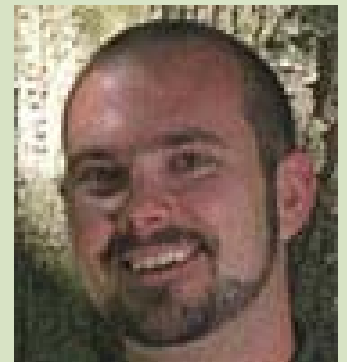


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## message from BC Housing

I am currently looking out over several inches of snow in Burnaby – a sight not uncommon across the rest of the province, but one that reminds me of the important work of emergency shelters and drop-in centres. Not only do agencies funded through the Emergency Shelter Program provide a safe place out of the cold, but the programs and services you offer are vital to helping many people stabilize their lives.

BC Housing has a long history of working with community agencies. We want to build similar partnerships with you. We have started by meeting with as many agencies as possible over the past year so that you know the face behind the voice on the phone. We hope this will make you feel comfortable contacting us when you have an issue you need help on or when there is a success you want to celebrate. We have also asked you – the experts in emergency shelters – about what capacity exists in your agencies and your communities and we look forward to working with you to develop standards and outcomes for the Emergency Shelter Program over the next year.



In this issue of Building Connections, we have updates on the Extreme Weather Response Policy, the program review, and new Homeless Outreach Projects. We have also included information on coming conferences and other best practices which may interest you. We have a profile on the great work done by the staff at the Vi Fineday Family Shelter and Lookout Emergency Aid Society has kindly shared its bed bugs control policy with us. Building Connections offers you an opportunity to share ideas with your colleagues and I encourage you to provide us with feedback and story ideas.

If you have questions or concerns about the Emergency Shelter Program, please do not hesitate to contact BC Housing. Your first point of contact is generally your Property Portfolio Manager, who will refer you on if they are unable to respond fully to your inquiry.

Sincerely,  
Michael Anhorn, Manager, Emergency Shelter Program

## Extreme Weather Response Policy

A reminder to all operators that an Extreme Weather Response Policy has been established to outline clearly BC Housing's role in funding Extreme Weather Responses so that both the communities that organize these and BC Housing will be prepared to serve people who are homeless during weather emergencies.

The Extreme Weather Response Policy is now available from BC Housing's [website](#) as are forms for extreme response shelter operators. The forms (Extreme Weather Response Nightly Expense Budget Template; Extreme Weather Nightly Occupancy Form; and Extreme Weather Response Invoice Form) are provided in Excel format and include directions on how these are to be completed and submitted.

## Program review

BC Housing has started working with consultants at CitySpaces to review the Emergency Shelter Program and the services provided by the funded agencies. The purpose of the review is to fully integrate shelters and other program-funded agencies into the continuum of housing and ultimately to help re-connect homeless people with more permanent kinds of housing.

A steering committee has been formed and includes shelter providers representing a wide variety of service models. Representatives are included from shelter providers in BC Housing's Vancouver Coastal Region, Fraser Region, Vancouver Island Region, Interior Region, and Northern Region. We will also be hosting consultations as part of the review and will provide other opportunities for agencies to provide feedback and guidance.

We appreciate your co-operation and look forward to working with you to improve the program.

## Homeless Outreach Projects

A new initiative known as Homeless Outreach Projects was announced in October as part of the new provincial housing strategy, Housing Matters BC. These projects are located throughout the province and fall under BC Housing's auspices. Many homeless people have already been connected to various support services.

The 17 projects are in Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Surrey, Langley, Maple Ridge, Abbotsford/Mission, Chilliwack/Hope, Victoria, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George, Prince Rupert, and Vanderhoof. Altogether, they will receive \$3.6 million over three years.

Outreach workers are contracted in each community to provide immediate and long-term assistance by offering not only food, clothing and shelter, but also access to transition services such as life-skills training and health and social programs.

