

CITY OF BURNABY

COMMUNITY PLANNING & HOUSING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

RE: REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN FOR GREATER VANCOUVER

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council provide its preliminary support for the guiding principles contained in the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* prepared for the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness; and
2. **THAT** Council receive the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* as a working document; and
3. **THAT** Council express its appreciation and support for the continuing work of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Burnaby staff participation in the evolution of the Plan; and
4. **THAT** Council send a copy of this report to:

Mr. George Puil
Chair, Greater Vancouver Regional District Board of Directors
4330 Kingsway
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4G8

:COPY - CITY MANAGER
- DIR. PLNG. & BLDG.

REPORT

The Community Planning and Housing Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2001 August 28, received and adopted the *attached* report evaluating the GVRD Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver. At this point in the creation of the Plan, the Committee advised that a number of issues remain to be resolved before consideration of formal endorsement of part of the Plan can be recommended. At the same time, however, the Committee recognized that the Plan represents a significant step forward in addressing the complex issues facing the homeless in the Greater Vancouver area. Accordingly, the Committee requested that Council provide preliminary support for the guiding principles in the Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Redman
Chair

Councillor G. Begin
Member

Councillor D. Johnston
Member

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS August 23, 2001
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING OUR FILE:12.800.1

SUBJECT: REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN FOR GREATER VANCOUVER

PURPOSE: To respond to a referral of the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* to the Community Planning and Housing Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT the Community Planning and Housing Committee recommend that Council:

1. Provide its preliminary support for the guiding principles contained in the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* prepared for the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness; and
2. Receive the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* as a working document; and
3. Express its appreciation and support for the continuing work of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness and Burnaby staff participation in the evolution of the Plan; and
4. Send a copy of this report to:

Mr. George Puil
Chair, Greater Vancouver Regional District Board of Directors
4330 Kingsway
Burnaby, BC V5H 4G8

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its Open Meeting held on 2001 July 23, City Council received correspondence from Mr. George Puil, Chair of the GVRD Board of Directors that outlined details of the recently

completed *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*, a regional strategy to reduce and alleviate homelessness in the Greater Vancouver area. Through this correspondence, the GVRD Board of Directors formally referred the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness' strategy on homelessness to member municipalities for endorsement of the guiding principles and direction for addressing homelessness.

Arising from consideration of the correspondence, Council resolved to REFER the letter to the Community Planning and Housing Committee for review and report. This report responds to this referral.

2.0 CONTEXT FOR REGIONAL PLAN ON HOMELESSNESS

The City of Burnaby has been requested by the Board of Directors of the Greater Vancouver Regional District to consider endorsement of the guiding principles and direction for addressing homelessness contained in the report *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* prepared by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

Since March 2000, the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness has been working to develop a regional plan to alleviate and prevent homelessness in Greater Vancouver. Initiated partially in response to the Federal Government's announcement in October 1999 of a new package of funding initiatives to address homelessness, this planning process is being funded and administered by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and facilitated by the GVRD.

It should be noted that this Plan has not been prepared by GVRD, but rather by a multi-stakeholder Regional Steering Committee consisting of emergency shelter operators, regional health boards, service and housing providers, urban aboriginal organizations, the Provincial and Federal governments and a number of municipalities in the region (see *Attachment 1*). Beverly Grieve, Planner, is the City of Burnaby's representative on the Regional Steering Committee. The Regional Steering Committee represents the first time that these service providers, shelter operators and funders have come together to develop a regional strategy on homelessness.

3.0 THE REGIONAL PLAN

The Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver, completed in May 2001, is the result of the Regional Steering Committee's year-long community-based planning process, which included collaboration with a broad array of stakeholders through a number of workshops and outreach sessions. The planning time-frame for the regional plan is ten years,

reflecting the Committee’s acknowledgment of the complexity of issues which contribute to homelessness or being at risk of homelessness in the Greater Vancouver region and the ineffectiveness of quick remedies.

