



## Report 16, 2008/09 – Homelessness: Clear Focus Needed

As at July 2010

Introductory comments from Ministry of Housing and Social Development

*The provincial government continues to demonstrate leadership through action to address homelessness. Through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative and MOU agreements with eight local governments, more than 5000 new and upgraded supportive housing units and beds have been committed. MOUs are fast-tracking the approval and construction of more than 1900 units of supportive housing. In May 2010, the provincial government announced an additional 1006 new supportive housing units to be built in Vancouver in partnership with Streethome and the City of Vancouver. The provincial government has also acquired 26 Single Room Occupancy hotels in Vancouver, New Westminster and Victoria, protecting and upgrading over 1560 rooms. The Homeless Outreach Program and Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program were created to connect homeless people to housing and support services. More than 10,600 people in 50 communities have been housed since 2006. Emergency shelters now function as gateways to housing and support services; since April 2009, more than 5400 people have been helped to find housing. There are now more than 1600 permanent year-round shelter beds in 63 shelters in 33 communities. The majority of shelters operate 24/7 and provide three meals a day. Additionally, there are over 1400 Extreme Weather Response spaces available during extreme winter weather across the province.*

*In March 2009, the provincial government announced the Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP), which is focused on addressing chronic homelessness in five communities (Victoria, Vancouver, Surrey, Kelowna and Prince George). By aligning public agencies and ministries working with homeless individuals under a common vision, HIP has successfully ensured that chronically homeless people are housed and connected with the support services that they require in order to lead stable lives and to remain housed. HIP also recognizes the importance of local solutions to local problems, as the issues associated with homelessness vary between communities.*

*While significant progress has been made, there is still more to be done. The provincial government, with its local government, federal government, non-profit, and private sector partners, continues to work towards its goal of eliminating homelessness.*



## Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

### STATUS

**Recommendation 1:** Government develop a comprehensive plan to address homelessness.

Alternative action taken

#### Actions taken, results and/or actions planned

*The provincial government demonstrates its leadership through action. BC is widely recognized as a leader for its aggressive and innovative approaches to addressing homelessness. This approach considers the unique circumstances of each community and involves the full participation of local partners.*

*Through the provincial housing strategy, Housing Matters BC, the provincial government is addressing a range of housing needs, from homelessness to affordable rental housing and homeownership.*

*Under the umbrella of Housing Matters BC, the provincial government has a multi-pronged, multi-year strategy to address homelessness. It has the following components:*

- Homeless Outreach Programs which connect homeless individuals to housing and supports;
- The Emergency Shelter Program which functions as a gateway to housing and support services with most shelters now operating 24/7 and providing three meals a day;
- The purchase, renovation and stabilization of 26 single room occupancy hotels (SROs) which protects the existing housing stock;
- Working in partnership to expand the number of supportive housing units, which provide the necessary support to enable people to live in permanent housing.
- Service coordination and integration, breaking down the silos between agencies and every level of government.

*On March 3, 2009, the provincial government announced the Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP). Through HIP, provincial ministries and agencies are focusing homeless efforts on the chronically homeless in five communities: Victoria, Vancouver, Surrey, Kelowna and Prince George.*

*HIP has:*

- A common focus on priority clients;
- A performance measurement and evaluation framework with clear common targets;
- A collaborative and coordinated approach to outreach, housing and support services;
- Priority access to services and supports; and
- An information management framework.

*The provincial government approach is working.*

- Through the Homeless Outreach Program and Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program more than 10,600 people in 50 communities have been housed since 2006.
- The Emergency Shelter Program now has more than 1600 permanent year-round shelter beds in 63 shelters in 33 communities. This program has helped more than 5400 people to find housing since April 2009.
- The SRO's which have been purchase and upgraded have protected 1560 rooms
- Over 5000 units of supportive housing have been built, or committed to, across BC.

*As of July 19, 2010, 3100 homeless individuals have been housed across the five HIP communities.*

*As of July 2010, HIP has:*

- Integrated, cross-agency teams in each of the five communities. Activities include outreach, intake, assessment and ongoing support to help homeless individuals get and maintain stable housing;
- Developed and implemented community action plans that reflect each community's unique characteristics;
- Developed and implemented integrated care management frameworks; and
- Developed and implementing information management frameworks.

*A HIP evaluation, including lessons learned and recommendations for continuous improvement, has been initiated. (due by March 2011)*

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## Recommendations continued...

RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS	STATUS
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Government designate a lead agency and assign specific roles and responsibilities to all of the significant agencies involved with addressing homelessness in British Columbia.</p> <p><b>Actions taken, results and/or actions planned</b></p> <p><i>The Ministry of Housing and Social Development has been designated as the lead agency to ensure that services for homeless individuals with severe mental illness and/or addictions are delivered in an integrated and timely manner. HIP is responsible for service coordination and integration between provincial ministries and various the levels of government and community agencies in Vancouver, Victoria, Surrey, Kelowna and Prince George. BC Housing develops, delivers and manages the provincial government’s housing, outreach and shelter services.</i></p> <p><i>Provincial agencies involved in HIP include the Ministries of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Health Services, Children and Families, Community Development and Citizens Services; the health authorities; BC Housing; and Community Living BC. HIP also works in partnership with community-based organizations such as the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and the StreetoHome Foundation.</i></p> <p><i>HIP has established governance structures with roles and responsibilities at the corporate and community level. Corporately, HIP has established a Deputy Minister/Chief Executive Officer Leadership Team; Assistant Deputy Minister/Vice President Steering Committee; and Corporate Management Team to provide direction and clear barriers. At the community level, the community action plans set out cross-ministry, agency and non-profit organization executive steering committees for increased operational integration.</i></p> <p><i>The integration of support services, including mental health and addictions treatment, income assistance, life skills and employment counselling, has been a critical component of our success. Evidence supports this multi-faceted approach to help people secure and maintain housing.</i></p> <p><i>All agencies within the program, policy and governance structure have a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.</i></p>	<p>Fully or substantially implemented</p>

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## Recommendations continued...

RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS	STATUS
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Government provide guidance to municipalities in collecting homeless count data consistent with the information requirements of the Province and encourage municipal participation in homeless counts.</p> <p><b>Actions taken, results and/or actions planned</b></p> <p><i>While it is difficult to get consistent data on the homeless population, the homeless counts that have been conducted in several communities are a good source of information. Data from these counts helps to plan and gauge the effectiveness of provincial initiatives.</i></p> <p><i>The government's primary concern is to improve the lives of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We are concentrating our efforts on building new housing, preserving and improving existing affordable housing, coordinating housing and support services and providing outreach and shelter services to connect people with services.</i></p> <p><i>HIP is currently making aggregate data available on homeless persons housed or sheltered to its community teams to assist in planning, coordination and program management.</i></p>	<p>Alternative action taken</p>



**Recommendations continued...**

RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS	STATUS
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Government gather sufficient and appropriate information on homelessness so that it can identify key gaps in services to the homeless and use this information to better inform its decisions.</p>	<p>Fully or substantially implemented</p>
<p><b>Actions taken, results and/or actions planned</b></p>	
<p><i>The provincial government, through HIP and BC Housing, measures and reports on achievements in housing the homeless. Robust data collection gives the provincial government the necessary tools to inform its decisions and assess the social and financial impacts of homelessness. This includes information on clients, the number of clients receiving income assistance and the number of clients who have been housed and remain housed.</i></p> <p><i>HIP has a performance and management plan with targets to measure progress. A common evaluation framework has been put in place to assess the effectiveness of integrated efforts. The framework includes an evaluation of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>o Success in housing clients and ensuring they remain housed;</i></li> <li><i>o Success in improving clients' well-being and self-sufficiency; and</i></li> <li><i>o Success in reducing clients' future dependence on high cost, crisis oriented health, social and justice services.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Research Agreements have been signed by partner ministries, BC Housing and health authorities to support the performance plan and evaluation framework. This includes a web based tool to collect client information, provide counts of clients housed, and track progress.</i></p> <p><i>An integrated service delivery framework, including gap assessments, has been implemented in each community.</i></p> <p><i>BC Housing's Homelessness Services Database continues to provide person-centred data management for reporting and program planning.</i></p> <p><i>HIP has produced a clear focus on data gathering and sharing, analysis of client flows, and gap assessment at the community level. In addition, the Project as a whole will be evaluated against the results-based targets in the performance and management plan. These measures will be invaluable to future planning.</i></p> <p><i>HIP continues to fully implement information sharing agreements for community teams, to help identify community level service gaps and support integrated care management.</i></p> <p><i>As of July 2010, the BC Housing Homelessness Services Database has increased its capacity to provide individual case planning. Through assessment, goal setting and referrals, service providers are better able to address the immediate and long term needs of those who are homeless.</i></p> <p><i>Data collected to date confirms the success of our programs and strategy to address homelessness.</i></p> <p><i>Currently under development, the Integrated Case Management (ICM) project will replace outdated information systems used to deliver critical social programs, including child protection services, child care subsidies, income assistance and employment programs. ICM will improve the provincial government's ability to share, protect and manage information between ministries; in turn, delivering better outcomes for clients through coordinated planning and improved access to effective services. In addition, an integrated approach to the delivery of social services will support staff in making appropriate and timely decisions.</i></p>	



**Recommendations continued...**

**RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS**

**STATUS**

**Recommendation 5:** Once government has defined a target for homelessness, it ensure that the breadth and intensity of its strategies and programs are consistent with that target.

