



## **Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness**

**Media Release**

**April 23, 2014**

### **2014 Regional Homeless Count Finds Small Increase**

The preliminary results of the 2014 Homeless Count show a five percent increase in the number of people who are homeless in Metro Vancouver. The number of people identified as homeless in counts has not changed significantly since 2008.

Conducted on March 12, 2014, the 24-hour survey provides a snapshot of homelessness in Metro Vancouver. About 900 volunteers fanned out across the region to document and interview homeless people in streets and shelters, as well as those with “no fixed address” in hospitals, jails and detox facilities, plus couch surfers and people who used homelessness services on the day of the count.

A total of 2,770 people were found homeless on March 12, 2014, five percent more than 2,650 in the 2011 count.

“Regionally speaking, homeless numbers remain stable from previous years,” said Deb Bryant, Chair of the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. “This shows that we’ve stemmed the tide of increasing homelessness and have achieved some stability – but we still have more to do to end and prevent homelessness.”

Of the 2,770 in the region, 1,813 were considered “sheltered homeless,” meaning they were found in shelters, safe houses for youth or transition houses for women. This category also includes individuals with “no fixed address” staying temporarily in hospital beds, jails or detox facilities.

The 2014 count identified 957 people considered “unsheltered homeless,” that is, people living outside, couch surfing or using homelessness services on the day of the count.

Aboriginal people continue to make up nearly one third, or 31 percent, of the total homeless population. This year’s count identified 582 Aboriginal people who were homeless, compared to 394 in 2011.

“We’re distressed by the rise in the number of Aboriginal Peoples who are homeless and the disproportionate number of Aboriginal Peoples who remain on the street,” said Patrick Stewart, Chair of the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee. “Most Aboriginal Peoples clearly aren’t accessing the shelter system. We need more housing and support services managed and operated by Aboriginal Peoples that incorporate Aboriginal community traditions.”

“With the new cycle of federal homelessness funding being directed to a Housing First approach, it will be especially important to focus on what will work for the Aboriginal community,” Stewart said.

A total of 410 youth (under the age of 25) were counted as homeless compared to 397 in 2011. Despite the higher number, the proportion of youth homelessness decreased to 20 percent in 2014 from 24 percent in 2011.

“Homeless youth are not the same as homeless adults – they are much less visible,” said John Harvey, Director Program Services of Covenant House Vancouver. “We believe there are a lot more young

people who are homeless and at risk of becoming homeless than the numbers show. Youth homelessness is not about young people making bad choices – it’s about a lack of support and housing options.”

A total of 371 seniors (55 and older) were counted as homeless. These seniors represented 18 percent of the homeless population, up from 16 percent in 2011.

“The homeless count confirms what homeless-serving agencies have been telling us over the past year,” added Ms. Bryant. “Last fall, we consulted with stakeholders across the region as part of our process to update the Regional Homelessness Plan. Our direction is clear – we need to focus our resources on helping people who are most in need: Aboriginal Peoples, young people, seniors, women and families.”

The Regional Homelessness Plan, once updated, will identify priority actions and will provide strategic direction toward reducing homeless in the region.

### **About the Homeless Counts**

Every three years since 2002, homeless counts have provided estimates on the number of people who are homeless during a 24-hour period in Metro Vancouver as well as their demographics. The trends identified in the counts help inform funding and policy decisions.

The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) and the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee (AHSC) provided oversight for the count methodology. In 2014, a Youth Steering Committee was formed to help the homeless count gain a better understanding of homeless young people.

### **About The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH):**

Since 2000, the RSCH has brought together a range of people and organizations collaborating to reduce and prevent homelessness in Metro Vancouver. The RSCH mandate is to develop and implement a Regional Homelessness Plan, recommend projects in Metro Vancouver for funding through the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy, and develop a regional understanding of homelessness solutions. The RSCH includes more than 150 organizations and individual members. <http://stophomelessness.ca>

### **About the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee (AHSC):**

The vision of the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee is to reduce and prevent Aboriginal homelessness and improve the quality of life for people who are homeless. The Committee was established in September 2000 and includes over 25 members representing Aboriginal service providers and community-based organizations. The Committee agrees that the most effective means of addressing the vision is through Aboriginal best practices and culturally appropriate services.

**The preliminary report of the 2014 Homeless Count is available on <http://stophomelessness.ca>**