



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: March 12, 2012
Contact: Abi Bond
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RTS No.: 9484
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: March 27, 2012

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Managing Director, Social Development
SUBJECT: Vancouver Rent Bank

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve a grant for \$49,600 from the City of Vancouver Innovation Fund to Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) for the administration of Vancouver Rent bank, subject to the commitment of other funds, as generally proposed in Appendix A.
- B. THAT Council approve a grant for \$49,600 from City of Vancouver Innovation Fund to Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) for two subsequent years, subject to the approval of Recommendation A and budget availability and good performance for the administration of Vancouver Rent bank, subject to the commitment of other funds, as generally proposed in Appendix A.

REPORT SUMMARY

Rent banks provide small emergency loans for people who have temporary financial difficulties. Loans are not given directly to the applicant but to a collector such as a landlord for rent arrears or a security deposit or utility company for utility arrears. Rent banks are an innovative tool proven to be successfully implemented in other major centres such as Toronto, Surrey, Prince George and the Fraser Valley.

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021, endorsed by Council in 2011, identifies strategic directions to support Council's priority of ending street homelessness and providing more affordable housing choices for all Vancouverites. The 3-Year Action Plan 2012-2014 identifies rent banks as a priority action to prevent renters from losing their housing.

The rent bank proposal will be administered by NICCSS who will serve as a community hub with referrals made by staff at neighbourhood houses to ensure a comprehensive case management with the loan recipient. This report seeks Council approval to contribute \$148,800 over three years towards the operating costs for a Vancouver-based rent bank. The City's financial contribution leverages \$551,500 over three years in funds from Streetohome Foundation, Vancity Community Foundation, Vancouver Foundation (pending approval), Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) and 14 neighbourhood houses for capital and in-kind contributions. Streetohome Foundation committed \$150,000 to the capital portion of the rent bank in October 2011. Vancity Community Foundation (VCF) will be contributing to the financial literacy component and assist with loan approvals and hold the capital funds in trust. The Vancouver Foundation is currently considering a grant application for \$90,000 over three years as a contribution towards administrative costs. A Letter of Understanding between NICCSS and the City of Vancouver will outline annual reporting requirements which will be the basis for monitoring and evaluating key success factors.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On July 28, 2011 Council endorsed the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021, which includes strategic direction three: to provide strong leadership and support partners to enhance housing stability. The 3-Year Action Plan 2012-2014 identifies priority actions to achieve some of the strategy's goals. The development of a rent bank was an identified outcome that could enhance support to renters.

Approval of grant recommendations requires eight affirmative votes.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of this important prevention initiative that will only enhance support to renters and prevent evictions of low-income individuals and families. Partnerships like this are important to alleviate the immediate costs of homelessness and the pressures experienced by low income individuals and families.

REPORT

Background/Context

In the spring of 2011, the City underwent an extensive public engagement exercise to engage residents to share ideas on the actions required to ensure that everyone in Vancouver has a home. There was considerable concern expressed for renters who comprise the middle part of the housing continuum and the increasing pressures on their rent levels. At the Talk Housing to Us Unconference on June 4th 2011, one of the 20 discussions focused on rental assistance tools, specifically rent banks. Citizens explored the concept of rent banks and reviewed several existing rent bank models and their approaches. They exist across Canada including Surrey, Prince George, the Fraser Valley and Toronto (Appendix C). From the discussion there was support for the City of Vancouver to work with community groups to develop a Vancouver-based rent bank.

Based on feedback from the public consultation process, staff developed the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021. To supplement this there is a 3-Year Action Plan 2012-2014 and rent banks were specifically identified as an outcome to enhance support to renters. Potential partners for this outcome included government, non-profit, financial institutions and community partners.

Renter households are a vital part of our City. According to the 2006 Census, over half (52%) of the dwelling units in Vancouver are rentals. Vancouver faces the second most expensive rents in Canada, second to Montreal. Nearly 40% of renters are paying more than 30% of their income in rent and 15% are paying over 50%. Canadian households that spend 30% or more of their income in housing are considered to be at-risk of homelessness. This demonstrates the precarious state of the City's renters and the need for a local rent bank.

Table 1: Renters Profile Comparison Across Canada

	% of renters	% renters spending >30%	Median income of renters	Average rent
Vancouver	52%	40%	\$34,000	\$1,102
Toronto	50%	46%	\$36,860	\$1,147
Surrey	25%	39%	\$36,000	\$814
Prince George	30%	39%	\$29,426	\$658

Rent banks serve low income singles, couples and families who are in temporary financial crisis and at imminent need of losing their housing. Rent bank loans are considered a type of micro-credit alternative to otherwise borrowing from friends or families, or borrowing from payday lending sources. Micro-credit financing has been recognized globally as a financial model to spur entrepreneurship, increase incomes and alleviate poverty. The United Nations declared 2005 as International Year of Micro-credit.

Research findings from an evaluation of rent banks across Ontario commissioned by the Province of Ontario have shown that rent banks are an effective tool to promote and maintain housing stability and to be cost effective. Outcomes included reduced costs of prevented evictions to landlords and renters, reduced strain on families and children whose relocation or homelessness were prevented, and reduced emergency shelter costs. Dr. Paul Bowles, a professor from the School of Economics at University of Northern British Columbia, was commissioned by the three rent banks in British Columbia (Prince George, Surrey, and Fraser Valley) to conduct an evaluation. These rent banks were also found to be cost effective at providing housing stability. At the time of the evaluation there were 107 loans issued which impacted 288 individuals. This demonstrated that for every loan issued nearly three people's housing was preserved, or evictions were prevented. Currently, there are two main government programs that provide support to rentals, Rental Assistance Program (RAP) or Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER). These programs are designed as a permanent housing subsidy which is a different type of support than from a rent bank loan which is for a temporary financial crisis. The eligibility criteria for these existing programs preclude income assistance recipients, singles/couples without children, or individuals/families without employment income. Rent banks serve renters who are precariously housed and in temporary financial difficulty.

Discussions began with community partners and financial institutions in the summer of 2011. Network of Inner City Community Services (NICCSS), a consortium of community-based organizations, resident groups and consumer groups working together to coordinate multiple services to youth and families, spearheaded the discussions and engaged the partners. The mission of NICCSS is to promote the development of children, youth and families and to strengthen and support the development of partnerships between service providers, consumers and natural neighbourhood systems. NICCSS has been operating a small-scale rent bank, iRent, for low-income families in the DTES since 2008.

Vancouver Rent Bank (VRB) Proposal

Based on discussions from various stakeholders and current experience, NICCSS has brought forward a proposal to the City of Vancouver for a VRB, see Appendix A. Existing network of neighbourhood houses, community centres, neighbourhood service organizations and other agency partners will serve as referring agencies to the rent bank's community hub for the VRB which will be operated by NICCSS. The VRB Administrator will provide support and training sessions related to the various referring agencies on how to complete the form, eligibility criteria and other relevant VRB information. People who are at risk of losing their housing and are already connected to services through their communities centres and neighbourhood houses will be assisted to access the VRB.

