

“Listen to what we are saying,
please listen and try to understand”



Photos by Ken Villeneuve © 2008

Homeless Voices, Part 3 – April 2009

(What We Heard from Metro Vancouver Residents
Who Have Experienced Homelessness)



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SUMMARY

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the perspectives of people who have experienced homelessness, so that decision makers can respond more effectively. This third round of Homeless Voices interviews was designed to gather input on questions related to draft recommendations in the Call to Action. These recommendations came from the Creating Housing Choice forum, 3 days of dialogue among over 100 people.

Outreach workers conducted interviews with 42 people in communities across Metro Vancouver, including women, youth, seniors and people who identified themselves as Aboriginal. Each was currently with no fixed address or had experienced homelessness in the past 2 years.

What kinds of housing and services do people want?

Asked what kinds of housing they want to see built, interview participants spoke of modest, self-contained, subsidized units such as bachelor suites or apartments. They typically dream of something that is “clean and secure”, warm and dry, and “structurally sound”. Some suggested that the ideal housing would be a “small community”.

- Regarding location, there were 2 common themes: outside the Downtown Eastside, and near transit.
- The vast majority of interview participants indicated a preference for doing their own cooking. Several suggested a choice of eating alone or communally.
- Most participants said they would like to have on-site health services and social supports, although some said they would rather not.
- Most said it is not important to live in the same building with their friends and family. On the other hand, some suggested this is crucial to living well.



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What is the Impact of Homelessness on Children and Families?

Some parents chose not to speak about this aspect of their lives, perhaps because of the pain associated with having lost custody and/or being out of contact with their children.

- Comments from some parents revealed a sense that they perceive they would be harshly judged by their children.
- Some have faced a difficult dilemma in which their income was insufficient to provide adequate housing for their children.

What Would You Like People Who Work with You to Understand?

Participants emphasized how it is important for professionals serving them to be compassionate and non-judgemental, seeking to empathize with the unique situation of each individual.

- Several participants suggested it would be helpful if the workers have previously had first hand experience with homelessness and/or related issues.
- Some spoke of the need for various professionals to have knowledge of mental health and addictions.
- Several suggested it is vital to have strong communication skills and basic training in counselling.

How Can We Help People Leave the Street?

Many of the responses confirmed what we learned in the first two rounds of Including Homeless Voices, such as the fundamental point that homelessness often stems from the gap between low incomes and expensive housing markets, combined with an insufficient supply of non-market housing.

- Several commented that in a tight rental market, people on income assistance and/or who have had no fixed address face challenges when competing for scarce housing opportunities.
- Some spoke of the value of having assistance with housing search.
- Others spoke of transportation difficulties.
- Another common theme was the experience of difficulty in making the lifestyle changes associated with moving from long-term homelessness to living indoors.

How Can We Keep People from Becoming Homeless?

- The idea of a rent bank, described to participants as a ‘program to provide one-time help with rent to avoid eviction’, brought out a mixed response.
- The vast majority of participants agreed with the idea of having access to a Residential Tenancy Office (RTO) located in the community.
- Participants spoke resoundingly in favour of having access to advocates to assist with the RTO process.



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Conclusion

This report reveals that people in Metro Vancouver who have experienced being homeless have diverse housing needs, dreams and preferences.

In keeping with the theme of ‘housing choice’ in the Call to Action, people who have experienced homelessness made it clear that providing health and social supports in connection with housing is felt to be necessary for some. They share a desire to see improved access to housing and independent living, in some cases with supports built in. The aspiration for many is simply to be housed.

Acknowledgements

The organizations that initiated, advised, funded and administered this project deserve recognition. The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy served as the lead organization, championing the importance of hearing directly from people who have experienced homelessness and developing a consultation method to make this inclusion possible. Metro Vancouver staff, serving as implementation partners for the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, provided invaluable input in the design and development of this project. The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation and the City of Vancouver provided the necessary funding. Lookout Emergency Aid Society administered project funds as an in-kind contribution. The project consultant, James Pratt, provided services at a discounted rate.

