Cost of poverty in Toronto pegged at $5.5 billion a year

By LAURIE MONSBRAATEN

Although data is limited, Stapleton and his researchers were able to quantify the annual impact of poverty on crime in the city. They estimate that poverty costs Toronto $5.5 billion a year, in terms of added health care, policing and interaction with the justice system.

"While it's important to move people out of poverty, it's even more important that we prevent people from falling into that position," he says.

"I developed two leg ulcers that still have not healed." said Andy Creek, a 56-year-old homeless man who has been on disability welfare for all those years when he could have been making an economic and social contribution," he said.

"Today, the senior manager of Working for Change, a Toronto non-profit that helps people escape poverty through advocacy, education and employment training, shakes his head in disbelief.

"The system spent a quarter of a million dollars on cancer treatment to keep me alive only to push me into poverty and ill health." he says.

"A cancer diagnosis in 1993 cost him a management job in the hotel industry and plunged him into 13 years of poverty and ill health." said Paul Bogle, 60, who was able to buy a condo and have his health issues addressed.

"Woodgreen Community Services. She credits the organization with her earnings." said Bogle, who works in banking and has been able to buy a condo.

"My fellow graduates and I are tangible returns on the investment this program made in us," she says. "We are showing up in poverty and are unable to escape."