

# **SURREY HOMELESSNESS PLAN**

## **Phase 1: Needs Assessment & Inventory of Services**

**Prepared for:  
The Interim Homelessness Task Force,  
Community Solutions**

**Sponsored by:  
Surrey Social Futures**

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The definition of homelessness as used in this report encompasses the following two components:

- absolute homelessness refers to people who are living with no physical shelter – i.e., on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and on beaches, as well as people living temporarily in emergency shelters or transition houses; and
- at-risk of homelessness refers to people who are living in spaces or situations that do not meet basic health and safety standards, do not provide for security of tenure or personal safety and are not affordable. This also includes people considered as the invisible homeless, such as individuals who “couch surf” or stay temporarily with family and friends.

This report uses a number of other terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader. If you encounter such a term, refer to the glossary of terms on page 35.

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## **Executive Summary:**

This report documents the results of a needs assessment study of those people who are absolutely homeless or who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. More specifically, it estimates the size and compiles a profile of the above population, develops an inventory of current services and facilities serving the above population, identifies service and facility gaps, outlines a number of suggested actions to address homelessness, and prepares the basis for both a communications and a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Instrumental to the preparation of this report was the ongoing guidance of an interim homelessness task force (appendix 1) and the organizational support provided by Surrey Social Futures. This study was made possible by a grant from Human Resources Development Canada, under its Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives Program and was undertaken by John Talbot & Associates Inc. Other contributors include the Surrey Urban Mission which provided a venue for the community forum and the volunteers who participated in the 24-hour count of the homeless in Surrey.

The study involved about 30 community and government agencies (appendix 2) who directly or indirectly serve people who are absolutely homeless or who at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. It also involved over 50 people who are absolutely homeless. Where possible, the consultant interviewed people in person, which allowed for a freer exchange of information and facilitated probing for clarification or more detail.

Prior to highlighting some of the key findings, the interim homelessness task force felt that it was important to outline a brief context in which to interpret the findings. First, it noted that homelessness is a regional issue and that its presence is not confined to the major centres of Surrey and Vancouver. Second, it noted that addressing homelessness will require a collaborative effort, involving all three levels of government, businesses, educators, funders, non-profits and residents. The task force stressed that it is everyone's problem. Third, it noted that this problem can no longer be ignored, as people's lives are being placed at-risk and Surrey's overall quality of life and reputation are being compromised.

Based on the research, it is estimated that the minimum number of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey is in the range of 150 to 200. Of importance, this number does not include people who are "couch surfing" or "living rough." The research also suggests that this number may be higher in the summer, when proximity to a shelter is not as important. Additionally, it is estimated that the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness numbers at least several thousand in Surrey.

The inventory of services and facilities, the identification of service and facility gaps and the suggested actions are organized according to the "continuum of housing, income and support" framework. This framework was developed by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and it consists of three major elements – i.e., housing, income and support. It espouses a strong prevention approach by focusing on housing and income as solutions to homelessness, while recognizing the importance of support (both community and personal).

In the short-term (0-6 months), the following actions are proposed:

- That a homelessness steering committee be established that reflects the diversity of Surrey and represents the key community and government agencies directly or indirectly serving people who are absolutely homeless. This steering committee will prioritize the suggested actions, which will form the basis of a homelessness plan for Surrey. It will also facilitate the implementation of the prioritized actions, monitor/evaluate their effectiveness, advocate with and on behalf of the homeless, increase public awareness about homelessness, facilitate partnerships and leverage necessary resources and support.
- That a meeting or meetings be held with elected officials of all three levels of government to share the results of the needs assessment and to seek their support for and participation in the plan's development and implementation.
- That a housing/homelessness symposium be held with key community, business and government leaders and residents to discuss the results of the needs assessment, to gain feedback on the suggested actions and to seek support for the plan.
- That a communications strategy be developed to build a base of knowledge and support for the plan and to raise public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey.
- That a monitoring and evaluation strategy be developed to measure the effectiveness of the plan, to amend and update the plan to ensure that it reflects changing conditions and new opportunities, to document and report outcomes as the basis for community support and to provide a rationale for ongoing funding in a credible and results-oriented way.

For a complete listing of suggested actions, refer to appendix 3. For information on the communications strategy and the monitoring and evaluation strategy, refer to pages 27 and 28 respectively.

This report uses a number of terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader. If you encounter such a term, refer to the glossary of terms in appendix 4.

## **Section 1: Purpose**

The Surrey Homelessness Plan comprises two phases. Phase 1, and the subject of this report, documents the results of a needs assessment study of those people who are absolutely homeless or who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. More specifically, it:

- estimates the size and compiles a profile of the above population;
- develops an inventory of current services and facilities serving the above population;
- identifies service and facility gaps;
- outlines a number of suggested actions to address homelessness that fit within the context of the “continuum of housing, income and support framework” as used in the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver; and
- prepares the basis for a communications and a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Phase 2 will primarily focus on plan development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. An essential component of this phase, will be the establishment of a homelessness steering committee, who, with the assistance of a consultant, will:

- review what other jurisdictions are doing to facilitate the development of affordable housing, shelter accommodation and support services for the homeless;
- prioritize the suggested actions based on established criteria (e.g., perceived need, available funding, fit within the continuum of housing, income and support framework, level of community support, etc.);
- develop, cost out and establish responsibility for the prioritized actions;
- establish working relationships with the City of Surrey, other levels of government and key community partners to gain support for the prioritized actions;
- implement a communications strategy which will inform and educate residents about the homelessness situation in Surrey and build support for the prioritized actions; and
- develop a detailed monitoring and evaluation strategy to track changes in the number of people who are absolutely homeless and to provide regular feedback as to the effectiveness of the prioritized actions in addressing homelessness in Surrey.

## **Section 2: Background**

In late-1999, the Federal government announced a major homelessness initiative which included funding of \$305 million over a three-year period for “Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives” to be allocated through Human Resources Development Canada. Greater Vancouver was identified as one of ten areas initially targeted under the program. In March 2000, the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness was formed. This steering committee was responsible for developing a regional plan to address homelessness, as well as making recommendations for the distribution of Federal funds totalling some \$25.1 million.

The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness released its report entitled “Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver” on March 19, 2001. This plan profiled the homeless population (both absolute and at-risk) and assessed their needs; provided an inventory of services and facilities targeting people who are homeless; identified service and facility gaps; and outlined strategies to address homelessness and create a continuum of housing, income and support.

During the above time period, Surrey Social Futures, with funding support from the United Way of the Lower Mainland, developed and implemented a Community Impact Profile for Surrey and White Rock. This profile highlighted 34 measurable indicators from a social standpoint and provided information about economic, education, health, housing, public safety and other conditions. Based on the profile, a number of community issues were identified, including the lack of affordable housing and homelessness. Regarding the former, the profile revealed that Surrey had a greater percentage of renter households with housing affordability problems (i.e., who paid 30% or more of their gross household income on rent) than for any other municipality in the Greater Vancouver Regional District in 1996. As for homelessness, it reported that the Surrey Men's Shelter had turned away 101 men due to the facility being full, while Sheena's Place had turned away 377 women for the same reason in 1998. Additionally, Gateway Shelter had turned away 123 people in January 1999.

At the Community Impact Profile Forum on September 28, 2000, a Homelessness and Housing Task Force was formed to discuss the two related issues and to develop strategies to address them. Based on its deliberations, the task force recommended:

- that a plan to address homelessness in Surrey be developed that dovetails with the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver; and
- that a community awareness initiative be undertaken to both address misconceptions regarding the homeless and to improve community understanding about the need to address homelessness in Surrey.

Surrey Social Futures submitted two proposals to be funded under Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives and received funding for the first – i.e., a plan to address homelessness in Surrey. Of note, this plan was to be based on a needs assessment of those people who are absolutely homeless or who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. Soon after, it circulated a request for proposals to qualified consultants and based on a review of proposals, John Talbot and Associates Inc. was retained in mid-November 2001.

