



The **Research Shop**

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

## FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

SEPTEMBER 2013

Meaghan Anderson\* and Jane Robson\*\*

\*Research Shop Intern

\*\*Research Shop Project Manager

Citation: Anderson, M. & Robson, J. (2014). *Furniture provision in Guelph and Wellington County*. Guelph, ON: Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship.  
<https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/xmlui/handle/10214/8902>

The authors would like to acknowledge Randalin Ellery and the members of the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination's Research and Policy Working Group for their support throughout all phases of the research presented in this report. Our deep appreciation also extends to the furniture providers and service providers who graciously shared their time and stories with us.



**INSTITUTE for  
COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1  
phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: [ices@uoguelph.ca](mailto:ices@uoguelph.ca)  
[www.theresearchshop.ca](http://www.theresearchshop.ca)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Research Goals .....	3
Background.....	3
Funding and policy changes in Guelph and Wellington: The Housing Stability Program (HSP) .....	4
Demographics of Guelph and Wellington .....	5
<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Furniture Providers.....	7
Service Providers .....	7
<b>Results/Findings .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Current Provision of Low Cost and No Cost Furniture in Guelph and Wellington.....	8
Who is Accessing services from furniture providers? .....	8
What People Feel is Working Well .....	9
What People Feel Needs Improvement.....	9
Comparisons of furniture providers and service providers .....	12
impact of csumb redistribution.....	12
Furniture bank.....	12
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>13</b>
General Conclusions.....	14
Limitations of the Report .....	14
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
For furniture providers:.....	14
For service providers:.....	15
For a potential furniture bank:.....	15
<b>References .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix I: Furniture Banks Across Canada .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix II: Interview Guides for Service Providers and Furniture Providers.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix III: Furniture Providers in Guelph and Wellington .....</b>	<b>26</b>



## INTRODUCTION

### RESEARCH GOALS

This report has been developed and completed by the Research Shop with the support of the Guelph and Wellington Task force for Poverty Elimination. The purpose of this report is to explore furniture provision in Guelph and Wellington, the potential need for a Furniture Bank and propose recommendations for moving forward. This report has been developed to explore the impact of the elimination and redistribution of the Community Startup and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) that occurred in the 2012 Ontario budget cuts. These changes have the potential to impact the accessibility of low cost and no cost furniture for individuals with lived experiences of poverty.

The research objectives, which were developed in collaboration between the Poverty Task Force (PTF) and the Research Shop, were:

- To explore the scope of the need for furniture bank in Guelph and Wellington by establishing what elements of the current provision of furniture may be working well, and what elements may need improvement;
- To utilize the input of furniture providers and service providers in Guelph and Wellington to establish recommendations for a Guelph-based model.

The following report will provide a background of the current furniture provision in Guelph and Wellington, a discussion of the methods used in to gather qualitative data with various furniture providers and service providers, outline the results of the research, and make some preliminary recommendations for the community.

### BACKGROUND

Furniture Banks (FBs) are not-for-profit organizations designed to provide free, quality used household furnishings to individuals and families in need (Furniture Bank Association of North America, 2012). According to the Furniture Bank Association of North America, there are six recognized FBs across Canada, including one in British Columbia, one in Nova Scotia, and four in Ontario (2012). Based on these organizations, the elements that make up furniture banks are:

- **Organizational Model:** Each FB operates with a different organizational model. For example, the Toronto Furniture Bank is a social purpose enterprise that seeks to provide skills training to marginalized individuals, and the Mississauga Furniture Bank operates through an online database facilitated by community organizations.
- **Community Partnerships:** FBs typically operate in partnership with community organizations. The level of involvement of these organizations varies depending on the FB. Several FBs are partnered with local educational institutions for fundraising activities and support through donations.



## The **Research** Shop

### FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

- **Eligibility Process:** Each FB has a distinct set of eligibility criteria, although some are more transparent and accessible. For example, at the Homestart Furniture Bank in Vancouver service providers refer clients to the bank. The service providers conduct home visits with clients to determine their eligibility for furniture.
- **Funding:** All six of the FBs are funded through a combination of public and private funding; some FBs have partnerships with businesses for specific furniture needs (ex. mattresses).
- **Transportation:** Most FBs provide delivery, although some will charge a fee depending on the distance as well as the size and amount of items being delivered. Most FBs also provided pick-up of donated items at a cost.
- **Health and Safety:** Some FBs maintain a public health policy to maintain quality of furniture items and avoid the spread of bed bugs. For example, at the Toronto Furniture Bank employees receive training to inspect donated items and vehicles are regularly cleaned.

For a more detailed explanation of each FB and the services they provide, please see Appendix I.

There is no formal FB in Guelph and Wellington. However, there are several independently operated low cost and no cost furniture providers in Guelph and Wellington that provide furniture. These include the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Habitat for Humanity (ReStore), and the Salvation Army. Individuals in the Guelph and Wellington area in need of furniture can also access second-hand stores, garage and lawn sales, and online databases, such as Kijiji, to obtain furniture at low prices. However, prices are often still not affordable for individuals with lived experiences of poverty.

### **FUNDING AND POLICY CHANGES IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON: THE HOUSING STABILITY PROGRAM (HSP)**

The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) was a provincial program available to individuals on social assistance to help pay for necessities (including furniture) needed to start up a new home, stay in a current home, or protect the health and well-being of residents (CLEO, 2011). CSUMB was eliminated and redistributed in the 2012 Provincial budget, and the municipal government became responsible for administering roughly 50% of funding once offered through CSUMB to the Guelph and Wellington area. Beginning in January 2013, the County of Wellington launched the Housing Stability Programme (HSP) (County of Wellington, 2013). This program focuses on two main areas of support: helping individuals who are homeless to obtain housing and helping individuals retain existing housing, through the provision of funds for last month's rent, rental arrears, utility deposits, utility arrears or moving costs.