In the short term, the Plan will inform the review of funding applications under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI)¹. In the longer term, the Plan is intended to guide future actions of major stakeholders such as community groups, service providers, federal, provincial, provincial and municipal governments and health authorities in the creation, funding, facilitation or evaluation of programs or services designed to alleviate homelessness.

The *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* strives to address homelessness at a regional level. The guiding principles of the Plan state that homeless people with their diversity of needs should have access to all components of the continuum of housing and support within their home communities. At the same time, a regional approach to the homelessness issue is required as service providers recognize that the varied needs of their clients often cannot be met in each municipality.

3.1 Regional Plan Definition of Homelessness and “At Risk” of Homelessness

The Plan defines homelessness as “living with no physical shelter; on the street, in doorways, in parkades, in parks and on beaches as well as people living temporarily in emergency shelters or transition houses for women fleeing violence.”

“At risk” of homelessness includes people living in spaces or situations that do not meet basic health and safety standards, do not provide for security of tenure or personal safety and are not affordable. This includes people considered as the invisible homeless, such as individuals who are “couch surfing” or staying temporarily with family and friends.

3.2 Continuum of Housing and Support Model

The Plan presents solutions to the complex root causes of homelessness in the framework of a continuum that includes housing, income and support services as its three primary components. The continuum advocates a strong prevention approach by focusing on housing and income as solutions to homelessness, while recognizing the importance of support services.

¹In December 1999, the Federal government committed \$305 million under Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative as part of a co-ordinated response to address homelessness across the country. Of this, Greater Vancouver will receive \$25.1 million over three years.

3.3 Plan Goals

The specific goals of the plan are:

- to enhance the continuum of housing and support
- to create and maintain a continuum of housing
- to ensure households have an adequate income
- to deliver support services; and
- support sub-regions to meet local needs.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Plan sets out numerous policy statements and recommended strategies which are aimed at a range of stakeholders, including various levels of government, community agencies and homeless persons. The Plan does not allocate any specific costs to the proposed strategies, nor does it envision a role for local government as a direct funder of services and facilities to address homelessness that are the responsibility of senior levels of government.

The following provides a number of key issues identified in the Plan that suggest a role for local government to work with partners in addressing homelessness:

- the existence of gaps and insufficient capacity in the continuum of housing and supports for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness region wide and in communities around the region;
- the lack of emergency shelter beds in several communities and the shortage within the region as a whole;
- the inability of the emergency shelter system to meet the wide range of needs amongst the diverse homeless or “at risk” population, for example, youth;
- the lack of appropriate housing with support services for people with mental illness, addictions, HIV/AIDS and women with or without children fleeing violence;
- the lack of information about the homeless and those at risk or homelessness;
- the inadequate supply of new social housing and affordable housing for low and moderate income households;
- the loss of existing affordable rental housing due to redevelopment.

As a concurrent initiative to the development of the Plan, the Greater Vancouver Regional District recently commenced research to provide a profile of the homeless and “at-risk” population in the Greater Vancouver area, as well as the creation of a data-base that will allow the monitoring of such populations over time. This information will fill significant gaps in knowledge about the homeless in Greater Vancouver and provide a more precise understanding of the nature and scope of the homeless and “at risk” of homeless population within communities in Greater Vancouver area and inform future policy directions and responses.

5.0 THE REQUEST FOR ENDORSEMENT

The *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* has been formally approved by the national Secretariat on Homelessness and by the federal Minister responsible for co-ordinating homelessness programs. The Regional Steering Committee is currently embarking upon a process of endorsement of the plan amongst municipalities, pertinent Provincial ministries, community organizations and other stakeholders. The Regional Steering Committee acknowledges that the level of endorsement will vary among constituencies, and therefore is seeking approval of the guiding principles of the plan, and endorsement of the plan as a “working document.”

