

**PANHANDLING IN WINNIPEG
LEGISLATION VS SUPPORT SERVICES**

VOLUME 4

INTERVIEWS WITH PANHANDLERS

A STUDY FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW CENTRE

by

**Tom Carter
Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation
Anita Friesen
Chesya Polevychok
John Osborne**

University of Winnipeg

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Glossary of Terms

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder - a condition characterized by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness

ATM – automated teller machine

BIZ – Business Improvement Zone. Includes and represents the retail, commercial and professional businesses in the area. There are 16 Business Improvement Zones in Winnipeg. Sometimes the term “BIZ” is used by panhandlers to refer to the BIZ Ambassadors.

BIZ Ambassadors - Staff and/or volunteers of the BIZ associations that walk the area, offering directions, tourist info, first aid, and assistance wherever needed. They also participate in community events, watch for and deal with minor problems, and report larger issues to the Winnipeg Police Service. Downtown, they are known by the panhandlers as the “Red Coats.”

Blue Key/Help Key - an alternative for people to give to panhandlers instead of spare change. Part of the Winnipeg Downtown BIZ’s “Change for the Better” campaign (below).

By-Law – In this report is used to refer to the City of Winnipeg’s “The Obstructive Solicitation By-Law No. 7700/2000”, with amendment added June 29, 2005.

Change for the Better – Program of the Winnipeg Downtown BIZ that encourages people to drop change into collection boxes at participating businesses, instead of giving change to panhandlers who may use the money to feed an addiction. People then take a brochure containing a Help Key (Blue Key) that can be given to panhandlers instead of spare change. The key can be redeemed for a range of services at six agencies.

Couch surfing - staying for short periods of time with friends or family, usually sleeping on the couch or floor.

Crackhead - a habitual user of cocaine in the form of crack

Detox: 1) used as a noun, is short for detoxification.

- a period of medical treatment, usually including counselling, during which a person is helped to overcome physical and psychological dependence on alcohol or drugs.

- a place where one would undergo detoxification

2) Used as a verb, is short for detoxify: to undergo detoxification

Drop – noun: a single donation given to a panhandler

Drunk tank – in Winnipeg, the Intoxicated Persons Detention Area at Main Street Project

Dumpster diving – is the practice of rummaging through trash, whether commercial or residential, to find items of use that have been discarded. It takes advantage of the fact that as a whole, people and businesses are very wasteful.

EI – Employment Insurance

FASD – Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. An umbrella term used to describe fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and the less noticeable, but sometimes equally serious, fetal alcohol effects (FAE). FAS and FAE are permanent, and often devastating, birth-defect syndromes caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy

Feed My Addiction Campaign – part of the Winnipeg Downtown BIZ’s “Change for the Better” Campaign. Posters and pamphlets were distributed that showed a man from the neck down holding a hand lettered sign the reads “Please Feed my Addiction”. The poster also says: “Typically 7 out of 10 panhandlers will use your spare change to buy drugs, alcohol or cigarettes”

Flag – (*See Fly a Sign, below*)

Fly a sign: To stand or walk on a meridian or street corner with a handmade sign asking passers-by (usually in vehicles) for donations. A term used by youth. Synonym: Flag (v).

GED: General Educational Development. A test that certifies the taker has attained high school-level academic skills.

GLBTT: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Two-Spirit community

Half in the bag - Drunk

Homebums – Panhandlers who are not travellers, but stay in their city of residence throughout the year. It is generally a term of endearment used by travellers when referring to these local panhandlers. Many of them help out travellers by giving them advice and guidance, or just hang out with them while the travellers are in town.

Inhalants - include solvents and aerosols, are products that people inhale to get high. They are commonly known as “sniff.” Inhalants are in the class of drugs called sedative/hypnotic/anaesthetic. (Sedatives have a calming effect; hypnotics make you sleepy; anaesthetics cause loss of physical feeling and/or consciousness so pain can’t be felt.) Inhalants are taken into the body by sniffing, snorting or by breathing them in through the mouth, which is called huffing.

Jack – to rob with violence or threat of violence

Jib-tech – a habitual user of methamphetamine (Meth) displaying visible characteristics including paranoia, sleeplessness, psychosis, sores on body, weight loss.

Jumped – to be attacked on the street, and usually robbed in the process

Methadone - A potent synthetic narcotic drug, that is less addictive than morphine or heroin and is used as a substitute for these drugs in addiction treatment programs.

Methamphetamine - a powerful stimulant (a drug that increases energy and alertness). It can be smoked in a pipe, snorted, taken by mouth or injected. Other street names are crystal meth, speed, glass, shards, the lady and krank.

OTM – on-the-move, non-stationary

Panhandle – To indicate a request, whether by spoken, written or printed word, or gesture, for donations of money or other things of value for one’s self or for any other person.

Panhandler – Someone who panhandles. A person who makes a request for money, food, etc.

Pick butts – On sidewalks and streets, to collect used cigarettes that have some tobacco remaining. Later the unused tobacco is removed, combined, rolled into cigarettes and smoked.

Pick cans: To collect pop and beer cans for the purposes of cashing them in for the deposit money.

POW – Panhandlers of Winnipeg – a group of about 16 mostly homeless panhandlers who can usually be found on Portage Avenue downtown.

RaY – Resource Assistance for Youth (formerly Operation Go Home) strives to provide youth (under 30) with what they need, on their terms, to better their lives, by offering a range of services.

Red Coats – (*see Downtown Watch Ambassadors*)

Rolled – to be robbed, generally with force but without the threat of violence, usually while sleeping or passed out.

Rubbies: mainly entrenched solvent/substance abusers who “look dirty and rough.” May also include alcoholics who are “constantly drunk and often smell bad.”

Sniffers – inhalant users (*see inhalants*)

Squeegee – people at street intersections (mostly teenagers and young adults) offering to clean car windows while cars are stopped at a red light in order to make some money.

Travellers: young homeless transients who spend the warmer months of each year travelling across the country and settle down somewhere with a milder climate, such as Vancouver, for the winter months. They generally have backpacks and look like punks i.e. piercings, tattoos, and ratty mostly black clothes. In Winnipeg, you only see them during summer. Each stays only for a couple of weeks before moving on to another city.

Working Under-the-table – refers to employment that is not reported to the government. The employer and employee do not pay the related taxes. This term alludes to money being passed under a table in some shady transaction, such as a bribe.

Youth – 15 – 24 years old, for the purposes of this study and comparisons to census data figures. Note that HRSDC, and services receiving funding from HRSDC for youth services, use their definition of youth as under 30.

Executive Summary

Panhandlers in Winnipeg are a diverse population, exhibiting a range of characteristics. One characteristic they certainly all share, however, is that of living in extreme poverty.

This study found that panhandlers are predominantly male. Twice as many as the general population fall into the age bracket of 25–44 years. Although no seniors or children were found panhandling in Winnipeg, the ratio of youth aged 14-24 was considerably higher than the city and inner city averages. The very high proportion of Aboriginal people among the respondents is testament to their marginalized position in society.

Among those interviewed, there is a very high proportion that has never been married, and a correspondingly small percentage that are married. As a result, many may have a smaller social support system that people tend to rely on in difficult times. Many respondents have children but few have children living with them as dependents, and those individuals who do are often their children's sole support.

High levels of unemployment, infrequent and short incidents of employment, and inability to function effectively in the workforce characterize the work histories and employment status of panhandlers. The interviewees identified many common barriers to finding and keeping employment. Sixty percent of the interviewees are homeless – either “couch surfing,” staying in shelters, or sleeping on the streets. Housing and employment are inextricably interconnected: you can't get a place to live without a job, and you can't get a job without a place.

Low levels of education, common among the respondents, often limit the type of work for which they are qualified. Then, if manual labour is not an option due to a physical disability, a job can be impossible to find. Affordable opportunities for further education or retraining for sedentary work were reported to be virtually non-existent. Other disabilities, including cognitive and mental health issues, can be major barriers to employment as well. Many interviewees in this situation reported not receiving disability benefits. In addition, services geared to those with disabilities either are scarce, are not known, or are not convenient to access. Many other barriers to employment, including lack of ID or a criminal record, were reported by respondents, and when multiple barriers coincide, these barriers can become insurmountable.

The rate of unemployment among the panhandlers interviewed is predictably high at eighty-five percent. One might even expect that *all* panhandlers would report being unemployed. But eleven respondents work regularly and still find they have to supplement their wages by panhandling. A job is no guarantee of freedom from poverty. In fact, a few interviewees said they earn more money panhandling than working a full-time job, but generally they have to panhandle for most of their waking hours to do so. The majority of the interviewees reported earning meagre amounts through their panhandling activity. Those for whom it is their only income often rely on other ways of meeting their basic needs, such as collecting cans, and dumpster diving. Many rely on

services such as temporary shelters, foodbanks, soup kitchens, and clothing banks, but for others, these services are not appropriate to their needs or are considered as a last resort.

Panhandling is not an option that many would choose over employment. Although it has some advantages such as meeting new people, being able to relax and be outside, and the freedom to choose where and when to work, it also comes with many disadvantages. These include being the targets of frequent physical and verbal abuse, having to endure all weather conditions, not knowing when the next meal will be, not having the freedom that comes with money, being labelled as a “lazy addict”, living on the margins of society, and associated diminished self-esteem.

The majority would certainly choose to receive a living wage through full-time employment over panhandling, as was indicated at various points throughout the interviews. When asked what they need in order to stop panhandling, interviewees most often mentioned employment and employment related supports, such as training and education, a return to good health, or being free from addictions so they could work again.

In addition to the barriers to employment above, other factors can also contribute to individuals’ reliance on panhandling. For the approximately two thirds of respondents who receive one form or another of government income assistance, they find the amount they receive to be insufficient and, therefore, supplement this income by panhandling. Others reported not being able to even qualify for income assistance. Other significant factors included the ending of relationships, and leaving home at a young age. Alcohol, drug or substance addictions were identified by some respondents as major factors that brought them to panhandling and kept them there, while others developed addictions as a result of the panhandling lifestyle. Interviewees reported various successes with their efforts to overcome their addictions.

Unfortunate events, choices, behaviours or situations, which on their own might easily be dealt with, when combined can become insurmountable and leave panhandling as the only income earning option. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true: in order to have any substantive, positive and lasting change happen in their lives, the multiple compounding issues and barriers have to be dealt with simultaneously. Counselling for depression may be ineffective if the individual still wakes up each day to homelessness and hunger. Without any income until the first payday, and no place to sleep and food to eat, keeping a job is virtually impossible. Undertaking a residential addictions rehabilitation program is of no use if they return to the same surroundings and influences that fostered the addiction in the first place.

For many interviewees, the road to positive change in their lives may seem so unlikely and overwhelming that it isn’t even something they consider. The daily and immediate struggle to meet basic needs monopolizes their efforts and thinking, pushing out dreams of future possibilities. They focus on finding shelter, clothing, food and other things they consider to be necessities. This is reflected in their spending habits and priorities. Ninety-three percent spend their panhandling earnings on food, and for 88%, it ranks as their first

or second priority. Shelter costs, clothing and bus tickets also ranked high. Panhandlers also spend their earnings on cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs and substances, but these did not rate as high priorities for many interviewees.

Sources of pride for many of the interviewees are the panhandling skills they have honed and methods they have developed through experience, including very creative strategies. Many expressed pride in their adherence to a panhandlers “Code of Conduct” which outlines basic ethics of considerate behaviour toward each other and polite interactions with those they panhandle. About 40% of panhandlers said they stay stationary when they panhandle and speak only to thank those who give. The majority, however, do use a verbal request. About half panhandle alone and those who choose to panhandle with others generally do so for the company and for personal safety. Overwhelmingly, the interviewees advocated politeness and respectfulness when panhandling, and said they do not agree with aggressive panhandling because it is rude, counterproductive, and reflects badly on all panhandlers. There did not, however, seem to be a clear consensus on a definition of aggressive. What one panhandler would consider aggressive, another would not.

This lack of consensus on what constitutes aggression is probably linked to the interviewees’ lack of understanding of current legal restrictions on panhandling. Only half even knew that changes had been recently made which directly affect how and where they can undertake their income-earning activity. Of those who knew a by-law to this effect had been passed, most are misinformed as to its content. In fact, many are under the impression that all panhandling is illegal.

Since the amendments to By-Law 7700/2000 were put in place in the summer of 2005, relationships with the public have generally taken a turn for the worse for panhandlers. According to some interviewees, this also seems to be the case for relationships with business owners, the BIZ Ambassadors and the police as well, with reports of increased pressures to move along or to stop panhandling altogether.

Less than a third of the interviewees reported having been ticketed for panhandling. Most ignored the tickets because they said they would have had to panhandle to pay any fines, but a few had been arrested. Some reported that the effect this had on their panhandling was to make them more cautious and watchful for those enforcing the By-Law.

Panhandlers are obviously a group living on the “margins of society.” Panhandling is not an option that many would choose. What they need to stop panhandling goes far beyond by-laws that restrict panhandling activity. A range of targeted services are required to address the multiple and often co-existing health, housing, education, employment and social problems that panhandlers face. Solving the “panhandling problem” is complex; far more complex than passing a by-law that simply restricts panhandling activity.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes about panhandlers abound in Winnipeg. Strong negative reaction to panhandling has been the impetus for the creation of legislation to either control and/or eliminate panhandling. The effectiveness of legislation is often questioned on the basis that it only relocates the problem - rather than solving it - and limits or infringes on the rights of a group trying to sustain themselves.

It is unknown whether the stigma attached to panhandlers by many members of the public and many in the business community is justified: there is little solid information about panhandling activity in Winnipeg. This study sheds light on panhandlers' realities and needs which provides an understanding of the gaps in services and supports that need to be bridged, and systemic changes required to improve circumstances and reduce individuals' reliance on panhandling. Essentially, this research provides a foundation from which to better address the personal, systemic, legal, service/support and social issues that make it necessary for individuals to resort to panhandling activity.

There are several components to the research methodology used in this project (for study methodology see Appendix A). This study 1) reviews the current literature on panhandling, and the legislation and initiatives in other jurisdictions used to control and/or reduce panhandling; 2) maps the location of panhandlers relative to "sensitive services"; 3) observes the nature and methods of panhandling; and 4) interviews 75 panhandlers. The study examines the effects of the current legislation on panhandling activities in Winnipeg, and describes inadequacies identified by panhandlers in support services and program initiatives in effectively reducing their need to panhandle.

This volume is the fourth of the study, and presents the findings of the interviews with panhandlers. Seventy-five interviews were conducted with panhandlers in Winnipeg between February and June of 2006. This volume highlights key socio-economic and demographic characteristics of panhandlers, provides insights into the reasons they panhandle, how they panhandle, what services they use or need, how much money they collect and how they spend the money. The report also provides insights into panhandlers' knowledge of the By-Law, and its effect on their panhandling activities.

No count of regular panhandlers has ever been formally attempted in Winnipeg. The researchers were uncertain even as to a rough estimate of numbers. Even the panhandlers themselves were unsure when asked. Thirty-two of seventy-five who were asked wouldn't even try to guess. The 42 who hazarded a guess gave a wide range of estimates from 25 to 2500 in number. Fourteen percent of the respondents who guessed felt there are between 50 and 60 regular panhandlers in Winnipeg, while 45% thought there are between 80 and 150, which is still a wide range.

Although the study was unable to determine how many panhandlers there were in Winnipeg, or even in the downtown area, interviews with 75 panhandlers yielded some very valuable information on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population that panhandles. These characteristics are highlighted in this volume.

2.0 THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PANHANDLERS

Information collected through interviews with 75 panhandlers in Winnipeg indicates that the sector of the population that panhandles has a substantially different socio-economic profile than the population in general in Winnipeg. There are also substantial differences between the panhandlers' profile and the profile of inner city residents.

Sex

Of the 75 panhandlers interviewed,

- 16 were female (21.3%)
- 59 were male (78.7%)

This would indicate that far more males than females panhandle. Compared to the city and inner city population the sex distribution of the sample of panhandlers interviewed contains 25 percent more males and 25 percent less females. Panhandling seems to be predominantly a male activity.

Age

The age range of the interviewees spanned from 18 to 60 years, with a median age of 37.

- 17 (22.7%) were youth, between the ages of 15 and 24
- 46 (61.3%) fell in the age range of 25 – 44
- 12 (16%) were 45 – 64 years old.

Although the median age of panhandlers interviewed was almost identical to the general population in the city and the inner city, they were far more concentrated in the 15 to 24, and particularly the 25 to 44 age range. No children or senior citizens were discovered panhandling on the streets of Winnipeg during the study.

Table 4.1 Demographic Comparison of Panhandlers and Winnipeg Population

	Winnipeg 2001	Inner-City 2001	Study Sample
Age Groups			
15 - 24 yrs	13.84%	14.51%	22.70%
25 - 44 yrs	30.39%	33.48%	61.30%
45 - 64 yrs	23.34%	20.16%	16%
Median Age	38.3	37.7	37
Gender			
Male	48.5%	49.2%	78.7%
Female	51.5%	50.8%	21.3%
Marital Status			
Never Married	33.7%	46.7%	65.3%
Married	48.8%	31.5%	5.3%
Common Law	6.9%	9.5%	16.0%
Separated or Divorced	10.9%	14.1%	10.6%
Widowed	6.6%	7.7%	2.6%

Ethnicity			
First Nations	8.6%	19.2%	38.0%
Métis	4.7%	6.8%	17.0%
Inuit	0.0%	0.1%	4.2%
Visible Minority	13.4%	20.0%	2.8%
Unemployed	3.9%	5.7%	85.3%
Housing Situation			
Homeless	N/A	N/A	62.7%
Renters	36.4%	63.7%	37.3%
Owners	63.6%	36.3%	0.0%
Education (highest level achieved)			
Less Than Grade 9	7.8%	12.4%	16.0%
High School Diploma	32.1%	34.9%	26.6%
University Degree	18.3%	15.0%	1.3%

Marital Status

A total of 59 (78.7%) of those interviewed were not cohabitating:

- 49 (65.3%) were single and have never been married,
- 2 were widowed/widower
- 8 were separated or divorced

Sixteen of the interviewees, or 21.3%, had a spouse:

- 4 were married (5.3%)
- 12 lived common-law (16%)

Although it wasn't a question asked directly, through the course of the interviews it became clear that almost all had a "significant other" in their lives (i.e. married or common-law spouse, long term girlfriend or boyfriend). Although many panhandlers had "significant others" in their lives they seemed to be far more likely to have never been married and more likely to be living common law than the general population of the city or inner city.

Another question not asked was the number of children each panhandler had. Through the course of the interviews, however, it became clear that the majority of the respondents had kids, many of whom are over the age of 18 and, therefore, independent. In only 9 cases, however, did their children live with them as dependents. Sixty-three percent of the interviewees' dependent children were under the age of six. Seven interviewees were supporting more than one dependent, and all but two of those with dependents were the only income earner for the household. See table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Dependents' relationship and age

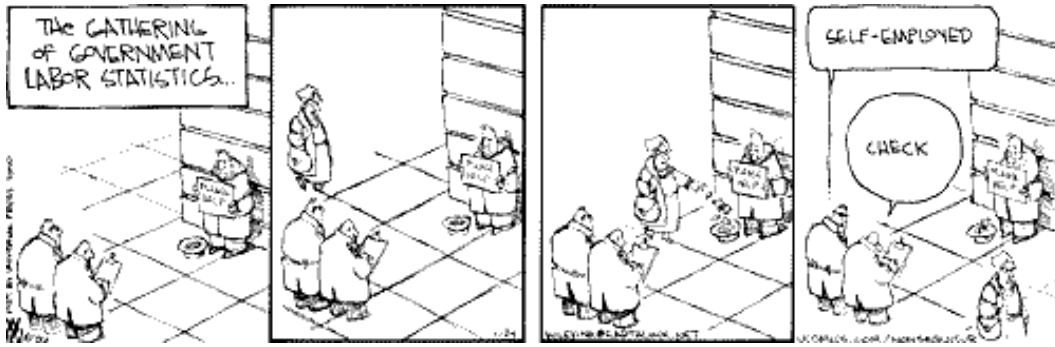
Respondent	Sole Income Earner?	Dependent Spouse?	Dependent Child?	Age of child
Male, 21 yrs.	√	√	√	6 months
Male, 27 yrs.	√		√	17 months
Male, 28 yrs.	√		√	9 months
			√	3 yrs.
Male, 33 yrs.	√		√	3 yrs.
			√	5 yrs.
Male, 37 yrs.			√	15 yrs.
			√	12 yrs.
Male, 43 yrs.	√		√	10 yrs.
			√	8 yrs.
Male, 44 yrs.	√		√	18 yrs.
			√	17 yrs.
			√	17 yrs.
Female, 21 yrs.	√		√	15 months
Female, 42 yrs.			√	24 yrs.
			√	21 yrs.
			√	19 yrs.
			√	16 yrs.
			√	9 yrs.