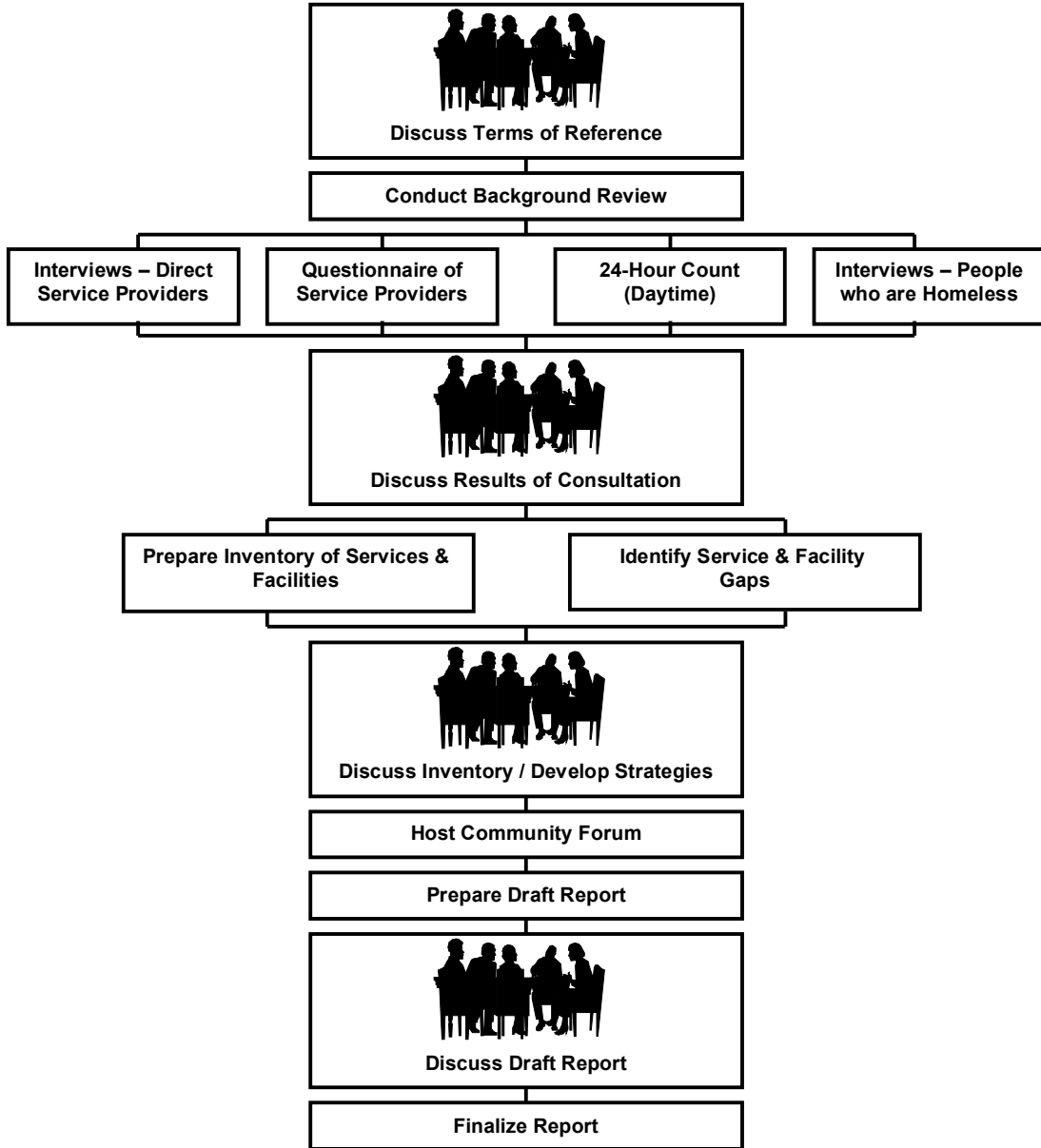
### **Section 3: Methodology**

The methodology which was used (diagram 1) was to be as inclusive as possible. As such, every effort was made to involve direct service providers to the homeless, as well as those people who are absolutely homeless. Where possible, the consultant interviewed people in person, which allowed for a freer exchange of information and facilitated probing for clarification or more detail. The following is a brief description of the methodology which was used.

#### Background Review:

The consultant conducted a background review of the literature pertaining to homelessness in Greater Vancouver, in other parts of British Columbia, in Canada and the United States. This review informed the profile and highlighted a number of innovative ideas and strategies to address homelessness.

# Diagram 1: Methodology



#### Questionnaire of Direct Service Providers:

The consultant, in close consultation with the interim homelessness task force, developed a questionnaire to obtain information on those people who are absolutely homeless or who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. It also asked for information about the level of public awareness regarding the issue of homelessness and public attitudes toward responses to address it such as emergency shelters. This questionnaire was mailed to 58 community service and government agencies located in or serving Surrey. Of these questionnaires, seven (12.1%) were returned unopened, as the address was incorrect or no longer applicable. Of the 51 agencies who actually received the questionnaire, 30 completed and returned it for a completion rate of 58.8%.

#### 24-Hour Count of People who are Absolutely Homeless:

The consultant participated in the daytime component of the 24-hour count which was conducted on January 14 and 15, 2002. This count attempted to enumerate those people who are absolutely homeless in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. As part of the daytime component in Surrey, five teams of two asked people in line-ups for food or other services and on the street if they had permanent housing and if they had been counted as part of the night time component. If the answer was "no" to both questions, then they were counted and asked to answer ten questions regarding their current living situation, their health, their sources of income, etc. In total, 47 people were counted as part of the daytime component in Surrey. With regard to the night time component, staff at emergency shelters and transition houses counted the number of people staying in their facilities and administered a similar set of questions.

#### Interviews with People who are Currently or Formerly Homeless:

The consultant conducted eight interviews with people who are currently or formerly homeless in Surrey. These interviews involved five men and three women aged 26 to 50 and were conducted at the Front Room and outside the Salvation Army. The interviews took between 30 and 55 minutes to complete and interviewees were asked questions regarding their current living situation and the reason(s) for their homelessness, as well as about prevention strategies and service needs. They were also asked a number of personal questions, including their age, educational attainment, health status, income sources and relationships.

#### Interviews with Direct Service Providers:

The consultant interviewed representatives of emergency shelters and transition houses in Surrey. These interviews asked representatives about their facility, including number of spaces and turn-aways, eligibility criteria, maximum length of stay, programs and services offered, planned changes and profile information regarding clients. They also asked for more general information regarding service needs that are not being addressed or met and suggested short and longer term actions to address the homelessness situation in Surrey.

#### Community Forum:

The consultant, with the assistance of the interim homelessness task force, staged a community forum on April 24, 2002. This forum was attended by about 30 people, including residents, elected official and representatives of community service and government agencies in Surrey. After a 15-minute presentation on the study findings, participants worked in small groups to discuss and revise a number of proposed strategies. Of note, the revised strategies form the basis for the suggested actions as contained in this report.

#### **Section 4: Government Housing Policies**

The following section outlines information as to the housing policies of all three levels of government, which provides the context for the sections and suggested actions that follow. Of note, the non-profit and private sectors also play a major role in the provision of affordable housing.

#### Federal Government:

The Federal government, which stopped funding new non-market housing in 1994, has initiated two programs to begin to address the homeless situation and the lack of affordable rental housing in Canada.

In mid-1999, the Federal government announced a \$305 million homeless program, which is now in the second year of a three year commitment to add emergency shelter and transition house beds, as well as support services. This program initially targeted the ten largest cities or metropolitan areas in Canada and later added 51 smaller communities. To be eligible for funding, participating jurisdictions must prepare a plan that assesses the needs of the homeless and establishes local priorities to address them. As of April 2002, the program had “assisted in the construction or renovation of 5,600 beds for overnight or transition housing and 164 food banks and soup kitchens” (Lewington, April 25, 2002). Of note, it is not known if the program will be extended beyond the current three year commitment.

In November 2001, the Federal government announced a \$1.4 billion grants program to stimulate the affordable rental housing market. This program, shared equally between the Federal and Provincial governments, is intended to assist Canadian households who are spending 30% or more of their gross household income on rent. The Province of British Columbia was the first to sign-up for the program, inking an agreement on December 18, 2001. This agreement will result in Federal funding of \$88.7 million, which will be matched by Provincial contributions. This funding, as originally announced, will be used in two program areas: HOMES BC and the Supportive/Assisted Living Program, which is a health and housing partnership.

### Provincial Government:

In British Columbia, BC Housing is the government agency responsible for the delivery of Provincial non-market housing. It works in partnership with housing co-operatives, non-profit societies, government ministries, health authorities and the private sector to develop new non-market housing. As of September 2001, there were more than 75,000 units of non-market housing in the Province, providing affordable housing to about 170,000 people. With regard to this housing, BC Housing managed about 8,000 units directly, while housing co-operatives and non-profit societies managed about 67,000 units. Of those managed by housing co-operatives and non-profit societies, BC Housing had administrative responsibility for more than 26,000 units. BC Housing also provides subsidies to more than 80,000 families, seniors and adults with disabilities (BC Housing, October 2001).

While the Provincial government's Core Review of BC Housing's operations has yet to be completed, it appears that the agency's mandate has been narrowed. BC Housing's mandate previously focused on "working together to create homes, choices and healthy communities." It has now changed to "working in partnership to create housing options for those most vulnerable in our communities." The Provincial government recently announced that only 697 of the 1,700 co-operative and non-market housing units frozen in October 2001 will proceed. Of note, all of these projects target the "most vulnerable," which appears to focus on the frail elderly. Additionally, BC Housing's new Service Plan indicates that the other priority for the next three years will be the Supportive/Assisted Living Program, under which 3,500 supportive/assisted living units will be created. While 1,500 units will be new, another 1,000 units will be converted from existing housing and 1,000 units will be rent supplement. Of note, the Provincial government promised 5,000 intermediate and long term care beds during the last election and this initiative may be the response.

### Municipal Government:

The City of Surrey implemented its Home Ownership Assistance Program in 2001. This pilot program is intended to assist Surrey residents with moderate incomes to purchase their first home. More specifically, qualified residents are eligible for an interest free loan that is the lesser of 15% of the purchase price of the home or \$15,000. The total loan amount is reduced by 10% each year for the first five years to a maximum of 50% of the original loan and is repayable upon sale of the home. To be eligible, residents must have lived in the city for a minimum of one year, have an annual household income that does not exceed \$49,000 and have not previously purchased a home. As for the home, it must be a newly constructed unit located in Surrey and be covered by a New Home Warranty under the Home Protection Act. In year one, the program assisted four families.

Concurrent with City Council's approval for the implementation of the second year of the above pilot program, it has also directed its staff to review policy options for funding of "non-ownership" housing and to provide a further report to it that evaluates these policy options.

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The above context outlines a number of opportunities and challenges with regard to the provision of affordable housing in Surrey.

### Opportunities:

The Federal government is once again an active ‘player’ in the provision of affordable housing. It has also allocated funds to study homelessness and to assist in the provision of emergency shelter beds and transition housing, as well as support services. While the commitment is quite limited at this time, it may signal more of a role in the future. The Provincial government has announced the creation of 3,500 supportive/assisted living units targeting the frail elderly, which will address many of the housing needs of this segment of the population. Additionally, the City of Surrey recently implemented the Home Ownership Assistance Program and it has directed its staff to review policy options for funding of “non-ownership” housing.

### Challenges:

Provincially, several respondents to the service provider questionnaire expressed concern that the change in mandate at BC Housing may leave out families, seniors and singles who do not fit within the classification of “most vulnerable.” Other respondents expressed concern about changes to BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance) (appendix 5), which will reduce the monthly shelter allowance for families of three or more, while tightening eligibility requirements for this program and placing time limits on the receipt of assistance. Municipally, the Home Ownership Assistance Program only assisted four families in its first year of operation and it is inaccessible to most people who are homeless or living in poverty, as they are unable to qualify for a bank mortgage.

