

SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY PLAN ASSESSMENT PHASE 2

for the

Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report is a summary of the key findings and recommendations of the Phase 2 (April 1, 2003-March 31, 2007) Victoria Community Plan Assessment (CPA) of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). Since Phase 1 of the NHI (2000-2003), the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness (VSCH) has been responsible for the administration of the Plan and the allocation of project funding. The CPA is intended to be a learning tool, enabling both the local community and the Housing and Homelessness Branch of HRSDC to better understand which strategies are useful in assisting individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homeless to move to greater housing stability.

■ Community Plan Assessment Methodology

The Housing and Homelessness Branch, HRSDC established an assessment framework which set out five components to be covered by the CPA: Community Profile, Continuum of Housing and Supports, Knowledge and Communications, Community Development, and Moving Forward. The assessment drew on reported project data; socio-economic data from the Canada Census and other sources; the Community Development Survey; interviews; and local research (e.g. the 2007 Homeless Needs Survey). In Phase 1 an assets inventory was developed and updated in 2003 and, again in 2007. The statistical data and the updated inventory form the Data Tools document prepared as part of the assessment.

■ Community Profile

Community Trends and Impacts: Homelessness has multiple causes and the solutions are complex and interrelated – requiring all sectors to work collaboratively in the planning, development and maintenance of housing and support/ prevention services. Dealing effectively with homelessness requires an understanding of key socio-economic trends and their impacts: e.g. housing affordability and the lack of safe, affordable, supportive, transitional and permanent rental housing stock, inadequate mental health/ addictions, income and employment supports/ services.

The Homeless and At-Risk Populations: Over the last two decades the number of homeless people has been growing – in 2007 estimated at over 1,350. The number of at-risk of homelessness currently stands at 8,100 individuals and 24,300 families, many of whom are part of the 'hidden homeless'. Aboriginals are overrepresented in both groups, making up 25% although they comprise less than 3% of the regional population. Research indicates there are 250 to 300 street youth in the CRD. The numbers of homeless and those at-risk, combined with the needs identified in the 2007 Homeless Needs Survey and service agencies provide direction for identifying future planning and investment strategies.

Community Assets and Gaps: While there has been an increase in the community's assets over the last few years, particularly as a result of the NHI, need continues to outpace capacity. Specifically there is a need for: a more, diverse range of low-barrier and supportive housing and shelter; more affordable rental housing; housing placement, access and maintenance supports; intensive community support services (outreach, health and treatment services, employment and income supports, short term core services during transition, and life skills services). Need is particularly evident amongst Aboriginal people, women/children/ families, health and addictions, the hard to house, and youth. (An Assets Inventory covering the Victoria CMA is appended to the CPA).

■ Continuum of Housing and Supports – Phase 2 NHI Projects

Phase 2 of the NHI provided over \$3M. There were 23 projects funded based on the Community Plan's priorities: (1) Safe, Affordable Housing and Shelter, (2) Enhanced Support Services, and (3) Enhanced Capacity). The majority of funds were allocated to 8 key community agencies and focussed more on sheltering facilities than support services to maximize investments and achieve something permanent. Based on project reporting and recognizing the limited funds available, the first 2 priorities were fully met. The third priority was only partially met, particularly in the area of communications (e.g. raising public awareness and understanding). The funded projects addressed all key Victoria target groups.

■ Knowledge and Communications

Knowledge: While the VSCH did not have an articulated research strategy, a number of projects addressed this area. Phase 2 yielded several examples of projects that could be of use to other communities: the BGCA Homeless Families Outreach Project; the Homeless Needs Survey; and the Extreme Weather Protocol and Communications Plan.

Communications – Information Sharing and Public Awareness: Communications was acknowledged as the area least addressed in Phase. In Phase 2 the VSCH made a concerted effort to address this area, e.g. hosting a number of specific events focused on homelessness and the development of a Community Based Social Marketing Plan (CBSMP) and Communications Strategy. Nevertheless, research undertaken by Artemis PR & Design indicates the public (and business community) has limited knowledge of the homeless and specific efforts to deal with homelessness. There are, however, signs this is changing, e.g. with the release of the Homeless Needs Survey results, followed by media coverage (Focus Magazine and the Independent Settlement Project and Times Colonist feature articles on homelessness). Information sharing between agencies about clients and services (as appropriate) has always existed, both informally and formally and this has increased as a result of the NHI.

■ Community Development (Capacity)

The CPA required the completion of a community development survey by VSCH members and funded projects. The results showed: there is a strong sense the community is beginning to understand homelessness; the response needed is a shared one; individuals, organizations, and funding partners are cooperating and working well together with a shared sense of purpose; and the community has the capacity to develop solutions to homelessness. Of most concern is: the lack of resources generally, lack of supportive government policies, inability of agencies to further adapt to limited resources, the continuing need for services, and the lack of knowledge/ awareness of amongst the general public on how their efforts can help prevent and reduce homelessness.

Over the years, the VSCH has engaged in a number of strategic planning exercises, including a session in the fall of 2003. That session established a revised vision, mission, principles, goals, objectives and strategic priorities. The Committee's membership process was revised to ensure appropriate community representation. Consistent membership from some key stakeholders and the same co-chairs has promoted mutual awareness, understanding, cohesion, and a strengthening of relationships amongst members, agencies and other key sector groups – key outcomes of good leadership.

Though there was little change in the number of funding sources in Phase 2, the amounts invested significantly increased. In Phase 1, \$5M was leveraged; in Phase 2, \$19M was leveraged.

■ Moving Forward

The Homeless Partnering Strategy is the next phase of Federal funding and the VSCH is in the process of identifying the steps for a proposal call, based on the information from the CPA and a recent planning session. At the same time, it is uncertain what the precise role the VSCH will play in steering the next phase. Over the last 7 years the focus has been on homelessness in the City of Victoria where the problem, needs, and assets are most prevalent. It is now acknowledged that homelessness (albeit to a lesser extent) is a regional problem. A new regional secretariat is being formed which may shortly either include or replace the VSCH. Ideally this new body will bring additional resources to bear to support the vision of ending homelessness in the Capital Region.

Recommendations: The following highlights particular areas of focus for the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness and the Regional Homelessness Task Force.

Communications and Ongoing Research:

- Develop an articulated research strategy and establish strong ties with community organizations undertaking research, e.g. the United Way, University of Victoria, Community Council, and service agencies.

- Identify research needs as part of an articulated strategy, e.g. gaps in the health care system for people who are homeless or unstably housed, understanding what happens to unstably housed seniors as they reach 65, and exploring the needs of transgendered persons.
- Implement a comprehensive communications strategy – building capacity into the VSCH (e.g. retaining consultants with responsibility for communications, publicity and media relations, including a communications person on the Committee). Obtain resources to manage the communications strategy (web site, media relations, event organization, etc.).
- Mobilize the community – improve public/business awareness/ understanding, how to get involved – communications initiatives that will "help to get the word out" about what is occurring to alleviate homelessness.
- Identify opportunities for providing contributions to fill in service gaps, e.g. developing and regularly maintaining an online list of current needs of the different non-profit agencies.
- Create a newsletter to inform the public (in a clear and focussed way) on the proceedings of the Committee and other initiatives addressing homelessness in the community – keeping the business community informed and engaged is integral to having them support and help create solutions.
- Host public information sessions/ forums – linking housing and homelessness, profiling solutions to homelessness.
- Develop and maintain a specific dynamic and 'go to' VSCH website on homelessness and encouraging agency/government websites to more effectively highlight the work of the VSCH (either through information or a link to the VSCH website).
- Involve 'high-profile individuals as speakers, presenters, members of the Committee, etc.
- Provide regular reports to the community.
- Provide case studies of successful NHI projects to show the public what has been done, how they have been done, who was involved, and their outcomes – these could be put on-line.
- Obtain resources to manage the communications strategy (web site, media relations, event organization, etc.).
- Make sure that communications, informational material, and the Plan are succinct easy to read documents, providing information on what the plan is, who is involved , what is happening and when, and how progress is monitored and assessed.
- Develop and implement a regular monitoring and evaluation framework and process (on an annual basis) that reviews progress (report cards, accountability forums, etc.).
- Explore other initiatives for lessons learned, best practices, etc. to apply to the Capital Region, where and when appropriate.

Capacity:

- Create and maintain strong consistent leadership, particularly in the Chair's role.
- Ensure the new regional body includes members of the VSCH to provide continuity in transferring knowledge and experience.
- Strengthen business representation and encourage senior governments and VIHA to appoint senior representatives. Obtain senior management involvement from MCFD. Involve new emerging funding/ equity partners, e.g. Credit unions, developers, land owners, other business leaders. Consider mechanisms for increasing Aboriginal representation, i.e. AHMA, Band Council representatives.
- Enhance the Downtown Service Providers Group's ability to represent Downtown issues in a larger regional homeless strategy.
- Continue to develop collaborative, trusting and inclusive relationships across all sectors – clarify the reporting relationship of sector representatives, ensuring that there is a reporting back to their sector.
- Continue to use a broadly-based community steering committee (and strengthen the committee with additional resources, mandate, etc.) as the delivery mechanism, forum for sharing/ receiving information, and developing policy and strategies for addressing homelessness.

- Obtain resources to organize/ attend training and skill development sessions – one potential area is on leveraging funds, developing successful proposals.
- Maintain HRSDC's support: committee coordination (e.g. meeting arrangements – agendas, minutes); project monitoring; providing direction on federal requirements; providing/updating information on other matters of relevance.
- Secure a dedicated paid secretariat function that could work with the Chair, Committee, and HRDC to facilitate the development and implementation of the Plan.
- Continue to work/advocate with community partners to effect positive policy and strategic approaches to address the needs of the homelessness and homeless at-risk populations.
- Develop Committee and agency capacity and skills in leveraging funding, including a scan of funding agencies and their requirements, timelines, etc.
- Encourage the Downtown Service Providers Group to continue tracking the needs of their agencies, the homeless and the impacts of policy change to inform the VSCH/ Secretariat, particularly if there is a major change in membership. The role of this committee in providing the "voice of downtown" could become pivotal if this is the case.

Planning and Monitoring:

- Gather information from the housing registries, e.g. data about available housing, as well as the housing needs of individuals and families, e.g. develop the Coordinated Housing Registry's capacity to include other parts of the region and increase the inventory of affordable housing units.
- Develop an effective system for collecting and recording information on the numbers of: different people in shelters on a monthly/quarterly basis, with demographics; people accessing each service or agency; services delivered (e.g. number of outreach contacts, number of nursing interventions, needles exchanged, condoms given out, meals served, bed nights etc.); and people on waitlists for housing, and in some agencies, the numbers of people turned away from service.
- Identify the numbers and needs of groups who were not recorded or were undercounted in the Homeless Needs Survey, e.g. the hidden homeless, the chronically living on the street, the episodically sheltered, families, youth, the aging homeless, transgendered individuals, and Aboriginal people.
- Undertake a homeless needs survey every two years to track homeless numbers and needs, expanding the survey to include all populations and sub populations.
- Develop permanent, measurable solutions. Be rigorous, set targets, monitor and evaluate progress against stated goals and objectives on an on-going basis.
- Undertake more frequent, regular (annual) monitoring and evaluation of NHI funded projects so the roll-up at the end of each funding phase is easier and information gaps are identified and rectified early.
- Encourage HHB to develop and maintain a consistent, clear project reporting framework and effective quality control system.
- Identify an implementation strategy that incorporates: leadership, cooperation, commitment, staging, and momentum.
- Use the new regional structure to develop a longer-range, broader based plan (both in terms of geographic area and issues), with specific implementation strategies, quantifiable targets, and monitoring mechanisms.
- Identify an interim model to manage the updated plan and distribution of funds to projects while the region develops its 10 year plan to end homelessness.
- Ensure that the focus of the Community Plan and distributed funds do not get lost in the higher level extensive discussions that will occur around a longer term and much larger plan.