Ethnicity

Seventy-one interviewees responded to the question about their ethnic/cultural background:

- 27 (38%) were Caucasian,
- 27 (38%) were First Nations
- 12 (17%) were Metis
- 3 were Inuit
- 2 were “other visible minority”

Approximately 55 percent of the panhandlers identified themselves as either First Nations or Metis, another four percent were Inuit and three percent were other visible minorities. In total over 60 percent were non-caucasian, a proportion almost three times as high as the proportion of non-caucasians in the city as a whole and fifteen percent higher than the inner city.



3.0 EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

High levels of unemployment, infrequent and short incidents of employment, and an inability to function effectively in the workforce characterize the work history and employment status of panhandlers.

Eighty-five percent of the 75 panhandlers interviewed were unemployed or not working regularly, compared to just four percent in the city and six percent in the inner city. Of the 15 percent who indicated they were employed, most were only working part time at temporary, seasonal, casual or day labour positions.

Just over 60 percent of those who were working were employed in construction or general labour positions (usually day labour jobs). It was surprising, however, to find that one person worked in auto body repair, another as a market research analyst, one in landscaping, while another sold art on the street.

Although very few of those interviewed indicated they were employed, just over 70 percent indicated they did receive income from other sources: panhandling was the only source of income for just over 25 percent of those interviewed. Other income came from a variety of sources: employment insurance for about two percent; social assistance for approximately 36 percent; disability pension twenty-three percent; seniors benefits two percent, child benefits two percent; money from friends and family five percent; and GST rebate twenty-nine percent. Some of those receiving income from sources other than panhandling were receiving income from more than one source. However, the two most significant sources of income were social assistance and disability pensions. Other sources yielded very little money and the money they did receive was irregular and infrequent.

Most of those on social assistance received the basic shelter and personal allowance given to individuals: \$286 for rent and the basic personal allowance of \$485. A few who had partners or dependents received more. Some received less because if they earned income from other sources during the month, above a certain threshold the amount would be deducted from their personal social assistance allowance. Those on disability pensions received amounts that varied from \$90.00 per month up to \$1325.00. Most, however,

received between \$200 and \$500 per month. Because most who were working were only part time, temporary or casual, they received very modest amounts per month. No one earned over \$500 from employment; most were in the \$200 to \$300 dollar range - not enough to live on.

Barriers to Employment

The fact that the majority of panhandlers receive so little income from any regular source of employment or social safety net sources is a major reason why they are panhandling. An examination of their educational characteristics, as well as reasons given for their inability to work, sheds additional light on why they find themselves panhandling to make “a living.”

Low educational attainment

Fifty seven (76.0%) of the interviewees had at least some high school education, twenty-five of whom had achieved at least a high school diploma (33.3% of all interviewees). When comparing the highest level of educational achievement, the percentages of those whose highest level was high school are quite similar between the interviewees (26.6%), the inner city (34.9%), and the city overall (32.1%). Large differences are evident, however, when comparing the percentages of the populations that achieved a university degree: only one interviewee (1.3%), but 18.3% of the city and 15.0% of the inner city populations had completed a university degree. Another significant difference between populations is in the percentage that has not even completed elementary school. Among the panhandlers interviewed, sixteen percent had achieved less than grade nine, compared to only 7.8% of the city population and 12.4% of the inner city population. The fact that approximately sixty-seven percent of the panhandlers interviewed had not completed a high school certificate is a clear indication that the majority has a skill and education level that makes access to the labour market difficult.

“I would like to work, but the doctor says I can only do sedentary work, and I’ve done heavy work all of my life. I have a grade 7 education, so I need skills- training. I was on welfare, and got cut off because I didn’t go to a job search workshop. I didn’t go because I know how to look for work, I just can’t get any work because I don’t have the training. Welfare wouldn’t help me get the training I need. Now I’m cut off.”

Disabilities

Fifty-four of the interviewees, or seventy-two percent, reported having a disability of some kind. Thirty-eight of the interviewees, or 70% of those who said they have a disability, identified a physical impairment. Nineteen respondents said they have a mental health problem (35% of the disabilities). 18 cases of disabilities reported were equally divided as cognitive (learning/intellectual) and illiteracy. There is overlap in these numbers because twenty interviewees identified multiple disabilities. For example, one man suffers from multiple physical impairments: debilitating migraines, arthritis, recent

triple by-pass, and a painful cyst in his knee. Another reported having a heart condition, a metal plate and pins in his hip, vision impairment (blind in one eye), and very high blood pressure.

Others reported combinations of different types of disabilities including:

- Speech impediment, plus anxiety and depression.
- Anxiety and depression, plus poor back and leg.
- Car accident injuries: Metal plate in leg and permanent brain damage
- Hepatitis C, depression and asthma

In addition to brain damage caused by injury, diagnosed cognitive disabilities (intellectual/learning) reported include Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). If severe enough, these disabilities can make it impossible to get or keep a job. Illiteracy can also be a major barrier to employment. One youth reported that he was able to find work a couple of times, but each time he was fired when the employer found out he was illiterate.

Another youth has blackouts periodically, but the health system has been unable to determine what they are caused by or predict when they will occur, so he is not allowed to drive or operate machinery, which limits his employment prospects.

If disabilities are not officially diagnosed, respondents cannot receive disability benefits.

Disabilities not recognized

Thirty-seven of the interviewees who self-reported a disability in this study, although it may prevent them from working, had not been assessed or had not applied for disability benefits. This seemed to be most common with those with back problems and vehicle accident injuries. Only 23% of the respondents were receiving disability benefits, but 72% reported having a disability.

In some cases, interviewees reported having been assessed by doctors as having disabilities, but were still not receiving disability benefits. One interviewee explained his case:

“There’s no reason why I shouldn’t have some clean clothes and smokes now and then. I’m lame, I’m broke, and I’m homeless. Eventually the government will figure it out and give me welfare. Instead I have to keep going to the hospital. I just got out of the hospital and everyone else goes home. I have to go stand in line for a mat to sleep on a shelter floor overnight.”

“My welfare worker wouldn’t put me on disability, even though three specialists said that I couldn’t work because of my back injury. I appealed and they overturned the decision, but they still wouldn’t put me on.”

Some of the issues the panhandlers indicated as disabilities may not be readily identified as such. This may be the case with the youth who, when asked if he had a disability of any kind, replied *“Regular jobs make me ‘crazy’.”* Other cases will never qualify. For

example, when asked if he has a disability, one respondent replied “*Ya, I keep getting hurt when I’m intoxicated.*” (Note: this was not counted as a disability in this study).

Lack of access to training and education

Some interviewees, who reported having a physical disability, were deemed by social services as capable of working, just not at a physically demanding job. Many of these individuals, however, had work histories of exclusively physically demanding jobs, had low literacy skills, low educational attainment, and/or lacked computer skills. This combination puts them at an extreme disadvantage when looking for work because they do not have the skills, experience and educational background required for non-physical jobs.

Appropriate training and education to do sedentary work were identified by many of the interviewees as the key to being able to stop panhandling. Unfortunately, those opportunities did not seem to be available to them. Several respondents indicated that most free training is only offered to those on Employment Income or Social Assistance (welfare). One welfare recipient indicated that the only training offered was for job search skills. This was of no use to him because he first needed to gain some employable skills. He stressed that it wouldn’t matter how good he was at looking for work, people still wouldn’t hire him if he didn’t have the appropriate skills to offer. Another welfare recipient reported that he wasn’t considered eligible for re-training: “*Social services says that if you’re able to take training, then you’re able to go to work.*”

Many sedentary jobs also involve working with cash, in which case a criminal background of any kind would be a major deterrent to being hired. Although it was not a question asked in the interview, a few of the respondents mentioned they had criminal records that made it difficult to find any kind of work.

If training and education are not provided free, the costs can be prohibitive for anyone living day-to-day on a panhandling income. One interviewee explained his situation: “*I want to become a welder. I have experience but I need a license. I need \$4,500 to go back to school, but I have bad credit, so I can’t get a loan.*” One youth who was abused as a child and kicked out of home at the age of 12 was only able to finish grade nine because it was too difficult to go to school while living on the streets. He has tried to find work, but employers are looking for a higher level of education. He’d like to write the General Educational Development (GED) exam for high school equivalency, but for him the cost of \$65 was not within his reach.

Lack of ID

Some of the interviewees did not have any identification document (ID). It may have been lost or stolen or, in a time of desperation, sold. Without a social insurance card, the interviewees pointed out that the only work they could get is day labour or odd jobs “under the table.” Even day-labour isn’t easy to find, as one respondent describes: “*The day-labour agencies have work, but they tend to take the regulars. It takes awhile before*

you get known and can get regular temp work. It's discouraging." Five of the interviewees reported that a lack of ID was the reason they were not working at all. Others who were working day labour said that if they had ID, they could get regular better paying jobs. The replacement cost for a social insurance card is \$35 – money that most did not have to spare. It also costs to get other ID, such as a health card, birth certificate, or driver's license.

Homelessness

While discussing the barriers to employment, one interviewee noted a common Catch-22 situation: *"You need a house to get a job and you need a job to get a house."* It's hard for anyone to get a job without a permanent address, or at least a phone number to be reached at. Even if a panhandler is offered work, they often have to turn it down. One interviewee explains: *"If you hired me to start work tomorrow, I would have a hell of a time getting food, having clothes, getting to work, etc. and surviving until the first payday."*

Other Barriers

There were many other reasons why panhandlers had difficulty accessing employment. These included problems such as a criminal record, addictions, lack of a phone, and the fact they had been in the city only a short period of time that created barriers to permanent "living-wage" employment. Some freely admitted that it was their choice not to work, they were not prepared to work for minimum wage and they simply were not prepared to accept the regular schedule that a job requires. They preferred, instead, to panhandle as it provided them with more flexibility.

It is clear from the characteristics described above that panhandlers are a group of people living in very deep poverty. Few are working, many lack the skills necessary to access employment, and others reported physical, cognitive or mental issues that are real barriers to employment. Some have "opted out" and are not actively looking for, or interested in obtaining, employment. The income they earn is not sufficient to support them, so they panhandle.

4.0 RESIDENCY AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Seventy of the seventy-five interviewees (93.3%) considered themselves to be residents of Winnipeg. The five who did not are transient youth who referred to themselves as 'travellers'. They spend the warmer months of each year travelling across the country and settle down somewhere with a milder climate, such as Vancouver, for the winter months. Another fourteen of the interviewees lived elsewhere at other times of the year, either on reserves, or in urban centres in other provinces.

Contrary to popular belief, not all panhandlers are homeless. Thirty of those interviewed (40%) lived in rental accommodation. Interestingly, the proportion that rented is very

similar to the proportion of renters in the city as a whole, while 64 percent of the inner city population are renters. The difference is that the non-renters in the population of the city or inner city are homeowners, but the non-renting panhandlers interviewed were homeless.

A little over half of the panhandlers who were renters have a room in a rooming house or residential hotel. The other half rented an apartment. Rental costs per unit ranged from \$110 to \$700 per month. Half of the rental units cost \$280 or less per month, reflecting the shelter component for a single person on social assistance. All but three included utilities in the cost of the rent. Only nine of the respondents reported sharing household expenses with another person. Two interviewees were staying in a residential rehabilitation centre at the time of the interview.

In this study, sixty percent (45 of 75) of the interviewees were homeless – they either slept outdoors, stayed in a shelter, “couch surfed”, or some combination of the three. A third of all interviewees regularly “couch surfed”, which is to stay for short periods of time with various friends or family, moving frequently from place to place and usually sleeping on the couch or floor. Most who couch surfed said they pay a small amount of money to stay there, buy groceries, or contribute towards other household costs. This can be an awkward arrangement for some. One youth who had been sleeping on a friend’s couch said he feels uncomfortable because he’s violating his friend’s space, and doesn’t want to “wear out his welcome,” which makes him feel stressed sometimes.

Twenty one respondents said they regularly stayed in shelters, with Neeginan and Main Street Project being the most frequently used. Three respondents said they stayed at the Salvation Army on a regular basis.

Seven interviewees indicated that the only place they slept was outdoors. In the winter months they used various techniques to keep from freezing to death. One panhandler said he lights a fire in a dumpster to warm it up, puts the fire out and climbs inside to sleep. Another sleeps outside over an air vent to stay warm in the winter, and when it gets muddy in the spring he sleeps in a window well. Another 15 interviewees reported sleeping outdoors regularly, but when the weather turns cold, they turn to the shelters or stay with friends or family who tend to be more sympathetic at that time of year.

5.0 WHAT ARE PANHANDLERS LIKE IN WINNIPEG?

Who would better understand and be able to describe what panhandlers are like than panhandlers themselves? During interviews, the question was raised “Can you describe the characteristics of the panhandlers you know?” with optional prompt questions of “What are panhandlers like?” and “How do panhandlers act?” The range of answers was indicative of the range within the panhandling population.

Many of the youth described panhandlers primarily according to their situation, rather than their characteristics.

“They’re survivors. Individuals on the struggle-level, homeless people trying to make ends meet.”

“People just trying to survive, the best way they know. It’s not easy. We do what we can.”

“Half the ones I know have no homes, no family, and they’re not on welfare. They’re thrown away. People don’t care for them.”

“Anybody who’s broke and desperate.”

When asked the question “What are Panhandlers Like in Winnipeg?” some of the interviewees attributed exclusively positive behaviours, describing them as nice, polite, good, quiet, friendly and decent. *“Most are easy going, non violent. They don’t usually get in trouble with the law. Most would take jobs if we could get them.”*

A smaller number of the panhandlers interviewed held solely unfavourable opinions about others they know, describing their behaviour as rude, “assholes”, obstructive, demanding and violent – *“up in your face”* or *“ready to strangle you.”*

“Some are very mean and aggressive. They want money right now! They are impolite... they don’t say please or thank you. They have no respect for others or themselves, and are aggressive to other panhandlers, too.”

“They verbally harass you to give them change. They feel they deserve it.”

The majority of the responses, however, indicated that characteristics of panhandlers range greatly. Many explained this diversity by describing the opposite extremes of behaviour exhibited, for example,

“Some will try to slap you or chase you down the street if you don’t give money. Some are crazies, but most are nice.”

“[There are] those who can barely talk, all the way to the very intelligent.”

“All sorts. Some are at times violent...fairly aggressive. At times they are very passive, but others they scare people. Some are mean, some are nice.”

This range of behaviour was described by a few as paralleling that of the general population, or being *“just like everybody else.”* One youth seemed surprised by the question of what panhandlers are like and replied matter-of-factly, *“Some are polite, some are in your face, ignorant. Some are drunk...just like any other subset of people.”*

Some respondents attributed this range of behaviour to individual personalities. Several responses suggested that aggressive or annoying panhandling behaviours surfaced only with drunkenness:

“Some are nice and calm. Others, it depends if they’ve been drinking or not, if they have, then they get stupid and get in people’s faces, too much aggression.”

“Most who have addictions problems are aggressive.”

“There’s probably some panhandlers that don’t walk away, and keep asking, especially if they’re using.”

“Some of the panhandlers may be “half in the bag” which can cause aggressiveness.”

Drug, substance and alcohol addictions were mentioned by more than half of the respondents as characteristics common among most panhandlers, and their primary motivating force: *“Most panhandle for booze or drugs, most are dependent on alcohol and drugs and that’s why they’re out there.”* A clear distinction, however, was emphasized between those who panhandle for their addictions and those who do it for basic survival needs:

“A few probably really need it, the rest don’t ...they have addictions. There are some legitimate ones, though.”

“I only panhandle when I’m hungry and need food. Others do it for whatever poison drug. I call it a hustle, but in reality it’s a struggle, too. The majority of these people are homeless. They don’t know if they want to stop their addiction. A lot of doors have been slammed in their faces. Nothing else to turn to. Either panhandle or get into trouble.”

“A lot don’t actually need the money. They’re into drugs and booze. They don’t want to work. They spoil it for those who need money for food. And there are those who don’t have a place to stay and they really need to panhandle.”

Many of the youth interviewed had developed a categorization of panhandlers that clearly divided those who are motivated by their addictions and those who are not. These categories were also seen to be roughly represented by different age groups. There were some minor variations, but generally the categories identified by and described by the youth could be arranged as:

- 1) Those who have addictions and for whom addictions are their primary motivation: (described by one respondent as the “lower class” of panhandlers)
 - a. Drug addicts: *“they look sketchy, skinny, like people you’d be scared of...covered in bruises, cuts.”* Includes “Crackheads” who will *“sell their lives for crack”* and “Jib-techs”(crystal meth users).

- b. Rubbies: mainly entrenched solvent/substance abusers who *“look dirty and rough.”* May also include alcoholics who are *“constantly drunk and often smell bad.”* *“Their brains are so gone, they’re messed up.”*
- c. Alcoholics – *“don’t talk properly even when sober. Dirty, they have beards; they’re usually around 30 – 50 years old.”* *“Are older people who will probably die in the streets. Most of them pretty much never eat.”*

2) Those whose main motivation is non-addiction related:

- a. Those who really need the money to survive (usually are much older and panhandle for food). Some have jobs or are on social assistance, and panhandle to supplement their other income.
- b. The mentally ill or those with cognitive disabilities.
- c. Travellers – are young, have backpacks and *“look like punks i.e. piercings, tattoos, and ratty, mostly black clothes”*. In Winnipeg, you only see them during the warmer months, and they stay only for a couple of weeks before they move on to another city. *“People respect them more than homebums.”*
- d. Homebums – Panhandlers who are not travellers, but stay in their city of residence throughout the year. It is generally a term of endearment used by travellers when referring to these local panhandlers. Many of them help out travellers by giving them advice and guidance, or just hang out with them while the travellers are in town.

It was also primarily the youth respondents who noted that the different areas of the city have different types of panhandlers. Generally, the geographic distribution was described as follows: (Refer to Volume 3 for maps of these areas)

- 1) Boulevard/meridian of Broadway/Osborne, and Broadway/Portage – most are local street youth (not travellers) from 17 – 24 years old. *“They’re not sniffers, drug or booze addicts.”*
- 2) North of Portage Avenue, including the Exchange District up to Ellice Avenue – *“they’re aggressive, drunk and belligerent. I don’t go to that side of Portage Ave. They’re all sniffers there and I don’t like sniffers.”*
- 3) Downtown – Along Portage, Vaughn, Graham – *“they’re alright, drunk and belligerent”; “I don’t pan at Air Canada building anymore. The Rubbies have taken over.”*
- 4) Osborne Village – *“all are polite and good friends, who just sit around.”* Most are travellers (around the belltower at the corner of Stradbrook), but some are older Homebums.

“Some have problems and that’s why they pan because there is no other way to make money. Some are out there to get necessities. There are those who are out there for their addictions. Others that are mentally handicapped and don’t know better. Lately I’ve been seeing more and more kids. It’s sad to see this increase.”

