once you have taken action, evaluate the outcome over an appropriate time frame then re-assess or make corrections to your action plan.

In these troubling and uncertain financial times, it is important to work with the facts of the problem and to be aware of our emotional responses. Once the facts are clear we will be able to make informed decisions. Following through on these decisions while taking care of our physical and mental health will help us to move forward and cope in these difficult times.

### **Employee Profile—Lucille Smeltzer-Legault, Counsellor**

By Stephanie Piovesan, Communications Officer

Lucille Smeltzer-Legault works as a counsellor in the Employee Assistance Program. Prior to this, she worked for five years in our mental health program. Lucille began working at Family Services à la famille in October 1994. She left for a about a year and a half to work with the L'Arche, a residential community for adults with developmental delays, but returned to the FSFO family in 1998. Lucille has a counselling degree from Saint Paul University and has worked on EAP contracts in private practice. She feels this, along with her history of involvement with L'Arche (since 1969), "has been important in helping to accept ... (her) own and other's limitations and to help look for the unique gift that each person offers."

While working as a counsellor in the Mental Health program Lucille had several clients who were interested in developing their artistic skills. Recognizing the benefits this could have, she developed and led a creativity workshop once a week. Several of the participants blossomed and in the first year they prepared an exhibit of their work which was well received. She also worked with representatives of the city of Ottawa and the Royal Ottawa Hospital to set up the arts workshop which continues at the Hintonberg Community Resource centre. Lucille is a valued employee and multi-talented colleague and has made many contributions to the agency.

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Teaching a noon-hour yoga class to the staff of 1 Community Place Lucille enjoys “seeing people grow in skill and flexibility”. She worked with the staff and management team in the negotiation of two collective agreements and “appreciates (the) atmosphere (of FSFO) as a place where we are able to confer with colleagues and to have fun together”.

Lucille enjoys yoga, cross-country skiing, hiking, Authentic Movement and dance. Lucille is a gifted artist who enjoys watercolor painting and painting on silk and hopes to get back into doing more art when she retires. She also enjoys gardening and cooking.

### **Possible Impact of the Economic Downturn for Family Services à la famille Ottawa** (continued from page 1)

employed we will likely experience an increase in demand. Stress will make all situations worse and the complexity and severity will likely increase along with the numbers.

For the organization, we will start to see some impact on our funding at this stage. A recession will effect charitable contributions and tax based support which comes to us in the form of United Way and government funding, and impacts almost all of our organization. It is difficult to determine how big the impact might be but our best guess is that it won't be in the form of large or wholesale cuts but rather small amounts and perhaps the loss of growth in funding support . EAP business may be affected but our principle customers should sustain us.

The third wave will be felt if the recession goes very deep or lasts for very long. The impact is not known at this moment and only time will tell. When the economy recovers we will still see individuals and families suffering; they won't recover as quickly. Organizations will need to be prepared to step in when asked and then when the environment gets better.

Today our programs and services are secure and in demand, and in such difficult times tremendously important. Our emphasis on expanding our impact, working collaboratively, and taking effective social action are even more important at this time. FSFO has been serving this community since 1914 when “*unemployment was high and breadlines were forming*”. Responding to this sort of societal problem is what FSFO does best.

<sup>1</sup>The Ontario Trillium Foundation-Challenges and Opportunities for Ontario's Not-For-Profit Sector during Tough Economic Times-March 2009

## Getting Back to the Basics

By Stephanie Piovesan, Communications Officer

While the economic situation has many of us concerned, maybe this is the time to look at how we are living and to reassess what's really important. Maybe these challenging times provide an "opportunity" to reconnect with family, friends and the community.

As a parent you may be concerned with not being able to provide your children with all the "extras", or how to help them to understand the new household budget or the importance of turning off a light. With the real time media reports and the internet most kids are probably aware of what's happening. It's important to talk with them and explain how you can all work together to make changes and adjustments and to answer their questions and address their concerns in an age appropriate way.

Although there may be less money to eat out, buy the newest gadget, or take a vacation, we can still enjoy family time by being creative and getting back to basics. Spending quality time with your children is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. The family memories you create will be with them long after they outgrow that expensive pair of sneakers or their cell phone becomes obsolete. When you think back to your fondest and most cherished memories as a parent, is it your weekly manicure or the card your child made you for your birthday? Is it the 52 inch plasma TV or the night the power went out and you and your family roasted marshmallows in the fireplace and told ghost stories?

