



# November 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, November 4<sup>th</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.*

### ***Are we seeing a new increase in homelessness?***

As we head into our cold wet west coast winter the reality of shelter becomes even more important. From November to March the shelter system expands with additional winter beds and there are mat programs during particularly bad weather. White Rock's First United Church working with Options Society has been a long time community resource ensuring the most basic of shelter during cold spells.

There have been numerous court cases in the last number of years concerning public spaces and people setting up encampments. In 2008 there was the Victoria vs Adams decision concerning setting up 'structures' (tents) in civic parks when all area shelters were full. The decision weighed the legal points of individual rights to security of the person (need for sleep, health and shelter) versus public issues of specifically named physical damage. Since then there have been numerous other cases involving, locally, encampments in Abbotsford.

In presentations to high school classes, the snow balling development of homelessness over the last 30 years has been summarised as:

- ***Homelessness 1.0***  
In the 70's/80's homelessness was in shelters:
- ***Homelessness 2.0***  
In the 90's/00's homelessness was in shelters and on the street:
- ***Homelessness 3.0***  
In the 2010's+ homelessness now is in shelters, on the street and in encampments

The choice to step outside the shelter system and 'house' oneself is not entirely new, but is it reaching new levels? (Recognizing that in B.C. it is partly self-sheltering and partly political protest.) What is going to happen in the near future with extremely low vacancy rates and rental rates increasing faster than wages and fixed incomes? How closely will our experience in Metro Vancouver mirror the experience south of the border in Seattle and Portland?

In 2013, the Greater Seattle homeless count identified over 700 people as sleeping in their vehicles. Since 2012 Seattle city staff has seen an increase in

unauthorized camping in Seattle parks, alongside highways and under bridges from 80 sites in 2012, to 131 sites in 2013, to 351 sites in 2014. In 2015 there were 49 sites in one month. Given that situation the Mayor of Seattle has urged official recognition of encampments, under the management of long-term homeless shelter operators. There are now three city-sanctioned encampments operating in Ballard, Interbay and Othello with 'shelter' for 300 people. An additional four sites for 200 people are being planned.

Last month the provincial government announced \$500 million dollars towards affordable housing construction. This is good news. And it will be 2 to 3 years before the housing funded will be available. How will homelessness develop over the next couple of years? Will urban camp sites be a more common choice for 'autonomous' housing for people who can't find any place that is vacant and affordable? We know there has been:

- No increase in seven years in the amount of money dedicated to rent supplements which local homeless outreach team use to try and re-house people off the street
- Little increase in permanent shelter beds, (the shelter sector has said we need affordable, safe and appropriate housing not shelter beds)
- No local shelter space created other than for extreme weather situations

With the worsening of the housing market for affordable rents of any kind in Vancouver, the next couple of years look like things could get worse before they get better with homelessness. And while all this develops we do need to remember that homelessness hasn't always been this way; and it can be solved.

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

If you want to volunteer or need information on the regional homeless count 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)