The tighter restrictions called for by the HSP have left a gap that the County of Wellington had anticipated when making the policy changes: funds provided through the HSP cannot be used towards furniture or appliances. Many clients in Guelph and Wellington relied on the funds from CSUMB to obtain furniture and appliances; thus in prioritizing funding for rent payments, rental arrears, or moving arrears over furniture and appliances, the clients who relied on the CSUMB are now unable to access the pathways to obtain furniture that they previously used.

This project will explore the impact of the change from CSUMB to the HSP as observed by furniture providers and service providers in the Guelph-Wellington community since the HSP was launched in January 2013.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS OF GUELPH AND WELLINGTON**

This section will examine statistics relevant to the potential need for low cost and no cost furniture in Guelph and Wellington, including the number of low-income households and numbers of individuals on social assistance.

#### **Low Income**

According to the Low Income Measure (LIM), households are considered low income when they earn less than 50% of the median adjusted household income (Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, 2013). In the National Household Survey the number of individuals living in low income in 2010 in Guelph and Wellington based on the after-tax LIM was 21,780, with the following statistics describing the demographic breakdown:

- Less than 18 years: 5,815
- Less than 6 Years: 2,135
- 18 to 64 years: 14,350
- 65 years and over: 1,615

Overall in Guelph and Wellington the low-income rates for all family types are lower than Ontario as a whole, although there are neighborhoods in Guelph and Wellington that have much higher low-income rates than the provincial level. Low-income is most prevalent in Wellington North for all family types (7.8%) (Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, 2012).



**Table 17** Low Income by Economic Family Type in Wellington County/ Guelph, 2006

Geographic Area	All Families	Male Lone Parent	Female Lone Parent
Ontario	11.7%	16.4%	31.6%
Puslinch	2.3%	0%	0%
Erin	2.8%	0%	12.5%
Guelph/Eramosa	3.6%	9.5%	14%
Centre Wellington	3.5%	0%	18.3%
City of Guelph	7.5%	12.7%	26.6%
Mapleton	6.1%	0%	0%
Wellington North	7.8%	12.5%	33.3%
Minto	6.4%	0%	15.2%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

**Table 18** Low Income Prevalence Among People in Wellington County/Guelph, 2006

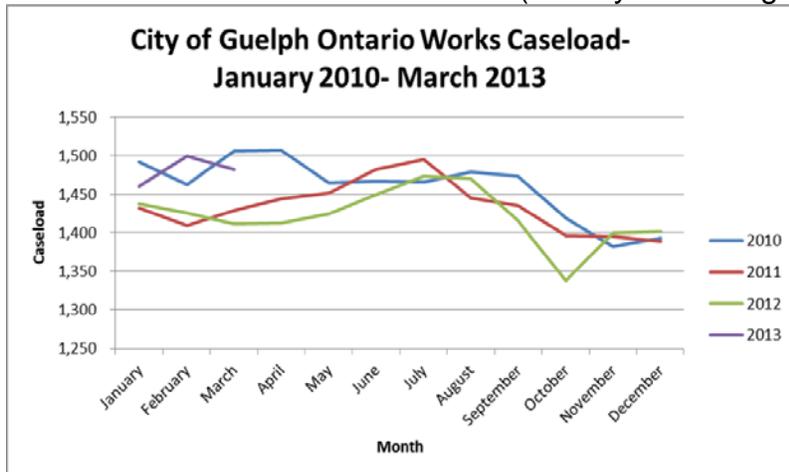
Geographic Area	All People	Children Under 6	People 65 and Older
Ontario	14.7%	19.3%	12.0%
Puslinch	3.3%	0%	0%
Erin	3.6%	0%	4.5%
Guelph/Eramosa	5.1%	7.4%	4.3%
Centre Wellington	5.0%	4.8%	3.9%
City of Guelph	10.8%	12.6%	7.8%
Mapleton	7.3%	8.4%	5.5%
Wellington North	10.1%	11.1%	8.0%
Minto	8.0%	9.6%	6.3%

Source: Statistics Canada 2006 Census

Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health 2012

### Social Assistance

Ontario has multiple social assistance programs to help individuals in financial need. One of these programs, Ontario Works (OW) provides employment assistance and financial assistance to people in financial need (County of Wellington, 2013). The County of Wellington predicts a 3% increase in the caseload of OW clients in 2013. The average monthly total caseload for Guelph and Wellington was 1,848 in 2012, and is forecasted to be 1,903 in 2013. In Guelph and Wellington clients on OW struggle to obtain employment opportunities; as a result, a relatively high caseload of clients on OW has been sustained since 2008 (County of Wellington, 2013).