Learning to appreciate the simpler things in life may actually be a gift from these difficult times.

Here are some suggestions for family activities:

- Instead of the latest video game – save on your electricity bill and dig out the old board games.
- Instead of the going to a movie – save on the costs of transportation, tickets & goodies by renting a movie & making your own popcorn.
- Instead of paying for a gym membership or Wii fit – get the family together to take a walk with the dog; run through a sprinkler, play catch or go for a bike ride.
- Instead of eating out – pack up a picnic of family favourites and special recipes, and visit your local park; a museum or get together with neighbours.
- Instead of your usual vacation away – plan a "stay"cation, camp in your back yard or stay in a local hotel and rediscover our beautiful city (see page 7 for events & activities in Ottawa this summer).



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## Things to do in Ottawa this summer...for FREE

- **Visit the Parliament Buildings** (Daily 9 am to 7 pm)
- **Changing of the Guards** (Daily, June-August, weather permitting, 10-10:30am)
- **Canada Day Celebrations & Fireworks** (July 1st)
- **Ottawa Jazz Festival to Celebrate Canada Day and Family Day**  
(on July 1 only courtesy of the NCC. Visit [www.ottawajazzfestival.com](http://www.ottawajazzfestival.com))
- **Sound and Light Show on Parliament Hill** (July, August, September)
- **Noon Under the Bridge** (June to August -outdoor musical lunch performances, two to three times weekly under the Plaza Bridge, west arch)
- **BOB FM Movie Nights** (visit [www.939bobfm.com](http://www.939bobfm.com) for details)
- **Visit your Public Library** ([www.biblioottawalibrary.ca](http://www.biblioottawalibrary.ca))
- **Orchestras in the Park** (July 23 to 26, series of outdoor concerts presented by the NAC Orchestra and the NCC.)

## A Lesson in Poverty

By Emily Troy, Family Advocacy Program

Unemployment rates are hitting record highs, major banks and corporations are declaring bankruptcy, families are losing their homes and Canadians are facing the most difficult economic time since the depression. It is at times like these when we can feel that we are most alone and disconnected from the rest of our community, which is why it is during these times we are in such need of critical services that support families and community. We are not alone during times of crisis precisely because of our social safety net, the roots of which were planted during the depression.

Living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, and struggling to find a job are not unique to our current situation. These realities exist on a daily basis for many of our community members. In 1989 the Federal Government made a commitment to end child and family poverty by the year 2000<sup>i</sup>. Unfortunately 20 years later there has been little change. In fact, "...nearly two decades later, 760,000 children - almost 1 child out of every 9 in Canada – still lives in poverty when measured after income taxes"<sup>ii</sup>. If you are a member of a First Nation community the rate of poverty becomes even more severe – 1 in 4 children lives in poverty<sup>iii</sup>. Family Services à la famille Ottawa believes that all families have the right to a secure source of income to meet their basic needs. We must work towards ensuring all members of our family, from birth to death, are cared for with dignity and have equal access to services and supports.

Though these are tough times we can all use this experience to open our hearts to those who, through no fault of their own, have been pushed to the margins and are in need of a community's support. Because, after all, Everyone Matters.

<sup>i</sup>Campaign 2000, 2008 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty.

Available online: <http://www.campaign2000.ca/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup>Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup>Ibid.

## Upcoming Events ...

### Annual General Meeting

Tuesday June 23rd, 2009

5:00-7:00 pm at 312 Parkdale Avenue

### Juke Box Mania 2009

Save the date — **Friday October 23rd, 2009.**

Visit our newly updated site at [www.jukeboxmania.org](http://www.jukeboxmania.org).



**For more information on groups and workshops,  
please visit us at: [www.familyservicesottawa.org](http://www.familyservicesottawa.org).**

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## YES! I would like to Help...

Please accept my:  One-time donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly donation of  \$10  \$25  \$50  \$100

I'd like to pay by:  Pre-Authorized payment (please attach a void cheque)

Cheque or post-dated cheques  
(payable to **Family Services à la famille Ottawa**)

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(mm/yyyy)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(Of Name on card)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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I have left a gift to Family Services Ottawa à la famille in my will.

I would like information on leaving a gift in my will.

Please send me your newsletter  By mail.  By email.



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