

Executive Summary:

Surrey is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. While most existing and new residents enjoy a high quality of life, the municipality is experiencing a number of social issues, including homelessness. While historical information regarding homelessness in Surrey is extremely limited, recent evidence suggests that homelessness is on the increase. In fact, several respondents to a service provider questionnaire conducted in January 2002 felt that homelessness had reached crisis proportions in Surrey and that immediate action was necessary.

With regard to numbers, in a recent count conducted in May 2003, it was estimated that there are between 200 and 250 people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey. Additionally, based on 1996 Census data, it was estimated that there are 24,110 people or 8,535 households who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. Regarding those who are absolutely homeless, in an earlier regional count conducted in January 2002, there was a higher number of people classified as street homeless¹ in Surrey (109) than for the City of Vancouver (93). Given the difficulties in counting people who are absolutely homeless, the true extent of the problem is likely far higher than estimated. As for those who are at-risk of homelessness, the number of households increased by 71.4% between 1991 and 1996.

In response to the above situation, a Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force was established to explore and address the issue of homelessness in Surrey. This task force, comprised of representatives of some 30 agencies, groups and organizations who directly serve people who are homeless in Surrey (see Appendix 1), have been extremely active in developing this plan. Of significance, this plan provides background information as to the extent of homelessness in Surrey; lists current facilities and services serving people who are homeless; offers an analysis of existing gaps in facilities and services; and outlines recommended actions to address homelessness. It also includes a draft communications plan and a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

The ultimate goal of this plan is to develop a continuum of housing, income and support in Surrey to assist people who are absolutely homeless to move out of the cycle of homelessness and to prevent those at-risk from becoming homeless. Currently, the facilities and services which need to comprise this continuum are fragmented, inadequate or non-existent in Surrey. For example, there is inadequate second stage housing to enable people who are homeless to transition from emergency shelters to independent housing. Additionally, there are no residential detox beds which means that people with addictions cannot get the support they need to become employable or to live independ-

¹ Street homeless refers to the homeless population who are not using the emergency shelter system either because they are deemed to be inappropriate or ineligible or because they have been turned away due to a lack of available beds. In some cases, these people may prefer to live outdoors.

ently. As such, the task force recognizes that it will take many years and new funding and partnership arrangements to realize this continuum.

While the task force believes that this plan will be of great assistance to community, government and social service agencies in addressing homelessness in Surrey, it also wants to acknowledge an important limitation. At the time of plan completion, a number of agencies were submitting proposals for funding under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative Extension Program. These proposals, depending on which ones are funded, will have a significant impact on the recommended actions, addressing some and not others. Given this limitation, the task force decided against developing a detailed implementation strategy at this time. It did acknowledge the need for such a strategy and agreed that this task will be a major priority in the coming months (after the announcement of successful proposals).

While we have all been complicit in allowing homelessness to slowly take root in our communities, we can also be part of the solution.

We need to stop assigning blame and start building consensus in Surrey.

Surrey Service Provider Questionnaire Respondent

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Introduction:

Plan Components:

The Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force (hereafter referred to as the task force) has been working over the past 18 months to explore and address the issue of homelessness in Surrey. In July 2002, the task force prepared a Surrey Needs Assessment Report, which detailed the extent of homelessness in Surrey and included an inventory of facilities and services to assist people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness. The report also included a preliminary listing of suggested actions to address homelessness in Surrey.

The task force, as part of its efforts to address homelessness in Surrey, agreed to work on the preparation of this Surrey Homelessness Plan. This plan, builds on the above needs assessment, the findings of a 24-hour count of people who are absolutely homeless conducted on May 21 and 22, 2003 and the results of a major forum on homelessness and housing in Surrey held on June 12 and 13, 2003. It also builds on the contributions of task force members through interviews and meetings and the work of the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

More specifically, this plan:

- develops a listing of recommended actions organized according to the continuum of housing, income and support framework as outlined in the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver (March 19, 2001);
- develops a communications strategy which builds support for the plan and raises public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey;
- identifies possible funding sources and potential partnership arrangements in which to implement the recommended actions;
- develops a monitoring and evaluation strategy which tracks changes in the number of people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness and which provides regular feedback as to the effectiveness of the plan in addressing homelessness in Surrey.

The ultimate goal of this plan is to develop a continuum of housing, income and support in Surrey to assist people who are absolutely homeless to move out of the cycle of homelessness and to prevent people who are at-risk from becoming homeless. The plan is also intended to encourage independence and self-sufficiency, through counseling, education, employment assistance and other support services.

Plan Organization:

The plan is organized according to the following eleven sections:

- Section 1: This section provides a definition for absolute homelessness and at-risk of homelessness.
- Section 2: This section provides information as to the extent of homelessness in the Greater Vancouver Regional District in general and Surrey in particular. It also provides profile information as to people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness.
- Section 3: This section provides an overview of federal, provincial, regional and local initiatives to address issues related to homelessness and housing in Surrey.
- Section 4: This section describes the continuum of housing, income and support framework.
- Section 5: This section provides an inventory of facilities and services to assist people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Surrey.
- Section 6: This section provides an analysis of gaps in facilities and services to assist people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey.
- Section 7: This section provides an overview of those proposals which were submitted for Surrey under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative Extension Program.
- Section 8: This section lists recommended actions to address homelessness in Surrey.
- Section 9: This section proposes a communications strategy to build support for the plan and to raise public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey.
- Section 10: This section discusses the plan's implementation. More specifically, it addresses continuity issues related to the task force and the need for ongoing funding and partnership arrangements to implement the recommended actions as contained in this plan.
- Section 11: This section discusses monitoring and plan evaluation. More specifically, it proposes strategies to provide credible and reliable information on the homelessness situation in Surrey; while outlining an approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in addressing homelessness.

Section 1: Definition of Homelessness

1.1 Introduction:

This section provides a definition for absolute homelessness and at-risk of homelessness. These two terms are used throughout this planning document.

1.2 Definition of Homelessness:

The 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 Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness in its Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver (March 19, 2001). This consistency, the task force felt, would facilitate cross-comparisons and enable the consultant to use the results of the regional 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 those people living temporarily in emergency shelters, safe houses and transition houses;
- 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 to be the invisible homeless, such as individuals who couch surf or stay temporarily with family and friends.

Absolute homelessness is just the tip of the iceberg. We must recognize that economic events and political policies, often external to Surrey, can aggravate homelessness in our communities.

Homelessness and Housing Task Force Member

Section 2: Extent of Homelessness

2.1 Introduction:

This section provides information as to the extent of homelessness in the Greater Vancouver Regional District in general and in Surrey in particular. It also provides profile information as to people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

2.2 Greater Vancouver Regional District:

The first comprehensive count of the number of people who are absolutely homeless, including people living on the street, in the Greater Vancouver Regional District took place on January 14 and 15, 2002. This count included both a night time and a daytime component. The night time component counted people in 40 emergency shelters, safe houses and transition houses across the region; while the daytime component counted people at 45 locations across the region where people who are homeless are known to congregate. In total, between 1,181 and 1,206 people who are homeless were counted, with virtually every municipality in the region recording people who are homeless. The count proponents in their review of the data noted that people who are homeless were missed as part of the count but felt that the count figures were the best available using established methods.

As part of the count, people who are absolutely homeless were asked a number of questions regarding their housing situation (or lack thereof), their sources of income and their health status, among other questions. Based on the aggregated information, the following profile emerged. The majority of people who are homeless are males of Caucasian decent; most are between 25 and 44 years and live alone; about a third have been homeless for more than six months; and about two-thirds have at least one health condition, with addiction being the most often cited condition. Most people are homeless because of abuse, addiction or family breakdown or because they have recently moved. Additionally, most people cited their major source of income as government assistance or a training program. Interestingly, profile information varied by geographic sub-region within the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the number of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey, as any count will underestimate the true extent of the problem.

Surrey Service Provider Questionnaire Respondent

With regard to the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness in the Greater Vancouver Regional District, a consultant team headed by Jim Woodward & Associates Inc.² came up with an estimate using the INALHM concept³ applied to the 1996 Census. This measurement best describes those people and households with economic issues that may lead to homelessness, including those living in inadequate or unsuitable housing. In total, 131,015 people or 57,685 households were identified in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Of significance, the number of households with economic issues increased by 47.9% between 1991 and 1996. While part of this increase may be attributed to population growth (14.0%) within the region during the period in question; the majority is likely due to worsening conditions for owners and renters. In fact, the average value of dwellings increased by 14.0% and the average rental rates for bachelor suites increased by 13.0% in the region for the period in question; while real household incomes decreased by 4.3%.

