



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **8th annual Homelessness Action Week to draw attention to major issue of Invisible Homelessness in Metro Vancouver**

For Immediate Release  
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**Vancouver, BC** – Preparations are well underway across Metro Vancouver for the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Homelessness Action Week (HAW), an initiative organized by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, and supported by hundreds of volunteers across the region. Taking place October 13-19, 2013, HAW is focused this year not only on providing support and services to people who are homeless, but also on raising awareness about the growing concern of Invisible Homelessness.

*"Few people realize that some 80 per cent of homeless people do not live on the street," says Deb Bryant, Co-Chair of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. "These are the people who live in their cars, in church basements, in temporary shelters, or on the floors and couches of friends and family. They live month to month in unstable and even unsafe housing, and always with the fear of ending up on the street. It's important the public be aware of this critically important issue and that we work together towards a permanent solution. We believe the solution is to start with housing, which has proven effective in other cities in Canada."*

Seniors, youth and Aboriginal peoples are over-represented in the homeless population. These groups are particularly vulnerable to challenges such as inadequate income, abusive relationships, and health issues that lead to homelessness. *"Solving and reducing the cost of homelessness begins by providing people with a secure and stable home," says Bryant. "Once people are securely housed, support services, if they are needed, become much more effective in helping people meet challenges. Support services could include finding job training or improving their physical and mental well-being. But it all starts with having a place to call home."*

Activities during Homelessness Action Week will include Homeless Connect Events (service fairs for people who are homeless), public events (such as film nights and discussion panels) and a public awareness campaign focused on raising awareness about the issues of and solutions for Invisible Homelessness. The solutions go beyond providing people with shelter and include providing people with a home - a safe and permanent place to live - while supporting them with services that help them break the cycle of homelessness.

In 2012, more than one hundred events took place across the Metro Vancouver region related to Homelessness Action Week.

Those unable to attend events can still do their part to support HAW and solutions for homelessness by:

- Supporting the solutions to homelessness by spreading the word about the need to start with housing, and using the Homelessness Action Week social media action kit found at [www.stophomelessness.ca](http://www.stophomelessness.ca).
- Contacting your local Community Homelessness Task Force to become involved in supporting the solutions in your area.

To find out more about the activities of Homelessness Action Week and how you can help visit [www.stophomelessness.ca](http://www.stophomelessness.ca).

On Twitter: #startwithhome.

### **About Homelessness Action Week**

Homelessness Action Week is an annual event focused on bringing public awareness and understanding to the issue of homelessness as well as solutions in the Greater Vancouver region. During Homelessness Action Week the public is invited to participate in events across the region. Community organizations, schools, and concerned members of the public are also encouraged to get involved, help spread the word about homelessness action, and support the solutions through education, advocacy, and social media activity.

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