6.0 WHY DO PANHANDLERS PANHANDLE?

Many interviewees had difficulty answering the question “What are the main reasons that brought you to panhandling?” Often the immediate response was “*I needed the money.*” So, the question was rephrased as “What happened in your life that made it necessary to panhandle?” Quite often the reply to that was “*I don’t understand...what do you mean?*” Then the final prompt was “Well, generally, people go to school growing up, they graduate, get a job, have a place to live, etc....but that didn’t happen for you...why not? What happened in your life?” Even then, some interviewees seemed to struggle with identifying causes and consequences related to their panhandling activity. Some of the answers to the question of “Why?”, therefore, may be incomplete or inaccurate. In some cases, issues mentioned in other parts of the interview were not identified here as having led to panhandling, even though they would seem to have been major contributing factors. It could not be assumed that these factors were simply forgotten or overlooked and, therefore, only the information provided directly in response to the question above is included here.

For most of the panhandlers interviewed, multiple factors were identified as having contributed to their current situation. Often it was a series of unfortunate events, choices, behaviours or situations. Any one of these might not have been a problem to deal with had it occurred on its own, but when compounded by others, led to a point in their lives where they found themselves relying on panhandling.

A physical disability, including chronic illness and injury was identified by 30 percent of those interviewed as the principal reason why they panhandle. Only three of the interviewees identified a criminal record as a factor contributing to their reliance on panhandling, and only two mentioned illiteracy or low education as a factor. Through the course of the rest of the interview, however, many more respondents indicated they had criminal records or low educational attainment, so these may actually be underreported or unrecognized factors.

Being unable to find work for which they have the skills was reported as a major factor for 28% of the respondents. One sixty-year old interviewee had been employed doing layouts in graphic art for most of his working life. He quit his job and moved to Winnipeg in order to give palliative care to his parents for quite a few years. During that time, however, his type of work became computerized, and he no longer had the skills for the job. He’s unable to do manual labor due to a back problem, and has a low level of literacy so has been unable to find any kind of work. After his parents died, he lived on life insurance money until that ran out, and now only has income from social assistance, which he finds he needs to supplement through panhandling.

Fifteen percent of the interviewees said they have found they have to panhandle to supplement either their employment earnings or their social assistance income. A further eight percent said they panhandle because they don’t qualify for assistance. One interviewee was unemployed for three years during which time he was on social

assistance. He said he finally found a job and was no longer on assistance. He thought the job was secure, but then was laid off, and when he couldn't get back on to social assistance, he had to start panhandling.

Ten respondents provided the following related reasons (including some multiple responses) for panhandling. Three interviewees have never had a job. Eight respondents said they choose to panhandle because they enjoy it. Four indicated they choose to panhandle because they can earn more money at it than by working. Two interviewees declared that they were lazy, and chose not to work. Another said that he can't get enough sleep because he's homeless, so he's too tired to work.

Eleven percent of the respondents identified mental health issues, and 5.3% indicated their cognitive disability as having contributed to their current situation. Drug and substance abuse was identified as a major factor with 11% of respondents, while alcohol abuse was mentioned by 5.3% as leading to reliance on panhandling. Again, this is a factor that was likely under-recognized or underreported as a contributing factor during this part of the interview. One interviewee stated that when he was much younger he was gainfully employed, but then turned to sniffing gas. As a result, he now has permanent brain damage, difficulties with his speech, and has trouble walking and needs crutches, so he can't work anymore.

Four respondents identified the ending of a relationship as a devastating experience that sparked a downward spiral which included job loss, alcohol abuse, depression, and even homelessness.

Nineteen percent of the respondents, all youth, indicated that leaving home at a young age was the first factor in a series that led to having to panhandle. Many reported leaving home or leaving care of Child and Family Services at the age of 12 or 13 and becoming homeless. Without a place to live they were unable to continue with their schooling and so achieved a low level of educational attainment. Because they were too young to work, they began panhandling. One youth was under care of Child and Family services but when he turned 18 he no longer qualified for support. He suffers from multiple disabilities, but when he asked for assistance at 18 he said he was refused help.

There were a number of other miscellaneous factors mentioned by a few interviewees as having contributed to their need to panhandle. One young interviewee said he was feeling guilty for stealing, so he started to panhandle instead because "*it's an honest way to make money.*" A couple of respondents indicated they had escaped abusive home situations and had no money or resources. Another lost his family support so when he couldn't find work because of his mental health issues, criminal background and low skill level, he had no one to help him out. Others offered the following comments:

"I'm poor at budgeting because \$500 [from welfare] should last me 2 weeks. I give a lot of my money to my kids, though."

“I always had seasonal work, but it was subcontracted [under-the-table] and I didn’t file my taxes properly, so I’m not eligible for EI. In the winter when there is no work, I can’t make ends meet.”

“I sold drugs for 7 years, but didn’t want to anymore. I had a job for a month and a half doing home renos and enjoyed it. When the landlord found out I had a dog, I got evicted. Then I had to quit the job because I had nowhere to leave my dog while I was at work. I don’t want to go back to selling drugs, so I panhandle instead.”

A youth who used to panhandle more regularly, says he only does it now when he needs to feel humbled, stating that it reminds him of where he came from. He refers to it as “trading my dignity” and feels he is offering the opportunity for people to do good deeds.

How panhandlers spend their earnings

When asked the question “What makes you panhandle or not panhandle on any given day?” the majority of respondents’ replies indicated they panhandle in order to get just enough money to meet their basic needs for that particular day. *“I panhandle for the fact that I’d like a place to stay, something to eat...you know ... normal stuff.”* Those with children said they place a priority on meeting their kids’ basic needs. The same was true for those with pets.

Most interviewees consider food, shelter, clothing, and bus tickets to be basic needs. This priority was reflected in what they reported spending their money on.

- Ninety-three percent of the interviewees said they spend money they earn from panhandling on food: 88% ranked it as either first or second among their priorities for spending.
- Twenty-six percent spend their earnings on rent/shelter costs, which ranks among the top four spending priorities for 24% of the respondents.
- Although it didn’t rank as the most important expense for any of the respondents, over half of them said that some of their panhandling earnings go towards buying clothing and personal items. It might have ranked higher if there were not places to get free clothing, such as clothing banks and dumpsters.
- Forty-one percent of respondents indicated they spend some of their panhandling earnings on bus tickets, but only 32% rated this as a high priority for spending, and again, never as #1.
- Sixty-eight percent of the interviewees said they spend some of their panhandling money on cigarettes, but only 5.3% consider it to be their highest priority.

- Forty-three percent of respondents spend some of their earnings from panhandling on alcohol.
- Thirty-seven percent report that they spend some on illegal drugs or substances.
- For the two respondents who spend their earnings on sniff, it is their first priority.
- Fifteen percent of respondents consider substances, illegal drugs or alcohol to be their first priority for spending their panhandling earnings. For them, it qualifies as a basic necessity:

“[I panhandle] everyday and all day for food, drugs and alcohol.”

“I wake up hung-over everyday and need a fix.”

“I need money for alcohol, to get sadness and anger out.”

A couple of the interviewees who said they panhandle to buy drugs or alcohol added anecdotally, that they only have the courage to panhandle when they're drunk or high:

“I won't panhandle if I'm feeling embarrassed. I need a fix, a drink, need to get high before I can ask for money.”

“I feel ashamed and need a few beer, just to get the courage to get started.”

Other things that the interviewees mentioned spending their earnings on include: medical costs such as prescription and over-the-counter drugs (11%), entertainment (17.6%), helping out friends and family (8%), pet food (4.1%), furniture and household items (6.7%), telephone (8%), debt repayment (10.6%), utility bills (8%), gambling (1.3%), and prostitutes (1.3%).

When Do Panhandlers Panhandle?

Many of the youth respondents stated that they panhandle *only* when they are in need (whatever way they may define 'need'). This seemed to be out of consideration for others who panhandle, and for those who give.

“I don't pan when I have money because that's not fair to anyone”

“It's spontaneous – as I need it for food or smokes. But only when I need it.”

Many of those on social assistance stated they only panhandle when their cheque has run out. Those who earn other income panhandle only when other opportunities are not available, for example, if there are no day-labour jobs, if they normally busk but their

instrument is stolen or broken, if they usually squeegee but it's raining or their squeegee was taken away, etc.

For those with serious health issues, the way they are feeling on a particular day can be a factor that determines whether they panhandle or not: *"I have Hep B and the doctor told me I should sleep as much as possible, so when I feel tired I don't panhandle."*

Others panhandle everyday, whether they feel they need to or not. For some of them, panhandling is their job: *"In my view you should be able to pan anywhere you want. It's a job and its hard work like other jobs, especially when you get things and rude comments thrown at you."* For a handful of others who panhandle everyday, it's a way to pass the time: *"Just a daily routine. Something to do besides sitting on my ass all day long."*

Weather is often a factor in deciding to panhandle or not on any given day, but respondents take it into consideration in different ways. Some indicated that inclement weather conditions work in their favour:

"If the weather's bad, I'll go out because people don't want to see people in the rain begging."

"Winter's the best time to panhandle. Fewer people are willing to be out panning. Those who are out are serious and desperate for money and people know that."

Others feel that extreme weather works against them, and that milder days bring better results:

"If the weather's miserable, I won't go out. I flag [hold a sign for motorists at stoplights], and people don't want to roll down their windows and get cold or wet."

"Some days you just know you're not going to get any money because it's too hot or rainy, so I don't even bother to go out."

"If it's a really nice day, people are cheerful and willing to help out, but if it's gray and gloomy, people are too, and won't give."

One respondent mentioned that he plans ahead according to the weather forecast in order to avoid having to go out in bad weather: *"If the weather forecast isn't good, I'll pan longer to make enough money to keep me going until the weather is better."* This type of foresight and planning ahead seemed rare among those interviewed. As one respondent said about panhandlers, *"They live one day at a time, one hour at a time."*

What do you enjoy or not enjoy about panhandling?

Almost a third of the respondents indicated that they don't enjoy anything about panhandling, and another 15% said the only good thing about it is the money they make and the things that money buys.

Thirty-eight percent, however, indicated they enjoy the interaction with people, including meeting them, talking with them, and making them smile.

"You don't really enjoy panhandling, but you do appreciate the people who care. No one really enjoys having to ask for help for basic things."

"I like some people, the ones who talk to you and treat you well. I like chatting with people that ask about me, talk to me, and it doesn't even matter if they give me money. They care."

One woman who had been in the sex trade for seven years said, *"It's more sociable than going on the corner and selling yourself."*

Nineteen percent of the responses were related to the panhandling lifestyle. Six of the interviewees, four of whom are travellers, indicated they enjoy the freedom of being able to make money when they want to and not having to answer to anyone. Six responses indicated an appreciation for being able to relax and be outside, and two like that it is an "escape."

For almost half of the respondents, the worst part of panhandling is the negative effect it has on their self-esteem. Many expressed feelings of guilt, anxiety, shame and humiliation. This is reflected in comments such as *"You get sick of asking people for money because it's demeaning."* Another said he hates *"the whole concept of having to ask someone for money. It's embarrassing...shameful."*

"I feel embarrassed about it. I worked most of my life. I never thought life would come to this. It's lowered my self-esteem."

"It's embarrassing. If I see someone I know, I make myself disappear."

Panhandling can be particularly damaging for those already struggling with low self esteem or mental illness: *"Being depressed already, it makes you more depressed having to beg."* Knowing the negative stereotypes about panhandlers, one youth said he feels that when he's holding a sign people think that he's a bum or a drug addict. He added, *"I don't like to be judged for what I have to do to survive."*

In some cases negative self-esteem may come from being the regular target of physical and verbal abuse,

"I feel awkward asking people...People looking down on me. I feel embarrassed. I may be homeless, but I don't want people to feel I'm hopeless."

which was another negative aspect of panhandling mentioned by half the respondents. This connection was made by a young woman when she said *“I’ve had eggs thrown at me, or people flick dead cigarettes at me. It made me feel like I was dirt under their feet.”* She also pointed to the negative perception the media creates about panhandlers. Another youth, who reported having food thrown at him, expressed dismay at how people are so quick to judge *“that he’s out for drugs”*. Another said the thing he least enjoys about panhandling is when people don’t believe that he is homeless.

Being spit on and being the target of rude comments were reported as common occurrences.

“The rude people who don’t understand say ‘Why don’t you get a job’ or ‘Go back home’ and I just think ‘Don’t you think that if I could do that I wouldn’t be here?’”

The Aboriginal panhandlers interviewed gave examples of blatantly racist comments they regularly endured including *“Stupid Indian”*; *“You give Indians a bad name”*; *“Squaw, get an F’in job”*; *“Go back to the reserve where you Indians belong”*; or *“What are you panning for? You spent your last welfare cheque on Listerine?”*

For some, however, being ignored is, by far, the worst aspect of panhandling: *“I prefer people swearing at me to being ignored – at least it’s a response.”* To them, a complete lack of acknowledgement and being treated as though they don’t exist are the worst insults.

“When people ignore you, that’s what really gets [the young panhandlers] mad or upset.”

“I hate it when people don’t answer. Even an ‘F-off’ is better than no acknowledgement.”

Other elements that interviewees identified when asked what they enjoyed least about panhandling included the boredom of it, not making any money, confrontations with authorities, having to endure bad weather, and always having to ‘be on’- pretending you’re in a good mood. One respondent stated that he hated being in the position where he had to do it; that he had no other option. Another answered that he disliked *“everything about it. I’d rather work for my money, but I can’t work now.”* This was echoed by another respondent who replied, *“I don’t like anything about panhandling. It’s rude to take money that people work for.”*

7.0 DOES PANHANDLING PROVIDE A LIVING?

Are all of the negative comments, the diminished self-esteem, and the verbal and physical abuse worth it? Can you make a living by panhandling? When asked how much they earn, 70% of those who responded reported getting less than two dollars from each donor, and 20% said they received between two and five dollars per ‘drop’.

Of those who estimated their daily panhandling earnings, 40% reported making between ten and thirty dollars per day, while 38% said they earned more than thirty dollars daily (only 22% reported making more than fifty dollars per day). Days in which panhandlers earn larger amounts seem to be rare, as those days stand out in their minds as uncommon occurrences that they are pleased to relate. Examples of the times someone gave a twenty dollar bill are memorable but uncommon. And one interviewee reported, *“The most I made in one day was \$200. People started competing over how much money they would give.”*

Only a third of the respondents took a guess at how much they earn per hour when panhandling. Nine estimated earning between three and five dollars per hour, and an equal number estimated their earnings as five to ten dollars per hour. Six believed that they earned over ten dollars per hour on average. Only three respondents estimated their monthly income from panhandling: their answers were \$150, \$200, and \$800.

According to some of the interviewees, their income as a panhandler is comparable to what they could make through employment. One interviewee said that he won’t work for minimum wage because he makes more money panhandling, and another supported this: *“I can make more money than most people who work. Panhandling is my job.”* Yet another agreed, but was not happy with this situation: *“Panhandling makes me bitter because its better money than getting paid work.”*

The service providers who partnered in this research and who work closely with panhandlers on a regular basis suggested that reports of earnings are likely exaggerated. Apparently some panhandlers may be inclined to say they earn more than they actually do because they feel better about themselves, and it makes them look good to others – they consider panhandling to be a skill and the more money you make, the more skilled you are seen to be. In fact, when asked what was needed in order to be able to stop panhandling, one youth said he needed to stop hearing so many stories from other panhandlers about how much money they make.

For many, what they make panhandling supplements their welfare cheque, income from day labour, or other resources they draw upon (dumpster diving, picking cans, squeegeeing, soup kitchens, clothing banks, picking butts, etc.). Almost two-thirds of those interviewed set a goal for each day, often for only \$10 or \$20, some as much as \$40, a few find they only need \$5 - just enough to cover their costs for the day. For those who set a goal, once they have earned their goal, they stop panhandling for the day.

Those whose only income is panhandling generally don’t have a home and all of the associated costs, so in that case, a meagre panhandling income may be enough to meet the much lower costs of their basic needs when living on the streets or in shelters.

For some, panhandling often doesn’t even cover the cost of food. One man mentioned that he has missed a lot of meals just so that his kids could eat. An older respondent chuckled as he mentioned the health benefits of being on welfare: *“Going on welfare is a*

good way to lose weight. I can't afford food, so my weight has gone down, and my blood pressure has gone down, too."

Although it doesn't fall under any particular question in the interview, many mentioned they rely on what other people throw away. Some get most of their clothing from the garbage - even brand new clothing thrown away by retailers. Quite a few mentioned that they frequent the garbage cans and dumpsters behind restaurants and grocery stores for most of their food. One young interviewee said, with awe and disgust, *"It's amazing how much good food people throw away."* Another gave the details of the places he regularly visits and when: he knows exactly when they put the garbage out, so he is able to get fresh food, most of which is still wrapped, and he says he hasn't been sick in three years of eating that way. *"People throw away everything I need. I get it all from garbages and dumpsters. I know where to sell everything."* One youth said that he still has to be careful, though, because *"you can get arrested for it because, even though it's garbage that's been thrown away, it's considered to be private property."*

Panhandlers receive all kinds of donations besides money. Ninety-one percent of the interviewees indicated that people give them things besides money, whether solicited or not. Those respondents who had received non-monetary donations reported that most common were food/drinks (93%), cigarettes (51.5%), clothing (27.3%), alcohol (22%), and illegal drugs (20%). Other things less frequently mentioned include bus tickets, food coupons, books, jewellery, Blue Key, and even less frequently perfume, bedding, stuff to sell, a job, and 'grief'.

Although not a question asked, some of the panhandlers indicated they really appreciated being given food, and their sincerity seemed evident in the details of the stories they told of times they had been given an entire meal, or taken out to a nice restaurant to order whatever they wanted off the menu.

Do you share your money with others?

The majority of the interviewees (81.3%) said they share their panhandling proceeds with others.

- 23% of those who share, share with family members,
- 51% share with other panhandlers and people who are worse off than them,
- 54% share with friends (note: although they may have answered 'friends' but not answered 'panhandlers', often the friends they refer to are also panhandlers).

Among many of the panhandlers there is an unwritten "Code of Conduct" outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards each other. This was most often mentioned in interviews with youth. Experienced panhandlers often convey the Code of Conduct to those who are just starting out. Aspects of the "Code of Conduct" related to interactions with potential donors is discussed on page 40. In terms of interactions with other panhandlers, the "Code" covers the following:

1) Don't rob other panhandlers

2) Share everything with other panhandlers:

A young woman explained it this way: *"Even if they're your mortal enemy, you give to them, because you're all in the same situation."* Another explained that the sharing is like investing in security for your own future: *"What goes around, comes around."* A group of about 16 panhandlers that refer to themselves as POW (Panhandlers of Winnipeg) shares money, but only within their group.

A few panhandlers indicated they will not share their money, but will instead buy food with the money they earned, and share that. One who does this explained in this way: *"I think there's a way out for most people, but they're not taking those steps. Most people wouldn't have to pan if they didn't have the addictions."*

Another said that before he panhandled, he would get scared when approached, too. He used to give, too, *"in the days"* because he thought it was all real. Now he knows that *"half the time it's real, half the time it's fake"*. Now he only gives to those he knows. One older interviewee said that he gives and doesn't care how the other panhandlers spend their money: *"A boss gives you a paycheck and doesn't ask how you spend it. The same applies here."*

3) Don't take more than your share.

"When you leave a spot, it gives someone else a chance to make what they need. I'm not there to be greedy."

"I take only what I need. I don't go overboard. It's an unwritten rule. Don't get greedy."

"I don't want to stay out panhandling after I have enough because there are others who are really stuck. I just take what I need, don't want to take their spot."

The vast majority of respondents (61 of 75) said they stop panhandling once they've made enough money or if they become too tired or sick to continue. Quite a few mentioned that if they were not making any money, it became discouraging so they would just give up entirely for the day. Inclement weather can also force some to stop.

Only four respondents mentioned that the persistence of police or BIZ Ambassadors would make them stop panhandling.

And if Panning Doesn't Pan Out?

The question was asked "What do you do on those days when you can't get enough money?"

- Almost half of the respondents said that they do nothing and/or go hungry.
- 15% either borrow money or "bum off" family or friends.

- 14% said that they steal or sell drugs.
- 12% pick cans or squeegee.
- 11% use the soup kitchens/services.