## **Section 5: Continuum of Housing, Income and Support Framework**

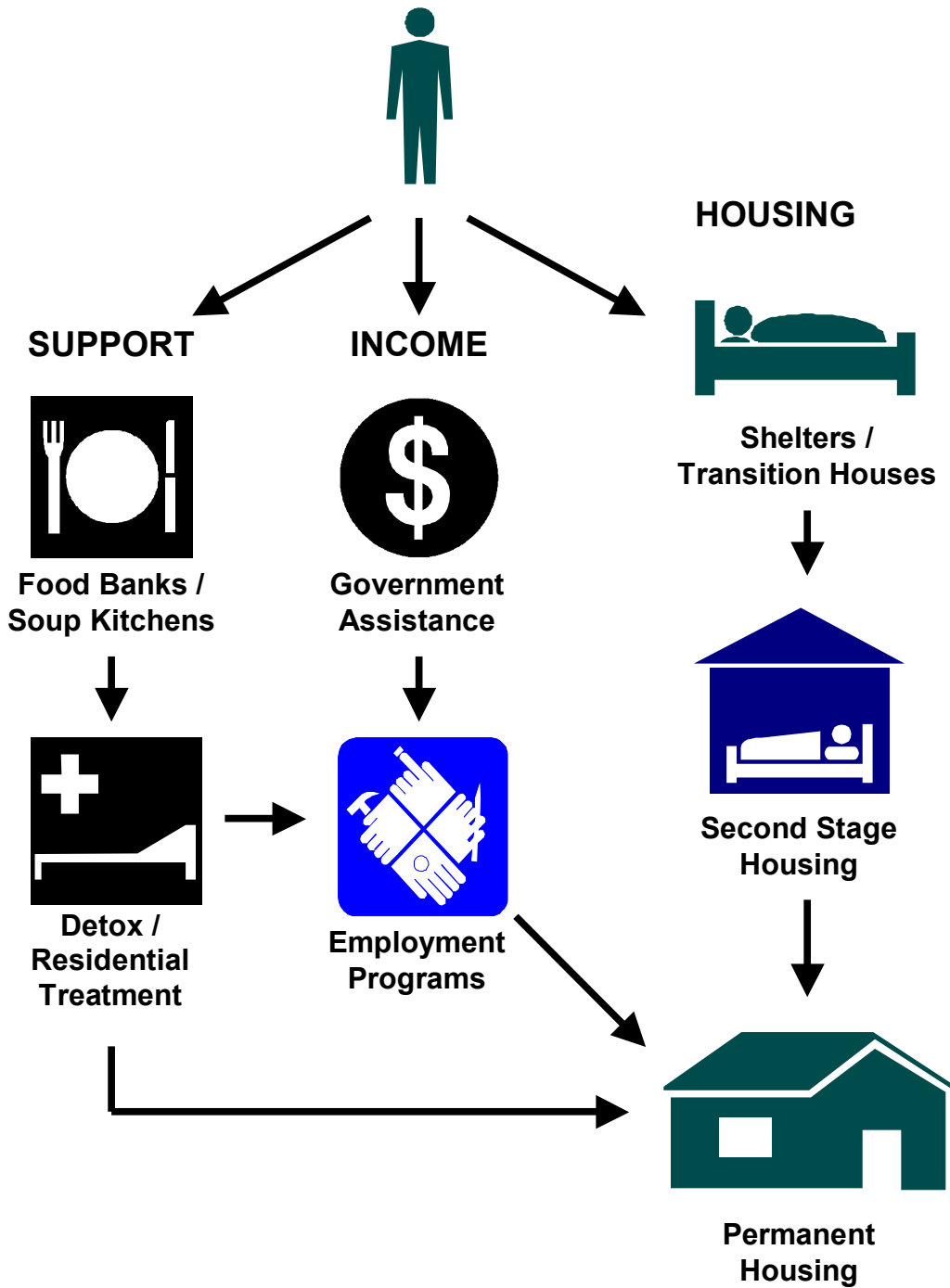
As part of the terms of reference for this study, it was stated that “the plan and suggested actions should fit within the context of the continuum of housing, income and support framework as used in the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver.” This framework was developed by refining the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s continuum of care model to suit the unique characteristics and needs of those people who are homeless in Greater Vancouver.

Diagram 2 illustrates the workings of the continuum of housing, income and support framework. While a simplification, it shows the interrelationships of the three elements (i.e., housing, income and support) and the desired outcomes (i.e., stable employment and permanent housing).

### Housing:

In the diagram, we start with a person who is either homeless or fleeing abuse. This person may seek temporary accommodation in an emergency shelter or transition house. In the case of the former, he or she may first need to be eligible for BC Employment and Assistance. After a maximum of 28 or 30 days, this person may find his or her own housing in the private rental market or he or she may be referred to second stage, supportive or transitional housing. The latter type of housing is designed to assist people to make the transition between emergency shelters and permanent housing and it may include support services such as counselling, crisis intervention, employment assistance, etc. After a stay in a supportive housing arrangement, this person may find his or her own housing in the private rental market or apply for non-market housing. During this process, people may find themselves in-and-out of homelessness but the desired outcome is the realization of permanent housing.

**Diagram 2: “Continuum of Housing, Income and Support” Framework**



### Income and Employment:

This person may be eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) or BC Employment and Assistance. If eligible for EI, he or she will receive temporary financial assistance while he or she looks for a job or upgrades his or her skills. If not eligible, then this person may apply for BC Employment and Assistance. To be eligible, he or she will first have to complete a three week job search and meet two asset limit tests (appendix 5). If eligible, he or she will receive assistance (i.e., a monthly shelter allowance and/or income support) while looking for a job or receiving training for a period not exceeding 24 months every 60 months. If this person has a severe mental or physical disability, then he or she may be exempted from looking for employment and face no time limitations as to the receipt of assistance. Finally, if this person has an addiction, he or she may be referred for treatment to improve his or her employability.

### Support Services:

This person may access support services such as a drop-in centre, food bank, health clinic, mental health centre, etc. If not using services, he or she may be approached by an outreach worker in an attempt to link him or her to needed services. If this person has an addiction, he or she may access or be referred to a detox centre, residential treatment facility and/or supportive recovery house. In some cases, he or she may first need to be eligible for BC Employment and Assistance. At a minimum, these support services are designed to improve the quality of life for people who are homeless or fleeing abuse. More ideally, they may provide needed support to enable them to address personal issues that may be preventing them from obtaining stable employment and permanent housing.

## **Section 6: Definition of Homelessness**

The interim homelessness task force discussed several definitions of homelessness before deciding on a preferred definition. It was agreed that the definition should encompass both people who are absolutely homeless and people who are at-risk of homelessness. It was also agreed that the definition should be consistent with that used by the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver. This consistency, the task force felt, would facilitate cross-comparisons and enable the consultant to use the results of the 24-hour count and other related research.

As such, the preferred definition encompasses the following two components:

- absolute homelessness refers to people who are living with no physical shelter – i.e., on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and on beaches, as well as people living temporarily in emergency shelters or transition houses; and
- at-risk of homelessness refers to people who are living in spaces or situations that do not meet basic health and safety standards, do not provide for security of tenure or personal safety and are not affordable. This also includes people considered as the invisible homeless, such as individuals who “couch surf” or stay temporarily with family and friends.

The task force stated that the above definition recognizes the fact that “absolute homelessness is just the tip of the iceberg” and that economic events and political policies (often external to Surrey) can aggravate homelessness. In fact, it was noted that the recent changes to BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance) may result in far more people being homeless or living in poverty in Surrey.

## **Section 7: Profile of the Homeless Population**

Respondents to the service provider questionnaire were asked to describe those people who are absolutely homeless or who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. Based on the two lists of descriptive words which were used, the following similarities emerged:

- aboriginal people living off-reserve;
- lone parent families;
- low-income individuals and families;
- members of visible minorities;
- people with mental health or substance misuse issues or both;
- people with severe activity limitations or disabilities;
- recent immigrants and refugees;
- the chronically unemployed or underemployed;
- those who are reliant on government assistance;
- those who lack an education or a trade;
- those with criminal justice system history;
- those with limited or no social support networks;
- women and children fleeing abuse;
- women in the sex trade; and
- youth who are unable or unwilling to live at home.

With regard to the differences, respondents to the service provider questionnaire felt that people who are absolutely homeless were more likely to be unattached males of Caucasian descent. Additionally, they felt that they were more likely to have mental health or substance misuse issues or both, as well as physical health problems such as asthma, hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS. By comparison, respondents felt that people who are at-risk of homelessness encompass all ages, cultures and both genders. Additionally, they were more likely to cite economic circumstances or factors such as fixed incomes, high housing costs, minimum wage jobs and unemployment.

Based on the interviews with people who are currently or formerly homeless, many of the interviewees fell into one or more of the above groups or subsets. Six of the eight interviewees had dropped out of high school and five had a Grade 9 education or less. Seven interviewees were unemployed and five were reliant on some form of government assistance. As for the other two interviewees, one relied on panhandling and one on prostitution. All eight interviewees had or previously had an addiction and three had managed to get their addiction under control. Of concern, two interviewees had both an addiction and a mental illness. Six interviewees had a physical health problem and two of these interviewees had a severe activity limitation, with one being confined to a wheelchair. Although not directly asked, several interviewees stated that they had experienced some form of past physical or sexual abuse.

The findings from these interviews were reinforced by the information obtained from the daytime component of the 24-hour count. As part of this count of the absolutely homeless in Surrey, 47 people were asked several questions of relevance to their homelessness. With regard to employment, 91% of respondents were unemployed. As for income other than from employment, 47% of respondents were in receipt of some form of government assistance; 14% relied on binning, panhandling or squeegeeing; and 14% relied on prostitution. Regarding health, 70% of respondents had an addiction, 60% had a medical condition and 20% had a mental illness.

It should be noted that the development of the above profile had limited youth involvement. The age of those involved in the interviews ranged from 26 to 50 and the age of those involved in the daytime component of the 24-hour count ranged from 20 to 67. Youth involvement is a difficult proposition, given that many youth are transient and given the lack of services catering to homeless and street youth in Surrey. As such, the consultant relied on a survey of 523 street youth conducted by The McCreary Centre Society between June and December 2000, including 61 street youth in the South Fraser Area (i.e., Langley, Surrey and White Rock). The term street youth as used here, referred to adolescents under age 19 who were living on the street or involved with street life to a significant extent.

Based on the findings of this survey for the South Fraser Area, 53% of respondents had ran away from home, 41% had been told to leave home, 35% had slept on the street, 24% had stayed in a safe house or shelter and 23% had slept in an abandoned building. Regarding home and school, 100% of respondents reported a low level of family connectedness and 69% reported a low level of school connectedness. As for health, 32% of respondents had a learning disability, 27% had an alcohol or drug addiction, 17% had bipolar disorder or major depression and 2% had schizophrenia. Additionally, 50% of female and 18% of male respondents had experienced past physical and sexual abuse and 46% of female and 25% of male respondents had attempted suicide in the year prior to the survey.

## **Section 8: Extent of Homelessness**

### Absolute Homelessness:

Based on the research, it is estimated that the minimum number of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey is in the range of 150 to 200. Of importance, this number does not include people who are “couch surfing” or “living rough.” Additionally, the research suggests that this number may be higher in the summer, when proximity to a shelter is not as important.