Community workers who have been trained by the VRB Administrator will conduct a pre-assessment to explore all the clients' needs. At the pre-assessment or in-take period, community workers and the VRB Administrator will work together to determine eligibility for a loan or provide other viable options for the individual. A plan of action will be developed for the individual that may include referral to another community service or advocacy by the Administrator and/or community worker. The Administrator will conduct follow-ups with declined applicants as well as loan recipients for evaluation purposes as it is likely that VRB services prevented evictions even though a loan may not have been issued.

If a loan is required then the community worker facilitates the applicant to complete a VRB application form (see Appendix A). In some cases, a loan may not be required but rather another intervention may be suitable to ensure evictions are prevented such as referral to food banks or to other community services. This screening process is intended to ensure that all applications being reviewed by the Loans Committee are potentially eligible.

The application is then reviewed by a weekly Loans Committee which will consist of 3-5 representatives from partner agencies including the financial sector and a neighbourhood representative. Loans Committee meetings will be facilitated by NICCSS.

The Loans Committee will be accountable to the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) which will meet monthly at the onset of the program and then quarterly thereafter. The CAC will provide oversight to the VRB process as it develops and will engage key partners such as BC Housing and the Ministry of Social Development to be part of the ongoing development of the VRB.

Representatives who sit on the Loans Committee or the CAC will have experience, skills and knowledge in financial literacy, the rental housing market, low-income individuals and community service provision.

Figure 1: VRB Process



The proposal includes a budget for capital and operating expenses that is \$700,300 for three years. In addition to their request for a contribution towards operating funding from the City of Vancouver; the proposal includes contributions of capital dollars from Streethome Foundation, in-kind support from Vancity Community Foundation, UBC, and various community agencies.

Table 2: VRB Funding - over 3 Years

Contributor	Funding Item	Estimated Value	Percent of Total Funding
Streethome Foundation	Capital cash for loans	\$365,800	52%
City of Vancouver* Vancouver Foundation* *pending approval	Operating expenses - CoV \$148,800 - VF \$90,000	\$238,800	34%
NICCSS & Community Partners	Advisory Committee Participation Communication	\$77,700	11%
Vancity Community Foundation	Financial Literacy Training Advisory Committee Participation	\$15,000	2%
UBC	Evaluation	\$3,000	0.4%
TOTAL		\$700,300	100%

VRB: Conditions & Eligibility

The list of expenses that are eligible for loans will be confirmed and agreed upon by the CAC. Typical expenses eligible for other rent bank loans include: security deposit, rent and utility arrears. Also being considered is the concept of bonds where a financial institution holds in trust a damage deposit for a landlord, which would reduce administrative costs for the VRB.

Priority will be given to those individuals and families with low income. Based on the Toronto's Rent Bank, the following will form the basis of eligibility criteria which will be confirmed by the CAC:

- Imminent danger of losing housing or utilities due to arrears;
- Must not be more than 2 months arrears;
- Must have good rental history and landlord willing to maintain tenancy;
- Must have ability to repay loan;
- Only 1 loan at a time;
- Must be Canadian citizen, conventional refugees, landed immigrants or permanent residents; and
- Housing must be sustainable.

The term of the interest free loan will be up to 24 months, which is based on past loan experience by NICCSS' iRent program.

The financial literacy component is a tool that will be offered to loan recipients to further their knowledge of budgeting and daily banking. Specific attention will be dedicated to the cyclical nature and challenges of payday lending sources. Details of the financial literacy component will be explored and developed with the community agencies and Vancity Community Foundation.

VRB: Evaluations

The Department of Economics from the University of British Columbia has offered fourth year students to conduct the VRB first year's evaluation based on regular reports provided by NICCSS (see Appendix B). By the end of year 2 it is expected there will be enough data to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation. NICCSS has committed to exploring options to have the evaluation piece contributed in-kind by a credible and appropriate organization.

VRB: Proposed Timeline

If approval for the operating budget was granted and funding was secured the intent is to have the VRB operation in late summer 2012. The following table outlines the timeline:

Table 2: VRB Timeline

Action	Date
NICCSS to convene Advisory Committee	June, 2012
NICCSS to post, hire and train VRB Administrator	June, 2012
Advisory Committee to confirm Communications Strategy	July, 2012
Staff to roll out Training Modules with community partners	July, 2012
Staff and partners to roll out Communications Strategy	July, 2012
Rent Bank application in-takes	August, 2012

Strategic Analysis

The City has focused on bringing other partners and funding together to enable the development of a Vancouver-based rent bank. NICCSS has the appropriate infrastructure, organizational capacity and experience in administering rent bank loans. Their office space is located across the street from Ray Cam Co-operative Centre at 877 East Hastings Street. Their relationships with member agencies are well established with a strong reputation for coordination of services. They are confident they can expand their relationships to reach a broader city-wide population.

NICCSS have proposed a rent bank that fits into a social enterprise model. Vancity Credit Union and Vancity Community Foundation are keen supporters of social enterprise development and do a lot of education in the community about different types of models. The VRB fits into a mission subsidization model where the business will break even as a result of their earned income (loan repayments) plus a stable subsidy. NICCSS have developed clear financial goals, as they aim to maintain the size of their loan fund during the three-year period.

The costs inherent in this model are due to the nature of the delivery model. Based on the experience of other rent banks, NICCSS are proposing a model that uses significant staff resources, resulting in relatively high on-going administration costs. This is because of the additional value that experienced staff will bring through a case management approach that provides additional financial advice, support and sign-posting to additional services, over and above the loan administration. There will be a number of individuals that will be helped without the use of a loan so the number of people impacted will far exceed the number of loans issued. This model is considered to be most effective in helping individuals and families in a holistic way, rather than just distributing loans.

NICCSS proposal is founded on a strong business plan and shows that in addition to their track-record as a non-profit, they hold significant promise as a social entrepreneur. Through their work with iRent in Strathcona and their studies of other rent banks in Canada, they have developed a local analysis and identified a market opportunity, based on local need. They have realistically estimated the loan repayment rates and forecasted their revenue and operating costs. They have clear social goals with measurable targets. A realistic assessment of impact is that the VRB will have the capacity to issue an estimated 540 individual loans during the three-year period. It can potentially prevent up to 1,620 evictions (based on the three-to-one ratio as Bowles' evaluation estimated). NICCSS will be able to demonstrate value through on-going performance monitoring.