Funding Guidelines and Strategies:

- Develop funding guidelines that require collaboration, leverage, partnering, etc. to ensure as many aspects of a homeless person's needs are met most effectively, e.g. prioritizing applications from agencies with a "track record" in serving the homeless and the ability to implement an integrated service

delivery model, demonstrating public and private funding support, leveraged non-financial assets, and significant impact in addressing the needs of the homeless

- Leverage additional capital funding for maximum impact, e.g. starting with the Housing Trust Funds and accessing other funding opportunities through agencies such as the United Way who share similar goals.
- Emphasize permanent solutions – the bricks and mortar with committed operational funding. Concentrate resources on programs that offered measurable results. Prioritize funding towards housing and housing related projects.
- Provide community based support services that significantly impact a person's ability to find and maintain safe, affordable housing. while leveraging services already in place.
- Develop a strategy for leveraging operational funding to make project proposals viable. Obtain operational funding (often the critical fail point for a proposal) through advocacy, partnerships, and proven organizational capacity.
- Leverage significant funds for equipment and furnishings by mobilizing support from the business community.
- Leverage support services through good working relationships with major providers (e.g. VIHA, provincial ministries and community-based groups).
- Develop projects that are larger, highly visible and built by well-established not-for-profits that have leveraging power through their existing programs and reputation, contribution of equity, relationship with donors, etc.
- Recognize that locations outside the City of Victoria are viable and provide for a wider response base. Locate new shelter beds and services in other parts of the region.
- Provide community based support services that significantly impact a person's ability to find and maintain safe, affordable housing. while leveraging services already in place.
- Focus on key target groups – the chronically homeless, Aboriginal people, families, and youth with improved core support services and moving them on a priority basis from emergency to transitional and supportive housing.
- Look at models such as the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group for strategies to provide small-scale integrated affordable housing projects.

Funding Priorities:

The overriding priority for the Victoria Homeless Initiative over the next NHI funding phase focus will be safe, affordable housing and shelter, achieved through increasing the number of transitional and long-term supportive housing units, emergency shelter beds and permanent housing.

- Target the following group – the chronically homeless, including families with children, youth, and Aboriginal people.
- Increase the existing transitional/ supportive housing stock (i.e. there is a net increase in the number of units). To be funded, a project should meet a number of criteria, including: partnering with other homeless serving agencies, multiple funders, and leveraging of assets including money, time, services, and equipment, and the ability to articulate and implement an integrated service plan that provides supports for residents to maintain their housing.
- Provide support services that will assist the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness to find and maintain affordable housing in the private sector.

Addressing the needs of the most visible, hardest to house chronic homeless has been identified as a longer term strategy.

PHASE 2 COMMUNITY PLAN ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the key findings and recommendations of the Phase 2 (April 1, 2003- March 31, 2007) Victoria Community Plan Assessment (CPA) of the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI). Since Phase 1 of the NHI (2000-2003), the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness (VSCH) has been responsible for the administration of the Plan and the allocation of project funding. The CPA is intended to be a learning tool, enabling both the local community and the Housing and Homelessness Branch of HRSDC to better understand which strategies are useful in assisting individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homeless to move to greater housing stability.

2. COMMUNITY PLAN ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

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The CPA focused on: the identification of socio-economic trends, including the homeless and at-risk of homelessness populations; projects undertaken in Phase 2, community knowledge and awareness; and community development, including planning, representation, financial leveraging, policy development; and implications for future efforts ('Moving Forward'). A synopsis of each of these areas is provided below, supplemented by further detail provided in the Appendices.

3. COMMUNITY PROFILE

■ Socio-Economic Trends and Impacts

Demographic Trends

- The population growth rate has increased in recent years. The estimated 2005 CMA population is 343,675 (up 10% since 2001).
- Growth is primarily the result of in-migration (mostly intraprovincial and interprovincial). Deaths have outnumbered births for several years.
- Visible minorities comprised 9% of the CMA population in 2001: Aboriginal People comprised 3%.
- The population is aging, with persons aged 65+ comprising a significant proportion (one of the highest of any Canadian urban area).
- Non-family households, while not the majority, have been increasing both absolutely and proportionately.
- Increased population growth has put considerable pressure on the local housing market.

Housing Trends

Affordability has become a major issue for both owners and renters.

- Between 1991 and 2001: the number and proportion of owned housing units and housing units below adequacy and affordability standards increased; proportion of owned housing units in core housing need declined slightly, but the actual number increased; owner shelter costs rose by 41%.
- Between 1991 and 2001: the number of rented units rose, but their proportion of total housing stock decreased; renter shelter costs rose by 19%. (the number of renter households who can afford to

buy a home has consistently been lower in Victoria and Vancouver than in any other Canadian metropolitan centre),

- In 2001, 28% of rental units were in core housing need (the majority in Victoria, Saanich and Esquimalt); 47% of rented units were below at least one standard of adequacy, suitability or affordability in 2001, with 39% of units below the affordability standard.
 - In the past decade, fewer than 1,000 units of new social housing were provided in the CRD – compared to 6,200 built between 1970 and 1995.
 - The conversion of existing suites to other uses has resulted in 100 fewer rental apartments overall.
 - In October 2006, the Victoria CMA registered a vacancy rate of 0.5% - the third time in the past 15 years that rates have dropped to that level (2001, 2005, and 2006). The Victoria CMA had the lowest vacancy rate for Major Centres in Canada in both 2005 and 2006. Victoria has had no new privately initiated rental market suites completed since October 2005.
- In the Victoria CMA, average rents rose to \$681 for one-bedroom apartments and \$874 for two-bedroom apartments in 2006 from \$657 and \$837 in 2005. Average rents are forecast to rise 3-5% in Metro Victoria in 2007. The situation is especially dire for persons on social assistance – monthly shelter allowance of \$520.
- As of March 2007, there were 560 active clients on the Pacifica Housing Services Community Housing Registry for supported subsidized housing and 1,958 active applicants on the CRD / BC Housing waitlist (including 236 families). Local housing providers reported that if someone on a wait-list for housing is evicted, they most likely end up on the street or in a shelter.

Economic Trends

- Between 1991 and 2001: owner income rose by 23%; the percentage of average owner household income spent on rent rose to 19%. House prices increased by 82% from 1995-2001 and 75% from 2001-2005.
- Between 1991 and 2001: renter income rose between 1991 and 2001, but renter incomes were less than 60% of owner income levels; the percentage of renter household income spent on rent in both was 31%.
- Between 1991 and 2001: core housing need renter income rose by 12%; average monthly shelter costs increased between by 16%; core renter incomes were just over 40% of other renters income levels; the proportion of household income spent on shelter was 51%.
- Between 1991 and 2006: the CMA labour force grew by 24%; the number of employed individuals by 30.2%; unemployment decreased from 8% to 4%.
- In September 2006: the proportion of people aged 19-64 on BC Basic Income Assistance in the CRD was lower than the BC average, although it was higher in the City of Victoria. Case loads were significantly reduced in 2002 with provincial regulatory changes.
- Although the Province recently announced an increase in income assistance rates (March 2007), this is the first increase in 12 years.
- Owners of small businesses are experiencing rising costs due to security demands, petty theft, vandalism and cleanup of human waste and needles. Developers and owners/managers of larger businesses have described annual security costs up to \$100,000 each. The construction industry is frustrated by the increasing costs of theft (particularly items that can be sold for scrap metal). They are also concerned about the safety of their workers because large numbers of used needles are found on job sites. The business community is also concerned about the impact of the visible homeless on tourism (in a town where this is a significant employment/ income generator).

Moving Forward - Looking Ahead

Homelessness and the risk of homelessness in the Victoria CMA will not be adequately addressed unless there is a serious commitment to be informed by and deal with the trends described above. Homelessness has multiple causes and the solutions are complex and interrelated – requiring all sectors to work collaboratively in the planning, development and maintenance of housing and support/ prevention services.

- Housing affordability will continue to be an issue for both homeowners and renters.
- Affordable rental housing stock in is short supply and this is likely to continue.

- The continued rise in construction costs will exert cost pressures on new/ renovated housing.
- As real estate prices rise much faster than rent increases, the pressure to convert rental units to condominiums will continue.
- Continued rising employment levels and a low unemployment rate will mean more demand for rental suites.
- Rising university student enrolment and demand from low-wage service workers (a major component of the Victoria economy) will contribute to the pressure on rental stock.
- At \$8/hour (minimum wage), a single parent with 2 children needs to work 63 hours/ week to be above LICO in the Capital Region – no change in the minimum wage has been announced.
- Considerable numbers remain in core housing need, without sufficient income to access housing – a situation likely to continue without significant intervention.

■ Community Homeless and At-Risk Population Trends

The CPA used the following definitions to describe the homeless and at-risk populations:

- **At Risk of Homelessness:** individuals or families who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing or who live in unacceptable housing or housing circumstances.
- **Hidden Homeless:** individuals or families living in locations not intended for human habitation (e.g. abandoned buildings) and/or continuously moving among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family.
- **Living on the Street:** individuals or families living on the street who lack secured housing. Includes the **Chronically Living on the Street**, individuals or families who, because of a lack of secured housing, live on the street for a predominant period of time over the course of a year(s). These individuals or families might access some services from time to time, but will use available sheltering facilities only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. a very cold night). Many individuals chronically living on the street have challenges forming long-term connections to services because of personal life issues or unsuccessful histories with the “system”.
- **Short-Term or Crisis Sheltered:** individuals or families who are in and out of emergency and/or transitional housing and do not return once they transition to the next step in the Continuum of Housing and Supports, or once they secure stable housing (one- or two-time users). Includes the **Episodically Sheltered** sub-population, individuals or families who access shelters multiple times through the year, seeking assistance, but who are not necessarily able or ready to form the long-term connections necessary to move to housing stability (this inability could be due to a number of reasons, including longer duration accessibility of the sheltering facilities, lifestyle choices, etc.).
- **Long-Term or Supportive Housed:** individuals or families with secured supportive housing, who may not have the necessary skills to live without some type of support (i.e. financial, advocacy, life management, etc.).

Numbers in the Victoria CMA

- At Risk of Homelessness: 32,379 (24,284 families, 8,095 individuals)
- Hidden Homeless: 261
- Living on the Street: 341 (187 chronically living on the street)
- Short-Term or Crisis Sheltered: 331 (202 episodically sheltered)
- Long-Term or Supportive Housed: 417

The numbers of homeless have been growing, from 237 in 1991 to over 1350 in 2007.

- The number of homeless at-risk stands at 8,100 individuals and 24,300 families.
- Aboriginals are overrepresented in both groups, making up 25% although they comprise less than 3% of the regional population.
- Over a three-year period, BGCA identified 432 families who were homeless or at-risk of homelessness, but many families are part of the ‘hidden’ homeless. Reasons cited in the HNS include: fleeing violence (28%), evicted or unaffordable rent (29%), and substandard or unaffordable housing (30%). In the BGCA study, nearly 45% of parents had experienced past or present abuse, 37% identified mental health problems, and 30% had alcohol or drug use issues (survey participants may have reported more than one reason). If depression is considered, mental health issues would top 90%.

- Research indicates there are 250 to 300 street youth in the CRD. Reasons cited in the HNS include: personal conflict violence or neglect by a family member, friend or caregiver (55%), alcohol or drug use (50%).

Findings from the 2007 Homelessness Needs Survey

- Homelessness is a regional problem that impacts more than Downtown Victoria. Of 815 people surveyed: 73% were from the four core municipalities (Victoria 61%, 496 people; Saanich 6%, 48 people; Esquimalt 3%, 24 people; Oak Bay 1%, 6 people); 4% from the Western Communities; 3% from the Saanich Peninsula; and 4% from Salt Spring Island (16% did not state a municipality).
- Homelessness is a home-grown problem: only 11% of those surveyed were from outside B.C., with 73% from the CRD, and 16% from elsewhere in B.C., mostly Duncan and Vancouver.
- Two-thirds of Survey participants (64%) identified themselves as male, 34% as female and 2% as transgendered or other.
- 78% of participants identified the lack of affordable housing as their main barrier to being housed, only 3% did not want a permanent home.
- Over half had been unstably housed for the last two years or longer, and 44% had been homeless more than twice in the last ten years.
- One-third of participants reported being on a waiting list for social housing.
- 35% of unstably housed people used shelters, compared to 72% of people who were homeless.
- Two-thirds of people who used shelters had sometimes been turned away.
- 26% of respondents who were homeless did not stay at shelters, most (60%) slept outside or “rough”.
- Almost half reported staying in a more costly public facility, such as a jail, shelter or hospital, at least once in the last month.
- 80% reported health concerns as a contributing factor to their inadequate housing or an important support they needed.
- 58% noted concerns about their physical health.
- 42% reported having a mental health concern.
- 48% reported alcohol or drug use.
- 27% listed both mental health and alcohol or drug use as factors contributing to their inadequate housing.
- 63% had used a health clinic in the last three months.
- 58% of those looking for work identified better physical or mental health care, dental care or support for addictions.
- 21% had a criminal record, and 32% of those were Aboriginal, 57% reported mental health issues and 72% alcohol or drug use.
- 17% reported being employed and 40% being unable to (physical or mental health challenges, including addictions) or not wanting to work right now.
- 44% reported needing regular income or a job to find housing
- 42% wanted help to find a job or a better job.
- 41% have been denied Income Assistance and, of those, 80% were still not receiving income assistance and were not formally employed.

