

# QUIET CRISIS:

Homelessness and At Risk in Greater Victoria

**Greater Victoria Report  
on Housing & Supports**

2011 - 2012



**University  
of Victoria**

Centre for Addictions  
Research of BC



greater victoria  
coalition to end  
homelessness  
**hope has found a home**



# Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the individual members of the Research, Evaluation and Data Working Group at the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness for their contributions to the research and analysis for this report.

## Authors

Bernie Pauly, RN, Ph.D Centre for Addictions Research of BC, University of Victoria

Nicole Jackson, BA, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

Andrew Wynn-Williams, MA, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

Kelsi Stiles, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

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# Executive Summary

We begin this report with information about some of the **key factors that contribute to homelessness**, including housing affordability and availability and costs of living for families and single individuals in our region. We have found that, although vacancy rates have increased, rental rates have also increased. While rental accommodation may be more available, it is not more affordable. Resources available to individuals and families on low incomes have not increased. This means they still cannot afford current rental market rates. This gap between income and housing costs is an important contributor to homelessness in our region.

We provide information on **those at risk of homelessness** by examining households in core housing need, households on waitlists for subsidized housing and individuals and families who need to rely on food banks because their income is insufficient to cover all costs. Subsidized housing continues to be unavailable, with 1,545 people on the Housing Registry to access subsidized housing in our region. Food bank use is down slightly over last year, but still up when compared to 2008.

We look at the **extent of homelessness** by examining the use of emergency shelters over the past year and providing a snapshot of facilities that provisionally accommodate people. 1,617 unique individuals used an emergency shelter bed in five of six emergency shelters in Greater Victoria this past year. While the number of unique individuals is similar to last year, the occupancy rate of our emergency shelters has increased from 95% in 2010/11 to 111% in 2011/12. Further, people are being turned away from one of the main emergency shelters on a nightly basis. On a single night, 1,205 people were counted

in temporary accommodation in our region.

The majority of the participating facilities (56 out of 74) are located in the City of Victoria. Women were more likely to use transitional facilities and stay in hotels/motels while men were more likely to be staying in emergency shelters.

We close by examining our **community response** to the challenge of homelessness and housing exclusion. Greater Victoria service providers are consistently housing people and keeping them housed. There have been limited new subsidized units added to the affordable housing stock. Rental supplements for individuals at risk of homelessness or formerly homeless have not increased and there has been a limited increase in the use of rental supplements by families and seniors. While much is being done, there is more to do. We provide some recommendations for how we can continue to make progress in ending homelessness in our community.

## Recommendations:

- Increase the number of rental supplements available and the number of households accessing them
- Increase the number of subsidized housing units in our community
- Increased understanding of housing needs of particular subgroups (e.g. families, youth, Aboriginal peoples, etc.)
- Establish a shared, integrated information database

# Canadian Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness is not just what you see on the street. Even when homelessness is not visible, it still exists when people in our community are living in abandoned buildings, camping, staying in emergency shelters or couch surfing. There are many different situations that range from people living outside to being precariously or inadequately housed.<sup>1</sup> Those that are precariously or inadequately housed are at risk of homelessness.

*For many people, homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.*

Although sometimes hard to imagine, there are many other people in our community who are living in housing that does not meet health and safety standards such as presence of mold and inadequate electrical or heating systems. All of these living situations, from homelessness to precariously housed, put people at risk for poor physical, mental and emotional health. On a daily basis, people spend much of their time meeting their survival needs (such as food and shelter), and face many barriers (ranging from transportation, financial resources and negative attitudes) that make it difficult to access essential health and social services.

## Canadian Definition of Homelessness<sup>2</sup>

Homelessness describes a range of physical living situations, organized here into four categories. Homelessness and housing exclusion include:

**Unsheltered**, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;

**Emergency Sheltered**, including those staying in overnight shelters for people who are homeless, as well as shelters for those impacted by family violence;

**Provisionally Accommodated**, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure;

**At Risk of Homelessness**, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.

It should be noted that for many people, homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency.

1 Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012). Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Available online at Homeless Hub.

2 Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012). Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Available online at Homeless Hub.

# Introduction

Homelessness continues to be a major concern for our community. The rise of homelessness throughout Canada in rural and urban centres has been associated with changes in the supply and availability of low-cost and affordable housing. Having adequate income and access to affordable housing are key to preventing and solving homelessness. In the absence of these, some people are more likely than others to become homeless, and many more are at risk of homelessness.

Who will become homeless? Contributors like income and housing interact with individual factors such as substance use, mental illness, chronic health problems, and trauma to determine who will become homeless. Some problems, such as substance use and mental illness, are worsened with loss of housing and homelessness, which can contribute to the effects of trauma and violence. Sometimes, in difficult living situations, individuals may be forced to leave housing in order to stay safe and avoid further abuse or conflict. This is not a choice, and is a particular challenge for women and youth.

Many different groups are at risk of homelessness. Some of these groups are single adults, families, women, youth and children, Aboriginal peoples, those with mental illness and substance use problems, veterans, immigrants and refugees. All of these groups experience a unique set of factors that, in the right social conditions, can create a perfect storm that results in homelessness. The experience of homelessness is different for every individual; but a common factor for many who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is a lack of access to safe, affordable housing.

Housing and income are essential parts of any solution to homelessness. Addressing these issues is the most important step in preventing homelessness because they ease the challenge for those at risk. These factors are also key to solving homelessness for those already experiencing it by providing an avenue out.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2000). *A Plan Not a Dream: How to End Homelessness in Ten Years*. Washington, DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness.



# Contributors to Homelessness

Affordable, appropriate housing, adequate income and healthy, nutritious food are the basic components for health. For individuals and households on limited incomes who are at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness, difficult choices between these basic necessities are part of daily life.

## Housing

A cornerstone of preventing and solving homelessness is the availability of safe, affordable housing. Examining the most current information on rental market costs and rental market availability gives an overall picture of the rental market, as well as the challenges that people living on low incomes face when trying to access housing. Increasing access to rental market housing for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is a key part of the Great Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness' Housing Procurement Action Plan.<sup>4</sup> In the current climate, rental market housing is often costly and unavailable.



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<sup>4</sup> City Spaces. (2012). Housing Procurement Action Plan. Prepared for the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

## Rental Vacancy Rate

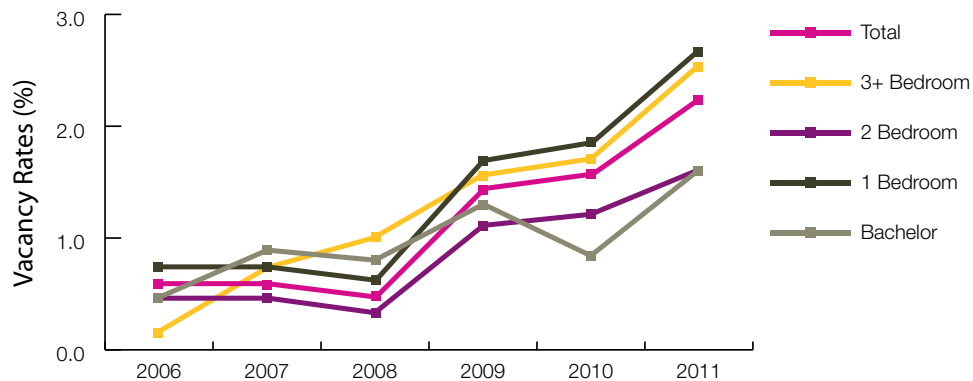
*How easy is it to find a place to live in Greater Victoria?*

Greater Victoria's vacancy rate is improving and is at its highest point in five years. From 2006 to 2011, vacancy rates across all unit types have increased.<sup>5</sup>

For bachelor apartments, the average vacancy rate is 1.7% (an increase of 0.9 percentage points over 2010/11).<sup>6</sup> This is significant, as bachelor units represent an important rental option and the one most likely to be accessed by low-income single individuals.

2011/12 represents the third consecutive year of rising overall vacancy rates, following three years during which the vacancy rate was stable at 0.4%-0.5%. This year, the overall vacancy rate for Greater Victoria (2.1%) is on par with the national vacancy rate (2.2%). Greater Victoria's vacancy rate is ranked 18th out of 34 when compared to other cities across Canada, a significant improvement over 2010's rank of 29th.<sup>7</sup>

### Private Apartment/Townhouse Vacancy Rates (%) by Unit Type (Greater Victoria)



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

- 
- 5 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA. CMHC's fall reports (released in October) are used in this report on the recommendation of CMHC, as the fall survey has been in place for over 30 years and therefore has an established track record, while the April survey has a less consistent history. The October survey also tends to be less impacted by seasonal trends.
- 6 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.
- 7 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.



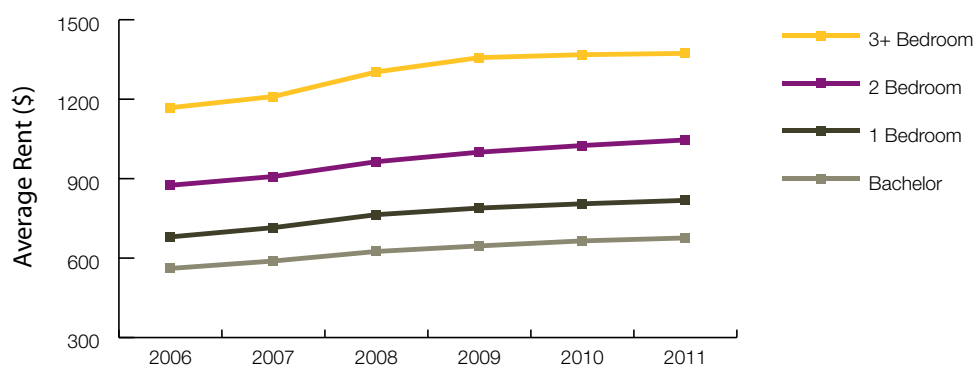
## Average Rent

*How much does it cost to rent in Greater Victoria?*

Despite an increase in rental vacancy, rents in Greater Victoria continued to increase in 2011.<sup>8</sup> From 2006 to 2011, rents increased 18-20% for each rental type. As we will see later, incomes for people on social assistance have not increased at this rate and individuals must make significantly more than the minimum wage to afford housing.