Streethome Foundation has committed the initial loan capital investment of \$150,000, which ensures there can be up to 180 loans at an average of \$835 loan (based on NICCSS data) per year. A key focus of NICCSS will be to maximise the repayment rate, and a realistic estimate is that they will be at 70% where part is collected within the same loan year and the rest is collected over the next 12 months. Streethome Foundation has committed to topping up the capital, maintaining a loan fund of \$150,000 each year once repayments are considered.

The first year's budget of \$261,500 includes \$150,000 in capital for the actual loans. Total operational costs for each year are \$111,500 with \$31,900 delivered in-kind, resulting in an actual operational cost of \$79,600 (30% of the total budget). It is estimated that 540 loans would be issued over the three years with the average loan amounting to approximately \$835. Full budget details are available in Appendix A.

The impact of 540 loans to individuals will be significant but it will be a further benefit to the families and dependants of the recipients, as their housing will be preserved and safeguarded as a result. A sense of the value of the VRB can be gauged through a comparison with shelter costs. On average, it costs \$2,500 per person per month in a shelter. An average loan of \$835 plus administrative costs could save \$1,300 at a minimum and the savings in human suffering are far greater. Each loan reduces the risk of homelessness. The coordination of services offered in this model include interventions such as case management follow-up, financial literacy training and introduction of other services that have long-term impacts in sustaining housing.

The City's investment into VRB aligns with other efforts of ending street homelessness such as through Homelessness Action Week (HAW). HAW is a regional campaign that aims at raising awareness on homelessness issues. It is another Council endorsed initiative that promotes city-wide partnerships and local capacity building such as the proposed VRB model. To this end, Council demonstrated its support to build new partnerships and enhance existing partnerships by approving \$25,000 in grants during HAW in 2011.

A City financial contribution to a VRB is recommended because this particular proposal has garnered many supporting partners. Please see Appendix B for the various letters of support such as from MLA Spencer Chandra-Herbert, Frog's Hollow Neighbourhood House, UBC, Streethome Foundation and Vancity Community Foundation.

Multi-year funding has been often identified as a best practice in grant funding. A Letter of Understanding (LOU) allows for regular monitoring and evaluations in case the project is poorly managed or performing poorly. A Letter of Understanding between NICCSS and the City of Vancouver will outline annual reporting requirements which will be the basis for monitoring and evaluating key success factors.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)

Financial

The proposed financial contribution from the City will be \$49,600 for each year. As part of the 2012 Operating budget, Council approved a new "Innovation Fund". This fund is to leverage third-party funding at a minimum of one-to-one matching funds for the purpose of advancing City policies and programs. The source of funds for this initiative will be from this new Innovation Fund. The VRB will be continually evaluated to provide evidence for future funding opportunities and support. The sustainability of the VRB will be a component of the evaluation piece in the third year.

CONCLUSION

The development of a Vancouver based rent bank supports the strategic direction three in the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021, to provide strong leadership and support partners to enhance housing stability. Rent banks serve as a prevention strategy for those at-risk of homelessness. Staff recommends approval of a grant of \$148,800 over three years, subject to a capital financial contribution from Streethome Foundation, and operational contributions from the Vancouver Foundation, NICCSS and Vancity, as generally proposed in Appendix A.

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VANCOUVER RENT BANK LOAN FUND PROPOSAL

Contact Information

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Project

Vancouver Rent Bank – 3 year pilot: A Rent Bank with loan fund for Vancouver residents facing eviction & homelessness due to short-term financial crisis

Three year Financial Summary

(For full details please see attached detailed summary)

Request

The Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) is working with a consortium of community agencies, organizations and foundations to create the Vancouver Rent Bank. We are requesting \$148,800 from the City of Vancouver as a contribution towards the operating costs. This fund will build on the existing supports available in neighbourhoods in Vancouver with a high proportion of renters, and complement the City of Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2012-2021). The StreetoHome Foundation has provided initial capital for the loan funds in the amount of \$150,000. In addition to direct funding, we have been working with many partners to provide their expertise in financial services and literacy (Vancity), in data analysis and evaluation (UBC Department of Economics) and in community support networks for residents through neighbourhood houses and community centres. NICCSS brings its expertise in forming collaborative partnerships to this project as well as experience in operating the local iRENT Bank for the last five years.

Executive Summary

There is an urgent need for preventative solutions to homelessness in Vancouver. There have been significant efforts to address homelessness and the City is finally seeing a shift in the number of people who are homeless. As a community, we have an opportunity to prevent homelessness with the appropriate tools—a Vancouver Rent Bank will be a cost-effective resource for neighbourhoods with high volumes of low-income renters who may face homelessness. There are currently a number of gaps in our response to homelessness in Vancouver and the Vancouver Rent Bank will address much-needed prevention, using neighbourhood-based community organizations as access points for the Vancouver Rent Bank, financial literacy training and connection to housing support services. The goal of the Vancouver Rent Bank is to reduce the high cost of homelessness for taxpayers by providing an option to renters in a temporary financial crisis, ensuring they do not end up homeless, where the costs to our already stretched system exponentially increase.

The NICCSS is proposing a Vancouver Rent Bank Loan Fund with an initial 3-year mandate. This fund will build on the existing supports available in neighbourhoods in Vancouver with a high proportion of renters, and complement the City of Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2012- 2021) and the work of the StreetoHome Foundation. The fund will gain from the experience of existing Rent Banks in British Columbia, including the NCISS' existing iRENT Bank program that is already being offered to families in the DTES, Strathcona and Hastings Corridor area of Vancouver. The Vancouver Rent Bank will allow low-income residents across the City, who are in temporary financial crisis and about to lose their housing, to access interest free emergency loans to address rent shortfalls and utilities arrears and deposits thus preventing their eviction.

An important element of the Vancouver Rent Bank will be financial literacy education and connections to a network of neighbourhood agency partners that can support loan recipients based on their current needs and ensure continuity of support, loan repayment and ongoing stability of housing. Vancouver Rent Bank partner agencies will use their existing resources and infrastructure to help individuals negotiate arrears repayments with their landlord, assist people in obtaining a job, and provide financial counseling to assist applicants with budgeting and financial planning. This support will be offered within the context of relationships already existing between these residents and member agencies and will be enhanced by the Vancouver Rent Bank model.