Based upon the above data for 1996, people who are at-risk of homelessness are far more likely to have dropped out of high school; to have lower average household incomes; and to be unemployed than are all residents in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Regarding income, people who are at-risk of homelessness have an average household income of \$16,303, compared to an average household income of \$54,055 for all residents in the region. They are also far more likely to have immigrated or to have moved in the previous five years. Even though smaller in absolute numbers, aboriginal peoples, lone parent families and people with disabilities have far higher incidences of risk of homelessness. As with people who are absolutely homeless, profile information for people who are at-risk of homelessness varied by geographic sub-region within the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

For complete statistical information by region, sub-region and municipality, and for an analysis of this information, go to <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/research.html>.

2.3 City of Surrey:

As part of the above regional count of people who are absolutely homeless held on January 14 and 15, 2002, 160 people were counted in Surrey. Of this total, 51 people were using an emergency shelter, safe house or transition house (and were counted as part of the night time component); while 109 people were using a drop-in centre, waiting in a line-up for food or walking the street (and were counted as part of the day-time component). Significantly, the latter number was higher than for any other municipality in the Greater Vancouver Regional District, including New Westminster (33) and Vancouver (93).

² This consultant team prepared the Research Project on Homelessness in Greater Vancouver (July 2002).

³ The INALHM concept refers to in core housing need and spending at least half of one's household income for shelter.

The task force conducted a follow-up count of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey on May 21 and 22, 2003. As part of the night time component, 82 people were counted and 27 people were turned away because emergency shelters or transition houses were full or because the people in question were deemed inappropriate or ineligible. Of note, some of the people who were turned away were counted the following day. With regard to the daytime component, 108 people were counted; which mirrored the number which was recorded in the earlier count on January 14 and 15, 2002.

Based on the recent count, it is estimated that the minimum number of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey is in the range of 200 to 250 people. This range is consistent with estimates of homelessness as provided by respondents to a service provider questionnaire conducted in January 2002. When asked to estimate the number of people who are homeless in Surrey, of the 30 service providers who responded, most stated between 100 and 300 people. Significantly, both counts likely underestimate the actual number of people who are homeless in Surrey. This statement is based on a number of factors, including the limited number of teams counting people who are homeless; the large physical size of and many wooded areas in Surrey; and the cold, wet weather on the days of both counts.

As part of both counts, profile information was collected for people who are absolutely homeless. In the more recent count, partial information was received for the night time component and full information was received for the day time component. As such, the following profile information will focus on the daytime component only. Of note, if full information was received for both components, more women would be represented, as it would include those women using an emergency shelter (10 beds) or transition house (52 beds) in Surrey. Regarding the 108 people who were counted as part of the daytime component, 85 or 78.7% were male and 23 or 21.3% were female. The average age was 39.5 years and the range was from 14 to 68 years. Most people (80 or 74.1%) lived alone and the majority (75 or 69.4%) reported that their last permanent housing was located in Surrey. As for time spent being homeless, 48 or 44.5% reported that they had been homeless for more than six months. Most people reported at least one health condition, with 61.5% citing an addiction, 39.6% citing a medical condition and 27.5% citing a mental illness. With regard to factors contributing to homelessness, the most often cited factors were addiction; conflict or family breakdown; eviction; inadequate or no income; and ineligibility for government assistance.

The numbers are reaching crisis proportions in Surrey and little, if anything, is being done to address the problem.

Surrey Service Provider Questionnaire Respondent

With regard to the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey, the earlier mentioned consultant team headed by Jim Woodward & Associates Inc. came up with an estimate using the INALHM concept applied to the 1996 Census. This measurement best describes those people and households with economic issues that may lead to homelessness, including those living in inadequate or unsuitable housing. In total, 24,110 people or 8,535 households were identified in Surrey. The majority of these households (4,975 or 58.3%) were renter households. Of significance, the number of households with economic issues increased by 71.4% between 1991 and 1996.

For complete statistical information on the daytime component of the 24 hour count of the homeless conducted on May 21 and 22, 2003, refer to the Companion Report. Additionally, for detailed information as to people and households at-risk of homelessness in Surrey, refer to the Surrey Needs Assessment Report (July 2002).

Section 3: Homelessness and Housing Initiatives

3.1 Introduction:

This section provides an overview of federal, provincial, regional and local initiatives to address issues related to homelessness and housing in Surrey. Given the number of initiatives, only a few of the more prominent ones are highlighted below. Where available, website addresses are included to enable the reader to obtain more detailed information, as well as to obtain information on initiatives that are not highlighted.

3.2 Federal Initiatives:

With regard to federal initiatives to address issues related to homelessness and housing, they can be divided into three main categories. The first category deals with federal programs designed to provide or encourage the creation of affordable rental housing. These encompass both federally operated non-market housing programs and programs funded through cost-sharing arrangements with the provinces. The second category deals with home ownership and the role that the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation⁴ plays in providing both mortgage insurance and financial assistance to low income homeowners in the repair and upkeep of their existing homes. The third category deals with programs to address homelessness.

Regarding homelessness, the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI)⁵ is working with communities to develop the tools to plan for and implement local strategies to address this issue. Under the NHI, communities are encouraged to work together with provincial, regional and municipal governments, as well as the not-for-profit and private sectors; and are eligible for federal funding. The NHI includes the following programs: the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, the Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Program, the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, the National Research Program and the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative.

The Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) Program, the centrepiece of the NHI, was launched in 1999 to create a more inclusive and integrated approach to homelessness. Along with providing financial support to communities, it encourages them to work in partnership with provincial, regional and municipal governments and with the not-for-profit and private sectors to strengthen existing capacity and to develop new responses to homelessness. Under the NHI, the Greater Vancouver Regional District was identified as one of the ten most affected urban areas in Canada and allocated \$24.9 million under the SCPI Extension Program, with an additional \$5.7 million allocated under the Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Program.

⁴ <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc/en/index.cfm>

⁵ http://www21.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/home/index_e.asp

With regard to the SCPI Extension Program, all funded expenditures must be made prior to March 31, 2006 and all projects must meet one of the following two criteria:

- To develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help people who are absolutely homeless move out of the cycle of homelessness and to prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness.
- To ensure sustainable capacity of communities to address homelessness by enhancing community leadership and broadening ownership by the government, not-for-profit and private sectors, on the issue of homelessness in Canada.

For more information regarding Surrey proposals for funding under the SCPI Extension Program, please refer to Section 7.

3.3 Provincial Initiatives:

In British Columbia, BC Housing⁶ is the provincial crown agency that develops, manages and administers non-market housing. It works in partnership with not-for-profit housing providers, community agencies, health authorities, other levels of government and the private sector to develop non-market housing.

As a result of the provincial government's core review of BC Housing's operations in 2002, the agency's mandate was narrowed. BC Housing's mandate previously focused on "working together to create homes, choices and healthy communities." It has now been changed to "working in partnership to create housing options for those most vulnerable in our communities." Under the revised mandate, new non-market housing will primarily target the frail elderly and people with physical disabilities under its Independent Living BC Program. In fact, under the Canada/BC Affordable Housing Agreement signed in December 2001, of the 3,500 new non-market housing units to be funded over a five year period, most will be allocated to the above targeted population. As such, low income families, seniors and single adults are far less likely to have their housing needs met.

3.4 Regional Initiatives:

In March 2000, the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness was formed to facilitate a community planning process to develop a plan to alleviate and prevent homelessness in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. Regarding the steering committee, it consists of representative stakeholders from government, community and social service organizations from across the region.

⁶ <http://www.bchousing.org/>

As for the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver (March 19, 2001),⁷ it identified policies and actions that can be implemented by all levels of government, community organizations and the not-for-profit and private sectors to alleviate and prevent homelessness. Currently, the plan is being updated. To date, priority areas and associated target area populations have been established and community plan and inventory information has been collected. Of note, all proposals for SCPI Extension Program funding must fit within the priority areas.

3.5 Local Initiatives:

With regard to local initiatives, progress has been made over the past three years, although much still needs to be done. The City of Surrey has implemented a Home Ownership Assistance Program and a task force has been established to address homelessness in Surrey. Other local initiatives, many developed under the first phase of the SCPI Program, are also making a difference. These initiatives, collectively, will act as important building blocks as the community works toward developing a continuum of housing, income and support to move people out of the cycle of homelessness and to prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness.