In 2011, the average rent for a bachelor apartment in Greater Victoria was \$676 (compared to \$665 in 2010). When the cost of an average two-bedroom apartment is compared across Canada, Victoria is the 5th most expensive place to rent (the same standing as 2010/11).<sup>9</sup>

**Private Apartment/Townhouse Average Rents (\$) by Unit Type (Greater Victoria)**



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

## Rental Market

Among Greater Victoria municipalities, those areas outside the City of Victoria have seen significant increases in vacancy rates for bachelor units - up 1.4 to 7.5 percentage points over 2010. While the West Shore, Oak Bay and Saanich/Central Saanich were all reporting 0.0% vacancy rates in 2010, these three municipalities and Esquimalt now have vacancy rates at or above the national average.<sup>10</sup>

However, the majority of social services that may utilize low income individuals (i.e. meal programs, drop-in centres) are in the City of Victoria. Inside the City of Victoria, vacancy rates for bachelor units have changed less dramatically (from no change to an increase of 1.0 percentage points).<sup>11</sup>

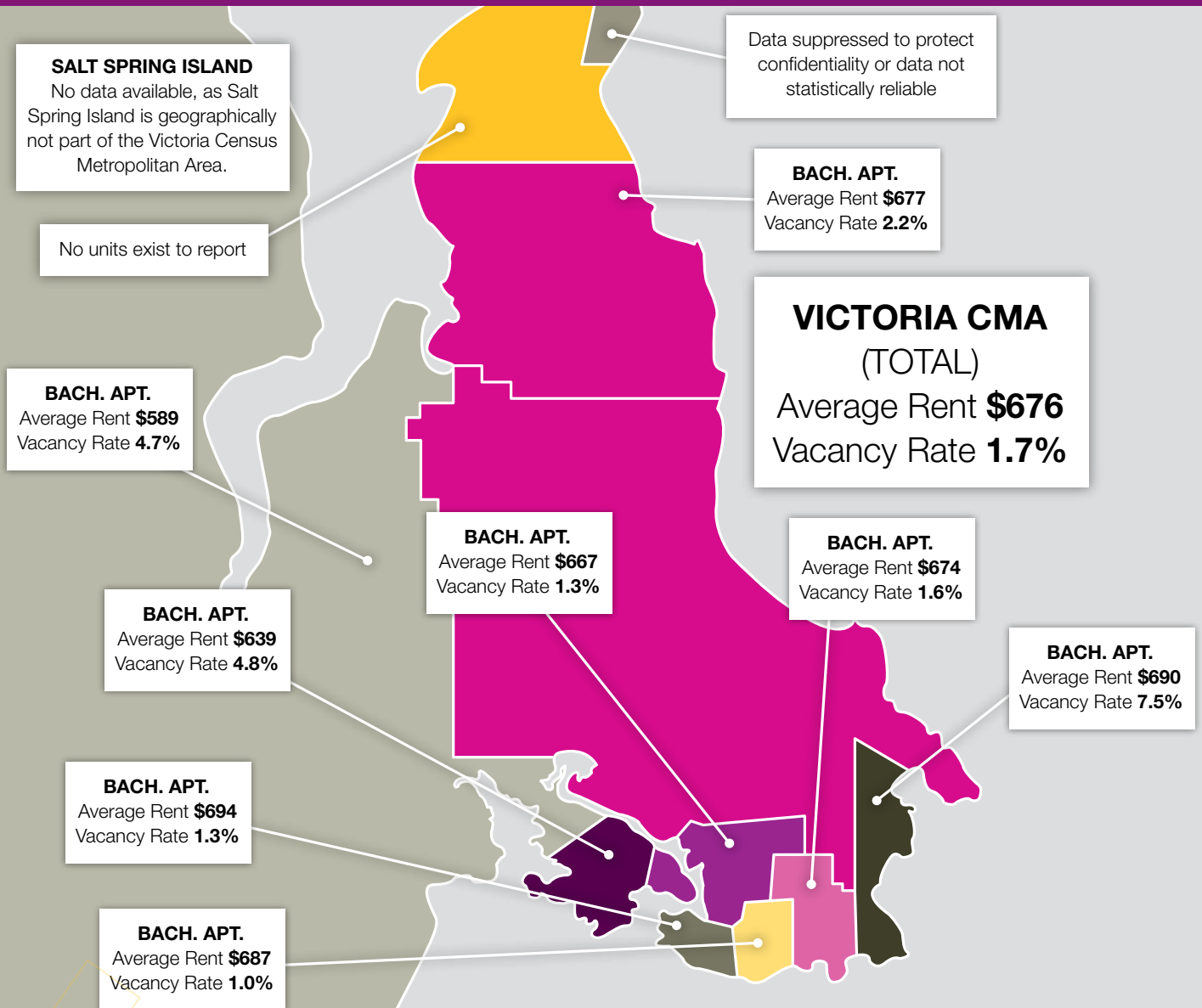
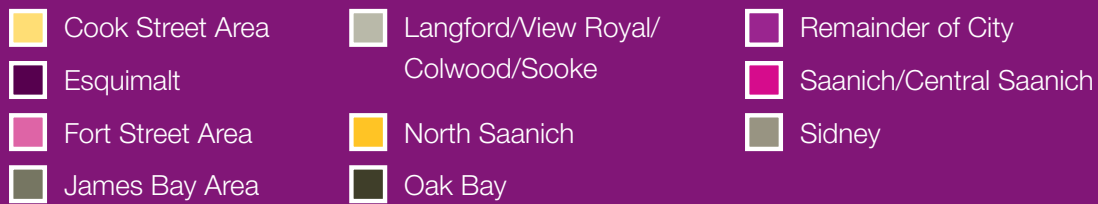
8 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

9 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

10 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

11 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

# Vacancy Rate and Average Rent



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.  
Based on Victoria zone map and data for bachelor units.

## Income

A key factor in ending homelessness is an income that is sufficient to access safe, affordable housing. Rent is considered affordable when households are not required to pay more than 30% of their before-tax income each month for housing that is in good repair and free of overcrowding.<sup>12</sup> In other words, people should be able to find housing that costs less than 30% of their gross income. If they are paying more, living in substandard housing or overcrowded situations, they are considered to be in core housing need and can be at risk of homelessness.

### The Living Wage for Families

*What does it cost for a family to live in Greater Victoria?*

In 2012, the hourly living wage required to maintain an adequate quality of life for a two-parent, two-child family in Greater Victoria is \$18.07. This is the hourly wage that both parents would have to make in order to cover the costs of living in Greater Victoria. Each parent would have to work 35 hours per week. Looking at the chart below, one can see how the living wage for a family has changed over the past six years.<sup>13</sup>

#### Living Wage for Families

Year	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Living Wage (Hourly)	15.63	16.39	17.02	17.31	18.03	18.07
Difference over previous year (%)		+4.9%*	+3.8%	+1.7%	+4.2%	+0.2%

Source: Community Social Planning Council. (2012). "Living Wage: Dialogue on the Real Costs of Living."

\*Note this increase is over a two year period, and averages 2.5% per year.

#### With this living wage, a family<sup>14</sup>:

CAN	CAN'T
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adequately feed, clothe and shelter their household	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save for their children's education
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maintain the health of family members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Afford to care for an elderly relative or a disabled family member
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participate in activities that are an ordinary part of community life	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service loan debts or credit card bills
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Receive up to two weeks paid time off for illness annually	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save for holidays
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Own a car and use public transit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Own a second car
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rent a home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save to purchase a home
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save for retirement

12 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

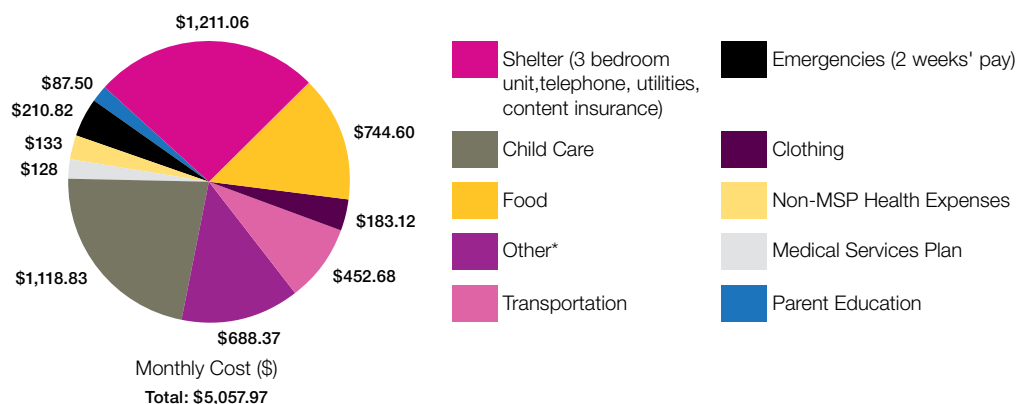
13 Community Social Planning Council. (2012). "Living Wage: Dialogue on the Real Costs of Living."

14 Community Social Planning Council. (2012). "Living Wage: Dialogue on the Real Costs of Living."

However, making a living wage is not a reality for many families in Greater Victoria. In Greater Victoria, “more than one out of four two-parent, two-children families (27.2%) earn an income that is less than required to sustain an adequate quality of life.”<sup>15</sup>

The minimum wage as of March 31, 2012 in BC is \$9.50.<sup>16</sup> This is \$8.57 below the living wage of \$18.07. Many jobs, even those requiring technical training and education, pay above minimum wage but still remain far below the living wage. For example, the most common hourly wage in 2009 for full-time early childhood educators and assistants in BC was \$16.46, \$0.56 below that year’s living wage. Similarly, the most frequent full-time hourly wage in 2009 for grocery clerks and store shelf stockers in BC was \$12.65, \$4.37 below that year’s living wage.<sup>17</sup>

#### Monthly Costs for a Family of Four in Greater Victoria



Source: Community Social Planning Council. (2012). “Living Wage: Dialogue on the Real Costs of Living”.

\*Other expense includes personal care items, household supplies and furnishings, small appliances, recreation, laundry, banking, computer, Internet, and children’s toys.

#### Basic Costs for Individuals

*What are basic costs for housing and food for a single individual living in Greater Victoria?*

The situation for single individuals living in Greater Victoria, especially those working for minimum wage or receiving social assistance, is not any better. Many individuals earning low incomes struggle to make ends meet. Covering the two most basic necessities – food and shelter – is a major challenge. Sometimes, just paying for housing means that food and other basic needs cannot be met.

After paying basic costs (housing and food), a single person on income assistance or earning minimum wage at a full time job would have little remaining for other costs of living including clothing and footwear, personal hygiene items, transportation, health-related expenses,

15 Community Social Planning Council. (2012). “Living Wage: Dialogue on the Real Costs of Living”.

16 Ministry of Labour, Citizens’ Services and Open Government. (2012). “Minimum Wage Factsheet.” <http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/facshs/min-wage.htm>. All data in this report is based on the 2011-12 fiscal year. Note that this represents the general minimum wage, and does not apply to all types of workers (i.e. liquor servers, etc.). Minimum wage will change as of May 1, 2012 to \$10.25 per hour.

17 BC Stats and Stats Canada. (2009). “BC Wage and Salary Survey: Provincial Estimates by Occupation.” Wage is the most frequent full-time hourly wage for given occupation.

household supplies and laundry, telephone and other emergency expenditures. There is little buffer to resist unexpected difficulties and there are no savings for the future. When this lack of a buffer is combined with individual factors such as an unexpected illness or family or personal crisis, the risk of homelessness is increased.