As part of the 24-hour count, 47 people who are absolutely homeless were identified during the daytime component. Given the limited number of team members, the large physical size of Surrey, the many wooded areas and the weather on the day of the count (i.e., below freezing temperatures), it is likely that a number of people were missed. Of those missed, they would include people who were “couch surfing” or “living rough” and people who took advantage of available shelter space in another municipality.

As part of the night time count, of the 66 shelter beds (both permanent and cold/wet weather) and 52 transition beds in Surrey, the vast majority were occupied on the night of the count. Additionally, a number of people were turned away from shelters and transition houses because there was no available space or because they did not meet eligibility requirements.

The above range is consistent with estimates of homelessness as provided by respondents to the service provider questionnaire. When asked to estimate the number of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey, of those who responded, most stated between 100 and 300. A number of respondents noted that homelessness had reached crisis proportions and that immediate action was necessary. Several other respondents commented that the public perception is that homelessness is confined to a few blocks adjacent the King George Highway in north Surrey and is limited to "a few addicts, prostitutes and winos."

#### At-Risk of Homelessness:

It is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately estimate the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. At best, one can only refer to a number of indicators or risk factors that together provide a picture of this population. Based on this picture, it becomes evident that the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness numbers at least several thousand in Surrey. Of note, some people will be far more at-risk than others, as they may be characterized as having more than one risk factor.

#### Housing:

Housing affordability is a major risk factor for homelessness. In Surrey, 7,940 renter households or 26.7% of all renter households paid 50% or more of their gross household income on rent in 1996 and, according to Statistics Canada, these households were considered to have serious housing affordability problems. Those facing the most severe housing affordability problems were female headed households (both lone parents and unattached elderly women), low income people who live alone and young people under age 25. While statistics are not yet available for 2001, Surrey's vacancy rate has decreased from 2.7% in 1996 to 2.3% in 2001. In general, the lower the vacancy rate, the greater the pressure on rents to increase and the more renter households who will face housing affordability problems. Of note, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation considers a vacancy rate of 2.5% to represent a balanced market between supply and demand.

Since 1991, only 131 market rental housing units have been built in Surrey and this situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. In fact, a recent study reported that the cost of building and operating rental housing exceeded market rents in every major centre in Canada (Layton, 2000). In other words, for private developers, building rental housing as an investment is not economical. As such, the growth in rental housing is largely being met through non-conventional housing such as condominiums being rented out by their owners or secondary suites. With regard to the latter, the municipality has identified approximately 12,000 secondary suites in Surrey. However, it has been estimated that there may be up to 24,000 unauthorized secondary suites in Surrey and only about five percent of the city is zoned to permit such suites (Gauthier, 2000). For renters of secondary suites, these suites are vulnerable to closure and most do not meet municipal codes, meaning they may be dangerous, substandard or unhealthy.

Since 1994, the year the Federal government stopped funding new non-market housing, only 637 units of non-market housing have been constructed in Surrey. In total, there are currently 3,824 co-operative and non-market housing units, including units managed by BC Housing. Of these units, 1,745 or 45.6% are family, 1,085 or 28.4% are senior, 839 or 21.9% are co-operative and 155 or 4.1% are aboriginal. As of April 2002, there were 1,419 applicants who had indicated that they would like to live in Surrey. Of these applicants, 1,008 were families, 261 were adults with disabilities, 138 were seniors and seven were single women. Five other applicants were either seeking a market rental housing unit or a rent supplement (Bennett, 2002). While information on the wait time for non-market housing was not readily available, for many applicants, it will be years if at all before they are placed.

#### Income and Employment:

Low incomes and unemployment are major risk factors for homelessness. In Surrey, 12,300 or 42% of unattached individuals and 15,100 or 19% of economic families<sup>1</sup> were living below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs in 1995 (the latest year in which this information is available). These cut-offs are often interpreted by community service agencies and the media as poverty numbers. Those most likely to be living below these cut-offs were lone parent families (62%), elderly unattached women (51%), aboriginal people (47%), non-elderly unattached women (45%) and recent immigrants (43%) (Lee, 2001). For a complete statistical profile for Surrey, refer to chart 1. With regard to trends, for unattached individuals, the incidence of low-income increased by 0.8 of a percentage point between 1990 and 1995; while for economic families, the incidence of low-income increased by 5.1 percentage points between 1990 and 1995.

In December 2000, 3.5% of Surrey's adult population (19-64) were receiving Federal Employment Insurance (EI). By comparison, 3.1% of the Province's adult population (19-64) were receiving EI. Of note, EI regulations have been progressively tightened throughout the 1990s and the effect has been that fewer people qualify for benefits and of those who do, their benefits do not last as long (Stubbs, 2000). In December 2000, 5% of Surrey's adult population (19-64) were receiving BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance). By comparison, 4.7% of the Province's adult population (19-64) were receiving BC Benefits. Of note, recent changes to BC Benefits may increase poverty levels in Surrey, which may contribute to higher rates of homelessness. These changes include the reduction of support payments for some recipients, the elimination of earnings and income exemptions, the tightening of eligibility criteria for the child care subsidy and time limits with regard to the receipt of assistance (PovNet, April 2002).

#### **Interpreting Chart 1:**

Chart 1 provides a statistical profile of families, groups and individuals living below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs in Surrey. The low-income cut-offs are often interpreted as one of the best measures of poverty, as they are calculated every five years and comparisons can be made with other municipalities, the regional district and the Province. To interpret the chart, refer to unattached individuals. In 1995, there were 29,400 unattached individuals living in Surrey, of which 12,300 were living in poverty (i.e., below the low-income cut-offs) for a poverty rate of 42%.

<sup>1</sup> An economic family is two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.

**Chart 1: Statistical Profile of Poverty in Surrey in 1995 (Lee, 2001)<sup>2</sup>**

	Total	Poor	Poverty Rate
<b>Unattached Individuals</b>	29,400	12,300	42%
Non-Elderly Men	13,900	5,200	37%
Non-Elderly Women	8,600	3,900	45%
Elderly Men	1,800	700	39%
Elderly Women	5,100	2,600	51%
<b>Economic Families</b>	80,400	15,100	19%
Couples with No Children < 18	33,700	3,400	10%
Couples with Children < 18	34,700	5,900	17%
Lone Parent Families < 18	7,600	4,700	62%
Other Families	4,400	1,000	23%
Non-Elderly Families	67,400	13,400	20%
Elderly Families	12,900	1,700	13%
<b>Children 0-17 in Families</b>	80,400	20,600	26%
Aged 0-5	28,800	8,600	30%
Aged 6-17	51,600	12,000	23%
<b>All People</b>	301,700	64,500	21%
Aged 0-14	69,300	18,800	27%
Aged 15-24	40,700	9,800	24%
Aged 25-34	49,700	11,100	22%
Aged 35-44	51,100	9,300	18%
Aged 45-54	37,600	5,300	14%
Aged 55-64	23,500	4,100	17%
Aged 65-74	18,700	3,400	18%
Aged 75+	11,200	2,700	24%
<b>Population Groups</b>	301,700	64,000	21%
Aboriginal People	4,900	2,300	47%
Recent Immigrants	24,200	10,300	43%
Visible Minorities	87,000	25,800	30%
With Disabilities	29,800	9,400	32%
<b>Education Level (15-64)</b>	202,500	39,700	20%
Less than Secondary Education	84,700	21,600	26%
Secondary Education	52,700	9,000	17%
Post-Secondary Education	65,100	9,100	14%

<sup>2</sup> Lee, Kevin K. Urban Poverty in Canada. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, April 2001.

According to a recently released report, it is becoming even more difficult for poor families, especially those receiving government assistance, to make ends meet. Between 1997 and 2001, the overall cost of living in British Columbia increased by 5%, while BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance) increased by 2%. As such, those families receiving BC Benefits lost ground. In 2001, basic BC Benefits met only 65% of the minimum monthly cost of living (as calculated by SPARC BC) for a single parent of a young child. Additionally, it met only 61% of the minimum monthly cost of living for a couple with two young children (Goldberg and Long, December 2001).

#### Support Services:

Use of support services such as food banks and soup kitchens are an indicator of extreme poverty, which is a risk factor for homelessness. With regard to use of these services, the Salvation Army soup kitchen feeds about 1,200 people per month living in Surrey and use was reported to be up about 30% over the same period last year. Most of these people are single men or families who are either not receiving government assistance or who are new to the Province. The Surrey Food Bank assists about 11,400 people per month living in Surrey and use for the month of April 2002 was up about 23% from the same month in 2001 and up about 37% from the same month in 2000. Most of these people are adults (53.3%) and children (28.8%) who are living with low incomes. The White Rock/South Surrey Food Bank assists about 300 people per week living in Surrey, most of whom are on government assistance or are living in poverty.

### **Section 9: Inventory of Services and Facilities**

The inventory of services and facilities (chart 2) is based on consultation with direct service providers and is organized according to the continuum of housing, income and support framework. Of note, this inventory is current as of June 28, 2002. Given the number of service and facility changes documented in Surrey since the publication of the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver (March 19, 2001), the need to update this inventory on an annual basis is abundantly clear.

#### Housing:

- **Non-Market Housing:**

There are currently 3,824 co-operative and non-market housing units, including units managed by BC Housing, in Surrey. Of these units, 1,745 or 45.6% are family, 1,085 or 28.4% are senior, 839 or 21.9% are co-operative and 155 or 4.1% are aboriginal. Another 130 units are currently under construction. By community, just over 50% of the co-operative and non-market housing units are located in Newton (1,386 or 36.2%) and Whalley (922 or 24.1%). The remainder are located in South Surrey (681 or 17.8%), Guildford (574 or 15%), Cloverdale (210 or 5.5%) and Fleetwood (51 or 1.3%). As of April 2002, there were 1,419 applicants who had indicated that they would like to live in Surrey. Of these applicants, 1,008 were families, 261 were adults with disabilities, 138 were seniors and seven were single women. Five other applicants were either seeking a market rental housing unit or a rent supplement.

