



# June 2014 Newsletter

## Peninsula Homeless to Housing Task Force

***Our Mission is to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness on the South Surrey White Rock Peninsula to live in safe and appropriate housing***

***NEXT MEETING: Next scheduled meeting is Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:45am White Rock Baptist Church, 1657-140<sup>th</sup> St. Surrey.***

### ***Estimating Homelessness – How and Why?***

In Canada there is no systematic information collected on homelessness at the national level. Through national data collection we can find out the number of hot dogs eaten – but we don't know the number of people homeless; we don't even have a definition of what homelessness is. Without defining the issue and knowing the extent of the problem how do we come up with targets to end homelessness? The question of knowing the number of homeless is important because:

1. It signals homeless people matter;
2. It tells us the scale of the problem;
3. It allows targets, timelines and solutions to be implemented based on reliable numbers; and
4. It measures progress and allows for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

In Canada there have been attempts to create a national definition of homelessness. One recent example is the Canadian Homeless Research Network (CHRN); which covers the aspects of security, affordability, and safety of housing similar to the definition used in Calgary:

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/06122012/CHRNhomelessdefinition.pdf>

In Metro Vancouver we have had regional counts in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2014. These counts helped quantify the issue and helped increase understanding of who was on the street, for how long and from where. In Surrey the 2014 count reported there were a minimum of 403 people homeless in our community on March 12th; and many service providers are concerned this doesn't reflect the reality of Surrey homelessness. (For results from the 2014 regional homeless count please see the following link: <http://stophomelessness.ca/>)

Surrey shelters operate at maximum capacity and outreach workers struggle with finding any housing – let alone safe, appropriate, affordable housing. What are the implications for homeless prevention when we use minimum numbers? Is there a closer estimate of the level of homelessness in Surrey/ White Rock?

The Ministry of Social Development & Social Innovation (welfare) recorded 980 people getting income support but no shelter allowance at the time of the 2014 homeless count. (This includes people not considered "homeless" such as adult children living at home, people who have not provided new addresses to update their files etc.) BC Housing's stats show almost 1,400 unique individuals using 3 Surrey shelters in 2013. Are these closer estimates of homelessness in Surrey?

In the USA local communities are required to marshal volunteers to conduct annual homeless counts as a requirement of receiving federal homeless program funding – a highly stigmatizing requirement. At the other end of the scale Australia has included the homeless as one of many population groups within the national census since 1996 with attempts to broaden the survey to include the unsheltered as well as the sheltered homeless. Australia and New Zealand both have national definitions of homelessness for the Census covering the spectrum from street homelessness to overcrowded/ unsafe/unaffordable housing.

Homelessness is a geographic expression of extreme poverty and social isolation – it's national, it's wide spread and it's not going away. With the elimination of the long-form census in 2011; replaced by the national household survey with unproven reliability; inclusion in national data gathering is currently not on the table. We will continue to rely on local community estimations – with widely divergent local definitions – to fund raise and organize volunteers to gather data that has significant social policy implications affecting hundreds of thousands of Canadians (some estimates) and families.

Is being counted a right of citizenship? As part of a national strategy to prevent homelessness a national definition and cross-country strategy to estimate the need in a cost-effective non-stigmatized manner is an essential element.

***Support Challenge for PH2H – A local congregation has extended a community challenge to make a donation to PH2H. Donations will be matched up to \$2,500 for up to 4 years. Cheques would be made out to SourcesBC (fund manager) for PH2H.***

### ***Food Security Fund***

***PH2H Definition of Food Security – Food security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life; a food secure community ensures nutritious food and access for Peninsula residents, raises poverty awareness and includes the community in creating sustainable food solutions.*** Working with the Peninsula Community Foundation (PCF), PH2H has developed a fund to support low-income food security. Charitable Tax Receipts available. PCF: Tel: 778-292-1367 Email: [info@peninsulafoundation.ca](mailto:info@peninsulafoundation.ca). [www.peninsulafoundation.ca](http://www.peninsulafoundation.ca)

*Thank you to the Van Dusen Fund of the United Church, Linda Klitch Legacy Fund, Peninsula Community Foundation, VanCity White Rock Branch and Surrey Housing and Homeless Foundation for financial support.*

***Please circulate our newsletter to your congregations and members. Send feedback/ news to: [ph2htaskforce@gmail.com](mailto:ph2htaskforce@gmail.com)***