Surrey Home Ownership Assistance Program:

The City of Surrey implemented its Home Ownership Assistance Program⁸ in 2001. This program is intended to assist eligible households living or working full-time in Surrey to purchase their first home. More specifically, qualified households with annual incomes not exceeding \$59,000 in 2003 (the amount to be annually adjusted) are eligible for interest free loans that are the lesser of 15% of the purchase price of the home or \$15,000 City-wide or 20% of the purchase price of the home or \$20,000 in Surrey City Centre. Of note, the 15% or \$15,000 applies to newly-constructed or resale homes with building permits issued after January 1, 2000 and the 20% or \$20,000 applies to newly-constructed homes. The loans are registered as a second mortgage and are discounted by 10% per year for the first five years of ownership. After five years, the repayable amount (upon sale) is 50% of the original loan. In the first year of the program, four households qualified; while in the second year of the program, seven households qualified.

While the situation is dire, it is not hopeless. We need to augment existing services and develop new ones in response to identified needs.

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Forum Participant

⁷ <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/index.html>

⁸ <http://www.city.surrey.bc.ca/Living+in+Surrey/Community+Development/Home+Ownership+Program.htm>

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force:

The task force, which is comprised of representatives of some 30 agencies, groups and organizations, has been active over the past 18 months in addressing homelessness and housing issues in Surrey. In July 2002, it released a needs assessment report which provided an estimate as to the number of people who are homeless in Surrey; an inventory of facilities and services; and a preliminary listing of suggested actions to address homelessness. On May 21 and 22, 2003, the task force conducted a 24-hour count of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey; while on June 12 and 13, 2003, it staged a major forum on homelessness and housing issues to raise public awareness and to engage participants as to how best to address these issues in Surrey. Regarding the forum, it attracted in excess of one hundred people on both days and involved business and community leaders, all three levels of government and people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness.

Surrey Extreme Weather Response Plan:

The Surrey Extreme Weather Response Plan for the Homeless was spearheaded by the task force, facilitated and prepared by a consultant working on behalf of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy and funded by a grant under the SCPI Program. The plan sets forth a framework for expanding resources to people who are absolutely homeless during the winter months to prevent or reduce hardships due to extreme winter weather conditions. More specifically, when temperatures are at or below minus four degrees Celsius or minus two degrees Celsius with a wind chill or when there are significant accumulations of snow, an activation team calls an alert. Once an alert is made, up to one hundred additional emergency shelter beds will be temporarily opened during the extreme winter weather conditions. For those who choose to remain outdoors, they will receive blankets, clothing, food and hot beverages.

Vibrant Communities:

Surrey is a member of Vibrant Communities,⁹ which is a national initiative to reduce poverty by creating partnerships that make effective use of the community's most valuable assets – i.e., its people, businesses, institutions and organizations. It is a unique approach to reducing poverty that allows communities to learn from each other. To this end, it links 15 communities from across Canada in a collective effort to test the most effective ways of reducing poverty at the grassroots level. In Surrey, the convenor committee is comprised of Coast Capital Savings, CUPE #402, the Newton Advocacy Group Society, Pacific Community Resources, Surrey Social Futures Society and the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Later this fall, other organizations will be invited to join the committee.

⁹ <http://www.vibrantcommunities.ca>

Surrey Projects Funded under the SCPI Program:

During the first phase of funding (2000-2003) under the SCPI Program, the following projects were funded in Surrey:

- Options: Services to Communities Society:

This project entailed the purchase of land for and the development of an emergency shelter and second stage housing. The emergency shelter contains 35 permanent and 15 cold/wet weather beds, with the former replacing the 16 bed Surrey Men's Shelter Program. As for the second stage housing, it can accommodate up to 20 people. The development serves both men and women and offers related support services.

- Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society:

This project entailed the purchase of the society's leased premises to provide a permanent, stable home for existing programs and services.

- South Fraser Community Services Society:

This project entailed the purchase of the society's building housing the Front Room Drop-In Centre, Gateway Emergency Shelter and other programs and services. It also entailed the renovation of the drop-in centre and the hiring of additional support workers to staff it.

- Surrey Social Futures Society:

This project entailed the preparation of a needs assessment study and this plan to address homelessness in Surrey.

While we are making progress, capacity is not keeping pace with demand. As such, many people who are homeless go without, while others who are at-risk do not receive the support they require to avoid becoming homeless.

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force Member

Section 4: Continuum of Housing, Income and Support Framework

4.1 Introduction:

This section describes the continuum of housing, income and support framework.

4.2 Framework:

As part of the terms of reference for this plan, it was stated that “the plan and recommended 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 (March 19, 2001).” 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 absolutely homeless in the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

As part of this framework, it emphasizes that solutions to homelessness are based on the following three interrelated elements: a continuum of housing; adequate income; and support services.

Housing:

The continuum of housing includes emergency shelter, second stage housing, supported housing and independent housing. As the word “continuum” implies, all are needed to move people who of the cycle of homelessness. For some people, emergency shelter is needed until a temporary crisis is averted (e.g., the loss of a job). For others, especially those people who require support to deal with personal issues such as abuse, addiction or mental illness, second stage housing is needed to stabilize their lives prior to living independently. For those who are unable to live independently, long term supported housing is needed to allow these people to live in the community and to reduce the chances of them becoming homeless again. For those who can live independently with little or no supports, affordable market and non-market housing is needed. While all four components of the continuum of housing are inadequate to meet current needs in Surrey, the middle components are particularly problematic. Given the lack of second stage and supported housing, people who are absolutely homeless are curtailed in their ability to make the transition from homelessness to independent living.

Without a comprehensive continuum of supports, people who are homeless are unlikely to break the cycle of homelessness.

Surrey Service Provider Questionnaire Respondent

Income:

An adequate income is needed to pay for independent housing and to prevent people at-risk from becoming homeless. Income is derived from either employment or government assistance. For those people who are employable, yet underemployed or unemployed, employment programs and government assistance is needed until these people gain employment. For those people who are temporarily unemployable due to an addiction or mental illness, support services, employment programs and government assistance is needed for them to become employable and to gain employment. For those people who are unemployable due to a severe mental illness or physical disability, long-term government assistance is needed in the form of disability benefits. In Surrey, as elsewhere, inadequate support services, ministry restructuring and reforms to government assistance act as impediments to people gaining employment and living independently.

Support:

Support services include prevention services, drop-in and outreach services, food support services, health and mental health services and substance misuse services, among others. These services are designed to improve the quality of life for people who are absolutely homeless, while addressing personal issues that may prevent them from gaining employment and living independently. For those who are at-risk of homelessness, these services may enable them to retain their existing housing through crisis grants and direct assistance to prevent eviction. In Surrey, support services are either inadequate to meet needs or are unavailable, as in the case of dual diagnosis and residential detox beds.

Section 5: Inventory of Facilities and Services

5.1 Introduction:

This section provides an inventory of facilities and services to assist people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Surrey.

5.2 Inventory:

The following inventory of facilities and services for Surrey is organized according to the continuum of housing, income and support framework. As for gaps in facilities and services, these are discussed in Section 6.

Housing:			
Facility/Service:	Description:	Target Group(s):	Beds/Units:
Emergency Shelters:			
Gateway Emergency Shelter	Cold/wet weather beds for people who are homeless.	Men and Women	36 Beds
Hyland House	Cold/wet weather beds for people who are homeless.	Men and Women	15 Beds
Hyland House	Permanent emergency shelter beds for people who are homeless.	Men and Women	35 Beds
Sheena's Place	Permanent emergency shelter beds for women and children who are homeless.	Women and Children	10 Beds
Safe Houses:			
Quick Response Program	Short term stabilization support and assessment services.	Youth (12-18)	3 Beds
Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey)	Safe house beds for young women exiting the sex trade.	Young Women (16-29)	16 Beds
Transition Houses:			
Durrant Transition House	For women and their children fleeing abuse.	Women and Children	10 Beds
Evergreen Transition House	For women and their children fleeing abuse.	Women and Children	10 Beds
Ishtar Transition House	For women and their children fleeing abuse.	Women and Children	12 Beds
Shimai Specialized Transition House	For women with substance misuse issues and their children fleeing abuse.	Women and Children	10 Beds
Virginia Sam Transition House	For women and their children fleeing abuse.	Women and Children	10 Beds
Second Stage Housing:			
Hyland House	Second stage housing for people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness.	Men and Women	20 Beds
Koomseh Second Stage Program	Second stage housing for women and children leaving first stage transition housing.	Women and Children	11 Beds