The Need for the Vancouver Rent Bank- Preventing Homelessness

Through its work, NICCSS has identified a strong need in the community for a Rent Bank. There has been a doubling of property values since 2001 and a historically low rental vacancy rates (0.3% for 2006). This has added significant pressure on renters. Housing costs comprise the largest proportion of these households' expenditures and families are increasingly finding themselves unable to afford escalating rents. Add to this an unstable economy that has placed those with fixed incomes, such as seniors, in increasingly difficult financial situations, and our city has been faced with a homelessness crisis. An estimated one-third of the households in Greater Vancouver are struggling to secure housing that is in good condition, appropriate in size and affordable in relation to their income.¹ Six years ago, homelessness was an imminent risk for an estimated 20,500 households in Vancouver or 40,000 people (8% of the population).^{2 3}

Government funding streams for homelessness prevention and related services are fragmented and limited. Most existing programs are focused either on emergency shelters or existing social housing. The number of subsidized housing units available has not kept pace with the number of low-income families needing subsidy. Less than 1% of rental units are available at welfare rates – including social housing stock. About 10,500 households are waiting for subsidized housing and do so for an average of 8 years before being placed.⁴

Low-income families have to make hard decisions regarding their limited budgets such as whether to pay utilities; buy their children food, clothing, and medication; or pay to rid their homes of major infestations (bed bugs, lice, cockroaches, rodents). Unexpected expenditures leave them without sufficient funds to cover their full monthly rent. Low income seniors are a significant population of renters in Vancouver, with approximately 26,000 seniors renting in Vancouver. With their fixed income they represent a particularly vulnerable population⁵.

Once residents fall behind they find it almost impossible to catch-up without a corresponding increase in their budget. The majority of low-income working people live from pay cheque to pay cheque or welfare cheque to welfare cheque. When they are in trouble, they need assistance to prevent an episodic shortfall from becoming a

¹ GVRD (2007).

² Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (2005). That is, these renters and owners were IN "core need" And paying at Least Half their income on housing – INALH for short. Households are in "core housing need," according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, when their current accommodation is unaffordable, inappropriately sized or inadequately maintained, and they cannot afford housing that meets all three of these standards.

³ Davidson, Jill and Annitta Lee. 2005. Homeless Action Plan: City of Vancouver.

⁴ Solving the Crisis of Homelessness & Affordable Housing in Greater Vancouver, City in Focus, 2007.

⁵ City of Vancouver Seniors Factsheet October 2010

large crisis. Their biggest fear is 'I don't want to be homeless.' The cost to individuals and families when they are evicted for rent shortfalls is high: dislocation, instability, loss of possessions and community impacts on employment, school, health and safety. The cost to Vancouver taxpayers is also high: according to the Province of BC, we spend approximately \$2,250- \$2,500 per month on immediate emergency shelter beds. For those who are episodically homeless⁶, the Vancouver Rent Bank will address dislocation costs to the taxpayer, landlord and resident, and increase the chances for success for participants. According to 2005 research by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, landlords participating in their study "indicated that the costs of each eviction average nearly \$3,000 for social housing landlords and close to \$6,600 for private sector landlords. Costs included legal fees, unpaid rent, foregone rent, and rental unit repairs."⁷ The Vancouver Rent Bank is a prevention tool that will have significant impact on the increasing costs of homelessness, providing evaluation and evidence to show the value of this resource in the long term as an essential part of the continuum to reduce homelessness in Vancouver. The important nature of rent banks has been recognized by British Columbia's Auditor General, who a need to identify key gaps as well as the fact that "Some best practices, such as "rent banks" for preventing evictions, are not being used."⁸

Existing Rent Banks

There is much experience in Canada with preventative work on homelessness and in particular with Rent Banks, which NICCSS has researched in order to put together this proposal. Toronto has a rent bank which provides interest free loans to sustain their tenancies and avoid eviction, targeting seniors, individuals, and families who face eviction for rental arrears. Toronto also has an Emergency Rental Deposit Loan Program that provides an interest-free repayable loan for last month's rent deposit to households where changes in economic situation necessitate a move to more affordable housing. These programs were so successful that they were adopted by the province and became part of Ontario's Rent Bank network and the larger initiative in that province, *Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*.⁹

In British Columbia, there are three existing Rent Banks in addition to the NICCSS iRENT Program. These four programs (Surrey Rent Bank, Fraser Valley Rental Assistance Project and the Prince George Rent Bank) use differing models and delivery systems particular to their communities, resources and organizational structures¹⁰. All are in the early stages of their development and provide a mix of support and education in addition to the loans for low-income residents in financial crisis. Together, these Rent Banks have provided support to 288 individuals across the province, in a 12- 24 month period, preventing immediate eviction¹¹. Their success in such a short period of time demonstrates the need and importance of homelessness prevention programs. Surrey has provided support to its Rent Bank through the Surrey Homelessness & Housing Society, providing 58 loans so far, representing 155 people, families and individuals saved from being street or sheltered homeless. Vancouver would greatly benefit from this integrated model of support, as we look to long term sustainable tool for homelessness prevention.

The NICCSS iRENT Program began in Ray-Cam Centre, a member of NICCSS located in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona and Hasting Corridor area of the inner city of Vancouver. In January 2008, the Ray-Cam Board re-assigned scarce centre resources (\$5,000) to a small emergency fund to assist several families who were facing eviction (mainly from social housing) as a result of rent arrears. These arrears ranged from \$450 (accumulated over 5 months) to a high of \$1,000. Most families had not established credit histories, could not get conventional bank loans and some had poor credit histories. A plan was negotiated with each family relating in receipt of a loan from the fund, which covered their rent arrears and avoided their eviction. NICCSS eventually took over administration of this program, expanding it to a fund just under \$10,000. The first phase of the pilot began in 2009/10 to select participants to receive initial iRENT loans and develop the model. The initial loans were to female

⁶ Province of BC Ministry of Energy and Mines and Minister Responsible for Housing news release April 25, 2011, and CMHA 2005.

⁷ Cost Effectiveness of Eviction Prevention Programs, Research Highlights, 2005, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

⁸ Auditor General, Homelessness: *Clear Focus Needed* March 2009

⁹ http://toronto.ontariotenants.ca/rent_bank.phtml

¹⁰ Evaluation of Rent Banks in British Columbia, Dr Paul Bowles, March 2011

¹¹ *IBID*, ii.

residents in the Hastings corridor between Carrall Street and Campbell Avenue. All have support of community workers who are assisting them with repayment plans and providing connections to community support services for themselves and their families. In 2010, loans averaged \$400 and were distributed to 15 singles and families. The terms of the loan were 24 months and repayments were an estimated 70%.

Learning from the successes in the iRENT Program, we have found that residents are most successful in maintaining housing and repaying loans when they have access to services based on strong interpersonal relationships and workers who connect them to supports in their communities. Therefore, the Vancouver Rent Bank will emphasize collaboration amongst community members, building on the existing family and support networks within neighbourhoods and developing new partnerships between citizens, neighbourhood groups and social service providers.

Vancouver Rent Bank (VRB) Model

NICCSS proposal for the VRB is based on a social enterprise model that seeks a blended return on investment. NICCSS will draw up a cooperative services partnership with agencies and organizations across the city to operate a VRB which provides interest free loans that will prevent evictions for families. This will include one-time funding for security deposits, first and last month's rent as well as rental or utility arrears. This Rent Bank will operate on the basis of recovery of initial principle via repayment of approved loans. We will seek to maximize the loan repayment rate and at the same time achieve our goals of helping to support vulnerable renters. However, we do acknowledge that the repayment rate will never be 100% so in order to maintain the same loan fund value, there will have to be a top-up of the fund on an annual basis.

