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## message from BC Housing

With part of the additional funding provided to the Emergency Shelter Program in the 2007 provincial budget, a building repair and small capital replacement program will be available soon. This is the first time such funds have been provided, and we know that many shelters have a range of needs. Please see Program Updates on page 2 for further details.

There is also a modest amount of money available for ongoing operating budgets of funded shelters and agencies. As a result, we will be inviting applications from shelters funded by the Emergency Shelter Program to fund additional beds or address specific issues related to the stability of the shelter's services. Information on this funding is also outlined in Program Updates on page 2.

It was great to see some of you at the recent Shelter Net BC symposium in Vernon. I am always impressed by the commitment and dedication of people who work to end homelessness. I had some great discussions with individuals about their ideas for improving the Emergency Shelter Program and their reactions to the changes already made. We see our work with you as a partnership and always welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,

Michael Anhorn,  
Manager, Emergency Shelter Program



### New funding

As you may recall from the April issue of Building Connections, new funding was announced for the Emergency Shelter Program in the February 20, 2007 provincial budget. This funding is making some significant differences to the program and funded agencies.

### Cold wet weather beds

All of last year's existing cold wet weather beds (344) have been converted to year-round beds. This brings the total number of funded beds to 1,410. In addition, we've been able to provide ongoing, annual funding for 30 cold wet weather beds whose funding was previously uncertain from year to year.

### Funding for building repairs

Starting at the end of June, ESP funded agencies can apply for funding for things such as minor building repairs, replacement washers/dryers, stoves, fridges, mattresses, and lockers. A letter detailing application requirements will be sent to all funded agencies by the end of June. Deadline for applications is July 31, 2007. Funding for building repair and small capital replacement will be available annually.

### Funding to increase shelter operations

A modest amount of money is available to funded shelters for some ongoing operating costs. It includes a range of needs that you've identified, including wage increases to be competitive with salaries offered at other social services agencies and additional overnight staff to increase the safety of your staff and clients (for shelters with 10 beds or more). Applications can also be submitted for subsidies for additional beds that are currently operated but for which you do not receive funding from BC Housing or any other government funder. Full details on this funding and how to apply will be included in the letter detailing the funding for building repairs. The deadline for applying for these funds is also July 31, 2007.

### Program Review update

Thanks very much to the agencies who participated in the consultations with City Spaces. We are now creating some new standards and guidelines for the Emergency Shelter Program. At the core of these changes are a set of principles and objectives that will guide the program as we continue to develop how emergency shelter services are delivered in British Columbia. These principles and objectives reflect the comments that many of you provided as ways to improve the program. Following is a summary of the principles and objectives.

#### Guiding principles

- **Core services that are accessible and client-focused**  
Shelter is offered without discrimination and there will be more integration of housing and support services.
- **Transparent and accountable operations**  
Funded agencies will provide the materials necessary to ensure that the program can demonstrate its effectiveness.
- **Welcoming, safe and secure service environment**  
Steps will be taken to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers and clients, as well as creating an environment that encourages clients to move forward with their lives.
- **A collaborative and innovative sector environment**

Partnership and integration are key to effective service delivery and service providers and partner agencies will work to further this.

### Program objectives

The Emergency Shelter Program must aim to provide shelter for homeless clients wherever need exists. The program must also help move clients from emergency accommodation to more stable housing. Funded agencies will provide a high level of client service and ensure their services are accountable, effective and responsive to client needs.

In addition, two overriding concepts have emerged for the operations of shelters. First, the emergency shelter system must become a true “gateway” to link people to more permanent housing and to stabilize their lives. The new standards and guidelines will identify what services are required to best achieve this. Secondly, the standards and guidelines will identify the essential services in terms of hygiene, nutrition and shelter that an agency needs to provide to be considered an emergency shelter.

