



Press Release

NEW SOCIETY PLANS TO END HOMELESSNESS IN THE TRI-CITIES

Port Coquitlam, BC – October 5, 2009... The Mayor's Action Team on Homelessness dissolved last week, making way for a new society whose goal is to end chronic homelessness in the Tri-Cities in five years.

The Homes for Good Society will pick up where MATH leaves off, bringing to life the two-pillar strategy to end homelessness that was released Friday. The strategy was developed by 22 individuals from all walks of life, including homeless residents, over a seven-month period.

"We've looked at jurisdictions and cities around North America to learn about models that work," said Mayor Greg Moore, who will chair the new society. "They've been successful and we think we can achieve similar successes. That's why we've taken the bold step of giving ourselves the goal of ending chronic homelessness in the Tri-Cities in the next five years."

The strategy's innovative approach is based on two pillars that aim to permanently end the crisis of homelessness, rather than manage it with temporary fixes:

- *Finding homes for good*—the right homes for the right people will be found from existing inventory wherever possible.
- *Coordinating necessary supports to keep people housed for good*— comprehensive case management, though a Case Champion, will ensure clients receive the services and support they need to stay in their home.

"The crisis of homelessness has been building for years," Mayor Moore said. "This is the right thing to do. Our community needs to look after all of its citizens – not just the ones who have a home and not just the ones who have a job."

One of MATH's guiding principles in developing the strategy was to learn from others' successes and to maximize existing resources. The society will work closely with other agencies, government and service groups, and will employ the Housing First model that has seen success around North America, including Toronto and Portland.

In addition to seeking government funding, the society is planning creative fundraising approaches such as the "dollar a day" concept popularized by World Vision, a "giving circle" model that provides a return for investments of cash and goods, and partnerships with businesses and agencies.

"We want to make it convenient for someone to give. We're going to use technology and the internet to bring it home to people," Mayor Moore said. "Generally, I've had a lot of feedback that people want to help out. And they want to help end the problem, not manage the problem."

A report on homelessness in the Tri-Cities by the Hope for Freedom Society (conducted Oct. 2006-Mar. 2007) indicates that Port Coquitlam is a hot spot for homelessness in the region:

- 168 individuals were identified as homeless in the Tri-Cities. Of those, 62 per cent (102 individuals) were living in Port Coquitlam, 30 per cent in Coquitlam and eight per cent in Port Moody.

- 88 per cent of the homeless people in the survey had a drug, alcohol or other substance dependency, about 37 per cent had a mental illness, about 36 per cent had dual diagnoses, and about 13 per cent came from abusive family situations.
- The homeless live throughout our community, seeking shelter in a variety of locations, including homeless camps (24.1 per cent), drug houses (11.2 per cent), abandoned buildings (7.8 per cent) and vehicles (six per cent).
- 71.6 per cent were categorized as “roaming,” which includes seeking shelter at the locations above, plus “couch-surfing” (temporary accommodation with friends or family).
- Only 29 per cent indicated they were originally from the Tri-Cities. Of those, 40 per cent (19 individuals) said they were originally from Port Coquitlam.
- Port Coquitlam is considered an ideal location because of access to the river and downtown, and the availability of services.
- Ages of homeless people in the Tri-Cities range from 18 to 60, with an average of 40. Sixty-eight per cent are male.

The Homes for Good Society will hold its first meeting in October. The full version of the Homes for Good strategy is available at: www.homesforgood.ca.

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