



# December 2016 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: Friday, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9:45am, White Rock Baptist Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room, 1657-140<sup>th</sup> St. Surrey.** Please circulate to contacts.

Over the next couple of months there will be a tremendous volunteer effort organizing and conducting a regional homeless count. As a lead up to the count let's consider who we are counting?

As visible homelessness emerged over the last decade and a half there have been various attempts to define who is homeless. How we define the 'problem' of how many people are homeless – drives the question of what level of support is needed to end the problem. For years homeless researchers and advocates have questioned the variety of homeless definitions. How inclusive or limited should it be? In 2012 the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness – a national umbrella group of academics and service providers – developed the *Canadian Definition of Homelessness*.

The definition describes the range of circumstances; from people being without any form of shelter at one end, to insecure housing at the other. (And we know that homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and frequently.)

*Homelessness encompasses a range of physical living situations:*

- 1. Unsheltered, or absolutely homeless and living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation;*
- 2. Emergency Sheltered, including those staying in overnight shelters and transition houses;*
- 3. Provisionally Accommodated, referring to those whose accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure (e.g. couch surfing);*
- 4. At Risk of Homelessness, referring to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards.*

[http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelessdefinition.pdf?\\_ga=1.177434979.759752267.1478633336](http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelessdefinition.pdf?_ga=1.177434979.759752267.1478633336)

There is an argument made that this definition is too broad. So at the other extreme of definitions, criticized as too narrow, is 'functional zero' commonly used in the USA, in particular with the overwhelming levels of veterans' homelessness.

Functional zero means *"that at any point in time, the number of people experiencing sheltered or*

*unsheltered homelessness will be no greater than the current monthly housing placement rate for people experiencing homelessness."*

What you say? In practical terms this means that a community can have 1,000 homeless people, but if that community has the same number of people entering homelessness as exiting - they have reached "functional zero." In this USA definition if there was no growth in homelessness in Surrey/White Rock – we would have solved our homeless problem.

USA federal agencies have more recently moved away from "functional zero" to a new "operational definition of ending homelessness." The amended federal homelessness plan *Opening Doors* states:

*An end to homelessness means that every community will have a systematic response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.*

The new operational definition asks if there is a pan in place, it doesn't address people currently experiencing homelessness; the definition of ending homelessness is right-sized to fit existing federal resources rather than right-sizing the resources to fit the homeless crisis.

### **Regional Homeless Count March 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>**

For our upcoming regional count the 'definition' we use is really the screening question used since the 2002 count to determine if someone should answer the survey or not. *"Do you have a place you pay rent for?"*

For people in shelters and on the street this incorporates the first three of the Canadian Definition of Homelessness – but doesn't include housing insecurity. We are answering what is the absolute minimum number of people homelessness; we don't factor in how many people are becoming homelessness.

If you want to volunteer or need information on the regional homeless count in Surrey and White Rock contact Jonquil Hallgate at 604-961-2170 or [friendship.blvd@gmail.com](mailto:friendship.blvd@gmail.com)

**Challenge for PH2H** – A local congregation has extended a challenge to the community to make a donation to PH2H for its modest operating budget of \$5,000. Donations will be matched up to \$2,500 for up to 4 years. Cheques would be made out to Sources (fund manager) for PH2H.

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