

LET'S TALK
ENDING
HOMELESSNESS

CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

DECEMBER 2013

Prepared for: Metro Vancouver's Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

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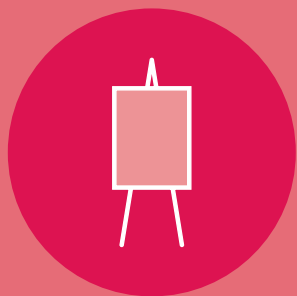


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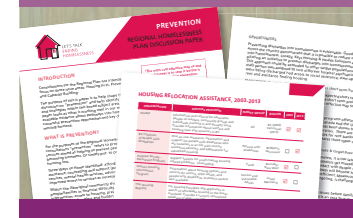
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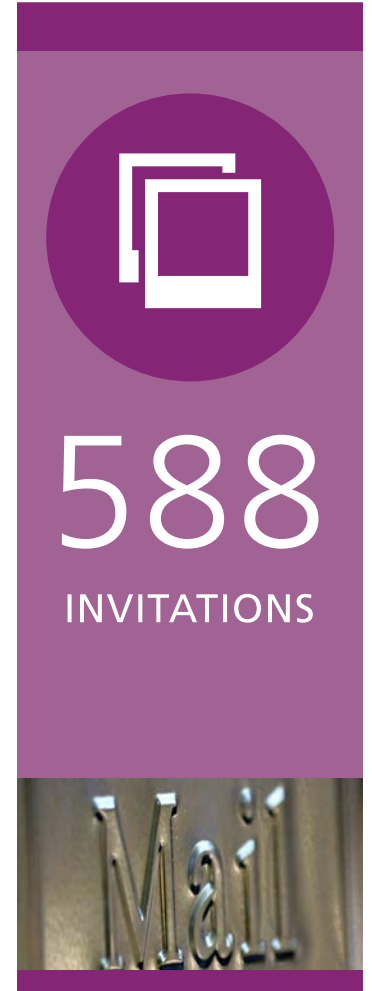
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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) engaged CitySpaces Consulting to implement a consultation initiative to identify preliminary priorities and strategies that will inform the new Regional Homelessness Plan and guide the allocation of federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding. The consultation initiative engaged with a broad range of community stakeholders throughout the Metro Vancouver region, ranging from housing operators, service providers, health authorities and other relevant organizations.

PRINCIPLES

The consultation process fostered an inclusive consultation approach, reaching out to all relevant stakeholders and groups across the region to ensure community needs and priorities were identified to the greatest extent possible. The consultation process was framed to match the planning principles of the RSCH's new Regional Homelessness Plan.

OBJECTIVES

Overall, the consultation had the following key objectives:

- To identify effective approaches and areas of practice (e.g. what is working well within the region).
- To identify shortfalls in funding and practice and the solutions and strategies to overcome them.
- To identify areas of agreement on strategies and priorities for the region.
- To re-focus the new Regional Homelessness Plan around 3 areas — housing first, prevention, and capacity building — and to align community priorities with the planning efforts of different levels of government.

PRINCIPLES OF THE REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN + CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Responsive to the local community
- Informed by current data and best practices
- Aligned with efforts of other levels of governments
- Focused on strategies to end and prevent homelessness and promote capacity-building
- Forward-looking with a focus on setting targets and priorities
- Emphasis on implementation and outcomes
- Having a regional perspective



FOCUS AREAS

Discussions from the consultation activities centered around identifying strategies and priorities to end homelessness, and were focused on three topic areas: housing first, prevention, and capacity-building. Having these topic areas to guide the consultation provided a strategic framework for the conversations.



HOUSING FIRST

“Housing First” is an approach to ending homelessness that involves giving people direct access to permanent housing, along with the services they need and want to maintain their housing. It is:

- Based on the idea that housing is a basic human right.
- An approach to providing access to permanent affordable housing.
- An approach to community-based services designed to meet individual needs.

There is no requirement for people who are homeless to become ‘housing ready’ before getting permanent housing. They do not need to move through the continuum of shelters and transitional housing, or be engaged in mental health or addictions treatment programs, prior to being housed. Housing First is based on the idea that issues that may have contributed to a person’s homelessness, such as a lack of employment, addiction, poor mental or physical health, can be best addressed once a person has stable housing.

Housing First can be delivered in a number of ways, from scattered site self-contained units to dedicated buildings.



PREVENTION

“Prevention” refers to programs or services aimed at helping to prevent people from becoming homeless. Or simply put: to prevent housing loss. The range of prevention activities is very broad, ranging from employment assistance, addictions treatment services, advocacy, early intervention, addressing family breakdown, and increasing access to affordable housing.

The most cost effective way to end homelessness is to stop it before it begins with effective prevention. Every individual or family comes into contact with a person, program, or system that could prevent homelessness. Within this context, communities need a thoughtful and methodical prevention strategy that includes:

- Early detection and intervention.
- Emergency assistance.
- Policy and practice reforms to mainstream systems.
- Coordination of services.
- Housing and support services and access to income.
- Access to mental health and addiction services.



CAPACITY-BUILDING

Capacity-building is an ongoing process to strengthen the ability of individuals, agencies, networks and the broader community to develop meaningful and sustainable response to homelessness. Objectives of capacity-building can include:

- Enhance, or more effectively utilize, skills and abilities and resources.
- Strengthen understandings and relationships.
- Address issues of values, attitudes, motivations and conditions in order to support activities in a sustainable manner.

It gives people the skills, ability and confidence to take a leading role in the development of their community, and provides them with the information, understanding and training that enable them to perform effectively in bringing about desired change.

APPROACH

CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

The consultation activities were characterized by a cross-sectoral and geographic integration of participants to encourage broad-based solutions and a greater regional perspective. The consultations were comprised of three main components:

3 SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOPS:

The large, sub-regional workshops had participants representing a variety of stakeholders including funders, front-line service agencies, housing providers, and institutions. The workshops were divided between three geographic regions: the North East (North Shore, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, Burnaby, and New Westminster); the South (Richmond, Surrey, Langley, and Delta); and, Vancouver.

The workshop format began with participants identifying issues or ideas they wanted to discuss (within housing first, prevention, and capacity-building). The ideas were assembled onto a wall canvass and organized into table topics. Each topic was assigned to a table with a note-taker/facilitator. Participants chose the table they wanted to participate at for the first break-out discussion, and then found a new table for the second break-out discussion. The top re-occurring themes from the table discussions were identified and recorded onto the priorities board and shared with all the participants during the plenary discussion.

4 IDEAS SESSIONS:

Service providers for four sub-population groups were identified for targeted discussions: at-risk youth, women, seniors, and the Aboriginal community. It was anticipated that these groups would be under-represented in the sub-regional workshops and were identified as priority populations. As such, dedicated “Ideas Sessions” were developed, still focusing on the strategies and priorities within the areas of housing first, prevention, and capacity-building, but tailored to each group as appropriate. These smaller sessions recorded issues, ideas, and strategies on flip-chart paper and participants used up to 3 sticky dots to identify the top priorities.

10 ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS:

Brief one-on-one interviews were conducted with individuals with “lived experiences” (of being homeless or at-risk of homelessness) who have been housed for six months or longer and who consider themselves to be in a positive, stable place in terms of their housing, access to services and general well-being. Interviews were conducted in Langley and in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, focusing on their past experiences and challenges accessing services and housing, and on identifying strategies to overcome issues in the sector to better serve people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.



INFORMATION + OUTREACH

Discussion papers were prepared by Metro Vancouver that described and defined the three focus areas (housing first, prevention, and capacity-building). The papers included examples of relevant practices within each of the focus areas to further highlight the importance and relevance of them in the region. The papers were made available for download from the www.stophomeless.ca website, and a link to the papers was distributed to participants by email.

In addition, brief two-page handouts were prepared that summarized the discussion papers, and were distributed to the sector as part of the email invitations for the consultation activities. Additional copies were made available at the sessions.

SYNTHESIZING + ANALYZING INFORMATION

There were a number of ways that participants were able to provide input into the consultation activities: writing their “original ideas” on post-it notes, contributing to small group discussions, engaging in the plenary discussion, and completing comment forms. The post-it notes, wall canvas notes, and notes from the verbal discussions were all collected for synthesizing and analyzing. The key findings from the analysis is highlighted in the following sections of this report.

The report is organized starting with the emerging strategies, followed by highlights from each consultation event.

In addition to the three main components of the consultation work program, Metro Vancouver met with the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy Society (GVSS) and the Funders Table to discuss strategies and priorities for housing first, prevention, and capacity-building. Although these meetings were separate from the consultation program, the information obtained from these discussions have been included in this report for information-sharing





EMERGING STRATEGIES

From the consultation activities, a synthesis of the discussions revealed a number of emerging strategies for the upcoming Regional Homelessness Plan. The strategies presented below have not yet been prioritized and, as such, are in no particular order of priority. This section has been organized by the three focus areas, but with slightly 'modified' titles to reflect feedback from participants: housing, prevention + support, and capacity-building.

HOUSING

1. INCREASE THE HOUSING SUPPLY

STRATEGY:

Provide more housing in the region to persons who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness through a combination of purpose-built, dedicated-buildings and scattered site units.

COMPONENTS:

- Continue to provide a range of affordable housing options along the housing spectrum, including shelters and safe houses; low-barrier housing; transitional/temporary housing; supportive housing; and independent living options.
- Prioritize the development of independent living housing for individuals and families that do not require integrated on-site support services.
- Build purpose-built housing for specific at-risk populations (see Housing Strategy #5).

- Investigate opportunities to better use or redevelop the existing housing stock in low density areas (e.g. programs that link and support empty nesters with at-risk populations with moderate needs).

2. SHELTERS + SAFE HOUSES

STRATEGY:

Continue to provide different types of shelters and safe houses as part of the housing spectrum, and focus on enhancing shelter safety, expanding operations to provide more on-site support and case planning, and strategically develop shelters in underserved communities.

COMPONENTS:

- Expedite client assessments and development of case plans with homeless individuals who enter an emergency shelter or drop-in centre.
- Align shelter operational standards with a legislative framework. Establish and enforce operational standards for emergency shelters to ensure there is consistency in length of stay, entry criteria, and access to information and services.

- Increase access to safe and suitable emergency beds for vulnerable groups who are unable to access traditional shelters, including youth, seniors, families, and women who have experienced trauma.
- Increase the number of trained staff able to provide client-centered, one-on-one interaction with shelter users (see Capacity-Building Strategy #6).

3. INCREASE ACCESS TO PRIVATE MARKET HOUSING

STRATEGY:

Establish programs and services that increase access to private market housing, and support landlords and tenants in market housing.

COMPONENTS:

- Improve access to private market housing through rent subsidies and mobile supports.
- Support tenants to access basic necessities that help create a positive home environment (e.g. buying furniture and other household items).

- Facilitate workshops and information sessions to clients on how to find market housing. These could include information about rights and responsibilities; preparing for landlord-tenant interviews; and selecting suitable housing and neighbourhoods.
- Support tenants to access market housing with flexible funding to assist with damage deposits, moving costs, etc.
- Implement life-skills programs that improve tenants' ability to maintain market housing (e.g. budgeting skills, using appliances safely/effectively, good neighbourliness, etc).
- Develop friendly landlord programs that provide incentives and support landlords when there is conflict or communication issues (e.g. damage bank for potential repair costs).
- Provide training to outreach workers to communicate, mediate and negotiate with landlords (see Capacity-Building Strategy #6).

4. PROTECT + IMPROVE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

STRATEGY:

Prevent the loss of units and improve the quality of existing low-income housing stock (e.g. upgrading SROs and renovating existing buildings).

COMPONENTS:

- Upgrade existing older stock of buildings, particularly SROs, to provide self-contained units where possible and ensure all apartments meet basic standards of maintenance and safety.
- Ensure individuals are not placed in housing situations that are potentially unsafe or harmful.
- Establish a regional livability standard and ensure municipalities work with property managers and landlords to ensure buildings are safe, secure, and maintained.
- Implement one-to-one replacement of purpose-built rental units throughout the region as part of major upgrading or redevelopment of the older stock of buildings.
- Improve access to affordable housing units to people who are homeless by supporting agencies and non-profit housing providers.
- Seek improvements to how individuals are matched to housing units and ensure individuals and households have more control over where they live.
- Review selection criteria and unit-matching efforts by existing registries and wait-lists to ensure individuals and households are able to identify the housing that is best suited to them.



- Prioritize individuals who are living in inadequate housing, such as substandard SROs, to access better housing as it becomes available.

5. HOUSING FOR SPECIFIC AT-RISK POPULATIONS

STRATEGY:

Provide specific housing throughout the region that meets the needs of specific at-risk populations, such as housing specific to at-risk youth, women, families, seniors, the Aboriginal community, and persons with mental health and addiction issues.

