



greater victoria  
coalition to end  
homelessness  

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**hope has found a home**

# Report on Housing and Supports to March 31, 2009

This report gives an overview of data on homelessness and housing since the Mayor's Task Force on Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness was released in October 2007. It shows progress in a number of key areas and will provide a baseline for assessing progress in future years. The evaluation indicators used are based on a review of indicators used to report on homelessness in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Information for this report came from community and university researchers, data experts, and community agencies. This first report includes only the indicators for which data was available at the time of reporting. Although some records were incomplete, the data available has been included. The data and reporting systems will continue to be developed and improved in future reports.

The indicators fall into four main categories: Homelessness, Housing, Income and Supports. The report presents a summary of indicators followed by detailed information in all categories. Explanatory notes for the tables and text are at the end of the report.

## Summary

HOUSING INDICATORS	DATA
Number of people who have been supported to move from streets to homes	594 <sup>1</sup>
Estimated number of individuals who remain housed on March 31, 2009	400
% of homeless individuals accessing housing who remain housed on Mar 31, 09	67%
Number of Supportive housing units (2007)	3392 <sup>2</sup>
Number of new units (permanent supportive) in 2008/09	22
Number of protected units in 2008/09	123
Permanent Housing Units Committed and coming online through 2011	113
Number of Transitional Housing Units (2007)	198 <sup>3</sup>
Number of new transitional housing units 2008/09	56
Upgraded Transitional Housing Units in 2008/09	20
Transitional Housing Units Committed and coming online through 2010	33
SUPPORTS	
Number of ACT/Outreach teams implemented (including VICOT)	4
HOMELESSNESS INDICATORS	DATA
Number of emergency shelter beds for adults and youth year round	171 <sup>4</sup>
Number of emergency shelter beds for adults and youth during extreme weather protocol months	316 (2007/08) <sup>5</sup> 381 (2008/09) <sup>6</sup>
Number of adults sleeping in emergency shelters in a typical month	
Number of Men: 370	516 <sup>7</sup>
Number of Women: 146	
Number of Applicants to B.C. Housing Registry (2008)	
436 Families	
308 Seniors	
267 People w Disabilities	1064
40 Singles	
13 People Wheelchair Access	
HOUSING MARKET INDICATORS (CMHC, 2008)	DATA
Rental Vacancy Rate	0.5% <sup>8</sup>
Average Rent for a Bachelor	\$626 per month
Average Rent for a 1 BR	\$764 per month
Average Rent for a 2 BR	\$965 per month
Increase in Rental Cost in 2008	7%
INCOME INDICATORS	DATA
Basic Income Assistance (support only)	\$235 per month
Shelter Allowance for Single Adult on Basic Income Assistance	\$375 per month
Total Temporary Income Assistance Amount	\$610 per month
Disability Shelter Allowance	\$375 per month
Disability Support Portion	\$531 per month
Minimum Wage	\$8.00 per hour

## I. Homelessness

Homelessness is an extreme form of poverty and can be understood in relation to different types of living conditions. The ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) definition of homelessness is most commonly used nationally and internationally<sup>9</sup>.

- rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough)
- houselessness (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter) e.g. emergency shelters, hospitals, prisons etc.
- living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence). This would also include staying with family or friends or couch surfing.
- living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding). Includes both substandard and overcrowded accommodation.

### EMERGENCY SHELTER BEDS AND MATS

The following is a listing of the emergency shelter beds and mats available year round (2008/09)<sup>10</sup>. In addition, during the winter months from November to March, the Extreme Weather Protocol provides additional mats in communal settings such as church basements.

	EMERGENCY SHELTER BEDS YEAR AROUND	EWP* (Most are mats in Communal Settings)	FOR
Street Link	95		Women and men
Sandy Merriman	25 (women only)		Women only
Salvation Army	21 (men only)	30	Men only
St. John the Divine		40	Mats on floor, Couples, dogs
Out of the Rain		30	Youth
Kiwanis House	10		Youth
VIHA Sobering and Assessment Center	20	5	
Our Place		50 mats	Men and Women
Native Friendship Center		25 mats	
High Point Community Church		30mats	Men and Women
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>210</b>	

*\*EWP runs from November to March of each year and is funded by B.C. Housing. Is a collaborative effort of participating agencies. Reports on EWP usage is available in June of each year.*

## II. Housing

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE HOUSED

Since the Mayor's Task Force reported, the Coalition partners have made efforts to increase housing for homeless and near-homeless people. Funding support has come from federal, provincial, federal, regional, and municipal governments, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), the United Way of Greater Victoria, Victoria Foundation and individual donors.

As a result of these efforts, 594 people have been supported in moving from streets to homes between October, 2007 and March 31, 2009. Approximately 400 people are known to remain housed as of March 31, 2009. (Because reporting systems are still being set up, data is incomplete for 185 people).

