



greater victoria
coalition to end
homelessness
hope has found a home

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For Immediate Release

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Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Strikes Priority One Task Force to Help People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

VICTORIA – A new 'Priority One' Task Force of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness will be carrying out focused work to help house the people in Greater Victoria experiencing chronic homelessness.

"Unfortunately, despite the resources being invested in the community for housing, mental health and substance use services, there is a small group of individuals who have been unable to find or maintain housing as their needs require a higher level of supports to accompany the housing that is currently available in Victoria." said Lisa Helps, Mayor of Victoria and Chair of the 'Priority One' Task Force.

The Coalition Board of Directors recognizes the need to work collaboratively to address the needs of this population. The Board recently struck the Priority One Task Force with a time-limited mandate to identify needs and work in partnership to find housing options for this subset of people experiencing chronic homelessness. These are people who may be living with particularly high levels of support service need.

People who haven't found stable housing through existing housing and support service programs require alternative approaches to ensure that once housed, they can stay housed. Members of the Priority One Task Force will consider housing and support needs on an individual basis in combination with a targeted, intensive and specialized approaches to better support this population.

"The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness recognizes that housing needs are greater for this specific population, and that affordable housing is a key piece of a long-term strategy to end homelessness," said Cheryl Damstetter, Executive Director, Island Health and Vice-Chair of the Priority One Task Force. "We also recognize that none of the

options currently available in our community are meeting the needs of this specific population group. Stable housing is a key part to the effective delivery of health care and social supports.”

The task force will work with individuals to identify their specific housing and support service needs. At the same time, it will develop a better understanding of available resources, including gaps and duplications and a need for the possible reassignment of resources to better provide safe, affordable, appropriate housing and support services for this group.

The task force was a key recommendation of a recent governance review of commissioned by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

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Backgrounder Attached

Media Contacts:

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Backgrounder

Priority One Task Force: Better Housing and Support Services for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness with Additional or Other Needs

Priority One Task Force Historical Context:

- In April 2015, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness released a [homelessness plan](#). This plan identified as a first priority to house and support individuals identified as 'High Need +'.

- In December 2015, the Coalition released a governance review that, among other recommendations, called for the establishment of a time-limited special task force that would focus on meeting the housing and support needs of a small subset of the population of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, and make a special effort to obtain housing for this group.
- In February 2016, the Coalition's Directors struck this task force. The task force represents the next evolution of collaborative community efforts focused on providing better housing and support opportunities for those individuals with the highest levels of housing need and support service requirements.
- In April 2016 the Task Force established a, focussed, action-oriented Terms of Reference and has set to work.

Priority One Task Force Purpose:

To move beyond traditional approaches, to address the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness and to identify options for a subset of this population who have additional and other needs.

Priority One Task Force Membership:

Lisa Helps, Mayor, City of Victoria and Priority One Task Force Chair

Cheryl Damstetter, Executive Director, Mental Health and Substance Use, Island Health, Coalition to End Homelessness Board of Directors, and Priority One Task Force Vice-Chair

Dominic Flanagan, Executive Director, Supportive Housing, BC Housing

Christine Culham, Senior Manager, Regional Housing, Capital Regional District

Gordon Gunn, Co-Chair, Coalition to End Homelessness

Don Elliott, A/Executive Director, Coalition to End Homelessness

Ernie Quantz Community Member

Kelly Reid, Director, Mental Health and Substance Use, Island Health

Del Manak, A/Chief, Victoria Police Department