COMPONENTS:

YOUTH-SPECIFIC HOUSING

- Ensure that a range of youth-specific housing options are available, including low-barrier safe houses, transition homes, and independent living options.
- Ensure housing for youth is located in safe neighbourhoods, and is accessible to services, programs, and transit.
- Develop congregate housing for youth with integrated, multi-disciplinary support services (e.g. clinical support, peer support, intergenerational mentorship) in a non-institutional environment.
- Match youth-friendly landlords to youth who are ready to live independently in market housing, and provide support as needed (see Housing Strategy #4).

WOMEN-SPECIFIC HOUSING

- Approach women-specific housing using a women-centered lens. This could involve integrating community building activities, peer support, and childcare support.
- Provide a range of affordable housing options for women, from low-barrier transitional housing, supportive housing, affordable independent living, and housing that is suitable for different ages (e.g. mature women). Increase access to specialized housing for women fleeing domestic abuse, and housing for trafficked women.

FAMILY-SPECIFIC HOUSING

- Provide flexible housing options that can accommodate a variety of family household compositions, including women with older sons, larger families, single Dads, multiple generations, and other situations to minimize family separation.
- Housing for women with children need to be larger, with multiple bedrooms, located close to schools, parks, and community services. It should prioritize safety in building design and neighbourhood location.
- Continue to provide family-only shelters with support services, where parents are not at-risk of losing custody of their children.
- Provide rapid-rehousing opportunities for families to limit the impact of homelessness on children.

SENIORS-SPECIFIC HOUSING

- Provide a range of affordable housing options for seniors, including independent living, semi-independent living with non-medical supports, and assisted living.
- Ensure seniors housing is culturally appropriate and accessible for a range of ethnic groups and non-English speaking seniors.
- Increase opportunities for seniors to age in place, including adapting housing to be accessible and suitable.
- Build relationships with landlords in market housing and other service providers to build a safety net for seniors living on their own.

SPECIFIC HOUSING FOR THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

- Approach Aboriginal-specific housing using an Indigenous lens. This could include using culturally-sensitive design features such as clustered housing, multi-generational units, sweat lodge, and integrated Aboriginal-specific services.
- Aboriginal-specific housing should be managed and operated by Aboriginal individuals and incorporate Aboriginal community traditions such as smudging and food sharing.

6. ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGY:

Establish partnerships between housing providers, government agencies, businesses and developers to increase the number of subsidized units in the region.

COMPONENTS:

- Municipalities and service providers need to partner with businesses and developers to support the development of housing for at-risk groups along the housing spectrum.
- Municipalities and other levels of government to provide incentives to support the development of purpose-built rental (e.g. tax breaks, density bonusing).
- Municipalities to partner with developers to ensure one-to-one replacement of purpose-built rental units as part of major redevelopment or upgrading projects.
- Facilitate partnerships between non-profit organizations and developers to manage new units of non-market or affordable housing in new developments.



Prevention + Support

1. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE + ELIGIBILITY

STRATEGY:

Improve the situation of people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness by making financial assistance and subsidy programs accessible and adequate.

COMPONENTS:

- Continue to provide rent assistance for low-income families through the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and seniors through the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters Program (SAFER) and expand the eligibility of these programs. Increase the number of rent supplements available to homeless outreach programs.
- Support rent bank programs and consider developing a regional rent bank program.
- Reduce institutional barriers for accessing income assistance, such as creating centralized access to rent subsidies, reducing the process time for rental assistance applications, creating user-friendly websites, and updating file-access systems.
- Increase the amount of income assistance, disability assistance, shelter allowance, and rental subsidies to match regional housing costs, and make financial assistance programs more flexible and inclusive with less rigid eligibility criteria.

- Introduce flexible financial assistance funding that service providers or individuals could direct towards childcare costs, dental services, transit passes, or other basic requirements.
- Raise earning exemptions for income assistance, with provisions that allow people to work.
- Provide additional trustee options for clients unable to manage their own funds (e.g. aging seniors).
- Implement debt reduction programs that also increases the financial literacy of clients.
- Provide regional transportation subsidy/pass for clients to access services across regional jurisdictions.
- Introduce additional rent subsidies that are tied to support service providers and prevention support programs.

2. ENHANCE SUPPORT SERVICES

STRATEGY:

- Increase, enhance and update outreach and support services to become more flexible, responsive and inclusive in their approach.

COMPONENTS:

- Prioritize client needs assessments and case planning work to identify the level and type of services that best meet each client's needs.

- Ensure outreach teams have access to rent subsidies and flexible funds that they can use at their discretion to support clients in maintaining their housing and create a positive home environment (e.g. damage deposits, household furniture and supplies, moving expenses, and groceries).
- Expand outreach programs to enable client support on evenings and weekends and provide ongoing life-skills training, including increasing the number of outreach workers (see Capacity-Building Strategy #7).
- Focus on providing wrap around one-on-one services, in a positive trust-building environment.
- Help clients complete forms for disability assistance, rental applications, identification replacement, and filing taxes.
- Facilitate access to drop-in centres throughout the region that foster a safe and compassionate environment, designated as an entry point to access information, services, peer support, and referrals. Where possible, drop-in centres should target specific sub-populations, such as women, at-risk youth, the Aboriginal community, or seniors.

3. SUPPORT SERVICES SPECIFIC TO AT-RISK POPULATIONS

STRATEGY:

- Provide a range of support services throughout the region that are specific to at-risk populations, such as services specific to at-risk youth, seniors, women, families, the Aboriginal community, and persons with mental health or addiction issues.

COMPONENTS:

FOR YOUTH

- Provide seamless and flexible funding and support before and after the age of 19, as needed. This includes the continuation of client/social worker relationships for youth aging out of youth-designated programs.
- Provide a range of youth-specific services: outreach and drop-in centre services for youth aging out of government care, outreach services, specialized multiple barriers teams, and programming for young women and teen moms.
- Improve access to financial assistance by making rent subsidies more flexible; expanding the eligibility and funding for adult youth agreements; and creating a rent bank specific to youth.
- Increase the availability of beds at

youth-specific treatment centres.

FOR SENIORS

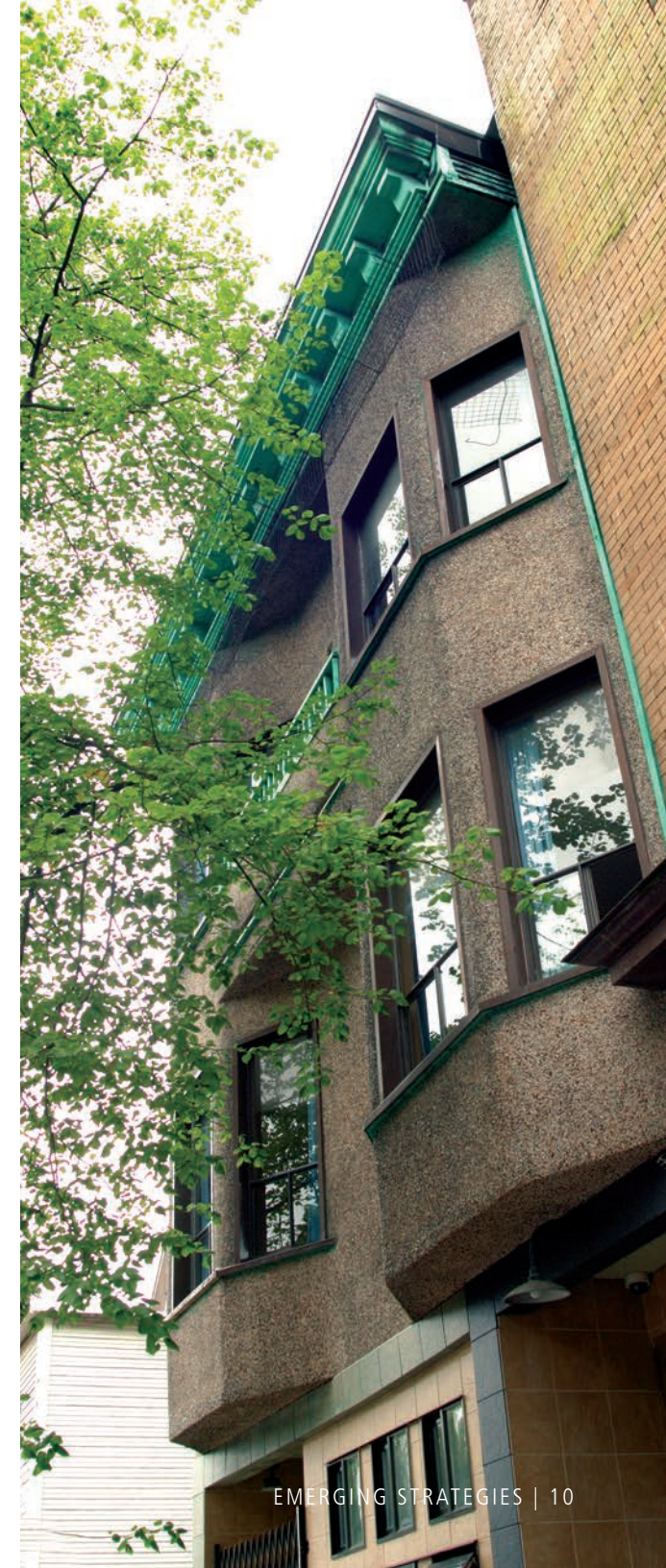
- Develop programs and checklists for pre-seniors to get them 'senior ready' and prevent future instability and financial uncertainty.
- Develop an umbrella organization that provides services specific to seniors.
- Increase capacity for service providers to provide senior-specific services, such as training to work with seniors (see Capacity-Building Strategy #6).

FOR WOMEN

- Incorporate peer support programs and wrap-around services for at-risk women.
- Implement rapid re-housing programs for women.
- For women fleeing domestic violence, shift the assessment of women's safety and well-being onto women's centres as opposed to the RCMP.

FOR FAMILIES

- Assist moms with maintaining or regaining custody of their children.
- Provide family counselling and tools to cope with relationship issues or tragedy to prevent family breakdowns.
- Establish ACT teams for families that integrate family services and health supports.



FOR THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

- Increase access to Aboriginal specific services outside of Vancouver.
- Provide Aboriginal-specific life-skills services.
- Increase the availability of services for Aboriginal individuals that are staffed and managed by Aboriginal organizations. This includes treatment programs and drop-in centres.

FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH + ADDICTION ISSUES

- Support specialized outreach teams focused on health, mental health, and concurrent disorders.
- Enhance outreach teams to include workers with mental health training, clinical staff, and other population-specific expertise (e.g. Aboriginal individuals or youth).
- Increase links between service agencies (e.g. BC Housing and health authorities, mental health services and youth agreement workers, or clinical staff and outreach teams).
- Enhance early intervention and detection assessment of persons with mental health and addiction issues, and connect them with appropriate services.
- Provide assistance to individuals living in hoarding situations.
- Increase the number of recovery beds and provide immediate access to detox beds for those in need.

- Provide opportunities for clients to access traditional Aboriginal health services.
- Provide life-skills training and services.
- Provide recreation opportunities to at-risk individuals and families, and to persons recovering from physical and mental trauma (brain injury, etc).

4. COMMUNITY-BUILDING

STRATEGY:

Foster community-building and a sense of belonging by creating social networks and connections for clients.

COMPONENTS:

- Implement peer-run mentorship programs and outreach services alongside professionally-staffed support services.
- Work with clients to find housing within their neighbourhood so they can maintain community connections, social networks, service provider relationships, and volunteer activities.
- Ensure new housing for at-risk populations is located within reasonable walking distance to amenities, services, programs, employment, and volunteer activities.
- Integrate community-building principles as part of the design and programming of housing for all groups, especially Aboriginal tenants, youth, and women and children.

5. ACCESS TO EDUCATION + EMPLOYMENT

STRATEGY:

Increase access to education and employment opportunities for at-risk groups to improve their financial situation and prospects for personal growth.

COMPONENTS:

- Provide access to literacy programs to ensure that all residents have basic reading and writing skills (see Prevention Strategy #1).
- Improve access to education funding for youth.
- Increase access to employment and volunteer opportunities for individuals who have experienced homelessness and may still be at-risk of homelessness.
- Link existing employment programs to outreach service providers. Programs may include matching clients to jobs, but also working with prospective employers to ensure understanding and compassion.
- Facilitate meetings and mentorship programs between employers or industry representatives to work with at-risk youth and adults.

6. DISCHARGE PLANNING

STRATEGY:

Improve discharge planning and support for individuals leaving hospitals, treatment centres, and prisons.

COMPONENTS:

- Assess the clients' risk of housing loss or related issues at point of patient/client in-take, and plan accordingly.
- Expand existing pilot programs that work with chronic offenders before they are discharged to find housing and address personal needs.
- Investigate approaches to support patients and clients who are soon to be discharged from hospitals or treatment centres.

7. FOOD CHOICE + FOOD SECURITY

STRATEGY:

Improve access to food programs and nutritious meals for individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, living in shelters and living in supportive housing.

COMPONENTS:

- Provide access to regular, nutritious meals and consideration of specific dietary needs at supportive housing or other group living situations.
- For clients in self-contained units, ensure regular access to meal programs as well as training on how to buy groceries and prepare meals.
- Provide assistance to clients to enable them to purchase their own food that meets their dietary needs.