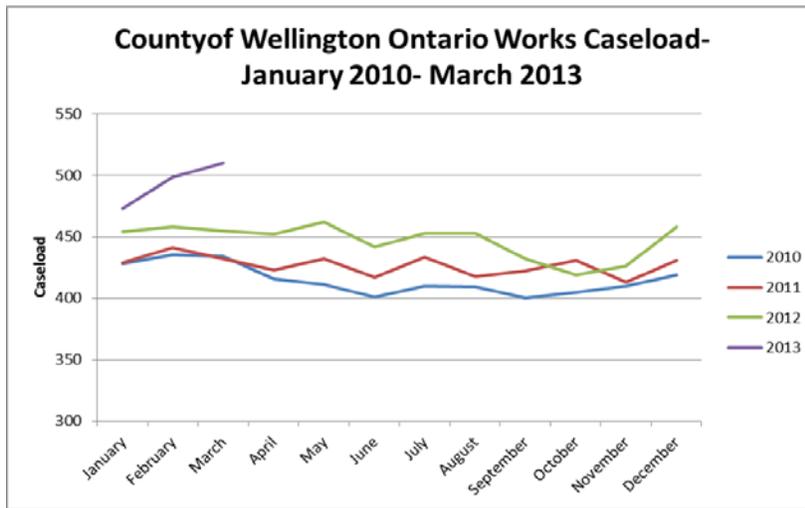


County of Wellington, 2013



**INSTITUTE for COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
 University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1  
 phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: ices@uoguelph.ca  
 www.theresearchshop.ca



County of Wellington, 2013

## METHODS

The first phase of this project involved gathering background research, reviewing policy documents and online sources related to furniture bank models across Canada and statistics relevant to Guelph and Wellington and the provision of low cost or no cost furniture. This research informed the semi-structured interview guide that was used to interview furniture and service providers (see Appendix II). The Research Shop and PTF collaborated to determine the participants of this study, which was finalized by The Research and Policy Working Group.

### FURNITURE PROVIDERS

For the purpose of this report, *furniture providers* were defined as not for profit organizations that provide low cost and no cost furniture to individuals in need. The furniture providers who participated in this project were the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Habitat for Humanity (ReStore), and the Salvation Army. There were a total of 5 individuals who participated in these interviews.

### SERVICE PROVIDERS

For the purpose of this report, *service providers* were defined as workers who provide front-line support to individuals in a variety of circumstances, often with lived experiences of poverty. The service providers who participated in this project were the Welcome in Drop in Centre, Wyndham House, Michael House, Ramoth House, the Community Resource Centre, East-Wellington Resource Centre, and Maryanne’s Place. There were a total of 10 individuals who participated in these interviews.





Participants were recruited through convenience sampling; they were selected due to their involvement in furniture provision in our community and through connections with the PTF. Most of the participants had attended community meetings surrounding furniture provision facilitated by the PTF earlier in the year. Other participants were contacted directly via email and asked to participate in the project. Overall there were 15 individuals who participated in interviews. Furniture providers and service providers were interviewed in an attempt to capture various community perspectives. Prior to data collection, the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph approved this project.

Individual interviews were conducted either in person or by phone, each lasting approximately one hour. Themes were highlighted to represent pressing issues related to the acquisition of low cost and no cost furniture. These themes provide general conclusions about the current provision of low cost and no cost furniture, and have been used to make some preliminary recommendations regarding how to proceed with a community effort.

## RESULTS/FINDINGS

### **CURRENT PROVISION OF LOW COST AND NO COST FURNITURE IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON**

Guelph and Wellington does not currently have a FB. The furniture providers included in this project have separate mandates to provide low cost or no cost furniture, different organizational models and ways of engaging with the community. Attached is a guide developed by the PTF that outlines furniture providers in Guelph and Wellington, including the three involved in this program. See Appendix III.

Service providers also referred to alternative sources for acquiring furniture, such as 'Bibles for Missions' in Guelph and Fergus, as well as other 'creative' options such as lawn and garage sales, and online sites such as Kijiji.

### **WHO IS ACCESSING SERVICES FROM FURNITURE PROVIDERS?**

The interviews with furniture and service providers suggested that clients of furniture providers vary widely in their circumstances. Clients find themselves in complex circumstances involving transition that may lead to a need for low or no cost furniture. Furniture and service providers stated that these circumstances include: homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, unemployment or underemployment, marital breakdown, and domestic violence.

While each furniture provider maintains a distinct eligibility process, all work with individuals who require assistance to furnish their homes; either due to financial constraints, issues related to ability, or unanticipated events like a house fire. Many clients are currently part of government assistance programs, such as OW, Ontario



Disability Support Program, and Employment Insurance. However, given the complexity surrounding the need for low cost and no cost furniture, many grey areas exist in the current provision of furniture. For example, the working poor may not have connections with local service agencies but may still need assistance to furnish their homes.

**WHAT PEOPLE FEEL IS WORKING WELL**

Overall, most furniture and service providers felt that furniture needs were not the most urgent issue in Guelph and Wellington, but that efforts to address overlap and inconsistencies among current furniture providers would make the process smoother and free up resources for more urgent needs.

*“The system works, but it would be nice if it were smoother.”  
(Service Provider)*

Some participants felt that current partnerships and collaborations between different organizations in the community have opened up channels of communication, and increased awareness of how to access low cost and no cost furniture within the Guelph and Wellington area. Lastly, participants expressed the belief that efforts to address issues of access to transportation have positively impacted people’s ability to access low cost or no cost furniture. According to furniture providers, the Affordable Bus Pass program has enabled individuals to more affordably travel to and from furniture providers.

**WHAT PEOPLE FEEL NEEDS IMPROVEMENT**

There were numerous areas in which furniture and service providers felt that there was room for improvement. The main issues evident were accessibility for clients, transportation, partnerships/collaboration and resources.