NICCSS will employ the VRB administrator, who will provide training and education sessions with partner agencies on the application and support process and provide regular stakeholder meetings and coordination sessions. The implementation plan will include convening a Steering Committee consisting of organization and stakeholder representatives who will establish working parameters for the VRB. They will:

- Publicize VRB
- Set maximum loan amount and frequency e.g. \$2,500, one loan at a time
- Set maximum repayment period e.g. up to 2 years
- Develop a community-based intake/referral process, for those seeking loans e.g. include release of information, etc.
- Coordinate loan dissemination with funders
- Provide cheques/letters of credit directly to landlord/utility providers

NICCSS will act as the Coordination Hub for the VRB, working with agency partners across Vancouver to serve vulnerable renters across the city. These Community Referral Agencies will represent accessible community organizations (Neighbourhood Houses, Community Centres, neighbourhood service organizations) as well as specialized services such as youth serving agencies (for example youth hubs such as Broadway Youth Resource Centre and their City-Wide Table of housing workers) and seniors organizations that provide support and outreach to seniors. Across the city, vulnerable identified populations include seniors, youth, Aboriginal people, women as well as low-income individuals who fall into a combination of these categories.

The diagram below outlines the organizational and administrative structure for the VRB. A loans approval committee will meet weekly and will be made up of three to five representatives and will be chaired by NICCSS. Representatives will include at least one community agency partner representative, at least one financial sector representative and one neighbourhood representative. The Community Advisory Committee will meet monthly at the beginning of the program and quarterly subsequently and will be made up of stakeholders including representatives from funding partners, community referral (intake) agencies, residents in key neighbourhoods and representatives from the housing sector who can address and problem solve issues that arise for loan applicants and the program as a whole.



Intake Agencies will provide community referrals to the VRB Administrator who will review applications on a weekly basis with the Loan Approval Committee made up of partner and stakeholder representatives. The project will be overseen by the Community Advisory Committee that will meet on a monthly basis to set goals, ensure the collection of evaluation data and work with Intake Agencies to ensure follow up through the loan period with each loan recipient, develop a support referral system as needed and set up liaison with landlords, utility providers, and advocacy systems.

NICCSS have carried out research to focus on the market need for a Rent Bank by looking for where in Vancouver there is a high concentration of renters so that neighbourhoods reflecting a high number of renters can be targeted through the program for outreach and education (see Appendix 2 for details). In each neighborhood, partner agencies will help NICCSS identify the target population in greatest need.

VRB Priority activity areas will include the following:

Activity Areas	Activities
Prevention of Homelessness	Provide emergency loans to prevent homelessness (i.e. security deposits, rent or utility arrears) to residents unable to get conventional bank loans and facing imminent eviction
Community Collaboration	Promote and expand the program and referral process ensuring accessibility and accountability
Education	Provide financial literacy workshops for Vancouver Rent Bank loan recipients
Ongoing Support	Create individual support plans with NICCSS family support workers and loan recipient's community worker for each participant and their family that includes both repayment and prevention of future eviction

Evaluation and Learning	Develop an evaluation plan that includes feedback from participants and community partners and organizations, monitor successes and challenges and includes residents in advisory committee. Evaluation will include tracking of outcomes for those receiving loans, data collection on homelessness prevention and financial accountability through reports to funders and community partners on success of investments in the program and learnings as the program develops
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Evaluation & Expected Results

NICCSS have considered other Rent Bank experiences to determine the parameters and expected outcomes for the VRB. NICCSS expects that the VRB could prevent the homelessness of 540 individuals and families. This is based on the following assumptions; an annual loan fund of \$150,000, an average loan size of \$835, a payback period of up to 24 months, and 70% loan repayment rate.

NICCSS considers that the VRB will be a cost efficient, effective, and respectful way to assist residents through financial crisis points in their lives. By drawing alongside them with this assistance, we will see residents continue in stable and secure housing, their children not uprooted in their schooling, and the parents continuing to have that base from which to build a future. The VRB will strengthen existing relationships between neighbourhood agencies and with an evaluation process will identify gaps and supports needed to prevent homelessness. NICCSS will provide a neutral and central source of coordination and funding. Similar approaches implemented in other cities have proven to be very effective at preventing residents becoming homeless and in crisis.

APPENDIX 1 - Organizational Capacity of NICCSS

In 1999, The Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) formed to provide a single contracting source, which has the ability to coordinate contracts among multiple experienced grassroots agencies. As a consortium of community-based organizations, resident groups and consumer groups working together, NICCSS delivers and coordinates multiple services to youth and families. Its geographical focus is primarily on those living in the northeast sector of Vancouver.

NICCSS mission is to promote the optimal development of children, youth and families and to strengthen and support the development of partnerships between service providers, consumers and natural neighbourhood systems. Through this collaborative community building model, gaps in services for vulnerable populations have been identified and addressed. As well, cooperation and coordination within the community has increased.

NICCSS works with member organizations, helping coordinate & secure specialized responses and resources to address the underlying issues of vulnerable seniors, children & youth and families which require broad community coordinated responses. Such issues include: street involvement, drug abuse, sexually exploited children, family breakdown/violence, mental health, discrimination, isolated and medically fragile seniors, and access to training and employment for residents on income assistance.

Subsequently, programs frequently involve a number of community organizations working together to address a common issue. NICCSS does not compete for or duplicate services, but strengthens the work of its members through developing services that extend beyond the mandate of member organizations. Flowing from collaborative planning, when NICCSS functions as a service provider, this function always is within a cooperative services partnership; which draws on the capacities of the various member organizations participating.

NICCSS Services include prevention and early intervention, youth and family support, and social enterprise projects. Specifically:

- Home Support Services (Supervised Visitation Access, Teaching Homemakers, and Homecare services including employment and training initiatives for women);
- Child and Youth Services and Child and Family Referrals (HUB Coordination and Roving Leaders Program);
- Capacity Links Seniors Program (multiple agency outreach and support to isolated seniors);
- RICHER Initiative (health services for residents including seniors, families and community support services planning with BC Women's and Children's Hospital) and
- Social Enterprise Initiatives (incubated reBOOT Vancouver and VANOC Lost and Found/ Asset Disposal program)

A social enterprise model for the Rent Bank which seeks a blended return on investment by preventing homelessness and maximising a loan repayment rate fits well into the mandate of NICCSS. The Vancouver Rent Bank Administrator will be based out of NICCSS, with responsibility for reaching out to Intake Agencies and community. NICCSS will provide administrative support, and manage the program with the assistance of the Vancouver Rent Bank Advisory Committee, including the employment of the Rent Bank Administrator, oversight of the evaluation of the program and financial measurements and accountability. NICCSS will be responsible for the delivery of outcomes monitoring reports and the organization of evaluation of the program. This resource will connect community organizations across Vancouver's neighbourhoods, assist residents and build new or strengthen existing relationships between community groups and residents. NICCSS will provide a neutral and central source of administration, coordination and funding. This project meets both the criteria of benefiting vulnerable populations, and is one that is outside the mandate of any single agency. Similar approaches implemented in other cities have proven to be very effective at preventing seniors, families and singles from becoming homeless and in crisis.