Capacity Building

1. UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

STRATEGY:

Facilitate the sharing of knowledge and understanding of homelessness issues to the general public, organizations, and various levels of government.

COMPONENTS:

- Establish and use consistent and clear language on housing and homelessness.
- Educate municipal Councils and the general public about housing and homelessness issues to garner better support of community housing and homelessness projects.
- Eliminate stigma through public education and foster an understanding that everyone deserves housing and housing choice.
- Educate the public to change attitudes about at-risk populations and the importance of a living wage.
- Tell peoples' stories to help raise awareness and understanding of homelessness.
- Showcase cost savings of providing housing to at-risk populations in areas such as health, corrections, and the court system.
- Educate the general public on the history and experiences of the Aboriginal community to foster better understanding and sensitivity.

2. COMMUNICATION

STRATEGY:

Increase communication across sectors, agencies, and end-users to improve the awareness of programs and services available to people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

COMPONENTS:

- Increase service providers awareness and knowledge of programs and services available in their jurisdiction and in the region.
- Improve connections and communication between hospitals and outreach teams.
- Build awareness of the services available through neighbourhood houses and community centres, and enhance their ability to disseminate information across agencies and to the public.
- Further support outreach and in-reach workers to communicate available services and resources to their clients.
- Increase information sharing about available resources and programs among agencies by having regular contact and quarterly meetings.
- Create a user-friendly service navigator tool or system for both staff and clients.

3. COLLABORATION

STRATEGY:

Facilitate collaboration between local and regional government agencies, housing and shelter providers, and health practitioners to increase the collective capacity to provide services, build consensus on new initiatives, and enhance support across communities.

COMPONENTS:

- Encourage local and regional collaboration and referrals across agencies and discourage the duplication of services.
- Increase opportunities for local agencies to interact, mingle and collaborate by hosting events and conferences.
- Facilitate inter-agency workshops on a regular basis with a variety of stakeholders.
- Coordinate round table discussions between funders and service providers that work with the same at-risk populations in the region.
- Establish local advisory groups to provide feedback on projects, gain community support on projects, and share skills to build cross-agency capacity.
- Include representation from hospitals as part of community homeless task forces and tables.
- Implement shared spaces, hot desks (multiple workers using single work station at different times), and mobile work spaces across agencies to provide client access to a range of professionals and referrals.

- Designate key contacts at service organizations to liaise directly with key ministries (e.g. Ministry of Social Development or Ministry of Children and Family Development).
- Coordinate efforts by senior governments, municipalities, and developers in building affordable housing.

4. COORDINATE FUNDING

STRATEGY:

Encourage integration of services by coordinating funding providers, increasing access to funding, creating consistent criteria, and removing competitive nature of funding applications.

COMPONENTS:

- Develop less rigid and more flexible funding programs.
- Coordinate eligibility criteria for funding opportunities and develop consistencies in client eligibility.
- Re-align funding to provide more stable and long-term funding for services and programs.
- Allow service providers and organizations to 'team-up' on projects and share funding resources.
- Provide sustained funding for staffing and training to enable service providers to better serve at-risk populations.

5. ADVOCACY

STRATEGY:

Advocate to senior levels of government where housing and homelessness issues extend beyond the jurisdiction of municipal and regional authorities.

COMPONENTS:

- Provide more advocacy services at the municipal and regional level.
- Strengthen Ombudsperson legislation so governments can act on recommendations.
- Advocate to health authorities to enforce accountability and prevention of seniors' abuse.
- Initiate a campaign network to build capacity to lobby senior levels of government to address regional homelessness issues.
- Advocate to increase access and amount of income assistance, disability assistance, shelter allowance, and rent subsidies.
- Advocate for a National Housing Strategy.
- Adopt a regional livable wage policy and advocate for a federal guaranteed livable income.



6. STAFF TRAINING + DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY:

Provide professional development and specialized training for staff working with people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

COMPONENTS:

- Coordinate training for staff at a regional level and provide regular training programs for staff.
- Implement inter-cultural effectiveness training and provide Aboriginal and cross-cultural sensitivity training for all staff in the sector.
- Increase region-wide training for non-profits, front-line workers, police and peer support groups/mentors on common issues of people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
- Train workers to better understand and serve individuals with complex mental health issues, addictions, acquired brain injury, trauma, and other health issues.
- Train service providers and shelter providers to have 'people skills', improve communication to clients and to better manage client-to-client interpersonal issues.
- Train outreach workers to communicate, mediate and negotiate with landlords.
- Train staff to know the available services are for all at-risk populations, and how to make the appropriate referrals.

- Train school teachers and administration on the signs and symptoms of at-risk children and youth and provide the tools for schools to make referrals.
- Provide training to health practitioners and service providers on how to identify and work with individuals with mental health and addictions issues, and how to connect patients to community services.

7. MORE STAFF + BETTER WAGES

STRATEGY:

Increase the capacity of service providers to hire more staff and increase the wage/salary range of staff.

COMPONENTS:

- Increase the number of service provider and shelter staff to provide more opportunities for one-on-one interaction with clients, and to move away from crisis interventions to more supportive interventions.
- Prevent staff burnout and reduce the dependence on volunteers and untrained personal by hiring more staff and providing them with commensurate salaries.
- Increase the capacity and quality of service by hiring specialized staff, such as youth care workers and staff with a second language.

8. RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

STRATEGY:

Support opportunities for housing and homelessness research and make data and information accessible to the sector.

COMPONENTS:

- Prepare and share research on programs that are working in the region and elsewhere, including best practices and alternative models that foster evidence-based approaches.
- Develop outcome-based reporting and evaluation that demonstrates the effectiveness of different models.
- Support the Ministry of Children and Family Development to release the figures on the number of women getting pregnant while in-care to justify programs.
- Support memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between government, agencies, service providers, organizations, and the general public to support inclusive data and information sharing.
- Continue to improve the homeless counts to accurately reflect the true number of homeless and hidden homeless (youth, women, families, etc).
- Partner with universities to increase evidence based research.

9. PROCESS AND PLANNING

STRATEGY:

Develop consultation and planning processes that are meaningful and inclusive.

COMPONENTS:

- Provide opportunities for persons with lived experiences to participate on housing and homelessness committees, tables, and advisory groups.
- Connect with the Aboriginal community to ensure that culturally sensitive engagement processes are implemented.
- Approach consultation as an ongoing process.
- Remove geographic barriers by coordinating and integrating planning, policies, and strategies from the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.
- Support the alignment of plans and policies by regional and local governments.





CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #1: NORTH EAST

(North Shore, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, Tri-Cities, Burnaby, New Westminster)

ABOUT

The Sub-Regional Workshop #1 was hosted at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts in Burnaby, on Monday, October 21st between 9:00am and noon. There were 32 participants.

TABLE TOPICS

The North East participants identified the issues or ideas they wanted to discuss, and posted them to the wall canvass (see pages 19 through 22 for the original ideas). The ideas were clustered to the same or similar ideas, and were assigned to tables as topics for discussion. There were 5 small group tables altogether, and 19 topics identified for discussion:

- Affordable Rental / Supportive Housing Strategies
- Outreach
- Removing Barriers to Housing (e.g. pets)
- Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Rent Banks
- How to Get Units Faster
- Coordination Between Services

- Foster Care
- Life Skills
- Peer Driven Supports
- Seniors Aging + Support
- Harm Reduction
- Knowledge of Successful Practices
- ACT Teams
- Landlord Relations
- Local Homeless Tables

PRIORITIES BOARD

The following ideas and strategies were identified by the breakout groups and discussed in the plenary discussion, and have informed the emerging strategies section of this report.

HOUSING FIRST:

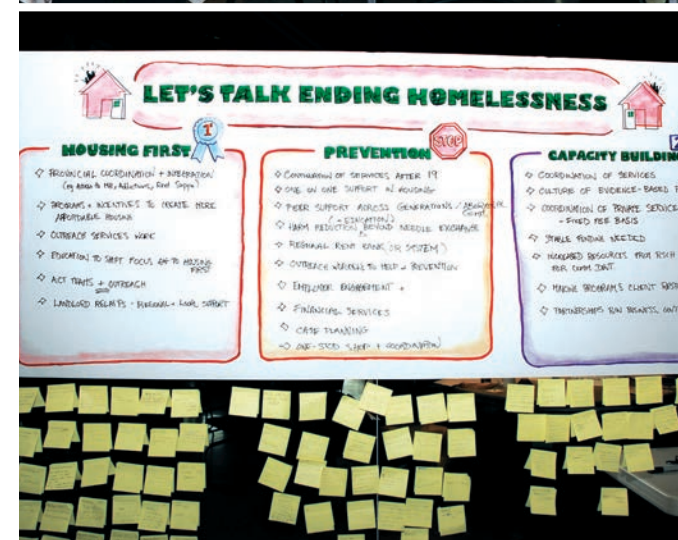
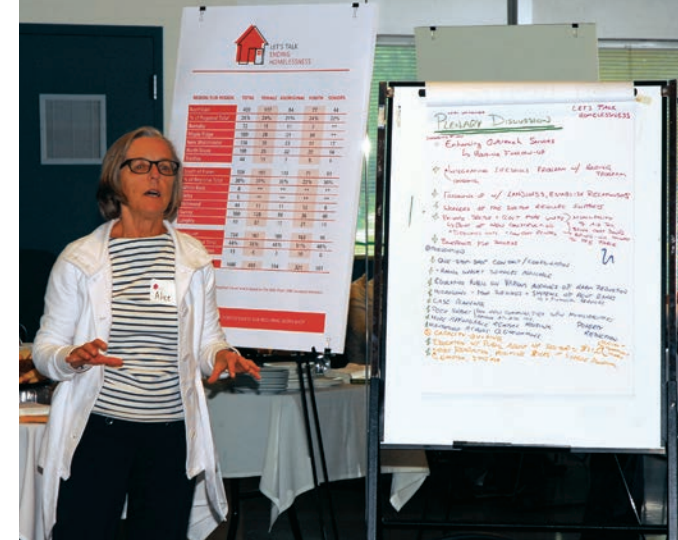
- Provincial coordination and integration
- Programs and incentives to create more affordable housing
- Outreach services work!
- Education to shift focus to housing first
- ACT teams and outreach
- Landlords relationships are important and require both regional and local support
- Enhancing outreach services and follow-ups after being housed
- Integrating life-skills program with housing program
- Opportunities to partner with the private sector and government to get units at the point of new construction, obtaining dedicated units and low-cost rental
- Municipalities to support lowering cost of housing
- Blueprints for success

PREVENTION:

- Continuation of services after age of 19
- One-on-one support in housing
- Peer support and mentorship across generations / Aboriginal communities
- Harm reduction and education beyond needle exchange
- Regional rent bank (or system)
- Outreach workers to help with prevention
- Employment support for clients and employer engagement
- Financial services
- Case planning
- One-stop shop and coordination
- Educating public on various avenues of harm reduction
- Micro-loans and food subsidies
- More affordable rental housing
- Poverty reduction

CAPACITY-BUILDING:

- Coordination and collaboration of services
- Culture of evidence-based practice
- Coordination of private services - fixed fee basis
- Stable funding needed for non-profits to take positive risks
- Increased resources from RSCH for community development
- Making programs client responsive
- Partnerships between business, government, etc.
- Support workers in the sector
- Educating public about non-profit sector, sharing knowledge of social and community impact, and support securing funding



SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #1: NORTH EAST CONTINUED

(North Shore, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, Tri-Cities, Burnaby, New Westminster)

ORIGINAL IDEAS

Education/
Resource Education

More involvement
from those who
serve

More life-skill
programs with
attainable good
setting

Low-income family
support

Training for staff
teams

Seniors (aging /
supports)

Provide assistance
once off the street

Stable funding to
support community
homeless table
function

Approach and
practice training
- capacity

How can hidden
homelessness be
identified and be
part of housing first
strategy?

Income/cost of
living

In house
programs that
help re-integrate
into society, keep
housing

Consumer choice for
housing with options
throughout lower
mainland

Affordable housing
- purpose built,
targeted and
tailored

Cost of market rate
housing

Reconciling housing
first strategy
with need still for
housing for single
moms and children

Affordable housing
wait list

Housing options
specifically for
foster youth leaving
care

Housing population
specific - more
dollars

Finding affordable
housing

What type of housing
is acceptable?
Housing first can
create short term not
long term success

The need still
exists for lots of
affordable housing

Finding/accessing
all the supports
needed for housing
first e.g. ACT team

Mental health
(including
addictions)

Support/training
peer driven

Foster youth leaving
care are the main
drivers of new
homelessness

Supportive housing

Interventions that
strengthen families
and stop children
entering foster care
system

Supportive housing

Harm reduction
approach in
shelters/permanent
housing

Coordination between and
availability of services
e.g. food bank become
sources of info and access
to support services and
prevention

Providing needle
exchange in
shelters

Trend - higher?
Why? In 15 years?