Moving Forward – Future Planning

The numbers of homeless and those at-risk of homelessness, combined with the needs identified in the Homeless Needs Survey and by agencies, provide direction for identifying future planning and investment strategies. The breadth and depth of information in the Homeless Needs Survey did not previously exist and previous planning was based largely on the 2003 evaluation and updated Assets Inventory, the experience of VSCH members and community agencies who know and serve the homeless population.

■ Community Assets and Gaps

Ideally, programs and services for the homeless are integrated with shelters, transitional and long-term supportive housing forming a comprehensive continuum of support. In the Victoria CMA, there is a network of agencies and organizations providing services in one part or for some, throughout the region. Most are not-for-profit organizations, although there are some major public institutions and many active faith-based organizations. Some agencies and services have paid staff; others are run by volunteers.

Some agencies serve a variety of clients, others focus on a specific target group within the population. Some provide a range of services, others have a more 'specialized' focus, e.g. housing, food, or employment. This 'web' of agencies is linked informally and formally through partnerships, collaboration and networking.

In 2003, as a result of Phase 1, asset capacity increased in some areas: additional housing/ shelter and enhanced services. However capacity had also decreased in some areas: many agencies were struggling to cope and adapt to changes in the external environment and the increase in need. Funding for some existing programs was reduced or eliminated, particularly for employment and life-skills programs.

By 2007, there appears to be more agency stability – to some extent agencies have rebuilt their programs and some gaps (e.g. shelters) have been narrowed, but it has come with a cost, requiring a significant continuous commitment from agencies serving the homeless.

The Assets and Gaps Inventory

This latest version focuses on facilities, programs, and services directly serving and accessible to the homeless population, and facilities, programs, and services accessible to those at-risk of homelessness. This version expands the Inventory to include the whole of the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area.

With over 1200 people identified in the 2007 Homeless Needs Survey as homeless or in unstable housing, there remains a huge gap between need and capacity in safe and affordable supportive, transitional, and permanent housing and supportive services, particularly for mental health and addictions, but also across the range of services.

For the last decade there has been little low income family and seniors housing added to the stock (345 units since 1999 and only 9 since 2002). There have been less than 200 units added to the special needs stock and 118 units of homeless housing since 1999. Most of these additions have been located in Victoria and Saanich. For the population at-risk of homelessness, housing was mentioned over 50% more often than any other need in the HNS, including access to transportation, education or healthcare.

There are no shelters outside of the City of Victoria and no family shelter anywhere. In both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the NHI, the emphasis has been on increasing capacity in the City of Victoria where the majority of the homeless live (61% of those surveyed in the 2007 Homeless Needs Survey).

Seasonal Difference Between Supply and Demand of Shelter Beds and Mats				
	Men	Women	Youth	Total
People who use shelters	260	101	56	427
Shelter Beds & Mats Available in Winter*	105	36	40	181
Needed in Winter months	- 155	- 65	- 16	-246
Shelter Beds & Mats Available In Summer	96	31	10	111
Need in Summer months	- 164	- 70	- 46	-316

* Except when the "Cold Wet Weather Protocol" is in place, when there are between 35 and 125 additional mats available for a few days at a time, depending on the severity of the weather.

Moving from shelters to affordable housing is not a common occurrence in the community. The few supported housing units built are filled from waitlists at the Coordinated Housing Registry or as provided by funding agreement (this registry served 451 individuals and was able to make 85 supported housing placements). A number of other examples during Phase 2 included: Burnside Gorge's Homeless Outreach

Project, the YM/YW Mom Reach Project, VNFC's Fernwood House Project, and VYES Life-Skills Project). The few market rental units available are quickly taken by those who can afford them. With rents so high and availability so low, homeless clients, looking less than perfect and without good references, have little chance of obtaining other than a 'cheap' hotel room or illegal room/suite.

Promising Approaches	
▪	providing services to clients and collecting data on those served
▪	amalgamating/ expanding an existing housing registry to include secondary suites, analyzing and circulating statistics
▪	providing training to those working with Aboriginal clients to prevent eviction and maintain housing
▪	describing an outreach intervention to families and leveraging that work to provide more services to homeless families and children

While the proportion of the homeless population with mental health and addiction issues does not appear to be increasing, the numbers have risen significantly as the number of homeless have increased. When those at-risk are added in, the numbers are even more dramatic. Those with chronic mental health and addictions issues often need numerous supports to maintain tenancy. Service providers have identified a need for more mental health and addictions support and treatment services and appropriate housing situations. Concerns were recently expressed over apparent funding reductions from VIHA moving funds to services further north on Vancouver Island. However, VIHA has recently announced that it will reconsider this decision over the next year.

HNS participants reported on the dilemma of needing housing to find work and needing work to find housing. Almost half of participants (44%) reported needing regular income or a job to find housing. Two-thirds (67%) of participants looking for work reported needing supports typically found with shelter, but which also can be used outside of a home. Supports needed are listed below.

What Would Help People Find Paid Work			
Employment assistance (clothing, tools, transportation, resumé)	353	people	75%
Housing (address, shower, phone, storage, alarm clock)	316	people	67%
Education and Training	286	people	60%
Health (physical, dental, mental, addictions)	276	people	58%
Identification (driver's licence or ID)	267	people	56%
Counselling (anger management, motivation, fitting in)	197	people	42%
Jobs available	167	people	35%

Moving Forward – Continuum of Housing and Support

At the VSCH priority setting session roundtable discussion on June 12, 2007, members and several community stakeholder representatives (e.g. BC Housing, the United Way, MEIA, MCFD, VIHA, Regional Homelessness Secretariat, and City of Victoria) identified a number of areas requiring attention in the future.

Areas Requiring Attention in the Future

- More (diverse range) low barrier and supportive housing and shelter in Victoria and elsewhere/ affordable housing.
- Housing placement, access and maintenance (possibly through the housing registries and related services).
- Intensive community support – outreach; health and treatment services (particularly mental health and addictions (e.g. facilities that deal with both mental health and addictions, dental care, a single facility providing primary health care and social services); employment and income supports (help to find more or better paid work – clothing, tools, transportation, education and training, causal labour pool, jobs); short term core services during transition (e.g. laundry and showers, storage), assistance services (e.g.

phone or voice mail, identification, help with social assistance, tax returns, resumes, and technology); and life skills services (e.g. conflict or anger management, help getting motivated).

- Addressing the needs of certain target groups – Aboriginal people, women/children/ families, health and addictions, the hard to house, and youth.

There was also considerable discussion around the **chronically homeless**, particularly 30-40 individuals who are the most 'visible' face of homelessness in Downtown Victoria and who have the highest need for support services. Addressing the needs of this group would demonstrate noticeable 'action' on homelessness to the public. There was also much discussion about the need for '**Housing First**', the foundation for addressing homelessness by providing housing quickly and the focus around which to then build needed supports.

Additional Focus and Strategies - Strategies to Meet On-going or Emerging Needs

- Adopt a 'Housing First' policy and funding priority.
- Develop funding guidelines that require collaboration, leverage, partnering, etc. to ensure as many aspects of a homeless person's needs are met most effectively, e.g. prioritizing applications from agencies with a "track record" in serving the homeless and the ability to implement an integrated service delivery model, demonstrating public and private funding support, leveraged non-financial assets, and significant impact in addressing the needs of the homeless
- Leverage additional capital funding for maximum impact, e.g. starting with the Housing Trust Funds and accessing other funding opportunities through agencies such as the United Way who share similar goals.
- Develop permanent, measurable solutions. Be rigorous, set some targets, monitor and evaluate progress against the stated goals and objectives on an on-going basis.
- Develop a strategy for leveraging operational funding to make project proposals viable.
- Identify an implementation strategy that incorporates: leadership, cooperation, commitment, staging, and momentum.
- Mobilize the community – improve public/business awareness/ understanding, how to get involved – communications initiatives that will "help to get the word out" about what is occurring to alleviate homelessness.
- Provide dedicated communication and administrative support to the Committee;
- Identify the numbers and needs of groups who were not recorded or were undercounted in the Homeless Needs Survey, e.g. the hidden homeless, the chronically living on the street, the episodically sheltered, families, youth, the aging homeless, transgendered individuals, and Aboriginal people.
- Develop the Coordinated Housing Registry's capacity to include other parts of the region and increase the inventory of affordable housing units.
- Locate new shelter beds and services in other parts of the region.
- Look at models such as the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group for strategies to provide small-scale integrated affordable housing projects.

4. CONTINUUM OF HOUSING AND SUPPORTS – PHASE 2 – PROJECTS

Total funding provided in Phase 2 under the NHI for Victoria was \$3,107,133: 20% (Aboriginal); 11% (RFF); 69% (SCPI). There were 23 projects funded, with the majority of funds going to 8 key agencies, several of whom received funds for several projects. (See Attachment 1.) These agencies have provided services for many years to Greater Victoria's homeless and at-risk of homelessness populations. They include:

- Pacifica Housing Advisory Association
- Upper Room Society/Open Door (Our Place)
- Salvation Army Addictions Rehabilitation Centre
- Victoria Cool Aid Society
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre Society
- Burnside Gorge Community Association
- YM/YWCA
- Victoria Youth Empowerment Society

In addition, funds were also provided to the Victoria Women's Transition House Society and the Canadian Housing Research Foundation.

There were fewer projects in Phase 2 than in Phase 1 and the focus shifted significantly, with more emphasis in Phase 2 on sheltering facilities than on support services, recognizing the priorities of the Community Plan. The Committee took a more strategic approach than in Phase 1 – to maximize investments and achieve something permanent. Funded projects addressed all key Victoria target groups, i.e. Aboriginal, visible minorities, youth, women, families, individuals, people with mental health, health, and low income.

- Safe, affordable housing and shelter – 51.9% of funding / 15 projects
- Enhanced support services – 35.8% of funding / 12 projects
- Capacity enhancement – 12.3% of funding / 9 projects

■ Community Priority # 1 – Safe, Affordable Housing and Shelter

A range of short term emergency, transitional and supportive housing was developed and/or enhanced. Fifteen (15) of the projects funded achieved results under this priority. Based on project reporting and recognizing the limited funds available, this priority was fully met.

<u>Emergency Shelters (Final)</u>	<u>Transitional Housing (Expected: under construction)</u>	<u>Supportive Housing (Final)</u>
Total beds created – 46	Total beds created – 46	Total beds created – 10
Total units created – 1	Total units created – 68	Total beds affected – 24
Total beds affected – 83	New/Improved – 2	New/Improved – 1
New/Improved – 4		

- Highlights**
- 16 new permanent beds at the Salvation Army for homeless and at-risk (Achieved project results reported:
 - 30 shelter beds (male and female) in 2004 under the Cold Wet Weather Strategy, as well as renovations at the Streetlink Shelter to provide additional laundry and washroom facilities.
 - 45 beds at ‘Our Place’ (under construction) – these units will replace 22 existing/old stock and provide 23 new units of housing as part of a multi-use complex providing both housing and support services
 - 23 units of transitional housing for older women recovering from domestic abuse and at-risk of homelessness (Harrison Place).
 - 6 beds of transitional housing for Aboriginal youth 16-18 in existing foster care (underway)
 - 8 unit apartment complex renovation and upgrade to enhance transitional housing for Aboriginal women and children (Fernwood House)
 - Other projects directly affected increased access to housing, e.g. Pacifica Housing’s Coordinated Housing Registry, Burnside Gorge’s registry for secondary suites and Homeless Families Outreach Program, and operational funding for the YM/YWCA’s supportive housing projects.
 - NHI funds were used on a pilot-basis in 2004 for beds at the Streetlink Shelter and the Out of the Rain Shelter leading to the development of the Cold Wet Weather Strategy in 2005.
 - When needs increased significantly, St. John the Divine Church undertook a pilot project which provided additional shelter beds for several months.
 - The development of Housing Trust Funds in both the CRD and City of Victoria, although not funded by NHI, have successfully leveraged/provided funds for housing projects in the region.