Fully or substantially implemented

**Actions taken, results and/or actions planned**

*The provincial government's goal is to eliminate homelessness.*

*Using a multi-pronged strategy to address the immediate and long-term needs of people experiencing homelessness, the provincial government takes action by:*

- o Connecting people to housing and support services;*
- o Expanding and stabilizing existing housing stock;*
- o The provision of wrap-around services and supports; and*
- o Integrating service delivery which improves client flow and supports partnership.*

*Actions taken include:*

- o The launch of HIP in March 2009, focused on addressing chronic homelessness in five communities;*
- o Specialized community assistance program pilots implemented in HIP communities to provide life skills and pre-employment support to formally homeless persons;*
- o Continued development of over 5000 new and upgraded supportive housing units and shelter beds completed through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative and MOU's with local governments;*
- o Partnership with the Streethome Foundation and the City of Vancouver to provide 1006 new supportive housing units on 8 sites;*
- o The creation of the Supportive Housing Registration service, offering a single point of access for applicants seeking low barrier supportive housing in the provincial government's 24 Single Room Occupancy hotels in Vancouver. The service will be available province-wide in Fall 2010; and*
- o Vancouver's Downtown Community Court, offering offenders support and services, such as health care, housing or help with obtaining income assistance.*

*Results confirm the breadth and intensity of the provincial government's strategy and actions are working.*

*As a first step, HIP focused on reducing chronic homelessness in the five HIP communities. HIP's strategies and actions are all designed to meet that goal. Since Homelessness: Clear Focus Needed was released, HIP's targets have been met.*

*The Emergency Shelter Program, Homeless Outreach Program and Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program continue to connect homeless individuals across the province with stable housing and supports. In 2009/10, 89% of homeless individuals accessing housing remained housed six months after placement.*

*The successes, information gathered, and lessons learned through HIP inform and support the strategies intended to achieve the provincial government's goal of improving client flow and identifying service gaps. For example, information gathered through HIP resulted in a partnership between the Ministries of Health Services and Housing and Social Development, in collaboration with three health authorities and BC Housing, for housing to prepare individuals for treatment at the Burnaby Centre Mental Health and Addictions, as well as for individuals in need of residential care after treatment.*

*Results of the 2010 City of Vancouver homeless count demonstrate there has been a significant reduction in street homelessness and an increase in the number of shelter users.*



**Recommendations continued...**

**RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF PROGRESS**

**STATUS**

**Recommendation 6:** Government strengthen its approach to preventing homelessness by taking steps to ensure that people leaving health care services, child protection and correctional facilities are not homeless upon their release.

Partially implemented

**Actions taken, results and/or actions planned**

*Protocols are already in place to ensure that clients are not discharged to the street. Discharge planning from health care services and correctional facilities is being assessed with a view to identify gaps and strengthen processes.*

*The Ministry of Children and Family Development has led the development of Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs to ensure a coordinated process for youth transitioning to adulthood. Government ministries and agencies include MCFD, the Ministries of Housing and Social Development, Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, Education, Health Services, Public Safety and Solicitor General, BC Housing and Community Living BC.*

*Through a multi-ministry and agency partnership, the provincial government has opened 44 beds at Riverview sites to create transitional housing for people leaving the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions.*

*A working group of signatories is currently implementing the Cross-Ministry Transition Planning Protocol for Youth with Special Needs.*

*The Integrated Offender Management pilot project links community and correctional staff with high risk offenders identified at risk of homelessness, helping to secure housing upon release.*

**Recommendation 7:** Government improve its reporting related to homelessness so that the public and Legislature can understand its extent and whether or not progress is being made.

Fully or substantially implemented

**Actions taken, results and/or actions planned**

*The provincial government regularly measures and reports on its progress related to homelessness. As noted, HIP includes a performance and management plan with targets to measure progress. A reporting process has been implemented. BC Housing measures and reports on performance related to homelessness within the agency Annual Report and Service Plan publications.*

*Ensuring data is complete and accurate is a primary focus of the provincial government.*

*An evaluation of HIP will be undertaken (March 2011).*

*BC Housing will continue to publically report on issues around addressing homelessness through comprehensive performance measurements and documentation.*