Lack of safe,
appropriate
affordable rental
housing

Purpose built
affordable rental
housing

Addressing lack of
affordable housing
(making housing
affordable)

Appropriate services
embedded (mental
health, addiction)

Providing basic
needs for rent

How long can
subsidies carry on

Outreach centres

SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #1: NORTH EAST CONTINUED

(North Shore, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, Tri-Cities, Burnaby, New Westminster)

ORIGINAL IDEAS

Availability of
affordable housing

Increase understanding
and practice of recovery
based on psycho-social
rehabilitation principles

Building knowledge
of housing first
fidelity scale

Increased funding
for addiction and
mental health
treatment services
and housing

Increase and improve
comprehensive
services that assist
people who move to
affordable housing

Increase opportunities for
municipalities to discuss
homelessness especially
Mayor and Council
(elected official) to
increase comprehension

Support for local
homelessness
tables and local
coordinators

Information and
awareness raising at
city halls

Increased ability
for communities to
support foster youth
when they are out
of care

Staff support,
training and
education

Removing barriers
(pets, other
considerations)

Strategy to facilitate
the construction of
'affordable' rental
housing by the
private sector

Financial resources

Funding for the
intensive support
services required for
housing first

ACT teams
(services)

Concurrent disorders

Housing continuum for
youth in care (under 19) that
remains with team over 19.
SIL, suites transition to
independent suite

Housing options for
low-income moms
to maintain custody
of their children

Lack of affordable/
low end of market
rental housing

Housing and
programs for
refugees

Enhancing outreach, rent banks, for prevention

How do we get funding faster?

Clarity of access to services and funding to the end user

Role of outreach in Housing First model

More clarity on Housing First, policy on housing with mental illness/addictions in BC Housing seniors buildings

Keeping at risk individuals housed

Expand/increase rental stock that is affordable

Role for outreach resource centre in prevention, identification for at risk population, preventative services

Collaboration between homelessness prevention services and mental health and addictions treatment services

Mental health services to prevent homelessness

Targeted, specialized, innovative outreach

Landlord relations and rent supplements

Need for ACT teams with access to real supplements

How to continue keeping people housed

Role of RSCH in financially supporting community homeless tables – or increase capacity

Open the subsidized housing option to private citizens/landlords

Prevention is not considered as affective in crisis oriented environment

Eviction prevention – an example of what's working is Hollyburn Family Services Program for Seniors at Housing Risk

SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #2 - VANCOUVER

(Vancouver)

ABOUT

The Sub-Regional Workshop #2 was hosted at the Creekside Community Centre in Vancouver, on Monday, October 25th between 9am and noon. There were 51 participants.

TABLE TOPICS

The Vancouver participants identified the issues or ideas they wanted to discuss, and posted them to the wall canvass (see pages 25 through 28 for the original ideas). Similar ideas were clustered together and assigned to tables as topics for discussion. There were 7 small group tables, and 14 topics for discussion. The table topics identified were:

- Support Services
- Sustainability of Scattered Sites Model
- Cooperation Across Ministries
- Link Between Plans (Regional, Municipal, etc.)
- Integrated Continuum of Services
- Supporting Aboriginal Organizations
- Range of Housing Options
- Youth Services (Aging Out)
- Access to Services for Family + Youth
- Guaranteed Income Sources
- Training on Mental Health

- Financial Supports (youth, seniors, women)
- Link Between Plans (Regional, Municipal, etc.)
- Cooperation Among Ministries

PRIORITIES BOARD

The following ideas and strategies were identified by the breakout groups and discussed in the plenary, and have informed the emerging strategies section of this report.

HOUSING FIRST:

- Staffing for youth services
- More low-barrier housing
- Variety of housing
- Income assistance and rent subsidies to reflect real cost of living throughout region
- Coordinating and providing incentives to landlords
- Support services
- Meeting people where they are at
- Access to existing housing
- Client-centered and peer support programs
- More education about rent supplements
- Integrated case management and support from funders
- Common language about supportive housing

PREVENTION:

- Working with people leaving prisons and foster care
- Housing for working poor and at-risk populations
- Institutional barriers (e.g. income assistance)
- Flexibility in access to services
- Commitment to address root causes of homelessness (e.g. domestic violence, low income)
- Poverty reduction strategies
- Eligibility criteria (youth, women, seniors)
- Financial assistance to women and children
- Rent bank for youth and in more communities

CAPACITY-BUILDING:

- Aboriginal focused organizations
- More training - cultural sensitivity (Aboriginal)
- Trauma - more informed practice
- Partnerships - connecting between services
- Regional coordination for service providers
- Clear identification of Regional Plan versus other plans
- Training on full range of issues affecting homeless
- Collective impact model - local group solving problems
- Timing and funding for coordination

REGION/COMMUNITY	TOTAL	YOUTH	SEN
Northwest	430	84	77
% of Regional Total	26%	24%	24%
Northwest	72	15	7
% of Regional Total	10%	28%	21%
North Shore	108	25	20
% of Regional Total	16%	22%	22%
South of Fraser	509	119	71
% of Regional Total	30%	30%	22%
Southwest	8	**	**
% of Regional Total	0%	**	**
East	66	11	**
% of Regional Total	4%	3%	3%
West	360	128	12
% of Regional Total	64%	68%	11%
Regional Total	1586	489	396



SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #2: VANCOUVER CONTINUED

(Vancouver)

ORIGINAL IDEAS

Housing for youth

Affordable secure housing for all

Assessment and risk

Engagement, vulnerable, youth, newcomers

Coordination between service providers

Housing First support services

Housing First outreach support

Housing First, adequate support and integrated services

Housing choice in Housing First, rent subsidies, scattered sites, family size in placement, supports follow individual

Range of housing options

The sustainability of the scattered sites concept, especially funding

Access to services for family and youth

Financial supports for vulnerable population (youth, seniors, women)

Youth – services for transitioning out of care – after 19

Rent Bank

Housing affordability and income security

Prevention youth and children – prevention through poverty reduction and why they leave care

Prevention: reform, assistance, social, funding, model

More opportunity for peer support, no evictions

Training and connecting services

Staff training

Support Aboriginal organizations

Inter-ministry cooperation

Capacity Building: multi high level stakeholders, focus on building access to market rental sector, engage COV and BCH, consider rent control on buildings

- 150 150 365
 - Rent bank 137 loans
 - 228 people
 - 1200 telephone
 - 500 pre assessments
 - Average \$906
 - Repayment 90%
 - 665K

Integrated continuum of services (ACT teams) on site. (Bring services where people are at)

Front line training and effective resource use

Work with organizations and governments to reduce poverty

Federal funding for housing

Integrated case management for prisoners with children

Housing First data quality and reporting

Training and education; more collaboration with stakeholders

Integrated continuum and well managed services

Stop reset the clock

Prevention: no prio

Support/ integration in Housing First	Supply of affordable, secure housing	Rent bank is financially sustainable through funding	Housing First criteria & allocation for youth	Integrated continuum	More secure on site	Assessment work and case management
Partnerships and collaboration	Housing stock needed for Housing First	Stabilizing newcomers ref	Integration of services/support	Low supply of affordable/ secure housing	Housing First - Warehousing concerns	More services available on site which includes health and IA
Rent subsidies / Rent Bank	Major players determining sustaining	Coordination among service providers	Distribution of social housing outside of Downtown Eastside	Rent control and rent bank expansion	Increasing mental health support	Increase funding from fed/province
Increase welfare rate	Break down silos	What are barriers for accessing Housing First	Engaging with the right partners	How do we create flow through	Partnership/ development	Barriers in capacity-building
Education/job training	Support services	Life-skills	How to sustain scattered sites and provide support	Capacity Building with Aboriginal community and their needs	Federal funding for social housing	Early detection and intervention

SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #2: VANCOUVER CONTINUED

(Vancouver)

ORIGINAL IDEAS

Focus on regular apartment with rent supplements

Food programs as a way to prevent eviction and increase nutrition

Housing for families

Need for increase funding

Focus on youth, leaving care

Poverty reduction needed

Co-ops subsidy

Rent bank

Co-ops – need to create more nationwide

Seniors rising homelessness. How to provide housing first for them

Scattered housing site for families

Mental health issues

Rapid rehousing

Addressing concurrent disorders

Support services in-house

Better/easier communication between service providers

Supports follow the individual not the provider

Housing First, Housing Choice

Lack of social housing

Scattered site model

Housing co-ops

Public perception/education

5% of city capital funds goes to social/low income housing

Prevention: money – education – healthcare

Start with Feds – national strategy

Who will provide Housing First? Private landlords, Agencies, Government

How to fully support residents, mixed of homeless/homed

Outreach – experts in this room

Rent subsidies

Front line training/support

HOP – expanding to other parts of the City

Rent Banks – how's it going in Van? How to increase its capacity and accessibility

Inter-agency case conferencing for individuals facing most barriers

Income security? Who's working on it?

Enhance more effectively use skills, abilities and resources

Need for adequate supply of rental housing

Identify people in need early/ before crisis

More ACT teams, focus on youth

Youth housing

Build social housing some with support

Feeders into homelessness poverty

Support/fund neighbourhood based initiatives to address homelessness

Support Aboriginal organizations to address unique challenges for their people

Lack of rental stock

Poverty

Cooperation of different ministries

Identify affordable housing stock

Establishing rent banks

Staffing for supporting clients

Housing - affordability

Alternative-housing models

Transition strategies for youth in care

Housing first - number of units available

Address issues of affordability

How to address clients at temp risk of homelessness

More options for housing clients that will be dependent on housing services long term.

Gentrification of DTES - everywhere

Transitioning youth off of YAG, after 19

What kind of support will be available in Housing First

Support

Training - what kind?

What do we do with people for whom HF doesn't work? Where's the money coming for support?

Supplements and ACT Teams

Social housing, programs for families

Education housing units

Where/who is responsible for support in Housing First

Who pays for Prevention? Identification of clients at what level does intervention happen.

Supportive housing for seniors and mental health consumers

Funding

Rent supplements

SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #3 - SOUTH

(Richmond, Surrey, The Langleys, Delta)

ABOUT

The Sub-Regional Workshop #3 was hosted at the Surrey Centre Public Library in Surrey, on Monday, October 28th between 10:00am and 1:00pm. There were 30 participants.

TABLE TOPICS

The South participants identified the issues or ideas they wanted to discuss, and posted them to the wall canvass (see pages 31 and 32 for the original ideas). The ideas were clustered to the same or similar ideas, and were assigned to tables as topics for discussion. There were 5 small group tables altogether, and 12 topics for discussion. The table topics identified were:

- Prevention Efforts for Specific Groups (e.g. Aboriginal community, women..)
- Youth Housing and Aging Out
- How to Implement Consumer Choice in Housing
- Enhancing Outreach Services
- Capacity of Non-Profits to Maintain Housing and Facilities

- Discharge from Prisons and Hospitals
- Collaboration Among Service Agencies
- Rent Subsidies and Income Supplements
- How Can Housing First Respond to Range of Needs/Groups?
- Increasing Housing Supply
- Rapid Re-Housing
- Mental Health and Addictions

PRIORITIES BOARD

The following ideas and strategies were identified by the breakout groups and discussed in the plenary discussion, and have informed the emerging strategies section of this report.

HOUSING FIRST:

- Approaches to municipalities to increase supply
- Need more housing (national and provincial)
- Increase opportunities for purpose-built rental
- Mix of housing - increased density
- Flexible temporary or transitional housing
- Continuum of housing needed - working poor to be supported
- Dedicated housing with supervision for those leaving prisons
- Peer support is effective
- Mobile outreach

PREVENTION:

- Extending government services for youth in-care to age 25
- Outreach works! Not 9 to 5
- Rapid access to mental health and other support services
- Subsidies need to be flexible/adaptable
- Focus resource allocation on families and youth in every community
- Integration - outreach, social work, nursing
- Specialized teams for seniors, Aboriginal community, youth and mental health outreach
- Subsidize transit
- Youth services attached to schools

CAPACITY-BUILDING:

- Training on mental health
- Agencies to focus on resilience of clients
- Agencies to collaborate to make housing first work
- Advocate for increasing shelter allowance
- Improve connection between hospital and outreach services
- Advisory groups for projects with diverse skills



SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP #3 - SOUTH CONTINUED

(Richmond, Surrey, The Langleys, Delta)

ORIGINAL IDEAS

Shortfall of counselling/ support services to stabilize and maintain

Specialized outreach - addiction, concurrent disorders

Justice system - how do we prevent people from ending up in the justice system? Criminalizing homelessness or mental health and addictions

Integration of support services to add to housing

Continuum of housing - working poor to supported

Discharging from hospital to where? Why being brought to the hospital when there should be other places?