Housing (Continued):			
Facility/Service:	Description:	Target Group(s):	Beds/Units:
Supported Housing:			
Sandell House	Supported apartments for people with mental health issues who can live independently.	Mental Health	8 Beds
Supported Independent Living Program	Housing assistance for people with mental illness.	Mental Health	74 Units
Independent Housing:			
Permanent Social Housing	Co-op and non-market housing, including units managed by BC Housing.	Families, People with Disabilities, Seniors	3,824 Units
Income:			
Facility/Service:	Description:	Target Group(s):	Beds/Units:
Employment Programs:			
Aware Society	Career planning and job search support.	Women	N/A
Pacific Community Resources	Employment counselling for people with multiple-barriers but considered employable.	Mental Health, Women, Youth	N/A
Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society	Employment assistance and job search support.	Immigrants	N/A
Surrey Community Services Society	Monitored volunteer placements in the community.	Mental Health	N/A
Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society	Employment assistance, including training.	Immigrants	N/A
Youth Work Connections	Six-month pre-employment program.	Youth (16-29)	N/A
Support:			
Facility/Service:	Description:	Target Group(s):	Beds/Units:
Advocacy Services:			
Supportive Community Resource, Referral and Advocacy Program	Information and referral for people on or coming off of government assistance.	All	N/A
Drop-In Services:			
Surrey Reconnect Services for Street Youth	Counselling services, parent-team mediation and referral.	Youth (Under 19)	N/A
The Front Room Drop-In Centre	Drop-in centre offering laundry, showers and telephone. Client referrals.	All	N/A
Women's Place	Drop-in and resources centre for women and children.	Women and Children	N/A
Food Support Services:			
The Front Room Drop-In Centre	Daily dinner served at 6:00 p.m.	All	N/A
Surrey Food Bank	Food bank, community garden, community kitchen and food buying club.	All	N/A
The Salvation Army Community Services	Hot lunch program served between 11:30 a.m. and 12:50 p.m., Monday through Friday.	All	N/A
Women's Place	Hot lunch program.	Women and Children	N/A

Support (Continued):			
Facility/Service:	Description:	Target Group(s):	Beds/Units:
Health and Mental Health Services:			
Adolescent Crisis Response Program	Serves adolescents who are in acute care.	Youth (12-18)	N/A
Next Step Options Society	Support to sexually exploited or street involved youth exiting the street.	Youth	N/A
Street Health Outreach Program	Health clinic offering medical assessment and treatment.	All	N/A
Street Health Outreach Program	Needle exchange program for injection drug users.	All	N/A
Surrey HIV/AIDS Support Network	Education, prevention and support services.	All	N/A
Surrey Memorial Hospital Youth Clinic	Pregnancy testing, screening for sexually transmitted diseases, etc.	Youth	N/A
Mental Health Consumer Advocacy Program	Information on rights and responsibilities for mental health consumers.	Mental Health	N/A
Surrey Central Mental Health Centre	Assessment and screening, counselling and treatment, pharmacotherapy, referral, etc.	Mental Health	N/A
Surrey North Mental Health Centre	Assessment and screening, counselling and treatment, pharmacotherapy, referral, etc.	Mental Health	N/A
White Rock/South Surrey Mental Health Centre	Assessment and screening, counselling and treatment, pharmacotherapy, referral, etc.	Mental Health	N/A
Substance Misuse Services:			
Astra Youth Addictions Outreach Program	Alcohol and drug intervention, support and treatment program.	Youth (13-18)	1 Bed
Cwenengitel Aboriginal Support Centre	Culturally sensitive alcohol and drug services for men.	Aboriginal Men	7 Beds
Daughters and Sisters Program	Six month treatment program.	Female Youth (12-18)	7 Beds
Cornerstone Manor	Alcohol and drug services for men. Open ended stay.	Men	69 Beds
Cornerstone Manor	Alcohol and drug services for women. Open ended stay.	Women	10 Beds
Finally Free Recovery House for Men	Recovery house for men with an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs. Open ended stay.	Men	25 Beds
Launching Pad Recovery House	Recovery house for men with an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs. Open ended stay.	Men	17 Beds
Liz's Place	Physician supervised methadone treatment for women.	Women	6 Beds
Path of Freedom Treatment Centre Ltd.	Alcohol and drug services for men. Services available in Punjabi and Urdu.	Men	10 Beds
Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Centre	Alcohol and drug services for men. Program length is three to twelve months.	Men	30 Beds
Step by Step Recovery House	Four recovery houses for men and women. Program length is three to twelve months.	Men and Women	56 Beds

Section 6: Gap Analysis

6.1 Introduction:

This section provides an analysis of gaps in facilities and services to assist people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey. It was developed based on the findings of the research and in consultation with the task force. Of note, it only addresses major gaps and it is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis. As designed, it is intended to act as a guide or resource to community, government and social service agencies to assist them in establishing priorities, allocating funding and planning programs. It also forms the basis for the section on recommended actions to address homelessness in Surrey.

6.2 Housing:

Gap #1: Year-Round, Minimum Barrier Emergency Shelter Beds

Most people (68.6%) enumerated as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003 were not in receipt of government assistance. As such, they are ineligible to stay at a permanent, year-round emergency shelter in Surrey. In fact, when asked why they did not stay at an emergency shelter the night prior to the count, the most often cited response (25 people or 23.1% of all people counted) was that they were ineligible or that they needed a referral. Additionally, of those people enumerated, 61.5% reported an addiction and 27.5% reported a mental illness. As such, they may be deemed to be inappropriate to stay at a permanent, year-round emergency shelter in Surrey, if they are seen to be disruptive, high or intoxicated. In fact, when asked why they did not stay at an emergency shelter the night prior to the count, the third most often cited response (12 people or 11.1% of all people counted) was that were deemed to be inappropriate.

Currently, there are 51 minimum barrier emergency shelter beds in Surrey; all of which are classified as cold/wet weather beds, meaning they are only available between November 1 and March 31. The majority of these beds (36 or 70.6%) are located at Gateway Emergency Shelter and the remainder (15 or 29.4%) are located at Hyland House. Regarding Gateway, in an interview of 25 shelter users conducted on March 24, 2003, about half (48.0%) stated that they plan to sleep at the Front Room Drop-In Centre (located below the shelter) or outdoors after the shelter's seasonal closure. The remainder stated that they plan to stay with a family member or friend, try to locate housing of their own or relocate. As for those people using the Front Room, they will have to sleep in an upright position in a chair; will face frequent disruptions as people come and go; and will have to leave by 7:00 a.m. the next morning. For many, especially the day labourers, this routine takes a physical toll on both body and mind.

Gap #2: Emergency Shelter Beds for Men and/or Women with Children

Recent research shows that families comprise an increasing percentage of those people who are absolutely homeless. In fact, in the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver (March 19, 2001), it states: "While people who are homeless have traditionally been viewed as single older men; today they are a diverse group, comprising youth, women, families, members of the aboriginal community, new immigrants, refugees, etc." Despite the changing demographics, the majority of existing emergency shelter beds still target single men who are homeless in Surrey. While gains have been made with regard to emergency shelter beds targeting women who are homeless; there are only 10 emergency shelter beds that can accommodate women with children and no emergency shelter beds that can accommodate couples or men with children. Regarding the former beds, all are located at Sheena's Place, which in March 2003, turned away 48 women and 27 children. As such, families who are homeless often have to live with friends and relatives, frequently in overcrowded and unsafe conditions.

Gap #3: Safe House Beds for Youth who are Homeless or Street Involved

While there have been two counts of people who are homeless in Surrey; these counts were not overly successfully in enumerating youth who are absolutely homeless or street involved. The reasons for this lack of representation include: a highly transient youth population; a limited number of services targeting youth; and a reluctance by youth to use services targeting men and women who are homeless. As part of the daytime components of both counts, seven youth were enumerated. Despite this low number, other evidence suggests that this number is far higher. Between June and December 2000, The McCreary Centre Society conducted a survey of 523 street youth in the Greater Vancouver Regional District; 61 of which reported living in the South Fraser Area (i.e., Langley, Surrey and White Rock). 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. During the month of June 2003, Surrey Reconnect served 83 youth; 32 of which were classified as being AWOL (or absent without leave). It also had casual street contact with additional 184 youth.

There is nothing that I would miss about my current lifestyle. I am broke, homeless, unemployed and wheelchair bound. Additionally, I must rely on others to survive and I am becoming less confident with each passing day that I will achieve my independence.