What if it Wasn't an Option?

When asked the question “What would you do if you could not panhandle?” most interviewees asked “*What do you mean?*” which was then rephrased as “What if panhandling just wasn't an option?” 27% answered that they had no idea whatsoever. They seemed to be at a complete loss. Another 17.5% said that they would have no option and wouldn't be able to do anything and/or they would go hungry. This suggests that for almost half of the interviewees, panhandling is their final option or last resort.

Twenty percent of the respondents answered that if they could not panhandle, they would have to find a job. Most of them had previously mentioned that they are unable to work or have been unable to find work. Would this situation change if they had no other option available? Or would they still be unable to work or find work?

If they couldn't panhandle, 14% of the interviewees said they would undertake other non-standard income earning activities, including the sex trade, busking, squeegeeing, and picking cans. Eight respondents (11%) said they would resort to stealing or break and enter.

Only two people (2.7%) replied that they would have to use the soup kitchens and shelters, and only one said he would go into a drug treatment program. This suggests that if panhandling was no longer an option, more panhandlers would turn to illegal activities, such as the sex trade and theft, than would turn to services.

8.0 PANHANDLERS AND THE NUMBER AND NATURE OF SERVICES USED

The interviewees were asked about the services they use in Winnipeg, and to provide comments about them. Many panhandlers interviewed are not using services that are meant to serve their needs. It seems there may be a few reasons for this:

- 1) The services available are not appropriate for their needs (shelters not safe for youth, food bank can only be used if you have access to cooking and storage, job search workshops for those who lack marketable skills);
- 2) The services are stretched beyond their capacities already (shelters are full, food at soup kitchens is inadequate, food bank doesn't supply enough or is not accessible);
- 3) They may not be aware of the services available; or,

4) Panhandling is not viewed as a last resort...services are. One panhandler who has a place to live stated that he won't use the soup kitchens because *"they're meant for people who are actually on the streets, they should go to them."* Another said that he won't stay at shelters. He *"leaves the spots for people who really need it."*

For some individuals, panhandling may allow them to still feel they have some modicum of control over their lives; that they are working and earning their own way and not simply relying on support of others or the government. Throughout the interviews, many said they viewed panhandling as a job for which one needs and develops certain skills. And like other jobs, the more skilled, the higher the earnings. For many, panhandling also provides positive social interaction that may be otherwise lacking in their lives.

Blue Key

An initiative of the Downtown BIZ to combat panhandling is a program commonly referred to on the streets as the Blue Key. This initiative encourages the public to donate to the "Change for the Better" campaign instead of giving to the panhandlers who might use the money to buy alcohol, drugs or cigarettes. All of the donations are given to six downtown social agencies that provide services to "people in need." Complementing the donations, is the Help Key (Blue Key) which the donor can then give to a panhandler. In turn, this key is said to be redeemable for a meal, change of clothes and counselling, as well as a shower and shelter at some agencies. This is meant to encourage panhandlers to use services instead of panhandling to meet their needs.

Although the interview did not ask about the Blue Key, many interviewees commented on it. The Blue Key was often described by panhandlers as "useless." They explained that five of the agencies that accept the Blue Key provide the services for free anyways – a Blue Key is not needed to access them. The only exception is Salvation Army, but as one panhandler pointed out: *"Those keys are so stupid. If you take one to Salvation Army, they write down your name and you can't use a key again. One time only."*

Foodbanks

A full two-thirds of the respondents reported that they do not use a foodbank. Those who live on the streets don't have anywhere to keep perishables or to cook the food, plus the foodbank won't provide food without an address and I.D. Those living in residential hotels and rooming houses don't usually have fridges to store the food or cooking facilities, so the foodbank is not useful to them because they can't store perishables or use food that requires cooking. This makes panhandlers' food expenses much higher: "It costs a lot to eat out when you have no place to cook."

For others, the challenge in using a foodbank is the lengthy process and inconvenience involved in accessing the service. It is necessary to phone ahead to make an appointment. But such a phone call usually involves being put on hold for upwards of an hour. For

those who do not have phones and must use one provided by an agency, this is not possible because these phones have long line-ups to use them and are generally limited to 5 minutes of use per call. Once an appointment is made, it is often in a distant location requiring bus travel, and is often at an inconvenient time of day, especially for anyone who has a job. Even at the foodbank there is usually a long wait in line. The respondents indicated that after that lengthy process, not much food is provided, unless you have children. *“By the time my appointment comes around, I’ve already found a way to get food. I can’t be bothered to haul a friggen’ heavy ass bag of useless crap.”*

Soup Kitchens

Soup kitchens provide free prepared meals in various locations, many in churches, in low-income neighbourhoods throughout Winnipeg. Eighty percent of the interviewees said they regularly use soup kitchens. Reports about the people running the soup kitchens were only positive. They were described as polite and non-judgemental. One interviewee who has tried all of the soup kitchens said *“They treat the clients with respect and don’t look down on you.”*

Quite a few mentioned that the hours of operation were inconvenient, though. Most soup kitchens are closed on weekends. Those open on weekdays often only serve one meal a day, so the people who rely on soup kitchens have to go from one to another to get three meals a day. Those interviewees who suffer social anxiety said they can’t use soup kitchens at all because there are too many people: the line-ups are long and the places are crowded.

Most respondents said they felt the food provided at soup kitchens is pretty good. As one person put it, *“It’s certainly not gourmet, but it tides you over.”* Others said they wouldn’t use soup kitchens because the food was mouldy, the soup was watered down, they serve *“mystery food - you don’t know what’s in it,”* or it made them feel sick. Others indicated they felt the food was not as nutritious as they would have liked: *“Sometimes they give just spaghetti, no meat.”*

“I went to a soup kitchen once, but they didn’t have good food, they give coffee and donuts which aren’t good for you. Panhandling is a better option. I can eat better that way: I can buy milk, bread and peanut butter for a couple of dollars and eat that for several days.”

Some of the respondents refuse to use those soup kitchens that require clients to sit through a religious service or pray before the meals are served. This is required of them even if they have a Blue Key.

Shelters

In Winnipeg there are three main emergency shelters for homeless adults (this does not include women’s emergency shelters). All are in the Main Street area just south of

Higgins Avenue within a few blocks of each other. Each offers a sleeping mat and floor space in a common area for the night, plus shared shower and washroom facilities. Main Street Project and Neeginan are free. Salvation Army charges \$11, and for an additional charge one can upgrade to a bed. There are two shelters in Winnipeg for youth under the age of 18 years old. MacDonald Youth Services on Mayfair is south east of downtown, not far from Osborne Village, and Ndinawe is in the North End. Both are free.

Interviewees' reviews on the three adult emergency shelters were mixed. Neeginan (also known as Jack's) was reported to be the cleanest. The staff are considered by most to be friendly. The facilities at Neeginan were reported to be comfortable, with the opportunity for clients to make toast and watch T.V. Main Street Project was also reported to have very friendly and helpful staff, but offers fewer "perks."

The staff at Salvation Army, however, received only negative comments including "*staff are grouchy*" and "*the workers there are heartless.*" One homeless panhandler mentioned that when he took a Blue Key to the Salvation Army after he had already been there once, he was often refused meals, clothes, or a place to sleep, and reported that "*When I had a key and they did give me a meal, they would make me wait until everyone else was done eating, and then I would get the leftovers.*" Other comments about the Salvation Army included "*it's expensive for a meagre mat on the floor*" and "*It's a complete rip-off.*"

Many interviewees stated that the shelters were often full, and they were turned away unless they had lined up early to get in. One respondent spoke of the desperate urgency of people waiting to get in:

"At Jack's at 6:00 p.m. there are people dying to get into there, people fighting to get in. I've seen things that I thought only in a nightmare would happen."

For those who are 'lucky' enough to get in, the conditions inside shelters were reported to be very crowded and unpleasant. Main Street Project, in particular, was reported by several respondents to "smell really bad", and to provide only thin mats to sleep on, but no blankets or pillows. One youth described Main Street Project as a "*last resort, even for street people.*" Another youth, who stayed there only one night, seemed to support that conclusion with this comment: "*It's really for people living on the streets. It smelled like solvents. A guy almost peed on me, and the woman beside me wasn't a woman.*" Several people indicated they disliked sleeping right next to strangers. For anyone with anxieties related to crowds and groups of people, shelters are simply not an option.

Another negative point mentioned about shelters is that clients are expected to wake up early in the morning, and be out by about 6:00 or 7:00 a.m. The problem is that "*at 6 a.m. there's nothing to do and nowhere to go and it can be really cold in the winter at that time.*" The only warm place open at that time is the skywalk, so many will go there until services open their doors later. Only one interviewee considered this to be a positive point: "*I don't have to be homeless, but it's easier. They wake you at 6:30 at Jacks so I don't sleep the day away.*"

Half of the interviewees do not use shelters, either because they have other housing options or because they choose not to. When asked if there are any services they will not use, a third of the panhandlers interviewed stated that they refuse to use any shelters. Most indicated they feel the shelters are too dangerous and are notorious as places where belongings are stolen:

“I’m too scared to go there. [There are] drugs, sniffers, violence, safety issues.”

“You can’t trust the people staying there anymore. They’ll steal your false teeth, your shoes, anything. They’ll stab you.”

“I won’t go to Salvation Army – my friend had his boots stolen off his feet while he slept.”

“Won’t use the shelters, you can’t trust the clients or workers at any of those places.”

One youth even reported having a gun pulled on him at Salvation Army. Although they are allowed to use the shelters in the Main street area, most of the youth said they feel particularly vulnerable to abuse there: *“I’m a young white male, and will get pushed around by all the big native guys.”* Another youth described his primary need as housing: *“I need a secure place to live, a transition place from the street to finding a place to live. I’m a non-drug user, non-alcoholic and I don’t want to be in a shelter with smelly, weird acting people.”* Right now, other than sleeping on the streets, a shelter is his only option.

Several interviewees went so far as to say they would rather take their chances sleeping on the street than in a shelter. An older panhandler who lives in a rooming house described his one experience with a shelter:

“Once, my key broke in the lock to my unit’s door, and the caretaker was away for the weekend, so I had to sleep at Main Street Project. I had to sleep on the floor with my jacket over me, and someone stole my jacket. I’d sleep on a park bench in the middle of winter rather than go there [again]...the place reeks of liquor. I don’t like the smell.”

Drop-in Centres

Many services can be accessed at, or through, drop-in centres. These centres are generally conveniently located for their target population and offer a place for people to rest and relax, and escape harsh weather. Some offer refreshments, meals, clothing banks, free computer access, counselling, job search support, referrals or a combination of these and other supports and services. Seventy percent of the interviewees reported using drop-in centres on a regular basis. Those centres mentioned most often in interviews were Siloam

Mission, Mainstreet Project, Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY), and West Broadway Community Ministries (Crossways in Common).

General comments about drop-in centres were favourable. A few respondents made specific reference to RaY that indicated appreciation for the range of services and supports provided under one roof: *“They have everything here. You don’t have to walk thirty blocks for other things.”* One thirty-seven year old who panhandles and lives close to RaY said he wished there were no age limits on who can access their services. (RaY serves clients under age 30).

Clothing Banks

Many organizations and churches in Winnipeg’s inner city receive used clothing donations and provide it for free to anyone who needs it. Almost sixty percent of the interviewees use these clothing banks regularly, and said they were quite satisfied with the availability and quality of the clothing offered. One youth said though, that warm socks, footwear and underwear are often not available. Another youth commented that *“Clothing banks don’t have my style – when I get \$60, I go buy [brandname] clothes.”*

Training

Fifty-three of the interviewees (71%) had not accessed any training services. Of those who had received training, most was related to general employment and job-search skills, life-skills, and secondary school upgrading. Some had received specialized skills training in the past, such as Fork Lift certificate, working with dangerous chemicals, or upholstery. A few comments were given by interviewees on barriers to accessing further training and education services. One mentioned that he had been taking his grade ten at Horizons Learning Centre, and wanted to continue but couldn’t afford the school supplies, plus because he’s homeless he doesn’t have anywhere to do homework. Another interviewee said that he wanted to get his grade twelve through Horizons, but that welfare wouldn’t cover the costs. Edge Training and Consulting provides free employment training for low-income youth facing barriers to the labour market. One respondent said, however, that his repeated phone calls to Edge were not being returned.

Employment Services

More than half of the panhandlers interviewed do not use employment services of any kind. The majority of those who do, rely on temporary employment (temp) service agencies, or day-labour agencies. Respondents reported that these agencies do not provide meaningful or reliable work. One panhandler interviewed stated that he could always get a day-labour job, but they sign you up for *“something stupid that you have trouble doing.”* Another mentioned that *“Half the time they don’t have work at temp agencies, so it’s a waste of time to sit there for hours waiting.”* A 55 year old man with back problems reported that despite going daily to the temp agencies and day-labour

places, he hasn't been able to get any work because they want younger, more able-bodied people.

Counselling

Given the hardships of the marginalized lifestyle, decreased self esteem, addictions, troubled histories, and incidence of emotional and mental health issues among panhandlers, counselling can be a crucial component in making positive life changes. Despite this, only a little over a third of the interviewees reported having used counselling services to discuss personal issues. Those who had been seeing counsellors at Mount Carmel, Resource Assistance for Youth, and Main Street Project all said their counsellors were very helpful. One interviewee considered the sweatlodges he was attending to be counselling because, as he described, they are a form of healing that involves looking inwards and at one's life path. One young woman wanted to see a counsellor, but said that counselling services are not advertised, so she didn't even know they were offered. This seems unfortunate, as there are services available: results of the interviews contain reference to 19 different counselling services. An older man with mobility issues said that counselling services are all too far away for him to access, but that if they were only 3 or 4 blocks from Portage Avenue, he would definitely like to see a counsellor.

Health Services

Not including visits to regular walk-in medical clinics or their regular doctors, thirty of the interviewees reported having accessed other health services. The most frequently mentioned were Mount Carmel Clinic (community health centre that serves those living with the effects of poverty), Nine Circles Community Health Clinic (serves the GLBTT - see glossary - community, and those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS), the nurse at RaY, and Four Rivers (inner city community health centre).

Disabilities Services

Although 54 of the panhandlers interviewed indicated they had disabilities, only 13 were accessing services related to those disabilities. Some of the respondents said they don't know of any such services. Others mentioned that they cannot access the services offered, generally because the services are too far away and they can't afford the bus fare, or they don't have the time or energy to make the trip.

Welfare/Social Assistance

In response to the question "Are there any services that you will *not* use or refuse to use?" a handful of interviewees indicated they would not use welfare. Some had been

refused assistance in the past because of lack of ID, or because they had been deemed able to work and were, therefore, considered ineligible. The insufficient assistance received from welfare was another reason mentioned for not using the service. One individual stopped going to welfare because *“it wasn’t worth the time it took to go there, fill out forms, etc. when all they provided was a bus ticket and a voucher for food.”* Another interviewee reported that he had been on assistance and had a place to live, but did not receive a letter in time about a meeting he was supposed to attend as a condition of receiving welfare. As a result, he was cut off. He waited the required six months, during which time he lost his apartment. When he re-applied, he was only allowed \$236 for rent, but now can’t find a place for that amount, not even in a residential hotel.

“Whoever runs welfare, they don’t give much money anymore. There are people without homes and the money is going to other things instead. [The government has] the money, but doesn’t give it to welfare”

Some interviewees expressed concern about the fairness of the welfare system. One mentioned that *“they always want something in return, and are actually making money off the poor people.”* Another stated that *“The ones that really do need, don’t get. But there are so many people that rip welfare off. They wouldn’t help me, so I went to work on the streets (sex trade) and that’s when I got run over.”* This interviewee is now permanently disabled, and no longer able to work in any trade.

9.0 WHAT DO PANHANDLERS NEED TO STOP PANHANDLING?

When asked “What do you need in order to be able to stop panhandling?” many interviewees’ initial answer was that they didn’t know. They were then asked “What needs to change in your life so that you don’t have to panhandle anymore?” Those who seemed to have the most difficulty in answering this had been panhandling for the longest periods of time. Perhaps they had given up thinking about and hoping for change that they found through past experience never happened. Perhaps it is because their focus is only on getting through the immediate future. This was the case with one respondent who, when asked what he needed, seemed overwhelmed when he replied *“I don’t know. It’s too far to think. I just live day to day...try to not get hurt. I don’t think about it too much. I don’t know where to start.”*

It’s interesting to note that most of the youth did not have difficulty identifying what they need. In fact one young woman had obviously put a great deal of thought into this, as she answered promptly with what she felt is needed overall:

“Better opportunities for street kids, more resources, training programs, more people to give us a chance, and more government support.”

Below are the responses of interviewees about what they need to have change in their lives. Many offered other ideas on how the many issues associated with panhandling could be addressed. These ideas have been included in Appendix D.

A Job...and a Place to Live

Eighteen interviewees said that a job was all they needed in order to be able to stop panhandling. A couple of respondents mentioned, however, that they would need a fulltime job that pays more than panhandling does. A young woman who used to panhandle said, *“Even on minimum wage, working 2 jobs, I still had to panhandle.”*

Another eight interviewees included a job along with another factor, which was usually a place to live. This again highlighted the interdependence of employment and housing.

This interdependence is evident in the story of one youth who was, until recently, homeless, unemployed and panhandling. He was able to use the computers at Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY) to search the on-line Job Bank and apply for positions. Because RaY has a phone number that he could give to prospective employers, when he applied for jobs they were able to contact him for interviews. He was offered a job, and then was fortunate enough to find a landlord who was willing to take a chance on him and rent an apartment to him without requiring a damage deposit or first month’s rent. This gave the youth a place to sleep, shower, and keep the work-clothes he got from the RaY clothing bank. Having a kitchen allowed him to use the foodbank and cook to sustain himself until his first pay-cheque.

Training, Education

Some respondents identified that first and foremost they need training or education in order to secure a fulltime job. Those with interests in particular skills identified business, accounting, and welding as training they would like to receive. Others spoke of the need for general education, and a sponsor to cover the associated costs. Education and re-training for sedentary work was identified as a primary need by a couple of interviewees facing restricted physical capacity. As mentioned in a previous section, one respondent expressed his frustration with social services workers who won’t provide him with re-training for less physical work because they say that if you’re able to take training, then you’re able to go to work.

Income Assistance

Ten of the interviewees indicated they need to get on welfare/social assistance or disability assistance in order to not have to rely on panhandling for income. A couple of young men, each of whom had been denied social assistance because they are capable of working, indicated they just needed enough support to get back on their feet and get a place to live. One said that all it would take would be two months’ rent. He said,

“The government doesn’t care that I’m helping myself. If you’re in a poverty situation, it should be mandatory that the government help you if you’re working, until you get on your feet.”

Two of the youth interviewed had been homeless and panhandling in the past, unable to get or keep work, but no longer panhandle. The turning point in each of their lives had been getting a mental health diagnosis which qualified them for disability benefits. This provided for a place to live and enough to meet their basic needs. One described it as a great relief, not only because she didn’t have to panhandle anymore, but even more of a relief to know there was a legitimate reason for the issues and difficulties she had struggled with all her life.

Another panhandler indicated that all he requires is a place to live, food and basic needs. At the time of the interview, he had an appointment with welfare the next day, and said *“if I get on, you won’t see me around here anymore. All I need is for my basic needs to be taken care of.”*

For ten of those interviewed who are already receiving income assistance, however, panhandling was deemed necessary because they found the amount from welfare or disability assistance was inadequate. These respondents stated that they wouldn’t need a lot more to be able to cover their basic needs. One said *“I just need a few more dollars on my check. Just enough to scrape by.”* Another estimated his need to be only an extra \$100 a month so he wouldn’t have to use food money to supplement his rent.

Get Past Addictions

Some interviewees said they need to get past their addictions before they would be able to make lasting changes in their lives that would allow them to not have to rely on panhandling. The decision to deal with addictions, however, has to be made by the individuals when they are ready, as indicated by one respondent: *“I just need to quit drinking, but I don’t want to quit yet.”* Another seemed ready to deal with his addictions, but feels there are not enough services out there for crack users.