Housing first is only a demand supply solution - does not create stock (capacity)

Supported housing designed to help those who are consistently homeless and appear unable to maintain a residence for any length of time

Training on mental health - upzoning/ density homes etc. for more units

Youth housing and the challenges of finding youth friendly landlords and youth friendly market housing

Subsidized rent based on disability or inability to work (like RAP or SAFER) guaranteed housing that is affordable

Agencies that focus on resistance of clients

Lack of national housing strategy (housing first/ capacity building)

Surrey specific homeless count model - adults and youth

Flexible tools for any subsidies/ supplements

Temporary of transitional housing - flex

Advocacy to increase shelter allowance for those on income assistance

Services need to collaborate with each other to make housing first work across housing continuum (capacity building)

Scattered site model helps social integration

Need purpose built rental housing

Aboriginal homeless prevention

Connecting/networking with community groups, build stronger relationships, connect with justice system and health system. We're all a part of the discussion.

Rent bank

Child poverty

Sustainability of operational funding for programs has always been a challenge (ie. Addiction and mental health programs) how will that be maintained on an ongoing basis

How do we get additional and increased subsidies

Lack of physical SRO's in Surrey

Shortfall in funding revenue from SA

Lack of advocacy to prevent loss of housing. Lack of units for independent living for seniors

Develop plan for low/no barrier housing including funding

Providing supports in a realistic manner that truly supports people being housed/ staying housed

Medicals lack of response / assistance to homeless

Mandated addiction recovery resources with safe housing

Building a support system to prevent them losing existing housing

Need for a significant rent subsidy to bridge the gap. Where is this money going to come from?

Maintenance of facilities to prevent slums

Who qualifies for housing-first? Only the mentally ill? Those with a dual diagnosis? Other homeless population?

Capital funding - develop purpose built facilities, 1st stage, 2nd stage, etc

Outreach workers - working well in Vancouver and elsewhere, critical shortage in Richmond

Mentally Ill - enforcement into supportive housing

Define housing first as it applies to ending homelessness

Supported housing models for hard to house or chronically homeless

Focus on consumer choice

Importance of including clients in creating / choosing next steps, supports etc

Lobbying campaign to provincial and federal governments for raising income assistance rates and building social housing (ie. Housing programs)

Shelter Operators

What will the affects of HF funding initiatives be on 'safe, clean and affordable' transitional housing models?

Emergency housing support for individuals who lose their housing (when long term programs are full)

The gap in service for youth transitioning out of care. Increasing the risk of homelessness

Mental health and/or addictions

Rapid rehousing - outreach services, identifying possible pit falls before they occur

Not just creating affordable housing but making housing affordable (ie. How to watch/manage the housing market for affordability). Rental housing programs

Not working: connection with mental health and addiction services

Programs for people in shelters and supportive housing for people to be able to support themselves

Strengthen the capacity of non-profit housing providers to maintain the stock of existing affordable housing

Engage all community groups, faith groups, justice system, etc. Talk about and come up with strategies to prevent homelessness and being accountable to those strategies

Linking services to prevent people from entering homelessness

EI Income Assistance

Increase the supply of affordable housing

Collaboration among service providers/ government agencies - plan implementation

Housing first outside of Vancouver and Surrey (Richmond)

Need for supportive housing

Working well: outreach centres having a drop-in feel where clients are not intimidated to come and access services and support

Working well: outreach - but stressed as more is asked of programs

Unable to adapt to emerging issues while maintaining current areas of service

IDEAS SESSION #1 - AT-RISK YOUTH SERVICE PROVIDERS

ABOUT

The At-Risk Youth Ideas Session was hosted at the Surrey Centre Public Library in Surrey, on Thursday, November 7th between 1:30pm and 3:30pm. There were 13 participants.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Turning 19

- Youth in care face numerous difficulties when they turn 19.
- Transitioning from youth agreements to income assistance results in half the income for young people, plus there is no guarantee that youth will receive income assistance. This often leads to homelessness.
- Youth in-care after the age of 19 have to change mental health workers and other support workers. There is a need for continuation of care and support.
- Transitional housing is not available longer term (e.g. after the age of 25).

Access to Market Housing

- There is a lack of private market affordable housing that is suitable for youth.
- It is a challenge getting landlords to be receptive to youth in market housing. Landlords are taking a risk of potentially paying for damages when taking on a youth tenant.
- Housing first model does not always work as well for youth as not all youth are mature enough to enter market housing.
- It is difficult keeping youth connected to services in their own community due to the lack of affordable housing or youth-specific housing in different parts of the region.

Access to Support Services

- Mental health centres have a multi-week backlog for youth to see a psychiatrist, and agencies that work with youth “lose” them as they wait for their first appointment.
- There is a disconnect between Ministry of Children and Family Development and Ministry of Social Development. It is not clear who is responsible for youth under youth agreements and how to access income assistance or youth agreements for young adults aged 19 to 24.
- Mobile ACT teams are not as available in smaller, suburban communities, and they are not targeted to youth.
- Addiction issues are prevalent among youth, but there is a shortage of programs (detox and rehab) and beds available for youth. The beds are usually restricted to youth on income assistance or linked to corrections system, but are not available to youth who are unattached to a specific service/program. There is a need for stabilization beds (e.g. Creekside) to hold youth “in-line” before a detox bed becomes available. Treatment beds for youth are also needed.

Capacity Limitations

- Lack of capacity among community-based agencies to provide adequate staff support and resources that are directed to youth. Funding is needed to support training and professional staff wages.

STRATEGIES

Supporting Youth in Market Housing

- Supporting youth in market housing by providing damage deposits; teaching budgeting skills and other life-skills; providing information to youth about how to be good tenants; offering semi-independent living (SIL) or other support workers. A certificate program could be developed to demonstrate a young person’s housing readiness to landlords.
- Friendly landlord programs to identify a list of willing landlords and match young people to suitable market housing. Components could include a database of good landlords and rent range; honorariums for having youth as tenants; matching programs; ability to intervene before youth lose their housing; and a damage bank for potential repair costs.

Youth-Specific Housing + Safe Houses

- Having youth-only housing that is in a non-institutional environment and that is available over longer term (e.g. 2 years) is important. As part of this type of housing, on-site multi-disciplinary teams are needed including occupational therapists, clinical support, mental health/addictions support, and others. Peer support is also effective and should be integrated.
- Youth-specific housing should be located outside of the Downtown Eastside and away from “triggers”. Youth housing needs to be geographically accessible to services, programs, and transit.
- Partnerships and support from municipalities will be needed.

- Safe houses are still an essential service and require funding that is stable.

Providing Support Services

- Relationship building between youth workers and youth clients to help break down barriers.
- Income assistance workers need to act as a liaison for youth needing mental health support and access to a mental health worker.
- In addition to outreach work, support services need to have a clinical focus. Clinical resources need to be offered in smaller communities.

Building Capacity of Agencies to Respond

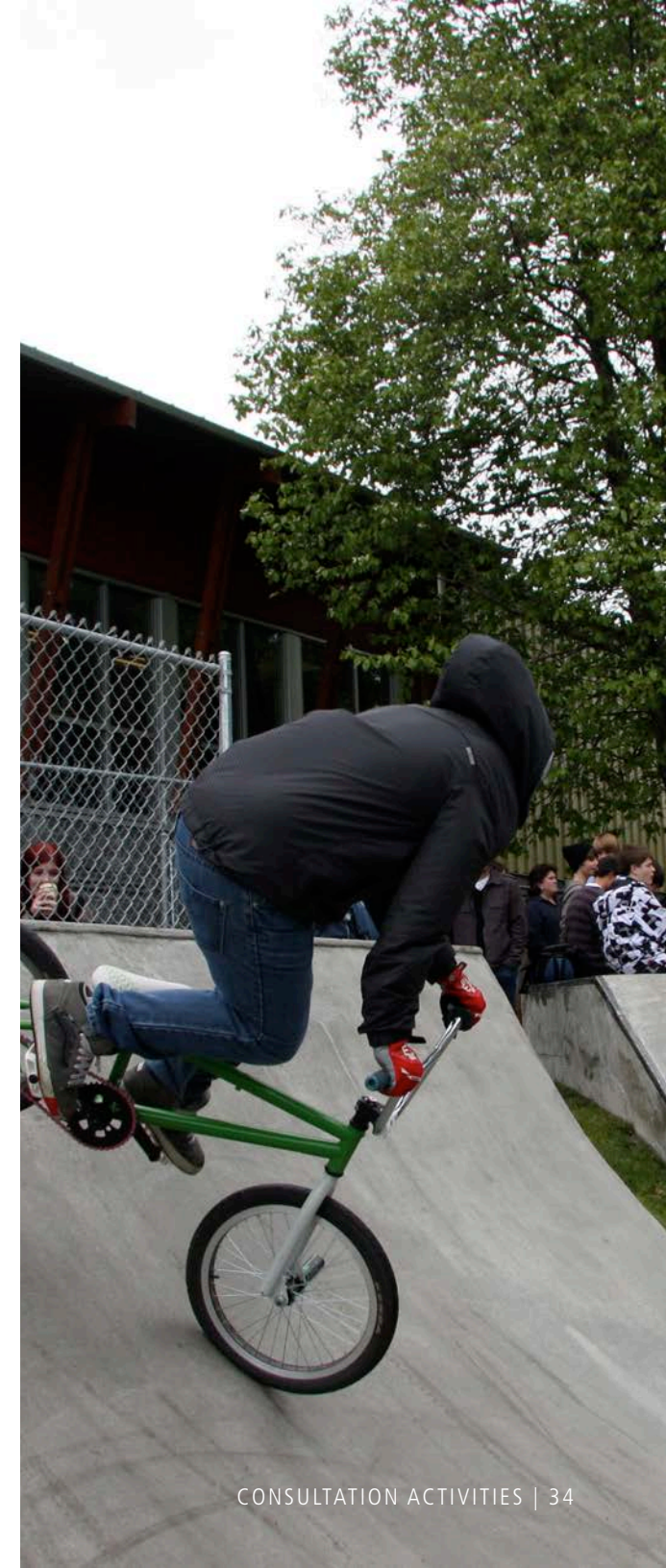
- Collaboration across agencies is needed. Having shared spaces/services (e.g. hot desks, mobile work spaces) could work at a sub-regional level.
- There is a need for more information-sharing about available resources and programs among agencies. Homelessness information, such as databases, are not updated fast enough - especially regarding bed availability. Having regular contact and quarterly meetings between service providers helps to maintain open communication.
- Designating key contacts for agencies and the ability to liaise directly with Ministry programs is useful.
- Outcome evaluation reporting that demonstrates the effectiveness of different models is important.

Turning 19:

- Housing for youth aging out of care requires an adult youth agreement (not just for youth going to school), and more consistent support over time.
- A seamless transition of services, funding and support from under 19 to over age 19 is needed. There is also a need to work with youth in care to help them prepare for the shifts that occur at age 19. A longer time frame is needed (e.g. support workers can begin transitioning youth in foster care three years before they turn 19).
- The definition of youth should be less rigid, and could potentially be based on a developmental assessment.

PRIORITIES

- Youth aging out of care require a continuation of support and consistent support
- Youth-specific transitional housing with support; providing options for youth across the housing spectrum
- Youth safe houses are essential
- Multi-disciplinary outreach teams
- Landlord support programs



IDEAS SESSION #2 - WOMEN SERVICE PROVIDERS

ABOUT

The Women's Ideas Session was hosted at the Metro Vancouver head office in Burnaby, on Wednesday, November 13th between 1:30pm and 3:30pm. There were 12 participants.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Increasing Needs for Different Ages

- The number of unhoused women is increasing throughout the region, and the increase spans all ages. Women of different ages have different needs, yet agencies approach women's housing issues as one group.
- There is a gap in services to teen moms aging out of care.
- Mature women who have not planned for their 'seniors years' face greater challenges accessing information, services, programs.

Financial Assistance + Subsidies

- The Rental Assistance Program (RAP) is limited to employed families. Eligibility criteria for income assistance is restrictive and subsidies are limited. Once an individual reaches the income threshold, they lose their subsidy because income assistance is pulled back when families earn income. Policy does not allow families to transition from low-income to moderate income earners, and does not allow families to build equity or assets and holds families back from improving their financial situation.

- Women without status is an issue in the region (e.g. refugee women or women who came to Canada with their partners and are no longer in a relationship). These women are not eligible for income assistance or other programs because they do not have documentation/identification.
- There is a lack of affordable childcare available to women in the region. An allowance of \$10 per child per day has been discussed but not implemented.
- The introduction of the new Translink compass pass system will create barriers for women and families accessing support services and programs. For example, bus tickets provided to youth to go to school would no longer be available.

Housing for Women + Families

- There is a lack of safe affordable housing suitable for women and children in the region. Newly constructed units are increasingly too small for women and children. Without an existing housing stock suitable for women and with limited funding for capital housing projects, there will not be enough suitable housing available for women in the region.
- Women and families tend to register themselves on waiting lists for all social housing buildings without pre-screening the building to see if it is located in a suitable or safe neighbourhood.
- When children reach the age of 19, their family loses their subsidized family housing and must evict within a constrained time period.

- Women and children do not 'fit' into homelessness programs. There is a lack of consideration of how to make services and programs work for women and children. The conditions of homelessness for women are different than those of men; women experience more episodic homelessness. Equally, the housing first model is primarily focused on homeless men and not geared to women and does not address childcare issues or housing families. Homelessness services are male biased, due in part because it is more expensive to provide homeless services to women and to women with children.