Surrey Homeless interviewee

Currently, there are twelve long-term and seven emergency safe house beds for youth in Surrey; with most of these beds targeting sexually exploited female youth 16 to 29 years who are trying to exit the sex trade. As such, there are few safe house beds for male and female youth who are homeless or male youth who are street involved in Surrey. For these youth, some will gravitate to the Downtown Eastside, where such beds exist; while others will live in unsafe conditions, possibly with adults who are using drugs or in squats. As for the former, relocation will sever connections with family members, friends, schools and social services; leaving them vulnerable to the perils of street life in Canada's most dangerous neighbourhood. As part of a service provider questionnaire involving 30 agencies in Surrey and conducted during January 2002, there was general agreement that homelessness had reached crisis proportions in Surrey and that immediate action was necessary. Of note, particular concern was expressed about the plight of youth who are homeless or street involved, especially given the lack of safe house beds and other support services for them in Surrey.

Gap #4: Second Stage Housing for People who are Homeless and Women and Children Fleeing Abuse

There are very few units of second stage housing in Surrey. This housing targets people who are absolutely homeless and women and children fleeing abuse. Typically, it is time limited, transitional housing obtained after leaving an emergency shelter or transition house and prior to an individual or a family being ready for independent living. This type of housing is often combined with supports such as counselling, crisis response, employment assistance, etc. Currently, there are 31 units of second stage housing for men, women and women with children in Surrey. Given the extent of homelessness in Surrey (i.e., estimated to be in the range of 200 to 250 people) and the number of women and children fleeing abuse on a monthly basis, the current number of units of second stage housing is inadequate to meet demands. For those people who cannot be accommodated in Surrey, many will have to relocate to another municipality, which can be very disruptive to support networks. Of note, in some cases, relocation may be warranted, where an abusive partner poses an ongoing risk.

With regard to those people living with addiction, mental illness and other conditions which make them "hard to house," and who are not receiving or seeking treatment, there is a need for second stage or transitional housing to stabilize their lives. This housing would be "barrier free" and it would not discriminate based on age, gender, health, income or marital status. In fact, as part of the daytime component of the 24 hour count on May 21 and 22, 2003, of those people enumerated, 61.5% reported an addiction and 27.5% reported a mental illness; however, only 18.5% of these people stated that they needed treatment to deal with their addiction or mental illness. As one task force member stated, "there should not be a prerequisite for change to be entitled to affordable, safe and secure housing."

Gap #5: Supported Housing for People Dealing with Addiction, Mental Illness and Other Health Problems

There are very few units of supported housing in Surrey. This housing targets people dealing with addiction, mental illness and other health problems. Typically, it is affordable, independent housing, either in a purpose-designed building or in scattered site apartments, with supports such as counselling, crisis response, health services, etc. Currently, there are four units of supported housing accommodating eight adults dealing with mental illness and 74 units of supported housing under the Supported Independent Living Program in Surrey. The latter housing also serves adults dealing with mental illness. As such, there are no units of supported housing targeting people dealing with addiction and people living with HIV/AIDS. Regarding the former, 61.5% of people enumerated as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003 reported having an addiction. As for the latter, several people enumerated as part of the above count reported being HIV+. Without adequate supports and supported housing, people dealing with addiction will face greater risk of relapse and people living with HIV/AIDS will face greater risk of complications associated with the disease.

Gap #6: Non-Market Housing for Single Adults who are Homeless

Most people (80.8%) enumerated as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003 reported that they lived alone. For these people, attaining appropriate housing is a difficult proposition, as they must do so based only on one income. For many, they will have to seek a roommate to share housing and related costs, which entails its own set of perils. During focused interviews with people who are homeless in Surrey, conducted between March 5 and April 10, 2002, four of the eight people interviewed had shared an apartment with a roommate prior to becoming homeless. In all four cases, the relationship deteriorated and the arrangement ended. As one interviewee stated: "The only thing that I had in common with my roommate was that we both needed housing and we could not afford to live on our own." As part of the same interviews, the most often cited barrier to attaining appropriate housing of one's own was insufficient income, whether employment or government assistance.

*My common-law partner left me and I was unable to pay the rent myself.
As such, I had no choice but to leave. With no job and
little money to support myself and still reeling from the break-up, I found
myself on the street.*

Surrey Homeless Interviewee

Currently, there are 3,824 co-operative and non-market housing units in Surrey; none of which are designed for or meet the needs of single adults who are absolutely homeless. These units typically offer subsidized rents, provide for more security of tenure and are far more flexible in terms of references, security deposits, etc. In the above interviews, when interviewees were asked what assistance they needed either to retain their current housing or to locate alternate housing, the two most often cited responses were: increased benefits under government assistance and more government subsidized housing. Additionally, as part of a service provider questionnaire involving 30 agencies in Surrey and conducted during January 2002, the lack of affordable market rental housing and government subsidized housing were seen as the two major contributing causes to homelessness in Surrey. When asked what needs to be done to address homelessness in Surrey, the number one response, mentioned by 36.7% of questionnaire respondents, was to develop more non-market, subsidized and supported housing.

6.3 Income:

Gap #7: Employment Program for Deeply Entrenched and Multi-Barriered Men and Women who are Homeless

People who are absolutely homeless, especially those who are deeply entrenched in homelessness, face multiple barriers which make them unsuitable for traditional employment programs. In Surrey, 44.5% of people enumerated as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003 reported that they had been homeless for more than six months. Additionally, 61.5% reported an addiction, 39.6% reported a medical condition and 27.5% reported a mental illness. In some cases, those enumerated were dealing with two or more health conditions at the same time. During focused interviews with people who are homeless in Surrey, conducted between March 5 and April 10, 2002, six of the eight interviewees had dropped out of school and five had a Grade 9 education or less. Additionally, most interviewees reported having low self-esteem and poor lifeskills, which they believed hampered them in their ability to gain employment.

I have struggled with hard drugs in the past. Although my addictions are now under control, there is always the possibility that I will relapse. Getting off the street and into a decent apartment would probably reduce my chances of relapsing.

Surrey Homeless Interviewee

Currently, there are a number of employment programs targeting the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Surrey, including abused women, mental health clients, multi-barriered youth, recent immigrants and visible minorities. While these programs are addressing the employment needs of those targeted, they are not accessible to the vast majority of people who are homeless. In the above count, 93.5% of people enumerated as part of the daytime component were adult men and women of Caucasian decent. Additionally, as part of a service provider questionnaire involving 30 agencies in Surrey and conducted during January 2002, a number of respondents mentioned the need for an employment program targeting people who are homeless. Suggested program components included counselling, crisis response, lifeskills and ongoing support, as well as assistance in dealing with addiction. Other suggested program components included a clothing exchange, job finding club and supervised employment program.

6.4 Support:

Gap #8: Availability, Currency and Reliability of Information

People who are absolutely homeless are highly transient and often move in response to available services, employment and housing. As such, they are not always aware of homeless resources and services to assist them. In fact, as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003, the fourth most often cited response as to why people did not use a safe house, shelter or transition house on the night prior to the count was that they did not know about them. Of note, this response was mentioned by 11 people or 10.2% of all people counted. As part of a service provider questionnaire involving 30 agencies in Surrey and conducted during January 2002, a number of respondents expressed concern about the availability, currency and reliability of information. While information regarding homeless resources and services in Surrey is contained in a Survival Guide, several respondents stated that it needed to be updated on a more frequent basis. Additionally, other respondents called for the development of a contact centre in Surrey to access all homeless resources and services in the South Fraser Region. Suggested functions of such a centre included a centralized computer database; internet connectivity to all service providers for referral purposes; and collection and reporting of relevant statistical information.

I dropped out of school in Grade 9 and my job experience is limited to working as a dishwasher and short order cook. While I have tried to get a decent paying job, I have had no luck. As such, I find myself in and out of homelessness.

Surrey Homeless Interviewee

Gap #9: Outreach Services

Most people (61.1%) enumerated as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003 reported that they had not been approached about finding a place to live. Additionally, about half the people (49.1%) enumerated as part of the above count did not approach anyone or any place to get help in finding a place to live. These findings speak to the need for outreach services to make initial contact, to assess the individual's situation and to match him or her with appropriate services. As part of a service provider questionnaire involving 30 agencies in Surrey and conducted during January 2002, respondents, while in support of expanded outreach services, cautioned against increasing demand without first augmenting capacity.