■ Community Priority # 2 – Enhanced Support Services

The projects addressed the continuum of prevention, crisis, support, and prevention. Twelve (12) of the projects funded achieved results under this priority. Based on project reporting and recognizing the limited funds available, this priority was fully met.

<p><u>Support Facilities</u> (Expected)</p> <p>Food Bank – 1 Soup Kitchen – 1 Drop-In Centre – 1 Community Centre – 1</p> <p><u>Housing Placement Activities</u> (Final)</p> <p>Emergency Shelter – 3 Transitional Housing – 2 Supportive Housing – 3 Independent Housing – 3 Other – 4</p> <p><u>Program Activities</u> (Final)</p> <p>Education/Life Skills – 4 Addiction Treatment – 4 Employment Program – 4 Other Programs – 3</p>	<p><u>Prevention Activities</u> (Final)</p> <p>Eviction Prevention/ Maintaining Existing Housing – 6 Obtaining New Housing – 6 Obtaining Employment – 2 Counselling/Intervention – 8 Psycho-social Support – 4 Legal/financial Service – 2 Other – 3</p> <p><u>Service Activities</u> (Final)</p> <p>Health Services – 5 Material Services – 8 Psycho-Social Services – 8 Legal/Financial Services – 3 Information/Referrals/Follow-up – 8 Transportation Services – 5 Laundry/Shower Services – 7 Other – 1</p>
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Note: Information provided by the HRSDC Vancouver Office – there was inconsistency in the reporting of achievements by funded projects and some information is, or may be incomplete.

Highlights

- BCGA Food Bank provided increased emergency food and supplies to 8 agencies
- Soup Kitchen – a new facility to serve 700 people is under construction to replace the Upper Room
- Drop-In Centre – extended hours provided a day shelter to cover Saturday and Sundays for a period of three months at Our Place and a new multi-service centre is under construction to expand and improve existing services (currently provided by the Open Door) for 800 people
- VNFC Community Centre renovations, including a new commercial training kitchen, to enhance VNFC’s ability to provide meals, laundry and showers
- BGCA’s Homeless Families Outreach increased the number of legalised suites and homeless family placements by hiring two workers to work with families and the community
- VNFC Fernwood House provided long-term housing services for urban Aboriginal families and individuals
- YM/YW access to stable housing, prenatal attention, life skills, counselling and employment training for street involved pregnant young women
- YM/YW counsellors to staff youth night shelter
- Pacifica Housing developed a co-ordinated housing registry of subsidised housing and provided a worker and a fund to help individuals most at-risk find and maintain housing
- VYES developed a 3-month life skills day program for at-risk youth during the summer months that helped at-risk youth maintain current housing, prevent eviction and provided support in obtaining new housing.
- VNFC developed a commercial training kitchen and provided residential manager training and landlord/tenant life skills and eviction prevention at Fernwood House

- Various agencies provided other supports such as counselling, legal, housing and financial

The amalgamation of the Upper Room and Open Door, forming Our Place, and the development of a multi-functional building will greatly enhance the ability to support homeless and at-risk in Greater Victoria.

■ Community Priority # 3 – Capacity Enhancement

Nine (9) of the projects funded achieved results under this priority. In contrast to the other two Community Plan priorities, the only projects reporting they did not fully meet outcome expectations were in this priority area, specifically: increased awareness, increased understanding and knowledge of the homeless situation, and more coordinated response between sectors to address homelessness. Based on project reporting, this priority was partially met.

Activity	Expected	Final	Activity	Expected	Final
Research	3	6	Enhanced Organizational Capacity	7	5
Community Undertakings	6	5	Enhanced Coordination of Services	7	5
Orientation/Workshops/Conference	1	1	Other	1	1
Support for Project Development/ Management	1	0			
<u>Public Awareness</u>			Articles/ Press Write-ups	4	5
Production of Awareness Tools and Documents	5	3	Window Displays	4	4
<u>Public Awareness Activities</u>			Packaging and Branding	1	1
Documentary	7	7	Public Forums/ Conferences	1	1
Speech		1	Annual Progress Reports	4	4
Broadcast Interview	2	3	News Releases/	2	2
Advertising	3	4	Announcements/ Events	3	4
Direct Contact with Users	3	3	Letter Campaign		
Artistic Performance	4	5	Telephone Campaign	3	3
Research Publications	1	1	Participation in Local Events	2	2
Pamphlets/ Flyers			Other	1	1

Note: Information provided by the HRSDC Vancouver Office – there was inconsistency in the reporting of achievements by funded projects and some information is, or may be incomplete.

Highlights

- Cool Aid Society Homeless Needs Survey – a baseline of the homeless population in Greater Victoria profiling characteristics and needs to increase public awareness and understanding and policy development
- Canadian Housing Research Foundation – a number of articles on nimbyism, and research on Greater Victoria’s housing stock, 4 forums (Accepting Supported and Transitional Housing in Residential Neighbourhoods and Innovative Approaches to developing Affordable Housing and Partnering on Solutions to Homelessness)
- BGCA publications and 5 forums
- Open Door research – Cycle of Homelessness, Health, Justice
- Pacifica Housing Advisory Association – coordinated housing registry database for information sharing
- VNFC Fernwood House Orientation/Workshops (14) and 5 public awareness activities on homelessness
- Community Based Social Marketing Strategy to develop communication tools for community engagement and a Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) model for piloting aimed at creating more collaborative partnerships amongst stakeholders and businesses and leverage funding for future implementation in the Greater Victoria area

- Communications Plan and Community Plan Assessment – under development. Development of the Communications Plan has involved a survey of public and business sector attitudes regarding understanding and awareness of homelessness, barriers to participation, and willingness to be involved in finding solutions, etc. and more recently, a VSCH web site is being developed, as part of the overall communications strategy.

Other initiatives included: Downtown Service Providers (regular meetings and advocacy role); St. John the Divine (shelter pilot, subsequent report and media coverage); Victoria Homelessness Steering Committee; media coverage including Focus Magazine challenge to find solutions.

5. KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATIONS

■ Data Collection/ Research

The VSCH does not have an articulated research strategy. In conducting the Assessment, it was apparent that there are continuing data problems, including availability and quality. These deficiencies affected the level of possible analysis. Fortunately, a number of local research efforts were available to augment agency and community knowledge of homelessness. As well, based on the research that was undertaken, the community has just begun to see the impact: the recent series of newspaper articles were comprehensive and well written, grounded in the HNS. For the first time, there was solid information to inform the public on who the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness are and, what they need. (See Attachment 2 for more information.)

Examples of Data Collection/ Research Undertaken during Phase 2

- BGCA / UVIC - *Challenges Facing Homeless Families in Greater Victoria: Past or Present Abuse, Mental Health Problems and Substance Misuse Issues*
- 2005 Homeless Count
- 2007 Homeless Needs Survey
- Coordinated Housing Registry
- Mom Reach (needs of young pregnant women)
- I-Track project (intravenous drug use in Victoria)
- *Serving the Homeless – Social Agencies in the Red Zone*

Moving Forward – Research and Data Collection

- Develop an articulated research strategy and establish strong ties with community organizations undertaking research, e.g. the United Way, University of Victoria, Community Council, and service agencies.
- Identify research needs as part of the articulated strategy, e.g. gaps in the health care system for people who are homeless or unstably housed, understanding what happens to unstably housed seniors as they reach 65, and exploring the needs of transgendered individuals.
- Undertake a homeless needs survey every two years to track homeless numbers and needs, expanding the survey to include all populations and sub populations.
- Develop an effective system for collecting and recording information on the numbers of: different people in shelters on a monthly/quarterly basis, with demographics; people accessing each service or agency; services delivered (e.g. number of outreach contacts, number of nursing interventions, needles exchanged, condoms given out, meals served, bed nights etc.); and people on waitlists for housing, and in some agencies, the numbers of people turned away from service.
- Gather information from the housing registries, e.g. data about available housing, as well as the housing needs of individuals and families.
- Undertake more frequent, regular (annual) monitoring and evaluation of NHI funded projects so the roll-up at the end of each funding phase is easier and information gaps are identified and rectified early.

- Encourage HHB to develop and maintain a consistent, clear project reporting framework and effective quality control system.

■ Knowledge and Expertise to Share

The VSCH has a number of projects that that could be of use to other communities.

- The **Burnside Gorge Community Association (BGCA)'s Homeless Families Outreach Project** identified documented issues/concerns and, delivered services to homeless families in the Victoria area. UVIC followed up with a research paper and the research, knowledge, and experience has been leveraged into a province-wide effort to document and support homeless families.
- **Homeless Needs Survey** was a collaborative research project led by the Victoria Cool Aid Society. Its purpose was not just to count, but to better understand the needs of people who are homeless or unstably housed, directly from people with this experience. The methodology involved an enumeration and a survey, involved over 200 volunteers and 60 social service providers.
- **Extreme Weather Protocol and Communications Plan**, a collaborative effort of numerous community agencies, the faith community, and government. The protocol has 3 stages, each one coming into effect as successive shelters reach capacity. The City of Victoria coordinates the protocol and the Province has contributed funding.

Communications was acknowledged as the area least addressed in Phase 1. In Phase 2 the VSCH made several concerted efforts to address communication issues and increase public awareness around homelessness. NHI funded projects included a provincial communication strategy framework developed by a consultant for SCPC, the development of a Community Based Social Marketing Plan (CBSMP) and, a project undertaken by Artemis PR & Design to assess public knowledge and interest in strategies for greater inclusion in solutions to homelessness. Several community agencies and Victoria's largest newspaper undertook projects (not funded by NHI) that have also helped to bring homelessness issues to the fore.

■ Information Sharing

Information sharing between agencies about clients and services (as appropriate) has always existed, both informally and formally, e.g. the Downtown Services Providers Group (and its forerunners) provides a focal point for bringing together agencies and the Downtown business community to discuss issues. Currently an informal meeting is held at Our Place or another agency on a regular basis where frontline workers meet and discuss the needs of individuals on their caseloads with strict adherence to privacy and confidentiality concerns. The formation of the VSCH in 2000 and the use of a sector representation model have encouraged information sharing both within and beyond the Committee. The Asset Inventory and other information on homelessness initiatives have been posted on the City of Victoria website and were available to anyone who sought them out.

Recently, several other groups have formed to work on homelessness or monitor the issues. These include the UDI (Urban Development Institute) homelessness committee, the Capital Regional District Homelessness Task Force, the Housing Affordability Partnership (HAP), and the Independence Settlement Society (ISS).

■ Public Awareness

Until the recent communications plan, Victoria has not had a well formulated strategy for information sharing with the community. Although the VSCH has worked stoically, there has been little public acknowledgement or awareness of the Committee's activities.

As one member of the Steering Committee commented: "What we haven't done is tell the story."

“VSCH needs a greater community presence.... should be more proactive about sharing accomplishments and success stories... This not only raises public awareness about the Committee, but also informs people that there are things being done to find solutions to homelessness.” (Artemis)

The research undertaken for the Communications Plan revealed the public (and business community) has limited knowledge of the homeless and specific efforts to deal with homelessness. This finding is supported by the results of the Community Development Survey.

“The public has limited knowledge of the term ‘homeless’, and the demographics of the people who are homeless or at-risk-of being homeless” (Artemis)

There are signs this situation is changing – homelessness is now high on the community’s agenda. One very positive outcome of the 2005 Homeless Count and 2007 Homeless Needs Survey was some improvement in community awareness as both efforts received widespread media coverage. The HNS was followed shortly by Focus Magazine challenging the community to find ‘solutions’ to homelessness. Their and other media coverage leapt into a perceived void in the public’s mind. The community forum sponsored by Focus around the Independence Settlement Project attracted about 700 participants, the largest gathering ever for a homelessness initiative.

Subsequently, there have been numerous (almost daily) articles and editorials focussed on homelessness, albeit without much acknowledgment of the role and accomplishments of the VSCH. It was perhaps unfortunate that many of the successful NHI projects that actually created new housing were not completed until almost the end of Phase 2 and, therefore, could not be highlighted throughout.