Support Services

- Women and children in crisis do not have access to dental or education.
- Women should have access to ACT teams and other outreach services, but it is expensive to provide these services to women.
- There is little support for Dads and older boys and when women and children are seeking shelter, families are often separated.
- It is challenging for outreach workers to communicate with landlords who have language barriers, and this can result in more evictions if workers cannot explain the tenant situation.
- There is a shortage of financial support to agencies which reduces their capacity to support families.

STRATEGIES

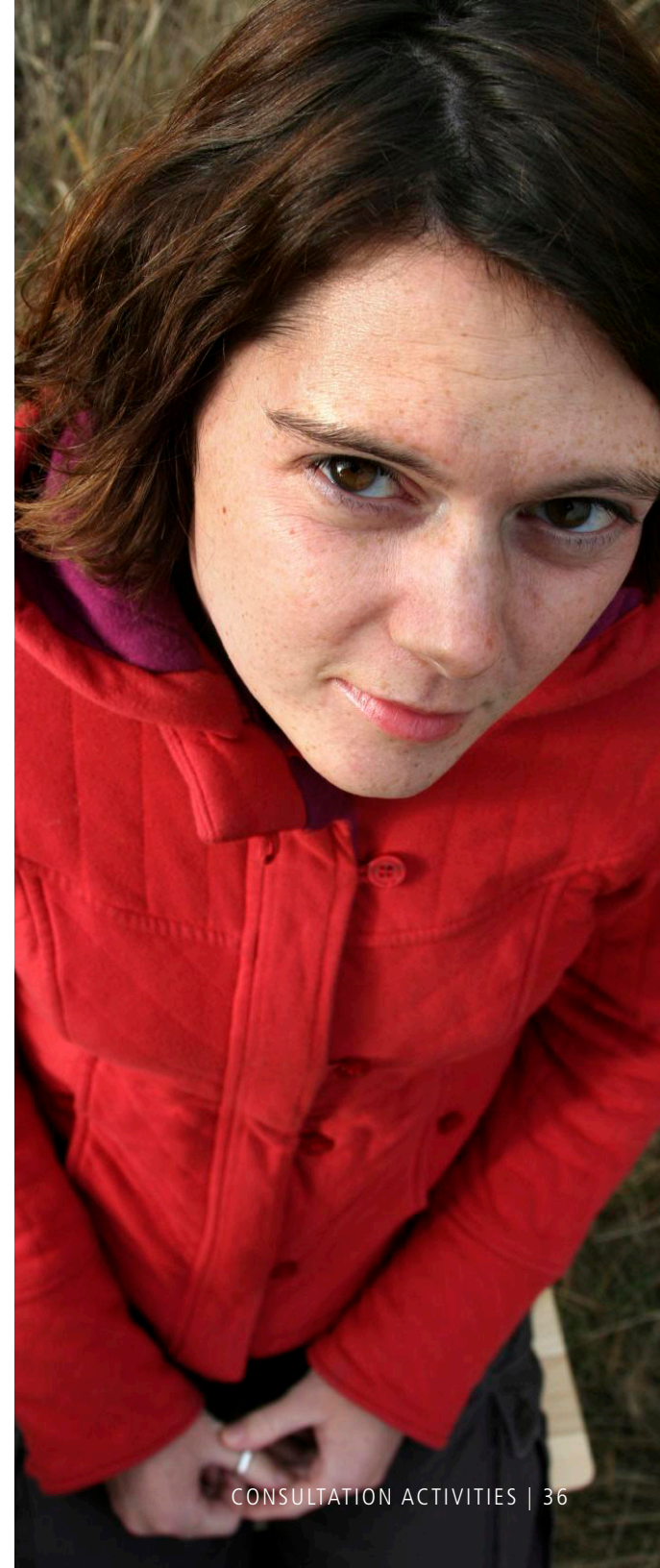
Housing for Women

- Housing first is one of many solutions. Women and women with children need a variety of options across the housing spectrum, and require continued support. Family-only shelters provide safe places for families where there is no risk of having their children removed by social services. There is a need to provide age-related services and supports for women, and to plan for how needs of women will shift as women transition to different stages of their life.
- The range of housing should include housing with or without supports and long-term low-barrier housing. Housing with supports should have 'wrap-around support services' that includes childcare, health care, etc. There is a need to create a 'home base', and not just housing. Housing for women with children need to be larger, at least two bedrooms but also three or four bedroom units. Housing for families needs to be located close to schools, support services, and in safe neighbourhoods.
- Protect and maintain existing housing stock for women, and increase the amount of capital dollars for new units that are safe and suitable for women.
- Safe housing for women include women-only and family-only housing. Buildings and/or units need to be secure and located in safe neighbourhoods.

- Partnerships are needed to implement programs that house women in market housing scattered sites.
- Rapid re-housing will work for women, geared towards episodically homeless with moderate needs.
- Homes for women need to be designed with a women centered lens, and designed in a way that builds community. Community building efforts must be integrated and this includes referrals to local programs to help women establish roots in the community.

Family Support

- In order to support women and children, there needs to be support for Dads and older boys. Prevent separation of families by making use of hotels or other housing forms where families can stay together. Support is needed for single Dads as well.
- Implement ACT teams for families.
- Help moms maintain custody or regain custody of their children. Keeping families together keeps children out of the foster care system and prevents women from losing family social housing. It is difficult for mothers to regain custody once a child has been removed. Further, keeping children out of foster care prevents the cycle of homelessness in the next generation.



Collaboration + Capacity

- Establish partnerships across agencies to support women and families.
- Increase funding for service provider staff in order to provide services needed by women and families. Funding should reflect actual administrative costs of operations.
- In order to move shelters away from crisis mode to more supportive living environments, increase services provided in shelters and in housing with supports such as child and youth workers, or 'in-reach' workers for case planning.

Research

- The definition of homelessness needs to recognize that homeless women experience homelessness differently than men and recognize that women are under-counted as their experiences tend to be more episodic.
- Prepare and share research that demonstrates programs that are working, fostering evidence-based monitoring specific to women.
- Ministry of Children and Family Development should count the number of women getting pregnant while in-care. The statistics would justify additional programming for teen moms.

Support Services

- Provide women-centered, region-wide, wrap-around services to connect women to community services.
- Provide peer support in conjunction with other community-based services.

- Provide training to outreach workers on how to build relationships with landlords, mediate conflict, and provide information to tenants with respect to their rights and responsibilities. Increase access to education and resources to building managers, improve communication between landlord's and tenants, and prevent reno-victions.
- Provide outreach and drop-in centre services specific to women and for youth aging out of government care.
- Provide workshops and information sessions to clients on how to find housing (e.g. script for telephone conversations with potential landlord, appropriate attire, and what to look for in a safe and appropriate neighbourhood).
- Increase services to mature women who do not require supportive housing (e.g. home cleaning, friendship).

Financial Assistance

- Continue to provide rent assistance for low-income families (Rental Assistance Program and flexible rent banks). Make the RAP program more inclusive for those on income assistance/rent subsidy, and keep women in their communities.
- Provide debt reduction programs to prevent women from becoming homeless (e.g. YWCA Clean Slate program).

PRIORITIES

- Low-barrier housing for families
- Rent-subsidies and rent banks that provide flexible financial support
- Training and resources to assist agencies (especially outreach workers and care teams, to provide information about tenants rights and responsibilities)
- Support efforts to prevent mothers losing custody and regain custody of children in care
- Spectrum of housing and services suitable for women at all stages of life including shelters for women and children and dedicated housing for women
- Having a new lens/understanding of how to tailor services and programs to women
- Better funding for agencies to assist women accessing programs and services
- Rapid re-housing efforts



IDEAS SESSION #3 - SENIORS SERVICE PROVIDERS

ABOUT

The Seniors Ideas Session was hosted at the Roundhouse Community Centre in Vancouver, on Thursday, November 14th between 3:00pm and 5:00pm. There were 10 participants.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Vulnerability

- Seniors are often isolated and do not receive the services they need because they are less visible than other groups.
- Age eligibility criteria is a limitation. Homeless persons tend to age faster, yet are ineligible for seniors assistance until they reach 65 years of age, but in reality they often need assistance much earlier.
- The number and proportion of seniors will increase significantly and groups are not aware or prepared for the level of senior-specific service and housing demands.

Access to Information

- Access to information about services available for seniors is problematic. Telephone information systems, such as 211, are difficult for seniors to use. Seniors who do not know how to use the system give up and often feel isolated.
- Seniors centres are entry points for seniors in need of help, yet they are recreation focused and do not always provide the information or referrals that seniors need.
- There is a lack of one-stop-shops for senior services. There is no umbrella organization for seniors.

- The Residential Tenancy Act does not adequately protect seniors (e.g. abusive situations with landlords). The rules are not enforced, and their role is limited to dispute resolution.

Housing Costs

- Housing prices are increasing in the region, with increasing poverty rates among seniors. Many seniors are forced to choose between paying their rent, medication, food, or utilities.
- There is a lack of subsidized housing for seniors, lack of seniors-specific shelters, and a lack of support in housing for seniors. Seniors housing is often combined with housing persons with mental health issues. When there is no resident manager, this can lead to tenant conflicts.

Service Capacity + Resources

- Agencies lack resources to adequately support seniors. Seniors are on wait lists for months or years before getting into housing.
- A lack of continuity in funding creates instability and insecurity of programs and services.
- Volunteer staff in small non-profits are providing services that paid/trained staff are unable to provide due to lack of time and resources.
- Collaboration among service providers is limited. There is competition amongst service providers to obtain funding which limits the opportunity for agencies to collaborate.

STRATEGIES

Collaboration

- Collaboration among service providers, outreach workers, shelters, and various levels of governments is needed to provide better, more accessible support services to seniors. This includes better liaison between service providers and Ministry offices.
- Every municipality has a role to play, including housing and advocacy information to seniors and other vulnerable population groups.
- Provide more advocacy and related services at both the municipal and regional level.
- Ombudsperson legislation needs to be strengthened so that government can improve the accountability and ability to pursue cases of seniors abuse.
- Provide consistency in funding and reporting among funders and all levels of government.
- Partnerships with developers to include subsidized units in new housing development projects.

Support Services, Capacity + Resources

- Provide intensive one-on-one outreach services with seniors.
- Increase capacity for service providers in the non-profit sector to meet increasing demands for seniors population (funding for staffing levels, higher wages, and training dollars).
- Establish programs with long term funding or re-align existing funding in order to provide more stable funding for services and programs.

Prevention

- Establish an umbrella organization that provides services to seniors (e.g. the Citizens Advisory Bureau for seniors in the UK). Re-align services to fit within the umbrella organization, and roll-out a campaign to increase awareness (e.g. bus advertisements).
- Train service providers to know what services are available for seniors.
- Create checklists for older adults (40-64) to prepare for senior years (e.g. managing their health, housing, and finances).
- Improve discharge planning and patient in-take planning so seniors do not lose their housing when hospitalized.
- Continue to provide financial assistance that reduces housing costs such as rent banks, and SAFER. The SAFER program should increase the income eligibility and make age criteria more flexible.

Housing For Seniors

- Supportive housing works for seniors. The range of housing options for seniors needs to be expanded, especially increasing non-medical home supports so seniors can age in place.
- Build relationships with landlords in market housing to build a safety net for seniors living on their own.
- Create housing that is culturally appropriate for non-English speaking seniors. Adapt existing facilities to be accessible to these seniors.

Recognition

- All initiatives need to be based on 'housing as a right' approach.

- Seniors homelessness is being recognized by funders as an emerging issue. Need to continue raising awareness of seniors housing issues and increase financial support.
- Efforts should be made to widen the lens of learning and practices by undertaking seniors homeless and housing research and sharing results with service providers.

PRIORITIES

- Develop an umbrella organization that provides services to seniors
- Get the 40 to 64 population 'senior-ready'
- Increase non-medical supportive housing
- Increase capacity for service providers in the non-profit sector to provide services and programs to seniors (e.g. funding for training staff, paying better wages, and increasing the number of paid staff)
- Collaboration among service providers
- Address needs of non-English speaking seniors; and culturally-appropriate housing



IDEAS SESSION #4 - ABORIGINAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

ABOUT

The Aboriginal Ideas Session was hosted at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Vancouver, on Friday, November 15th between 9:30am and 11:30am. There were 9 participants.

INCLUSIVITY, PROCESS + ENGAGEMENT

- According to the participants, the Aboriginal community has not accepted the consultation framework proposed for the Regional Homelessness Plan (housing first, prevention, and capacity-building), and has not accepted the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) framework (housing first). They do not feel they were consulted on this framework and felt that housing first is not an appropriate model for the Aboriginal community.
- Urban Aboriginal organizations in the region do not believe that “housing first” as a model of practice is a good fit with the Aboriginal community. Previous meetings, where the new funding framework was presented, were found to be disrespectful of the needs of the Aboriginal community.
- It was suggested that the Aboriginal community needs to be a part of the planning process, helping to shape, run, and lead future meetings and consultation activities.