While the principles have been completed, implementing the new standards and guidelines will take a few years and there will not be changes to contracts or service delivery expectations in the immediate future. We are committed to working with shelter providers to implement these changes smoothly with as much support as we can offer. Details on this framework will be available as soon as an implementation plan is developed.

### Submit your statistics!

A reminder of the importance of submitting your reports every month. Less than half of funded agencies submitted 100 per cent of their statistics last fiscal year. These reports provide us with vital information that we use to justify our funding from the provincial government and for program planning. Not having accurate information affects our ability to operate the program as well as we would like, and could affect future funding.

## news

### Shelter Net BC symposium

The May 23 to 25 Shelter Net BC symposium in Vernon offered a good opportunity for the shelter community to come together and network while learning more about various initiatives currently underway. The theme was “Thinking outside the cardboard box.” Event organizers put on a stimulating and thought-provoking conference. Thanks for all your work.

### BCNPHA annual conference

The BC Non-Profit Housing Association's 15th Annual Conference will be held November 19-21, 2007 at the Best Western Richmond Hotel & Convention Centre.

The theme for this year is "Opportunity Knocks!" The conference is tailored to meet the needs and interests of board members, administrators, front-line staff and volunteers in the non-profit housing sector. Participants will learn the latest on housing legislation and programs and have a wide variety of workshops to choose from.

For more information: [www.bcnpha.ca](http://www.bcnpha.ca).

## How The Housing Registry can help you

The Housing Registry is a centralized database for affordable housing providers that contains applicant information. Housing provider members of The Housing Registry use the registry to find tenants when units become available.

Shelter providers can apply to join The Housing Registry. By becoming members, shelters can help their clients in their search for more permanent housing by assisting them with the application process and using the online database to check the status of clients' application files to make sure that they are up to date, and/or updating them as required.

There is no charge to join The Housing Registry, however, members do need to have a high-speed internet connection in order to access and use the database effectively.

For more information: [www.bchousing.org/providers/registry](http://www.bchousing.org/providers/registry).

## Pro Bono Law of BC

This organization works closely with community groups and non-profit organizations to help with their legal needs as well as with the legal needs of the clients they serve. This can be helpful if you are having trouble understanding the legal complexities of running your society. On their website you can also find information about steps to take to establish and maintain a pro-bono partnership with a law firm in your community.

For more information: <http://probononet.bc.ca>.

## Raising the Roof's Shared Learnings on Homelessness website

This website provides a directory listing of services and initiatives for homeless and people at risk of homelessness. It also offers resources to assist front-line staff, managers and volunteers working in this field. Use the site to explore community initiatives and learn from the experiences of other agencies; check out the "how-to" resources; read the monthly electronic bulletin; and search the directory for specific organizations by organization name, location, client group, activities or other attributes.

For more information: [www.sharedlearnings.org](http://www.sharedlearnings.org).

## The health care of homeless persons

You are well aware of the profound effects that homelessness has on health. The Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program has published an online manual of communicable diseases and common problems in shelters and on the streets.

The manual includes information on communicable diseases and infections seen frequently among homeless populations. There is also a section on health risks such as frostbite and hypothermia caused by exposure to extreme weather, as well as another on the proper handling, storage and preparation of food in shelters.

For more information: [www.bhchp.org/BHCHP%20Manual/pages/intro\\_to\\_manual.html](http://www.bhchp.org/BHCHP%20Manual/pages/intro_to_manual.html).

## Socially responsible purchasing

Sustainable purchasing allows non-profit organizations to receive the best value for their money while also supporting local jobs, community impact, and working conditions and taking into account environmental effects of purchasing decisions. Opportunities exist in everything from

office supplies to electronic equipment, landscaping, fuels and food.

The Fraser Basin Council has launched a Sustainability Purchasing Network which publishes a free Guide to the Business Case and Benefits of Sustainable Purchasing which can offer you tips on how you can benefit.

For more information: [www.buysmartbc.com](http://www.buysmartbc.com).