Specific activities undertaken by the VSCH during Phase 2 included: a one pager “Homelessness Facts”; a “Hard Night Out” (where VSCH members, along with municipal politicians accompanied by a reported, roamed and slept on city streets; regular engagement by the VSCH co-chairs with the media and key community stakeholders; Homelessness Awareness Week in the fall of 2006; and open houses to launch projects such as Our Place and the Homeless Needs Survey.

Several other events also occurred. Burnside Gorge Community Association (BGCA) held a display of art by homeless children. “Through the Eyes of Children” was mounted in Victoria City Hall. Several forums with street youth speakers were held at the University of Victoria. Our Place generated a newspaper insert through a Leadership Victoria program. The insert was designed and developed by a group of area professionals in leadership training.

Moving Forward – Potential Strategies for Communications

- Implement a comprehensive communications strategy – building capacity into the VSCH (e.g. retaining consultants with responsibility for communications, publicity and media relations, including a communications person on the Committee).
- Improve communications between government, non-profits and businesses. These three groups speak very different languages and follow very different processes. An effort to speak the business language and being open to accommodating different processes would be an asset in engaging the business community.
- Fill in existing public knowledge gaps (including demographics, local initiatives, available resources, who to turn to or how to help) perhaps by establishing and making available a list of existing resources and agencies.
- Identify opportunities for providing contributions to fill in service gaps, e.g. developing and regularly maintaining an online list of current needs of the different non-profit agencies.
- Create a newsletter to inform the public (in a clear and focussed way) on the proceedings of the Committee and other initiatives addressing homelessness in the community – keeping the business community informed and engaged is integral to having them support and help create solutions.
- Develop and maintain a specific dynamic and ‘go to’ VSCH website on homelessness and encouraging agency/government websites to more effectively highlight the work of the VSCH (either through information or a link to the VSCH website).

- Enhance the Downtown Service Providers Group's ability to represent Downtown issues in a larger regional homeless strategy.
- Involve 'high-profile individuals as speakers, presenters, members of the Committee, etc.
- Provide annual reports to the community.
- Provide case studies of successful NHI projects to show the public what has been done, how they have been done, who was involved, and their outcomes – these could put on-line.
- Host public information sessions/ forums – linking housing and homelessness, profiling solutions to homelessness.

6. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CAPACITY)

■ Community Development Survey

The CPA required the completion of a community development survey. In total 25 surveys were sent out, with 14 replies – a 56% response rate. Despite the relatively low return rate, the questionnaire was completed by local government, project, and community representatives. There was a good mix of respondents not part of funded projects, whose agency received funding, and from those who were both a member of the VSCH and received funding. No senior government representatives completed the questionnaire.

Responses to most questions showed a high degree of consensus, although there were a number of questions where the results were more evenly split. The small sample size affected the results with 1 vote = 7% of the total. For this reason, the survey results should be viewed with a 'grain of salt'. The survey's results (see Attachment 3) were broken down on a percentage basis, with a 'mean' calculated for each question.

Respondents agreed:

- there is good representation from the various sectors addressing homelessness;
- there has been an increase in the number of volunteers working in the homelessness sector;
- individuals and organizations have a shared sense of purpose and values in serving the homeless, good working relationships, and a strong sense of cooperation;
- leaders, who address homelessness, share power with community members and work to resolve conflicts and find consensus;
- the community has the capacity to develop strategic solutions to address homelessness;
- the community works well with its funding partners;
- there has been an improvement of the coordination of resources to community agencies working in the homelessness sector; and
- there is a better understanding of the problem of homelessness, its causes and solutions.

Respondents are divided on the following:

- efforts have been made to include homeless or formerly homeless people in addressing homelessness;
- people have improved their knowledge, attitudes and skills related to working with people who are homeless;
- integrated goals and objectives to help in planning services and supports to the homeless have been developed;
- leaders who address homelessness are diverse and representative of the population;
- the community has the drive and enthusiasm to follow through with solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness;
- there are strong relationships between governments, non-profit and private sectors and community agencies; and
- there is a regular evaluation of progress towards strategic goals to address homelessness

The majority of respondents indicated they disagreed or disagreed strongly with a number of questions:

- there are enough funding partners to ensure adequate ongoing, financial resources for addressing homelessness;
- the community has enhanced its ability to address the problem of homelessness through relevant skills development (workshops and training);
- agencies and organizations that help homeless people can more easily adapt to situations of limited resource and high demand for services than a few years ago;
- the community has been successful in ensuring that local and regional government policies are supportive of efforts to address homelessness; and
- citizens believe their local efforts can help to prevent and reduce homelessness.

There is a strong sense that: the community is beginning to understand homelessness; the response needed is a shared one; individuals, organizations, and funding partners are cooperating, and working well together, with a shared sense of purpose; and the community has the capacity to develop solutions to homelessness.

Of most concern is the lack of resources generally, the lack of supportive government policies, the inability of agencies to adapt to limited resources and the need for services, and the lack of knowledge/ awareness of amongst the general public on how their efforts can help prevent and reduce homelessness.

■ Strategic Planning

The VSCH has engaged in a number of strategic planning exercises, including a priority setting workshop at the end of Phase 1 that established the priorities for the updated Community Plan, as well as associated activities, objectives, and outcomes. A workshop took place in the fall of 2004 and, as part of this CPA, a workshop to establish priorities for the next Phase of the NHI. The planning sessions included the members of the VSCH, as well as other community stakeholders (e.g. CMHC, several provincial ministries, Aboriginal and agency representatives).

The Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness (VSCH) grew out of the CRUNCH process which was a multi-sectoral community approach used to address key social issues in Victoria's Downtown. The Committee, in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 reflecting its original mandate through HRSDC and the need to have a process for implementing SCPI, has focused on: the development/update of the Community Plan; the setting-up and overseeing of the funding allocation process; and a networking forum for sharing information.

Mandate

The Committee was established as part of the National Homelessness Initiative (now the Homelessness Partnering Strategy) to represent the views and priorities of Victoria. Specifically, the Committee develops, implements and monitors a Community Action Plan on Homelessness. The Committee also recommends to all levels of governments and other interested parties how to respond effectively to the many challenges of homelessness within the community.

There has been continuing ambiguity about a wider role, e.g. a committee with responsibility for coordinating planning to address homelessness. This may change with the establishment of the Regional Homelessness Secretariat (due in June 2007). The VSCH and Regional Homelessness Task Force are in discussion on a collaborative partnership.

As part of the 2003 priority setting session for updating the Community a number of objectives for Phase 2 were identified:

1. Address the growing needs of homeless people in Victoria.
2. Increase/ enhance the number/amount of (1) transitional and long-term supportive housing units and (2) emergency shelter beds and (3) permanent housing.
3. Better coordinate (reduce overlap and duplication), expand and initiate supportive and preventative support services and activities that assist the homeless and those at-risk to (1) access and maintain housing and shelter and (2) develop greater self-sufficiency and independence.

4. Identify and encourage partnership opportunities and synergies amongst service organizations and build community capacity to ensure sustainability for projects and the community process, including identifying other sources of funding.
5. Develop an inclusive and transparent communications strategy that increases community awareness, involvement, and support on a sustained basis.
6. Establish a process involving the community to monitor, evaluate and update the Community Action Plan to ensure it is a 'living planning document'.
7. Develop and administer the Plan through a broadly based Community Steering Committee, including representation and participation from Aboriginal and youth-serving organizations.

Based on the CPA analysis, recognizing that funding was limited given the scope of the needs, most of these Objectives were addressed (and met or partially met) through a variety of projects. The two Objectives not as well addressed were 5 and 6. While the Committee began working on communications early in Phase 2, a plan is still in the development stage. The effect, at least in part, of the slowness in developing a communications strategy is reflected in the 57% 'agreed' response to Question 15 in the Community Development Survey. While an evaluation of Phase 1 took place, there has been no regular Committee monitoring or evaluation, except for periodic project updates. Indeed, in the Community Development Survey, Question 3 received a mean of only 2.25 and ranked 20th out of 23 questions.

Committee Vision, Mission, Principles, Goals and Objectives, and Strategic Priorities

In March 2005, the Committee adopted the following vision, mission, principles, goals and objectives, and strategic priorities.

- **Vision:** With our strength coming from our broad-based community membership, we will be recognized as a catalyst in alleviating homelessness in Victoria.
- **Mission:** The Victoria Homelessness Steering Committee, through its leadership, will enhance the capacity of the community to address homelessness and to advance local understanding of the causes of, and solutions to, homelessness. This was later revised to include "...in the Greater Victoria Area" at the end of the sentence.
- **Principles:** Broadly curious; recognizing complexity, accountable and collaborative.
- **Goals and Objectives:** Identify needs and plan for effective community responses to homelessness issues; identify and assist the community to access all available resources to address homelessness; develop a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach to addressing homelessness; to evaluate the impact and results of initiatives on homelessness as well as the effectiveness of the committee at meeting its priorities and delivering its mandate; and develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to communicate the committee's purpose, leadership activities and enhance understanding of the causes of and solutions to homelessness.
- **Strategic Priorities:** Confirm mission, mandate, scope and role of the Homelessness Steering Committee to ensure it is aligned with the Committee's goals and objectives; review and update the Homelessness Plan confirming the purpose and scope of the plan, incorporating evaluation findings and identifying successes; mobilize community partnerships through the implementation of the 'demonstration project' emphasizing collaboration in a multi-focus, cross-sectoral environment; and implement the communications strategy.

The reworking of the vision and mission statements was helpful – it spelled out the reason the Committee existed and focused them on what they were trying to do. The guiding principles spoke well of how the Committee would go about doing its business. The results of the Community Development Survey support this – strongly indicating a sense of shared purpose and similar values.

One of the strongest messages Artemis PR & Design heard during the development of the communications strategy was that: "There is an immediate need to develop a long-term strategy that looks at the entire picture, but has short-term goals. The plan needs to be results driven and continually evaluated and modified as needed."

While clear and appropriate goals and objectives were established, quantifiable measures/targets were not developed, measurement was either “achieved” or “not achieved”, leaving room for interpretation and lack of clarity around what was actually accomplished. This weakness was further highlighted in the Community Development Survey results where respondents were equally split on whether or not the community had developed integrated goals and objectives to help in planning services and supports.

Moving Forward – Suggested Changes for the Future

- Continue to use a broadly-based community steering committee (and strengthen the committee with additional resources, mandate, etc.) as the delivery mechanism, forum for sharing/ receiving information, and developing policy and strategies for addressing homelessness.
- Continue to take a strategic approach to funding allocations and leveraging.
- Develop an inclusive and transparent communications strategy that increases community awareness, involvement, and support on a sustained basis (e.g. web site development).
- Make sure that communications, informational material, and the Plan are succinct easy to read documents, providing information on what the plan is, who is involved , what is happening and when, and how progress is monitored and assessed.
- Develop and implement a regular monitoring and evaluation framework and process (on an annual basis) that reviews progress (report cards, accountability forums, etc.).
- Identify quantifiable targets against which to measure progress.

■ Representation and Decision-Making

Inclusion

The VSCH uses a sectoral approach to Committee membership, i.e. sector representatives are meant to keep in touch with others in the sector to ensure that each sector is aware of what is happening and increase involvement. Consistent membership amongst some key stakeholders, meeting attendance and the same co-chairs over the full period promoted mutual awareness, understanding and cohesion amongst members, agencies and other key sector groups – key outcomes of good leadership.

As the Survey results indicate, there is a strong (100%) view that the level of inclusion is high.

On the other hand, in 2003/04 as the provincial government ‘downsized’ a number of key members were lost. The Committee worked hard to fill these gaps, with the result that it has returned to its former working level. In June 2005 the Committee was expanded as part of a planned initiative to diversify and include those who directly served the homeless and youth and who fund homelessness initiatives. These additions brought the ‘major players’ in homelessness to one table and set the stage for the development of strategic partnerships and advocacy opportunities. New members represented not only specific interest groups within the sector, they brought differing perspectives, attitudes, and skill sets that greatly increased diversity, knowledge, and skill across the board.

Committee Structure and Membership

The Steering Committee will represent the following 13 constituencies:

Downtown Service Providers, Victoria Inner City Health Coalition, Non-Profit Housing, Shelter Providers, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Aboriginal Community, Business, Women and Children, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, City of Victoria, Ministry of Human Resources, BC Housing, and Youth.

