



## **2013 Homelessness Action Week Fast Facts**

### **Homelessness Action Week:**

- 2013 marks the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Homelessness Action Week (HAW), taking place from October 13-19<sup>th</sup>, 2013.
- This is an annual event focused on bringing public awareness and understanding to the issue of homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region.
- During HAW the public is invited to participate in events across the region.
- HAW activities include Homeless Connect Events (service fairs for people who are homeless), public events (such as film nights), and a public awareness campaign focused on raising awareness about Invisible Homelessness.
- Community organizations, schools, and concerned members of the public are also encouraged to get involved and help spread the word about homelessness action through education, advocacy, and social media activity.
- This year HAW is focusing on raising awareness about the growing concern of Invisible Homelessness.

### **Invisible Homelessness:**

- 80% of homeless people do not live on the street.<sup>i</sup>
- The invisibly homeless are those people who have shelter but not a home - a permanent, safe, and secure place to live. They instead live in temporary or unstable places such as cars, in church basements, in emergency shelters, or on the floors and couches of friends and family.
- Aboriginal peoples, youth, seniors, and families are over-represented in the Metro Vancouver homeless population.
- Invisible homelessness is the result of many different factors that include a lack of affordable housing for individuals, families, and seniors living on inadequate income or unable to work; mental illness, physical disabilities, lack of adequate employment opportunities; and the need to flee from abusive relationships.

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<sup>i</sup> Homeless Hub. (2013). Homelessness: Social Exclusion. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.homelesshub.ca/topics/social-exclusion-208.aspx>

## Solutions

- The RSCH is focusing on solutions to homelessness that start with a home, then provide the support required to stay housed.
- This has been proven a successful and cost-effective solution, as a home is necessary before someone can begin to address barriers to becoming self-sufficient.
- Results of the HAW 2012 public opinion poll revealed that Metro Vancouver residents support this solution to homelessness: to provide affordable housing with support services.
- Several Canadian cities, including Vancouver, have already seen a reduction in homelessness populations by starting with housing.<sup>ii</sup>
- Research notes that hospital admissions, police interventions, and health care costs dropped dramatically for people who are provided with housing and support services.
- Between 75 and 86 per cent of those who have housing with support services retain their housing long-term and begin their journey out of the cycle of homelessness.<sup>iii</sup>
- There has been noticeable progress over the last 10 years towards solving homelessness across Metro Vancouver. The 2011 Homelessness Count showed a 52% decrease in the number of unsheltered homeless individuals from 2008, which means more people are accessing temporary shelters.<sup>iv</sup> However, the total homeless population has not changed.

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.

-30-

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<sup>ii</sup> Homeless Hub. (2013). *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013*. Retrieved from: <http://www.homelesshub.ca/Library/View.aspx?id=55941>

<sup>iii</sup> Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2012). *At Home/Chez Soi Project Early Finding Report*. Retrieved from: [http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/Housing\\_At\\_Home\\_Early\\_Findings\\_Report\\_Volume\\_3\\_ENG\\_1.pdf](http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/Housing_At_Home_Early_Findings_Report_Volume_3_ENG_1.pdf) & Edmonton Homeless Commission. (2013). *10 Year Plan Progress – Year 4 Key Numbers*. Retrieved from: <http://homelesscommission.org/index.php/key-statistics>.

<sup>iv</sup> Metro Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. (2012). *One Step Forward: Results of the 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count*. Metro Vancouver.