#### Monthly Cost: Shelter and Food for Single Individuals

Single Individual (male) - 2012	Income Assistance (IA) <sup>18</sup>	IA Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers	IA Disability	Minimum Wage
Income (\$)	662.79	710.71	963.72	1,385.33
Bachelor Apartment Median Rent (\$)	685.00	685.00	685.00	685.00
Average Monthly Cost of the National Nutritious Food Basket in the Vancouver Island Health Authority (\$)	293.35	293.35	293.35	293.65
Remainder for Monthly Expenses (\$)	-315.56	-267.64	-14.63	406.98

Sources:

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Affordability Criteria, Victoria CMA. Median rent for bachelor apartment/townhouse in Greater Victoria. Note that use of median rent in this calculation is consistent with the use of median rental costs in the calculation for the family living wage. Median rents are considered a better indicator of middle rental costs because they are not skewed by the extreme high end and low end of market units. Please note that median rental costs are slightly higher than average costs of a bachelor unit. An alternative rental cost estimate for a low-income threshold is the 25th percentile of the rent distribution. Statistics Canada's estimates of rental costs, based on the 2006 Census of Canada and Survey of Household Expenditures and updated to 2012 using the CPI rent component for Victoria, indicate that 25 percent of bachelor units rent for less than \$524 and 25 percent of one bedroom apartments rent for less than \$630, including all utility costs and the annualized cost of appliances. This does not include rented rooms in houses, rooming houses or monthly hotel room rentals. Income assistance rates include other available assistance for single persons: Christmas supplement, Federal GST Credit, BC Harmonized Sales Tax Credit, BC Climate Action Credit.

Minimum wage income calculations are based on an hourly wage of \$9.50 (as of April 1, 2012) working 35 hours per week. Note that this represents the general minimum wage, and does not apply to all types of workers (i.e. liquor servers, etc.). The calculation is after-taxes, and includes the GST credit, the BC Climate Action Tax Credit, the BC Harmonized Sales Tax credit, and the working income tax benefit. Minimum wage will change as of May 1, 2012 to \$10.25 per hour.

Dietitians of Canada. (2012). "The Cost of Eating in BC 2011." Rate is the cost of food for an adult male, 31-50. Adjusted for the Vancouver Island Health Authority and household size.

The income for individuals receiving income assistance has changed little since 2007. While this past year has brought some small changes in tax credits, rental and food costs, the realities of monthly income and expenses for individuals on income assistance have remained basically the same in 2011/12 as they were in 2010/11.

For those on any type of income assistance, the shelter portion for income assistance recipients is \$375.00, and median bachelor unit rental cost is \$685. Although some people may be able to find cheaper accommodation, the average rent paid by single people on

<sup>18</sup> Rates as of April 2007. Ministry of Social Development, 2012. Includes assistance rate and other available assistance for single persons: Christmas supplement, Federal GST Credit, BC Harmonized Sales Tax Credit, BC Climate Action Credit. Note that the temporary single rates (basic income assistance) are not intended to permanently replace full-time earnings from work, and requires diligent budgeting. In addition, clients are eligible for up to 70 special financial supplements (e.g. Community Volunteer supplement, special transportation supplements, medical supplements) and crisis grants are available for clients with emergency food, shelter, and other needs. These supplements and crisis grants are accessed by a large proportion of single clients each month. Depending on the type of assistance, other supports are available such as bus passes (PWD) and Schedule C benefits (dental and optical) (PWD). All Income Assistance recipients receive free MSP and Pharmacare coverage.

*An individual earning minimum wage would need to work a 55-hour work week in order to stay above the threshold of affordability, where 30% of their gross income would be spent on rent.*

income assistance in Greater Victoria is \$490.00, which is still more than the \$375 shelter allowance portion of income assistance.<sup>19</sup> Individuals are paying more than 30% of their income for rent leaving little for other necessities.

Although individuals earning minimum wage make slightly more income, living on minimum wage in Victoria still presents a challenge – when working full-time, an individual earning minimum wage will have \$406.98 left after rent and groceries to cover all remaining monthly expenses, including transportation to and from work. A bus pass, for example, costs \$85.00 per month, requiring approximately one-fifth of their remaining funds.<sup>20</sup>

As of March 31, 2012, BC's minimum wage is \$9.50 (up \$1.50 compared to March 31, 2011, when BC's minimum wage was ranked the lowest across Canada at \$8.00). That wage will increase to \$10.25 in May 2012, when it will be on par with Ontario's minimum wage (tied for third highest minimum wage nationally).<sup>21;22</sup>

For a single individual earning minimum wage (\$9.50 as of April 1, 2012), an affordable rent would be \$433.00. Again, the median rent cost for a bachelor apartment in Greater Victoria is \$685.00.<sup>23</sup> An individual earning minimum wage would need to work a 55-hour work week in order to stay above the threshold of affordability, where 30% of their gross income would be spent on rent.<sup>24</sup>

19 Ministry of Social Development. (2012). Estimate is based on data from April 2012.

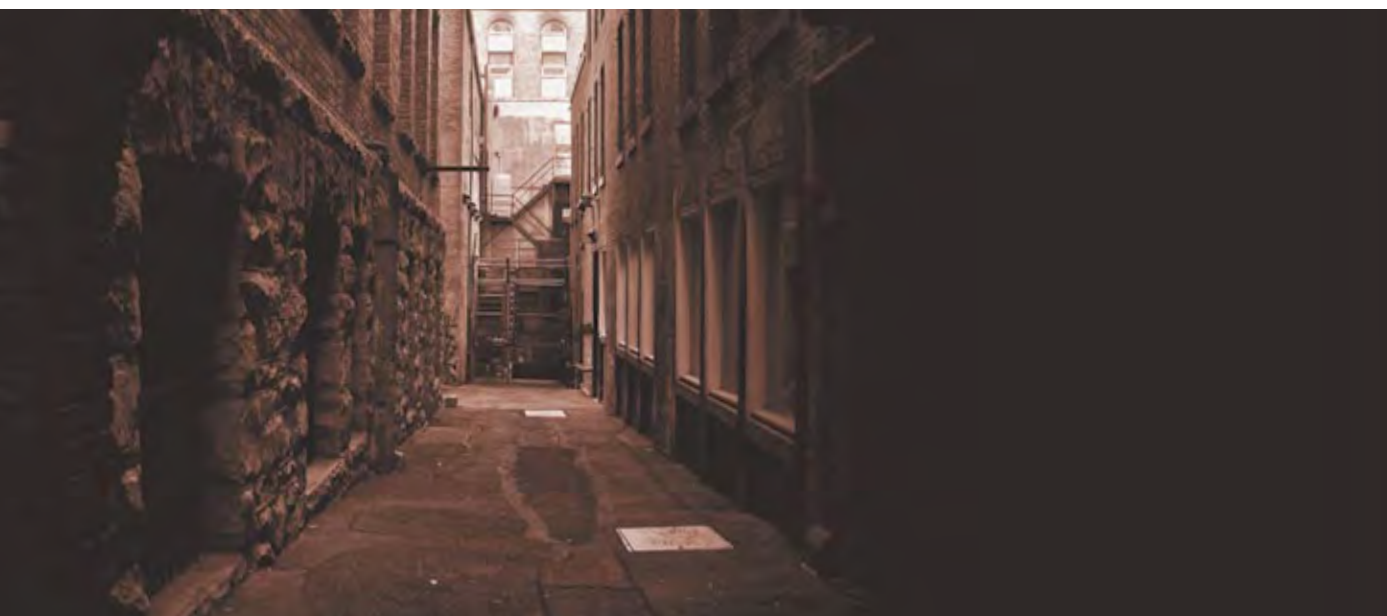
20 BC Transit. (2009). "Fares". Available at <<http://www.transitbc.com/regions/vic/fares/default.cfm>>.

21 Ministry of Labour, Citizens' Services and Open Government. (2012). "Minimum Wage Factsheet." Available at <<http://www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/factsheets/min-wage.htm>>.

22 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. (2012). "Current And Forthcoming Minimum Hourly Wage Rates For Experienced Adult Workers in Canada." Available at <<http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt1.aspx?lang=eng>>.

23 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Rental Market Report, Victoria CMA.

24 Calculation based on \$9.50, the minimum wage as of April 1, 2012; and, the median rental cost of a bachelor unit in Greater Victoria, \$685.00.





# The Challenge in Greater Victoria

Having investigated some of the contributors, or causes of homelessness, we turn to examine indicators that can help us determine the scope of challenge in the region. How many people are at risk of homelessness and how many are currently experiencing homelessness? This question presents a number of challenges, the first of which is the nature of homelessness itself.

Earlier in this report, we discussed how the definition of homelessness and housing exclusion includes a variety of situations individuals may face, and those situations are fluid as the circumstances of the individuals facing homelessness change. Consequently, it is difficult to place an exact number on those threatened by or currently experiencing homelessness in Victoria. However, we can examine a variety of data from different sources which provides us with strong indicators as to the approximate size of the challenge. Different indicators can show us how many individuals are at risk of homelessness and how many are actually experiencing homelessness.

## At Risk of Homelessness

### Core Housing Need

A household is in core housing need if their housing requires major repair, is overcrowded or uses more than 30% of the household's income for rent/mortgage costs.<sup>25</sup>

When core housing need was last calculated in 2006, 12.8% of Greater Victoria households were in core housing need with renters five times more likely to be in core housing need than owners. Core housing need was higher than provincial averages among Aboriginal and lone-parent family households and in four municipalities in Greater Victoria (Salt Spring Island, City of Victoria, Southern Gulf Islands and Esquimalt).<sup>26</sup>

Based on analysis by BC Non-Profit Housing Association, core housing need for renters in Greater Victoria is projected to increase by 19% to 27% over the next 25 years, at an average annual increase of 110-154 households per year.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2009).

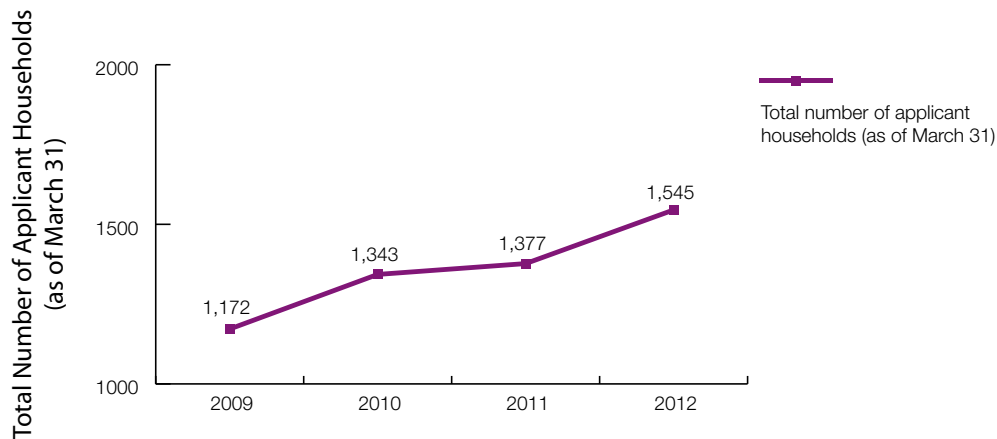
26 Pauly, B. M., Thompson, D., Kerr Suthin, M., & Jackson, N. (2011). *Hungry and Homeless in Greater Victoria: 2011 Report on Housing and Supports*. Victoria, B.C.: Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

27 BC Non-Profit Housing Association. (2012). *Our Home, Our Future: Projections of Rental Housing Demand and Core Housing Need (Capital Regional District to 2036)*.