Representatives of other organizations will serve in an advisory capacity and participate in Committee work for issue-specific topics.

During Phase 1, a number of attempts were made to include homeless individuals and youth on the Committee. For many reasons this did not work. Instead, a more effective approach was to ensure key service providers working with these groups on a daily basis were included on the Committee (e.g. Downtown Service Providers and the Victoria Youth Empowerment Society – VYES). During both Phase 1 and Phase 2 there was Aboriginal participation on the VSCH.

Although there were no homeless members of the VSCH, several events included the homeless in projects. In March 2004 a youth engagement forum had 22 Aboriginal youth participate to gain greater insight into the reasons for youth homelessness and steps other youth have taken to move out of that cycle. In 2005 the Stepping Stones to Housing charrette was targeted to bring attention to the needs of homeless families and children, develop a plan for collaboration between agencies and bring community decision makers together.

The Homeless Needs Survey in 2005, the 2000, 2003, and 2007 Assets Inventories, and 2003 Community Plan Assessment are good examples of including the homeless/homeless at-risk in efforts to address homelessness. Within many agencies, homeless/homeless at-risk are included in planning and decision-making at various levels. As well, initiatives such as the production of the 2005 “Imagine” homeless video profiled the many faces of homelessness in Victoria – a project spearheaded by Leadership Victoria and for which BGCA undertook a lead role.

Since its inception, the Committee has attempted to involve the business community. In 2006 the World Urban Forum took place under the banner of “business and community working together to end homelessness campaign. It was attended by VSCH members. Since 2005, a representative of the Downtown Victoria Business Association has been a VSCH member. Nevertheless, the business community as a whole has not been engaged and remains largely unaware of the activities of the VSCH.

Community Leadership

The Phase 2 updated Community Plan identified a number of objectives and outcomes for strengthening leadership and cohesiveness within the Homeless Initiative, including: improved and more inclusive decision-making around investments; a more coordinated response between sectors to address homelessness; broader partnerships; increased community awareness and ownership of activities; and better information sharing between agencies. Leadership development also emerged as a key identified priority from the 2004 Strategic Planning session, as reflected in the revamped vision, mission, goals and objectives, and strategic priorities.

The VSCH has benefited from consistent leadership over the span of the NHI – for example, the two co-chairs served throughout, as did a number of Committee members. Though a formal written succession plan was not developed, the Committee was keenly aware of these issues. As sector representatives knew they would leave the Committee, a replacement was recruited. The Committee made consistent efforts to balance its membership with an eye to the future, i.e. it practiced succession planning.

Leadership is seen as a Committee strength: as the Survey results demonstrate, there is a strongly held view that leaders share power, work to resolve conflicts and find consensus.
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Decision-Making

The VSCH uses a consensus based decision-making approach. For example, for the allocations process, although a scoring system was developed (and used by most members), in the end decisions were based more on informed discussion amongst Committee members, with no votes taken. With the main exception of a sub-committee to assist the development of a communications strategy, generally all Committee members have participated in the decision-making process (i.e. there was no separate funding table).

The Committee has developed (and adhered to) conflict of interest guidelines to ensure transparency and accountability, particularly where a Committee member is also associated with a funded project. These approaches resulted in excellent stewardship of the planning and implementation process for NHI fund expenditure. In particular, the conflict of interest policy supported a collaborative approach to funding decisions in what is normally a competitive and territorial environment. There was demonstrated success in

an integrated approach to Aboriginal funding (relationships were fostered between Aboriginal groups and other service providers) and amongst several projects (including Our Place, Harrison Place and the Out of the Rain shelter).

Cohesiveness

While the Survey pointed to a fairly strong sense of cooperation within the community to address homelessness, the Survey responses also pointed to concerns about the community's drive and enthusiasm to follow through with solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness, the ability of agencies to adapt to situations of limited resource and high demand, the relationship between the various sectors, particularly with governments and the private sector, and a lack of public understanding, awareness and citizen empowerment.

Cohesiveness

The sense of community and commitment of purpose, the quality of relationships (shared values, trust, cooperation, sense of commitment, openness, working relationships, ability to solve hard issues and to reconcile differences).

■ Assessment of Relationships

Overall during Phase 2 there was a definite strengthening of relationships in a number of areas.

- Between homeless serving agencies: most markedly in the formation of networks (e.g. the Downtown Service Providers), partnerships coordination, and coalitions, with clusters of agencies working Together, e.g. the Out of the Rain shelter, the Cold Wet, Weather Strategy, Our Place, and VNFC, M'Akola and Surrounded by Cedar (Aboriginal Youth Transitional Housing (and a number of other organizations) – to mention just a few.
- Local government: in particular, the City of Victoria has had strong representation on the Committee and with representation from the CRD through the Capital Region Housing Corporation and, more recently (as a regular guest), the Chair of the Regional Homelessness Task Force, links with the region have been strengthened.
- Aboriginal serving agencies: (as many as 6) have been significantly involved from the beginning – in the identification of objectives, strategies, project selection and community profile development and there has been a VNFC representative on the Committee during both Phases.
- Charitable sector: United Way involvement has been significant in terms of its continuous membership in the VSCH, supportive funding of various projects, and its recent and concerted focus on Housing for Low Income and Working Poor and Mental Health and Substance Abuse.
- Private sector: most significantly in the area of financial management, fundraising and community awareness.
- Media: the co-chairs worked hard to forge links with the media and during Phase 2 the media developed a relationship with some key agencies and spokespeople.

“In my community, there are good working relationships between organizations and agencies addressing homelessness”
(Survey responses: 86% support for a mean of 3.21).

On the other hand, Survey responses indicate some ambivalence about relationships between sectors, particularly with respect to the private sector and provincial government (and VIHA). There is a widely shared view that the private sector itself has not been sufficiently engaged and remains largely unaware of the activities of the VSCH.

In interviews, some concern was expressed that representation from senior governments (particularly from some provincial ministries and VIHA) was not sufficiently senior enough to have sufficient impact on decision-making within their organizations. The 'roller-coaster' of senior government and Health Authority policy and funding shifts towards the end of Phase 1 and into Phase 2 significantly impacted agency capacity, at the same time as there was increased need and continued limited resources (particularly with respect to safe, affordable, supportive and transitional housing, mental health and addictions services).

Human Resources

Throughout Phase 2 efforts were made to widen the skills and attitudes of VSCH members: strategic planning initiatives, broadening membership, participation in forums, conferences and training sessions. There were also several efforts directed at improving skills beyond the VSCH: VNFC Fernwood House Orientation/Workshop (involving 35 staff and 10 organizations) and the 2007 Housing Needs Survey (with over 220 volunteers recruited and trained and 60 agencies involved).

Nevertheless, as the Survey results demonstrate, not enough has been done in this area: concerns were registered regarding improved community knowledge, attitudes and skills related to working with people who are homeless and enhanced ability to address the problem of homelessness through relevant skills development (workshops and training). One of the difficulties for VSCH members is that despite their dedication and hard work, they are working “off the sides of their desks” when it comes to Committee work. There is perhaps some evidence of ‘burn-out’ – so much effort and commitment over many years without significant progress in the face of more need for more facilities and services and continued limited resources. Without, the continuing participation, support and direction provided by HRSDC the Committee would be far less effective – such support is a key underpinning.

These are real concerns, particularly when coupled with the perceived sense agencies are less able to adapt to a challenging environment. Having to cope with external pressures over many years has taken a toll. The challenges agencies and organizations have had to face destabilized many of them and it has taken a considerable effort to rebuild. And while 93% of Survey respondents agreed that there has been an increase in the number of volunteers, only thirty-six percent (36%) felt Victoria citizens believe their local effort can help prevent and reduce homelessness.

Moving Forward – What to Keep/ What to Change

- Create and maintain strong consistent leadership, particularly in the Chair’s role.
- Strengthen business representation and encourage senior governments and VIHA to appoint senior representatives.
- Obtain senior management involvement from MCFD.
- Involve new emerging funding/ equity partners, e.g. Credit unions, developers, land owners, other business leaders.
- Consider mechanisms for increasing Aboriginal representation, i.e. AHMA, Band Council representatives.
- Continue to develop collaborative, trusting and inclusive relationships across all sectors – clarify the reporting relationship of sector representatives, ensuring that there is a reporting back to their sector.
- Ensure the new regional body includes members of the VSCH to provide continuity.
- Stay focused on projects that: are collaborative in nature, can maximize leverage; have the most potential for sustainability through operating or capital funding from multiple sources; and that focus on housing and sheltering people with the necessary support systems for individual sustainability in their journey away from homelessness.
- Maintain HRSDC’s support: committee coordination (e.g. meeting arrangements – agendas, minutes); project monitoring; providing direction on federal requirements; providing/ updating information on other matters of relevance.
- Secure a dedicated paid secretariat function that could work with the Chair, Committee, and HRDC to facilitate the development and implementation of the Plan.
- Obtain resources to manage the communications strategy (web site, media relations, event organization, etc.).
- Obtain resources to organize/ attend training and skill development sessions – one potential area is on leveraging funds, developing successful proposals.

■ Policy Development

Policy/Structural Trends 2003-07 Summary

- Adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy
- Adoption of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy
- Inauguration of the Regional Housing Trust Fund
- Development of the City Housing Trust Fund
- Updating of official community plans to include implementation of the regional growth strategy
- Updating of the City of Victoria's Downtown Plan
- Development of secondary suite policies
- City closure of unsafe buildings, many housing those at-risk of homelessness
- Development of a Cold, Wet, Weather Strategy and Extreme Weather Protocol led by the City of Victoria
- Change in United Way funding priorities
- Province tightened income assistance eligibility rules in 2002; new rates adopted in 2007
- MEIA is enhancing its outreach and linkages with both clients and service agencies
- Senior government housing policy shifted to supportive/ assisted housing for seniors and persons with disabilities (away from low income family housing) over the last decade; rent supplements and more shelter funding introduced in 2006
- Addictions were transferred to VIHA

During Phase 2, a number of specific VSCH activities were undertaken to influence or shape many of the policy and structural trends noted above: policy: on-going contact with elected and non-elected officials at all government levels local media, and the business sector; regular written updates to Victoria City Council; advocacy around funding (e.g. the Aboriginal Youth Transitional Housing and Cold Wet Weather Strategy) and the inclusion of homelessness in major policy initiatives; community events such as Homelessness Awareness Week; publicly launching significant activities (e.g. the Homeless Needs Survey); and presentations/ guest speakers at Committee meetings. Individual VSCH members, working in their various positions in the community, were directly involved and instrumental in affecting policy, both at the staff and elected officials levels.

The Victoria Steering Committee was not directly involved in broad-based community initiatives (e.g. Vibrant Communities, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, etc.), with the exception of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy which Victoria Aboriginal groups have been part of. On the other hand, individual Committee members and many agencies (including Committee members' agencies) in the Victoria area have links with several of these networks and/or are members (e.g. Shelter Net BC and the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, CHRA).

Moving Forward - Focusing Additional Effort

- Use the new regional structure to develop a longer-range, broader-based plan (both in terms of geographic area and issues), with specific implementation strategies, quantifiable targets, and monitoring mechanisms.
- Continue to work/advocate with community partners to effect positive policy and strategic approaches to address the needs of the homelessness and homeless at-risk populations.
- Explore other initiatives for lessons learned, best practices, etc. to apply to the Capital Region, where and when appropriate.

■ Financial and Non-Financial Resources

Though there was little change in the number of funding sources, the amounts of money each invested significantly increased in Phase 2. The Phase 1 total was nearly \$5M including \$4,000 in non-financial contributions. In Phase 2 there was \$19M. Increases were primarily from CMHC and the BC Housing Management Commission who provided capital funding for housing projects.

Two other changes of note between Phase 1 and 2 were the decrease in funding from service clubs (\$1.5M) and an increase in funding from non-profit organizations (\$600,000): the \$1.5 M came from the Kiwanis Club of Victoria and other clubs for a capital project in Phase 1; in Phase 2 there were two contributions (each at \$300,000) from new formed City and Regional Housing Trust Funds.

One of the strategic priorities implemented in Phase 2 by the VSCH was leveraging NHI funds, using a number of successful strategies.