The referral of the Plan to City Council, through the GVRD Board, is part of this process. Endorsement of the Plan by the GVRD Board itself will be sought by the Steering Committee once the Board has had the opportunity to review response to the plan from member municipalities.

5.1 The Guiding Principles

Council has been requested to endorse the guiding principles (see *Attachment 2*) contained in the Plan. The principles provide a useful framework to guide implementation of the regional plan and to prepare locally based strategies and respond to locally based projects. The principles recognize that the solutions to homelessness do not rest solely with one level of government or community but require a co-ordinated response by a number of stakeholders and community partners. The principles are also consistent with the City’s perspective that it is the responsibility of senior levels of government to provide funds to pay for local relief, that solutions must be addressed at a regional level.

The Plan’s principles are seen to reflect the City’s view that its proper role involves working with community agencies and senior levels of government to facilitate the development of a continuum of housing and support at the local level that reflect the overall development framework for the City as contained in its Official Community Plan.

5.2 The Regional Plan as a Working Document

Council has also been requested to endorse the Plan as a “working document.” The Regional Plan is intended to be a guide to help co-ordinate the efforts of a great number of people and agencies across the region to address homelessness. It is meant

to be a working document that will respond flexibly over time as new information is made available, different needs arise or new funding initiatives are implemented. The Plan provides a framework by which local governments can evaluate and facilitate proposals for services and facilities in its jurisdiction.

The regional plan, which, unlike an Official Community Plan, has no basis in a legal context, sets out general directions which can be customized and implemented to address local circumstances. It is recognized by the parties involved as a common agreement from a wide range of people who have been working on the issues of homelessness, including homeless people themselves.

One of the requirements of the federal (SCPI) funding was the need to identify a legal entity which would assume longer term governance of the Plan. The Regional Steering Committee is currently considering a governance model option whereby an existing or newly constituted legal entity could assume this role. Potential candidates being considered include The United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Vancouver Foundation or the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation. An outstanding issue that requires resolution before a governing entity can be sought is the lack of commitment by the federal government to the funding of the administration costs that would be incurred by the legal entity for operations beyond the three year SCPI funding time-frame.

5.3 Analysis

The *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* represents an comprehensive, ambitious effort to address the complex issues facing the homeless in the Greater Vancouver area. It builds on the significant efforts of community stakeholders, which, over the years, have worked to provide support and services to address emerging needs throughout the region. The Plan represents the region's first comprehensive and strategic effort to develop a co-ordinated longer range planning framework to address homelessness. As the implementation of the Plan progresses over time, it will provide a solid foundation to assist decision-making to fund investments that will alleviate homelessness.

Given the diversity of perspectives on the issue of homelessness, the Steering Committee is not seeking agreement on every aspect of the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*. Rather, all stakeholders are requested to approve only the Homelessness Plan's guiding principles and direction for addressing homelessness in the Greater Vancouver region.

At this point in the Plan's evolution, however, staff believe that it is premature to recommend a formal endorsement of the Plan's principles. While it is recognized that the Plan has received strong support from a diverse range of stakeholders, it is believed that an endorsement from local government may lead to misconceptions as to the realistic ability of the City to respond to the needs and gaps identified in the Plan. Endorsement should be considered following the resolution of the following issues:

- i) A conclusion to the issue of the future governance entity for the Plan. The City should know which entity will be responsible for the implementation of the Plan so that the organizational relationship with the City is understood and potential governance protocols are established.
- ii) A secure commitment from senior levels of government regarding continued funding for the initiatives identified in the Plan;
- iii) Completion of research that will further profile the homeless and "at risk" of homelessness population. The results of the research will help clarify priorities and ensure that programs and facilities address demonstrated need within the community.

