

Strategy 1

THE HOMELESS HAVE ACCESS TO STABLE HOUSING
WITH INTEGRATED SUPPORT SERVICES



Homelessness is a growing concern throughout B.C. Since 2002, the number of homeless counted in the Greater Vancouver Regional District has almost doubled to over 2,100. Other communities are also reporting increases in their homeless population. For all of these communities, the cost of homelessness is extremely high, both socially and economically.

Under the leadership of the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions, the Province is proactively working with the federal and municipal governments and community partners to address homelessness. The Task Force has made progress toward the development of a range of housing and support services for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including:

- supportive housing,
- counselling,
- drug and alcohol treatment, and
- specialized job training.

These long-term projects will have a lasting impact in reducing homelessness.

To address immediate community needs, the Province has also increased base funding for the Emergency Shelter Program by 40 per cent, increasing the number of year-round and cold/wet weather shelter beds.

In addition, responsibility for the Emergency Shelter Program has transferred from the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance to BC Housing. This realignment of program responsibilities creates a linkage for seamlessly moving homeless people from emergency shelters to housing with appropriate supports to promote greater self-sufficiency.

Housing Fact

In B.C., research estimates the cost of homelessness to government health care, social and justice systems at \$30,000 to \$40,000 per person per year.

More needs to be done to link support services with housing to prevent recurring and absolute homelessness. To this end, the Province is continuing to support the Provincial Homeless Initiative and has identified new funding for Homeless Outreach Teams.

PROVINCIAL HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE

In its February 2006 report entitled Downtown Eastside Frequent Shelter User Review, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority reported that frequent shelter users occupy 33 per cent of available shelter beds in the study group. The report also noted the lack of appropriate housing with support services for this high-needs group has resulted in their frequent return to the shelter system.

To address the needs of individuals who are repeat users of shelters and who have multiple barriers to finding and keeping housing, the Province has funded 12 new developments in nine communities. These developments provide a range of housing options including shorter-term transitional housing and longer-term supportive housing.

The type or model used to deliver housing and support services will depend on the needs of the client group and the needs of the community. It may include 24-hour on-site staffing, help getting to medical appointments or job interviews, life skills training and peer support.

NEW HOMELESS OUTREACH TEAMS

The Province is also launching new Homeless Outreach Teams. Outreach workers will help homeless individuals address their immediate physical and safety needs such as food, warm clothing and housing. They will also work in close collaboration with emergency shelter and housing providers, to identify and provide options for longer term housing assistance including referrals to subsidized housing, private market rentals, or supported living environments.

Support from an outreach worker will improve the ability of people who are homeless to access the services they need and to move from shelters into transitional housing and on to more permanent and supportive housing. The emphasis shifts from providing greater numbers of temporary shelter beds to helping people break out of the cycle of poverty to begin the journey toward a healthier, more stable and productive life.



Phoenix Centre, Surrey

Many funding partners support innovative housing development

Surrey's Phoenix Centre, one of 12 housing developments announced as part of the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions, is being constructed with funding support from multiple partners.

The Phoenix is the first development to combine clinical addiction services with transitional housing, employment and education services. The centre will have 28 addiction

recovery beds, 36 transitional housing units, and an education and training centre.

It will provide health and mental health services to help those with substance abuse problems build the skills, resiliency, and self-sufficiency necessary to return to the community.

The Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society,

a non-profit society, will operate the Phoenix Centre. Funding partners include the Government of Canada, which is contributing \$2.5 million, and the Province, which is contributing \$2 million.

Other community partners who have contributed towards the capital cost of this development include: Real Estate Foundation of BC, Vancouver Foundation, Vancity Credit Union, and the Rotary Club of Surrey.