**Chart 2: Inventory of Services and Facilities in Surrey as of  
June 28, 2002**

<b>Service/Facility</b>	<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Units</b>
<b>Housing:</b>		
<b>Co-operative and Non-Market Housing</b>	Family, Aboriginal, Disabled, Senior, etc.	3,824
<b>Permanent Emergency Shelter Beds</b>	Men	20
	Women and Children	10
<b>Minimum Barrier Shelter Beds</b>	Men	28
	Women	8
<b>Transition House Beds</b>	Women and Children	52
<b>Safe House Beds</b>	Sexually Exploited Female Youth	8
<b>Second Stage Housing</b>	Homeless/Fleeing Abuse	0
<b>Supported Apartments</b>	Adults – Mental Illness	8
<b>Supported Hotels</b>	Adults – Mental Illness, Other	0
<b>Supported Independent Living</b>	Adults – Mental Illness, Other	<sup>3</sup> 134
<b>Income/Employment:</b>		
<b>BC Employment and Assistance</b>	Adults (19-64) and Youth (under 19)	
<b>Federal Employment Insurance</b>	Adults in Labour Force (19-64)	
<b>Employment Services</b>	Unemployed Adults and Youth	
<b>Canada Pension and Old Age Security</b>	Seniors (65+)	
<b>Support Services:</b>		
<b>Drop-In Centres</b>	Adults and Youth	2
<b>Food Banks/Soup Kitchens</b>	All Ages – Living in Poverty	3
<b>Detox Beds</b>	Adults/Youth – Addictions	0
<b>Dual Diagnosis Beds</b>	Adults/Youth – Addictions/Mental Illness	0
<b>Residential Treatment and Supportive Recovery Beds</b>	Adults	115-135
	Youth	8
<b>Syringe Exchange Program</b>	Intravenous Drug Users	1

<sup>3</sup> This figure refers to the South Fraser Region (i.e., Delta, Langley, Surrey and White Rock).

- Emergency Shelters:

There are currently 30 permanent emergency shelter beds in Surrey. Of these beds, 20 are located at the Surrey Men's Shelter (which is actually two separate shelters accommodating 10 men each) and 10 beds are located at Sheena's Place, which can accommodate both women and children. To access all 30 beds, a person must be eligible for BC Employment and Assistance. If eligible, men can stay at the Surrey Men's Shelter for up to 28 days, although the average stay is about three days. As for Sheena's Place, women and children can stay for up to 30 days, although the average stay is between 14 and 18 days. For both shelters, extended stays can be granted for medical or other reasons.

Both shelters operate at capacity and regularly turn away people because they are full or because the person in question is deemed to be inappropriate (e.g., disruptive, high, mentally unstable, etc.). In a typical month, the Surrey Men's Shelter turns away about 15 men, about half of which are turned away because the shelter is full. As for Sheena's Place, it turns away between 40 and 50 women and children per month, about three-quarters of which are turned away because the shelter is full. Both shelters offer assistance and support. The Surrey Men's Shelter provides limited alcohol and drug counselling, job search and lifeskills training, as well as advice regarding housing options and referral to community services. As for Sheena's Place, it prepares an individual case plan for each woman and assigns a staff member to work with her in determining immediate needs and finding safe and secure housing. It also offers an array of programs and services in conjunction with the Elizabeth Fry Society.

With regard to future plans, the Surrey Men's Shelter (through Options Services to Communities Society) is in the process of developing a shelter on a one-acre site near 65th Avenue and the King George Highway in Surrey. This shelter will have 35 permanent beds (32 single and three double), will accommodate both men and women and will include 15 cold/wet weather beds and 20 units of transition housing. Of note, this shelter will replace the two existing men's shelters containing 20 beds for a net gain of 15 beds. As for Sheena's Place, given the limitations of the site, there are no plans for expansion.

There are currently 36 minimum barrier shelter beds in Surrey, all of which are located at Gateway Shelter. Of these beds, 28 are for men and eight are for women and all are designated "cold/wet whether," which means that they are only available between November 1st and March 31st. There is no maximum stay and the average stay is about 21 days. Gateway operates at near capacity and in a typical month, it turns away about 40 people. The shelter has no plans to expand, however, it would like to operate year-round. For this to occur, it would require municipal approval and secure year-round funding.

- Transition Houses:

There are currently 52 transition beds located in five transition houses in Surrey. These transition houses are Atira, Evergreen, Ishtar, Shamai and Virginia Sam. To access these beds, women and children must be fleeing an "immediately abusive or violent situation." Of note, women do not have to be eligible for BC Employment and Assistance. The maximum stay is 30 days, however, extensions can be granted from a few days to up to 30 days, depending on the transition house.

Based on the interviews with representatives of Atira, Evergreen and Virginia Sam, these transition houses are operating at or near capacity. With regard to Evergreen and Virginia Sam, they turn away between 30 and 50 women per month. Of those turned away, most do not fall within their mandate, which is to serve women and children escaping an immediately abusive or violent situation. For these women, they are referred to emergency shelters. Of note, young mothers and children are seldom turned away.

All three transition houses offer limited services. Atira provides advocacy and resource referral, as well as counselling once per week. Staff, who are available 24-hours per day, can also assist in the latter area. Evergreen and Virginia Sam provide help to access BC Employment and Assistance and locate more permanent housing. Staff also refer clients to other community service agencies to receive the help that they need.

No changes are planned to Atira or Virginia Sam. As for Evergreen, it may be replaced, as it has been operating for 14 years, which has compromised its confidentiality. If replaced, the new facility will likely provide 24-hour care and disabled access.

- **Safe House:**

There are currently six long-term and two emergency/short-term safe house beds in Surrey, all of which serve sexually exploited female youth (16-29) who choose to exit the sex trade. These beds are all operated by the Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey). There is no minimum or maximum length of stay and no referral is required. The long-term beds are operating at capacity and the program's service area encompasses the entire Lower Mainland. In addition to safe housing, the program offers a full-time education and lifeskills program called the ASK Learning Centre and it refers clients to primary substance misuse treatment and counselling services. Of note, the program is designed to provide support, training and follow-up services for up to seven years. With regard to future plans, Servants Anonymous Society's long-term vision includes expanded day programs and the possibility of up to three safe houses targeting new participants, pregnant females and single mothers with children.

Income and Employment:

- **BC Employment and Assistance:**

To be eligible for BC Employment and Assistance, applicants must first be unemployed and they must complete a three week job search prior to applying, as well as meeting two asset limit tests (appendix 5). If successful, then they are eligible for a monthly shelter allowance and support. They may also be eligible for crisis assistance for clothing, food and shelter and money to cover their security deposit. Additionally, low income families with young children may be eligible for a child care subsidy. People who are employable are limited to a cumulative 24 months of assistance every 60 months. In December 2000, 5% of Surrey's adult population (19-64) were receiving BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance).

- Employment Services:

There are a number of employment services operating in Surrey, several of which target “marginalized groups,” including mental health clients, multi-barriered youth, recent immigrants, visible minorities, etc. The latter services are briefly described below:

- South Fraser Community Services Society:

This society, through Pathways, offers a pre-employment and lifeskills program for youth (15-18) who are referred by the Ministry of Children and Family Development or the Ministry of Human Resources.

- NISHA Family and Children’s Services Society:

This society offers the Youth Job Readiness Program, which is a structured program targeting multi-barriered youth (19-24) on BC Employment and Assistance. This program is designed to assist them to overcome barriers that limit their access to education programs and employment.

- Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society:

This society offers a number of employment assistance services, including counselling, a job finding club, job search support and a resource centre.

- Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society:

This society offers free job search assistance and career planning to clients with general, professional or technical work experience who are underemployed. The career planning program includes client assessment, goal setting, labour market information, and occupational and training program research.

- Surrey Community Services Society:

This society offers the Supported Work and Therapeutic Volunteer Program, which provides opportunities to mental health clients for monitored volunteer placements in the community.

Support Services:

- Drop-In Services:

The Front Room, which operates in conjunction with Gateway Shelter, provides assessment and referral services, as well as access to laundry, personal storage, showers, a telephone and two computers. These computers, which offer internet access, are used to do housing and job searches and to prepare resumes. It also provides an evening meal, which serves about 75 people per night. A housing worker is available five-days per week to assist clients with their housing needs and a sex trade outreach worker was recently hired to compile a dangerous date and next of kin registry and to offer harm reduction advice. During the colder months, about 25 people per night use the Front Room to keep warm or to rest.

Surrey Reconnect assists youth under age 19 who are considered “at-risk” or “high risk” to stay connected with community resources and to promote healthy, safe lifestyles incorporating preventative strategies. To this end, it provides counselling, crisis intervention and drug, alcohol and safer sex information, as well as assistance in finding housing and meals and referral to community service agencies. Most clients are referred by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), their friends, parents and/or a school counsellor or they are self-referred. Between April 1, 2001 and March 31, 2002, Surrey Reconnect opened 148 new files (42 male and 106 female) and had 21 repeat clients. The average monthly caseload was 87.5 clients and most files were closed as a result of the client being returned to his or her family (50.3%), the client realizing an independent living situation (15.9%), the client receiving a MCFD placement (12.7%) and the client being supported by a relative (7%).

- Food Programs:

The Salvation Army soup kitchen feeds about 1,500 people per month and its co-ordinator estimates that use is up about 30% over the same period last year. About 80% of its clients are from Surrey and about 20% are from Delta. Most clients are single men and families who are either not on government assistance or who are new to the Province. There are no eligibility requirements, other than being hungry. In addition to the soup kitchen, it provides a number of free services, including emergency clothing for those in need, furniture and start-up for fire victims, job training and pro-bono legal services. During Christmas, it offers an expanded range of services.

The Surrey Food Bank assists about 12,000 people per month and use for the month of April 2002 was up about 23% from the same month in 2001 and up about 37% from the same month in 2000. About 95% of its clients are from Surrey and about 5% are from Delta. Most clients are adults (53.3%) and children (1-12) (29.8%), including babies (less than 1) (3.8%). The remainder is comprised of teenagers (13-17) (11.7%) and seniors (1.4%). To be eligible, a person must have low or no income (e.g., be in receipt of Employment Insurance, BC Employment and Assistance, a disability benefit or a pension or be under-employed). In addition to its food bank, it operates a community garden, a community kitchen and a food buying club. It also operates a program called “Tiny Bundles,” which sees pregnant women and new mothers receive extra food, baby supplies and dairy products.

The White Rock/South Surrey Food Bank assists about 500 people per week and the number of people using this service decreased by 7.8% between 2001 and 2000. In discussions with the co-ordinator, she explained that this decrease is likely due to low-income people moving out the service area to take advantage of low cost housing elsewhere. About 59% of clients are from Surrey and about 41% are from White Rock. Information was not available as to client composition, although this information will be collected in the future. To be eligible, a person must have low or no income and live in the service area (between 1st and 40th Avenue and between 120th and 196th Street). In addition to its food bank, it provides free clothing and household goods and offers free tax clinics at tax time, as well as co-ordinating the Christmas Hamper Program.