## Housing Registry

Although not all applicant households on the Housing Registry are unhoused, this indicator does give a good picture of the number of households in need of subsidized housing and those who may be at risk of homelessness. On March 31, 2012, there were 1,545 applicant households<sup>28</sup> in Greater Victoria on the Housing Registry.<sup>29</sup> This represents a 12.2% growth over the number of applicant households as of March 31, 2011. Applicant households in Greater Victoria account for 11% of the total for BC.<sup>30</sup>

### Housing Registry Applicant Households Residing in the Capital Regional District, as of March 31 of Each Year



Source: BC Housing, Operations Branch, Housing Services Reporting, 4th Quarter Activity - March 31, 2009-2012. Housing Registry statistics are based on a snapshot of those on the waitlist on the last day of the fiscal year.

28 Applicant households are those households with active (live) or on hold status who applied to the Housing Registry for public housing and private market rent supplements. Statistics are based on a snapshot for those on the registry on the last day of the fiscal year.

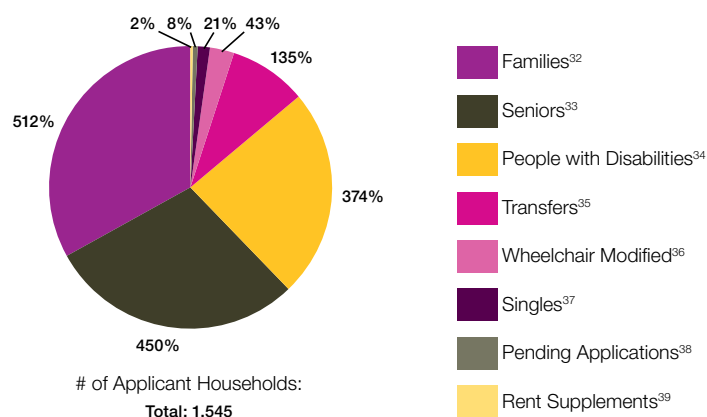
29 The Housing Registry is a centralized database of applicant households' information and housing providers coordinated by BC Housing. It allows individuals to apply for subsidized housing using one application form. (BC Housing, 2007. "Glossary.") Not all households in need of housing are represented on the Housing Registry, and not all housing providers participate in the Registry.

30 BC Housing, Operations Branch, Housing Services Reporting, 4th Quarter Activity - March 31, 2011-2012. Housing Registry statistics are based on a snapshot of those on the Registry on the last day of the fiscal year.



The volume of applicant households on the Housing Registry is an indicator of the growing need for subsidized housing in Greater Victoria. Given the current rental market rates this is perhaps to be expected. Of those applicant households in Greater Victoria, the majority (86%) were families, people with disabilities and seniors.<sup>31</sup>

#### Housing Registry Applicant Households Residing the Capital Region District by Type, as of March 31, 2012



Source: BC Housing, Operations Branch, Housing Services Reporting, 4th Quarter Activity - March 31, 2012. Housing Registry statistics are based on a snapshot of those on the registry on the last day of the fiscal year.

31 BC Housing, Operations Branch, Housing Services Reporting, 4th Quarter Activity - March 31, 2012. Housing Registry statistics are based on a snapshot of those on the Registry on the last day of the fiscal year.

32 Family: A minimum of two people, including one dependent child.

33 Seniors: One or two persons, with at least one person who is 55 years or older.

34 People with Disabilities: A single person who can live independently and qualifies for a disability pension, or can't work because of a disability, and is under 55 years of age.

35 Transfer: Tenants wishing to transfer from one social housing unit to another.

36 Wheelchair Modified: At least one applicant requires a wheelchair modified unit. May be family, senior or person with disabilities.

37 Singles: Singles and couples under age 55 who do not meet the definition of people with disabilities.

38 Pending: Applicants having Pending status.

39 Rent Supplement: At least one applicant qualifies to be considered for a private market rent supplement (i.e. live in areas of the province where there is limited or no subsidized housing, or have a unique need that cannot

## Food Bank Use

*Who is using food banks, how often and what does this indicate?*

Many individuals are simply unable to purchase all the food they need because of the realities of their income situation and the inflexibility of income and rental costs. Because food costs are flexible, people may use food banks and seek out meal programs as a result. When trying to manage limited income, families and individuals are often forced to choose between necessities: groceries or utility bills, rent payments or food on the table.

## BC Food Banks

Across BC, food bank use decreased slightly between 2010 and 2011 (down 4.4%). However, when evaluating the overall trend in food bank use since 2008, the number of individuals assisted by food banks in BC has increased by 15.5% since 2008. In 2011:<sup>40</sup>

- 6.9% of households accessing food banks across BC were doing so for the very first time
- 45.1% were adult women (up 6.9 percentage points over 2010)
- 7.2% were seniors (up 2.2 percentage points over 2010)
- 14.7% were Aboriginal persons (consistent over 2010)

Across BC, 10% of food banks ran out of food in March 2011 (down 5.5 percentage points over March 2010). The most common measure taken as a result was to cut back on hamper size (38.2% of food banks that ran out of food did this).

Almost three quarters of BC food banks offer five days or less worth of groceries and the majority are accessible to clients once per month.<sup>41</sup>

## Greater Victoria Food Banks

For Greater Victoria Food Banks, the scene is similar – a slight decrease in the number of individuals served in 2011 as compared to 2010, but an overall increase when comparing to 2008.<sup>42</sup>

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be accommodated in existing subsidized housing). May be family, senior or person with disabilities.

40 Food Banks Canada. (2011). Hunger Count 2011: British Columbia Summary of Findings.

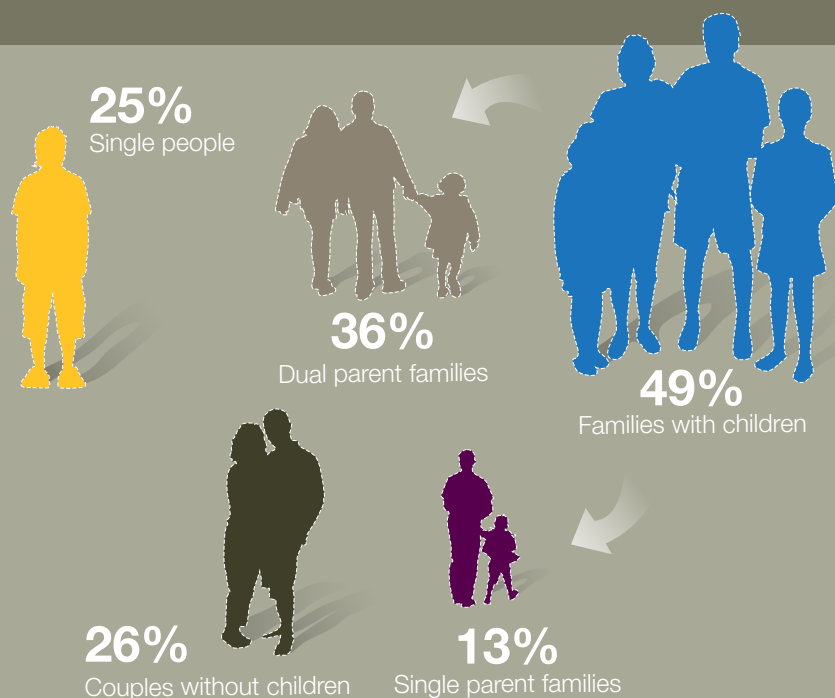
41 Food Banks Canada. (2010). Hunger Count 2010: British Columbia Summary of Findings

42 Food Banks Canada. (2011). Hunger Count 2011. This data is based on information from the Food Banks Canada Hunger Count 2011. These food banks represent the majority of grocery programs in Greater Victoria but may not capture all of them. Data is collected in March of each year from food banks across Canada to produce the annual Hunger Count report. March is a typical month for food bank use. Totals include only those assisted by grocery/food hamper programs, and does not include those individuals served by prepared meal programs (e.g. soup kitchens).

# Greater Victoria Food Banks

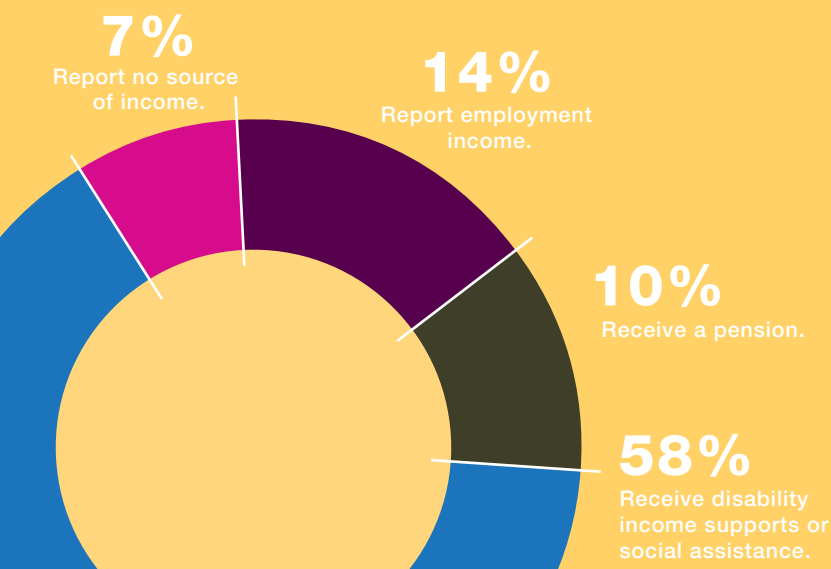
March 2011

## Households Accessing Greater Victoria Food Banks by Family Type



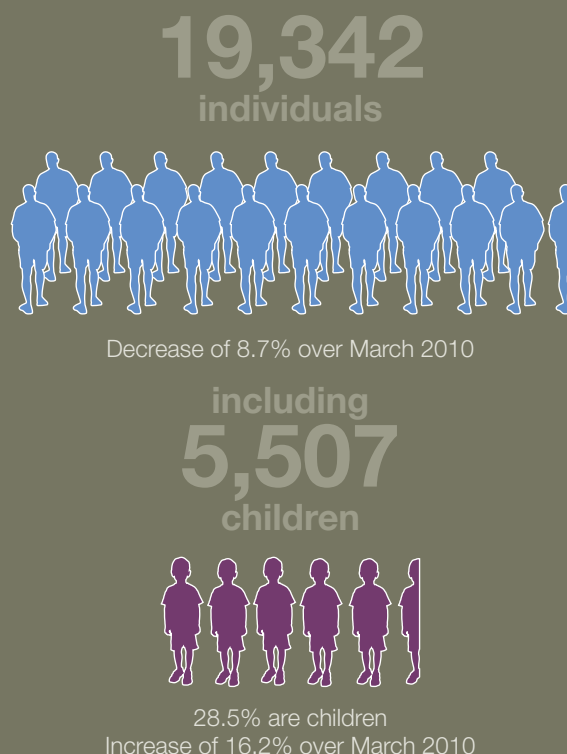
**CHALLENGE** Almost 3/4 of BC food banks offer five days or less worth of groceries. The majority are accessible to clients once per month.

## Households Accessing Greater Victoria Food Banks by Income Source



This data is based on information from the Food Banks Canada Hunger Count 2011. Agencies included represent a significant portion of food services in Greater Victoria, but do not capture all of them. Data refers to agencies providing a variety of food services, including hampers/grocery programs, hot meal programs, snacks, and other food services. Data based on the month of March 2011.