Here is a list of the agencies providing the outreach services:

- Abbotsford/Mission: Salvation Army
- Burnaby: Progressive Housing Society
- Chilliwack/Hope: Salvation Army
- Kamloops: AIDS Society of Kamloops
- Kelowna: Canadian Mental Health Association
- Langley: Stepping Stone Community Services Society

- Maple Ridge: Iron Horse Youth Safe House and Alouette Home Start Society
- Nanaimo: Canadian Mental Health Association
- New Westminster: Lookout Emergency Aid Society
- Port Alberni: Port Alberni Hostel
- Port Coquitlam: Hope for Freedom Society
- Prince George: Association Advocating for Women and Children
- Prince Rupert: North Coast Transition Society
- Surrey: OPTIONS and the Front Room
- Vancouver: Carnegie Centre, Coast Foundation Society, and Triage Emergency Services & Care Society
- Vanderhoof: Omineca Safe Home Society
- Victoria: Pacifica Housing Advisory Association

### After-hours emergency contacts

If an emergency arises that threatens your ability to provide services when BC Housing offices are closed and you need to reach your Property Portfolio Manager, please call our Emergency Services in your region:

Vancouver Coastal Region: 604-682-4852

Fraser Region: 604-682-4852

Vancouver Island Region: 250-213-8798

Interior Region: 1-800-834-7149

Northern Region: 250-562-9251

Please note that an incorrect number for the Interior Region was listed in the e-mail version of the September issue of Building Connections. Please check to make sure you have the correct number in your files.

## news

### Canadian Conference on Social Enterprise

The second national Canadian Conference on Social Enterprise will be held January 26-31 at the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver. The theme for the conference is Building Social Enterprise. The conference will offer 90-minute workshop sessions in four distinct learning streams: early-stage planning; operations and growth; enterprise series; and social enterprise environment. The Enterprising Non-Profits Program, which is based in Vancouver, is the secretariat for the conference and more information is available from its website:

[www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca](http://www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca).

### Thinking Outside the Cardboard Box: A Symposium for Those Looking to End Homelessness

Shelter Net BC Society is hosting a three-day provincial symposium in Vernon on homelessness, May 23 – 25. The event will offer keynote speakers, workshops, plenary sessions, networking and social events to the 400 expected participants who are looking to end homelessness. There will be four conference streams: research; policy implications; collaborative efforts/projects; and front-line education. For more information: [www.shelternetbc.ca](http://www.shelternetbc.ca).

## Pathways to Housing

It's controversial: providing homeless people who have mental disabilities, substance abuse, and/or other difficulties with immediate access to an apartment of their own without requiring participation in treatment or sobriety. But it's hard to argue with an 84 per cent rate of people who remain housed after two years.

Pathways to Housing has been serving New York's homeless mentally ill population since 1992. The agency believes that street life renders people incapable of managing the most basic daily routines and affords people little room to contemplate matters such as treatment or recovery. Pathways to Housing provides people with homes first and then provides the new tenants with assistance and supports to allow them to begin the process of rehabilitation and recovery.

Clients receive rent subsidies to pay for individual apartments. After settling in to their new homes, they are offered a wide range of support and clinical services that includes psychiatric and substance abuse treatment, health care, employment, and family reconnection, all of which are voluntary.

To learn more about this emerging practice, visit Pathways to Housing's [website](#).

To read articles about Pathways to Housing:

- New York Times: [Homelessness, Halved](#)
- Mother Jones: [Life on the Inside](#)
- Psychiatric Services: [Providing Housing First and Recovery Services for Homeless Adults with Severe Mental Illness](#)
- American Journal of Public Health: [Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals with a Dual Diagnosis](#)

## Rental Assistance Program

Operators who help families will want to know about the new Rental Assistance Program that provides direct cash assistance to eligible low-income working families. The program is part of the Province's new housing strategy, Housing Matters BC. Check out BC Housing's [website](#) for details and to download brochures and application forms.

## agency profile

### Vi Fineday Family Shelter

The Vi Fineday shelter in Vancouver's Kitsilano neighborhood is a drug- and alcohol-free family shelter catering to single- or dual-parent families, single women, and couples. It is one of the few shelters that does not split up couples during their stays.

Violet (Vi) Fineday, a Cree woman from Saskatchewan and single mother of five, had been working in Vancouver at the Native Outreach Office when she had the idea that "there was a



great need for some place cozy and clean and friendly for people needing temporary homes.”