**Accessibility for Clients:**

**Eligibility**

- Different criteria for different furniture providers
- Standard procedures do not allow for individual circumstances
- Intrusive procedures to determine eligibility – not client friendly





### **Access for Rural Areas**

- Lack of resources and services related to low cost and no cost furniture available in rural communities
- Increasing number of low-income households in rural areas of Guelph and Wellington
- Furniture providers unable to provide delivery – clients must pay for transportation

### **Ability**

- Individual circumstances require more assistance getting to and from furniture providers, and selecting furniture
- *Example:* physical disability, mental health, or old age
- Clients in transition have difficulty facilitating access to furniture providers because of lack of resources and inflexible work schedules
- *Example:* Individuals cannot arrange appointments with furniture providers because they don't have a phone

### **Transportation:**

#### **Getting to Furniture Providers**

- Limitations of public transit and geographical reach. Especially difficult for rural clients, and clients that cannot get to furniture providers during regular business hours.

#### **Delivery**

- Furniture providers rarely provide delivery; if they do it typically comes at a cost not feasible for clients. Especially difficult for rural clients who have to pay for delivery out of their own pockets.

#### **Donated Items**

- Lack of pick-up service for donated items
- Items end up discarded in landfills, etc. due to lack of delivery

### **Partnerships and Collaboration:**

#### **Between Furniture Providers and Service Providers**

- Limited communication/collaboration between furniture providers and service providers creates confusion about the mandate and geographical boundaries of furniture providers' services and procedures



### **Between Furniture Providers**

- Lack of collaboration
- Confusion about what each furniture provider offers
- *Example:* clients are referred from one provider to another for a mattress, but neither provider supplies mattresses
- Leads to inefficient distribution of furniture, and frustration for clients

### **Corporate Partners and Education Institutions**

- Increased collaboration with corporate partners and educational institutions could increase resources and provide broader community support

### **Resources:**

#### **Lack of Furniture Resources**

- Lack of availability of items most needed by clients
- Good quality mattresses difficult to find – concerns about bed bugs

#### **Storage**

- Inaccessible and unaffordable storage leads to clients abandoning their furniture in times of transition
- Furniture providers concerned about the items they provide being left behind – some have limits on the number of times clients can get furniture
- Furniture providers sometimes decline donations because of a lack of storage facilities

#### **Policy Change and Support for Clients**

- Change from CSUMB to HSP has led to decreased funding available for clients
- Clients have to stretch their budget further
- Some clients go without items, ex. mattresses, because of lack of funds
- Loopholes in the system being manipulated in order to get clients what they need – ex. clients use their rent money to buy furniture and when the default on rent payments, use HSP to pay rent.



### COMPARISONS OF FURNITURE PROVIDERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

There were few differences in conversations with furniture providers and service providers. The main difference was that service providers spoke more frequently about the impact of CSUMB being redistributed. Service providers also spoke in greater detail regarding the lengths they went to in order to support their clients to access furniture. Many spoke of borrowing trucks, driving clients across town and working extended hours to ensure furniture was obtained.

#### IMPACT OF CSUMB REDISTRIBUTION

Furniture providers suggested that there had not been any significant changes in furniture provision, distribution or need since CSUMB had been redistributed. Many furniture providers predicted changes as the community becomes more aware that CSUMB is no longer available.

“It is really hard to find an affordable place to live, and we will do everything we can to make sure that doesn’t fall through because our clients can’t afford to furnish it.”  
(Service Provider)

A few service providers suggested that since CSUMB had been cut it has become more difficult to support clients to access furniture. Service providers explained that many clients relied on their CSUMB funding for essential needs and no longer had a reliable source of income to fulfill those needs.

Although some furniture and service providers were tracking changes since CSUMB has been redistributed, there was little consistency in how this was done. Numerous providers were not tracking changes at all and those who were seemed to be using internal tracking tools.

#### FURNITURE BANK

Most furniture and service providers felt that there are organizations currently functioning to provide furniture in our community and these services should be enhanced rather than establishing a new entity. Providers discussed the importance of the established relationships of these organizations and how they are already embedded in our community.

Most providers expressed interest and enthusiasm towards establishing a FB if efforts to collaborate were unsuccessful, with tentative apprehension and uncertainty regarding the details. There were also numerous concerns regarding the impact of a FB on organizations that are currently providing furniture.





Although most providers were tentative and unsure in their suggestions regarding moving forward with a FB, this chart provides an overview of feedback received.

#### Location

- Downtown
- Central location
- In an area of need
- Satellite offices for rural areas

#### Eligibility

- Open to the public
- Only for individuals on social assistance
- Clients referred from social services

#### Business Model

- Donation based
- Clients could pay for furniture if they can afford it
- Run by the City of Guelph

#### Staff

- Staffed by volunteers
- Staff could be paid in credits to be used at the FB

## CONCLUSIONS

“We all want to know the best way we can help. When you strip away everything else, it comes down to helping our community.”  
(Furniture Provider)



## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In general, furniture and service providers described individuals accessing the services of furniture providers to have lived experiences of poverty, and the majority of these individuals were described to be in a period of transition. While furniture needs are not the largest priority of participating service organizations, many suggested that more support for the provision of furniture would allow organizations more space to tackle higher priority community issues. There were various suggestions for kinds of support including more funding, access to storage and enhancing transportation services for furniture clients.

Among the largest concerns of furniture providers and service providers is the process of acquiring furniture, citing eligibility processes as confusing, strict, and sometimes intrusive for clients. There was also significant concern regarding the accessibility of these services for rural clients due to a lack of resources in those areas. Transportation limits how individuals attend furniture providers and the lack of free delivery services provided to clients' limits how individuals get furniture home. This issue is intensified for individuals living in rural areas.

