



## MEMORANDUM

June 7, 2005

TO: Vancouver City Council

CC: Judy Rogers, City Manager  
Syd Baxter, City Clerk  
Jacquie Forbes-Roberts, General Manager of Community Services  
Cameron Gray, Director, Housing Centre

FROM: Jill Davidson, Homeless Policy Coordinator

SUBJECT: Adoption of Homeless Action Plan

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This memo considers the input from the public at the Special City Council meeting on May 25, 2005 and suggests how the revised Homeless Action Plan could be amended at the City Council meeting of June 14, 2005.

### BACKGROUND

- On November 8, 2005 City Council received the draft Homeless Action Plan for information, made two changes, and referred it for public review and report back with a revised final draft plan.
- On May 10, 2005 City Council received a staff report dated April 26, 2005 with recommendations for Plan implementation and referred those, the revised draft Homeless Action Plan, and four amendments to the Plan to a special Council meeting.
- On May 25, 2005 City Council held a Special Council Meeting where delegations were heard. When the delegations were finished, Council postponed the discussion and decisions on the plan to the Regular Council meeting on June 14, 2005.

### INPUT FROM THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

About forty people spoke at the Special Council meeting on May 25. Most people spoke in favour of the recommendations, and urged Council to move quickly to implement the plan.

A number of people spoke about how homelessness affects specific groups in the City's population. In particular delegations spoke about the needs of Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal women and children; youth; seniors; and people with physical disabilities, mental illnesses and addictions.

The Plan is organized primarily by issue, rather than population group, and the needs of specific groups are interwoven in the Plan. However it is important to acknowledge that homelessness is a particular concern for vulnerable groups in our city. Of importance are Aboriginal people, youth, women, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, people with special needs including physical disabilities, mental illness, addictions, multiple

diagnoses, brain injuries, HIV/AIDS, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect, criminal justice system involvement, victims of abuse, etc. These groups are identified throughout the plan in the context of specific issues, e.g. shelter or services, but not discussed as a group individually.

It is proposed that the Plan be amended to emphasize the needs of Aboriginal people, youth and other groups at risk of homelessness. For example, the Plan's profile of homeless people indicates that Aboriginal people are over-represented in every category of homelessness. The Plan should be amended to reference the findings of the recently completed regional homeless count indicating that 30% of the total homeless population are Aboriginal (34% street homeless and 23% of homeless in shelters). The Plan should also reference the 'GVRD Aboriginal Homelessness Study' which was completed in 2001 and updated in 2003, and included in summary form in the '3 Ways to Home, Regional Homelessness Plan Update (November 2003). That study identifies clusters of actions, many of which are similar to those identified in this Plan. The most important clusters in the regional Aboriginal study are housing; community and family supports; and employment/income supports. The study also describes cultural differences and emphasizes the importance of culturally appropriate services delivered by Aboriginal people.

Certain sub-populations of youth are at high risk of homelessness, especially those that are in or have experienced foster care. Without adequate services, youth move from the 'at risk' category of homelessness to sofa surfing, staying in shelters and becoming street homeless. Many of today's middle-aged and older homeless have histories of foster care or other problems during their youth, and the troubled youth of today are at risk of becoming the homeless of tomorrow. In implementing the plan's actions, it will be important to work with the Ministry of Child Development and Families, along with the other relevant provincial and federal ministries. The City's Child and Youth Advocate will be involved.

Other groups, such as seniors, refugees, etc. also have specific needs that must be addressed in any response to homelessness. Seniors can feel physically insecure, for example, in a shelter dominated by younger homeless, and refugees and new immigrants can experience communication barriers if services are not available to bridge cultural divides.

Implementation of the plan will involve partnerships with an array of community, government and business. It will be important to work with Aboriginal people so culturally appropriate housing and services are developed with and operated by Aboriginal organizations. Youth will also need attention, not only to reduce the risk of homelessness for those under 19, but to ensure that income, housing and services are adequate as youth mature into adulthood. Plan implementation will also consider the interests of other groups, including women, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and other groups with special needs.

