

Sent by Metro Vancouver on behalf of the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH). The RSCH includes representatives from over 40 groups including service providers, community based organizations, business and all levels of government.

September 16, 2008

2008 HOMELESS COUNT CONFIRMS MORE HOMELESS PEOPLE ON OUR STREETS FOR LONGER PERIODS

The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) today released the final results of its recent region-wide 24-hour point-in-time count of homeless people conducted on March 11, 2008. The numbers show that there were at least 2,660 homeless individuals in Metro Vancouver on the day of the count.

“Considering that 24-hour point-in-time counts inherently undercount the homeless, the numbers in the report tell us that the region is experiencing a continued growth in homelessness. It is distressing to see that homelessness increasingly affects not only those who are already vulnerable, but also groups that were previously thought to be immune, such as families and working people,” said Alice Sundberg, Co-Chair of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

“The rising incidence of homelessness among middle-aged people and senior citizens coupled with the increasing length of time people are remaining homeless and the deteriorating health conditions of our homeless population speaks to a population that is becoming very entrenched on our streets and need help to exit,” said Val MacDonald of the Seniors Services Society and Chair of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness Communications Working Group.

Although this report offers just a snapshot of the people who are homeless in our region, it will still serve as a valuable resource for the region. It will help to educate the public about the region-wide homelessness problem, and in so doing encourage more people to get involved in the regional efforts to address it. It will also provide guidance to the many organizations that work daily to serve people who are homeless, as well as assist policy-makers in all three levels of government in their efforts to design and implement lasting solutions.

“We thank our 2008 count funding agencies (the Government of Canada through the Homelessness Partnering Initiative, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, and the Vancouver Foundation), service organizations, sub-regional homelessness planning tables, local outreach workers, law enforcement organizations, and the hundreds of count volunteers for their work in making both the count and this report possible. This update would not have been possible without their contributions,” concluded Alice Sundberg, Co-Chair of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.

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The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) is a 40-member organization comprising representatives from community-based agencies, business and all levels of government working to address homelessness. The RSCH has demonstrated that all three levels of government can work side by side with community groups to achieve tangible results on homelessness. The RSCH developed and oversees the implementation of the Regional Homelessness Plan for Greater Vancouver, titled "Three Ways to Home" to reflect the three components of a comprehensive solution to homelessness: affordable housing, support services, and adequate income. A copy of the Regional Homelessness Plan can be found at: www.metrovancouver.org/planning/homelessness/.

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Still on our streets ...

2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count

Commissioned by:



Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness

Key Findings

“Still on our streets.... Results of the 2008 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count” was commissioned by the *Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness* to provide an updated enumeration of homeless people in Metro Vancouver. Preliminary results of the count were released on April 11 this year, and the following are the key findings from the final report released today, September 16, 2008. The key findings focus on the number of homeless people in Metro Vancouver, the growth in homelessness across the region, the level of street homelessness, Aboriginal homelessness, youth homelessness, long-term homelessness and the health conditions of homeless people.

- The number of homeless people in the region increased by 22% from 2005, and by 137% from the first count in 2002. There were 2,660 homeless people in Metro Vancouver on March 11, 2008.
- Street homelessness increased by 40% from 2005, and by 373% from 2002. Approximately 1,574 individuals or 59% of the homeless found were unsheltered, compared to 52% in 2005 and 30% in 2002.
- Aboriginal people continue to be over-represented in the region’s homeless population. Despite comprising only 2% of the region’s population, Aboriginal people represented 32% of all homeless people in 2008 compared to 30% in 2005.
- High levels of Aboriginal homelessness were reflected in almost all segments of the homeless population. Approximately 45% of all homeless women and 41% of the unaccompanied homeless youth had Aboriginal descent. Almost three out of every four (73%) of all homeless Aboriginals also had no shelter on the night of the count.
- Homelessness remains a region-wide issue which is not confined to the City of Vancouver, as all municipalities that participated in the count showed significant growth in the number of homeless people. From 2005 to 2008, the size of the homeless population found outside the City of Vancouver increased by 35%.
- Many homeless people had been without a home for a longer period of time. The number of people who were homeless for a year or more increased by 62% between 2005 and 2008. Almost half of all homeless people found in 2008 had been homeless for one year or more. At least half of the street homeless, a third of the Aboriginal homeless, and a quarter of the homeless women had been without a home for one year or more.

- The vast majority of homeless people had health issues, with approximately 84% reporting at least one health condition, including many disabling conditions such as addiction (61%), mental illness (33%), and physical disability (31%). Compared to 2005, there was a 47% increase in the number of homeless people with at least one health issue.
- 364 individuals under 25 years of age, approximately 14% of the total count, were found to be homeless. Of these, 270 were unaccompanied youth while 94 were children accompanying their parents.
- The working poor are being forced into emergency shelters. Almost 100 fully-employed individuals were counted in the emergency shelters.

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