- Residential Treatment and Supportive Recovery:

There are currently between 115 and 135 residential treatment and supportive recovery beds targeting men and women in Surrey. Those services solely targeting men include Cornerstone Manor (49 beds), the two Phoenix Houses (20 beds) and the Path of Freedom Recovery Centre (10 beds); while the one service solely targeting women is Liz's Place (six beds). Step-by-Step Recovery House targets both men and women and it reports to have between 30 and 50 beds. The maximum stay varies by service ranging from six months to an open ended stay. Most services report operating at capacity and several have waitlists. The two Phoenix Houses report a waitlist of 15 men and Liz's Place reports a waitlist of 16 women.

There are currently eight residential treatment beds targeting youth in Surrey. The Pacific Legal Education Association (PLEA), under its Daughters and Sisters Program, operates seven beds targeting female youth (12-18) who live in British Columbia. The maximum length of stay is six months and clients are usually referred by an alcohol and drug counselor or through probation. As of July 2002, the program was operating at capacity and it had a waitlist of 30 people. PLEA also makes available one bed (i.e., 365 bed nights) to NISHA Family and Children's Services Society for use as part of its Astra Youth Addiction Outreach Counselling Program. This short-term stabilization bed targets youth (13-19), is available for up to 28 days and is currently being used at capacity.

With regard to changes to residential treatment and supportive recovery services, Liz's Place is uncertain as to its future operating status. Additionally, several service providers referred to a review of addiction services being conducted by the Fraser Health Authority, which could have major implications on service provision in Surrey. The changes are proposed to take effect in October 2002. Of note, there is a high rate of turnover with regard to supportive recovery houses, with the following houses discontinuing their operations in the past two years alone: Altered Attitudes Recovery House, New Step Men's Recovery House, Quality Recovery House, Renaissance House and Unity House. Several homeless interviewees also raised concerns about inconsistencies in the level and quality of care provided by supportive recovery houses.

- Syringe Exchange Program:

The Syringe Exchange Program, which is operated by South Fraser Community Services Society (SFCSS), distributed 214,650 syringes to intravenous drug users in 2001/02. This number represented a 17.2% decrease from 2000/01. While this may suggest decreasing drug use or declining interest in the program, the executive director of SFCSS, states that is "is likely a reflection of a higher use of crack cocaine."

## **Section 10: Identification of Service and Facility Gaps**

Based on the interviews with direct service providers and the service provider questionnaire, a number of service and facility gaps were identified in Surrey. In some cases, the service or facility does not exist, while in other cases, the service or facility does not address a particular group's needs or offers very limited assistance or spaces.

## Housing:

Currently, there are 3,824 co-operative and non-market housing units in Surrey, none of which specifically target single adults. As such, a large percentage of people who are absolutely homeless have no access to this form of housing. In fact, as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count, 70% of those enumerated were living alone. Additionally, as part of the interviews with people who are currently or formerly homeless, five of the eight interviewees reported that they were living alone. With regard to these interviewees, three stated that they lost their last permanent housing as a result of a relationship ending or a roommate problem. One interviewee stated that “the only thing he had in common with his roommate was that they both needed housing and that they could not afford to live on their own.” He further stated that “once they moved in together, they realized that they were totally incompatible.”

There are only 10 permanent shelter beds designated specifically for women and children in Surrey and these are all located at Sheena’s Place. Of the 62 women and children referred to this shelter in February 2002, 20 were accommodated and 42 were turned-away. For those turned-away, most were referred to another shelter, often outside of Surrey. This relocation, even if for a short period of time, can disrupt child care arrangements, schooling and social support networks, as well as limit access to familiar community services. Of note, the development of a new shelter accommodating both men and women in Surrey by Options Services to Communities Society should reduce the number of women who have to relocate outside of Surrey but it is unlikely to fully address all their shelter needs.

There are only eight safe house beds targeting youth in Surrey, all of which serve sexually exploited female youth (16-29) who choose to exit the sex trade. For those youth not falling within this mandate and seeking a safe house or shelter bed, they must relocate to Downtown Vancouver. This relocation not only severs connections with family and school; it can leave these youth vulnerable to the trappings of crime, drug use and prostitution. The McCreary Centre Society, in its report entitled “No Place to Call Home,” which was based on 523 interviews with street youth in 2000, stressed: “The key challenge related to street youth is to keep them in the community (where they live) – i.e., in school or connected with social programs that provide positive influences and to prevent them from becoming long-term runaways.” It further stressed that “once street youth become disconnected, they become more entrenched, more at-risk and harder to reach.”

Currently, there are 36 minimum barrier shelter beds in Surrey, all of which are located at Gateway Shelter. These beds are all designated “cold/wet weather,” which means that they are only available between November 1st and March 31st. As such, no minimum barrier shelter beds are available outside the above time period. For homeless people who are not eligible for BC Employment and Assistance or who have been turned-away from a permanent shelter in Surrey, their options are quite limited. Some will sleep upright in a chair at the Front Room and some will sleep outdoors, while others will seek shelter outside of Surrey. With regard to the Front Room, up to 25 people per night use this drop-in centre. As for those who sleep outdoors, their very presence and their activities (e.g., binning, panhandling, etc.) and remnants (e.g., bedding materials, garbage, etc.), lead to public complaints and misconceptions about the homeless. Of note, several respondents to the service provider questionnaire commented that there is a concerted effort in Surrey to fence off empty lots and open spaces to discourage squatting. As such, the homeless are pushed to the urban fringes, away from needed services and supports.

There is no second stage housing for people who are absolutely homeless or for women and children who are fleeing abuse in Surrey. As such, these people must relocate to another municipality, which can be very disruptive, especially if young children are involved. In cases where an abusive partner may pose an ongoing risk, relocation may be the preferred option but the person should still have the choice to remain in Surrey. There is also a lack of this type of housing in Greater Vancouver, which means that many people in need go without, thus jeopardizing their transition from emergency shelters to permanent housing.

There are only eight supported apartments for mental health clients in Surrey and this number appears to be grossly inadequate in relation to the number of people with serious mental illness. The Adult Mental Health Division of the BC Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors, in its report entitled "Foundations for Reform: The Mental Health Policy Framework and Key Planning Tools," calculated that there were 4,230 people with serious mental illness (not including cognitive disorders) in the South Fraser Region in 1999. Based on Surrey's proportion of the regional population, it is estimated that there were 2,469 people with serious mental illness in 1999. This figure is based on those people suffering from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Additionally, there are no supported apartments for people dealing with abuse, addiction and/or HIV/AIDS.

#### Income and Employment:

Currently, there are a number of employment services operating in Surrey, several of which target "marginalized" groups, including mental health clients, multi-barriered youth, recent immigrants and visible minorities. None, however, are mandated or well equipped to address the employment needs of deeply entrenched and multi-barriered homeless men and women. In addition to their homelessness, many of these people are dealing with addictions, illiteracy, limited social support networks, low or no self-esteem, poor mental or physical health, etc. As such, they are prone to drop-out of employment programs, which can further diminish their confidence and jeopardize their eligibility for BC Employment and Assistance. Based on the interviews with people who are currently or formerly homeless, five of the eight interviewees had been homeless for one year or longer and of these five, two had been homeless for in excess of three-and-a-half years. Six interviewees had dropped out of school and five had a Grade 9 education or less. Additionally, six of the interviewees reported having a physical health problem and all eight had or previously had an addiction.

#### Support Services:

There are no residential detox or dual diagnosis beds in Surrey and these beds are in short supply in Greater Vancouver. As such, people trying to overcome an addiction or dealing with both a mental illness and an addiction, must place their name on a lengthy waitlist and be willing to temporarily relocate outside of Surrey. For some, the wait will prove too long and they will have changed their mind, relapsed or relocated elsewhere by the time a bed is available. As part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count, 70% of those enumerated reported that they had an addiction and 20% reported that they had a mental illness. Additionally, as part of the interviews with people who are currently or formerly homeless, all eight interviewees noted that they had or previously had an addiction and two interviewees stated that they had both a mental illness and an addiction. As such, these findings speak to the need for these types of beds in Surrey.

## Section 11: Costs of Homelessness and the Price of Inaction

The interim homelessness task force felt that an economic case needed to be made with regard to addressing homelessness and its underlying causes in Surrey. It was stated that the current piecemeal, reactive approach is not working and that the homelessness situation appears to be getting worse. It was also stated that for elected officials and residents to be willing to allocate scarce tax dollars, they needed to know that they will be getting “good” value for their money and that their investments will actually be making a difference.

In 2001, the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (now the Ministry of Human Resources) funded a comprehensive review of the homelessness literature, including the costs of homelessness. The review, entitled “Homelessness – Causes and Effects: A Review of the Literature,” includes the following statements:

- *The literature demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between homelessness and the health care, social and criminal justice systems. People who do not have safe, secure, affordable shelter have more health problems than the general population, experience social problems that may be exacerbated by their lack of shelter, and are more likely to become involved in criminal activity than are the general public. This tends to result in greater use of some services by the homeless, particularly hospital emergency services, shelters and correctional institutions, in terms of frequency and length of stay.*
- *Several published studies confirm that homeless people cause higher costs to the health care system. They use the most costly elements of the health care system more than housed people do. While there are fewer studies examining the costs of homelessness for the social and criminal justice systems, it is known that use tends to be higher.*
- *Research confirms that preventive measures are more cost-effective than the status quo. Issues arising from homelessness are more costly to deal with after the fact than if homelessness was prevented in the first place. Studies indicate that better access to affordable and supportive housing is cost effective and far less expensive than other alternatives such as hospital beds, shelters and jails.*

In conjunction with the above review, the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security funded a study of 15 people who are currently or formerly homeless in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. This study, entitled “Homelessness – Causes and Effects: the Costs of Homelessness in BC,” provides preliminary observations about the nature and range of service use among the homeless and now housed, including estimates of corresponding government costs.

Based on the findings, the research shows that in 1998/99, providing major government health care, social and criminal justice services (excluding housing) to people who are homeless cost, on average, 33% more than the now housed (\$24,017<sup>4</sup> as compared to \$18,239) (chart 3). It also suggested that adequate, safe, supportive housing not only ends homelessness but may reduce the use of costly government services and ultimately save money.

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<sup>4</sup> This estimate does not include longer-term costs that may be incurred by people who are homeless avoiding or deferring health care services.