It is also proposed that the plan be amended to tell the complete story of the plan's development and adoption. Therefore new text is suggested to reflect input from the special Council meeting in May and the adoption of the revised plan with amendments in June, assuming it is approved as recommended.

Specific amendments to reflect the above changes are contained in Appendix A.

## CONCLUSION

The public process to the Homeless Action Plan is now completed and Council can consider the various motions before it. These include:

- Recommendations A through I from the April 26, 2005 Vancouver City Council Report; and
- Amendments proposed in City Council meeting May 25, 2005, identified below as a new Recommendation J.

In addition it is suggested that Council consider the amendments proposed in this memo, which are based on the Council delegations, contained in Appendix A, and identified below as a new Recommendation K.

These motions (A through K) which Council may wish to now consider are as follows:

- A. THAT Council approve the revised Homeless Action Plan with priority for three strategic directions including:
  - Reducing Barriers to Accessing Welfare by the Homeless (Actions 1-3);
  - Developing 3,200 Units of Supportive Housing (Actions 18, 27-29); and
  - Increasing Mental Health and Addiction Services (Actions 45-54).
  
- B. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council, write to the Premier, Government of British Columbia and the appropriate Ministers urging the Province to implement actions identified in Appendix A, with priority to:
  - Reducing Barriers to Accessing Welfare by the Homeless (Actions 1-3);
  - Developing 3,200 Units of Supportive Housing (Actions 18, 27-29); and
  - Increasing Mental Health and Addiction Services (Actions 45-54).

AND FURTHER advising that the City of Vancouver is willing to work in partnership with the Province to implement particularly Action 3, a pilot project to coordinate outreach to assist eligible homeless people to access BC Employment and Assistance benefits.

- C. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Ministers responsible for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Western Diversification urging the Federal Government implement actions identified in Appendix B, with priority to:
  - Developing 3,200 Units of Supportive Housing (Actions 18, 27-29).
  
- D. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Chief Executive Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health urging Vancouver Coastal Health to implement the actions identified in Appendix C with priority to:
  - Developing 3,200 Units of Supportive Housing (Actions 27 - 29); and
  - Increasing Mental Health and Addiction Services (Actions 45-54).
  
- E. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Chair, Greater Vancouver Regional District and Regional Mayors urging them to assist in implementing the Regional Homelessness Plan and to support the City's Homeless Action Plan.

- F. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness supporting its implementation of Actions 79 - 84 relating to research, planning, regional capacity building and the need to address homelessness across the region through implementation of the Regional Homelessness Plan.
- G. THAT Council approve the creation of a regular full time Planner II position, Housing Centre, to implement actions in the Homeless Action Plan, the position level subject to a classification review by the General Manager of Human Resources. The estimated annual cost is \$79,500 (prorated for 2005 estimate is \$39,800 which includes salaries and fringe benefits ) plus start-up costs of \$5,000. Source of funding for 2005 costs of \$44,800 is the 2005 Contingency Reserve. Funding for fiscal 2006 and future years to be added to the Housing Centre's operating budget without offset.
- H. THAT Council approve the funding of \$200,000 over two years for consultancies to complete this work from Homeless Action Plan, such as Action 22, a rental housing strategy; Action 68, eviction prevention strategies; and Action 69, expanded housing registry; funding of \$100,000 in 2005 to be provided from Contingency Reserve and \$100,000 be added to the Housing Centre's 2006 operating budget without offset.
- I. THAT the Director of the Housing Centre be requested to report back every two years on the progress on implementing the actions in the Homeless Action Plan.
- J. THAT the amendments which City Council referred to the Special Council meeting on May 25, 2005, and identified below, be adopted:
- THAT the Income Priority with the Homeless Action Plan be modified to include not only Reducing Barriers to Accessing Welfare by the Homeless, but also Creating Job Opportunities for the Homeless.
  - THAT an additional action be added to the Homeless Action Plan under the Income section as follows: "the City of Vancouver to work with the Vancouver Agreement to ensure that job opportunities are available to the homeless, through such means as including employment objectives as part of large project permitting, where appropriate, and supporting the Vancouver Downtown Eastside Economic Revitalization Plan and the Vancouver Food Council".
  - THAT the following bullet be added to Action 36 in the Homeless Action Plan: "including staying open longer hours appropriate to people's needs, for example 9:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.
  - THAT the data in the report back be disaggregated by gender.