APPENDIX 2- Income Levels and Percentage of Renters in Key Neighbourhoods across Vancouver

These priority neighbourhoods were selected as they have high proportion of renters and a large proportion of renters paying more than 30% of their income in rent.

West End - V6G

Median individual income: \$28,944
Median household income: \$40,562
23.2% of families are low income
34% of this population pays more than 30% of income in rent
78% of population are renters

Downtown Eastside and Strathcona - V6A

Median individual income: \$13,608
Median household income: \$15,543
40.4% of families are low income
44% of this population pays more than 30% of income in rent
82% of population are renters

Marpole - V6P

Median income: \$21,809
Median household income: \$45,227
27.3% of families are low income
35% of this population pays more than 30% of income in rent
52% of population are renters

Grandview Woodland - V5L

Median income: \$19,764
Median household income: \$35,225
27% of families are low income
37% of this population pays more than 30% of income in rent
67% of population are renters

Mount Pleasant - V5T

Median income: \$19,798
Median household income: \$37,722
32.8% of families are low income
37% of this population pays more than 30% of income in rent
67% of population are renters

Kensington/ Victoria - Fraserview - V5P

Median income: \$18,726
Median household income: \$50,052
25.5% of families are low income
32% of this population pays more than 30% of income in rent
34% of population are renters

Oakridge - V5X

Median individual income: \$17,025
Median household income: \$46,164
23% of families low income
29% of population pays more than 30% of income in rent
40% of population are renters

APPENDIX 3

DRAFT Vancouver Rent Bank Application

The Vancouver Rent Bank Program is a **LOAN** which is interest free to assist applicants faced with homelessness with rental arrears, with rental deposits, and assistance with utilities arrears. The following is a list of criteria for applicants to follow:

Applicants must be a resident of Vancouver and meet requirements for status in Canada (attach proof to application)

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are able to sustain their housing and repay the rent bank loan. Applicants must **detail and document all income and expenses.**

Applicants must show that **every effort to negotiate a payment agreement directly with the landlord has been made.** The office will contact the landlord to assess the tenant landlord relationship.

Applicants must be residing as legal tenants in housing that is sustainable, safe and habitable.

Applicants currently receiving social assistance are not eligible until they demonstrate that all assistance through other funding or grants available is exhausted. This will be determined through contact with the Ministry responsible for social assistance.

Applicants can **only apply once in a two year period**, repayment of an existing loan may enable an earlier application period.

Referring Vancouver Rent Bank Intake Agency: _____

Applicant

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Social Insurance Number ____/____/____ Birth Date ____/____/____
M D Y

Address _____

City/Town _____

Postal Code _____

Home Phone # _____ Work Phone # _____

Cell Phone # _____ Emergency Contact# _____

Employer Name: _____ Contact Name: _____

Occupation: _____

Co-Applicant

Last Name _____

First Name _____

Social Insurance Number ____/____/____ Birth Date ____/____/____
M D Y

Employer Name: _____ Contact Name: _____

Occupation: _____ Work Phone # _____

Current Housing Information

Do you currently live in subsidized housing? Yes No

Current Landlord's name _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Date you moved into current accommodation _____

Current Rent \$ _____

How long have you lived in current accommodation? _____

Is eviction notice for reason other than rent arrears? _____

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION:

Name: _____	Relationship to Client: _____	D of B (d/m/y): ____/____/____	Sex (M/F): _____
_____	_____	____/____/____	_____
_____	_____	____/____/____	_____
_____	_____	____/____/____	_____

PREVIOUS ADDRESSES (if moved in the last 3 yrs):

Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
_____	_____	_____
Date moved in: _____	Date moved in: _____	Date moved in: _____
Date moved out: _____	Date moved out: _____	Date moved out: _____
Landlord: _____	Landlord: _____	Landlord: _____
Phone #: _____	Phone #: _____	Phone #: _____
Moving reason: _____	Moving reason: _____	Moving reason: _____
_____	_____	_____

Have you ever stayed in a shelter before? Yes No Were you evicted before? Yes No

Household Income

Total monthly household income (total amount before deductions)

You **must state all sources** of income for each applicant.

Source of Income	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Type of income: Employment	(\$)	(\$)
Type of income: EI Benefits		
Type of income: Workers Comp. Type of income: Income Assistance		
Type of income: Other (Please Specify) i.e.: Child Tax Credit		

Reasons for Arrears:

Declaration

Pursuant to Canada's *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA), I give my consent and authorization to Vancouver Rent Bank Approval Committee to make inquiries to verify the information given on this application and I authorize any person, corporation or any social agency having knowledge of any such required information to release the information to Vancouver Rent Bank Approval Committee.

I agree to provide any supporting material required for my application.

Applicant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Co-Applicant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Eviction Notice from Landlord Attached

Rent Bank
Projected Operating Statement
In Thousands of Dollars

	For the Years Ended July 31,		
	2013	2014	2015
Operating revenue:			
Grants	79.6	79.6	79.6
In-kind contributions	31.9	31.9	31.9
	111.5	111.5	111.5
Operating expense:			
Wages	69.2	69.2	69.2
Communication	12.0	12.0	12.0
Advisory Committee participation	10.4	10.4	10.4
MERCS	7.0	7.0	7.0
Training	5.0	5.0	5.0
Office space	3.5	3.5	3.5
Other office expense	4.4	4.4	4.4
	111.5	111.5	111.5
Net operating position	-	-	-

Rent Bank
Loan Capital
In Thousands of Dollars

	As at July 31,		
	2013	2014	2015
Cash			
Beginning		\$ 16.4	\$ 67.8
Capital investment	150.0	133.6	82.2
Loans made	(150.0)	(150.0)	(150.0)
Loans re-paid	16.4	67.8	103.9
Ending	16.4	67.8	103.9
Loans receivable			
Beginning		126.6	179.7
Loans made	\$ 150.0	\$ 150.0	\$ 150.0
Loans re-paid	(16.4)	(67.8)	(103.9)
Loan losses	(7.0)	(29.1)	(44.5)
Ending	126.6	179.7	181.3
Loan capital at year-end	\$ 143.0	\$ 247.5	\$ 285.2

ASSUMPTIONS:

Repayments scheduled to start 3 months after the loan is issued

Repayment term for all loans is 24 months.