Sixty-seven per cent of those housed through to March 31, 2009 have remained housed. The established Provincial performance measure on homelessness is: 60% of homeless individuals accessing housing who remain housed six months after placement<sup>11</sup>. While the number of people who have remained housed in this study in Greater Victoria exceeds the standards set by the provincial government, this number must be viewed with caution for two reasons. First, in this initial period, there were limited systems in place to accurately record and report data. Second, not everyone who is currently housed has been housed for six months.

The Coalition has set a goal of 75% of those housed will remain housed. This target was set prior to the provincial standards and is a goal that is believed to be achievable given the experience of other jurisdictions with Housing First programs.

### TYPE OF HOUSING

Of those who remain housed<sup>12</sup>; approximately 74% are housed in market housing, 16% in supportive housing<sup>13</sup> and 10% in transitional housing<sup>14</sup>. Of the approximately 40 people in transitional housing who remain housed, four have moved to permanent housing.

Of those initially housed, 56 people were housed in motel/hotels. Because it is possible these people may no longer be housed, we have not factored these people into the total number who remain housed. Due to increased hotel rates as of April 1, 2009, people housed in motels and hotels are often displaced during the during high tourist season in Victoria resulting in seasonal variations in homelessness.

NEW, PROTECTED AND COMMITTED UNITS OF SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL HOUSING  
(OCTOBER 2007 TO MARCH 31, 2009)

The chart below identifies new, protected and committed supportive housing units that have come online in 2008 or will come on line over the next three years. Protected housing refers to buildings that were at risk of demolition or re-development and have now been acquired and supports have been put in place.

This total does not include new market or social housing that has come, or is planned to come online as affordable housing.

Information related to loss of affordable housing was not available at the time of reporting.

	TYPE	2008	2009	2010	2011
New Supported Housing					
Mt. St. Angela	New	22			
TOTAL (New)		22			
Protected Housing					
Pacifica Gorge Waterway	New	49			
Desmond House	Protected- Single Room Occupancy	27			
Magdelaine Court	Protected	20			
Queen's Court	Protected	27			
Pacifica Clover Douglas	Committed		18		
Pacifica Humboldt	Committed			44	
Cool Aid Olympic Vista Carey Road	Committed			36	
Cool Aid Swift Street					15
TOTAL		145 (22 New and 123 Protected)	18 (Committed)	80 (Committed)	15 (Committed)

Total Supportive Social Housing units: 258

## TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Transitional housing provides temporary and short term housing for up to 3 years to assist individuals in transitioning to more permanent housing.

In 2007, there were 198 transitional housing beds/unit for singles, women, youth and families in the Capital Region.

Transitional housing is part of a housing continuum that includes emergency shelter and the Housing First approach.

	TYPE	2008	2009	2010
Next Steps	New	15		
Burdett - HES	New	10		
Our Place	New	25		
	Upgraded	20		
Cedar House	New	6		
Oak Bay Ave (Grove)	New		10	
Ellice Street	New			23
Total	New and Upgraded	56 New and 20 upgraded	10 New	23 New

Total Transitional Housing units: 109

## III. Income

### WHAT IT TAKES TO PAY FOR A HOME (2008)

What does it cost to rent a home in Victoria? The chart below outlines the cost of renting based on Canadian Mortgage and Housing rental affordability in 2008 and the income available for rent for persons employed full-time earning minimum wage and for persons on income assistance.

UNIT SIZE	RENTAL COST	AFFORDABLE RENT FOR FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE AT MINIMUM WAGE <sup>15</sup>	INCOME ASSISTANCE SHELTER ALLOWANCE FOR A SINGLE PERSON
Bachelor	\$626	\$384	\$375
1 Bedroom	\$764	\$384	\$375
2 Bedroom	\$965	\$384	\$375

### CORE HOUSING NEED

"A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30 per cent or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards." <sup>16</sup> (CMHC, 2008, p.1). 'Adequate' refers to housing that does not require major repairs. 'Suitability' refers to appropriateness for the size of household. 'Affordable' housing means that households are spending less than 30% of before-tax household income.

BC Housing has added 110 rental supplements which help bring market housing into reach for more people. Flexibility has been added by BC Housing's decision to attach the supplements to individuals, instead of tying these to specific rental properties.

## IV. Increase In Supports

A fundamental shift in service delivery towards “housing with supports” has been made possible by VIHA’s commitment to enhance supports in the region, made with the announcement of the 2007 Mayors Task Force Report.