## Number of Individuals Accessing Food Banks in Greater Victoria



**Hamper size varies according to the number of individuals eating from it; contents vary by donations.**

Sample hamper based on a three-person family:<sup>43</sup>

1 box of cereal • 1 bag of rice • 1 bag of pasta • 1 box macaroni and cheese • 2 litres of milk per child • 2 jars of spaghetti sauce • 1 pound of margarine • 2 boxes of crackers • 3 cans of canned fruit • 2 cans of canned vegetables (i.e. beets) • 2 cans of canned beans • 2 cans of crushed tomatoes • 1 can of Nourish soup • 1 tub of peanut butter • 3 cans of mixed beans • 2 cans of tuna • 2 packages of four muffins • 2 cans of soup • 2 cans of canned pasta meal • 1 package of ground beef • 2 bags of assorted vegetables (i.e. carrots, onions, potatoes) • 1 can of coffee • 2 bags of snacks (i.e. granola bars, fruit sauce) • 1 box of tissues

<sup>43</sup> Mustard Seed Food Bank. (Spring 2012). Street Beat: May 2012 Newsletter. Hamper contents depend on availability, so contents do change according to what is available at the food bank.

## Experiencing Homelessness

While many individuals are at risk for homelessness, there are many people who are currently experiencing the realities of having no permanent place to call home. Looking at the use of emergency shelters over the last year and a snapshot of individuals in temporary accommodation on one night tells us something about the numbers of those individuals who are currently in emergency shelters and provisionally accommodated.

### Emergency Shelter Use

#### Unique Individuals Using Emergency Shelters

Whether due to a crisis, eviction, job loss, abuse, inadequate housing or a variety of other reasons, at least **1,617 unique individuals** used an emergency shelter at least once in the past year. This figure is based on data from five Greater Victoria emergency shelter programs (4 adult, 1 youth).<sup>44</sup> Approximately 1,668 unique individuals used these emergency shelters in 2010/11.<sup>45</sup> This does not include individuals who were staying with family or friends, couch surfing, in transitional housing or sleeping outside. While the number looks similar to last year, it is important to remember that shelters have only so much capacity to shelter people and our emergency shelters are turning people away nightly, as detailed below.

#### Emergency Shelter Occupancy<sup>46</sup>

In 2011/12, emergency shelters funded through BC Housing's Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) had an occupancy rate of 111%.<sup>47</sup> The primary reason for the occupancy rate exceeding 100% in 2011/12 was due to the mat program implemented at Rock Bay Landing emergency shelter.<sup>48</sup> Mats are provided on the floor in the lounge area and can accommodate up to 40 people nightly on the floor in a communal space.<sup>49</sup>

44 These five shelters represent approximately 79% of all emergency shelter beds available in Victoria on any given night, as of March 31, 2012. Includes four adult shelter programs (three year-round shelters (Next Steps, Sandy Merriman, Rock Bay Landing emergency shelter beds) and one seasonal mat program (Rock Bay Landing seasonal mat program) run by Victoria Cool Aid Society, the largest provider of adult shelter beds in Greater Victoria; and, one seasonal mat program for youth, run by Beacon Community Services. One major shelter was not included because of data comparability issues.

45 This figure has been revised from last year and is a result of improvements in data reporting. The current number is based on the number of unique shelter clients with duplicates removed.

46 Shelter occupancy is a measure of how full emergency shelter sites were over the course of the year. Occupancy rates are based on BC Housing's Emergency Shelter Program sites, which include: Out of the Rain Night Shelter, Addictions and Rehabilitation Centre, Next Steps, Sandy Merriman House, and Rock Bay Landing. (Streetlink was included in 2010/11, but not in 2011/12, as the program moved to Rock Bay Landing during the 2010/11 year).

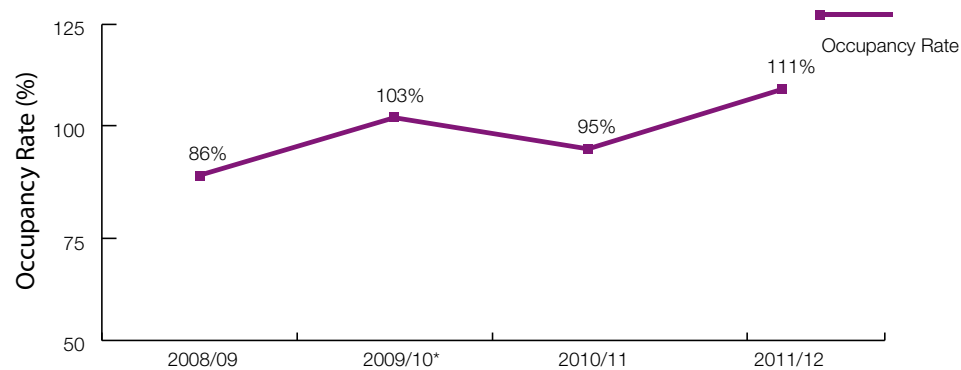
47 BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012. Total occupancy rates were over 100% primarily due to extra 40 mats at Rock Bay Landing since May 21, 2011.

48 Occupancy rates are above 100% in 2009/10 and 2011/12 because mats were not recorded as bed nights available (denominator), but were recorded as bed night stays (numerator) in the Homelessness Services System. In 2009/10, these were EWR mats; in 2010/11, they were the additional 40 seasonal mats at Rock Bay Landing.

49 These 40 additional mats at Rock Bay Landing ended March 31, 2012.



### Occupancy Rate in Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) Shelters



Source: BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012.

\*Total occupancy rates went down at the shelters in Victoria CMA between 2009/10 and 2010/11 because in 2009/10, some Extreme Weather (season beds) were being reported in the HSS database instead of the Extreme Weather Response database. This issue was corrected in 2010/11.

On any given night in Greater Victoria, there are approximately 160 emergency shelter beds and 15 transitional shelter beds available. Between October and April, an additional 70 seasonal emergency shelter mats (30 for youth, 40 for adults) are available on a nightly basis.<sup>50</sup>

### Emergency Shelter Turnaways

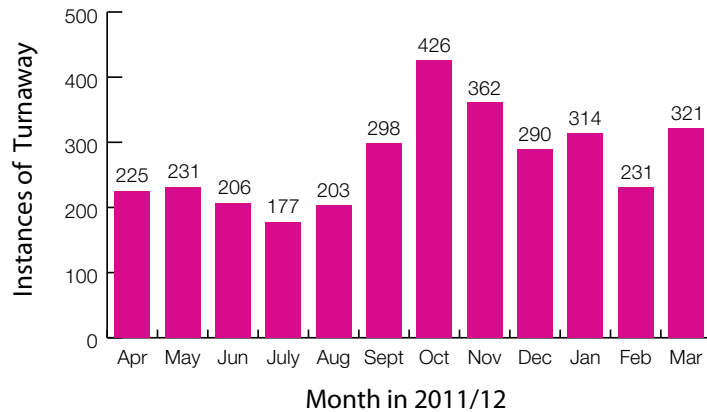
When emergency shelters are over capacity and there are no beds available, they are forced to turn away individuals. At Rock Bay Landing emergency shelter, there were at least 3,284 instances of turnaway in 2011/12 because there was no bed available.<sup>51</sup> This is only a portion of the total instances of turnaway from Rock Bay Landing, and it does not represent any other instances of turnaway from other emergency shelters or facilities in Greater Victoria.

On average, there were 274 instances of turnaway per month from Rock Bay Landing because there was no bed available.

50 These totals are based on the 2012 Facility Count conducted by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and the Centre for Addictions Research of BC. Totals do not include Emergency Weather Protocol mats.

51 Victoria Cool Aid Society. (2012). Crystal Reports turnaway crosstab report based on Homeless Individuals and Families Information System. There are many reasons why an individual may be turned away from a shelter, including: 3 P.M. turnaway, barred, difficult to serve, has other housing, highly intoxicated, ineligible for service (too young, too old, other), or no appropriate beds available. This figure represents only a portion of the total turnaways from Rock Bay Landing, as it represents 3 P.M. turnaways only - individuals for whom no emergency shelter bed was available in the morning, who returned at 3:00 P.M. that same day and still could not be assigned an emergency shelter bed.

### Instances of Turnaway from Rock Bay Landing Due to No Bed Available at the 3 P.M. Check-In



Source: Victoria Cool Aid Society, (2012), Crystal Reports turnaway crosstab report based on Homeless Individuals and Families Information System.

3 P.M. turnaways are those instances where there was no emergency shelter bed available for an individual in the morning, and the individual returned at 3 P.M. that same day and there was still no bed available. Being turned away at 3 P.M. likely means that the individual would have nowhere else to go, as any other emergency shelters will likely also be full for the night by that time. 3 P.M. turnaways are only a proportion of the total number of instances of turnaway from one emergency shelter.

These two pieces of evidence – 111% occupancy and 3,284 instances of turnaway over the course of the year – demonstrate that the scope of the problem is beyond what we see on our streets or in our emergency shelters. When emergency shelters operate over capacity and are forced to turn people away, it highlights that the need for housing and supports is not being met.



## Profile of Emergency Shelter Program Clients in Greater Victoria

A range of individuals stay in emergency shelters in Greater Victoria – the following charts lay out what we know about those who use emergency shelters:

### Profile of Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) Clients in Greater Victoria By Gender and Age Group<sup>52</sup>

Indicators	Criteria (% of population)	Fiscal Year			
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Gender	Male	71%	72%	72%	74%
	Female	29%	28%	28%	26%
	Other	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%
Age Group	19 - 36 Years	39%	38%	42%	41%
	37 - 55 Years	53%	51%	48%	47%
	56 Years and Older	8%	11%	10%	12%

Source: BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012<sup>53</sup>

### Profile of Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) Clients in Greater Victoria by Income Source

Indicators	Criteria (% of population)	Fiscal Year			
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Income Source	None	17%	14%	21%	27%
	Employment	14%	15%	14%	13%
	Employment Insurance (EI)	3%	4%	5%	3%
	Income Assistance (IA)	33%	36%	31%	26%
	IA - Persons with Persistent Multiple Barrier	5%	5%	5%	4%
	IA - Persons with Disabilities	27%	26%	18%	20%
	Canada Pension Plan (CPP)	6%	4%	6%	7%
	Old Age Security (OAS)	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	1%
	Other	7%	7%	6%	6%

Source: BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012

19% of emergency shelter clients self-identify as Aboriginal (consistent within four percentage points over the past four years). Comparatively, 3% of Greater Victoria's population is Aboriginal.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> BC Housing Emergency Shelter program has a mandate to serve adults, therefore no youth (18 and under) are represented in these figures. Emergency shelter refers to Emergency Shelter program beds only.

<sup>53</sup> BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012. Seasonal and Extreme Weather Response mats are reported separately.

<sup>54</sup> BC Statistics. (2010). 2006 Census Profile, Capital.