Until these issues are resolved, staff are unable to undertake a detailed analysis of the impact of the Plan's directions and approach on the strategic planning and land use framework adopted by the City in its own policies and plans. Rather than a formal endorsement of the Plan's guiding principles, it is recommended that the City provide its preliminary support for the guiding principles outlined in the Plan as an indication of the City's perspective that facilitating a co-ordinated response toward the goal of reducing and alleviating homelessness in the Vancouver region is an important and worthwhile objective.

As well, it is recommended that the City acknowledge its recognition of the usefulness of the Plan as a working document that provides a framework by which local governments can evaluate and facilitate proposals for services and facilities for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

Finally, it is recommended that the City express its appreciation and support for the work of the Steering Committee and for staff to continue to be involved in the evolution of the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*.

6.0 CONCLUSION

A regional plan to alleviate and prevent homelessness in Greater Vancouver has been prepared by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, a broad-based committee which has developed the plan through a year long process that included

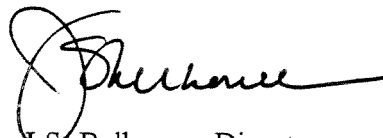
collaboration with an array of stakeholders, including homeless people. At the request of the Regional Steering Committee, the GVRD Board of Directors has distributed the plan to its member municipalities for endorsement.

At this point in the creation of the plan, staff believe that a number of issues remain to be resolved before consideration of formal endorsement of part of the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* can be recommended. Until the long-term governance of the plan is resolved, firmer funding commitments from senior levels of government are obtained and research profiling the homeless population is concluded, endorsement of the Plan's principles is viewed to be premature, and may lead to misconceptions or improper expectations regarding the City's abilities to respond to priorities identified in the Plan.

At the same time, however, it is recognized that the Plan represents a significant achievement in addressing the complex issues facing the homeless in the Greater Vancouver area. It is the region's first comprehensive and strategic effort to develop a co-ordinated longer range planning framework to address homelessness. As an alternative to endorsement, it is recommended that the Community Planning and Housing Committee recommend that Council:

- provide preliminary support for the guiding principles contained in the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*; and
- receive the *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver* as a working document; and
- express appreciation and support for the continuing work of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness including staff involvement with the evolution of the Plan.

A copy of the report with Council's decision will be forwarded to the Chair, Greater Vancouver Regional District Board of Directors.



J.S. Belhouse, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

BG:sa

Attachments(2)

cc: City Manager

**GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON
HOMELESSNESS**

June 19, 2001

NAME	ALTERNATE	AFFILIATION
<i>SHELTER PROVIDERS</i>		
Karen O'Shannacery	Al Mitchell	Lookout Emergency Aid Society
Peter Fedos	Darrell Ferner	Options Services to Communities Society
Chris Morrissey		BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses
<i>MUNICIPALITIES</i>		
Gerald Minchuk	Sharla Mauger Councillor	City of Langley
Beverly Grieve	Joan Selby	City of Burnaby
Jane Pickering		City of Coquitlam
Jill Davidson	Cameron Gray	City of Vancouver
Cheryl Kathler		City of North Vancouver
Barb Beblo		City of Surrey
Thor Kuhlmann		City of New Westminster
Ross Blackwell		District of Maple Ridge
Rob Innes		City of Richmond
Verna Semotuk (Chair)		Greater Vancouver Regional District
<i>HEALTH AUTHORITIES</i>		
Linda Thomas	Arleen Pare	Vancouver/Richmond Health Board
Lance Nelson		Simon Fraser Health Board
Laura Clarke		South Fraser Health Board
<i>FIRST NATIONS</i>		
Scott Clark		United Native Nations
Blair Harvey		Vancouver Aboriginal Council
Lynette Fiddler		Metis Family Services
David Stevenson	Paul Stevenson	Vancouver Metis Association
<i>HOUSING PROVIDERS</i>		
Alice Sundberg	Bonnie Rice	BC Non-Profit Housing Association
Diane Winkler		Co-operative Housing Federation of BC
Michelle Neilly/Lorraine Copas	Ashley Chester	BC Housing
<i>COMMUNITY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS</i>		
Linda Western		United Way of the Lower Mainland
Aziz Khaki		Interfaith Council
<i>SERVICE PROVIDERS</i>		
Linda Syssoloff		South Fraser Community Services
Marie Lemon	Jennifer Brubacher	Canadian Mental Health Association - Richmond
Linda Fletcher-Gordon	Rob York	Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Roxann MacDonald		SHARE (Tri-Cities)

**GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON
HOMELESSNESS**

June 19, 2001

NAME	ALTERNATE	AFFILIATION
Kathie Chiu	Gail Finsson	Child, Youth and Family Network (Maple Ridge)
Maureen Joyce		Stepping Stone Rehabilitative Society (Langley)
Rob Simms		Peace Arch Community Services
ADVOCACY		
John Argue		Working Group on Poverty
Tom Laviolette	Muggs Sigurgjerson	Carnegie Centre/Housing & Homeless Network
Kimiko Karpoff	Linda Mix/Vanessa Geary	Lower Mainland Network for Affordable Housing/New Westminster Community Housing Society
Timothy Welsh		Immigrant Services Society
Linda Mix	Kris Anderson	Tenants' Rights Action Coalition (TRAC)
BUSINESS/LABOUR		
Sophie King		Urban Development Institute
John Fitzpatrick		Vancouver & District Labour Council
GOVERNMENT		
Dianne Wenham		Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Greg Steves	Jeanine Ratcliffe	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Paul Clairmont	Barbara Montgomery	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Carla McLean	Lindsay Stephens	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Karen Hemmingson	Jennifer Vombrock	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Susan Stevenson		Human Resources Development Canada
Jennifer Semenoff		Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Steve Hall		CMHC
EX OFFICIO		
Chris Haynes		Ministry of Children & Family Development
Deborah Nilsen		Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Janice Aull		Ministry of Children & Family Development
Jim Green		Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Garry Curtis		Intergovernmental Services

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Guiding Principles Of The *Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver*

The guiding principles of the *Regional Homelessness Plan* state:

1. Solutions to homelessness require a co-ordinated and inclusive community response. The plan will be implemented through collective efforts by homeless people, housing groups, advocacy groups, service providers, community organisations, labour, the private sector, local governments within the GVRD, and provincial and federal governments.
2. The plan addresses the needs of people who are living with no physical shelter - on the street, in doorways, parkades, in parks, on beaches - or people living in emergency shelters or safe houses. It also addresses the needs of individuals at risk of homelessness living in spaces or situations that do not meet basic health and safety standards, provide security of tenure or personal safety, and are not affordable.
3. Preventing and alleviating homelessness requires flexible and co-ordinated responses that recognise the diversity of homeless people and their needs. The plan is inclusive and is intended to be sensitive to the diverse social, economic, cultural, religious, and language needs of all people including different target populations such as women and men, families, children, youth, seniors, Aboriginal people, new immigrants, refugees and refugee claimants, gay, lesbian and transgendered individuals as well as people with special needs including those with mental illness, disabilities, substance misuse, multiple diagnosis, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect, brain injuries, HIV/AIDS, criminal justice system involvement and victims of abuse.
4. A “continuum of housing and support” that consists of the following components best serves the needs of people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.
 - Housing continuum
 - emergency shelters
 - transition houses
 - supportive and second stage housing
 - independent housing
 - Adequate income
 - employment
 - employment insurance
 - income assistance
 - Support services
 - outreach
 - drop-in centres
 - health services
 - mental health services
 - substance misuse services
 - prevention services
 - Aboriginal/holistic services
5. Homeless people must have access to all components of the “continuum of housing and support” according to community need and distributed throughout Greater Vancouver.
6. The plan identifies actions (including education and communication) that can be initiated or implemented to address homelessness over the long term, beginning in year 2001, and updated as necessary.