- **Addressing one or two clear priorities:** In Phase 2 the VSCH decided to narrow their view and support the creation of new housing capacity and, services that maintain housing and prevent eviction (e.g. new shelter spaces, Harrison Place, Our Place, the Aboriginal Youth Transitional Housing, Coordinated Housing Registry, and BGCA Outreach project).
- **Focussing support:** The VSCH consensus decision-making model was used when the Committee decided to select both Our Place and the Aboriginal Youth Transitional Housing. This allowed the Committee to put all its energy in just one place at a time (these projects happened at different times), with members playing roles where they were best, within their sectors as agency leaders, community spokespeople, politicians and advocates.
- **‘Getting the funding ball rolling’ – providing seed money:** In both cases NHI – SCPI was the first committed funder of the project. Agencies in these examples, brought their commitment to the table – land and capital and NHI became the first partner. Getting the first partner on board was crucial. When other potential funders saw that the federal government had committed funds to a project, then it was easier for them to provide support. A snowball effect often follows.
- **Leveraging assets:** In the funding realm, this is a positive take. VSCH support with NHI dollars, step one, allowed committee members to advocate and influence potential funders to commit to the project, step two. Dollars and influence equalled leverage. Financial and non-financial assets were extremely well used by the VSCH in Phase 2.
- **Advocating on behalf of applicants:** Committee members worked collectively, lobbying funders to ‘come on board’, particularly with respect to operational funding (e.g. Aboriginal Youth Transitional Housing).

The VSCH was clear and direct with the community about funding priorities, distributing criteria prior to the applications process, including the importance of partnering. The Committee held well publicized information sessions for potential applicants where criteria, application and the allocation process were discussed. Question and answer periods were a part of these sessions as well. Further assistance was available for individual agencies in assessing their project or preparing their submission. This resulted in fewer total applications, but with those applying having a greater probability of success.

Despite the considerable improvement in the coordination of resources and obtaining leveraged funds, there is a widely held view that not enough funding has been made available, or will be made available, to ensure adequate, ongoing resources to address homelessness in Victoria – a view supported by the Survey results. Though some progress has been made in preventing homelessness for a few people, there are many more people facing eviction and homelessness, for a myriad of reasons. Local agencies cannot help due to the lack of affordable housing and support services necessary for people to get off and stay off the street or, become ‘homeful’. That is, having a place they can call their own that is safe, secure, appropriate, affordable, and meets their needs such that it can be called ‘home’.

Moving Forward – Other Possible Strategies

- Develop projects that are larger, highly visible and built by well-established not-for-profits that have leveraging power through their existing programs and reputation, contribution of equity, relationship with donors, etc.
- Obtain operational funding (often the critical fail point for a proposal) through advocacy, partnerships, and proven organizational capacity.
- Leverage significant funds for equipment and furnishings by mobilizing support from the business community.

- Leverage support services through good working relationships with major providers (e.g. VIHA, provincial ministries and community-based groups).
- Develop Committee and agency capacity and skills in leveraging funding, including a scan of funding agencies and their requirements, timelines, etc.

7. THE LAST WORD

The VSCH is in discussion on a collaborative partnership with the newly established Regional Homelessness Task Force. Over the years, the Committee has largely focused its efforts on homelessness in the City of Victoria where the problem, needs, and assets are most prevalent. There are both pros and cons to the possible changes. Homelessness, while concentrated in the City of Victoria, is evident throughout the region and a 'regional' focus is desirable, but it is also important not to lose the focus needed to address homelessness in the City. There is also a danger of losing the momentum and cohesion that has been developed within the VSCH over many years. A new group dynamic will occur with new members at the table, new perspectives and expectations.

The City of Victoria, as the only municipality involved in the NHI has played a lead role in the 7-year process, lending its support through staff, Council, and funding. Developing a new regional plan (a separate exercise from updating the current Community Plan) for homelessness will involve other municipalities plus the CRD. Ideally this will bring additional resources to bear, but it is not clear at this time what the extent of these will be. There is certainly considerable concern in some quarters that future funding could be 'diluted' and less focused on addressing very significant needs amongst the homeless population in the City.

These concerns are reflected in the results of the Community Development Survey: while respondents strongly indicated a belief that the community has the capacity to develop strategic solutions to homelessness, at the same time, they expressed strong disagreement with the view that the community has been successful in ensuring that local and regional government policies are supportive of efforts to address homelessness (at least in the past).

Moving Forward – Suggestions for Ensuring that Momentum is Maintained

- Identify an interim model to manage the updated plan and distribution of funds to projects while the region develops its 10-year plan to end homelessness.
- Have some overlap between the membership of the VSCH and the new body to ensure continuity in transferring knowledge and experience.
- Ensure that the focus of the Community Plan and distributed funds do not get lost in the higher level extensive discussions that will occur around a longer term and much larger plan.
- Encourage the Downtown Service Providers Group to continue tracking the needs of their agencies, the homeless and the impacts of policy change to inform the VSCH/ Secretariat, particularly if there is a major change in membership. The role of this committee in providing the "voice of downtown" could become pivotal if this is the case.

Moving Forward – Housing Stability and Future Recommendations

Based on the experience of the VSCH in Phase 2, the following strategies were efficacious:

- Emphasize permanent solutions – the bricks and mortar with committed operational funding.
- Concentrate resources on programs that offered measurable results.
- Focus on key target groups – the chronically homeless, Aboriginal people, families, and youth with improved core support services and moving them on a priority basis from emergency to transitional and supportive housing.
- Prioritize funding towards housing and housing related projects.
- Utilize existing buildings and converting/expanding them into additional housing/ shelter units and beds to address areas of greatest need (women, the chronically homeless and youth).

- Provide housing with built in support services.
- Provide community based support services that significantly impact a person's ability to find and maintain safe, affordable housing, while leveraging services already in place
- Respond to core service needs by expanding hours of operation and available services.
- Leverage substantial funds to augment HPS funding and make projects feasible.
- Recognize that locations outside the City of Victoria are viable and provide for a wider response base.

Implementation of a key strategy, capacity building (and, in particular, communications), was implemented late in Phase 2. However there is no doubt than an effective communications strategy has significant potential to positively impact homelessness by increasing community understanding, awareness, and mobilization.

The Homeless Partnering Strategy

The Homeless Partnering Strategy is the next phase of Federal funding and the VSCH is in the process of identifying the next steps for a proposal call, based on the information from the CPA and a recent planning session. At the same time as noted above, it is unclear what the precise role the VSCH will play in steering the next phase.

The Homelessness Partnerships Initiative will provide \$1.389 million in funding over the next two years. The breakdown is as follows: Designated (\$900k), Outreach (\$150k), and Aboriginal (\$340k). The target areas are: prevention measures; transitional, supportive and longer term housing and services; emergency facilities and urgent need services; and improvement of community services and service delivery networks. Communities are required to limit funding recommendations on proposal activities addressing emergency facilities and urgent need services to a maximum of 25% of their total community allocation.

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy is aimed at the prevention and reduction of homelessness across Canada and has three broad objectives: improved partnerships, particularly with provinces and territories; enhanced sustainability; and tangible results for the homeless population.

The Homeless Partnering Strategy Expected Outcomes

- Increased investment in transitional and supportive housing and services available to meet the needs of homeless individuals and families and those at risk of homelessness by facilitating integrated community responses to help improve their living conditions and to help them access and maintain secure and stable housing and services.
- Increased knowledge of and measurement of outcomes related to the prevention and reduction of homelessness at the local, regional and national levels through: data collection; research; the review and assessment of the effectiveness of interventions; and support for the dissemination and sharing of this information.
- Broader engagement of partners to address homelessness by strengthening partnerships and collaboration with other federal departments, all orders of government, and the private and not-for-profit sectors to maximize investments and linkages to social services, resulting in enhanced sustainability.

The June 12, 2007 VSCH priority setting session roundtable discussion identified a number of priority recommendations for building on housing stability and to guide them in the next funding phase.

- Target the following group – the chronically homeless, including families with Children, youth, and Aboriginal people.
- Increase the existing transitional/ supportive housing stock (i.e. there is a net increase in the number of units). An open, fair and transparent Call for Proposals process will be put in place and proposals will be reviewed using a number of criteria, including sustainability, partnerships, a reasonable operating budget, and outcomes that address housing stability.

- Support services that will assist the homeless and those at-risk of homelessness to find and maintain housing stability. An example cited was the services currently provided by the Coordinated Housing Registry through its databases and outreach support to tenants and potential tenants. Other services to be supported/ leveraged include: outreach, mental health and addictions treatment, employment related services, and core services.

While the indication is support for the existing priorities of Victoria's Community Plan (i.e. safe affordable housing and shelter and enhanced support services, the focus for the upcoming Call for Proposals is most closely aligned with safe, affordable housing and shelter by increasing the number of transitional and long-term supportive housing units, emergency shelter beds and permanent housing.

In addition to funding for priority projects, the VSCH (or regionally funded body) will also ensure that monies are set aside to develop an updated Community Plan.

As a longer term strategy, the session identified addressing the needs of the most visible, hardest to house chronic homeless.

APPENDICES

Attachment 1 – Phase 1 and 2 NHI Projects

HOUSING FACILITIES	Directed (D)/ Accessible (A)	Pre NHI (before 1999)	Phase 1 1999-2003	Phase 2 2003-2007	NHI Funded	Description of Funding
Emergency Shelters						
Cool Aid – Streetlink	D	X			YES	Phase 2: accessibility, shower/ laundry facilities (resident/non-resident), 30 beds
Cool Aid Sandy Merriman	D	X			YES	Phase 2: 5 beds
Extreme Weather Protocol	D			X	YES	Phase 2: see Streetlink, Sandy Merriman, Out of the Rain, Our Place
Out of the Rain Night Shelter	D	X			YES	Phase 1: operating funds, 4 youth counsellors, kitchen equipment and bedding Phase 2: shelter beds
Salvation Army Addictions and Rehab Centre	D	X			YES	Phase 1: 15 beds, STEP program Phase 2: 16 beds
Transitional Housing						
Our Place Society	D	X			YES	Phase 2: replacement of existing service/housing facilities with new purpose-built building, 22 existing beds/23 new beds, 70 Extreme Wet Weather beds
S.A. Beacon of Hope House	D			X	NO	
Threshold Housing Society	A	X			YES	Phase 1: life skills/job preparedness, equipment
VIARS Foundation House	A	X			NO	
Victoria Human Exchange Society	A	X			YES	Phase 1: furniture and equipment
VNFC IY ILEN HAUTW	A		X		YES	Phase 1: purchase 4plex, van, upgrade kitchen, storage, advocacy Phase 2: manager/ resident training
Women's Transition House Harrison Place	A			X	YES	Phase 2: 23 1-bedroom units
YM/YWCA Kiwanis House	A	X			YES	Phase 1 - 8 new residential units Phase 2 - life skills, pre-employment, employment skills
HOUSING FACILITIES						
	Directed (D)/ Accessible (A)	Pre NHI (before 1999)	Phase 1 1999-2003	Phase 2 2003-2007	NHI Funded	Description of Funding
Burnside Gorge	D	X			YES	Phase 2 - Homeless Families Outreach
Canadian Housing Research Foundation	D				YES	Phase 2: locate/acquire existing multi-unit residences, communications strategy
VNFC				X	YES	Phase 2: Aboriginal Youth Transitional Housing feasibility/ purchase
Long Term Supportive Housing						
Cool Aid	A	X			YES	Phase 1: staff training, renovations, laundry equipment, research study on storage
Affordable Rental Housing (Major Not for Profit Housing Providers)						
M'Akola Group of Societies	A	X			YES	Phase 1: residential intervention and harm reduction program