Some stated that going into residential alcohol or drug detoxification program (detox) is not sufficient to guarantee recovery from addiction. An older panhandler who has tried to kick his habit in the past recognizes that he needs to be able to move to a different part of the city when he gets out of detox, or he will likely relapse. He said that, as it stands now,

“if I go into detox, when I get out, I’ll be living in the same area and around the same people [as before], and I wouldn’t have the willpower because [drugs are] all around that area [Main street].”

One of the interviewees who had recently been able to stop panhandling noted that a number of changes had to occur in his life simultaneously in order to be able to stay off

drugs. At the same time as he became drug-free he also learned to manage his money, got onto social assistance, and found a good place to live. He explained:

“I used to be a very angry young man, and used to abuse solvents. I lost all my family support. I couldn’t find work: I’ve got a criminal record. I want to stay away from criminal activity, but it’s hard. There’s lots of peer pressure. I’ve turned around now and people have started respecting me. Counselors helped me a lot, and cops were also telling me to turn my life around. I worked at it slowly, and people have supported me. It doesn’t happen over night.”

Don’t want to Stop

Ten interviewees said they didn’t want to stop panhandling. Four of those were young ‘travellers’ who indicated they “felt a need” to travel and voiced an appreciation for the corresponding freedom. One said *“I like this lifestyle and can travel around. No responsibilities. I can travel Canada, and meet thousands of people.”* Another echoed this: *“I like being free. I don’t want to get hooked up in the system. Everything I get everyday is free. No worries about paying bills on time or anything.”*

Another traveller, a young man with a back injury and a grade eight education, explained his past experience with full-time work:

“I hate that kind of life – you work to barely survive. It takes all your pay cheque to have the things you need to have a job (apartment, clothing, bills). The expenses are high and the income is low. It’s easier to eat and feed my dog if I’m panhandling and living on the streets because there are no expenses.”

The older panhandlers who indicated no interest in stopping also seemed to appreciate the way of life. One said that he had never thought about stopping, and was *“just not interested in getting off the street. It becomes a lifestyle.”* Another said *“I don’t want to stop panhandling. I like it. Sometimes the money is really good. I get to hang around with my street buddies.”* Yet another spoke to how entrenched one becomes in that lifestyle, *“Once you know how to panhandle, you’ll always do it. You’ll always try it even if you’ve got bucks in your pocket.”*

<p><i>“Panning is a job you can do 24 hours a day – no one will fire me.”</i></p>

For one young man who is no longer panhandling, what he needed in order to make the change was a place to stay at no cost and to have someone around him who doesn’t like when he panhandles. Another young respondent said that before anything else could change, she needs counseling, and suggested that better advertising of counseling services is needed because she doesn’t know where to go or who offers it. Another interviewee said that he needed *“A different way of thinking – more positive way. It’s all a state of mind.”*

One unique case is that of a young man who had been working and earning \$40,000 a year, but became injured and lost his job. Now he earns only \$7,000 a year on disability and panhandles to pay his bills and maintain his old lifestyle until he can go back to work again. When asked what services were needed, he answered, “[It’s got] *nothing to do with services, it’s all about cash flow.*”

An Aboriginal interviewee said that he needed to be able to get back to the reserve where there is family to support him. Two interviewees indicated they need to get their health back: one said he needed “*a car, a driver’s license and better health*”, and the other needed a job and his eyesight restored. Another said he needed to win the lottery in order to be able to stop panhandling. Yet another interviewee revealed his sense of hopelessness when he said that what he needs so he could stop panhandling is death.

10.0 LOCATION, TIME OF DAY, METHODS AND REACTIONS

Panhandlers were asked to comment on when they usually panhandle (time of day and day of week) and which time of day, days of the week, and time of year they felt were best for panhandling.

Half of all respondents said they panhandled between 11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. This timeframe roughly corresponds to the time of day that most respondents identified as best for panhandling (11:30a.m.-7p.m.). The reason most often given for this was that the volume of people passing by is highest then. Approximately one third of the interviewees said they panhandled mornings (9:30-11:30 a.m.) or evenings (7 to 10 p.m.). One quarter of respondents thought that between 7 and 10 p.m. was the best time – “*evening is best because people go out to drink and people are nice then*”. A quarter of the respondents said they panhandled during early mornings (before 9:30), but only 13 percent said this was the best time. One quarter of respondents said they panhandle after 10 p.m. They mentioned that people leaving bars and restaurants at this time of the day are generous and there is a good chance to get some change and “*leftover food, to.*” At the same time only four percent of all respondents identified late nights as a good time to panhandle. Many said it was not a good time because they feared for their personal safety: “*It gets too freaky on the streets ... People start arguing and fighting.*” Fourteen percent said they panhandled pretty much all of their waking hours, while a few said they panhandle only occasionally, as needed.

It should be mentioned that the presence of panhandlers on the streets depends first of all on their need for money and the time they go out might not be the time they would identify as the best time for the activity. According to the survey, one quarter of respondents panhandled at night. At the same time only 4% said it was a good time for the activity. This leads to the conclusion that an acute need for money forces panhandlers on to the streets at night despite the fact that many of them identify night hours as being dangerous.

Approximately 70 percent of those interviewed said they had been panhandling for more than 2 years. The majority of interviewees said that they panhandled once a day, from two to six times a week. Most often they reported spending between two and five hours on average each time they panhandled. Interviewees generally identified Friday as the best day of the week for panhandling, followed closely by Thursday and Saturday. Sunday was the lowest rated.

Many respondents said that the best month of the year for panhandling is December because of people's generosity during the holiday season. They also said that people are also sympathetic to the few panhandlers who brave the chill during cold winter months. The summer months were reported as a good time to panhandle because people are in a good mood and the weather is comfortable so panhandlers can stay out longer. Summer long weekends are considered to be quite good, too, because of the high volume of people at events, who are in good spirits. *"Canada Day is good for panhandling and for picking cans – I make up to \$200 on empties, and then don't have to panhandle for a couple of months."*

When the panhandlers were asked what makes a specific location good for panhandling, they said that a high volume of people passing by is the main factor in choosing a particular spot. Quite a few also mentioned that places where generous people pass by, and where the panhandler is known as a regular, are also good places to make money. One mentioned *"where there is a mix of people, so the working people see a lot of poor around and come to understand their situation with compassion"*. One respondent felt that if a spot is regularly used, people learn to avoid it. The safety of the area of the city is also considered an important factor. Thirty-percent of respondents didn't know what made one area better than others, most often because they had never tried panhandling in other areas of the city.

The interviews identified Osborne Village and the downtown portion of Portage Avenue as two areas in the city where panhandling activity is prevalent. When asked where they usually panhandle, one third of respondents indicated Portage Avenue, and a quarter said Osborne Village. The next most often mentioned general areas were Broadway (11% of respondents), Downtown (8%), The Forks (5.4%), St. Boniface (4%), Graham Avenue (4%), and Ellice Ave (2.7%). Among more specific panhandling locations respondents identified: the corners of Donald Street & River Avenue, Broadway Avenue & Main Street, Stradbrook Ave & Osborne street, and Donald Street & Portage Avenue, City Place, Portage Place, MTS Center, Place Louis Riel, The Bell Tower, APTN Building, Harry's Food, Ramada Hotel on Smith, and the St. Regis hotel. The Bell Tower is located on the corner of Stradbrook Avenue at Osborne Street and all the other specific locations mentioned are on or near Portage Avenue.

When asked "Where else have you panhandled?" the respondents identified essentially the same areas mentioned above. Thirteen percent of the respondents said they panhandle outside malls, with Polo Park mall specifically mentioned by 7.3%.

When asked “Where would you *not* panhandle and why?” many respondents said they do not panhandle people who are enjoying themselves at restaurants, patios, near bars, etc. Many avoid entire areas of the city that are considered to be too dangerous (eg. North End, North Main). Other areas where they indicated they would not panhandle included:

- Areas of high poverty: people there simply do not have money to give.
- Areas where there are many police officers.
- Areas where people know the panhandler and he/she is embarrassed to be seen panhandling.
- Areas of gang activity: *“It’s getting hard to pan because of all the gang members “You’re on our turf, you owe us taxes for standing on this corner.”*
- Rich areas: *“Rich areas aren’t good for panning in. People are snobby. They didn’t make their money by giving it away.”*

Panhandling as a Skill

Panhandling is a skill that is learned and perfected for most panhandlers. All 75 interviewees had a preferred method they had developed based on experience. Some youth had actually ‘apprenticed’ under the guidance of seasoned panhandlers, learning not only what methods work well, but also a “Code of Conduct” to abide by.

Verbal vs. Silent, and Stationary/Still vs. On the Move

A common description by interviewees of their panhandling method (40%) was as follows: stand or sit in one place, indicate a request either with a sign or by holding out a hat, cup, or hand, and speak only to thank the person after they have given. Some panhandlers have found this method to be the most lucrative:

“People say ‘I always give to you because you don’t ask’.”

“The hat works really well. Put a couple pennies in the hat, then people start adding. What doesn’t work? Chatting. People say ‘You don’t need money, you can walk, you can work. You’re a nice guy’.”

Whether or not it is the most lucrative method, those who sit or stand without a verbal request believe this to be the most respectful way to panhandle:

“I use a sign “Homeless and hungry” because it saves you the trouble of asking or bothering people.”

“Don’t ask. If a guy’s got his hat out, you know he’s panhandling.”

“I don’t ask so people don’t feel obligated.”

The majority of the panhandlers interviewed indicated they use a verbal request. Some believe it to be a more effective technique for earning money than staying silent: *“Those who don’t say anything probably don’t get much money.”* Among the panhandlers who usually won’t ask, some indicated they will sometimes ask because they find they get more money that way, but will ask only when in desperate need. One youth also said he asks only when people are alone, so as to not interrupt any conversations between people *“because that’s rude.”*

A few interviewees use a verbal request, but only while stationary because they believe people feel intimidated if approached, and so are less likely to give. Approximately one fifth of the interviewees, however, reported that being “on the move” in their method of panhandling is most effective. This method involves constantly walking and asking people as they pass by. As one said *“Just move around, the change ain’t gonna come to you.”* Within this subset, four of the respondents said they walk directly up to people to ask.

Together vs. Alone

Only slightly more respondents indicated that they panhandle alone (55%) than those who said they panhandle with others (45%). Those who don’t panhandle with others mentioned a number of reasons for this choice. A few discussed the interpersonal problems that can occur when trying to decide how to fairly divide the panhandling proceeds, saying they prefer to avoid such hassles by panhandling alone. Some mentioned they don’t trust other panhandlers or haven’t found anyone compatible to panhandle with. Others said they simply prefer being alone. One respondent who panhandles alone said he does so because his pride is hurt if he’s *“verbally assaulted by the public in front of my friends.”*

The reason most frequently mentioned by interviewees for panhandling alone was that they don’t earn as much when they work with others. One interviewee emphasized this by quoting Merle Haggard: *“He who travels fastest goes alone.”* Some speculated about the reasons for these lower earnings. Most felt that people feel intimidated and scared if there’s a group, and then they won’t give: *“People think you’re hoodlums.”* A few interviewees said they feel people don’t give to groups because they think they’re *“just out to party,”* that they are just hanging out, having a good time with friends and panhandling *“for kicks,”* but don’t really need the money.

A few of those who choose to panhandle with others said they do so to have the company, even though they find that it’s less lucrative. Some limit the number of their group to two or three for reasons including: *“more than 3 and you won’t get any money”* and *“technically it’s illegal to be in a group.”*

The most frequently mentioned reason for panhandling with others is for protection. Most of those interviewees who mentioned that being in a group lessens the likelihood of being attacked or robbed panhandle in groups of three or more. *“There’s strength in numbers in*

case anything happens.” A couple of respondents said they panhandle as a group of up to 16 people together, but that they only ask other large groups, such as at line-ups, and then only one person from their group will approach to ask.

Appearance

When asked to talk about their method of panhandling, many of the interviewees spoke about how their appearance impacts the amount of money they make. There were two distinctly different approaches to this issue. One approach is to *“look as bad as possible”* and dress in old, dirty clothes. The logic behind this is to look ‘needy’. If you look clean and well-presented *“people think you’re trying to hustle, so they won’t give.”* Even though he believes that it works against him, one youth said he still tries to be clean and clean-shaven when he panhandles. He stays presentable so people aren’t intimidated and for his own self-respect. Another interviewee seemed to echo this when he said *“I don’t want to look grubby just to get more money.”*

The other line of logic regarding appearance, the opposite of the first, is that if you are clean, clean-shaven and dressed nicely, then people are more willing to help because they feel there is hope for you and their donation will have an impact. One young woman said she always dressed like she was trying to get a job in the hopes that someone would offer her one. And one youth even conducted an experiment on the role of appearance in panhandling: *“One time I panhandled in a silk shirt and got tons of money. The next day, I was in regular work clothes and didn’t get anything.”*

Interactions

Humour was often mentioned as a great way to get people’s attention and put them at ease. *“Say something that puts a smile on their face. If you get a smile, even if they don’t give, maybe they’ll come back.”* Some of the young panhandlers gave examples of humorous signs they have used and found to be effective:

“Spare change for a penis extension. I’m a little short.”

“SEX!now that I have your attention, can you spare some change.”

An example of a humorous line used by a panhandler on one of the researchers is *“Spare change for alcoholic research?”*

Some of the panhandlers interviewed spoke of the level of verbal ability it takes to be successful in getting donations:

“You need a gimmick. Panhandling is a sales job. The better the talker you are, the more money you’ll make.”

“It doesn’t work to not be getting your lines right.”

“You gotta know how to schmooze people.”

Another skill that some of the respondents mentioned as useful for panhandling is the ability to “read people” and adjust the method accordingly:

“I can tell by their face, ‘oh, this one needs a story.’ I’m cold, passive and nice to older people. Blunt with young people.”

One youth traveller used a unique method of panhandling (it could be argued that he was not panhandling but was offering a service) when he would stand outside of bars and say “Kick a punk for a dollar - \$20 for a kick to the crotch.” He reported great success with this method, but added that one needs to be willing to have pain inflicted in exchange for money.

Most comments about “what works” when panhandling relate to positive interactions with the public. Many mentioned that it’s important to be friendly, personable and in good spirits to put people at ease and earn more money. A young woman said she tries to start conversations with people, to keep them comfortable after she asks, so they don’t get scared and put their guard up while looking for money to give. Another said “Be polite. The more polite you are, the more money you’ll make.”

“You’ve got to be nice to people. Saying a joke helps. Or just being honest. As long as you can get something out of them, even a smile, it doesn’t matter. You gotta make them remember you and like you.”

Being nice, polite and personable was not only viewed as a lucrative method, but also as being the ‘right’ way to panhandle:

“Be polite. Regardless, you are asking people for help, act in such a manner.”

“You’ve got to earn it by the way you’re talking by being nice, kind, respectful, show them that you’re worth sparing the change for.”

Code of Conduct

When speaking about “the right way to panhandle,” ten of the 75 interviewees (mostly youth) mentioned what they call a “Code of Conduct”. The Code, as it relates to interactions with other panhandlers is mentioned above on page 22-23. It also refers to acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards those being panhandled. This Code of Conduct advocates being polite and respectful, and asking only once. Being respectful includes refraining from asking certain segments of the population: the elderly, people with children, anyone who has a disability, and anyone who looks like they need help themselves or may be in the same situation as panhandlers.

Although they may not even have heard of the Code of Conduct, ethics seem to underpin other panhandlers' methods. One panhandler has a different, but equally ethics-based approach, and actually targets the elderly and the young because to him "*the middle-aged are working and worried about their own lives*" and shouldn't be bothered. A couple of male panhandlers mentioned they only ask men, because women may feel uncomfortable being approached. Another said, "*It makes me feel bad taking from elderly. There's been a few times I've turned it down from elderly.*"

Some of the panhandlers stressed that the right way of panhandling includes being honest. "*I don't believe you should lie. It's wrong. In a way lying is stealing.*"

"There's a [panhandler] out there who [uses] crutches...he doesn't need them. Another guy smokes crack and flies a sign that says 'Have kids, need food' (but he doesn't have kids). That ruins it for others that [really do] need food."

What doesn't work when panhandling?

Some respondents said that smelling like alcohol or being drunk doesn't earn them much money, and when asked to describe the 'wrong' way to panhandle, being drunk was also mentioned frequently. One interviewee, however, reported that he earned more money when he said he was panhandling to buy booze (even though he wasn't). Another reported that he earned more if he said he needed money so he could leave town.

Other methods interviewees reported that don't work well for panhandling included being in a large group, following people, or allowing too much money to accumulate in the collection hat or cup because then "*people think you are rich*" and won't give anything. A few mentioned it was best to not ask for too much money, or to not ask for money at all, but rather ask people if they can spare 'anything' because then people might give food, cigarettes, or other things besides money.

Aggressiveness

When describing the 'wrong' way to panhandle, interviewees often began with "*Don't be aggressive*" and then added comments that fell under one or some of the following points:

- ***Don't pressure***: "*respect their answer, it's their choice, not yours.*"
"*You shouldn't heckle people – people shouldn't be forced into feeling compassionate.*"
- ***Don't ask again once they have declined***: "*The people you're asking work for their money. They don't have to give. Asking twice is asking for trouble.*"
- ***Don't pursue***: "*Don't chase them down and keep harassing them.*"
- ***Don't work in a group***: "*You should be alone, not with others. Think 'how would I feel?' Put yourself in their shoes.*"
- ***Don't be rude or verbally abusive***: don't be loud, yell at people or use vulgar language. Don't call them 'cheap'. "*Don't say things like 'Hey, give me some money' or 'I*

saw you come out of the bank, I know you've got money.'"
 - **Don't "get in their faces"**: don't hassle or bother people.

Although many of the interviewees' comments about the 'wrong' way to panhandle included aspects of behaviour prohibited by the amendment to the obstructive solicitation by-law, no single respondent covered all angles. Only one respondent made specific mention of the by-law when speaking of 'right or wrong' ways to panhandle, saying that the right way is to follow the by-law.

When asked the question "What are you not supposed to do when panhandling?" three quarters of the respondents mentioned that one shouldn't use threats or insults. Twenty-nine of the respondents (about 40%) said that you're not supposed to ask again or follow the person after being declined. A few said that you should be polite and non-aggressive, others that you are not supposed to approach as part of a group of three or more, and others said to not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Three said that you are not even supposed to ask people at all. Four mentioned that you are not supposed to be sitting down while panhandling. A significant proportion of respondents (13.5%) said they didn't know what they are not supposed to do. This is an indication that these panhandlers don't know any of the details of the by-law or its amendment.

About a quarter of the interviewees said they don't feel there is a right or wrong way of panhandling. Generally the reasoning given was simply that each person has to find what works best for him/herself within limits. However, the following comments seem to support an "anything goes" approach:

"Whatever works for the person. There are no morals to it."

"Anything that works, works. There's nothing that doesn't work."

"I have no moral compunction about being aggressive. You've gotta do what you've gotta do to survive."

Towards the end of each interview, the question was asked "What do you think about 'aggressive' panhandling/panhandlers?" Overwhelmingly interviewees said they are against aggressive panhandling. The closest the comments came to expressing support came from a couple of people who said it was an individual's choice, but then went on to say that they don't feel aggressive panhandling is right.

The main reasons the interviewees gave for being against aggressive panhandling were:

1) It demonstrates a lack of respect, it's impolite, and rude:

"It's not right. You shouldn't be aggressive when asking for something that isn't even yours."

"If you're going to panhandle, you'd better respect the people who will give to

you. It's disrespectful to be aggressive. If you don't treat people well, they'll remember and won't give next time."

"It's not a way to panhandle. You're taking people's time and you should be appreciative. Aggressive panhandlers are assholes."

"It's wrong. They are intimidating. People give to them just to make them go away."

"If people aren't going to give they shouldn't be forced. Everyone should have a choice and people shouldn't be scared into giving."

2) It reflects badly on the other panhandlers, gives them a bad reputation, and people are then less likely to give to any panhandlers.