**Chart 3:**

Average Cost	Health Care	Social Services	Criminal Justice	Total Cost
Homeless Person	\$4,714	\$7,893	\$11,410	\$24,017
Housed Person	\$7,003	\$9,386	\$1,850	\$18,239

When combined, the research shows that service and shelter costs for people who are homeless ranged from \$30,000 to \$40,000 on average per person per year (including the costs of staying in an emergency shelter). By comparison, the combined costs of services and housing for the people who are housed ranged from \$22,000 to \$28,000 per person per year, assuming they stayed in supportive housing. Thus, providing adequate, safe, supportive housing to people who are homeless saves the Provincial government money.

Based on the findings, the study concludes that “the preventive approach to homelessness has proved to be more cost-effective than the emergency or reactive approach for the sample used.” It further concludes that: “Focusing on preventing the use of costly government funded health care, social and criminal justice services through the provision of supportive housing for people who are homeless makes sense from a financial perspective.” “It also has the benefit of improving the quality of life and well being of people who are homeless.”

## **Section 12: Communications Strategy**

The two primary goals of the communications strategy will be to build a base of knowledge and support for the plan and to raise public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey. To achieve this, the strategy will target a wide cross-section of groups and organizations, including community groups, emergency shelter and transition house providers, faith-based organizations and their congregations, government agencies, multicultural groups and non-profit societies. It will also target elected officials in all three levels of government and the general public. With regard to the latter, the interim homelessness task force felt that public support and pressure would be necessary for civic leaders and elected officials to get onside and for more government resources to be allocated toward addressing homelessness in Surrey.

To raise public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey, as well as to dispel some of the misconceptions regarding homelessness, the communications strategy will promote a number of messages, including but not limited to the following:

- that homelessness can undermine the stability of communities and that it makes good social and economic sense to address it and its underlying causes;
- that high housing costs, which are unique to this part of the Province, place many families at-risk of homelessness;
- that initiatives to address homelessness are an investment in ‘our’ future, as they help people to rebuild their lives and enable them to start contributing in productive ways to society;
- that many people are homeless through no fault of their own – e.g., escaping an abusive situation, living with a disability, suffering from a mental illness, etc.;
- that many people are at-risk of homelessness for economic reasons – i.e., they live on fixed incomes, they are underemployed or unemployed and they are working for low wages; and
- that recent studies show that it is far less expensive to provide supportive housing than it is to provide health care, social and criminal justice services to people who are homeless.

As part of the interviews with direct service providers and as part of the service provider questionnaire, interviewees and respondents were asked: “What would you suggest to increase public awareness and education regarding homelessness in Surrey?” Based on the responses, a number of initiatives and mechanisms were suggested. These suggestions were further refined and prioritized by participants at the community forum.

- Develop a positive working relationship with the media – i.e., keep them informed, invite them to events, prepare press releases, etc.
- Host public information forums, meetings and/or workshops in all six communities in order to share information and stories about homelessness and to seek feedback and support for the plan.
- Invite civic leaders and elected officials to accompany police officers during night patrols and to volunteer for homeless services and facilities.
- Profile people who are homeless and their stories in the local media in order to raise awareness about homelessness and to dispel some of the misconceptions.
- Recruit people who are currently or formerly homeless to speak to the issue of homelessness.
- Create a display board containing art, poetry and stories by people who are currently or formerly homeless. This display board could be circulated between public spaces, including arts and cultural facilities, community centres, libraries, schools, etc.
- Incorporate a social issues component into the school curriculum, possibly as part of social studies. This component would discuss homelessness, poverty and other social issues.
- Work with a (local) theatre group to stage a play dealing with homelessness and its consequences. This play could be written, directed and/or performed by people who are currently or formerly homeless.

### **Section 13: Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy**

The primary goal of the monitoring and evaluation strategy will be to measure the effectiveness of the plan in reducing the number of people who are absolutely homeless and in assisting those people who are at-risk of homelessness to realize safe, secure, affordable housing in Surrey. It will also be used to amend and update the plan to ensure that it reflects changing conditions and new opportunities, to document and report outcomes as the basis for community support and to provide a rationale for ongoing funding in a credible and results-oriented way.

To accomplish the above, it is suggested that the homelessness steering committee, as part of Phase 2, undertake the following tasks:

- Establish realistic benchmarks to monitor and evaluate the plan’s performance. For example, these benchmarks could include: eliminate turn-aways from emergency shelters and transition houses caused by lack of available space, reduce the number of applicants waiting for non-market housing by 10% each year, etc.
- Interview people who are homeless or who are at-risk of homelessness and service providers to obtain their feedback on the effectiveness of the plan – e.g., are you aware of the plan, has it made a noticeable difference to you or your organization, what needs to be improved, who else needs to be involved, etc.

- Participate in initiatives to count and determine the needs of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey. If the 24-hour count is not repeated on a regional basis, then conduct a similar count for Surrey only. To be effective, the count should be conducted on an annual basis and it should alternate between a summer and winter count.
- Conduct an annual review of the accomplishments of the plan and other community initiatives to address homelessness, including a summary of extra capacity created within the continuum of housing, income and support framework. This review could also include a summary of the significant barriers or challenges arising through the course of implementation, as well as remedial actions to address them.
- Evaluate the plan and the planning process after three years of implementation. This evaluation will be a comprehensive review that involves all community stakeholders and funders and it will be used to revise and update the plan. It will also be a mechanism to demonstrate accomplishments and accountability.

It is important that the monitoring and evaluation strategy be communicated to all community stakeholders and funders involved in developing and implementing the plan.

## **Appendix 1: Interim Homelessness Task Force Membership**

The interim homeless task force included the following members:

- Dick Avison, Resident
- Katherine Cryer, North Langley Vineyard Church
- Linda Cunliffe, Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey)
- Peter Fedos, Surrey Men's Shelter
- Lynne Fletcher, Sheena's Place
- Joan Guichon, Office of Chuck Cadman (Surrey North)
- Paul Guiton, Resident
- Preet Heer, Surrey Social Futures
- Kimiko Karpoff, Lower Mainland Network for Affordable Housing
- Melinda McGraw, Human Resources Development Canada
- Annie McKittrick, Surrey Social Futures
- Michel Petit, Metis Family Services
- Linda Syssoloff, South Fraser Community Services

## **Appendix 2: Participating Community Agencies**

The following community and government agencies participated in the consultation process:

- ACT II Child and Family Services
- Atira Transition House
- City of Surrey, Planning and Development Department
- Connections
- Forest Grove Counselling Centre
- Gateway Shelter
- Indo-Canadian Seniors Centre
- Learning Disabilities Association of BC, Surrey Chapter
- Métis Family Services
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Ministry of Human Resources
- Newton Advocacy Group Society
- NISHA Family and Children's Services Society, South Fraser Region
- Options Services to Communities Society, Evergreen and Virginia Sam Transition Houses
- Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey)
- Sheena's Place
- South Surrey/White Rock Women's Place Association
- Surrey Alcohol and Drug Outpatient Clinic
- Surrey Central Mental Health Centre, Teams 1 and 5
- Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society
- Surrey Food Bank
- Surrey Memorial Hospital, Emergency Department
- Surrey Men's Shelter
- Surrey RCMP, Victim Services Unit
- Surrey Social Futures
- Surrey Street Youth Services, Surrey Reconnect
- The Children's Foundation, Surrey Family Preservation and Thetis Programs
- The Front Room
- The Salvation Army, Surrey
- Whalley Community Recreational Services
- White Rock/South Surrey Food Bank

## Appendix 3: Suggested Actions

The suggested actions are based on information obtained from the interviews with direct service providers and people who are currently or formerly homeless, the responses to the service provider questionnaire and the suggestions made by participants at the community forum.

The suggested actions have been organized according to the continuum of housing, income and support framework. As part of Phase 2, the homelessness steering committee will discuss and prioritize the suggested actions based on established criteria (e.g., perceived need, available funding, fit within the continuum of housing, income and support framework, level of community support, etc.).

Given the number of suggested actions and the current fiscal climate in the Province, it is recognized that not all the suggested actions are attainable. Additionally, it is recognized that a collaborative effort, involving the three levels of government, businesses, funders, non-profits and others will be necessary to implement the prioritized actions.

### **Housing:**

The suggested actions under housing have been grouped into two categories: permanent and temporary. While it is recognized that emergency shelters and second stage housing will be necessary to bridge the transition between homelessness and permanent housing, the goal will be the realization of affordable and non-market housing to meet the needs of homeless, low-income and marginalized people in Surrey.

#### Permanent:

- That the homelessness steering committee, in conjunction with its community partners and others, lobby the Federal government to develop policies and strategies and commit funding in support of a national housing program.
- That access to affordable and non-market housing be increased for homeless, low-income and marginalized people in Surrey.

Of note, there are 1,419 applicants who have indicated that they would like to live in a non-market housing unit in Surrey. The breakdown by type of unit is: family (1,008), disabled (261), senior (138), single women (7), market rental housing unit (4) and rent supplement (1).

- That non-market housing be developed for homeless and low-income single adults. This housing could be achieved by constructing a purpose-designed building, converting an existing hotel and/or through scattered site apartments.

Of note, there are no non-market housing units specifically targeting homeless and low-income single adults in Surrey; yet single adults represent the majority of people who are absolutely homeless.

- That the existing stock of affordable rental housing be preserved, enhanced and monitored in Surrey. This could be achieved by demolition and conversion controls, implementation and enforcement of standards of maintenance bylaws, public acquisition and conversion to non-profit management, etc.

Temporary:

- That there be year-round access to minimum barrier shelter beds in Surrey.
- That a safe house or shelter be developed for street youth. This facility would provide temporary accommodation for youth (13-18) who require safe overnight shelter to escape the street and/or the drug/sex trade.

Of note, there are six long-term and two emergency/short-term safe house beds in Surrey, all of which serve sexually exploited female youth (16-29) who choose to exit the sex trade. These beds are operated by the Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey).

- That additional shelter beds be developed that are appropriate for women and young children who are homeless in Surrey. These beds would need to be grouped to accommodate family units and they would be available for up to 30 days. Ideally, related services would include child care, a parenting program and play space.
- That second stage housing be developed for people who are homeless and for women and children fleeing abuse. This housing would assist them to make the transition from emergency shelters to permanent housing and it could be combined with counselling, crisis response, employment assistance and other appropriate services.
- That supported housing be developed for people dealing with abuse, addiction and/or mental illness, as well as those people living with HIV/AIDS. This housing could be combined with support services such as counselling, crisis response, intervention, medical care, etc.