- This “Ideas Session” is not considered to be adequate consultation of the Aboriginal community as the participants were not representative of the Aboriginal community as a whole. The proposed timeline for the consultation process is too aggressive. There is not enough time allocated to consulting with the Aboriginal community and, therefore, it was not found to be inclusive.
- Other avenues of consultation with the Aboriginal community were suggested, including meetings with the Aboriginal Executive Committee, the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee, and the Community Forum on Homelessness (planned for March, 2014).
- A prerequisite for future participation is that the Aboriginal community must be a partner in the process. The Plan will not otherwise be endorsed by the Aboriginal community.
- Previous conversations and dialogue (from 2012) should be referred to when updating the Regional Homelessness Plan.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Racism Still Exists

- The Aboriginal community comes from a history of not being allowed to have a voice. Racism and discrimination still exist, and this is evident from pre-determined planning processes.

- There is an inherent bias in the housing first model. The Aboriginal community has had traumatic experiences, including racism and discrimination. Often, landlords screen out future tenants who are Aboriginal. As a result, Aboriginal individuals find it difficult to approach a non-Aboriginal landlord or service provider. This could be the result of actual or perceived racism on the part of Aboriginal individuals.
- There is a need to bridge cultures in order to end homelessness. This would involve educating the general public about the history of the Aboriginal community in the region.

Housing First

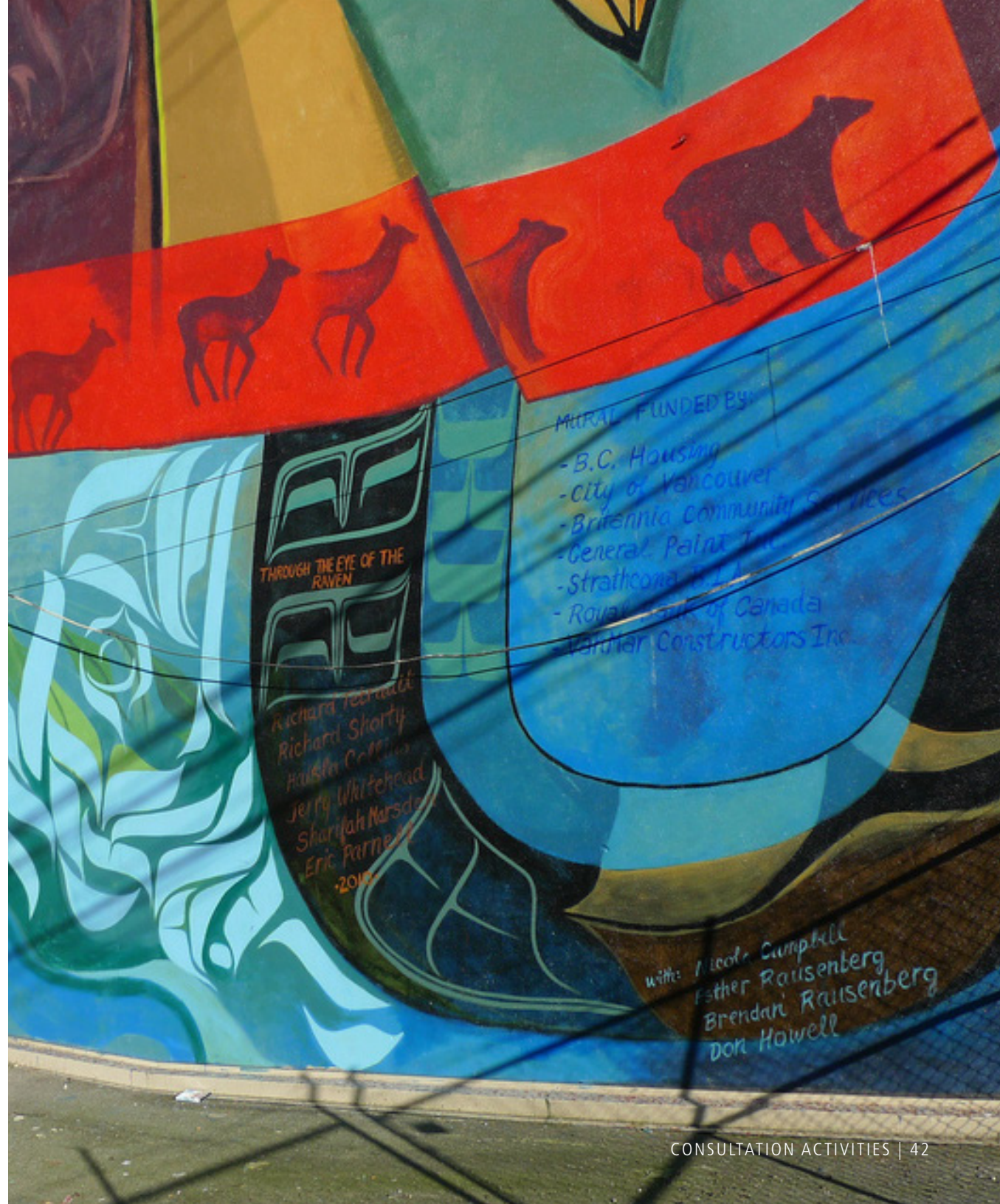
- Housing first is seen to be a new form of institutionalization — moving the absolute street homeless to being part of the hidden homeless population and isolating individuals from their community.
- Projects, such as At Home/Chez Soi or similar housing projects, that place individuals in scattered site market housing will not work for the Aboriginal community.
- Being “housed” does not solve everything. Many non-Aboriginal landlords have rules that are not sensitive to Aboriginal community needs.
- Housing first does not work for those individuals who choose not to be housed.
- The perspective needs to be reversed: how can the Regional Homelessness Plan work for the Aboriginal community; not how will housing first work for the Aboriginal community.

Funding Constraints

- There is a funding shortfall that is not representative of the scale of the problem — 30% of the homeless population in the region are Aboriginal, but only 15% of the funding is going to the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee.
- Housing costs are increasing, but wages and income assistance rates are not.

Good Practices

- Life skills training and support are essential to moving Aboriginal individuals from being homeless to being housed.
- The Aboriginal community is characteristically supportive, providing guidance and a caring and sharing environment. Housing Aboriginal individuals in their own communities is important, especially given the history of being removed from community (e.g. residential schools). Community and connectedness is important to the Aboriginal community.
- Future housing approaches should have an Indigenous lens. For example, an ideal model would be housing that is Aboriginal-specific, with multiple generations, and a mix of uses, including residential units, sweat lodge, and Aboriginal-specific services.



ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

ABOUT

Ten one-on-one interviews were completed with individuals who had personally experienced homelessness in the past. Interviewees included women, men, youth, Aboriginal individuals, and also people who had experienced homelessness in either an urban or suburban setting.

Six interviews were held on Monday, November 4th at the Stepping Stones Community Services Society in Langley and the other four were held on Tuesday, November 5th at VANDU (Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users), in Downtown Vancouver.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Root Causes of Homelessness

- Some of the issues that were reported to lead to homelessness include: rent increases, job loss, loss of rent subsidy, substance abuse by tenant or family member, and disputes with roommates.
- Family breakdown, relationship issues, or loss of a family member is also attributed to the causes of homelessness. Support services to assist families, including victim support services for women fleeing domestic abuse, are needed. Women in the Downtown Eastside may depend on abusive partners for protection.
- Having multiple medical issues can create challenges with maintaining and affording housing.

- When an individual loses their housing, they may also lose their clothes, furniture, and belongings because they are unable to store them. They can also lose their jobs and their friends due to miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Income Assistance

- Eligibility requirements limit who can access income assistance or disability assistance. Other requirements can also lead to individuals losing their support (e.g. not filing taxes).
- Income assistance recipients are unable to earn much employment income before their income assistance amount is deducted. This limits recipients' ability to improve their financial situation.

Lack of Housing Choices

- Income assistance rates, including disability rates, are too low for households to afford the housing prices in the region. Many will rent homes that are in undesirable locations or in very poor quality. Utility bills are often difficult to account for within these low budgets, and when bills are not paid, individuals have reported living in their unit without heat and having mold build up and other health problems.
- Individuals who move outside of their community become disconnected from their volunteer activities and social support network.

- Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels in the Downtown Eastside are characterized as being of low quality and unsuitable for most individuals' needs. With very small units, shared bathrooms, poor air circulation, no storage, and problems with pest infestation and a lack of security, they are highly undesirable. However, they are often the only option that individuals can afford.
- Hoarding is increasingly common, causing both safety and health issues to occupants.

Placement in Supportive Housing

- There are few low-income, independent living options available. Housing placements are not always well-suited to client needs. Individuals who meet the criteria for independent or semi-independent living are on BC Housing wait lists, and have no choice but to accept unsuitable units when they become available. Those who prefer to live independently may experience guest limits and staff oversight, which limits tenants' privacy and independence.
- Persons with specific dietary needs are reported to have limited choice about what food is available in supportive housing.
- Some buildings do not allow individuals to cook their own food because of safety/fire hazard. As a result, some tenants are unable to prepare own food that meets their dietary needs.

Staying in Shelters

- The length of stay limits in shelters and transitional housing are too short, resulting in evictions.
- Women have reported they do not feel safe staying in Downtown Eastside shelters.
- Shelter users do not have direct access to a phone line and calls are screened by shelter staff. Not having a phone, and relying on a phone number at a shelter, can lead to important calls being missed.
- Different shelters have different time limits, procedures, requirements, and staff training levels. Some shelters require users to be out on the street during the day.
- In shelters, individual belongings are not secure and are at-risk of being stolen.

Support Services

- Drug use is a common coping mechanism for underlying mental and physical health problems of homeless individuals. Many are unaware or do not have access to related support services.
- After being housed, gifted items, such as used mattresses, may have bed bugs.
- Individuals report being unfamiliar with many of the programs and services that are available. There is never one place where individuals can have all their questions answered.

- Homeless individuals are often referred from one agency to another, and this is found to be time consuming, exhausting, and stressful.
- Replacing lost or stolen identification is expensive and time consuming. Yet, without documentation, it is difficult to find employment and impossible to complete income or disability application forms. Obtaining documentation is especially challenging for immigrants whose birth certificate is from another country and is not recognized in Canada.

Employment + Education

- Employers lack understanding of situations faced by homeless or individuals at-risk of homelessness. (e.g. missing work to deal with housing issues has led to job loss and homelessness).
- At-risk youth and young adults interested in post-secondary education have difficulty navigating the options and are unable to afford tuition or other education-related costs.

STRATEGIES + PRIORITIES

Emergency Shelters and Access Centres

- Provide safe and comfortable drop-in centres that provide homeless individuals rest, information, support, friendship, and compassion. Drop-in centres can be key points of entry for client assessment and initiating the process of getting individuals housed.
- Expedite screening/assessment of homeless individuals at first entry in shelter.
- Monitor the operation of shelters by establishing an independent advocacy body to ensure shelters are performing and meeting standards.
- Recognize shelters under a legislative framework, such as the Residential Tenancy Act.
- Establish an Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre in the Downtown Eastside that would provide individuals with access to traditional Aboriginal health services and opportunity to learn about traditional Aboriginal health practices.
- Women centres should take the lead in assessing safety of women fleeing domestic violence (not RCMP).
- Increase availability and awareness of all forms of support services available in communities such as establishing a one-stop-shop for all questions and services, provided under one roof, where referrals are not required.

Financial Assistance

- Increase the amount of shelter allowance, income assistance, disability assistance, or other rent subsidy to enable households to find adequate housing. Continue to provide rent geared to income support as this arrangement works well.
- Review the eligibility limits for youth and other vulnerable groups and amend the earning potential for individuals on income assistance.

Housing Choice

- There is a need to increase housing supply to reduce social housing wait lists. New housing should be located in close proximity/reasonable walking distance to amenities, services and programs. Housing should be located in neighbourhoods where clients have access to their network and volunteer activities.
- It is important to upgrade existing SROs into larger, self-contained units. Individuals living in inadequate SROs should be prioritized in housing first programs.
- Increase the opportunities for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness to choose appropriate, suitable and affordable housing that is within budget and is independent, safe, clean, free of pests, and self-contained. Security of tenure should be maintained so that individuals are not at-risk of losing their homes.
- Among the housing options, there is a need for affordable housing, without support staff, for those individuals who are independent and can live on their own.
- All new units should be self-contained and ensure tenants' safety and privacy.

- Provide a variety of meal options and accommodate dietary considerations for individuals living in supportive housing. Support clients to prepare their own meals and control their nutrition. This includes financial assistance to purchase their own food that meets their dietary needs.

Housing Support

- Outreach programs, including street-level mobile services, should be continued.
- To assist individuals with their housing search, outreach workers can facilitate meetings between prospective tenants and landlords.
- Increase opportunities for clients to obtain household furniture and supplies that are in good condition and bug free. Outreach workers can also assist with moving furniture and belongings into housing.
- Other start up assistance could include providing damage deposit, first month's rent, and vouchers to assist with purchasing household items.
- Assist clients with landlord dispute resolution, including preventing the loss of tenants' belongings following eviction.
- Provide assistance to individuals living in hoarding situations.