3) It's counterproductive to making money:

"Being aggressive shouldn't be needed. You're not going to get anywhere."

"You'll get more money if you're nice, not aggressive. Be nice and next time they might give."

"Anyone who's aggressive are idiots because you won't get anything for fighting people."

"The aggressive ones don't make as much as they could. You're making a nuisance of yourself."

Many of the interviewees said that aggressive panhandling should be stopped, either by ticketing, fines, or arresting the aggressive ones:

"They should be stopped. The police, though, can't seem to tell the difference between an aggressive and non-aggressive panhandler. Aggressive panhandling is almost like trying to rob someone."

"Aggressive panhandlers (those who ask more than once) should be ticketed and fined. They should accept the fact that people don't want to give money."

"I'd like to see them clamp down on it because it does make it bad for everyone else. To me that's a form of assault."

"Aggressive ones should be taken off the street."

Sometimes, the panhandlers who dislike aggressive panhandling take matters into their own hands:

“I give my friends lectures or a slap if they are aggressive”

“I won’t let people panhandling with me be aggressive.”

“If aggressive panhandlers are anywhere near, I’d kick them away. If you’re asking people for something, why would you try to hassle them?”

No definition of “aggressive panhandling” was provided for the interviewees, nor were they directly asked in the course of the interview to give their own definition of the term. Some insights into this, however, were provided through comments to other questions. It is clear that among the respondents, “aggressive panhandling” holds many different meanings, not all of which coincide. Here is a sampling of what interviewees said aggressiveness is:

- making any verbal request: *“I don’t ask – that’s a sign of aggressiveness.”*
- being obstructive: Note: one interviewee said, *“I don’t obstruct people, but will get a little in the way”* to get their attention.
- *“Following people”*
- *“Following is not aggressive – it’s being persistent.”*
- *“Asking more than once”*
- *“Surrounding the person”*
- *“Yelling at people”*
- *“fighting people”*
- *“being mean”*
- being demanding: *“They want it right now!”*
- being *“impolite, rude”*: *“[they]don’t say please or thank you. No respect for others or themselves.”*
- *“To harass in any way”, “verbally harass you to give them change.”*
- *“violent”, “ready to strangle you”*
- *“making a nuisance of yourself”*
- *“its almost like trying to rob someone”*
- *“To me that’s a form of assault.”*

The Public’s Reaction to Panhandlers

Who Gives?

When asked what percentage of the people passing by give something, of those who ventured a guess, almost half felt that less than 20% give, with most of those estimates around 10-20%. Almost a third of the respondents, however, felt that 50% or more of those who pass by donate. Based on the observational component of this research, 50% or more is an overestimation. Community partners in this study have noted that many panhandlers will overstate the frequency of donations. Among various speculations about this is the possibility they exaggerate because they need to believe that their efforts are fruitful, and that their time is not wasted, in order to remain hopeful and justify their activity.

According to the respondents, women tend to give most often, and tend to be the most generous when they give. Young people and the elderly were generally reported as being more generous than the middle-aged, but only marginally. One young interviewee's comments (although opposite to most regarding the elderly) identified specific age-related giving patterns from his experience: *"Young people give beer, smokes, drugs. Middle aged give change and leftovers. The elderly don't even acknowledge your existence."*

An observation that emerged in numerous interviews is that those who give most often and most generously are blue-collar workers or people who appear to have lower incomes. The people who do not give to panhandlers are those who are obviously "well-off".

"Those who don't have much, they'll give. The people in suits are the ones who usually totally ignore you."

"You can almost guarantee that the people in the 'Beamer' with the gold jewellery won't give. A lot of times the ones that don't look like they can afford it are the ones that give."

"A certain kind of people give – not the rich. The one's who have a hard time give because they know what it's like to have a hard life."

One young man had analyzed this irony:

"The big rich people – they're the ones that hate us so much and they're the ones that go to the cops. The only reason we're here is because we're so capitalistic in our system and this system works for the rich."

Another young man shared his theory as follows:

"Waste is generated by wealth. Where there is waste, there are those who can and will live off it. Don't be mad at me for this, because I am proof there is wealth in society."

Positive Responses

About half of the interviewees indicated that when they panhandle, most people respond in a positive manner (*"nice," "polite," "receptive," "friendly"*). Those who reported a generally positive interaction with the public also added, however, that there are always some people who are mean, and those who don't respond at all. In fact, ten interviewees said the primary response by the vast majority of people was to ignore them altogether: *"They ignore me like I'm less than everybody else. The majority have no respect."*

Almost all respondents said there are always some people who ignore them completely. Most interviewees indicated they don't do anything to get attention when ignored. But a

quarter of the respondents said that if ignored, they will start talking to the passerby to get his or her attention, or repeat the request, sometimes raising the volume to ensure they've been heard. One respondent said he will follow people who ignore him and repeat his request until he gets a response. Once the person being panhandled indicates they don't want to give, the vast majority of the respondents (93%) said they do not repeat their request.

This and That...

About a quarter of the panhandlers interviewed felt that those who responded positively to their request and those who responded negatively were equally balanced in number.

"Some say "F-off". Others ask why I need the money. When I tell them, most will give, or take me out for a meal."

Negative Responses

Only a handful of interviewees said they received negative responses the majority of the time. Although the number was low, the type of negativity they encounter seems extreme, as illustrated here:

"Most people react like they just stepped in dog shit and pretend not to see or hear you. Their noses go up."

"People say "Get a job" or "Get off the street, bum" they curse at you, punch you or ignore you."

"Mostly [they treat you] like a leper. People take two steps to the side, walk around. Do everything possible to avoid you...even go around buildings."

When asked if they ever feel that people passing by are scared of them, a third of the respondents answered "no", and said it was probably because they looked non-threatening, or because they made a point of not asking people who might feel scared of them (such as women or the elderly). Certainly not everyone feels scared of all panhandlers, as one interviewee even reported that a couple of times young women have asked him to walk them home to their building at night *"...as their body guard."*

Sixty-five percent of the respondents, however, said that, yes, they felt that people passing by were sometimes scared of them. Three panhandlers had actually been told so. Respondents said they could tell people were scared when they would walk on the far side of the sidewalk or even cross the street to avoid them. People also exhibited fear by increasing their walking speed, avoiding all eye contact, clutching their purses or wallets closer, and by locking their doors or rolling up the windows when in vehicles.

Some of the panhandlers perceive themselves as completely non-threatening in appearance or approach, but still people would appear to be afraid of them. A few of the

youth felt people's fears were due to the prevalence of negative stereotypes of panhandlers:

"A lot of people think panhandlers are all drunks and would rob you if they had the chance. And I used to think that, too, but the majority of them wouldn't."

"Everyone assumes that we're drug users or addicts and that we're not trying to better ourselves."

"My sign says 'Spare change for baby food' and lots of people say 'Ya, right, we know it's for crack' It's NOT!"

Targets of Violence

Respondents mentioned numerous incidents of violence directed at them when panhandling, the extent of which can be extreme at times. As one interviewee stressed, *"Panhandling is a DANGEROUS business."*

In addition to having various items such as fruit, eggs or cups thrown at them from passing cars, panhandlers also reported being robbed and beaten up. One older respondent reported that he now wears a dental plate after having had his teeth kicked out while panhandling. Another received permanent brain damage as a result of being knocked out when he was panhandling late at night. A female panhandler had a beer bottle smashed across her face, which has left her with impaired vision. Another interviewee can no longer see out of one eye at all after he was beaten up while panhandling to make ends meet between seasonal jobs. Now he's unable to work at all.

During the course of the interviews for this report, a panhandler was beaten up by two unknown assailants. He had two black eyes from the encounter but no long-lasting injuries. On the same weekend, just a little further down the street, another panhandler was kicked from behind and fell face-first on a cement wall (an injury which needed stitches). Fortunately, some Squeegee kids nearby chased the assailant away.

Several panhandlers reported groups of people who roam the streets downtown looking for street people to beat up. One said that a panhandler who was unable to avoid one of these groups was violated with a steel pipe and injured so badly he had to have a colostomy, and now permanently wears a bag. Because of reports such as this, one group of about sixteen panhandlers who sleep outside keeps someone on 'lookout' throughout the night.

Interviewees also gave reports of increased pressure on panhandlers by gangs to pay them for the use of corners deemed to be in gang territory. *"You've gotta watch out for gangs – gotta know their colours and find a safe place where no one will jump you."*

One interviewee spoke of how this treatment of panhandlers is never brought forward to the public:

“I’m angry about seeing aggressive panhandlers on T.V. but nothing is shown on T.V. about the aggression towards panhandlers. They get spit on, kicked. I had my hat with money stolen. There are some cruel people out there.”

11.0 PANHANDLERS KNOWLEDGE OF THE BY-LAW

When asked whether they knew about the panhandling by-law (Obstructive Solicitation By-law 7700/2000, amendment 128/2005) passed in Winnipeg in the summer of 2005, half of the interviewees answered ‘no’. Among the other half who were aware of it, the majority did not know any of the details: *“I don’t know a single person who knows the details of the by-law.”*

“The law keeps changing and it keeps getting more convoluted. I still have no idea on the specifics about it.”

Those who felt they had knowledge of the by-law were often misinformed about its content. For example, three of the interviewees, when asked to explain the by-law said that they are no longer allowed to sit when panhandling. There is actually no prohibition on sitting while panhandling anywhere in the document.

Many of the interviewees are under the impression that the by-law has made any and all panhandling activity illegal, and that they can be arrested or fined if caught. One interviewee stated *“I don’t know the details, but apparently panhandling is illegal, the police told me that.”*

The interviewees were asked whether the by-law that was put into effect the previous summer has affected when, how and where they panhandle. The response rate to these questions was low, since half of the respondents weren’t even aware that changes had occurred.

Two respondents said they changed the time that they panhandle. One now panhandles in the evening after the businesses are closed *“because of all the new restrictions.”* The other no longer panhandles after sunset, as he is under the impression that it is illegal to do so. There is no such restriction in the by-law.

Eleven respondents indicated they had changed the way they panhandle as a result of the recent by-law amendment. One said that according to the by-law, panhandling is now allowed nowhere, and so now he walks around instead of staying in one place. That way, he says, he is *“nowhere”*. The rest of the responses, however, indicated the only change they have made is to be more careful and cautious in watching for the police and street patrols so that they won’t get caught. Most of these panhandlers are under the impression that panhandling is illegal.

Ten of the interviewees said they do not know where they are allowed or not allowed to panhandle. Thirty six percent said they are not allowed to panhandle indoors or on private property. Not a single interviewee identified all of the prohibited places for panhandling spelled out in the by-law. About half (33 respondents) said they were not supposed to panhandle near a bank entrance or ATM. Twenty-one said they are not allowed to panhandle at a transit stop or taxi stand. Very few of the respondents, however, included the following locations (prohibited in the by-law) in their answers:

- on public transit	6 respondents
- in a pedestrian walkway	5
- public pay phone	1
- in a parking lot/getting in/out of vehicle	1
- at a restaurant/bar patio	6
- on an elevator	0

Some panhandlers report being given inaccurate information about where they are not allowed to panhandle under the by-law. A couple of respondents mentioned that since the by-law was passed, they are no longer allowed to panhandle outside Portage Place Mall. Other respondents said they were told the by-law doesn't allow them to panhandle anywhere anymore. Another interviewee said "*You have to be ten yards from bus shelters, banks or businesses...the police and BIZ say so.*" Although not prohibited in the by-law, half of the respondents indicated they are not allowed to panhandle near business entrances including liquor stores, hotels, movie theatres and mall entrances. Other locations not covered in the by-law where respondents said they are not allowed to panhandle included: in front of police stations(5); religious buildings(2); schools/universities(3); at the Forks(1); on meridians/ at traffic lights(3); and in fire exits/stairwells(2).

When asked whether the new by-law had affected where they are allowed to panhandle, eleven respondents indicated it had. One panhandler explained that with the new by-law, the owner of the store where he used to panhandle had to tell him he wasn't allowed to panhandle by the back door anymore because there is an ATM in that entrance. Now he's had to move to the front entrance and down the street a bit, which is not as protected from the weather, and has less foot traffic.

Changed Relationship with Public

For some panhandlers, the changes to the by-law have significantly decreased the amount of money they earn. "*There's less money given now because people think it's illegal to give money.*" Below are interviewees' specific examples of decreased earnings:

"Last year, I was making \$30-40 in 2 hours. This year, even on the coldest days sometimes I make nothing. This is supposed to be Friendly Manitoba but it's harsh!"

“I make less now. I used to be able to make \$25 in the same time it takes to make \$15-\$18 now.”

“Last summer I’d make about \$50, and now with the same effort I struggle to make \$15.”

Some panhandlers report that the changes to the by-law have also affected how they are treated by the public. Some mentioned they are getting more dirty looks than before, while others find that fewer people are friendly now, whereas before they would at least say ‘hi’. Others report that unlike before, the public “pick on” them at night now.

“I feel that people look at me differently, like I’m a bum and lazy.”

“People are getting more fears of panhandlers. The ‘Feed My Addiction’ campaign, the new by-law...Everyone thinks that every panhandler is a dirty rotten scumbag now.”

Two interviewees mentioned that the public has become more educated about where food and shelter are available, and now they tell panhandlers where they can go. One interviewee mentioned that some people give Blue Keys, which often makes the panhandlers angry because they find the Keys are useless. The youth, in particular, reported getting annoyed by this because the Keys direct them to services that 1) are too far from “their turf”; 2) are in an area of the city where youth don’t feel safe; 3) serve clientele who have been known to victimize them; and, 4) do not provide services to meet the needs specific to the youth.

Relationships - Then and Now

Approximately a quarter of the panhandlers interviewed indicated that since the by-law was changed, they were being treated differently by the business owners, the police, or the BIZ ambassadors. These ambassadors are staff and/or volunteers of the Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) associations who walk the area and create an increased physical presence throughout the zone and at special events. About half of the panhandlers interviewed said they don’t feel they are treated any differently now. In the course of the research, it was learned that the regular panhandlers in Osborne Village have developed good relationships with the local beat cop, the BIZ ambassadors, and the business owners. It was observed that they greet each other by name and seem to be quite friendly with each other.

Business Owners

In general, relationships between panhandlers and business owners vary greatly. Some of these relationships have never been positive, and according to interviewees, have become worse since the by-law was passed:

“Now they’ll call the police, or they don’t like you bothering their customers, they’ll ask you to leave.”

“They used to be nicer, now they don’t treat me as well. They’re even hassling me about dumpster diving.”

Other panhandlers reported having developed congenial and even mutually beneficial relationships with businesses over the years. One panhandler said that the staff at the business he stands in front of are appreciative of his presence because they have found it reduces the amount of shoplifting that happens in the store. One grocery storeowner has worked out an agreement with panhandlers who stand in front of his store: each is given about half an hour to panhandle and then is asked to move along to give the next panhandler an opportunity to make some money.

Another business owner mentioned in casual conversation with the researcher that the businesses in Osborne Village get along fine with the regular panhandlers *“because they’re a nice bunch.”* He added that their relationships are beneficial. If any panhandler comes into the area and is aggressive, the regular panhandlers won’t tolerate it because aggressive panhandling would damage their own relationships and reputations. These positive relationships have reportedly remained unchanged since the by-law was passed.

BIZ Ambassadors

Relationships between panhandlers and the BIZ ambassadors (known downtown as the “Red Coats”) have been varied as well. The nature of the relationship seems to depend upon the individuals involved. As one respondent described the ambassadors, *“Some are nice and some use bad language and are mean.”*

Some interviewees reported that they have always had good rapport with the BIZ ambassadors and have never been bothered by them. An older respondent said,

“They’re nice to me because they know I don’t drink. [They say] ‘We know you don’t go up and demand money. You’re quiet. You just sit there’.”

Another panhandler said *“They’re just doing their job and keeping the peace.”* A youth who used to panhandle said that they gave him useful advice to *“be nice and not be a jerk back to those who aren’t nice.”* Another interviewee said that on a particularly cold winter day, the BIZ ambassadors even gave him hot chocolate while on their rounds.

In other cases, relationships between panhandlers and the BIZ ambassadors have always been strained. Many respondents reported that the ambassadors tell them to *“move along”*, or *“We don’t want to see your face down here.”*

“They try to tell you that you can’t do stuff. I was polite with them for so long. They should be informed about the laws. Now I just tell them to piss off. They’re

misinformed. One...grabbed my arm and I told him he was out of line. I think they do know, but they get away with it because others don't know the law."

"When I see them coming, I'm gone. I try and avoid those people. What I'm doing is none of their business. I'm going about getting money the only way I know how without doing something criminal."

Some interviewees said that since the amendment to the Obstructive Solicitation By-law was passed last summer, they have been treated differently by the BIZ ambassadors. A couple mentioned they feel they are treated even better now, and that the ambassadors are nicer and more generous than before. Most respondents who felt there had been a change, however, said the BIZ ambassadors had become more "*harassing now*" and tell them to move along regardless of where they are panhandling, or actually tell them to quit panhandling altogether.

"They're more aggressive now. They give warnings. And not just at [sensitive services]...everywhere!"

"They're trying harder to get you off the street, trying to stop all panhandlers."

One interviewee said that in the past some of the BIZ ambassadors would let him go inside to warm up in the winter, but not anymore, "*Now they don't want me around.*"

Police

As with the business owners and the BIZ ambassadors, panhandlers reported a range of relationships with police as well. Some interviewees said they have never been bothered by the police, and some even reported that they have always had excellent relationships with the police. One young woman said that the police even thanked her once for not being rude. The young travellers, who spend most of their time in Osborne Village, reported that the police in Winnipeg are always really good with them.

Other panhandlers reported having bad experiences and confrontations with the police in the past. They clarified that it was not every police officer, but only particular ones that had caused them problems. One interviewee said that most police follow the law, but some police threaten him and call him a "*useless piece of shit.*" Or they say "*I'm having a steak for dinner tonight, what are you having?*" or "*I don't like your kind.*" One respondent said that the police are really rough, they "*almost shot me once,*" and have taken him to Pembina Highway and made him walk back to downtown. Another said:

"The police have threatened to throw me in jail for flying a sign on the median, and for sleeping on private property. They actually said 'Rich people don't want to see poor people sleeping in the streets.'"

An Aboriginal respondent said there is unequal treatment by the police: *“The cops don’t bug the white guys. They leave them alone all day. They see us [Aboriginals] once, and they tell us to keep moving.”*

Fifteen of the interviewees indicated they have found that since the by-law was passed, the police are *“hassling”* more panhandlers now, threatening them with arrest, handing out more tickets, and are more *“power-trippy”*. One interviewee said that the police have become really aggressive and will put him in handcuffs and rough him up a bit now. Another said that now *“they tell you to beat it, they swear and are rude”* and they’ve also taken away his squeegee a few times. One interviewee, however, felt he was left alone by the police more recently. He said they don’t say anything to him because *“They’re worried that you won’t move if they tell you to, and then they’d have to give you a ticket and do paperwork.”*

12.0 BY-LAW ENFORCEMENT FROM THE PANHANDLERS’ PERSPECTIVE

Only twenty one, or less than a third of the panhandlers interviewed, reported having ever been ticketed for panhandling. More than half of the twenty-one were ticketed somewhere on Portage Avenue downtown, and three others had been ticketed at the corner of Broadway and Osborne Street. Only seven of those ticketed had the money to pay the fine, and of those, only two actually paid it, but did so in hours of community service. Although it wasn’t asked in the interview questions, some of the interviewees who didn’t pay said they had thrown away their tickets, but a few also mentioned they had been to their court appearance only to have the charges were dismissed.

Of the fifty-three who had never been ticketed, thirty four said that if they ever were fined, they would not be able to pay it. Some respondents added that the only way they could pay a fine would be by panhandling to earn the money. One youth who said he wouldn’t pay if he was ever fined for panhandling explained his reasons this way:

“What are they going to do, throw me in jail? Great! I’d get fed, and have a roof over my head. It’s stupid to fine someone who has no money, throw them in jail, and have the taxpayer pay. What would they rather have me doing: asking for change or jacking a 7-11?”