The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy is deeply grateful to the outreach workers and the organizations they work for who donated time to make this report possible:

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- Dave Speers – Alouette Home Start Society – Iron Horse Youth Safe House

Most importantly, we thank the 42 people who participated in interviews and donated their time so that they could share their views from the perspective of having personally experienced homelessness. Of these, the following agreed to be named in the credits (last names are deleted, as the GVSS has adopted a policy of only publishing the first names of people who have experienced homelessness, even when consent was given).

- | | | |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| • Al | • Don | • Krysta |
| • Alan / Alice | • Gloria | • Linda |
| • Alissa | • Isabel | • Ryan |
| • Allan | • Jeff | • Sharon |
| • Ashley | • J.P. | • Tamaraw |
| • Audrie | • Kris | |
| • David | • Karla | |

1. INTRODUCTION

“Compassion needs to be the guiding force. Homeless people need to be treated with dignity.”

– Interview participant, 2009

Purpose

The purpose of this report, the third in a series, is to present the perspectives of people who have experienced being with no fixed address - so that decision makers can respond to homelessness more effectively. Their voices need to be heard in the policy and program discussions of organizations such as the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy, the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee and BC Housing.

In this round of interviews, the specific purpose was to gather input on questions related to the draft recommendations from the Creating Housing Choice forum (3 days of dialogue, held in May and October 2008, involving over 100 people – see gvss.ca).

Outreach workers conducted interviews with 42 people in communities across Metro Vancouver, including women, youth, seniors and people who identified themselves as Aboriginal. Each of these people was currently with no fixed address or had experienced homelessness in the past 2 years.

Background and Rationale

Since 1988, the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (GVSS) has served as a unique forum where all levels of government come together with emergency shelter providers and other community-based agencies to develop and coordinate responses to homelessness.¹ The primary strength of this table has been that it brings together such diverse interests. An ongoing challenge, however, has been the absence of a key stakeholder group from the discussion: homeless people themselves. GVSS participants share a belief in including those voices, but have faced the reality that many barriers prevent bringing people from the street to the meeting room.

Principles

This initiative will uphold the following 4 key principles:

- RESPECT for the dignity and privacy of participating people;
- DIVERSITY, with mixed participation in terms of age, gender and location
- CLARITY of language to promote common understanding;
- TIMELINESS of the process so that results can be used.

Consultation Approach and Method

The GVSS developed the method used in this consultation based on the experience of people who have done homeless outreach work over many years. The concept of hearing from people who have been homeless but are not in a crisis state means that their firsthand perspectives can be provided at a time when they are relatively stable.

Outreach workers throughout Metro Vancouver conducted interviews with people who had experienced homelessness in the past

¹The GVSS was formerly known as the “Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy”.

two years. The consultant provided a set of guidelines to interviewers so that they could carry out and record these interviews in a consistent way. **The initial interview tool, covering a ‘plain language’ version of all 21 recommendations from the Call to Action, proved difficult to get through and was discontinued after 9 interviews²** The consultant worked with Judy Graves to develop a tool that focused on aspects of the Call to Action that are more relevant to people who have experienced homelessness (attached as Appendix 1).

Part of the intended approach was to reflect the geographic diversity of the region. As shown in the table below, the 33 interviews (using the revised interview tool) occurred in 6 sub-regions of Metro Vancouver.

Number of Interviews, by Community

Municipality or sub-region	Total # of interviews
Langley	9
Maple Ridge	1
New Westminster	4
North Shore	2
Surrey	7
Vancouver	10
Total	33

Another aspect of the approach was to reflect the demographic diversity of people who have experienced homelessness in this region, including gender, age and Aboriginal identity. The mix of 33 participants in this third round of interviews was as follows:

- **16 identified as female (52%), and 14 identified as male (45%), 1 identified as transgender (3%);³**
- **The average age was 38 years;** the age range was from 18 to 65, including **7 people under 25 and 3 over 55;**
- **7 identified as Aboriginal (23%), and 23 identified as non-Aboriginal (77%).⁴**

² The 4 completed responses to the initial tool were, however, helpful in showing broad agreement with the Agenda for Action recommendations. Just one of these, regarding formation of a committee, was disagreed with. Partly as a result, that recommendation was deleted.



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2. WHAT KINDS OF HOUSING AND SERVICES DO PEOPLE WANT?