#### **Income and Employment:**

- That the homelessness steering committee, with the assistance of direct service providers to the homeless, monitor and report on the impacts of changes to BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance) and other Provincial government programs. These findings could be used to lobby the Provincial government for more assistance for those in need or for more services and supports to address the impacts of changes.
- That an employment program be developed for deeply entrenched and multi-barriered homeless men and women. This program would provide assistance, counselling, crisis response, lifeskills and ongoing support to enable them to achieve greater employability and independence. It could also include a clothing exchange, job finding club and supervised employment program.

**Support Services:**

- That a homelessness self-help group be established to assist in the development and implementation of the plan, to identify and build on the capacities of people who are homeless, to articulate and address their needs and to provide them with a voice.
- That a concise, portable and up-to-date resource directory be developed which lists support services serving people who are absolutely homeless or at-risk homelessness in Surrey.
- That residential detox beds be developed for men, women and youth. These short-stay beds target people with alcohol and/or drug abuse/dependency issues by offering assessment, education, family and one-on-one counselling, group therapy, relapse prevention and follow-up.
- That more residential treatment and supportive recovery beds be developed for women and youth. These beds target people with alcohol and/or drug abuse/dependency issues.
- That dual diagnosis and treatment beds be developed. These beds target people with mental illness and substance misuse issues by offering assessment, education, group therapy, one-on-one counselling, relapse prevention and follow-up.

## Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition/Description
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Housing in which tenants pay no more than 30% of their gross household income for shelter.
<b>Couch Surfing</b>	A term used to describe temporary or transitory residence with family or friends.
<b>Detox Beds</b>	These are safe places where people undergo managed withdrawal from alcohol and/or drugs.
<b>Disabled Housing</b>	Housing that is designed to meet the needs of clients with cognitive, physical and/or sensory impairments. This type of housing may incorporate support services for residents who are incapable of living independently.
<b>Drop-In Centres</b>	Offer homeless people the chance to come in off the street, have a coffee or meal, obtain counselling and other support, take a shower or wash clothes. Can also offer activities and programs to build lifeskills or increase quality of life.
<b>Emergency Shelters</b>	Offer accommodation to people who are homeless for up to one month. Sleeping arrangements may be in dormitories or they may be in shared or single bedrooms. Some shelters can accommodate families and many offer meals, medical aid, rehabilitation and social services. Accommodation in most shelters is restricted to people who are eligible for BC Employment and Assistance.
<b>HOMES BC</b>	A Provincially funded housing program administered by BC Housing. This program supports the construction of affordable co-operative and non-market housing through loans and provides ongoing subsidies so that low income people can afford to live in these units.
<b>Independent Housing</b>	Permanent, affordable housing for people who can live independently without need for support services.
<b>Low-Income Cut-Offs</b>	These cut-offs were developed by Statistics Canada to identify households that spend approximately 54.7% of their income on clothing, food and shelter and who are therefore considered to be living in "strained circumstances."
<b>Living Rough</b>	Refers to a homeless person who is living on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and in wooded areas.
<b>Minimum Barrier Shelter Beds</b>	A flexible, non-judgemental service based on need, without restriction to eligibility, condition, lifestyle or number of times receiving the service. It does, however, acknowledge that acuteness of health needs, behaviour or level of intoxication may limit the service provider's ability to offer service.
<b>Non-Market Housing</b>	Housing built under Federal/Provincial or Provincial programs, or by a co-operative or non-profit society, where some or all of the units are made affordable to low and moderate income tenants.

Term	Definition/Description
<b>Outreach</b>	A service focused on finding homeless people and establishing rapport with the goal of engaging them in the services they need.
<b>Permanent Housing</b>	Long-term housing in which the tenant is in control of the length of stay, subject to compliance with the Residential Tenancy Act.
<b>Prevention Services</b>	Programs or services aimed at keeping people from becoming homeless. These include advocacy to protect tenant rights, counselling to prevent family breakdown in times of crisis and mediation services and rent banks to prevent eviction.
<b>Rent Supplement</b>	A monetary supplement paid by the Provincial government to private landlords to facilitate rental of units for low-income tenants. Under the program, tenants pay 30% of their gross household income, with the difference between this contribution and the market rent for the unit being paid by the Province.
<b>Safe Houses</b>	Offer temporary accommodation for youth (13-18) who require safe overnight shelter to escape the street and/or the drug/sex trade. Length of stay varies across the Province, ranging from a few days to up to six months. These facilities are funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and are operated by community agencies.
<b>Second Stage Housing</b>	Time limited, transitional housing obtained after leaving an emergency shelter and prior to a person being able or ready for independent living. Residents of second stage housing are expected to move on to permanent housing once their living situation has stabilized. This type of housing may provide specialized services such as counselling, crisis response, intervention, medical care, etc.
<b>Secondary Suites</b>	Self-contained suites in single family dwellings.
<b>Supported Independent Living Program</b>	A partnership between BC Housing, the BC Ministry of Health and Provincial Health Authorities. This supported housing program enables people with severe and persistent mental illness to live independently in affordable, self-contained units with the assistance of outreach services.
<b>Supportive Housing</b>	Affordable, independent housing, sometimes in a purpose-designed building or in scattered site apartments that have added support services attached to them. These units may include assistance with housekeeping, counselling and crisis response, health therapies and skill services. This combination of housing and support services provide the opportunity for people to stabilize their personal situation in preparation for moving back into the community.
<b>Transition Housing</b>	Safe, secure but time limited housing (i.e., maximum 30 days) for women and children fleeing abuse. This housing may include government funded shelters or safe houses in private family homes.

## Appendix 5: Changes to BC Benefits

Recent changes to BC Benefits (now BC Employment and Assistance) will have far reaching effects for those people who are homeless or living in poverty, lone parent families, the unemployed, working parents who are dependent on subsidized child care, and youth who are no longer able or willing to live at home.

These changes, most of which came into effect on April 1, 2002, are briefly summarized below. For information on these and other changes, access the PovNet website at: [www.povnet.org](http://www.povnet.org).

### Application:

People applying for BC Employment and Assistance must first complete a three week job search, during which time they are not eligible to receive benefits. For those people who are applying for disability status or who have been discharged from hospital, acute care or continuing care, they do not have to complete the job search but they still have to wait three weeks before being eligible to receive benefits.

### Asset Limits:

This refers to the amount of cash or other assets a person or family can have and still be eligible for assistance. People applying for assistance must meet two asset limit tests. As for cash, the maximum is \$150 for single people and \$250 for all other family units. If a person or family has over the maximum limit and is otherwise eligible, the amount over is taken off the first month's assistance. With regard to the general asset exemption limit test (that applies at the time of application and every month afterwards while in receipt of assistance), the maximum is \$1,500 for single people and \$2,500 for all other family units. Additionally, one motor vehicle is exempt, as long as there is no more than \$5,000 equity in that vehicle.

### Basic Rates:

Income assistance comprises two components: shelter and support.

The monthly shelter allowance has been reduced for families of three or more. For a family of three, the reduction is \$55 (from \$610 to \$555); for a family of four, the reduction is \$60 (from \$650 to \$590); for a family of five, the reduction is \$75 (from \$700 to \$625); and for a family of six, the reduction is \$120 (from \$780 to \$660). For each additional person after six, the reduction is \$35.

Support rates have been reduced for single parents who are employable and whose youngest child is over three and couples and single people who are employable and who are between the ages of 55 and 64. For the former, the reduction is \$51 per month (from \$376.58 to \$325.58). For the latter, the reductions range from \$46.92 per month for a single person (55-59) to \$144.84 per month for a couple (60-64).

### Crisis Grants:

Maximum amounts were established for crisis assistance for clothing, food and shelter. For clothing, the maximum annual amount is \$100 per person or \$400 per family, whichever is less. For food, the maximum monthly amount is \$20 per person. For shelter, the maximum annual amount is equal to the maximum shelter rate for a single person or family for one month. Cumulatively, the maximum annual amount for crisis assistance is equal to two months assistance (both shelter and support) for a single person or family at the time of the request.

### Earnings and Income Exemptions:

People who are employable and people on Disability 1 are no longer allowed to earn extra income without it being deducted from their assistance. People on Disability 2 are allowed to earn up to \$300 without it being deducted from their assistance. (In the past, the old exemption was \$200 per month and 25% of a person's earned income.) Exemptions for CPP Orphan's benefits, Family Maintenance and Workers' Compensation benefits have been eliminated. This means that these benefits are now deducted dollar for dollar from a person's assistance.

### Security Deposits:

People receiving money for a security deposit will have to pay the deposit back at the rate of \$20 per month. (In the past, a deposit was repayable when the tenancy ended.) Additionally, they are limited to a maximum of two outstanding security deposits.

### Single Parent Work Requirement:

Single parents who are employable are now expected to seek a job when their youngest child turns three. (In the past, they were expected to seek a job when their youngest child turned seven.) During the job search period, they are still eligible for assistance, job placement and training-for-jobs programs, as well as subsidized child care. As in the past, single parents are not required to seek a job if they are caring for a disabled child or if they are temporarily excused from seeking a job.

### Subsidized Child Care:

Fewer families are now eligible for the child care subsidy. In fact, the amount of money a family can earn and be eligible for the subsidy was reduced by \$285 per month (from \$500 to \$215). Parents who earn more than this limit may continue to receive the subsidy; however, it will be reduced by 60 cents on each dollar of additional net income.

### Work Entry Benefits:

People on assistance will no longer receive money to purchase clothes for work or to cover local transportation costs during the first month of a new job. (For a single parent, the work entry benefit was a one time payment of \$200.) Additionally, the transition to work benefit has been eliminated. (For families with children, this benefit paid up to \$150 per month for child care and transportation costs incurred during the first 12 months after they went off of assistance and into a job.)

Child in the Home of a Relative:

Children and youth living with relatives who are legal guardians are now considered to be part of that family. Therefore, they are no longer eligible for Child in the Home of a Relative assistance.

Time Limits:

People who are employable are now limited to a cumulative 24 months of assistance every 60 months. After reaching this limit, single people and couples (where both adults are at the limit) receive no assistance and couples with one adult at the limit receive \$300 less in assistance per month. For families with children, single parents receive \$100 less in assistance per month, two parent families with one parent at the limit receive \$100 less in assistance per month and two parent families with both parents at the limit receive \$200 less in assistance per month.

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