SUPPORT SERVICES	Directed (D)/ Accessible (A)	Pre NHI (before 1999)	Phase 1 1999-2003	Phase 2 2003-2007	NHI Funded	Description of Funding
Core Services						
AIDS Vancouver Island	D	X			YES	Phase 1: Facility renovations, kitchen equipment and supplies
Burnside Gorge	D	X			YES	Phase 2:- food and supplies
Open Door (Our Place)					YES	Phase1: Intervention and harm reduction Phase 2: equipment, extended operating hours
Upper Room (Our Place)	D	X			YES	Phase 1: kitchen equipment
VNFC	D	X			YES	Phase 1: food and supplies
Assistance Services						
Pacifica Housing	A		X		YES	Phase1: Coordinated Subsidized Housing Registry Phase 2: Coordinated Subsidized Housing Registry
Cool Aid						Phase 1: Peer Support program
PEERS	D	X			YES	Phase 1: housing coordinator (6 months)
Life Skills Services						
YM/YWCA Mon-Reach	A		X		YES	Phase 1: housing advocacy, pre/post natal support Phase 2: street outreach (housing, prenatal, life skills)
VYES	D		X		YES	Phase 1: life skill outreach services Phase 2: life skills programs
Health and Treatment Services						
Drug/Alcohol Rehabilitation Society	A	X			YES	Phase 1 - furniture and training
Employment Services						
VNFC	A			X	YES	Phase 2: Commercial training kitchen, shower/laundry facilities
Skill/ Research / Communication Networks						
Burnside Gorge	A	X			YES	Phase 1: resourcing and data collection, housing outreach
Shelter New BC	n/a				YES	Phase 1: HIFIS
City of Victoria	n/a				YES	Phase 1: Community Plan
United Way/ City of Victoria	n/a				YES	Phase 1: Board Boot Camp
Community Plan Evaluation	n/a				YES	Phase 1: Community evaluation Phase 2: Community evaluation/ communications plan
Cool Aid	n/a				YES	Phase 1: Research study on storage, identification of life skill/learning support needs for persons with co-occurring disorders Phase 2: Homeless Count

Attachment 2 – Phase 2 Knowledge and Communication Activities

Output Measure	Number	Comments
Area: Developing the Context for Planning		
# of community NHI-approved research projects during Phase II	1	Provincial communication strategy framework developed by a consultant for SCPC. 6 funded projects also reported research components, including: BGCA (Best Practices, Knowledge Transfer), Pacifica Housing Advisory Association (Best Practices, Knowledge Transfer), Upper Room Society (Cycle of Homelessness, Health, Justice), Cool Aid (Knowledge Transfer), YM/YW ((Best Practices, Knowledge Transfer), VFNC (Community Plan Evaluation and Update, Communications Plan).
# of shelters/ housing programs using HIFIS or another data management system in the community	n/a	No one in Victoria uses HIFIS, therefore there is no regular, comparable data on any component of the homeless population in Victoria. Data collection is regularly carried out in community agencies. Numbers of people accessing services and the numbers of services used/delivered are two examples.
# of NHI-funded needs assessments carried out in the community during Phase II in the homeless population	3	Needs assessment for Community Plan update in 2003. Homelessness Count in 2005. Homeless Needs Survey 2007. Although no others were reported, this does not mean they were not undertaken.
# of NHI-funded formative evaluations carried out in the community during Phase II having to do with homelessness interventions	n/a	Not reported, but this does not mean they were not undertaken. It is customary for many agencies to do such evaluations either on a formal or informal basis, with more or less rigour.
# of NHI-funded outcome evaluations carried out in the community during Phase II having to do with homelessness interventions	n/a	Not reported.
Area: Planning Interventions Using Contextual Information		
# number of reviews of best practice interventions	3	Three funded projects (BGCA Homeless Families Outreach, Pacifica Housing Advisory Association, and Cool Aid) reported in this area - Best Practices, Knowledge Transfer.
Area: Community Capacity		
# of research projects approved for NHI funding that targeted a particular community priority	6	6 funded projects had research components (see above). The Communications subcommittee developed a framework for public presentations/ communications.
# of collaborative partnerships between universities and community agencies when conducting research projects	2	Not reported. However, the United Way has recently announced a collaboration with the University of Victoria on issues regarding homelessness. The Community Council has had an on-going collaborative relationship with the University of Victoria on issues regarding poverty, children, and housing affordability (e.g. the 2004/05 Reconstruction Project).
# of publications	8	A number of publications were produced during Phase 2 – some of which involved collaborations between stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria City Police Report on Homelessness (2007) • St. John the Divine Anglican Church - Homeless Shelter Preliminary Report (2006)

Output/Measure	Number	Comments
Area: Community Capacity		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Challenges Facing Homeless Families in Greater Victoria, Past or Present Abuse, Mental Health Problems and Substance Misuse Issues</i>; Burnside Gorge Community Association/ University of Victoria (2006) • Capital Regional District – Regional Housing Affordability Strategy- Update (2007) • <i>Serving the Homeless, Social Agencies in the Red Zone</i>, Downtown Service Providers Group (October 2003) • <i>I-TRACK: Enhanced surveillance of risk behaviours and prevalence of HIV and Hepatitis C among people who inject drugs in Victoria BC</i>, Epidemiology and Disease Control and Population Health Surveillance Unit, Vancouver Island Health Authority (2006) • <i>Street Youth's Life Course Transitions</i>, Cecilia Benoit, S.M. Jansson, Helga K. Hallgrimsdottir, Eric Roth, Comparative Social Research (in press) • <i>Denied Assistance, Closing the Front Door on Welfare in BC</i>, Bruce Wallace, Seth Klein, Marge Reitsma-Street (2004)
Area: Community and System Changes Due to Enhanced Knowledge		
Difference in the number of agencies using HIFIS in a community pre- and post-Phase II	n/a	As noted above, no one in Victoria uses HIFIS.
# of formal networks in community	7	Informal networks have always existed among the agencies providing services to the homeless/at-risk, sharing information around clients and services as appropriate. Several previous formal networks included: the Downtown Interagency Network, VSCH, and CRUNCH. Existing and new networks include: the Downtown Service Providers (created in 2004), the Regional Homelessness Secretariat (2007), Urban Development Institute, and the Housing Affordability Partnership. In addition, based on the Inventory, there are at least another 3 networks on the West Shore of the CRD.
Area: Avenues for Sharing Information		
# of NHI-funded forums, workshops or conferences	25	A number of forums/ workshops were undertaken by funded projects: (BGCA – 5 – on secondary suites; Our Place – 1 on their new facility and relocation of the drop-in; VNFC – 14 workshop sessions, 5 forums on Homelessness; Canadian Housing Research Foundation – 4 sessions on Accepting Supported and Transitional Housing in Residential Neighbourhoods and Innovative Approaches to Developing Affordable Housing and Partnering on Solutions to Homelessness; Communications Plan – 1. The VSCH held a session to build understanding and consensus around next steps of designing and implementing a full communications strategy.
Area: Public Awareness (Education)		
# of articles in press	Unknown	Greater Victoria is served directly by 1 daily newspaper and several weeklies. It is impossible to count the number of articles, without this being undertaken throughout Phase 2. What is noticeable is that the number of articles on homelessness has increased significantly in recent months, with at least one article, editorial, and letter to the editor appearing almost daily. Of note, is that the Greater Victoria homelessness situation was recently

Output/Measure	Number	Comments
Area: Public Awareness (Education)		
		<p>featured on Vision TV – a national outlet. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hard Night Out</i>, spending the night on Victoria Streets. • Our Place generated a newspaper insert through a Leadership Victoria program. The insert was designed and developed by a group of area professionals in leadership training. • <i>Homelessness in Victoria</i>- a series of 6 articles in the Victoria Times Colonist, all of which were front-page. <p>As well, throughout Phase 2 the VHSC Co-chairs engaged with the media and business.</p>
# of funded projects with an accessible Web site for the public during Phase II	10+	All the funded projects had accessible web sites. It is also worth noting that most of the agencies included in the Assets Inventory also had accessible web sites – a significant change from when the Inventory was first developed in 1999 and updated in 2003. The City of Victoria web site, throughout Phases 1 and 2, has maintained a posting on homelessness.
# of fact sheets available to the public online that relate to homelessness issues	2	The United Way produced a promotional kit one pager summarizing achievements. A one-pager fact sheet was prepared by the VSCH, to be accessed through the Quality of Life Challenge web site.
Area: Public Awareness (Issue on Public Agenda)		
# of community forums held during Phase II having to do with issues of homelessness	27+	In addition to the 21 undertaken by funded projects, Focus magazine hosted a forum – the Independence Settlement Project, the forum was attended by @ 700 people. Several forums with street youth speakers were held at the University of Victoria. These were well attended and garnered media attention, speaking to the issues of homeless/at-risk youth. BGCA presented a display of art by homeless children – “Through the eyes of Children” and conducted a fundraiser to raise funds and awareness for homeless families and children. There was a community luncheon hosted by the Crystal Meth Society to inform community of issues of crystal meth use and plans for future. Homelessness Awareness Week focussed on issues and included an open house at Our Place.
Area: Communication Networks		
Increased representation of stakeholder groups in formal networks in the community	7	See activities listed above.
Difference between the number of formal and informal networks in the community pre-Phase II compared to post-Phase II	n/a	Not reported, however, the Inventory points to a number of formal and informal networks being established since the NHI was initiated, but not necessarily as a result of the NHI. The most notable network is the Downtown Service Providers, established in 2004.
Area: Communication Networks		
Enhanced sharing of research and knowledge		Homeless Count 2005. Homeless Needs Survey 2007.
Area: Public Awareness		
Increased public support on the issue of homelessness	n/a	See activities listed above.

Attachment 3 – Community Development Survey Results

Question		% Agreed	Rank	Mean	Rank
Q.4	There is a greater representation of people from various service and sectors, participating in efforts to address homelessness that there was a few years ago (Inclusion)	100%	1	3.43	1
Q.18	In my community, there has been an increase in the number of volunteers contributing to the organizations delivering services in the homelessness sector (Citizen Participation)	93%	2	3.21	2
Q2.	In my community, the individuals and organizations working together to prevent and reduce homelessness have a shared sense of purpose and similar values (Strategic Planning)	86%	3	3.00	6
Q.7	The leaders in our community who address homelessness share power with community members (Leadership)			3.21	2
Q.10	In my community, there are good working relationships between organizations and agencies addressing homelessness (Cohesion)				
Q.21	My community has the capacity to develop strategic solutions to address homelessness (Policy Change)	79%	6	3.07	4
Q.8	The leaders in our community who address homelessness work to resolve conflicts and find consensus (Leadership)	71%	7	3.00	6
Q.9	There is a strong sense of cooperation within my community to address homelessness (Cohesion)			2.71	11
Q.13	My community works well with its funding partners (Relationships)			3.07	4
Q.14	Over the past few years in my community, there is a better understanding of the problem of homelessness, it causes and its solutions (Public knowledge/attitudes)			2.79	9
Q.19	Over the past few years, there has been an improvement of the coordination of resources to community agencies working in the homelessness sector (Coordination)			2.71	11
Q.5	In my community, efforts have been made to include homeless or formerly homeless people to participate in efforts to address homelessness (Inclusion)	57%	12	2.75	10
Q.15	Over the past few years, the people in my community have improved their knowledge, attitudes and skills related to working with people who are homeless (Building capacity)			2.64	14
Q.1	In my community, we have developed integrated goals and objectives to help in planning services and supports to the homeless (Strategic Planning)	50%	14	2.43	16
Q.6	The leaders in our community who address homelessness are diverse and representative of the population (Leadership)			2.69	13
Q.11	My community has the drive and enthusiasm to follow through with solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness (Cohesion)	50%	14	2.33	18
Q.12	In my community, there are strong relationships between governments, non-profit and private sectors and community agencies (Relationships)			2.57	15
Q.3	In my community there is a regular evaluation of progress towards our strategic goals to address homelessness (Strategic planning)	43%*	18	2.25	20
Q.22	My community has been successful in ensuring that local and regional government policies are supportive of efforts to address homelessness (Policy change)	36%	19	2.42	17

Question		% Agreed	Rank	Mean	Rank
Q.23	In general, citizens in my community believe that their local efforts can help to prevent and reduce homelessness (Citizen empowerment)			2.31	19
Q.16	My community has enhanced its ability to address the problem of homelessness through relevant skills development e.g. workshops and training (Building capacity)	21%	21	2.15	21
Q.17	The agencies and organizations that help homeless people in my community can more easily adapt to situations of limited resource and high demand for services than a few years ago (Resilience)	14%	22	1.83	22
Q.20	In my community, there are enough funding partners to ensure adequate ongoing, financial resources for addressing homelessness (Sustainability)	0%**	23	1.31	23
<p>* 43% also disagreed, with 14% in the Don't Know category ** No one agreed, the remainder (7%) fell into the Don't Know category</p>					