The lack of effective partnerships and collaborations in the community, between furniture providers and between furniture providers and service providers has resulted in a lack of awareness of existing services and inefficient client services in some situations. Increasing collaboration with corporate partners and educational institutions could enhance the available resources and provide broader community support. There is also a lack of resources available to clients, and there is some evidence that the acquisition of furniture has been more difficult given the lack of resources that the shift from CSUMB to the HSP necessitated.

Lastly, although most providers were not opposed to a FB, it was commonly suggested that collaboration among current furniture providers should be considered before establishing a new entity.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

The primary limitation of this report relates to the selection and recruitment of participants. The sample was a convenience sample, which was obtained through existing relationships with the PTF. Thus, the sample for this study does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility of a furniture bank, but highlights some of the priorities related to the provision of furniture. Further, this study did not involve the clients of participating organizations, and as such a study that works with individual community members accessing furniture in Guelph and Wellington would be beneficial.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOR FURNITURE PROVIDERS:



## The **Research** Shop

### FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

- Services should be made more client-friendly, by increasing awareness of the process of acquiring furniture, and less intrusive screening of clients to determine eligibility.
- Increased communication and collaboration between furniture providers would make the provision of furniture more efficient and avoid overlap in the community:
  - For example, a furniture provider network could be developed that could meet regularly to discuss furniture needs.
  - Develop a website to be a repository that would allow easy access to conversations regarding furniture provision.
- Furniture providers should have the opportunity to access a standard evaluation tool that could track any changes in how and to whom furniture is being provided since CSUMB was redistributed.
  - This tool should also give providers the opportunity to track how many clients were turned away for service and why.
- Furniture providers should be trained to address concerns of bed bugs. Health Canada, the Toronto Bed Bug Project Steering Committee and the Toronto Furniture Bank have policies and resources that can be used to ensure best practice.

#### **FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS:**

- Stronger partnerships and greater collaboration with furniture providers would streamline the eligibility process for clients, and improve their access to low and no cost furniture.
  - Service providers could have access to the suggested Furniture Providers website, that would provide information regarding where to direct clients and when furniture may be available at what location.
- Service providers should have the opportunity to access a standard evaluation tool that could track any changes in how and to whom furniture is being provided since CSUMB was redistributed.

#### **FOR A POTENTIAL FURNITURE BANK:**

- Further research should be done to directly engage clients using furniture providers' services and refine their needs to inform the design of a furniture bank.
- Established furniture providers and service providers should be involved and consulted throughout this process.



## The **Research** Shop

### FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

- Partnerships with corporate sponsors, for example Sleep Country Canada or the Brick, could provide greater resources to the furniture bank and avoid the wastage of furniture.
- Partnerships with universities, colleges, and high schools for fundraising activities and to facilitate donations of furniture would provide broader community support for a furniture bank.
- Eligibility procedures, physical location, and access to transportation need to be made client friendly.
- Rural areas should be prioritized in the planning and implementation of a bank by partnering with service providers in rural areas and making it the bank accessible to rural clients.

## REFERENCES

- Community Legal Education Ontario. (2011). Retrieved June 20, 2013, from <http://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/csub/who-can-get-community-start-and-maintenance-benefit>
- County of Wellington Ontario Works. (2013). 2013 Ontario Works Service Plan. Retrieved October 8, 2013 from <http://www.wellington.ca/en/socialservices/resources/2013ServicePlan.pdf#open>
- Furniture Bank Association of North America (2012). Online List of Furniture Banks Retrieved June 25, 2013, from <http://www.furniturebanks.org/list-of-furniture-banks/>
- Guelph-Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination (2012). Furniture Bank Research Profile.
- Statistics Canada (2011). National Household Survey.
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, (2012). Community Picture: Health Status of Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. Retrieved February 16, 2014 from <http://www.wdgppublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/wdgpfiles/community%20picture%20health%20status%20report%202012.pdf>



The **Research Shop**

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

## APPENDIX I: FURNITURE BANKS ACROSS CANADA

### ‘FURNITURE BANK’ (FB) TORONTO, ONTARIO

- showroom and off-site warehouse

#### Services

- provides low cost furniture and appliances to individuals in need
- Social Purpose Enterprise
- Furniture Link: commercial pick-up and delivery service that provides employment and life skills training to marginalized individuals (at-risk youth, individuals suffering from minor mental disabilities, the learning disabled, people receiving ODSP benefits etc.)
- is the largest employer of people who are marginalized

#### Client Criteria

- clients referred to FB by a registered partner agency or shelter
- clients receive furniture free of charge

#### Donation Methods

- Public: City of Toronto, Toronto Enterprise Fund
- Private: local businesses (BMO, Microsoft etc.), private donations

#### Delivery Services

- Professional movers (furniture link participants) pick-up donations for fee
- Delivery is free to clients

#### Other

- Toronto Enterprise Fund: developed ‘Furniture Link’ – George Brown College event planning program, Humber College Applied Arts Interior Design



### INSTITUTE for COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1  
phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: ices@uoguelph.ca  
www.theresearchshop.ca



The **Research Shop**

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### **‘MISSISSAUGA FURNITURE BANK’ (MFB) MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO**

- no physical location

#### **Services**

- provides furniture to clients referred by community partners (shelters, social agencies, faith-based org.)
- virtual inventory of available items and online shopping page used by service providers
- does not accept large items or appliances, and baby items

#### **Client Criteria**

- clients referred to MFB by registered partner organizations
- MFB does not work directly with clients- org. facilitate process

#### **Donation Methods**

- Public: Community Foundation of Mississauga, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Region of Peel
- Private: local business (Home Depot, CARP)

#### **Delivery Services**

- Third party moving company picks up donated furniture twice a month for fee
- no fee for delivery to clients

#### **Other**

- community organizations facilitate provision of furniture: they order items online, and organize delivery with clients

### **‘NIAGARA FURNITURE BANK’ (NFB) NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO**

#### **Services**

- Provides furniture to clients in need referred by community organizations (Ontario Works, ODSP support, Public Health, Family and Children’s Services, shelters etc.)