Gap #10: Treatment Services for People Dealing with Addiction

The majority of people (61.5%) enumerated as part of the daytime component of the 24-hour count of the homeless on May 21 and 22, 2003 reported having an addiction. Despite this fact, there are no residential detox beds in Surrey. Of note, these short-stay beds enable people to undergo managed withdrawal from alcohol and/or drugs. Additionally, 27.5% of people enumerated as part of the above count reported having a mental illness, with many of these people reporting both an addiction and a mental illness. Despite this fact, there are no dual diagnosis beds in Surrey. Of note, these beds treat people dealing with both an addiction and a mental illness by offering assessment, education, group therapy, one-on-one counselling, relapse prevention and follow-up. While there are 230 residential treatment and supportive recovery bed in Surrey; 81.7% of these beds target men. As such, there are few beds targeted at women and youth. Of note, the majority of these long-term beds are not licensed, which raises concerns as to the quality of care and treatment provided.

The lack of treatment services for people dealing with addiction is a major contributing factor to homelessness in Surrey. As part of the above count, the most often cited response as to why people did not have a place of their own was addiction, mentioned by 20 people or 18.5% of all people counted. Additionally, the second most often cited response as to what assistance people needed to get a place of their own was treatment for addiction or mental illness, mentioned by 18 people or 16.7% of all people counted. During focused interviews with people who are homeless in Surrey, conducted between March 5 and April 10, 2002, three of the eight interviewees reported that their addiction contributed to their homelessness by consuming their incomes and making them unsuitable for employment. Additionally, two of these interviewees reported that they would require treatment prior to being able to live independently. Of note, interviewees expressed concern about the lack of treatment services in Surrey and the long wait times for those services which are available.

Section 7: SCPI Proposals

7.1 Introduction:

This section provides a brief overview of those proposals which were submitted for Surrey under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) Extension Program. This federal program was established to develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to assist people who are homeless to move out of the cycle of homelessness and to prevent people at-risk from falling into homelessness. The Greater Vancouver Regional District has been identified as one of the ten most affected regions in Canada and has been allocated \$24.9 million. Of note, all funded expenditures must be made prior to March 31, 2006.

7.2 Overview of Proposals:

For all proposals, the responsible agency is identified and a brief description of the facility or service is provided. Information as to targeted groups is also provided. Of note, the descriptions are based on information communicated to the consultant. All agencies who prepared a proposal submitted an expression of interest by September 12, 2003 to the SCPI Extension Program. The proposals do address many of the major gaps as identified in the previous section and they are supported by the task force. Given the number of proposals for Surrey, it is recognized that not all will receive funding under the SCPI Extension Program.

- Atira Women's Resource Society:

This proposal called for the development of 12 units of second stage housing for pregnant women who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness. This housing will be available to women until their babies are six months old. The proposal also called for an additional 12 to 24 units of second stage housing for women and children. This housing will be available for up to 18 months. Of note, the above housing will be offered in combination with daycare, health and other services.

- Elizabeth Fry Society:

This proposal called for the development of second stage and permanent housing for women with mental health issues.

- Newton Advocacy Group Society:

This proposal called for expanding the society's existing services in order to assist women to secure suitable housing and to remain stable, while advocating for immediate and long-term solutions to homelessness for women in the South Fraser Region. Of note, the proposal is a joint venture with South Fraser Women's Services and two other women's services organizations.

- Neighbourlink:

This proposal called for the hiring of a salaried coordinator to undertake the following tasks: educate the faith community as to homelessness in Surrey; develop and implement appropriate responses to homelessness which involve the faith community; and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of those responses. Of note, this proposal also incorporated administrative costs directly related to the coordinator's work.

- Options: Services to Communities Society:

This proposal called for the development of supported housing for men and women with mental health issues and others who require companionship and support. The latter people will be comprised of residents of the second stage housing at Hyland House. This housing may take one of two forms: the purchase of three duplexes or the conversion of an existing apartment or hotel. Of note, the latter will not necessitate a change in zoning, which has been problematic in the past.

- Pacific Community Resources Society:

This proposal called for the development of eight independent living units for youth aged 19 to 24 years transitioning to independence and self-sufficiency. These units will be allocated to meet the following priorities: previously homeless youth aged 17 to 24 years with histories of substance misuse; youth at-risk of homelessness and sexual exploitation under age 19 years; and homeless youth who have drifted to the Downtown Eastside, Whalley and other high risk neighbourhoods.

- Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society:

This proposal called for the development of between 10 to 12 detox beds, 28 supportive recovery beds and between 30 and 40 units of second stage housing for adults with substance misuse issues. It also incorporated an employment program and other related services.

- Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey):

This proposal called for the purchase and renovation of two safe houses in Surrey. Currently, the society is renting its existing two safe houses. Of note, both safe houses will serve female youth aged 16 to 29 years who are exiting the sex trade.

- South Fraser Community Services Society:

Five proposals were submitted. The first proposal called for the conversion of two offices in the society's owned building to accommodate up to four safe house beds for youth. The second proposal called for the development of supported housing for people with a dual diagnosis (i.e., those people dealing with both mental health and substance misuse issues) and for people who are HIV+. The third proposal called for the development of a 28 unit transitional housing program for those people who are hard to house. The fourth proposal called for the development of alcohol and drug services through the society's medical clinic. The fifth proposal called for the provision of preventative services at the Front Room Drop-In Centre.

- Surrey Aboriginal Cultural Society:

This proposal called for the development of a youth safe house similar to the St. James model on the North Shore. The facility will provide emergency and short stay housing and will serve aboriginal youth aged 13 to 20 years.

- Surrey Social Futures Society:

This proposal called for the hiring of a consultant to provide ongoing support to the task force to implement this plan. More specifically, the consultant will facilitate all meetings and provide assistance in the following areas: building capacity; conducting research; facilitating strategic partnerships; leveraging funding and resources; implementing community awareness and education initiatives; and monitoring the homelessness and housing situation in Surrey.

We need to ensure an adequately funded and responsive health and social services sector in order to provide needed services.

Surrey Service Provider Questionnaire Respondent

7.3 Review of Proposals:

Based on a review of the above proposals, some of the major gaps as identified in the previous section are targeted more than others. Five of the proposals address the needs of people dealing with mental health and/or substance misuse issues. Regarding mental health, second stage and permanent housing is proposed for women in need and supported housing is proposed for men and women in need. As for substance misuse, alcohol and drug services, residential detox beds, second stage housing and supportive recovery beds are proposed. Of note, the latter three proposals target adults. Additionally, supported housing is proposed for men and women with a dual diagnosis (i.e., both mental health and substance misuse issues). This emphasis with regard to the proposals is likely a response to the limited services and supports in the areas of mental health and substance misuse in Surrey and the large number of people, both absolutely homeless and at-risk, who are in need in Surrey.

Four proposals directly target youth and young adults. Three of the proposals address the lack of safe house beds and independent housing for youth; while the fourth proposal provides for greater security with regard to existing safe house beds serving female youth aged 16 to 29 years who are exiting the sex trade. Regarding the former, safe house beds are proposed for aboriginal and male and female youth and eight independent living units are proposed for youth aged 19 to 24 years who are transitioning to independence and self-sufficiency. Another proposal, while not directly targeting youth, will benefit young women who are pregnant or who have children. This housing, if developed, will begin to address some of the needs of youth who are absolutely homeless or street involved in Surrey.

Three other proposals are more comprehensive in their scope. One focuses on the faith community and how it can become more informed about and involved in addressing homelessness in Surrey. The second focuses on advocating for immediate and long-term solutions to homelessness for women. The third focuses on facilitating the implementation of this plan; increasing community awareness about homelessness; and monitoring the homelessness and housing situation in Surrey.

Other proposals target disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as the hard to house and people living with HIV/AIDS. Regarding the former, barrier-free transitional housing is proposed which is suitable for single adults who are homeless. This housing will offer varying levels of rent and will be designed to meet unique circumstances, including people with disabilities. As for the latter, supported housing is proposed to meet the specialized health and housing needs of people who are HIV+.

Section 8: Recommended Actions

8.1 Introduction:

This section lists recommended actions to address homelessness in Surrey. These actions were developed based on the findings of the research and in consultation with the task force. Given the number of actions, the task force acknowledges that not all will be implemented, at least in the short to medium term. However, the task force stresses that all are necessary to develop a continuum of housing, income and support in Surrey to assist people who are homeless to move out of the cycle of homelessness and to prevent people who are at-risk from becoming homeless.