## agency profile

### Kelowna agencies build trust

At a weekly round-table meeting, Kelowna agencies are building connections, rapport and trust with each other and with clients. The group, Partners in Community Case Management (PICC), is working together to best address the overall needs of clients who access their various services.

“Last December, we had a specific case that needed case conferencing, so we brought together the various agencies that had an interest in the client,” explained Andrew Hughes, Outreach Urban Health Clinic Coordinator, Interior Health. Collaborating on the client’s needs was such a success that the group decided to continue with the inter-agency meetings.

Through the meetings the group has held since then, PICC has helped 47 people get off the street and connected with the help they need. Forty-four are still off the street, either in shelter, in treatment, reconnected with their family, or in housing. And an immediate benefit realized has been an 80 per cent reduction in emergency room visits for the client group.

At the meetings, each agency introduces its new cases and the group assesses what other services the client would benefit from, anticipates future needs and gets services lined up. PICC sets up appointments for clients on the spot, and chooses a “point person” as the client’s main contact. They also provide updates and checkups to keep an eye out for individuals.

“The networking has been absolutely incredible,” said Peter Lees, Team Leader, NOW Canada Alexandra Gardner Women & Children Safe Centre. The agency representatives have “built up a real bond” that not only helps the agency workers, but helps the clients. “We’re not individuals working for an agency; we’re now a community working for an individual client.”

Peter comments that the group has created an environment where confidentiality is ensured and agency representatives feel free to discuss the client’s full needs. The trust they’ve built through working together is key in the client’s relationship with each of the agencies they connect with.

Andrew notes that if a client doesn’t buy into the process, they can’t move forward. With the process PICC has created, a client makes a connection with their point person and builds trust in them. That trust then transfers to the next agency representative in their “ladder of care.” “Clients move up the ladder because of their trust, which is built on the service provider’s trust for each other.”

PICC has created a virtual full-service agency that provides a continuum of care by combining the range of services offered. Both Andrew and Peter agree that PICC has built an inter-agency community that benefits the community at large. Andrew stated, “Through PICC, we’ve been able to drop the barriers and get things done.”

### Best practices for governance of shelters

Best practices allow you to improve your operations by using standard actions, methods or practices known to produce results. By applying best practices to the governance of your shelter or agency, you help ensure that your society's goals are clearly defined and that systems and resources are in place to achieve these.

Here are some basic best practices for effective governance.

- Implement a governance structure that is appropriate for the size and complexity of your organization. This should include a process for identifying what skill sets and experience is needed by the Board and ways to recruit directors to fulfill these roles.
- Recruit an executive director or administrator who is a competent manager and knowledgeable about governance. This will ensure the Board has the resources and support it needs to govern the society well.
- Clearly explain expectations to prospective Board members so they understand their roles and responsibilities. Supply them with job descriptions and provide appropriate orientation and training.
- Develop operational goals that can be monitored. Develop a clear mission statement that sums up your society's core purposes and values.
- Develop a plan that considers both the medium-term and long-term and that sets out measurable goals over these times.
- Develop policies on issues such as conflict of interest, financial management and control, human resources management, information and records management, maintenance management, planning and evaluation, revenue generation, risk management, stakeholder communication and transparency, and client management.
- Develop ways to generate monitoring information that the Board needs to ensure compliance with policies and progress to achieving operational goals.
- Create an annual Board calendar that includes recruitment and nomination of directors, AGM and Board meeting, orientation of new members, legal reporting requirements, planning cycle, budget cycle, fundraising, review of mission statement and Board manual, evaluation of the Board and of the staff person reporting to the Board, and evaluation of legal and policy compliance and of success in achieving operational goals.

This list is adapted from information the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) has developed. The BCNPHA lists further information about governance and other best practices applicable to non-profit housing providers on its website ([www.bcnpha.ca](http://www.bcnpha.ca)) including a self-test you can fill out and submit.