45% of emergency shelter clients self-identify as having addictions (down 13 percentage points over 2010/11). 40% of emergency shelter clients self-identify as having a disability (down four percentage points over 2010/11). 42% of emergency shelter clients self-identify as having mental health conditions (down three percentage points over 2010/11).<sup>55</sup>

People in emergency shelters are often in need of primary care, mental health, harm reduction and addictions services. Yet, previous research has shown that such services are often difficult to access because of barriers like stigma, the need to meet competing demands for food and shelter, lack of transportation and access to safe and appropriate services. Since 2008, lack of needle exchange services due to closure of Victoria's only fixed site needle exchange has meant decreased access to harm reduction services and increased rates of needle sharing and risk of HIV and Hepatitis C.<sup>56;57</sup> Access to detoxification and treatment services may be hampered by availability and wait times.

It is important to remember that not everyone who is homeless or in need of housing stays in an emergency shelter. Some groups (particularly families, women and youth), often do not stay in shelters because of safety concerns, specific restrictions (for example, no pets allowed or the inability to stay together as a family) and for other reasons.

In addition to year-round emergency shelters and seasonal emergency shelters (open fall to spring of each year)<sup>58</sup>, there are Extreme Weather Response (EWR - known as Extreme Weather Protocol in Greater Victoria) mats that open only during extreme weather conditions. These EWR mats are typically on the floor of a large room in a basement or hall. Clients accessing EWR mats in 2011/12 are 91% male (down three percentage points over 2010/11) and 9% female.<sup>59</sup>

### Facility Count – One Night Only

While emergency shelters can accommodate about 160 people per night throughout the year, there are an additional group of people who are vulnerable to homelessness because they are provisionally accommodated. This means that individuals or families may have accommodation for a temporary period of time, like transitional housing, but who do not have their own home or security of tenure. To better understand the scope of housing need in Greater Victoria, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness collaborated with the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research to conduct a one night only (point-in-time) count of individuals staying in temporary accommodation on the night of February 8, 2012.<sup>60</sup>

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55 BC Housing. (2011, 2012). Homelessness Services System.

56 MacNeil, J. and Pauly, B. (2010). Impact: a case study examining the closure of a large urban fixed needle exchange in Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 7(11).

57 Isvins, A. et al. (2012). An examination of injection drug use trends in Victoria and Vancouver, BC after the closure of Victoria's only fixed-site needle and syringe program. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 23.

58 Including a seasonal shelter program targeted for youth 25 and under.

59 BC Housing, Extreme Weather Response Database, 2012.

60 There are a total of 93 beds and 14 units in Greater Victoria designated for youth.

A point-in-time count estimate captures the number of people who are emergency sheltered and provisionally accommodated on one specific day in the year. Point-in-time counts are considered under-estimates of people in need of permanent, affordable housing because they reflect the capacity of the community to shelter people on one night of the year. They are a measure of those who are emergency sheltered and provisionally accommodated. They do not include individuals who are sleeping outdoors, couch surfing or living in overcrowded or inadequate accommodation.<sup>61</sup>

A total of 74 facilities participated in this point-in-time count on February 8, 2012. Of those facilities, 56 were located in the City of Victoria (including all six emergency shelter sites). Last year 66 facilities were counted, and as a result of the additional facilities captured in 2012, we have increased our ability to capture number of people in need of housing. However, it is critical to remember that the Facility Count is only on one night of the year and reflects our capacity to shelter people.

When facilities participating in the facility count have occupancy rates above 90%, and when people are being turned away on the night of the count, it points to the fact that the scope of the problem is beyond what we see in facilities and that the need for permanent, affordable housing has not necessarily stabilized.

Facilities were full on the night of the count: emergency shelters at 93% occupancy, extreme weather protocol (Salt Spring Island only)<sup>62</sup> at 84% occupancy, seasonal emergency mats at 96% occupancy and transitional housing at 93% occupancy.

27% (39) of adults in emergency shelters were women, 40% (138) of adults in transitional housing were women and 39% (101) of adults in hotels/motels were women. Emergency shelters are more likely to be accessed by men. Transitional houses and hotel/motels are more likely to be serving women. This is not surprising, as women and youth often do not feel safe in emergency shelters.

The facility count was completed in both 2011 and 2012. There were 1,205 individuals counted in 2012 – compared to 2011, in 2012 we counted 118 more sheltered people and 56 fewer turnaways, for a total change of +62 individuals.

Breaking down the facility count totals according to age grouping, there were 967 adults enumerated (as compared to 894 in 2011); 89 youth counted (as compared to 87 youth in 2011); and 149 children counted (as compared to 162 in 2011).

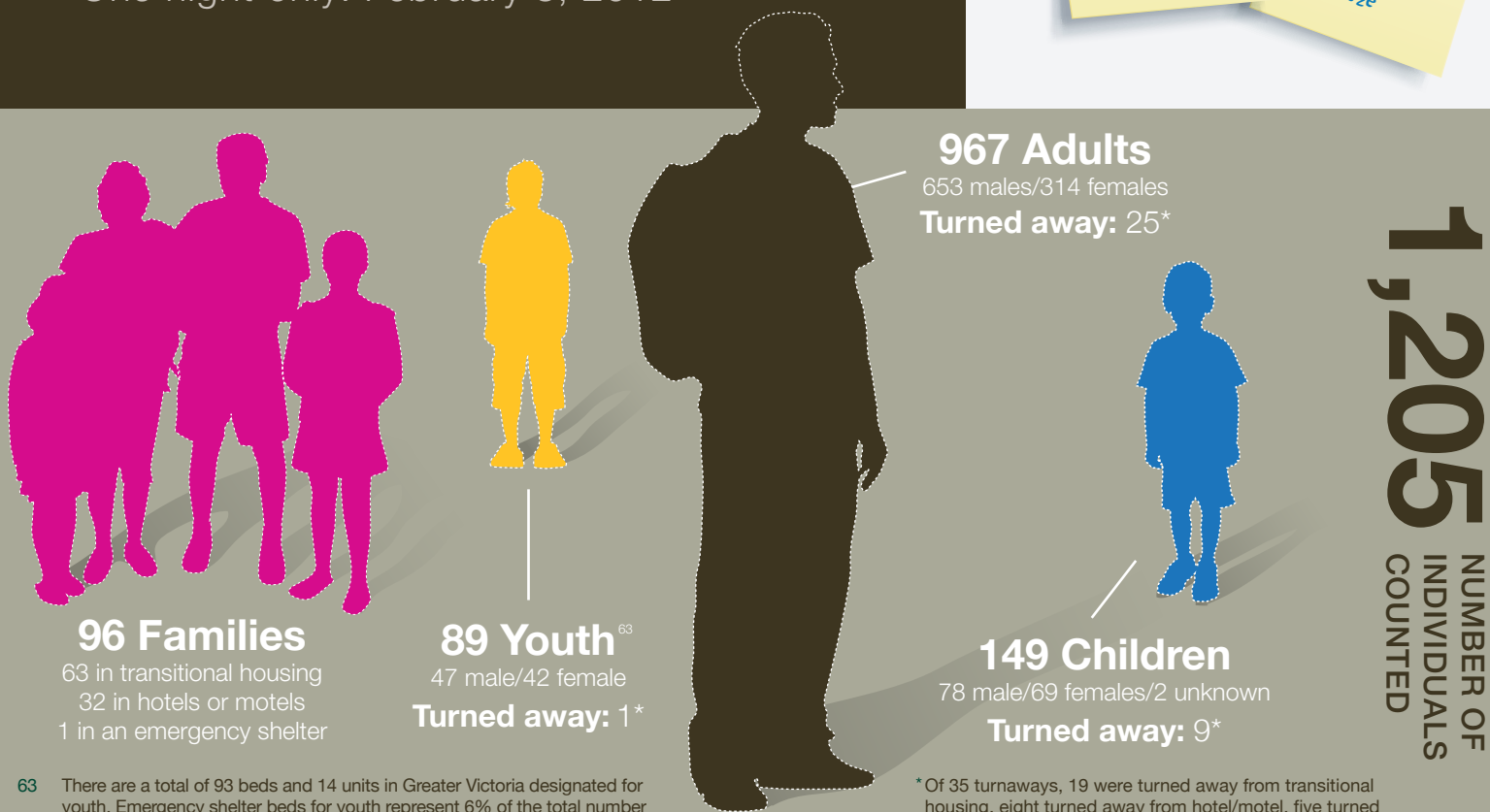
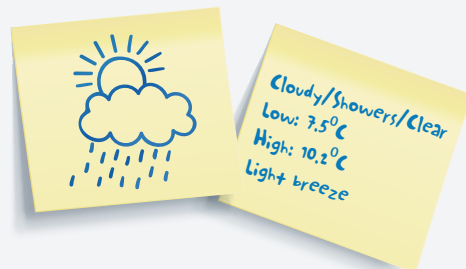
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61 The Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol was not activated on the night of the facility count. The Salt Spring Island Extreme Weather Protocol was activated, so the individuals enumerated on EWP mats represent the EWP facility that was open on Salt Spring Island.

62 The majority of youth enumerated in 2012 were in seasonal emergency shelter mats (90% occupancy) and transitional housing (93% occupancy). There are a total of 93 beds and 14 units in Greater Victoria designated for youth. Emergency shelter beds for youth represent 6% of the total number of emergency shelter beds. Transitional housing beds for youth represent 12% of all transitional housing beds.

# Facility Count

One night only: February 8, 2012



<sup>63</sup> There are a total of 93 beds and 14 units in Greater Victoria designated for youth. Emergency shelter beds for youth represent 6% of the total number of emergency shelter beds. Transitional housing beds for youth represent 12% of all transitional housing beds.

\*Of 35 turnaways, 19 were turned away from transitional housing, eight turned away from hotel/motel, five turned away from seasonal emergency mats, and three turned away from emergency shelters.



**1,170** TOTAL SHELTERED

## Types of Facilities

(74 facilities in total)

\* The Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol was not activated on the night of the facility count. The Salt Spring Island Extreme Weather Protocol was activated, so the individuals enumerated on EWP mats represent the EWP facility that was open on Salt Spring Island only.



These individuals in the 2012 count were in 96 families, compared to 79 families enumerated in 2011.