Asked what kinds of housing they want to see built, Round 3 interview participants spoke of modest, self-contained subsidized units such as bachelor suites or apartments. They are typically dreaming of something that is “*clean and secure*”, warm and dry, and “*structurally sound*”. Some suggested that the ideal housing would be a “*small community*”.

What would it look like?

“Easy access to amenities in the building and surrounding areas ... Maybe even communal gardens that people could share the work in. If there was a central space for all residents to get together for socializing and activities would be great. It would keep us occupied and not isolated. Also, if there was someone onsite to check in once in a while would be good too.”

— Elderly interview participant, 2009

Where should it be built?

Regarding location, there were 2 common themes: **outside the Downtown Eastside, and near the skytrain and/or bus routes.** For example, one person suggested: “*not in the middle of Hastings, or near the drug neighbourhood; within a block or 3 of bus routes.*” Another said they would prefer the housing to be in Vancouver but “*outside the Downtown Eastside.*” Just one participant said the Downtown Eastside would be preferred, emphasizing the importance of access to the Carnegie Centre, elders and friends in the community.

Many responses indicated a desire to remain in the sub-region the person lives in, be it Surrey, New Westminster or wherever.

Several spoke of access to basic amenities such as grocery stores. One said it should be in primarily residential area: “*in a neighbourhood, not a place where you just walk out and there are a million cars.*”

Some were non-specific, recognizing that affordable housing would ideally be widely available across the Metro Vancouver region and beyond: “*anywhere and everywhere.*”

Do you want to do your own cooking?

The vast majority of interview participants indicated a preference for doing their own cooking. Several suggested ideally there is a choice of eating alone or more communally: for example, one said “*...it would be nice to have a community kitchen space too, like at the DERA space.*” Similarly one said yes to doing their own cooking and to having “*a common area for cooking and laundry.*” Just 2 out of the 33 (6%) stated a preference for having meals provided. One said: “*I don't cook; too lonely.*”

Are there any kinds of support you think should be provided with the housing?

People spoke of many types of support they felt would be helpful as part of an affordable housing community. One of the common themes was a caretaker or ‘monitor/counsellor’; for example, one participant said: “*a caretaker to check in on you.*”

Several spoke of services similar to those offered in full service shelters, such as case workers. Other ideas included counsellors to support mental health, addiction recovery, life skills development and employment readiness.

³ Interview notes for an additional 2 participants did not specify gender identity.

⁴An additional 3 participants did not specify whether they were Aboriginal.

A few said they would prefer not to have supports on site. For some, such services may contribute to an institutional feeling. For example, one said: *“I don’t want a front desk that tells you that you can’t have visitors or so many visitors. I just want my own home.”*

Would you like health services provided at your housing?

Most participants said they would like to have on-site health services, although some said they would rather not. People with serious health conditions tended to see value in this. On the other hand, some perceive such on-site supports as unnecessary: for example, one said: *“I don’t need someone holding my hand—I just need a place to stay, and the time to do what I need to do.”*

Asked about having doctors and psychiatrists providing services on-site or in the home, many confirmed that this would be helpful while some others suggested they do not feel a need for that.

“I would like them to come to my home. Going to clinic makes anxiety and paranoia worse - if they come to my house and see how I live they can see the truth of me, the whole picture of my own home and me and what I need. The way I live is my depression.”

— Interview participant, 2009

Asked about on-site other services, such as nurses and addictions counsellors, the pattern was similar. People with more serious health issues see that as valuable whereas some would prefer to go to such services if and when they need them.

Is it important to you to live in the same building as your friends and family?

Most participants said it is not important to live in the same building with their friends and family. For some, distance is important: for example, one said *“I love them from afar”*. Several commented on experience with *“being judged”* or having live-in situations put *“a strain”* on family relationships.

On the other hand, some people suggested this is crucial to their vision for living well. For example, one said: *“I like to be close to my family and friends. Everyone talks about support... they are my support.”*



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3. WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

“My baby doesn’t listen to me anymore. There’s so many other people around, and people sneaking her candies when she’s supposed to go to bed. And there are other children there who have problems, and they lash out at their parents and then she sees that and tries it on me. We share a room now. Before she was on a schedule ... And now she doesn’t sleep without me and if I don’t go to bed at 8pm then she doesn’t go to bed. It’s very unstable for her. Since we’ve been at the shelter we’ve switched rooms 3 times in one month and she keeps trying to go to our old room. It’s really confusing for her not to have the sense of home.”