8.2 Housing:

- That the task force support the federal and provincial implementation actions pertaining to housing in the updated Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver. These actions include:
 - urging the federal government to expand the scope of projects eligible for funding under the SCPI Program to include permanent affordable housing;
 - urging the provincial government to increase its funding support for transition, second stage and supported housing, as well as permanent co-operative and non-market housing for low income families, seniors and single adults;
 - urging the provincial government to provide support for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in its call to the federal government for a National Affordable Housing Strategy.
- That the existing stock of affordable rental housing (including secondary suites) be monitored and that steps be taken to both enhance and preserve this housing in Surrey. These steps could include but not be limited to: demolition and conversion controls; implementation and enforcement of standards of maintenance bylaws; legalization of secondary suites; and public acquisition and conversion to non-market management.
- That there be year-round access to minimum barrier emergency shelter beds in Surrey. These beds would be based on need, without restriction to condition, eligibility, lifestyle or number of times receiving the service.
- That safe house beds be developed for homeless and street involved youth. These beds would provide temporary accommodation for youth aged 13 to 18 years who require safe overnight shelter to escape the street and/or the drug/sex trade.

- That emergency shelter beds be developed that are appropriate for couples, men and women with 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, parenting programs, play space, etc.
- That additional second stage housing be developed for people who are homeless and for women and children fleeing abuse. This housing would assist people to make the transition from emergency shelters to independent 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 people living with HIV/AIDS. This housing could cater to specific groups or it could be mixed, if appropriate. It could also be combined with support services such as counselling, crisis response, health services, etc.
- That non-market housing be developed for single adults who are homeless. This housing could be achieved by constructing a purpose-designed building, converting an existing hotel and/or through scattered site apartments.
- That access to affordable market and non-market housing be increased for homeless, low-income and marginalized people in Surrey.

8.3 Income:

- That the task force support the federal and provincial implementation actions pertaining to income in the updated Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver. These actions include:
 - urging the federal government to review its employment insurance program to ensure that a greater proportion of unemployed people have access to employment insurance benefits and that eligible recipients receive payment in a timely manner;
 - urging the provincial government to review its income assistance program to ensure that the shelter portion of income assistance reflects the actual market rent range of rental housing and that eligibility criteria do not preclude access to benefits for people in need;
 - urging both the federal and provincial governments to develop strategies to assist working poor households through the development of community-based employment programs; the imposition of revised tax structures to increase disposal income to low income households and the introduction of tax credits for renters.

- That the task force, with the assistance of direct service providers to people who are homeless, monitor and report on the impacts in Surrey of changes to provincial income assistance and other federal and provincial government programs. This research could be used to lobby senior levels of government for more assistance for those in need or for more facilities and services to address the impacts of the changes.
- That an employment program be developed for deeply entrenched and multi-barriered men and women who are homeless. This program would provide assistance, counselling, crisis response, lifeskills and ongoing support to enable these people to achieve greater employability and independence. It could also include a clothing exchange, job finding club and supervised employment program.

8.4 Support:

- That a working group comprised of people who are currently or formerly homeless be established to assist the task force in implementing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the plan. This working group could also identify and build on the capacities of people who are homeless; articulate and address their needs; and provide them with a voice.
- That a contact centre be developed in Surrey to access all homeless facilities and services in the South Fraser Sub-Region. This centre would include a centralized computer database; internet connectivity to all service providers for referral purposes; collection and reporting of relevant statistical information; and a tracking system to monitor people who are homeless, their needs and their transition to employment and independent housing.
- That the Surrey Survival Guide be updated on a regular basis to ensure current information on homeless facilities and services and that it be made available on line.
- That drop-in centres meet the needs of different people and offer expanded hours of operation, especially during the winter. Additionally, that drop-in centres offer counselling, information and other services that meet both immediate and longer term needs.
- That a mobile primary health care unit be established to improve access to health assessments, referrals and services. This unit would be a pilot project and it would be staffed by advanced practice nurses or nurse practitioners, with support from the Faculty of Nursing at Kwantlen University College.
- That outreach services be expanded to reach more people on the street, especially youth. Outreach services would include education, information and referral.

- That residential detox beds be developed for men, women and youth. These short-stay beds enable people to undergo managed withdrawal from alcohol and/or drugs. To be effective, these beds should be combined with long-term residential treatment and supported housing.
- That more long-term 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 in Surrey. 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. To be effective, these beds should be combined with supported housing.

8.5 Other:

- That criteria be developed regarding the location of social services requiring rezoning approval, including those which address homelessness.

Section 9: Communications Strategy

9.1 Introduction:

This section proposes a communications strategy to build support for this plan and to raise public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey. This strategy will build upon the highly successful homelessness and housing forum held on June 12 and 13, 2003 and the efforts of such organizations as Neighbourlink and the Newton Advocacy Group Society to advocate for and on behalf of people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Surrey.

9.2 Target Groups:

To be effective, the communications strategy will need to target a wide cross-section of groups and organizations in Surrey, including community groups; emergency shelter, safe house and transition house providers; faith-based organizations and their congregations; government agencies; multicultural groups; and not-for-profit societies. It will also need to target elected officials at all three levels of government and the general public. With regard to the latter, the 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.

9.3 Key Messages:

To gain support for this plan and 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 need to promote a number of key messages, including but not limited to the following:

- that homelessness can undermine the stability of communities and that it makes good economic and social 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;
- that recent studies show that it is far less expensive to provide second stage and supported housing than it is to provide health care, social and criminal justice services to people who are homeless.

9.4 Possible Strategies:

The task force felt that an effective communications strategy will need to involve a wide array of community-based organizations and rely on a number of different mediums and strategies to reach the above target groups. It expressed particular concern about those members of the general public who believe that homelessness is a lifestyle choice and who are politically inclined or motivated to oppose responses to address homelessness in Surrey. One task force member stated that without a change in public attitudes and perceptions, elected officials will be reluctant to champion or support such initiatives as emergency shelters, second stage housing, residential treatment facilities, etc.

As part of the community consultation process in support of this plan, participants were asked to suggest possible communications strategies to raise public awareness and understanding about homelessness in Surrey. Based on the input received, a number of strategies were suggested. These suggestions were discussed and further refined by participants at a community forum held on April 24, 2002. Of note, the task force, while in support of the following strategies, recognizes that expanded partnerships and new sources of funding will be necessary to ensure their implementation:

- Develop a positive working relationship with the local media – i.e., keep them informed, invite them to events, prepare press releases, etc.
- Host public information forums, meetings or workshops to share information and stories about homelessness and to seek feedback and support for this plan.
- Invite civic leaders and elected officials to accompany police officers during night patrols and to volunteer at homeless facilities and services.
- Profile people who are homeless and their stories in the local media 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 in Surrey.
- 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 could 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 10: Implementation

10.1 Introduction:

This section discusses plan implementation. More specifically, it addresses continuity issues related to the task force and the need for ongoing funding and partnerships to implement the recommended actions as contained in this plan.

10.2 Continuity of the Task Force:

At its meeting on June 26, 2003, the task force stated its support for Surrey Social Futures Society submitting a proposal under the SCPI Extension Program to retain a consultant to support it in its efforts to implement this plan. Regardless of the success of this proposal, the task force will have to address continuity issues. To this end, the task force will have to decide if wants to continue to operate as the coordinating body with regard to addressing homelessness in Surrey. If the answer is yes, it will have to develop the capacity and leadership to operate independently of an external consultant/facilitator or it will have to establish an operational budget to retain any necessary assistance. Regarding the latter, funding could be derived from participating agencies, groups and organizations and/or from other sources.

10.3 Ongoing Funding and Partnerships:

The task force expressed concern about the lack of funding to implement the recommended actions as contained in this plan. It was noted that provincial government ministries are undergoing major budget cuts and restructuring, which has reduced funding to many community-based agencies and organizations to assist people who are absolutely homeless or at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. At the same time, these changes are increasing demand for services. As a result, many of these agencies and organizations are seeking funding under the SCPI Extension and Urban Aboriginal Homelessness Programs. However, given the number of agencies and organizations submitting proposals (12) and the number of proposals (16) for Surrey, it is clear that many proposals will not receive funding. As such, alternative funding and partnerships will have to be explored.

The homelessness situation is only likely to get worse, given the changes that were recently announced by the provincial government.

As such, coalitions and partnerships will take on added importance.