This commitment has enhanced a wide range of health supports and services to serve homeless people and to help them gain and stay in housing. These include:

- The creation of the first four of five planned Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)/Outreach teams has made Greater Victoria the first jurisdiction in BC to implement these teams and this model of care;
- These teams included the establishment of VICOT (Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team) early last year. VICOT is a unique multi-agency team with staff from VIHA, the BC Ministries of Housing and Social Development and the Solicitor General, and the Victoria Police Department. VICOT released its first annual report with the Victoria Police Department on April 22, 2009.
- Two of the ACT teams and VICOT are based in the downtown core, and the third ACT Team established two years ago, is based at the Seven Oaks Tertiary Mental Health facility in Saanich. All teams work in coordination to help connect with homeless individuals, or those at risk of homelessness, to help connect them with services including stable housing, addictions services, and other social supports.
- The fifth team, an outreach team, is expected to be up and running in the summer of 2009 in the downtown area.
- Increased capacity for addictions services in Greater Victoria with the addition of 21 new detox/stabilization beds, plus new day detox programs as individuals secure safe housing.

There are a many other agencies which provide significant supports to homeless people and those newly-housed, including:

- Victoria Cool Aid Society provides health and dental services.
- Our Place and Cool Aid operate drop-in centres.
- Cool Aid, Pacifica Housing Advisory Association and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre employ housing outreach workers to assist people find housing.
- Pacifica Housing provides follow-up supports once a person is housed and they also employ a Landlord Liaison Officer to work with private market landlords.



## Notes to the text and tables:

- <sup>1</sup> This number is an estimate and may be an undercount of the number of people moved from street to homes as data was not available from all of the agencies in the region involved in housing those in need during the reporting period.
- <sup>2</sup> Taken from Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addiction and Homelessness (2007). Report of the Gap Analysis Team.
- <sup>3</sup> Taken from Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addiction and Homelessness (2007). Report of the Gap Analysis Team.
- <sup>4</sup> Represents permanent year round shelter beds in existing shelters.
- <sup>5</sup> This number is taken from 2007/2008 Extreme Weather Protocol Year End report. It does not include the 15 beds at Next Steps Shelter as these beds are by referral only. Next Steps is included in transitional housing in this report. The EWP Year End Report is available online at <http://www.vewp.net/index.htm>.
- <sup>6</sup> The total number of shelter beds included in the EWP protocol is 396. This includes 15 beds at Next Steps Shelter. This program is by referral only and has been removed from the number of shelter beds available on a nightly basis. The Next Steps program for the purposes of this report has been included as transitional housing. The EWP protocol can be accessed at [http://www.vewp.net/index\\_files/Page528.htm](http://www.vewp.net/index_files/Page528.htm)
- <sup>7</sup> April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 is the time period for this activity. This number could be considered an indicator of the number of people who are homeless but does not include those who are absolutely homeless and sleeping rough, in hospitals or prisons. Nor does it include those who are relatively homeless such as those who are couch surfing and does not include those who are unstably housed. Thus, while it is an indicator of homelessness it represents an undercount of homelessness. However, given the methodological, practical and ethical challenges of enumeration of homelessness it is an indicator that can be obtained throughout the year and at a significantly lower cost than point in time homeless counts.
- <sup>8</sup> Vacancy rates are reported twice yearly by CMHC. The most recent report was released in October, 2008. Low vacancy rates (less than 0.5%) have persisted in Victoria for about five years. According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2008), Victoria has one of the lowest vacancy rates in Canada (along with Kelowna, Vancouver and Regina) and is well below the national average of 2.2%. In addition, in Victoria the average cost of rent rose by 7% in 2008. CMHC (2008). Rental Market Report: Canada highlights and CMHC (2008) Rental Market Report: Victoria CMA. Both reports are Available online at <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/>.
- <sup>9</sup> This definition is widely used nationally and internationally. The ETHOS definition of homelessness can be found at FEANTSA, Available online at <http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/pg.asp?Page=484>.
- <sup>10</sup> The total number of shelter beds included in the EWP protocol is 396 (including Next Steps). Next Steps is not included in the count of shelter beds but included as transitional housing in this report. The EWP protocol can be accessed at [http://www.vewp.net/index\\_files/Page528.htm](http://www.vewp.net/index_files/Page528.htm)

- <sup>11</sup> Ministry of HSD 2009/20 – 2011/12 Service Plan, February, 2009.
- <sup>12</sup> Of those who remained housed on March 31, 2009 data was not available from all of the agencies in the region involved in housing those in need during the reporting period.
- <sup>13</sup> Supportive housing programs refer to those programs in which staff are available onsite to provide support and assistance to residents daily.
- <sup>14</sup> Transitional housing refers to housing in which residents do not have permanent tenure and the goal is to assist individuals to stabilize and find permanent housing. Tenure in transitional housing is defined as being less than 3 years.
- <sup>15</sup> For a full time employee earning minimum wage (\$8 per hour) would earn \$1280 per month. If they were to pay the recommended 30% of their income on rent that would be the equivalent of \$384.
- <sup>16</sup> Canadian Mortgage and Housing (2008). 2006 Census Housing Series: Issue 2- The geography of core housing need, 2001-2006. Research Highlight.