

## NEWS RELEASE

### ***DONOR INVITES COMMUNITY TO BE PART OF NEW HOMELESS PREVENTION FUND***

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 17, 2010

(Victoria, BC) - Thanks to the hard work of community organizations and the generosity of a local donor, a new fund has been established at the [Victoria Foundation](#) to provide emergency assistance to prevent people from losing their permanent housing.

The *Homeless Prevention Fund* will help to avert the threat of becoming homeless. The fund, established with a \$50,000 grant from a donor at the Victoria Foundation, is designed to provide emergency assistance to individuals and families in Greater Victoria to help stabilize their shelter arrangements. It will be facilitated by the [Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness](#) (the Coalition).

“We recognize some members of our community are exposed to the imminent threat of becoming homeless for a variety of reasons,” says Debbie Thompson, Executive Director of the Coalition. “A number of factors can contribute to unstable housing. For instance, if people in low wage jobs with no paid sick days become ill, they may have to miss a week of work without pay. People starting new jobs usually have a gap between their first day worked and their first pay cheque. Or if a medical emergency arises, rent money may be redirected to health-related expenses.”

Applicants to the *Homeless Prevention Fund* will be asked to show they have exhausted all other means, such as accessing emergency funds from the Ministry of Social Development, and to explain their plan for the following month. They will not have to repay the money, but can only borrow once a year.

The following local community organizations are partners in the initiative:

- Burnside Gorge Community Association
- Ministry of Social Development (MSD)
- Mustard Seed
- Our Place Society
- Pacifica Housing Advisory Association
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Salvation Army – Community and Family Services
- Together Against Poverty (TAPS)
- Victoria Cool Aid Society
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (facilitator)

“The results of our recent *Vital Signs* survey made it very clear - people in Greater Victoria are concerned about homelessness, the cost of living and housing,” says Sandra Richardson, CEO of the Victoria Foundation. “Helping stabilize community organizations and the clients they serve is what we do best. This fund certainly addresses all of those criteria.”

The Victoria Foundation’s grant is funded by a local donor who wishes to remain anonymous. It is the donor’s wish that recipients not have to repay the money; it is more important for the recipients to stabilize their situation so they can move past their crisis moments. The donor invites others to get engaged in solutions for the community by contributing to this critical fund.

“Housing is a fundamental human need,” says Karyn French, Executive Director of [Pacifica Housing](#). “Without the collective work of our community partners, we would likely see more people on the street.”

The *Homeless Prevention Fund* is one of several strategies identified in the Coalition’s Prevention Plan, which was created early this year. The Plan identifies two specific goals: creating more effective processes and tools to make it easier for people to access various support services, and intervening earlier with people who are at risk of becoming homeless. Results are already being seen with enhanced cross-agency collaboration.

“Providing the supports necessary to those at risk of homelessness is an important element on the continuum of housing needs” said Minister [Rich Coleman, Public Safety and Solicitor General](#) and the Minister Responsible for Housing. “This is a strong focus for the province – through services such as our Rental Assistance Program, the Homeless Outreach Program and Supportive Housing developments being built around the province. I want to congratulate the community for coming together to develop this fund and provide another resource for individuals and families with a helping hand if times get tough. It is a kind gesture and it will have a big impact.”

The Victoria Foundation is a public community foundation that connects people who care with causes that matter in our community. Independent and volunteer-driven, the Victoria Foundation aims to strengthen the community through grant making, leadership and stewardship. The Victoria Foundation is a member of the Coalition.

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness is a partnership of local service providers, non-profit organizations, all levels of government, business and the faith community. The Coalition’s vision is to end homelessness by 2018.

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