Other Support Services

- Increase access to health services and medication, and provide one-on-one support services for persons with mental health and/or addiction issues.
- Peer-run support programs, including mentorship, encouragement, and information by individuals with lived experiences, should be prioritized.

- Provide family support services to prevent family breakdown.
- Provide assistance to individuals with filing their taxes in order to continue receiving rebates and supplements. Assistance with completing forms for disability assistance, rental applications, and identification replacement is also needed.
- Employment support services could include educating employers of the situation facing employees staying in shelters or experiencing housing challenges and matching people to jobs.
- Improve the process of discharging patients from hospitals by aligning clients with housing, support services, and necessities such as clothes and a transit pass. Provide staff training to provide better support to clients (e.g. how to find housing, making referrals, being discrete when answering phone calls, etc.).
- Provide continuation of client/social worker relationship for youth aging out of care and for persons recovering from mental health and addiction issues. Stable and consistent support from a long-term relationship helps maintain trust and achieve better client results.

Planning

- Homelessness committees, tables, and advisory groups require representation from persons with lived experiences.



SPECIAL SESSION WITH THE GREATER VANCOUVER SHELTER STRATEGY SOCIETY (GVSS)

ABOUT

In addition to the three sub-regional workshops, 4 ideas sessions, and 10 one-on-one interviews, a special session was facilitated by Metro Vancouver with the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy Society (GVSS). Key messages from this meeting are provided here for information.

The meeting was held on October 23rd, 2013 between 10:30 am and 11:30 am. There were 21 participants.

WHAT IS WORKING

- Rent subsidies – although increased flexibility regarding eligibility criteria is needed.
- Rent banks – although more are needed.
- Supportive housing dedicated to people who are homeless.
- A focus on Housing First.
- Partnerships between governments and agencies to provide supported housing.
- Partnerships between service providers and health resources.
- Partnerships between Income Assistance workers and shelters.
- Collaboration among service agencies.
- ACT teams (although some concerns about limited capacity and high cost).
- Outreach services.
- Integrated teams and a focus on case management.
- Shelters.
- Low and minimal barrier shelters and services.
- “In reach” services by health providers.

- Innovative services delivery – to address specific needs.
- Emergency services.
- Dedicated services for seniors.
- Partnerships between private landlords and service providers.
- Increased understanding of homelessness and public knowledge of issues surrounding the lack of housing.
- Data collection for outcomes and demographics and ability to evaluate progress of clients.
- The Homeless Count – helps communities identify and raise awareness of homelessness, although there are limitations (point-in-time counts don’t provide an accurate representation of the entire homeless community)
- Shelter training for front line workers and communication.
- Matching people’s needs to appropriate resources.

STRATEGIES

Prevention

- Rent subsidies.
- Rent banks.
- Anti-poverty strategies.
- Residential Tenancy Act needs revisions to include transitional and supportive housing to prevent illegal evictions and to clarify rights to programs.
- Outreach teams that are flexible and responsive and also able to provide specialized services targeted to specific populations.

- Increase welfare rates and improve access to income assistance. Eligibility criteria make it difficult for people to maintain their benefits.
- Need employment training so clients can earn an adequate income.
- Address issues facing youth. Revise eligibility criteria to enable youth to access services before they hit bottom.
- Change legislation so that tenants cannot be evicted from their housing if they are hospitalized or incarcerated for a short time.

Housing

- Need to ensure different types of housing to provide housing choices.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Municipalities need to take a leadership role to:
 - » Streamline/fast track the development approval process and reduce development costs for housing for people who are homeless.
 - » Require developers to make 20% of all new housing units affordable for low and moderate income households and/or contribute funding for housing.
 - » Provide free land for affordable housing.
- Increase municipal support (Mayors and Councils) to address homelessness.
- Rent subsidies.
- Strategic development of shelters
- Social housing providers need to be able to use their reserves to leverage funding to develop more housing.
- Work with landlords to increase access to housing.

- Require finance companies to provide funds for rent subsidies.

Support

- Need on-site support at shelters. This includes partnerships with health providers and income assistance workers to provide services on site.
- Need detox, recovery houses, and alcohol/drug maintenance programs.
- Increase outreach teams.
- Mobile housing search staff attending with clients to find housing.
- Increase welfare rates so people can afford higher rents (while also regulating rent increases).
- Promote information sharing to try new ideas. This could include providing staff support and promoting innovations.
- Prevent health crises for people in housing.
- Need inter-agency and ministerial task teams to address specific homelessness issues.
- Need funding for coordinators to facilitate bringing people together – as was done to create the Extreme Weather response. Having a coordinator provided the capacity to develop and implement a successful strategy.
- Agencies need to be able to issue charitable receipts to encourage more donations (e.g. tax receipts for in-kind gifts).
- Make politicians accountable for ending homelessness.
- Need women-only resources.

Housing First

- Need capital dollars to be able to build more units.
- There is a need for supportive housing outside the Downtown Eastside (e.g. Surrey).
- Support for scattered sites.
- Increase mental health and addictions outreach services.

Capacity-Building

- Training for non-profit organizations – management and front-line workers.
- Longer term contracts with provincial funders.
- Support community homelessness tables.

PRIORITIES

- A range of affordable housing options to meet different needs, including rent supplements
- Municipalities to take a leadership role to promote affordable housing development for people who are homeless
- On-site services at shelters – including health services
- Detox, recovery houses, and alcohol/drug maintenance programs
- Rent banks
- Increased outreach teams to help clients access housing and income
- Anti-poverty strategies and increased income



SPECIAL SESSION WITH THE FUNDERS TABLE

ABOUT

Another special session was held between Metro Vancouver and the Funders Table on November 15th, 2013. Key messages from this discussion are provided here for information. There were 11 participants.

WHAT IS WORKING

- Outreach.
- The Homeless Count – helps mobilize around homelessness.
- HAW – helps keep the issue of homelessness at the forefront.
- Collaboration and partnership (e.g. with the police).
- Rent banks.
- Collaboration and pooling of funds (e.g. ability of community partners to make capital projects come together).
- Innovation fostered by bringing community partners together.
- Ability to serve people in their communities (e.g. a safe house so youth don't have to leave their community).
- Opportunities for employment.
- Case management models and outreach workers.
- Information sharing and research on best practices, including partnerships between researchers and community groups.
- Increased business engagement in some communities.
- Social enterprises.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Goals and Objectives

- The goals of funders need to be aligned.
- Keep goals and objectives focused and clearly defined around prevention, capacity building and housing first.
- Be clear on the extent to which the Plan will focus on urgent needs and homeless people with complex health issues compared to prevention among people at risk of homelessness.
- The structure of the plan will provide a 10-year horizon. It is important to address urgent needs now, but also address the root causes of homelessness to stop the flow into homelessness.

Housing

- Affordable housing is key.
- There is an equity gap for housing agencies that want to renovate their buildings. There should be a single point of contact for these agencies to be able to access funding.
- Cost of land is a significant issue. At the same time, many older housing developments have under-utilized land. We need to facilitate partnerships to bring groups together to make better use of their land (e.g. churches and non-profit groups).
- Need increased capital funding for housing.
- Need to address what groups in the region can do to promote a national housing strategy.
- Support for capital grants for housing.

- The expiry of social housing operating agreements needs to be front and centre over the next 10 years. Both the federal and provincial governments need to maintain their share of funding to maintain these affordable housing units. Policy-makers need to know the number of units that could be lost. The loss of these units will be a significant contributor to homelessness.
- Support rent supplements for scattered site housing. Note: Rental housing units are coming on stream in Vancouver, which will dovetail with rent supplements.

Prevention

- Need to focus on the transition of youth from care to adulthood – to strengthen and increase investments in transitions from care.
- It takes several years to build housing to meet the needs of the current homeless population. It is essential to stop the flow into homelessness or there will never be enough new housing units to meet the need.
- Need to create 'flow' within the system. What about people who continue to need a rent subsidy but not the services? Or people who continue to remain in large units after their children have moved out because there are no alternatives for them? Services providers need flexibility to address these issues – to free up resources for others who are in need.
- Support for prevention to avoid the negative outcome of failing to address the needs of seniors and families.

Services

- Support enhanced outreach.
- Support ACT teams and rent subsidies.
- Support financial literacy.
- Support services for refugees and immigrant populations.

Capacity Building and Awareness

- There is a lack of consistency within the region. Need coordination, coherence and buy-in from leadership region wide.
- Need to take a regional approach and build capacity among municipalities.
- Data sharing, common metrics, measurable objectives, and fostering understanding among service providers are essential.
- Need to be able to share data among all partners in the region.
- Data needs to be consistent to monitor our progress in ending homelessness - are we moving forward?
- Need accurate stats but also need to enable front line workers to focus on providing services.
- Need to increase effectiveness in building relationships and strategies to end homelessness.
- Need to help communities deal with change.
- Need a coordinated, online system that shows available resources in the region.
- Need to increase awareness - that homeless people are not all from the Downtown Eastside.
- Need cross jurisdictional integration.

Employment

- Need employment opportunities to help people increase their incomes.
- Increased income should be an indicator of success.
- Need to reduce the stigma around homelessness to facilitate access to employment.
- Support for social enterprises.
- Support grants for social innovation and employment training opportunities.

PRIORITIES

- Cross-jurisdictional integration
- Affordable housing, including the pooling of resources and funding for capital
- Be clear on how the Plan will focus on urgent needs compared to prevention among people at risk of homelessness
- Prioritize people who are chronically homeless
- Focus on prevention –to address the flows into homelessness and address the transition of youth from care into adulthood
- Develop a coordinated and consistent system of data collection and provide for data sharing
- Focus on employment initiatives
- Take a regional approach to homelessness





ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey has been prepared as the next step of gaining feedback from stakeholders. The survey seeks to:

- Test and validate the ideas and solutions identified through the consultation events.
- Reach out to groups who were unable to participate in the earlier consultation events.

The survey focuses on prioritizing the strategies and solutions identified in the consultation activities. We strongly encourage all stakeholders to complete the survey, and tell us what strategies should be prioritized in the upcoming Regional Homelessness Plan.

The deadline to complete the survey is **Wednesday, December 18th**. The link to the survey is provided below:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/talkhomelessness

PRIORITIES + STRATEGIES REPORT

A second report, the Priorities and Strategies Report, will be prepared and presented to the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. This report will include recommended strategies and priorities for the new Regional Homelessness Plan, which will be based on the input received during the consultations outlined in this report and from the results of the online survey. The Priorities + Strategies Report requires approval by the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness Constituency Table prior to moving forward.

PREPARING THE REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN

The Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness will prepare the draft Regional Homelessness Plan and Implementation Strategy by September, 2014, with staff support provided by Metro Vancouver. It is anticipated that the Plan will be informed by a number of sources, including findings from these consultation activities, as well as best practices research. The final version of the plan is expected to be completed by December, 2014, followed by community endorsement in June, 2015. Stakeholders will be consulted on the draft Plan for further input and feedback.





LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
Aboriginal Mother Centre
Aldergrove Neighbourhood Services
Alouette Home Start Society
Aunt Leah's Place
BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
BC Housing
BC Muslim Association - Women Chapter
Boys + Girls Club
Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness
Carnegie Community Centre
Citizen Services + Program Delivery, Service Canada
City of Burnaby
City of North Vancouver
City of Port Coquitlam
City of Vancouver
CMHA - Northshore
CMHA - Vancouver-Burnaby
CMHA - New Westminster-Vancouver
Collingwood Neighbourhood House
Covenant House Vancouver
District of Maple Ridge
District of West Vancouver
Dixon Transition Society
Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council

Elizabeth Fry Society
Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Fraserside Community Services Society
First United Church
Hollyburn Family Services Society
Indian Residential School Survivors Society
Inner City Youth Mental Health
Journey Home Community
Kay's Place
Keys Housing + Health Solutions
Kinbrace Community Society
Last Door Recovery Society
Lookout Burn Task Force
Metro Vancouver
Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Committee
Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation
More than a Roof
Native Education College
New Hope
Options Community Services Society
Pacific Community Resources
Process Pros
Purpose Society
RainCity Housing
Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

Salvation Army - Caring Place
Salvation Army - Grace Mansion
Salvation Army - Harbour Light
Seniors Services Society
Service Canada - Homelessness Partnering Strategy
Society for Gerontechnology
St. Leo
St. Pauls Hospital (Providence)
Terra Housing
The Bloom Group
Tri-Cities Homelessness + Housing Task Group
United Way
Union Gospel Mission of South Coast BC
VanCity Community Foundation
VanCity Metro
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
Vancouver Coastal Health
Vancouver Rape Relief
Watari
West End Seniors Network
West Vancouver Police Department, Victim Services
Wings (Women In Need Gaining Strength)
Wishs (Women in Search of Housing)
YWCA of Metro Vancouver
10 Anonymous Individuals with Lived Experience





WWW.STOPHOMELESSNESS.CA