

**Ministry of Housing and Social Development**  
**Homelessness: Clear Focus Needed - March 2009**  
**Detailed Ministry Action Plan for Implementing the 7 Recommendations**

**General Comments**

In March 2009, the provincial government announced the Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP), which is focused on addressing chronic homelessness in five communities (Vancouver, Surrey, Victoria, Kelowna and Prince George). HIP has successfully mobilized effort and resources in these communities to ensure 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, recognizing that the issues associated with homelessness vary from community to community.

The actions taken through HIP, coupled with the province's ongoing investment in shelters, housing, and support services, have produced significant progress in addressing the issues identified in the Auditor General's report on homelessness. In particular, HIP is breaking new ground with regard to integrated and client-focused service delivery. It is important to recognize that addressing homelessness must take into account diverse client needs, existing services and service delivery mechanisms, and the views of local governments and non-profit agencies. While considerable progress has been made, continued effort is required to ensure that British Columbia's most vulnerable citizens are adequately housed.

This action plan was prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Social Development, in consultation with other ministries and agencies with roles in addressing homelessness.

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**OAG Finding 1:** Government has not established clear direction for addressing homelessness.

<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Status (see note)</b>	<b>Actions Planned (Include Time Frame)</b>
<p>We recommend that government develop a comprehensive plan to address homelessness.</p>	<p>On March 3, 2009, the provincial government announced the Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP).</p> <p>Through HIP, provincial ministries and agencies are focusing homeless program resources on the chronically homeless in five communities: Victoria, Vancouver, Surrey, Kelowna and Prince George. HIP has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A common focus on priority clients;</li> <li>• Clear common targets;</li> <li>• A collaborative and coordinated approach to outreach, housing and support services;</li> <li>• Priority access to services and supports; and</li> <li>• An information management framework.</li> </ul>	<p>P</p>	<p>Future actions under HIP include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing fully integrated service delivery including cross-agency client flow assessment, gap analysis and role/resource alignment (January 2010).</li> <li>• An evaluation, including evidence based recommendations for continued programming improvements (December 2009, December 2010).</li> </ul>

**Note: Status of Implementation**

**I - Recommendation has been fully or substantially implemented**

**P - Recommendation has been partially implemented**

**AA - Alternative action has been undertaken, general intent of alternative action addresses OAG finding**

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<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>We recommend that the 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>Through HIP, 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.</p> <p>Provincial agencies involved in HIP include the Ministries of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Health Services, Children and Families, 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.</p>	<p><b>I</b></p>	
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**OAG Finding 2:** A lack of good information hampers government’s decision-making.

<b>Recommendation 3:</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Status (see note)</b>	<b>Actions Planned (Include Time Frame)</b>
<p>We recommend that 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>While it is difficult to get reliable data on the homeless population, some of the best sources are the homeless counts that have been conducted in several communities. Data from these counts helps to plan and gauge the effectiveness of provincial initiatives.</p> <p>The government’s primary concern is improving the situations of homeless individuals. We are concentrating our efforts on building new housing, preserving and improving existing affordable housing, coordinating housing and support services and providing outreach to connect people with services.</p>	<p><b>AA</b></p>	<p>Through HIP, the province will make aggregate data available to its community teams to assist with homelessness planning and coordination.</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b></p> <p>We recommend that 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>HIP includes 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 measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success in housing clients and keeping them housed;</li> <li>• Success in improving clients' well-being and self-sufficiency; and</li> <li>• Success in reducing clients' future dependence on high cost, crisis oriented health, social and justice services.</li> </ul> <p>A research agreement is in place to allow cross-agency information sharing to develop a comprehensive profile of homeless clients and their needs.</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>HIP will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement monthly reports of key performance indicators to indicate successes and gaps in connecting clients with housing and supports (October 2009).</li> <li>• Integrated service delivery design in each community including service gap assessment (November 2009).</li> <li>• Implement information agreements to support cross-agency sharing of client information and integrated care management (December 2009).</li> </ul>
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**OAG Finding 3:** Despite government’s many best practice initiatives, homelessness appears to be growing.

<b>Recommendation 5:</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Status (see note)</b>	<b>Actions Planned (Include Time Frame)</b>
<p>We recommend that, 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.</p>	<p>The province’s goal is to eliminate homelessness. As the first step to achieving that goal, HIP is focused on reducing visible and chronic homelessness in the five HIP communities. HIP’s strategies and actions are all designed to meet that goal.</p> <p>In addition, the province continues to take action on homelessness through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Provincial Homelessness Initiative, with 1445 new housing units created since 2001, 647 units under development, 1487 units acquired through purchases or leases, and a further 1066 units funded</li> </ul>	<b>P</b>	<p>HIP partners are working collaboratively on actions that will improve client flow in the Lower Mainland (for example, triage coordination for clients). The initial focus is on the Lower Mainland due to the number of clients and the complex array of services. (Spring 2010)</p> <p>HIP will resolve gaps and flow barriers as they are identified during implementation of integrated service delivery plans. (As required)</p>

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	<p>through MOUs with local governments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Homeless Outreach Program, which has placed more than 7000 people in 49 communities in stable housing. In addition, the Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program operates in 9 communities.</li> <li>• The Emergency Shelter Program provides some 1500 year-round beds through 59 shelters in 30 communities. Shelters act as a gateway to connect people with permanent housing.</li> <li>• The Supportive Housing Registration (SHR) offers a single point of access for applicants seeking</li> </ul>		
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	<p>low barrier supportive housing in the Province's 25 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. This simplified service ensures that applicants and the referral agencies supporting them only have to submit one application.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b>          We recommend that 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.</p>	<p>Protocols are already in place to ensure that clients are not discharged to the street. The province agrees that further steps can be taken in this regard.</p> <p>The transition from the youth care system provides one example of how the provincial government is strengthening its approach to preventing homelessness. Youth in care of the Ministry of Children and Families or</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>HIP will develop a problem assessment and recommendations (January 2010).</p>

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	<p>moving from a youth correctional facility are almost always transitioned with a housing plan in place. MCFD uses tools such as comprehensive plans of care, youth agreements, agreements with young adults, living support and assistance, safe houses and emergency shelters, outreach workers, and youth support workers to help youth successfully transition to self-sufficiency, and become contributing members of society.</p>		
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**OAG Finding 4:** Government is not adequately reporting on the results of its efforts to address homelessness.

<b>Recommendation 7:</b>	<b>Actions Taken To Date</b>	<b>Status (see note)</b>	<b>Actions Planned (Include Time Frame)</b>
<p>We recommend that 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.</p>	<p>As noted above, HIP includes a performance and management plan with targets to measure progress.</p>	<p>P</p>	<p>Further work on data integrity is required before results can be made public.</p>

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