**INSTITUTE for  
COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1  
phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: ices@uoguelph.ca  
www.theresearchshop.ca



The **Research Shop**

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

#### Client Criteria

- clients referred to NFB by community organizations
- receive furniture free of charge

#### Donation Method

- Public: Ontario Trillium Foundation, United Way of Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie
- Private: individual donors

#### Delivery Service

- own delivery truck
- no fee for delivery to clients
- pick up donations for fee

#### Other

- Niagara Prosperity Initiative: Bring us Your Beds campaign
- connects NFB with hotel industry for beds

### **'FURNITURE BANK OF OTTAWA' OTTAWA, ONTARIO**

- showroom

#### Services

- distributes used furniture and household goods to refugees; many are transitioning from institutions

#### Client Criteria

- appointments made through referring organization
- donations are dropped off to the bank at their showroom

#### Donation Methods

- Private: local business (Brown's Cleaners, Dymon self-storage, Holiday Inn etc)



#### **INSTITUTE for COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
University of Guelph · Guelph, Ontario Canada · N1G 2W1  
phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: ices@uoguelph.ca  
www.theresearchshop.ca



### Delivery Service

- will pick up furniture within donation zone for \$25 fee, require up to 3 weeks notice
- Delivery available at market value- to curb only and clients must have flexible schedules

### Other

- merged with Matthew House Refugee Services to improve capacity
- operates in partnership with community organizations

### ‘PARKER STREET FOOD AND FURNITURE BANK’ HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

- food and furniture bank

### Services

- independently operated food and furniture bank
- also provides skills training and outreach programs
- maintains an emergency fund to help those in financial crisis with bills, medical expenses, crisis support

### Client Criteria

- furniture and household items provided to families with proven need
- must have valid Nova Scotia Health Card or immigration number

### Donation Method

- Public: Halifax Regional Municipality, Government of Nova Scotia
- Private: Costco, Clearwater, RBC, Sobeys

### Delivery Services

- can provide delivery to clients for a fee: subject to scheduling constraints and location of drop off

### Other

- Community Care Network Society: organizes skills training programs, a computer recycling program, Traditional Christmas Dinner Program



The **Research Shop**

COMMUNITY. CAMPUS. COLLABORATION. 

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

## **‘HOMESTART FURNITURE BANK’ VANCOUVER, B.C**

- showroom/ warehouse

### **Services**

- faith-based organization that provides furniture to people in need through partner organizations

### **Client Criteria**

- clients are referred to bank through community organizations
- organizations make home visits to determine eligibility

### **Donation Method**

- Private: Coat Vancouver Airport Hotel, Re/Max, Kitsilano Christian Community Church

### **Delivery Services**

- provides pick up of donated furniture, fee paid by donation
- provides drop-off of furniture to clients free of charge

### **Other**

- 70 partner organizations (faith-based, women’s shelters, refugee organizations, mental health centres, families in crisis etc)



## **INSTITUTE for COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP**

College of Social and Applied Human Sciences  
University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario Canada N1G 2W1  
phone: 519 / 824.4120 Ext. 53829 | email: ices@uoguelph.ca  
www.theresearchshop.ca



## The **Research** Shop

### **APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND FURNITURE PROVIDERS**

#### **FURNITURE BANK INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FURNITURE PROVIDERS**

*Please note that these questions are guidelines for a semi-structured interview format. Probes may be used to clarify participant answers.*

What is your current role?

Please describe the range of activities engaged in by your organization relevant to furniture provision for individuals living in low income in Guelph and Wellington County.

- In your opinion, what are the most important factors that contribute to the effectiveness of your organization?
- In your opinion, what are the most important factors that constrain the effectiveness of your organization?

What other furniture providing organizations do you currently have relationships with?

- Formal partnership?
- Information sharing?

How would you describe the population that is accessing your organization?

- Are there steps that need to be taken before one attends an organization?
- What are the eligibility criteria?

Are you familiar with the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB)? If so, please describe how this benefit impacts your clients and organization.

How well do you think the “furniture needs” of community members living in low income in Guelph are currently being met?

- How are the items priced? What is this based on?
- How do individuals get to and from the organization providing furniture?
- How do individuals get their furniture home?
  - i. Is there a fee for delivery?
- Are the locations of these organizations accessible?



## The **Research** Shop

### FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

How do operating organizations that provide furniture for individuals living in low-income function?

- Is the furniture donation based?
- What is the funding model?
  - i. What is the business model?
- How is it staffed?
- What are the hours?
- What is the mandate for health and safety? How is this monitored?

Are you familiar with any programs or projects that exist in other communities that address some of the limitations that you have identified in Guelph and Wellington County?

- What organizations were involved?
- What additional support was available/provided?
- Do you think this mode would be feasible in Guelph?

How would you describe a furniture bank?

What would you describe as the differences and similarities between a furniture bank and what your organization is currently doing?

What do you see as some of the strengths and weaknesses of having a furniture bank in Guelph?