Loans approvals are processed equally across the year (\$12.5K per month)

Repayment schedule is based on a 70% loan recovery rate and 30% allowance for Bad Debt

Rent Bank
Funding Source Projection
In Thousands of Dollars

	For the Years Ended July 31,				
	2013	2014	2015	Total	%
Loan capital investment:					
Street to Home	\$ 150.0	\$ 133.6	\$ 82.2	\$ 365.8	52%
Operating funding:					
Cash grants					
Vancouver Foundation	30.0	30.0	30.0	90.0	13%
City of Vancouver	49.6	49.6	49.6	148.8	21%
Total cash grants	79.6	79.6	79.6	238.8	
Total cash funding	229.6	213.2	161.8	604.6	
In-kind contributions					
<i>Advisory Committee</i>	10.4	10.4	10.4	31.2	
<i>Participation</i>	3.5	3.5	3.5	10.5	
<i>Communications (estimated donations)</i>	12.0	12.0	12.0	36.0	
NICCSS & Community Partners	25.9	25.9	25.9	77.7	11%
VanCity	5.0	5.0	5.0	15.0	2%
UBC	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	0.4%
Total in-kind contributions	31.9	31.9	31.9	95.7	
Total cash and in-kind funding	261.5	245.1	193.7	700.3	100.0%



January 18, 2012

Mayor Gregor Robertson
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Robertson:

This letter confirms our support for a Vancouver Rent Bank, to be created and operated serving the citizens of Vancouver.

We believe the development of a rent bank will help prevent homelessness in the city of Vancouver, by allowing those people at risk of homelessness access to emergency funding, once all other funding options have been explored. We intend to fund the capital, or loan portion of the Vancouver Rent Bank, with the understanding the City of Vancouver will fund the operating costs associated with the operation of the project. We understand the funds will be loaned to individuals through an application process administered by Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS), with the intent of repayment over a 24 month period.

The attached budget shows the capital required over a 5 year period, with top up amounts required each year totaling a potential \$375,000 capital investment. We support this budget, with the understanding there will be reviews of performance conducted by the City of Vancouver, in collaboration with NICCSS and Streettohome Foundation in order to ensure the rent bank is performing and servicing the clients as intended.

We look forward to seeing the Vancouver Rent Bank operational in the first quarter of 2012.

Sincerely,

Frank Giustra
Capital Campaign Chair
Streettohome Foundation

Dick Vollet
President, CEO
Streettohome Foundation

c. John McLernon



Frog Hollow

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE | SINCE 1968

www.froghollow.bc.ca

2131 Renfrew Street
Vancouver, BC V5M 4M5

T: 604.251.1225

F: 604.254.3764

E: contact@froghollow.bc.ca

December 19th, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

We would like to convey our support for the Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) proposal to develop a Vancouver Rent Bank designed to prevent homelessness across Vancouver.

We are writing on behalf of a consortium of 14 Neighbourhood Houses across Metro Vancouver who have come together to propose a community development initiative through HPS. Our project will build the capacity of our communities to address issues of homelessness through partnerships, education, training, building an understanding of relevant current strengths, and the convening of stakeholders. The NICCSS proposal to develop a Vancouver Rent Bank presents a timely opportunity to build on these two dynamic and different, although complementary, approaches to addressing homelessness. As well-established hubs in our local neighbourhoods, we would be ready to work with NICCSS and the Vancouver Rent Bank to assure a more broad-based and integrated approach to preventing homelessness.

The proposed Vancouver Rent Bank represents an approach that builds on the existing strengths within Vancouver neighbourhoods, including supportive relationships that exist between potential participants and community organizations such as Neighbourhood Houses. Also, the proposed Vancouver Rent Bank intends to provide education regarding financial literacy, support in finding employment and financial counseling to bring people along to a place where they are able to increase the stability of their housing and their lives. This approach to building the capacity of people in our communities is the cornerstone of the work of Neighbourhood Houses and we feel that the Vancouver Rent Bank proposal and our Community Development Initiative represent an exciting, locally-supported opportunity to start to build a solid foundation across Vancouver to prevent homelessness - in the long term.

We hope that you will support this timely, well-conceived proposal to develop a Vancouver Rent Bank. If you have any questions whatsoever, please contact me at 604-551-1947 or gdobbin@froghollow.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

Gary Dobbin
Executive Director

Creating Our Community Together

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Economics
#997 - 1873 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: (604) 822-2876 Fax: (604)
822-5915
Website:

December 19, 2011

UBC Economics 490 (*Applied Economics*) Partnership with the Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS)

Please accept this letter as an expression of intent to embark on a Community Based Research partnership between fourth year UBC Economics students and the Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS). In Community Based Research (CBR), students undertake research that responds to a question that the community has identified as something of concern or that they would like more information about. The goals of the program are to work with the community organization to develop a better understanding of an issue and to provide information that can give direction to the organization (the research goal), while at the same time inspiring students to apply their academic knowledge to their critical analysis of the issue and to their roles as researchers (the learning goal).

In this case, between two and six students will undertake research on behalf of NICCSS, depending on the organization's specific research needs, and student research interests. The work that students undertake for NICCSS will form the basis for the completion of their Economics 490 research project, a requirement of all students graduating with a degree in Economics at UBC. Each student will spend an estimated 40 hours during the term on the research project. At the end of term, students will provide NICCSS with a report detailing the findings from their research as well as any data or other evidence that was gathered as part of the research process.

I am very much looking forward to this proposed partnership with the Network of Inner City Community Services Society next term, and on an ongoing basis where needed. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Catherine Douglas

Lecturer

Suite 510 – 815 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 4G2
Ph: (604) 877-7553
Fax: (604) 709-6909
www.vancity.com/vcf

Vancity Community Foundation

February 2, 2012

Kate Hodgson, Executive Director
Network of Inner City Community Services Society
309 – 877 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 3Y1
September 30, 2011

RE: Proposal for a Vancouver Rent Bank Loan Fund

Dear Ms. Hodgson,

We are pleased to write this letter confirming our support for the efforts to establish a Rent Bank Loan Fund within the City of Vancouver. Your proposal represents an important collaboration that would directly help address issues related to homelessness in our community.

Rent banks have been effectively modeled in a number of other locations, and we are very excited to see a “made in Vancouver” solution emerging here. The work you have done in putting together an integrated proposal and convening appropriate partners will help ensure this initiative’s success. We are certainly willing to offer our continued involvement through advisory support for some of the technical aspects of lending and administration, as well as a tie-in to additional financial literacy work that can help strengthen the longer term capacity of individual applicants and their families. It is our hope that you will choose to deposit the Fund at Vancity, and deepen the operating relationship at that level as well.