Five of the interviewees said they had been arrested for panhandling at some point. Three of the five reported that they had spent a short time in jail. Only one reported that the experience had affected how or where he panhandled, and in that case he simply avoided panhandling in his regular spot for a few days. The others continued panhandling as before.

The majority of the interviewees found the very concept of fining or arresting someone for panhandling to be absurd:

“Police are giving tickets to those who don’t have any money – the panhandlers, but they don’t give tickets to all the drug dealers. You give a poor guy a \$140 ticket... how’s he gonna pay it? That’s why he’s there!”

“It seems weird that if you ask for stuff, you get charged. Do they charge the missions for asking for free clothes and food? No.”

“It’s the stupidest concept in the world – to fine someone who has to be out begging.”

Comments About the By-law

Although they weren’t directly asked what they thought about the by-law, during the course of the interview many of the respondents shared their comments about the effect it has had, or could have, on them.

“The by-law is prejudiced against poor people. It’s a threat to the ones that need [the money]. They wonder why people steal? It’s because they can’t panhandle.”

This was alluded to by another respondent whose comment about the by-law was, *“It’s putting me in a situation where I would have to find another way to get money.”*

One of the panhandlers who is well-on-the-way to being fully recovered from a few years of multiple setbacks had this comment about the recent crackdown on panhandling:

“If they made it illegal, I’d be getting arrested. I’m not going to sit at home and count pennies and eat at soup kitchens. That would put me right back into depression again.”

A couple of interviewees mentioned that passersby have stopped to say that they don’t support the by-law.

A few respondents’ comments were supportive of the by-law. A young panhandler said that she was fine with the by-law because it paralleled the Code of Conduct that many of them follow already. A youth who no longer panhandles had these words of support *“I have no problem with the by-law because it actually got me off my butt. Without the by-law I wouldn’t have got my own place, or been trying to help out my girlfriend.”* Another interviewee had this to say about the by-law and its enforcers: *“Don’t blame them for trying to help people to not destroy their lives.”*

13.0 ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS AMONGST PANHANDLERS

Interviewees seemed to feel comfortable during the interview discussing substance use problem or addictions they have, or had in the past. All seventy-five interviewees chose to answer the questions about addictions and substance abuse, and the majority volunteered additional related information. When the topic of addictions was raised in the course of the interview, one youth had this poignant comment to share:

“Addictions? Well, yes, I seem to have a strange compulsion to eat everyday and sleep, to...and apparently sleeping, that’s illegal in a public place – even though it’s under a bridge where no one can see you.”

Eight of the interviewees said they do not have an addiction or substance use problem of any kind. Of the sixty-six respondents who said they do, thirty said that smoking is their only vice. Although most recognized that it can be an expensive addiction, many “bum” cigarettes or “pick butts” and so don’t have any costs other than rolling papers. Most believed smoking should not be considered significant as an addiction because for them it doesn’t have the high monetary costs, nor does it alter behaviour the way that abuse of alcohol and illegal drugs or substances can.

Thirty-seven, or almost half of the respondents, reported alcohol, illegal drug, prescription, gambling, or substance use problems or addictions: among these, twelve reported multiple addictions (not including tobacco use). Some of the respondents said they had become addicted as children or young teens. Twenty-two respondents, almost one third of all interviewees, reported an addiction to alcohol. Illegal drug addictions were self-reported by fifteen interviewees: marijuana or hash (9); crack (3); Cocaine (2); Methamphetamine (1). One interviewee reported having developed an addiction to methadone treatment. Four respondents reported addictions to prescription medication: three rely on Tylenol 3 or Codeine, one uses Valium. Six respondents reported problems with various other substances including inhalants: solvents, gas, glue; or drinking hairspray, mouthwash, or aftershave. Gambling was reported as an addiction by two respondents.

The cause and effect relationship between panhandling and addictions was not directly explored through the interviews, but some of the respondents offered insights on this from their own experiences. Some clearly identified addictions as a factor that contributed to their dependence on panhandling. For others, addictions have arisen as a result of the panhandling lifestyle. Some have become addicted to alcohol or drugs used to lose inhibitions and gain the courage to beg. Others reported using drugs, alcohol or other substances to help them sleep outside in the cold. Others said they rely on drugs for the opposite reason - to help keep them awake at night so they don’t get “rolled” or attacked. For many others, the alcohol, drugs or other substances help them feel a sense of well-being, take away physical or emotional pain, and escape the reality of their lives, if only for a short while.

Kicking the Habit

The issue of overcoming addictions and substance use problems is not straightforward, and seems to be cyclical in its progression. Some interviewees reported no efforts towards dealing with their addictions, others reported continued success in overcoming their addictions, others have overcome them and then relapsed, and others have overcome one, or some, among multiple addictions.

Some of the interviewees may be just starting to recognize they need help dealing with their addictions. During the course of one interview, through describing his activities and spending behaviours, the respondent seemed to come to the realization he might have an addiction: *“As soon as I’ve got money in my pocket I go buy crack lately. I guess that means I have a problem. I guess I should go talk to my doctor about that.”*

Some interviewees did not seem concerned about their addictions, nor did they express any interest in taking steps to overcome them. This seemed clear in the very matter-of-fact comments they made about their experiences. One respondent related how he now has debts to pay because a couple of times people saw him passed out outdoors and they called an ambulance even though, according to him, he didn’t need it. Now he owes \$770 for those ambulance rides. Another interviewee, when talking about where he slept at night, commented with a puzzled expression on his face that *“Sometimes I end up in the drunk tank...I don’t know how I get there.”*

One respondent seemed well aware of the impact his addiction has on other aspects of his life, but didn’t seem to have thought about dealing with it: *“Sometimes I want to get a job and get my own place. But I’m afraid I’ll mess up, get drunk, invite people over and they’ll bring people with hairspray and Listerine. They’d get rowdy and blast music ...and get me evicted.”* So, instead he remains jobless and living in a shelter.

Some who see their addiction as a problem also seem to recognize they are not at a place or time in their life where they can commit to dealing with it. One interviewee diagnosed with ADHD said, *“I don’t want to quit smoking right now, while stress is high. It keeps me from biting my nails. Maybe I’ll quit when I feel more settled.”* Another said that he wakes up feeling sick every morning, and if he doesn’t drink he feels worse, but once he takes a drink, he feels better. At the time of the interview, he said he had an appointment to get medication through a clinic to help him with withdrawal. About a month later, however, through casual conversation he mentioned that he hadn’t kept his appointment at the clinic, and had decided instead to just detox on his own. He said he was trying to save enough money so that he could do it at his friend’s place without being a financial burden.

A number of the interviewees mentioned they had tried to conquer their addictions but had relapsed. Some said they didn’t stay long enough in residential treatment programs, generally because the rules are strict and they felt they couldn’t abide, or because they were kicked out for not following them. One young woman, however, who had high

hopes for the Behavioural Health Foundation's program in St. Norbert said she left after having a knife pulled on her three times in three days.

For some, as soon as they were out of treatment they started using again. Others said they managed to "stay clean" for several months at a time, even years, before relapsing. One who reported using addictions services three times had given up altogether, saying,

"The services for addictions around here are no good. They're just places for you to go to fatten up after you haven't eaten for awhile. People come out and go and do the same thing."

Having heard the complaints of ineffectiveness, one interviewee expressed his views, *"The detox centres are doing the best they can, but it's up to the individual to decide to stop."*

Some of the interviewees talked about the challenges they faced in trying to "stay clean." When they return to the same environment as before treatment (including all of the same stressors and influences) without follow-up and support, they find it very difficult to stay clean. The following comments illustrate this:

"I used to be a hard core sniffer: started when I was 15 years old. My buddies keep trying to get me to sniff gas, but I won't do it."

"I used to have a crack addiction. I've been clean now for 3 years. It's hard still: everyone's getting into it now."

"My mom's in the city, but she's messed up – she drinks hairspray...I've got relatives here, but they're all messed up, doing 'Rock'. I've gotta stay away from that. My girlfriend and her family do 'Rock' around the kids. I always take off."

Stories of success in conquering addictions were not uncommon from the panhandlers interviewed, with many reporting having been drug, alcohol and substance free for many years. One respondent was also proud of his success, when he pronounced *"I quit weed a long time ago. Last time I had it was a week ago."*

Services in Winnipeg that respondents reported worked well for them include Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM), Mainstay, Pritchard House (Native Addictions Council of Manitoba), and Narcotics Anonymous. Respondents reported that it often takes more than one round of detox treatment to stay completely off drugs, alcohol or addictions. One interviewee said *"It took forty years to get there"* and gives full credit to AA and AFM in helping him become and stay sober. Another seemed pleased with his progress when he said he used to abuse solvents, alcohol and drugs together. He has used four different addictions services, and now just drinks and uses pot occasionally.

For others, conquering their addiction seemed to be easier, and something they were able to do on their own or with the support of friends. Some simply made up their mind one day to quit and have never looked back. Motivating factors they mentioned include the high expense of the addiction, or that it was causing health problems, or they were losing friends. One young woman described her experience:

“I used to be addicted to drugs. Over the years I became addicted. I started using so I could stay warm and stay awake – if you fall asleep your stuff goes missing. Now I’m cleaned up because I have a place to live. I called AFM and they said there was a 10 month waiting list. That’s too long to wait when you’re trying to clean up right now. I got off drugs with the support of friends and RaY.”

Now she does Prevention work with Resource Assistance for Youth(RaY) to raise awareness about drug addictions and the negative impact on people’s lives.

14.0 CONCLUSION

Although Winnipeg’s panhandling population is demographically diverse, panhandlers certainly share the characteristic of living in deep poverty and finding multiple ways to simply “make ends meet.”

The majority of panhandlers in this study were unemployed – most unable to find work because they lack the appropriate education or skills for the type of work their mental or physical health will allow. If they are deemed physically able to work or “employable”, but are unable to find work they are denied government support. That some panhandlers are employed seems to indicate that a job alone is not a guarantee of freedom from poverty.

Some interviewees on social assistance or with employment income have been fortunate enough to have a place to live, although they may have to panhandle to cover the rent. More than half of the panhandlers in this study, however, are homeless - either sleeping outdoors, staying in shelters, and/or “couch-surfing.”

Panhandling is not an option that many would choose over employment. Any positive aspects of panhandling are far outweighed by the negatives, which include low earnings, long hours of work in poor conditions, social stigma, and depleted self-esteem. Physical and verbal abuse is another hazard of panhandling. Since the amendments to By-Law 7700/2000 were put in place in 2005, panhandlers report they are not treated as well by the general public, business owners, police and BIZ Ambassadors. As a result, some find they have to spend even more time panhandling in order to meet their basic needs.

Those whose only income is panhandling often rely on other ways of meeting their basic needs, such as collecting and selling cans, and “dumpster diving.” Many rely on services

such as temporary shelters, soup kitchens, and clothing banks, but for others, the services currently available do not meet their needs or are only used as a last resort.

What is needed to stop panhandling is not simple by-laws that restrict panhandling activity - restrictions that may turn panhandlers to criminal activity, or at the very least force them to spend even more time panhandling to meet their basic needs. Most interviewees had turned to panhandling when unfortunate events, choices, behaviours or situations that, on their own might easily have been dealt with, combined to become insurmountable. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true: the multiple compounding issues and barriers need to be dealt with simultaneously in order to have any substantive, positive and lasting change in their lives. A wide range of effective targeted services are required to address the multiple and often co-existing health, housing, education, employment and social problems that panhandlers face. Systemic barriers to poverty reduction, including lack of flexibility in policy, bureaucracy and eligibility requirements, also need to be tackled. This solution to the “panhandling problem” would be resource intensive and complex - far more complex than a by-law that restricts panhandlers’ ability to simply “make ends meet”.

APPENDIX A: Project Methodology

The general methodology of the study in many respects is breaking new ground using a combination of several quantitative and qualitative approaches. The interviews with panhandlers yield specific quantitative information about the characteristics of panhandlers, the frequency of panhandling, the amount of money collected, and their use of supportive services. The mapping of locations of panhandlers also provides quantitative material on the location and nature of the activity. Additionally, the literature review presents facts and figures from other surveys and Statistics Canada data. The interviews also incorporate many qualitative, open-ended questions that elicit opinion panhandlers' opinions. The development of a typology of panhandling methods is another qualitative tool and a subjective exercise based on the researchers' observations. There has been little work undertaken elsewhere in developing a typology of panhandling approaches.

There are five basic components to the research methodology that were used to undertake and complete this project. Each component is described in more detail below.

1.0 The Review of Literature

The first component is a review of academic, legal, government, advocacy and professional literature. This informs the project by providing information on the characteristics of panhandlers, how they panhandle, why they panhandle and what services or initiatives might help this group of people reduce their dependence on panhandling. It also provides background on recent legislation that has been introduced in Canadian cities, the nature and effectiveness of this legislation and the reason(s) it was introduced. In addition, the review presents an overview of other non-legislative initiatives (Canada, the United States and abroad) to reduce the number of panhandlers through provision of services and support programs that reduce the need for panhandling. The literature sheds some light on programs and support services that have been introduced to address the systemic causes that drive people onto the streets to panhandle. The three components of the literature review are described in more detail below.

The focus of the literature review is Canadian material, but relevant works from the United States and other countries are included. The review of the literature attempts to highlight recent change in panhandling, including the changing nature, number and characteristics of panhandlers, reactions by the public, business and government sectors as well as changing attitudes toward the use of public space and the debate surrounding private versus public space in the urban environment.

The review of legislation focuses on Canadian cities where there have been recent changes in the legislation affecting panhandling. The review also highlights any appropriate legislation in American cities. It presents a detailed account of recent changes in panhandling by-laws in Winnipeg and compares the nature of legislation in Winnipeg

with legislation in other key cities. A matrix, accompanied by a detailed written explanation, has been developed to compare the regulations.

The review of initiatives providing resources to reduce the need for panhandling takes an approach similar to the review of legislation. It focuses on key cities in Canada, the U.S. and other countries to determine what programs and support services have been introduced. Initiatives in selected cities and those available in Winnipeg illustrate that criminalizing panhandling is not the only solution.

2.0 Mapping of Panhandling Locations

A second component of the research is the mapping of panhandling locations. It identifies where people panhandle in the city, and whether they panhandle in close proximity to “sensitive services”. There were three approaches to this component of the methodology: 1) recording the locations of panhandlers based on observation of panhandling activity throughout the study area; 2) mapping of these locations using Geographic Information Systems and mapping software; and, 3) using information gathered through observation to indicate if panhandlers are active near “sensitive services.” Several maps were produced indicating the distribution of panhandlers throughout the study area, priority or high traffic locations for panhandling, and proximity to “sensitive services.”

The necessary steps in preparing the maps included:

- a) Preparation of base maps for the downtown area and Osborne Village. For the purposes of this research, the downtown study area extends as far west as Arlington and north to include Ellice and Sargent Streets, as panhandling has been observed in these areas. Downtown also includes Main Street north to Higgins and south to include Broadway. The commercial portion of Osborne Village to Wardlaw Avenue was also included in the study area. It was limited to Osborne Street itself and the adjoining Safeway Shopping Complex, as this is where most panhandling activity in Osborne Village was observed occurring.
- b) The locations of sensitive services were plotted on the base maps as was the walkway system;
- c) The nature of the sensitive services was determined in consultation with the client based on by-law No. 7700/2000 and a review of the literature, and included ATMs, bus stops, banks, liquor stores, money marts, etc.;
- d) Fieldwork observation identified panhandling locations; and,
- e) Locations were plotted to illustrate proximity of panhandlers to sensitive services. Proximity was based on a 10-metre distance restriction.

3.0 Interviews with Panhandlers

A third and major component of the methodology was the interviewing of panhandlers. Representatives of three social service agency partners - Resource Assistance for Youth, The Main Street Project, and Siloam Mission - assisted the researchers in developing a structured questionnaire to be administered through confidential personal interviews.

Their input ensured the research tool was comprehensive, appropriately worded, and sensitive in addressing topics of concern. It was agreed upon with the client that the “squeegee kids” and buskers would not be included because they do not clearly fall within the definition of “panhandlers” (as they offer a service in exchange for donations) and the current legislation has not targeted these activities.

The questionnaire contains both defined and open-ended questions, focusing on a number of themes: demographic and socio-economic characteristics of panhandlers, their housing circumstances, where and why they panhandle, how much money they make and what they spend it on, the services they use and need, and how the legislation has affected their methods and locations of panhandling. The panhandlers were asked if they were aware of the current By-Law and whether they had changed their method of panhandling since it came into effect. Interview questions also asked about panhandlers’ experiences with authorities and how street patrols and police have changed their approach since the passage of legislation: Are they asking panhandlers to “move along” from certain locations? Do they warn panhandlers not to work in certain areas?, etc.

Because the actual number of panhandlers in Winnipeg is unknown, it was difficult to determine a representative sample size of this population. Consultation with the client and social service agency partners resulted in a decision of seventy five as the total number of panhandlers to be interviewed. Some of the interviews were conducted during the winter months of February and March when there were fewer panhandlers on the street, but interviews were extended into April, May and June to ensure that those who might not panhandle in colder weather were also included as research subjects.

Two approaches were taken in finding panhandlers to interview. The agency partners are established organizations that have developed trusting relationships with clientele, among which are individuals who panhandle. Agency employees discreetly approached potential interviewees to ask them to participate. It was believed this strategy would be most effective because potential interviewees would be more trusting and, therefore, be more likely to participate and more open with their responses if the research was endorsed and supported by an organization they trusted. Thirty six interviews were undertaken at the social service agencies: 15 at Siloam Mission, 9 at Mainstreet Project, and 12 at Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY). These interviews took place in a quiet, private room at the respective agencies.

Because not all panhandlers use services, it was necessary to find and ask panhandlers on the street for interviews as well. This second approach to finding interviewees was undertaken at various times of the day (ranging from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.), in areas frequented by panhandlers and resulted in thirty-nine interviews. Of those asked for an interview in this way, only 6 declined. Seven interviews were conducted on the street at the request of the interviewees. When the researcher approached, a brief explanation was given about the research, and the panhandler was asked if s/he would like to participate. The interview was most often conducted in a quiet location such as a coffee shop.

One interviewer was present for each interview. Two interviewers conducted interviews, and the primary interviewer met each interview subject to ensure that no panhandler was interviewed more than once. Before beginning the actual interview, the process and purpose of the research was explained, with emphasis given to the confidentiality and voluntary participation. Then the interviewee was given an opportunity to ask questions about the research, and was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B). On average, the duration of the interview was one hour. Each interviewee was given an honorarium of ten dollars for their participation, whether they completed the interview or not. There were no interviews started that were not completed.

Findings were analyzed using appropriate database software. The write up of the interviews highlights the key socio-economic and demographic characteristics of panhandlers, provides insights into the reasons they are on the street, what services they use or need, how much money they collect and how they spend the money. The report also highlights the geographic distribution of those surveyed and the effect of current legislation.

4.0 Characterizing Panhandling Methods

A fourth component of the methodology was the observation of panhandling techniques to characterize panhandling methods. To collect and analyze data in the observation component of this research study, a typology of panhandling methods was developed based on the categories of panhandling offences identified in By-Law 7700/2000 and the 2005 amendment to this By-Law. The typology also incorporates other categories in order to collect information upon which to develop a broader understanding of panhandling. This includes factors such as technique used (eg. sign, cap in hand), how the request is indicated (eg. verbal, gesture), and level of activity (sitting, standing, walking). It was recorded as to whether or not upon refusal any further communication followed, and if so, whether it was polite (“thank-you”, “have a nice day”, etc.) or impolite (nasty reply, perhaps including obscenities, gesturing or raised voice). The intention was to capture a more comprehensive range of panhandling methods than is achieved by the By-Law and to better reflect the truly broad spectrum of panhandling methods that exist. Community agency partners, a review of the literature and legislation in other cities, and panhandlers themselves provided insights into the development of the typology.