If a furniture bank were to open in Guelph what would be your suggestions for the following:

- Location
- Model
- Transportation
- Funding and fees
- Client base



## FURNITURE BANK INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

*Please note that these questions are guidelines for a semi-structured interview format. Probes may be used to clarify participant answers.*

What is your current role?

How would you describe the population that you work with?

What would you identify as their “furniture needs”?

Please describe the range of activities that you engage in with/for your clients regarding furniture provision in Guelph and Wellington County.

In your opinion, what are the most important factors that contribute to your success in helping clients to obtain furniture?

In your opinion, what are the most important factors that constrain the success of your capacity to help clients obtain furniture?

Are you familiar with the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB)? If so, please describe how this impacts your clients.

More generally, how do you think the “furniture needs” of individuals living in low income are being met in Guelph and Wellington County?

What are current eligibility criteria?

- Are there any steps your clients need to take before attending organizations for furniture?
- How does this impact your clients?

How accessible are these services?

- How do your clients get to and from these locations?
- How do they get the furniture home?



What are the price ranges at the various locations?

- How does current pricing impact users?

In your opinion, what are the factors that contribute to the strengths and limitations of these services?

Please describe any partnerships that you are aware of in the community relevant to furniture provision for individuals living in low income.

What do you see as the strengths and limitations to these partnerships?

Please describe any suggestions you have for partnerships and collaboration in our community.

Are you familiar with any programs or projects that exist in other communities that address some of the limitations that you have identified in Guelph and Wellington County?

- What organizations were involved?
- What additional support was available/provided?
- Do you think this mode would be feasible in Guelph?

What do you see as some of the strengths and weaknesses of having a furniture bank in Guelph?

If a furniture bank were to open in Guelph what would be your suggestions for the following:

- Location
- Model
- Transportation
- Funding and Fees
- Client base

Is there anything you would like to add?



## The **Research** Shop

### **APPENDIX III: FURNITURE PROVIDERS IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON**

#### **CHALMERS COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTRE**

##### **Contact**

- Anita Jarvis: 519-822-8778
- [volunteer@chalmerscentre.ca](mailto:volunteer@chalmerscentre.ca)

##### **Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?**

- 40 Baker Street, Guelph, ON
- All items are free of charge for anyone who uses their services.

##### **What items do they provide?**

- Items available include: baking dishes, blankets, bedding, cooking utensils, dishes, linens, pots and pans, small appliances (i.e. blenders, toasters, etc.), silverware and towels.
- Please note that the availability of items depends on what gets donated. They don't have all items, all the time. But, they can put out a request for items to their supporters. Sometimes they are successful.

##### **How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?**

- Multiple times, depending on item availability.
- Serving Guelph.

##### **Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?**

- No delivery service.

#### **MICHAEL HOUSE PREGNANCY CARE CENTRE (WWW.MICHAELHOUSE.CA)**

##### **Contact**

- Rosemarie Coombs: 519-766-7675  
[rosemarie@michaelhouse.ca](mailto:rosemarie@michaelhouse.ca)



## The **Research** Shop

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON  
COUNTY

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 187 Bristol Street, Guelph, ON
- All items are free of charge for anyone who uses their services.
- Serving young women during pregnancy and after birth, ages 16 years and up.

### What items do they provide?

- Household items include: baby items, baking, dishes, blankets, bedding, utensils, dishes, lamps, linens, pots and pans, small appliances (i.e. blenders, toasters, etc.), silverware, towels and baby furniture (i.e. car seats, strollers, cribs, bouncy chairs).
- Furniture items include: bedframes, bookcases, chairs, couches/love seats, coffee tables, desks, dining, tables, dressers, entertainment centers, wardrobes.

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- Multiple times, depending on item availability.
- Serving Guelph, Centre Wellington, Puslinch and Wellington North.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- They deliver if they have a volunteer or staff member available that has a vehicle large enough for the donation.
- Donors are asked to deliver items.

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE

### Contact

- Deborah Butts: 519-767-9752 ext. 23  
deborah@habitatwellington.on.ca

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 104 Dawson Rd #300, Guelph, ON
- Anyone can purchase items at the store.
- Social Assistance recipients can purchase items at a discounted rate, but arrangements must be made in advance with a partner organization.



## The **Research** Shop

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### What items do they provide?

- Household items include: air conditioners, lamps, small appliances (i.e. blenders, toasters, etc.), hardware, electronics, furniture, home decor and appliances.
- Furniture items include: bedframes, bookcases, chairs, couches/love seats, coffee tables, desks, dining, tables, dressers, entertainment centers and wardrobes
- Items sold at market value

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- No limit on use.
- Serving Guelph and Wellington.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- No delivery service.
- Donor pickups can be arranged.

## **SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL THRIFT STORE**

### Contact

- 519-836-5829
- [info@ssvpghuelph.ca](mailto:info@ssvpghuelph.ca)

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 74 Elizabeth, Guelph, ON
- Needs assessment is completed, and then the client is sent to the thrift store to arrange for pickup of selected items.

### What items do they provide?

- Household items include: baking dishes, blankets, bedding, cooking utensils, dishes, linens, pots and pans, small appliances (i.e. blenders, toasters, etc.), silverware, towels, pictures, knick knacks, costume jewellery, clothes, shoes, books, mats and curtains.
- Furniture items include: bedframes, bookcases, chairs, couches/love seats, coffee tables, desks, dining, tables, dressers, entertainment centers and wardrobes, mattresses and kitchen tables and chairs.
- Nominal fees for goods.