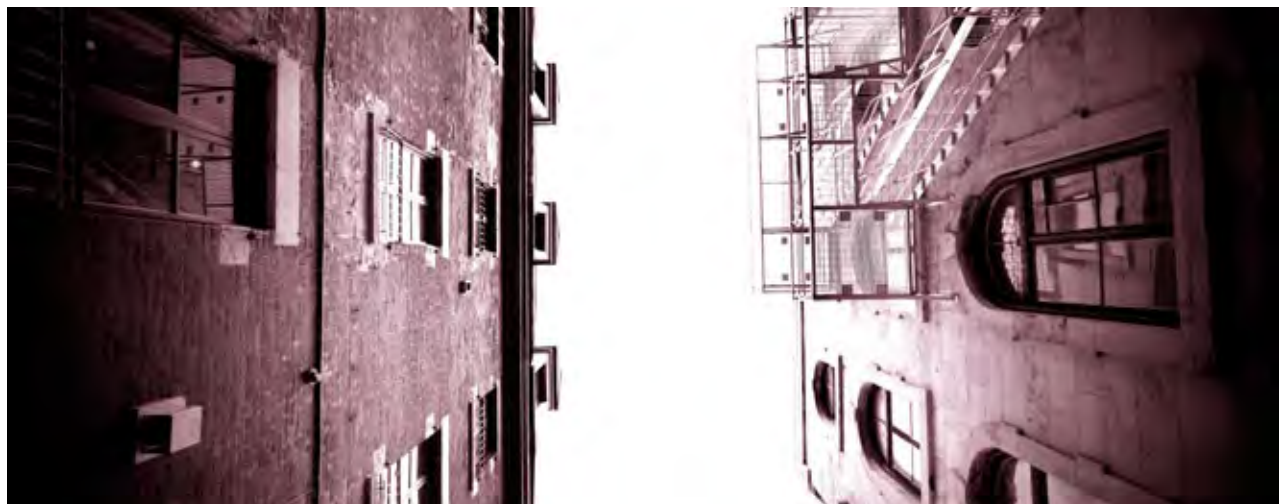
#### Total Enumerated in the 2012 Facility Count

2011 and 2012 Facility Counts	Number Of Individuals Enumerated (2011) <sup>64</sup>	Number Of Individuals Enumerated (2012)
Emergency Shelter	153	150
Extreme Weather Protocol <sup>65</sup>	n/a	21
Seasonal Emergency Shelter	29	67 <sup>66</sup>
Transitional Housing	516	500
Hotel/Motel	251	293
Treatment or Rehab	53	54
Other	50	85
Total Sheltered	1,052	1,170
Total Turnaways	91	35
Total Enumerated	1,143	1,205

Source: Facility Count, 2012. Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and Centre for Addictions Research of BC.

When looking at the breakdown across facility types, there is a similar story in 2012 as in 2011. Although the increase between 2011 and 2012 is small, it does not necessarily demonstrate that we have stemmed the flow of individuals who are emergency sheltered or provisionally accommodated; rather, it indicates that we have reached capacity in facilities providing temporary accommodation.

*The Facility Count reflects our capacity to shelter people in need of safe and appropriate housing and is an underestimate of those in need of housing.*



64 Due to better reporting and definitional consistency in 2012, data in the 2011 facility count has been re-evaluated and breakdowns may not be consistent with earlier reporting.

65 The Victoria Extreme Weather Protocol and the Salt Spring Island Extreme Weather Protocol were not activated on the night of the 2011 count.

66 The change between years reflects a change in capacity – put simply, 40 more seasonal mats were available in 2012 as compared to 2011. In 2011, 29 individuals were enumerated in a program with 30 mats. In 2012, 67 individuals were enumerated in two programs with 70 mats total.

# Community Response to Homelessness

The data discussed so far in this report shows that significant work still needs to be done in order for Greater Victoria to fully address the challenge of ending homelessness. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many people in our region have been housed or prevented from becoming homeless through new subsidized housing units, provision of rent supplements and other programming.

## Subsidized Housing Units

Subsidized housing units are operated by BC Housing or non-profit housing providers, including Pacifica Housing Advisory Association, Victoria Cool Aid Society and others. Tenants in subsidized housing units do pay rent. Their rent is often set at 30% of the household's income, or may be a flat rental cost.

The average monthly tenant rent contributions in BC Housing's non-profit and directly managed subsidized units (as of March 31, 2012) ranged from \$320 (for tenants in units designated for individuals at risk of homelessness or formerly homeless), to \$540 (for low-income families)<sup>67</sup>, to \$1,028 (for frail seniors in units that included meals and other supports).<sup>68</sup>

## New Subsidized Housing

In 2011/12, the following new BC Housing non-profit and directly managed subsidized units came into operation<sup>69</sup>:

- 95 new units for individuals who are at the risk of homelessness, or formerly homeless, including 23 units at Swift House, 36 units at Queen's Manor and 36 units at Olympic Vista Apartments
- 13 new units for individuals with special needs
- 54 new units for low income families, including units at Loreen Place and Ker Avenue

In 2011/12, four units designated for Special Needs and six units designated for Independent Seniors no longer had a financial relationship with BC Housing.<sup>70</sup>

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67 Excluding the Rental Assistance Program.

68 BC Housing, Housing Connections, March 31, 2012.

69 BC Housing, Central Property System, March 31 2012. Number of new units counts the number of units created during the fiscal year based on operating start date. Total does not include the Homeless Sheltered designation. These units are primarily emergency shelter beds and provide temporary accommodation for 30 days or less. Total also does not include any units that came into operation that are not affiliated with or not funded by BC Housing.

70 BC Housing, Central Property System, March 31 2012. Number of units deactivated counts the number of units that are no longer counted because the agreement between BC Housing and the housing provider expired or terminated during the fiscal year based on the status change date.

There were 152 net new BC Housing subsidized housing units created in Greater Victoria in 2011/12.

The chart below tracks BC Housing's new subsidized housing units<sup>71</sup> and deactivated subsidized housing units<sup>72</sup> over the past three years. Since March 31, 2009:

- 162 new units have been created for individuals who are at risk or homelessness or formerly homeless
- A total of two net new units have been created for persons with special needs
- No new units have been created specifically designated for Aboriginal persons or Frail Seniors
- 20 units for Independent Seniors have been deactivated
- A total of 101 net new units have been created for low income families (excluding Rental Assistance Program rent supplements)

**Number of New and Deactivated Units Administered by BC Housing by Target Client Group in the Capital Regional District<sup>73</sup>**

Client Group	March 31, 2010		March 31, 2011		March 31, 2012	
	# of New Units	# of Units Deactivated	# of New Units	# of Units Deactivated	# of New Units	# of Units Deactivated
Homeless Housed (Including Homeless Rent Supplements) <sup>74</sup>	0	0	67	0	95	0
Special Needs	13	4	0	16	13	4
Aboriginals	0	0	0	0	0	0
Frail Seniors	0	0	0	0	0	0
Independent Seniors (Excluding SAFER)	0	14	0	0	0	6
Low Income Families (Excluding RAP)	69	46	24	0	54	0
Total <sup>75</sup>	82	64	91	16	162	10
<b>Net New Units</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>75</b>		<b>152</b>	

Source: BC Housing, Central Property System, March 31 of 2010, 2011 and 2012 (excluding units from homeless sheltered designation).

<sup>71</sup> Number of new units counts the number of units created during the fiscal year based on operating start date.

<sup>72</sup> Number of units deactivated counts the number of units that are no longer counted by BC Housing because the agreement between BC Housing and the housing provider expired or terminated during the fiscal year based on the status change date. This does not necessarily mean that these subsidized housing units are no longer available to those in need.

<sup>73</sup> This chart only reflects new units funded by BC Housing. Units that are not affiliated with or funded by BC Housing are not included in this chart. This data reflects improved understandings of the data system and improved data reporting.

<sup>74</sup> Due to data restrictions, Homeless Outreach Program rent supplements are included in the total Homeless Housed units.

<sup>75</sup> Total and net calculations do not include the Homeless Sheltered designation. These units are primarily emergency shelter beds and provide temporary accommodation for 30 days or less.

While subsidized housing is an affordable option, it is unavailable with 1,545 people on the waiting list for subsidized housing. Other research in BC has shown that there are significant and ongoing concerns with food security even for those living in subsidized housing units. This indicates that even with affordable or scaled-to-income rent costs, people can still be at risk of food insecurity and homelessness.

## Rent Supplements

A keystone of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness' Housing Procurement Plan is to increase rental supplements to enable individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to access rental market housing. As of March 31, 2012, BC Housing provided rent supplements to 2,424 households in Greater Victoria through the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), Shelter Aid for Elderly Residents (SAFER) and Homeless Outreach Program (HOP), as well as Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Teams (VICOT). Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams, and Streets to Homes. These rent supplements are housing allowances paid directly to households renting in the private market.

BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program (RAP) provides low-income working families with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payments. As of March 31, 2012, RAP provided 719 supplements to families in Greater Victoria.<sup>76</sup> There were 21 fewer households accessing RAP supplements as of March 31, 2012 as compared to March 31, 2011.<sup>77</sup> The average RAP supplement amount is approximately \$369.00 per month.<sup>78</sup>

BC Housing's Shelter Aid for Elderly Residents (SAFER) provides rent supplements to low-to-moderate income seniors to subsidize rents for eligible residents (aged 60+) who pay for their homes. As of March 31, 2012, SAFER provided 1,555 rent supplements to seniors in Greater Victoria.<sup>79</sup> There were 31 more households accessing SAFER supplements as of March 31, 2012 as compared to March 31, 2011.<sup>80</sup> The average SAFER rent supplement is approximately \$151.00 per month.<sup>81</sup>

BC Housing also provides rent supplements that connect people who are homeless to housing, income assistance and community-based support services. As of March 31, 2012, BC Housing provided 150 rent supplements in Greater Victoria through various types of programming, including the Homelessness Outreach Program (HOP), Aboriginal Homelessness Outreach Program (AHOP), Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team (VICOT), Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams and Streets to Homes (S2H).<sup>82</sup> The total number of HOP and AHOP rent supplements provided by BC Housing is unchanged from last year.

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76 This figure includes 13 family households subsidized in the private rental market through other rent supplement programs.

77 BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2012. It is unknown why the number of households receiving RAP rent supplements has decreased. Those who apply to the SAFER or RAP programs and qualify will receive a rent supplement.

78 BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Quarterly Reports 2006-2012 (average rate of supplements - \$).

79 This figure includes two senior households subsidized in the private market through other rental supplement programs.

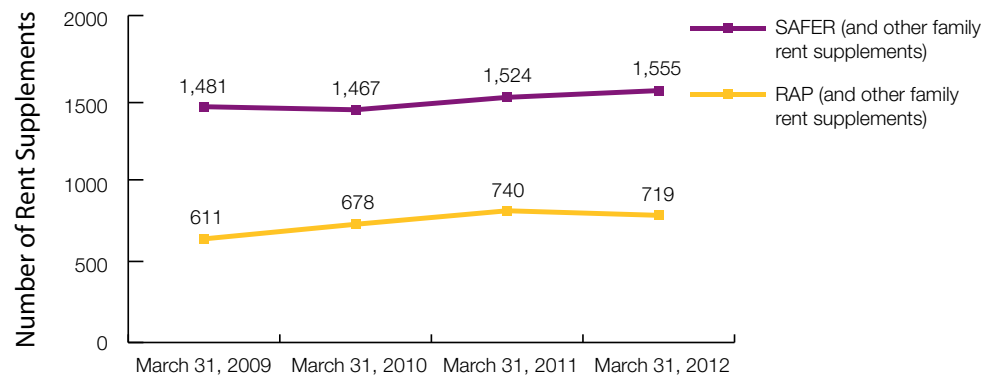
80 BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2011, 2012.

81 BC Housing, RAP and SAFER Quarterly Reports 2006-2012 (average rate of supplements - \$).

82 BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2012. This total includes the Victoria Integrated Community Outreach Team (VICOT), Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams, and Streets to Homes rent supplements.

The chart below trends the number of households accessing RAP or SAFER rent supplements, based on a snapshot of data taken on March 31st of each year since 2009.

**Number of Rent Supplements Administered by BC Housing in Greater Victoria Based on Fiscal Year End Snapshots (March 31, 2009-12)**



Source: BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Model for March 31, 2008, March 31, 2009, March 31, 2010, and March 31, 2011; BC Housing, Central Property System, Unit Count Pivot Tables for March 31, 2012.