- K. THAT the Homeless Action Plan be amended to provide further emphasis on Aboriginal people and youth, and other groups at risk of homelessness, in accordance with Appendix A of this memo.

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## **Appendix A - Proposed Text Changes to the Homeless Action Plan**

### **Section 1.4 Process, page 5**

Add new paragraph:

"A special meeting of City Council was held in May 2005 where about forty speakers were heard. In June 2005, City Council adopted the plan after making some revisions which have been incorporated into the text, and initiated implementation with activities that are described in Section 1.7 under Cost and Implementation."

The previous paragraph will be slightly modified to reflect the above new text.

### **Section 1.6 Three Strategic Priorities, page 5**

Add new last paragraph:

"While homelessness can affect all City residents, some people are more vulnerable to being homeless. In this summary of three priorities, no specific population group is specified, however, later in the plan when actions are identified related to income, housing and support services, attention is drawn to sub-groups in the Vancouver homeless population."

### **Section 1.7 Cost and Implementation, page 9**

Add new concluding paragraphs:

"In June 2005 when City Council adopted this Plan, it initiated implementation by writing to the Provincial and Federal Governments, Vancouver Coastal Health, the GVRD and member municipalities, the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, urging each to implement the Plan actions appropriate to each jurisdiction. Additional staff and consultant resources were provided. City Council also requested a biennial report on the progress of implementing the Plan.

Implementation of the plan will involve partnerships with an array of community, government and business. It will be important to work with Aboriginal people so culturally appropriate housing and services are developed with and operated by Aboriginal organizations. Youth will also need attention, not only to reduce the risk of homelessness for those under 19, but to ensure that income, housing and services are adequate as youth mature into adulthood. Plan implementation will also consider the interests of other groups, including women, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and other groups with special needs."

### **New Section 2.5 Specific population groups, page 13**

"Some people can be particularly affected by homelessness. Of importance are Aboriginal people, youth, women, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, people with special needs including physical disabilities, mental illness, addictions, multiple diagnoses, brain injuries, HIV/AIDS, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect, criminal justice system involvement, victims of abuse, etc. The needs of these people are interwoven within the Plan which is organized by issue, rather than population group. Nonetheless, their specific needs should be acknowledged.

As indicated in the homeless profile, Aboriginal people are over-represented in every category of homelessness. The recently completed regional homeless count indicated that 30% of the total homeless population are Aboriginal (34% street homeless and 23% of homeless in shelters). The 'GVRD Aboriginal Homelessness Study' was completed in 2001 and updated in

2003, and included in summary form in the '3 Ways to Home, Regional Homelessness Plan Update (November 2003). That study identifies clusters of actions, many of which are similar to those identified in this Plan. The most important clusters in the regional Aboriginal study are housing; community and family supports; and employment/income supports. The study also describes cultural differences and emphasizes the importance of culturally appropriate services delivered by Aboriginal people.

Certain sub-populations of youth are at high risk of homelessness, especially those that are in or have experienced foster care. Without adequate services, youth move from the 'at risk' category of homelessness to sofa surfing, staying in shelters and becoming street homeless. Many of today's middle-aged and older homeless have histories of foster care or other problems during their youth, and the troubled youth of today are at risk of becoming the homeless of tomorrow.

Other groups, such as seniors, refugees, etc. also have specific needs that must be addressed in any response to homelessness. Seniors can feel physically insecure, for example, in a shelter dominated by younger homeless, and refugees and new immigrants can experience communication barriers if services are not available to bridge cultural divides."