In 1975, the Owl House was established as an emergency shelter/transition house to serve the primarily First Nations clients. Over the years it had several locations, settling in 1987 at its current site. In 1992, the shelter was renamed the Vi Fineday shelter.

Staff at Vi Fineday come from far and wide: 14 are First Nations from B.C., Yukon, and Alberta; three are immigrants from Iraq, Fiji and Romania.

“The diversity of staff offers traditional elements and cultural sensitivities that our clientele can relate to,” said Irina Goga, Executive Director. “We have a very low turnover rate with employees, and there is a deep sense of compassion, understanding of life crises, and a desire to help.”

As an immigrant with a medical background and missing having connections with patients, Irina says she felt open to seeing a different kind of human pain to care about. “I was impressed by the important social role played by charities and shelters, and touched by daily contact with clients. I became attached to my work and my co-workers and their Aboriginal roots, traditions, and culture.”

## tips and tools

### Good night, sleep tight... tips on how to keep those bed bugs from biting

Bed bugs are making a comeback. They are being found increasingly in homes, apartments and hotels. Shelters are not immune. These small, nocturnal insects pierce skin and feed on blood. They can live in any crack or crevice; because they are active at night, they are most likely to be found on or around mattresses and the immediate area surrounding beds.



Because of the transient nature of shelter clients, it can be especially difficult to prevent bed bug infestations or to eradicate them once they appear. Shelter staff need to closely monitor everyone coming on site, have all new residents bathe immediately, maintain a supply of clean clothing to hand out, and segregate and disinfect all clothing and belongings. When bed bugs are found in buildings, segregation and treatment procedures need to be followed immediately. These include the use of pesticides applied by professional pest control services.

Lookout Emergency Aid Society has created a comprehensive Bed Bugs Control Policy that you can download [here](#). “The steps can seem time-consuming when you first review them,” said Lookout’s Executive Director, Karen O’Shannacery. “But these measures will make it easier to prevent and control outbreaks. These actions have helped enormously in reducing infestations in our shelters. We are happy to share the policy with other operators for fine-tuning to their sites.”

If you have tips that you would like to share with your fellow operators, contact the editor: [glunde@bchousing.org](mailto:glunde@bchousing.org); 604-439-4135. Please also let us know if there is something that you would like to have featured as a future “tips and tools” article.

## Vancouver Island Region

Property Portfolio Manager Chuck Braun is on leave until January 5, 2007. If Chuck is normally your contact at BC Housing, please refer your requests to John Cavelti until Chuck returns.

John Cavelti  
Property Portfolio Manager  
250-978-2904  
jcavelti@bchousing.org



John will be leaving BC Housing in the new year. His regular portfolio is being taken over by Malachy Tohill. If John has been your regular Property Portfolio Manager, please update your files with Malachy's contact information.

Malachy Tohill  
Property Portfolio Manager  
(250) 978-2922  
mtohill@bchousing.org



## Home Office

Michael Kierszenblat is BC Housing's new Senior Program Planning Manager. The Emergency Shelter Program is one of the programs that Michael supervises. He also supervises safety and security programs for BC Housing's sites and is planning new programs at the Commission.

Michael Kierszenblat  
Senior Program Planning Manager  
604-439-4150  
mkierszenblat@bchousing.org



## quotes from the street

“It’s a wonder how you can get so many angelic people in one place at one time.”

Pete, client, Active Support Against Poverty, Prince George

“This place is run beautifully. The staff are really kind and

patient.”

Trevor, client, Active Support Against Poverty, Prince George

“A year ago I met the most wonderful people I’d ever met as a group. You saved my life and here, a year later –you do it again! I now have you as neighbours and am so grateful.”

Blair, past client, now supported housing resident,  
Lookout Emergency Aid Society, Vancouver

“Thank you. The support and a roof over my head and three meals and snacks and kindness and care I received, I was truly blessed and grateful.”

Anonymous client, Vi Fineday Family Shelter Society

“Words cannot express our appreciation... thank you for your hospitality, kindness and warm giving.”

Anonymous client, Vi Fineday Family Shelter Society

Housing solutions for healthier futures

[www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org)

Feedback? Questions? Story ideas? Contact the editor.

Editor: Jill Lunde 604-439-4135; [jlunde@bchousing.org](mailto:jlunde@bchousing.org)

