

# Media Release



For Immediate Release:



## Coalition shows patterns of homelessness in Greater Victoria

VICTORIA, BC, September 16, 2014 –New research shows that of the more than 4,300 unique individuals who accessed an emergency shelter in the last four years 85% only access it for a short period of time. This suggests affordable housing and prevention initiatives rather than supportive housing are required to assist the vast majority of those experiencing homelessness in Greater Victoria. The study was conducted on behalf of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness by a partnership between Simon Fraser University and the Centre for Addictions Research at the University of Victoria. This study examined nearly 46,000 shelter records covering the period between April 2010 and March 2014.

“This research gives great insight into the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our community,” says Andrew Wynn-Williams, Executive Director at the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. “Last year, more than 1,700 unique individuals accessed an emergency shelter, if we extrapolate from last year’s shelter data, we can estimate we still need a minimum of 270 supported housing units and, like the rest of Canada, Greater Victoria is facing an affordable housing crisis.”

### Patterns of Homelessness findings:

- Four year trend:
  - Of the over 4,300 unique individuals who accessed an emergency shelter over last four years.
    - 3,670 (or 85%) were temporarily experiencing homelessness indicating the need for a focus on prevention and immediate access to permanent affordable housing and income supports.
    - 655 (or 15%) experienced episodic or long stay shelter use indicating the need for housing with more intensive supports such as Housing First.
  - Women represent about 30% of shelter users in every category while youth represent 3% of shelter users. They are clearly underrepresented in this data as only adult shelters were assessed.
  - Seniors are overrepresented among long stay shelter users indicating a particular challenge for housing this demographic.
- 2013/14:
  - 1,785 unique individuals who accessed an emergency shelter in 2013/14.
  - Shelter use was up approx. 8% (from 1,659 in 2012/13).

“Seniors, 60 and over, were disproportionately more likely to experience long stay or chronic homelessness” pointed out lead researcher Hannah Rabinovitch. “This indicates a significant housing gap in our community for seniors with complex physical and mental health care needs.”

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

The Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC) is a network of individuals and groups dedicated to the study of substance use and addiction in support of community-wide efforts to promote health and reduce harm. Our research is used to inform a broad range of projects, reports, publications and initiatives aimed at providing all people in BC and beyond with access to happier, healthier lives, whether using substances or not.

SFU is Canada's most community-engaged research university, with three thriving urban campuses.

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