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## Expert: Jobs Are the Problem

By Curtis L. Taylor

STAFF WRITER; Staff writer Dan Janison contributed to this story.

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The high local jobless rate is posing a much greater threat to the living standard of the average New York family than the city's current budget woes, according to testimony yesterday before a special state committee exploring ways to revitalize urban areas.

Employment fell more than 210,000 from its peak in December 2000 to March of this year, or 5.6 percent, four times greater than the drop nationally, said James Parrott, deputy director and chief economist of the Fiscal Policy Institute, a nonpartisan research organization that examines budget public policy issues.

"New York City's economy has been in recession for the past 28 months," Parrott said. "For all New Yorkers, this is without a doubt the most severe economic downturn since the prolonged and deep recession of the early 1990s."

Parrott told the three-member panel at 250 Broadway, headed by Assemb. Scott Stringer (D-Manhattan), that the unemployment rate in New York City averaged 9 percent, or 332,000 unemployed people during the first quarter of the year.

"When workers living from paycheck to paycheck lose their job, they often quickly fall behind in their rent or mortgage payments," Parrott said. "... hunger and homelessness have climbed sharply."

Council Speaker Gifford Miller told the panel that implementing aggressive welfare-to-work training programs were essential to urban renewal, highlighting the council's recent passage of training and education legislation.

"What this does is allow dedicated workfare participants to get the training they need ... and become fully self-sufficient," Miller said.

In contrast, Deputy Mayor Daniel Doctoroff spoke optimistically about the city's future prospects for creating jobs and potentially generating billions in tax revenues by developing the controversial Midtown-West project of office space and housing and expanding the Jacob Javits Convention Center.

Staff writer Dan Janison contributed to this story.

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