Fieldwork was required to document the nature of the methods through simple “observation.” The researcher simply observed from a discreet distance and recorded how panhandlers indicate their need to people.

The Observation Matrix (Table 3.1), based on the typology above, was used to record the panhandling methods observed during sweeps of the survey area. Whether the panhandler was male or female, alone, with a pet, or with others was recorded. If with others, the number of people together was also noted. The panhandling location, address and

description, the date and time of the panhandling event, and weather conditions were also noted.

Key panhandling methods were distinguished for the purpose of mapping and to allow for more accurate analysis:

- *OTM* (On-The-Move) refers to a panhandler who, for the most part, is walking and panhandling people along the way. Other than short stops made to rest or to gather money, movement is constant.
- *Stationary* is when the panhandler is either seated or standing in one place.
- *Approach* is when the panhandler is standing and moves towards a passerby when making a request. The solicitation space is very small; only a couple of steps are taken.
- *Still* is a category which includes both Stationary and Approach, but not OTM.
- *OCT* – refers to obstruct, continue and threaten as descriptors of the following specific parts of the amended By-Law 7700/2000 (2005):
 - a) In the course of solicitation, to obstruct or impede the convenient passage of any pedestrian or vehicular traffic in a street;
 - b) To continue to solicit from or follow a pedestrian after that person has made a negative response to solicitation; or
 - c) To verbally threaten or insult a pedestrian in the course of, or following a solicitation.

For a panhandling event to be considered OCT, it must be recorded on the observation matrix as at least one of the following categories: Obstructive Approach, OTM Obstructive, Verbal Repeat, Verbal Loud/Threatening, Follows, Gestures, Touches, or Nasty Reply. Passive methods of panhandling involve no violation of the above three rules (they could be considered non-OCT).

The Panhandling Observation Matrix was used to gather all data on panhandling event observation, which was then used to map panhandling methods. These maps illustrate the distribution and frequency of occurrence of different methods of panhandling according to the By-Law.

5.0 Consultation with Service Agencies

A fifth key component of the methodology is consultation and work with service agencies. Through contact and meetings representatives of the three agencies expressed a strong interest in the research, the issue of panhandling, the legislation currently in place, and alternative solutions or initiatives to reduce people's reliance on panhandling. Staff at these agencies have regular interaction with many of the people who panhandle and have thus developed a strong understanding of their situations. Consultation with these service agencies on aspects of the research and obtaining their insights on the issues has substantially enhanced the report.

APPENDIX B: Interview Questionnaire

(Note: spacing removed in questionnaire for purposes of inclusion here)

Panhandling in Winnipeg: Legislation vs. Support Services

This research is being conducted by Tom Carter, Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation and associates for the Public Interest Law Centre and the National Anti-Poverty Organization. This research will examine the nature of panhandling in Winnipeg and seek to determine the potential effectiveness of restrictions on panhandling-activity in addressing associated problems. It will also determine services used by and needed by panhandlers

Survey questions:

1. How old are you?

- Under 15
 15 - 24
 25 - 44
 45 - 64
 65 or over

2. Are you...

- Male
 Female
 Transgendered

3 What is your marital status?

- Single (never married)
 Widowed/widower
 Married
 Common-law
 Separated / Divorced

4. Do you have any dependents? (non-income earning family members, including children, dependent spouse, elderly parents) Yes; No

If yes:

	Relationship to you	Age
Dependent #1		
Dependent #2		
Dependent #3		
Dependent #4		
Dependent #5		

5. Are you currently employed or working regularly? Yes; No (If no, go to #8)

6. If **yes**, is it: (Note: here you may list the categories for the respondent)

- fulltime
 part time ___ average # of hours per week
 don't know

Is your work

- permanent
 temporary, term or contract (not seasonal)
 seasonal
 casual ___ average # of hours per week.
 day labour
 don't know

7. What kind of work do you do? _____

8. If **no**, What are the reasons you not working? (Eg. Your choice? Disability? Attending school? Can't find work?)

9. Do you have other sources of income?(besides panhandling) Yes; No If yes, indicate:

Source	\$ Amount per month (or per year)
Wages/Salaries	\$
Employment Insurance	\$
Worker's compensation	\$
Social Assistance	\$
Disability	\$
Seniors' benefits	\$
Child benefits	\$
Money from family or friends	\$
GST Refund	\$
Illegal activities	\$
Other	\$

10. What is the highest level of education you completed? _____
11. Has your level of reading and writing ever been a problem for you? (If uncertain ask "Can you read the newspaper?") Yes; No Comments? _____
12. Are you a resident of Winnipeg? Yes; No
13. Do you live somewhere else at other times of the year? Yes; No
If so, where and when?
14. Do you rent a place to live? Yes; No
15. Do you own your own home? Yes; No
16. What kind of unit do you rent / own?
 Single room in a rooming house (shared washroom and/or cooking facilities).
 Room in a residential hotel
 Room in someone's home
 Self-contained suite in a private home (eg. Basement suite) # of bedrooms ___
 Entire house, # of bedrooms _____
 Bachelor apartment (fully self-contained but with no separate bedroom)
 One bedroom apartment
 Two or more bedroom apartment - # of bedrooms _____
 Other
17. How much do you pay for rent each month? \$ _____
18. How much do you pay for utilities each month (heating, electricity, water, telephone) _____
19. Do you live in your parent's home? Yes; No
20. Are there other income earners who you share household expenses with? Yes; No
- If yes, how many? _____
- Can you estimate their average combined monthly income? \$ _____
21. If you do not have a home or live with parents, where do you usually spend the night?
 In the home of a friend/family member (couch surfing)
 In a shelter (if so, which one?) _____
 Outdoors "on the streets"
 Other?
22. How many years/months have you been panhandling? _____ don't know
23. How many regular panhandlers do you think there are in Winnipeg? _____ don't know
24. Can you describe characteristics of the panhandlers you know?

(Prompts: What are panhandlers like? How do panhandlers act?)

don't know

WHEN?

25. How often do you panhandle? **don't know**

(# of times or frequency: May answer one, some or all)

- per day;
 per week;
 per month;
 per year

26. What makes you panhandle or not panhandle on any given day? **don't know**

27. What time of day do you usually panhandle?

- early morning, before 9:30 a.m.
 morning, ~9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
 midday, ~11:30 – 1:30 p.m.
 afternoon ~ 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
 late afternoon/early evening ~ 4:30 – 7:00 p.m.
 evening ~ 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.
 after 10:00 p.m.

don't know

28. Why do you panhandle at this/these times? **don't know**

29. How long is an average shift? (~ # of hours) _____ **don't know**

30. What might make you decide to stop panhandling for the day? **don't know**

31. What are the best times of the day for panhandling? **don't know**

32. What are the best days of the week to panhandle?

Sun; Mon; Tues; Wed; Thurs; Fri; Sat; **don't know**

33. What are the best months of the year to panhandle?

Jan; Feb; Mar; Apr; May; June; July; Aug; Sept;
 Oct; Nov; Dec; **don't know**

WHERE?

(Address and description of location at time of meeting, if approached on street)

34. Where do you usually panhandle? **don't know** (specific location and/or area of city)

35. Where else have you panhandled? _____

36. What makes a specific location good for panhandling? **don't know**

37. What makes one area of the city better for panhandling than others? **don't know**

38. Are there some areas of the city where you would **NOT** panhandle?

Yes; **No**; **don't know** If **yes**, why?

39. Do you ever panhandle in any of these places... (*note: ask these categories*)

- on street corners
 on boulevards at busy intersections
 Near an ATM or bank entrance
 At entrance to business
 in pedestrian walkways (skywalk, underground)
 patios at restaurant/café/bar
 outside theatres
 at bus stops
 on the bus
 in parking lots
 at the University of Winnipeg

- in shopping malls
- in parks
- at payphones
- lineups

WHY?

40. What are the main reasons that brought you to panhandling? (Why do you panhandle?)

don't know

42. On average how much money do you receive?

\$ _____ per person

\$ _____ per hour

\$ _____ per day

\$ _____ per month

don't know

43. Do you set a goal for each day? **Yes**; **No**

If yes, what determines how much you try to earn each day?

44. What do you use the money you get from panhandling for? (How do you spend your money?)

What is your priority for spending? *Note: you may ask them these categories*

✓ or ✗ **priority: 1 = most important**

- Rent
- Utility bills (heating, electricity, water)
- Telephone
- Cable T.V.
- Food
- Over the counter, prescription medication or other medical costs
- Insurance
- Education costs
- Transportation (public transit, car payments, gas, maintenance, etc.)
- Clothing and personal items
- Furniture and household items
- Entertainment
- Debt repayment
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Other _____

45. Do you share your money with others? **Yes**; **No**

If yes, with whom? (relationship to interviewee, not names)

46. Do people give you anything besides money? **Yes**; **No** If yes, what kinds of things?

47. What do you enjoy most about panhandling? What do you not enjoy about panhandling?

48. What would you do if you could not panhandle? **don't know**

49. On those days you can't get enough money by panhandling, what do you do? **don't know**

50. Do you regularly use any services? Yes; No If yes;

a. **Foodbanks,**

No

Yes, Don't know name

Yes, specify _____

Comments?

b. **Shelters** Neeginan (Jack's Place)

MacDonald Youth Services

Salvation Army

- Ndinawe
- Main Street Project
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
- No, Don't use

Comments?

c. Prepared meals / "Soup kitchens"

- Agape Table
- Siloam Mission
- Salvation Army
- Union Gospel Mission
- All Saints
- Crossways
- St. Augustine
- Lighthouse mission
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
 - No, Don't use

Comments?

d. Drop in centers

- West Broadway Community Ministries/Crossways in Common
- Resource Assistance for Youth
- Siloam Mission
- Main Street Project
- Flora House
- Sage House
- Our Place
- Ndinawe
- Graffiti Gallery
- White Buffalo
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
- No, don't use

Comments?

e. Clothing banks

- Knox United Church
- Resource Assistance for Youth
- Salvation Army
- Union Gospel Mission
- Flora House
- Siloam Mission
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
- No, don't use

Comments?

f. Employment services

- No, don't use
- Yes, but don't know name
- Yes, Specify... _____

Comments?

g. Training or education

- Edge Training
- Horizons
- Youth Employment Services
- Teen Challenge
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
- No, don't use

Comments?

h. Health

- Klinik
- Ray
- Women's Health Clinic
- Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre
- Clearview Addictions Rehabilitation Institute
- Mount Carmel Clinic
- Salvation Army
- Four Rivers
- Nine Circles
- Sage House
- Street Connection
- Siloam Mission (Chiropractic services)
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
- No, don't use

Comments?

i. Counselling

- Klinik
- Ray
- Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre
- Aboriginal Traditional Wellness clinic at Health Sciences Centre
- Mainstreet Project
- Nine Circles
- Siloam Mission
- Other, specify _____
- Yes, but don't know name
- No, don't use

Comments?

- j. Other** Methadone Intervention and Needle Exchange program
- Street Connections
 - Other, specify _____

Comments?

51. Do you have a disability of any kind? Yes; No

If yes,

- Physical
- Learning / Intellectual
- Illiteracy
- Mental health
- Other, specify _____

If yes, are there services that you use related to your disability? Yes; No

If yes, specify _____ Comments about your disability needs and/or services?

52. Are there any services that you will **not** use/refuse to use? Yes; No **If yes,** why not?

53. What do you need in order to (be able to) stop panhandling? What services are missing?

HOW?

54. Explain your method of panhandling? What works, what doesn't?

55. How do most people react when you ask for money? How are you treated?

56. Do some people ignore you? Yes; No; Don't know

If yes, do you do anything to get their attention? Yes; No If yes, what do you do?

57. Do you ever ask again after they've indicated they don't want to give? Yes; No

58. Of the people who pass by/you solicit, about what percentage of them give something?
 _____% Don't know

59. Do you believe that there is a wrong way or a right way to panhandle?

Don't know No Yes, Explain

60. Who gives most often? Don't know

Men

Women

Couples

Young people

Middle aged

Elderly

61. When they give, who gives most generously? Don't know

Men

Women

Couples

Young people

Middle aged

Elderly

62. Do you ever feel that people passing by are scared of you?

Yes; No; Don't know Comments?

63. Do you ever panhandle with others? Yes; No

If no, why not? If yes, why and how many?

64. What are you not supposed to do when you panhandle? Don't know

(Note: Check off those they indicate, ask if there are any others they haven't mentioned, but don't prompt with the following)

impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic

Continue to solicit or follow after being declined

Threaten or insult during or after soliciting

Approach as part of a group of 3 or more

Other?

65. Where are you not allowed to panhandle? Don't know

(Note: Ask for specifics, and check off those locations that they mention. Don't prompt)

ATM/bank/credit union

Public pay phone

Transit stop or taxi stand

On public transit

On an elevator

Pedestrian walkway

Parking lot/getting in/out of vehicle

Restaurant/bar patio

Business entrance

66. Do you know about the panhandling by-law passed last summer? Yes; No

67. If **yes**, has the by-law affected how you panhandle? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
If **yes**, explain?
68. Has the by-law affected **where** you panhandle? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
If **yes**, explain?
69. Has the by-law affected **when** you panhandle? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
If **yes**, explain?
70. Has the by-law affected the amount of money you receive? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
If **yes**, explain.
71. Since the by-law was passed, do you feel that you are treated differently
a) by the general public **Don't know**; **No**; **Yes, explain**
b) by local business people **Don't know**; **No**; **Yes, explain**
c) by BIZ street ambassadors/patrol? **Don't know**; **No**; **Yes, explain**
d) by the police? **Don't know**; **No**; **Yes, explain**
72. Have you ever been fined for panhandling? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
If **no**, would you be able to pay a fine? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
If **yes**, when? ___ **Don't know** Where? ___ **Don't know**
If **yes**, did you have the money to pay the fine? **Yes**; **No**
If **yes**, did you pay the fine? **Yes**; **No** Comments?
73. Have you ever been arrested because you were asking people for money? **Yes**; **No**
If **yes**, when? ___ **Don't know** Where? ___ **Don't know**
If **yes**, did you spend any time in jail? **Yes**; **No**
If **yes**, did that affect how or where you panhandle? **Yes**; **No**; **Don't know**
Please comment
74. What do you think about "aggressive" panhandling/panhandlers? **Don't know**
75. Do you have a substance use problem or addiction? **Yes**; **No** If **yes**,
 Tobacco
 Alcohol
 Illegal drugs, specify _____
 Prescription drugs, specify _____
 Gambling
 "Sniff"/inhalants
 Other, specify _____
76. Have you ever used services for the substance problem or addiction? **Yes**; **No** If **yes**,
which? Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM)
 Tamarack Rehab
 Addictions Recovery Inc.
 Behavioural Health Foundation
 Indian and Metis Friendship Centre
 Native Addictions Council of Manitoba
 Salvation Army- Anchorage Addictions Rehabilitation program
 Union Gospel Mission
 Nine Circles
 Street Connection
 Clearview Addictions Rehabilitation Institute
 Mainstreet Project's Detoxification Centre
 Other, specify _____
 Yes, but don't know name
Comments re: rehab program?
77. What is your ethnic/cultural background? **Don't know**
78. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to make?

APPENDIX C: Consent Form**Permission to ask questions**

No. _____

I, _____, am being asked to participate in a research project entitled *Panhandling in Winnipeg: Legislation or Support Services*. This research is being conducted by Tom Carter - Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation, University of Winnipeg - and associates for the Public Interest Law Centre and the National Anti-Poverty Organization. This research will examine the nature of panhandling in Winnipeg and seek to learn the effects of the panhandling by-laws in Winnipeg. It will also determine what services are used by panhandlers, and what supports are needed. The research findings will be provided to social service agencies and government departments to bring about related improvements.

As a participant in this study, I will be asked to take part in a survey about my circumstances and my panhandling experiences in Winnipeg. This interview will take between 45 minutes and an hour, and I understand that I have the right to change my mind at any time and can withdraw at any point in the process. I also understand that I can choose not to answer any questions in the interview that I am not comfortable answering. Neither consenting nor declining to participate, or deciding to withdraw will adversely affect my ability to obtain services or access resources of any kind. I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary in nature.

I understand that I will receive a \$10.00 honorarium for participating in the study. This honorarium can be in the form of cash or a gift certificate to purchase groceries at a local grocery store. I also understand that if I withdraw part way through the interview I will still receive the honorarium.

I understand that the researchers will take all necessary measures to safeguard the confidentiality of the information that I provide. No names, personal information, or anything else that might identify me, my family members, or anyone else, will be included in the research documents or in any presentations or publications, and all participants will remain anonymous. All audio-tapes, consent forms and interview notes will be stored in locked cabinets in the researchers office, which is also locked when not occupied, and will be destroyed by August 31, 2006.

If at any time I would like additional information about this project, I can contact Dr. Tom Carter at 982-1148. If I have questions or concerns about the way I have been treated or the ethics of this research study, I may contact Kerry Murkin, Ethics Administration Officer at 786-9058, at the University of Winnipeg.

My signature below indicates that I have given my informed consent to participate in the above described project. My signature also indicates that:

- I have been given the opportunity to ask any and all questions about the described project and my participation, and that all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I have been permitted to read this document and I have been given a signed copy of it.
- I am at least 18 years old or have a parent/guardian's signature, or have been advised by an advocate at a social service agency
- I am legally able to provide consent.

Participant's

Name: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Participant's Signature _____ Date: _____

[If under age of consent:

Parent's Signature _____

Date _____

Or: Agency Rep. Signature _____

Date _____]

Researcher's Name:

(PLEASE PRINT)

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: Panhandlers' Ideas

The ideas below were offered by the panhandlers interviewed throughout the course of the interviews.

- Squeegeers should be able to have a business license.
- There should be a designated area where panhandling is allowed. Anywhere else - not allowed, so people who wanted to avoid it could.
- Panhandling shouldn't be illegal. Some people have to do it, particularly Caucasian people because there aren't the services there are for Aboriginal people.
- For the city to help panhandlers, listen to their story.
- Don't just give, but give an answer. No is fine.
- If you're homeless and you have a problem going to a shelter, and you want to sleep outside, the police shouldn't give you a fine. You should be able to rest/sleep outside.
- What we need is instead of tearing down old warehouses, do like Calgary: fix them up a bit and use as shelters. A bus picks you up and takes you there. They're open 10 p.m. – 5:30 a.m. It takes people off the streets and reduces crime.
- Police/biz should treat all panhandlers the same rather than picking on the native guys.
- The government needs to open its eyes, stop judging a book by its cover, start reading before you decide.
- “Get the Red Coats off the street”
- When people call in to report aggressive panhandlers, the cops should be given a description. Instead, the cops target everyone.
- Could use a locker to keep stuff in during the day
- Should have lockers for stuff at Main Street Project.
- I wish there was a better place that would help and get you back on your feet. Where they won't kick you out after a month (these places now give up on you). Need some longer term support service.
- Services needed: someplace to work out, hang out with activities for older people. Something like Rossbrook House. If you're over 30 you're not allowed into Rossbrook until after 9:30 p.m.
- They should have more services for those on crack and for the mentally ill – lots of them just wandering around.
- Need more training for panhandlers. More drop in centres. The ones now have to turn some people away. Need more resources.
- There need to be more places for people to get off the street to sleep, shower and wash.
- Need more clothing in winter, especially socks and underwear.
- Should have a meeting with all panhandlers for part of the research.
- Should do Hard Night Out for longer than just one night.
- We should have a right to panhandle because we're homeless and don't get enough from welfare. Give more money for rent on welfare, too hard to find a place for that amount.
- Social Assistance should at least raise the amount for rent. No one's getting a decent place for \$249. At least raise it to \$300
- They've got to raise minimum wage to give people incentive to go for work. Make welfare tougher...it's too easy. People are trying to get free money.
- They need to have youth shelters for 18 – 27 year olds. Older people at shelters tend to steal more. They need lockers at shelters.
- Panhandling is growing. There are more and more homeless people because there are more shelters and services. More people feel they can “blow their cheque” and have somewhere to stay. More shelters leads to more homeless