## The **Research** Shop

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- Furniture is given free to those in need through a voucher system.
- Serving Guelph.
- Accepts donations of clean, gently used furniture, clothing, household items and small appliances.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- They may charge for delivery depending on situation or need.
- Estimated delivery fee is around \$30.
- Donor pickups can be arranged for a \$30 fee.

## SALVATION ARMY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SERVICES

### Contact

- Mark Halliday: 519-836-9824  
mhalliday@guelphsa.ca

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 210 Victoria Rd. S. Guelph, ON
- This service is available to clients.
- Social Assistance recipients are welcome to access this service.

### What items do they provide?

- Household items include: baby items, baking dishes, blankets, bedding, cooking utensils, dishes, linens, pots and pans, sheets, small appliances (i.e. blenders, toasters, etc.), silverware and towels.
- Household goods and mattresses will be provided once every 5 years, unless special circumstance (i.e. fire, flood, etc.).

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- Depends on individual situation and need. They typically provide items to clients moving into a new residence.
- Serving Guelph, Centre and North Wellington.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- No delivery service.
- No donor pickups.



## The **Research** Shop UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### Contact

- Kathryn Hofer: 519-824-4120 ext.56276  
khofer@uoguelph.ca

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 50 Stone Rd. E., Guelph, ON
- This service is available to students at the University of Guelph. However, the general public is welcome to attend furniture giveaway events hosted at other times during the year.

### What items do they provide?

- Furniture items include: bedframes, bookcases, chairs, couches/love seats, coffee tables, desks, dining, tables, dressers, entertainment centers and wardrobes.
- Household items are donated to local Food Banks.

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- Serving Guelph.
- The University hosts Furniture Giveaway events during Orientation Week in September and are opened up to students in the following order: first year and transfer students, returning students.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- Free delivery available for University of Guelph students.
- Student donations will be picked up free of charge, but items must be registered on the University website.

## ELORA COMMUNITY SHARE

### Contact

- Maddy Smith: [sharingelora@live.com](mailto:sharingelora@live.com)  
<http://madeleine-smith.wix.com/sharelora>



## The **Research** Shop

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- No physical location.
- Operates online through their website and Facebook group.
- Anyone is eligible.
- No membership fee.

### What items do they provide?

- Anything and everything.
- If you need something all you do is ask and see what happens.
- There is no guarantee you will be able to find what you are looking for.
- People do not sell or use money to purchase items, instead it is about sharing. People should not ask for things all the time, everyone must also be willing to share.

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- Serving Centre Wellington.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- Maybe. It depends on the arrangement. It is case by case.

## THE FREecycle NETWORK ([WWW.FREecycle.ORG](http://WWW.FREecycle.ORG))

### Contact

- Guelph Freecycle: <http://groups.freecycle.org/FreecycleGuelph/description>
- Centre Wellington Freecycle: <http://groups.freecycle.org/Centre-Wellington-Freecycle/description>
- Erin Freecycle: <http://groups.freecycle.org/erinonfreecycle/description>
- Each local group is moderated by local volunteers.

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- Online service. Free membership with local groups.
- To sign up, find your community by entering it into the search box from the web link above.

### What items do they provide?

- Freecycle is a grassroots non-profit movement of people who are giving and receiving items for free in their own towns. Their mission is to keep good household items out of landfills.



## The **Research** Shop

**KIJJI.CA**

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### Contact

- People post adds for items they wish to sell, or items they wish to purchase

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- Kijiji is a local online classified service. Anyone can post a web add for free. No membership required.

### What items do they provide?

- Various items that are generally used and low-cost.
- Prices are negotiable

### How often can I use it, and what geographical area do they serve?

- Canada
- No limit

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- Delivery can pick-up is arranged with the seller and buyer.

## **GOODWILL COMMUNITY STORE**

### Contact/Hours

- 519-767-1800
- Monday to Friday 9am - 8pm  
Saturday 9am - 6pm  
Sunday 10am - 5pm

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 340 Woodlawn Road West  
Guelph, N1H 7K6
- Open to the public

### What items do they provide?

- Non-profit, social enterprise that recycles donated goods to create meaningful work for persons who face disabilities and other barriers to employment.
- Nominal fees for goods.



## The **Research** Shop

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON  
COUNTY

Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- Does not offer donation pick-up.

## VALUE VILLAGE THRIFT STORE

### Contact/Hours

- 519-821-9994
- Monday to Saturday 9am - 9pm  
Sunday 10am - 6pm

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 214 Silvercreek, Guelph ON N1H 7P8
- Open to the public
- 20% discount for seniors every Tuesday.

### What items do they provide?

- Sells used clothes, furniture, small household appliances, toys and other articles at low cost.
- Nominal fees for goods.

## BIBLES FOR MISSIONS THRIFT STORE

### Contact/Hours

- Guelph: 519-821-2498  
Monday to Saturday 10am - 5pm  
Closed on Sunday
- Fergus 226-383-5753  
[bfmfergus@gmail.com](mailto:bfmfergus@gmail.com)  
Monday to Saturday 10am - 5pm  
Sunday 10am – 4pm

### Where is it, and am I eligible for the service?

- 228 Victoria Rd S, Guelph, ON N1E 5R1
- 525 Maple Street, Fergus, ON



## The **Research** Shop

FURNITURE PROVISION IN GUELPH AND WELLINGTON COUNTY

### What items do they provide?

- Generates funds to distribute Bibles worldwide in partnership with The Bible League of Canada. Sells used items such as clothing, furniture, small electrical goods, kitchenware, sports equipment, toys and books.

### Do they deliver and, if so, is there a delivery charge?

- Call for more information on used item pick-up and delivery services.