During the past year, while there has been a slight increase in the number of households accessing SAFER rent supplements, there has been a decrease in the number of households accessing RAP rent supplements and the number of rent supplements designated for homeless people has not changed over the past year.

### Number of Clients Housed

Finding and keeping housing can be a daunting task, especially when faced with factors like illness, unstable or inadequate income and a challenging housing market. For some people, outreach programs can help to accomplish the transition from homelessness to housed.

Through BC Housing's Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) and Homelessness Outreach Program (HOP), a total of 639 people were housed in 2011/12. 206 were housed through ESP, and 433 were housed through HOP.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012 (Based on the most recent housing placement in each fiscal year of analysis per client record). An individual may have been housed more than once over the different fiscal years of analysis or by different ESP/HOP sites.

### Clients Housed by the Emergency Shelter Program and Homeless Outreach Program Sites in Greater Victoria

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Emergency Shelter Program	270	277	203	206
Homeless Outreach Program	355	359	297	433
Total Clients Housed*	625	636	500	639

Source: BC Housing Homelessness Services System, 2009-2012, based on March 31st snapshots.

\*The same individual may be housed multiple times over different reporting years, and/or may have been housed more than once by different ESP or HOP sites during the same reporting year. These totals should not be added across years.

### Where Housed Through the Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) in Greater Victoria

Indicators	Criteria	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Housing Type	Market Rental	30%	34%	32%	32%
	Single Room Occupancy	22%	22%	19%	21%
	Subsidized Housing	15%	13%	23%	30%
	Other	34%	31%	26%	17%

Source: BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012 (Based on most recent housing placement for client records with more than one housing placement at the same ESP/HOP site during each fiscal year of analysis).

Clients housed through ESP are 74% male and 26% female in 2011/12 in Greater Victoria. 55% of clients were 37-55 years old, with 23% being 19-36 years old and 22% being 56 or older. 17% of ESP clients self-identify as Aboriginal.

### Where Housed Through the Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) in Greater Victoria

Indicators	Criteria	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Housing Type	Market Rental	51%	49%	64%	63%
	SRO	21%	24%	15%	7%
	Social Housing	20%	20%	15%	27%
	Other	8%	7%	6%	4%

Source: BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2008-2012 (Based on the most recent housing placement in each fiscal year of analysis per client record). An individual may have been housed more than once over the different fiscal years of analysis or by different ESP/HOP sites.

Clients housed through HOP were 58% male and 42% female in 2011/12 in Greater Victoria. 42% were 19-36 years old, and 47% were 37-55 years old. 27% self-identified as Aboriginal.





Both ESP and HOP have seen increases in the proportion of individuals that remain housed after six months as compared to 2010/11. In Greater Victoria, 82% of ESP clients housed remain housed at their six-month check-in, 97% of HOP clients housed remain housed at their six-month check-in in 2012 in Greater Victoria.<sup>84</sup> This suggests that these programs are keeping people housed rather than re-housing people.

### Homelessness Prevention Fund

The Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF) provides emergency assistance to individuals and families in Greater Victoria who are experiencing the threat of homelessness and helps stabilize their shelter arrangements. Grants are used to pay rent, utility bills or damage deposits, and the maximum available amount is \$500. HPF is a partnership between the Great Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and ten Coalition partners. Recipients have to demonstrate that they have exhausted all other means of help, do not have to repay the money, and only receive the grant once in a 12-month period.

In 2011/12, the Homelessness Prevention Fund<sup>85</sup> assisted 75 individuals and 30 families, averaging nine grants each month.

The majority of grants issued (85%) were used for emergency rent costs (these grants averaged \$402). Other grants were used for damage deposits (8%, averaging \$317 each) and hydro disconnection (7%, averaging \$282 each).

In 2011/12, the Homelessness Prevention Fund distributed \$41,051 through ten partner agencies.

84 BC Housing, Homelessness Services System (HSS), 2010-2012. Comparatively, in 2010/11, 76% of ESP clients remained housed at their six-month check-in, and 86% of HOP clients remained housed at their 6 month check-in. If a client was housed through the same ESP or HOP site, only the most recent housing placement was included in this analysis. The mandate of shelter workers is work inside the shelters, which means they do not leave the facility to conduct housing follow-ups in person. Shelter workers do housing follow ups by phone or email or other methods that do not require them to leave the shelter.

85 Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. (2012). "Homelessness Prevention Fund Project Tracking".

# Recommendations

## What has changed?

In terms of what we are able to measure with regards to homelessness in the Greater Victoria region, little has changed since the report of last year.

- **Income** – People on social assistance have had no increase in income but there has been an increase in minimum wage.
- **Housing Costs** – Vacancy rates have increased but rental costs remain largely unchanged. Victoria remains one of the most expensive cities in Canada.
- **Food Insecurity** – Individuals, families and children continue to be at risk for hunger and homelessness when too much of their income goes to rent.
- **Shelter Usage** – Shelters are operating over capacity and routinely turn people away.
- **Provisional Accommodation** – Transitional facilities are operating at capacity.
- **Access to Subsidized Housing** – Although 152 new units have been added, the number of people waiting for access to subsidized housing continues to increase.
- **Rental Supplements** – There have been slight increases in the number of low income families and seniors who have accessed rent supplements and no increase in rent supplements for those who are homeless.
- **Number of People Housed** – Greater Victoria service providers continue to house and keep people housed. This means that we are moving people out of homelessness but not necessarily preventing the flow into homelessness.
- **Information Access** – Although our partners readily share available information, it remains extremely challenging to get a true and accurate picture of homelessness in our region. This is largely because we do not have a shared system into which all providers enter data.

## What is needed?

We have a sense of the broad parameters that shape homelessness and housing exclusion for many different groups of people. There is clear recognition that increased rental supplements are needed for people to access market rentals and there is a need for more subsidized housing. But there has been limited progress on increasing number of rental supplements, and in some cases rental market supplements are time-limited.

It is important to remember that we have much information about the pathways into homelessness for many groups, but the pathways out of homelessness are not necessarily the same as the pathways in. We know less about the particular needs of families, seniors, women and youth including Aboriginal people and those with chronic health problems in terms of their unique housing needs. Thus, more information about housing solutions and housing interventions for particular groups is needed. However, actions such as increasing rental supplements would provide individuals with greater choices in housing and allow individuals to find accommodation that suits their needs. Good data is important to solving homelessness. Currently, we do not have an integrated information system that could help us better assess and guide progress towards preventing and ending homelessness.

## Recommendations:

- Increase the number of rental supplements available and the number of households accessing them
- Increase the number of subsidized housing units in our community
- Increased understanding of housing solutions for sub groups (e.g. families, youth, Aboriginal peoples, etc.)
- Establish a shared, integrated information database

# Data Limitations

Greater Victoria does not have an integrated data system such as HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) which is used extensively in the U.S. and by Calgary Homeless Foundation. In the absence of such a system, we draw data from multiple data systems with varying levels of data quality. As well, data reporting by any single data provider can change from year to year which requires reanalysis of previous years' data and revisions to previous findings. Thus, this impacts reliability over time. All data refers to the 2011-2012 fiscal year (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 inclusive), unless otherwise noted. Data based on snapshots is extracted as of March 31, 2011.

If data reported is prior to 2011-12, it represents the most recent data available at the time the data was originally collected.

## Data Provider-Specific Limitations

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: CMHC data is produced by the Rental Market Survey, which targets only privately initiated structures with at least three rental units which have been on the market for at least three months. Included are all non-farm, non-band, non-reserve, private households. CMHC reporting does not include secondary suites, rooms rented monthly in houses or hotels.

Food Banks Canada: Data reported through the Hunger Count is based on the total number of individuals who receive food services from agencies in Greater Victoria who receive food from Food Banks Canada-affiliated food banks. This data represents a significant portion of agencies providing food services in Greater Victoria, but does not include all agencies. Data includes people who access food services such as grocery programs and hampers, prepared meal programs and other food services. March is the study period because it is an unexceptional month, without predictable high or low use patterns.

## Geographic Data Limitations

Greater Victoria is used in this report to refer to both the Capital Regional District and the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area. Different data reporting structures limit the ability to report consistently. For a direct comparison between Victoria CMA and CRD, see <http://www.crd.bc.ca/regionalplanning/maps/documents/MapVCMA.pdf>.

The Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) includes: thirteen municipalities; Juan de Fuca Electoral Area [Capital H (Part 1) which is comprised of East Sooke, Jordan River, Malahat, Otter Point, Shirley, and Willis Point]; and nine First Nations reserves.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) includes the Victoria CMA as well as Salt Spring Island; the Southern Gulf Islands; and Juan de Fuca Electoral Area [Capital H (Part 2) which is comprised of the area north and west of Jordan River to Port Renfrew]; and an additional four First Nations reserves.

Data reporting based on CMA: BC Housing (shelter and outreach data), BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Data reporting based on CRD: BC Housing (unit, tenant, and applicant data), Food Banks Canada, facility count (Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness).

Data sources not contingent on geography: shelter-specific data, Ministry of Social Development, Dieticians of Canada.

## Shelter and Outreach Data Limitations

BC Housing tracks shelter usage and client demographic data for shelters funded through the Emergency Shelter Program (ESP) and the Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters, as well as for clients in the Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Programs (AHOP).

BC Housing extracts data for ESP and AHOP sites from a database called the Homelessness Service System. Data in this database is entered and updated by agencies, so the accuracy of the data is dependent on provider entry. Data presented in this report was extracted as of March 31 for each fiscal year reported and thus represents a snapshot in time (previously entered data may be updated by the providers at any time, so data is based on snapshots of what was in the system on the date of the snapshot).

The number of ESP shelter beds that BC Housing funds and monitors changes from year to year, meaning the data collected and reported are drawn from an annually shifting sample of the shelter population.

All ESP and AHOP data is based on client records. Individuals get a new client ID number and record when they go to a different ESP or AHOP sites; however, general trends revealed through the database have been validated against other sources and appear to reflect what is known about the homeless population in BC. Demographic data for ESP clients is based on each client's most recent stay at a particular

shelter within each fiscal year of analysis. Demographic trends for AHOP clients is based on each client's most recent housing placement through a particular AHOP site within each fiscal year of analysis.

There have been some refinements to the data extraction methodologies to improve data reporting over time. It is not believed that these changes will significantly affect comparisons between reporting years.

All percentages are based on the total number of records where there is a response to the question being examined, not the total number of records (i.e. records missing for the indicator in question are excluded from the calculations, so as not to skew responses).

Data for EWR shelters are kept in a separate database. Demographic indicators are not parallel between EWR and ESP shelters.

## Data Sources

Thank you to our data providers and expert resources:

BC Housing

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

BC Statistics

Beacon Community Services

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Community Social Planning Council of  
Greater Victoria

Dieticians of Canada

Food Banks BC

Food Banks Canada

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness

Ministry of Social Development

Participating facilities in the 2012 Facility Count

Statistics Canada

Tim Richards (University of Victoria)

Victoria Cool Aid Society





**University  
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941 Pandora Avenue,  
Victoria, BC V8V 3P4

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