Surrey Shelter and Transition House Interviewee

At the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Forum held on June 12 and 13, 2003, a number of innovative funding mechanisms and partnership arrangements were discussed, including the following:

- Affordable Housing and Homelessness Fund:

An affordable housing and homelessness fund could be established with an existing community foundation, thus negating the need to establish a separate body to administer it. The community foundation, as a public charity registered with Revenue Canada, would be in a position to receive bequests, donations and gifts from citizens, businesses, governments, not-for-profit organizations and private foundations. The fund's principal would be kept in perpetuity, while the interest would be available in the form of grants to agencies, groups and organizations to assist people who are absolutely homeless or at-risk of homelessness in Surrey.

- Community Land Trust:

A community land trust could be established as a not-for-profit society to acquire and hold land in trust on behalf of the community for affordable housing. The trust could then lease the land to developers, housing co-operatives and not-for-profit housing providers to build affordable housing. By retaining ownership of the land, the trust would ensure that the housing remains affordable in perpetuity.

- Funders Table:

A funders table could be established to assemble capital and ongoing program funding for the recommended actions as contained in this plan. Such a table could include representation from all three levels of governments, businesses and corporations, financial institutions, philanthropic organizations, private foundations, etc.

With regard to the City of Surrey's Home Ownership Assistance Program, which was recently approved to continue until December 2005, some task force members felt that the program's mandate should be changed or expanded to provide financial assistance to housing co-operatives and not-for-profit housing providers to develop co-operative and non-market housing. It was noted that this funding could be used to leverage additional funding from the Provincial Housing Program and other sources. It was also noted that more people would likely be assisted, especially those people who do not qualify for a mortgage. Several other task force members felt that the City of Surrey's Home Ownership Assistance Reserve Fund, which totals about \$7.5 million, could be used as the basis for an Affordable Housing and Homelessness Fund.

Section 11: Monitoring and Plan Evaluation

11.1 Introduction:

This section discusses monitoring and plan evaluation. More specifically, it proposes strategies to provide credible and reliable information on the homelessness situation in Surrey; while outlining an approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in addressing homelessness.

11.2 Monitoring:

The task force supported the development of an ongoing monitoring strategy to provide credible and reliable information on the number of people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. With regard to those people who are absolutely homeless, there was support for repeating the 24-hour count on an annual basis. Given that the most recent count was conducted in May, it was felt that this month should be used for future counts. In this way, count information would be comparable over time. If funding and resources permitted, it was also felt that a winter count (e.g., January) should be considered, as this would show seasonal fluctuations in homelessness.

As part of the research in support of the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver, a follow-up, regional, 24-hour count of people who are absolutely homeless is being proposed for March 2004. This count, which is subject to funding, will involve most major municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. While the timing of the count is not optimal, there are several advantages to participation, including the availability of funding to cover costs related to the count and the generation of comparative information. As such, if the regional count does proceed, then the task force should consider this option for 2004. The count could then revert back to May in 2005.

As for people who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey, the task force should consider contacting the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness to find out if it is planning to report INALHM concept data based on the 2001 Census. This data describes those people and households with economic issues that may lead to homelessness, including those living in inadequate or unsuitable housing. If this data is available by municipality for 2001, then the task force would have credible and reliable information as to the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey, as well as any increase or decrease in the number between 1996 and 2001.

If INALHM concept data is not available by municipality for 2001, then the task force should consider collecting Census and other information. As part of the Surrey Needs Assessment Study (July 2002), a number of indicators were used to develop an estimate as to the number of people who are at-risk of homelessness in Surrey. These indicators included:

- The number of co-operative and non-market housing units.
- The number of people on the waitlist for co-operative and non-market housing.
- The number of people on the waitlist for the Supported Independent Living Program.
- The number of people receiving rent supplements.
- The number and percentage of all families comprised of lone parent families.
- The number and percentage of individuals and economic families living below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs.
- The number and percentage of households who paid 50% or more of their gross household income on rent.
- The number and percentage of the population receiving BC Employment and Assistance.
- The number and percentage of the population who are unemployed.
- The number and percentage of the population (15+) with less than a Grade 9 education.
- The number of individuals and families using food support services.

The task force felt that this information would assist it in documenting the impacts of senior government cutbacks and restructuring. If the count and indicator information showed increasing numbers of people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Surrey, then it could make the case for more assistance for those in need or for more facilities and services to address the impacts of the changes.

11.3 Evaluation:

To ensure that the plan remains current and responsive to the needs of people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness in Surrey, the task force felt that it needed to be updated and evaluated on a regular basis. To this end, an annual review of current inventory information and gaps would provide an indication as to how successful the plan has been in developing a continuum of housing, income and support in Surrey. This information would also be of assistance to community groups, government agencies and service providers in establishing priorities, allocating funding and planning programs to address homelessness in Surrey.

Consideration should also be given to conducting a more formal evaluation of the plan after two or three years. This evaluation could involve community groups, government agencies and service providers, as well as people who are absolutely homeless and at-risk of homelessness. As part of this evaluation, participants could discuss the following questions:

- How did the plan assist you or your organization in addressing homelessness?
- What information was most helpful to you or your organization?
- What information was missing or underreported?
- Why was the plan successful or unsuccessful in addressing homelessness?
- Who needs to be involved in preparing a new plan or updating the existing one?
- What body or mechanisms should be in place to implement the plan?

Based on the results of the formal evaluation process, the plan should be revised and updated to reflect the input received.

Appendix 1: Task Force Membership

The Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force is comprised of the following members:

- Janice Abbott, Atira Women's Resource Society
- Dick Avison, Resident
- Barbara Beblo, City of Surrey
- Kelly Bohl, Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey)
- Bob Butcher, The Children's Foundation
- Robin Campbell, Surrey Food Bank Society
- Jane Carter, South Fraser Community Services Society
- Cynthia Cavanaugh, Church of Surrey
- Ruth Chitty, White Rock/South Surrey Food Bank
- Linda Cunliffe, Servants Anonymous Society (Surrey)
- Lois Dixon, Fraser Health Authority
- Joy Elcheshen, Women In Need Gaining Strength
- Peter Fahey, South Fraser Community Services Society
- Peter Fedos, Options: Services to Communities Society
- Darrell Ferner, Options: Services to Communities Society
- Lynne Fletcher, Elizabeth Fry Society
- Michelle Francis, PLEA, Daughters and Sisters Program
- Charan Gill, Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society
- Gurmant Grewal, MP (Surrey Central)
- Sue Hammell, Surrey Aboriginal Cultural Society
- Eleanor Herd, Neighbourlink
- Safron Kanzeon, Surrey Social Futures Society
- Dina Lambright, Options: Services to Communities Society
- Margaret Lavelle, Elizabeth Fry Society
- Cindy Law, Area Residents on Homeless Shelter, Neighbourhood Advisory Group
- Laurie, Lawson, CUPE #402
- Wally Levigne, The Cwenegitel Aboriginal Support Centre
- Jim Logan, Project Parent (Fraser South)
- Melinda McGraw, Human Resources Development Canada
- Annie McKittrick, Surrey Social Futures Society
- Maxime Mott, Kwantlen University College
- Michelle Ninow, Cold/Wet Weather Strategy
- Suzanne Noel, Surrey Aboriginal Cultural Society
- Warren Stonnell, The Salvation Army
- Cindy Strogon, RCMP Victim Services Unit
- Linda Syssoloff, South Fraser Community Services Society

- Judy Villeneuve, Councillor, City of Surrey
- Louella Vincent, Envision Society for Choice and Inclusion
- Annette Welsh, South Fraser Community Services Society
- Soraya Wicks, Newton Advocacy Group Society
- Michael Wilson, Phoenix Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Society
- Sue Wrede, People's Full Gospel Church

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This plan would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force and funding support from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) under its Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) Program. Regarding the task force, it has been extremely active over the past 18 months in not only developing this plan but also in conducting a 24 hour count of the homeless and staging a major forum on homelessness and housing issues in Surrey. As for HRDC, it not only funded this plan but it has also funded many other homelessness initiatives in Surrey under SCPI. These initiatives are making a real difference in the lives of people who are absolutely homeless in Surrey.

The task force would like to acknowledge the following organizations that contributed to and supported the forum: the City of Surrey, Coast Capital Savings, CUPE 402, HRDC, Kwantlen University College and The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia. It is hoped that these organizations will continue to play a role in addressing homelessness in Surrey by supporting this plan and working towards its implementation. Finally, the task force would like to acknowledge Surrey Social Futures Society for administering the contract and John Talbot & Associates Inc. for the facilitating task force meetings and preparing the plan.