Your proposed approach will create a complementary support service among a continuum of homelessness strategies currently at work in Vancouver, and we welcome this additional piece of the puzzle. If you have any further questions about our involvement or if we can provide additional information to potential partners, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Derek Gent,
Executive Director

Together, more becomes possible



19 September 2011

Network of Inner City Community Services Society
Executive Director Kate Hodgson
309 - 877 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 3Y1

RE: Founding Vancouver's First Rent Bank

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to lend my enthusiastic support to NICCSS in their proposal to start a citywide rent bank program in Vancouver.

In Vancouver more than 50% of households are renters, and due to a serious lack of affordable housing in our region, many renters struggle to make rent each month.

At constituency and advocacy offices across the city we work hard to help people stay in their homes. However there are sometimes cases in which low-income people, due to circumstances beyond their control (such as a medical issue or a temporary loss of employment) are unable to make rent.

Too often we have felt frustrated about being unable to help someone who temporarily can't pay their rent, and as a result is forced out onto the street. This is why we have turned so enthusiastically towards the rent bank model as a vital tool in preventing homelessness.

I first learned about rent banks in fall 2010. There are rent banks operating in Surrey, the Fraser Valley, Prince George, and farther afield in Calgary and the Province of Ontario. Each rent bank is different with different objectives and target populations, but all have the goal of preventing homelessness by providing short term loans to keep low income people in their homes.

In the spring of 2011 my office pulled together a meeting of various stakeholders to begin puzzling through how we could bring the rent bank model to Vancouver.

I was pleased to learn that NICCSS has already started the ball rolling, by spearheading a pilot rent bank project, targeting their specific neighbourhoods of interest in the downtown eastside and Strathcona.

Armed with this experience and their organization's proven record in operating a variety of programs that assist people in need in Vancouver, I believe that NICCSS is well poised to operate a citywide rent bank in Vancouver.

A rent bank would provide a much needed tool to prevent homelessness in our city which is why I've been working to bring one to Vancouver and why I'm very excited to support NICCSS to see it come about.

Sincerely,



Spencer Chandra Herbert, MLA
Vancouver West End
www.spencerchandraherbert.ca

Spencer Chandra Herbert, MLA

s.chandraherbert.mla@leg.bc.ca

923 Denman St. Van BC

604.660.7307



309-877 E Hastings
Vancouver, BC, V6A 3Y1 Canada
phone 604-569-2787 fax 604-569-3779
www.niccss.ca

February 28, 2012

Re: Vancouver Rent Bank

To: Abi Bond, Assistant Director of Housing Policy, City of Vancouver

Find enclosed our proposal for the Vancouver Rent Bank, an exciting initiative that will address some gaps in the current housing continuum for residents of Vancouver. We are looking forward to partnership with the City of Vancouver, StreetoHome Foundation, VanCity and the Vancouver Foundation on the implementation of the Vancouver Rent Bank.

The Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS) is a consortium of community based organizations, resident groups and consumer groups that work together in the coordination and delivery of services to, children, youth, families and individuals. These programs are all similarly focused toward assisting people living in the inner city of Vancouver and addressing gaps in existing social services for residents in these neighbourhoods. The range of services include prevention and early childhood work, youth and family support, and social enterprise projects.

As a consortium, NICCSS will bring all of its collaborative expertise and partnerships to bear on this project. In addition to utilizing our expertise in collaborative models, we will also be contributing in-kind resources directly to the project:

-Office Space	In Kind Value (2012 to 2014): \$10,500
-Advisory Committee	
Implementation & Activities	In Kind Value (2012 to 2014): \$31,200
-Communication & Promotion	In Kind Value (2012 to 2014): \$36,000
TOTAL In Kind Donations	\$77,700

These in-kind donations will be in addition to the expertise from community agencies contributing to the project, working in diverse neighbourhoods and utilizing their connections with communities. The Vancouver Rent Bank project will be build capacity and knowledge in communities and contribute to homelessness prevention in our city.

We look forward to working with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Hodgson

Executive Director, Network of Inner City Community Services cell 604-351-8095 khodgson@niccss.ca

Information on Rent banks in Canada

Ontario

Ontario has a Provincial Rent bank which is administered by 47 municipal service managers, many of which have arrangements with community-based agencies such as the Salvation Army or the United Way. Each municipality determines client eligibility and approves applications for assistance. One example of a municipal service manager is the City of Toronto's Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division (SSHAD) which administers the Toronto Rent bank. In Toronto the Rent bank Program is used for people who face eviction for rental arrears (max up to 2 months rent) or for first and last months for those who move to more affordable housing. In addition to the Provincial Rent bank program, there is the Energy Emergency Fund (EEF) which is administered by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. The EEF provides assistance to low-income Ontarians, including social assistance recipients, who are facing energy-related difficulties such as energy arrears, security deposits, re-connection fees.¹²

Surrey

Surrey's Rent bank (SRB) was established in March 2010 and administered by the Newton Advocacy Group Society and is available to low income families and individuals living in Surrey, Delta & White Rock. The SRB is funded by donations and grants from the private sector, credit unions, local government and charitable foundations. It is a partnership including: Coast Capital Savings, Vancity Community Foundation, American Society for Quality, Vibrant Surrey, Surrey Homelessness & Housing Society and Envision Financial. The maximum allowable loan for a single person is \$1200 and for a family \$1600, an average loan is \$800. The term of the loan is up to 24 months. SRB have issued 78 loans to date, the goal is 45 loans per year for which they have \$40K available. Last year the SRB approved 49 loans totalling \$42K and experienced repayment of 70% of last years' loans. Interest of 1.5% above prime is accrued however it is returned to the recipient upon full repayment of the loan.

Fraser Valley

The Fraser Valley Rent Assist Program began in August 2010 and is comprised of a loan and grant program. Loans/grants can be used towards security deposits, utility deposits and arrears, and rent. A person applies for assistance and staff determines need and repayment capacity. Loan recipients have up to 24 months to repay the loan and must attend two financial literacy skills workshops which focus on budgeting and responsible consumerism. This model is a partnership with Coast Capital Savings, Abbotsford Community Foundation, United Way of the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Foundation and Service Canada. To date there have been 35 loans and over 200 grants issued. Loans have been \$300-\$700 and administrative costs have been approximately 25%. The grant portion of the program was depleted in November 2011 and the loan program will end in March 2012.

Prince George

The rent bank in Prince George is administered by the Aboriginal Business Development Centre. Since beginning in February 2009 there have been 100 loans issued to date, among these 46 have been repaid. The capital amount available is \$35K which is funded by a number of partners including Vancouver Foundation, Vancity Foundation and Urban Aboriginal Working Group.

¹² <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1145.aspx>