— Interview participant, 2009

For parents, asking how their lack of housing had an impact on your parenting was naturally very sensitive. Some chose not to speak about it, perhaps because of the pain associated with having lost custody and/or being out of contact with their children.

Comments from some parents revealed a sense that they perceive they would be harshly judged by their children. For example, one said: *“I got 5 kids ... 2 boys and three girls - aged 9-18. They probably all think I’m dead—or if their mom’s told them about me they probably think I’m a druggie, bin diver ... who might as well be dead to them.”* Another person, who identifies as both male and female, spoke of having become a parent as a gay teenager and being out of contact with 2 grown children: *“I don’t think they would understand their gay father yet.”*

Twelve of the 33 participants (36%) said they were parents, and 2 suggested they soon would be.⁵

Comments from 2 parents revealed a difficult dilemma in which their income has been insufficient to provide adequate housing for their children:

- *“I have my [grown] son living with me—but I have two young kids I want to get back. Now the only place I can afford MCFD won’t look at.”*
- *“Human resources wouldn’t give enough money for my son, so [he] had to live with my parents.”*

⁵ At least 2 interview participants skipped this question although the outreach worker who conducted the interview knew that they had children.

4. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH YOU TO UNDERSTAND?

“I think it needs to be understood that empowerment is the main thing. You can’t do everything for us and if you do it doesn’t help us. A gradual process of self-empowerment: you go from being on the street to shelter to transitional housing and it’s hard to do everything for yourself but it’s also totally useless if everyone is doing everything for you.”

— Youth interview participant, 2009

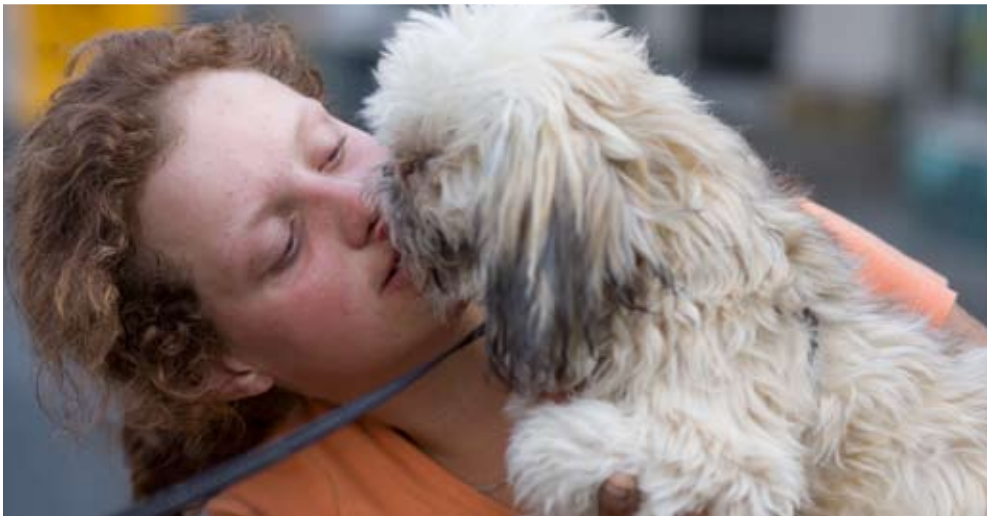
The interviewers asked: “the people who work with you – shelter staff, building managers, doctors, nurses, counsellors - what would you like them to understand?” Much of what we heard in response to this question was about how it is important for people to be compassionate and non-judgemental, seeking to empathize with the unique situation of each individual. For example, one said they need workers to be *“understanding and compassionate - don’t make me feel invisible like I don’t really belong.”*

Another said: *“... they need to learn and listen and deal with one person at a time and focus. Understand what withdrawal feels like and what seizures feel like. They need to understand my behaviour.”* Comments such as this suggest it would be helpful for people providing services to assist in stabilization of housing should receive training that builds their understanding of the experience of having addictions and/or common disabilities and ailments that afflict people on the street.

Several participants suggested it would be helpful if the workers have had first hand experience with homelessness and related issues: for example, one said: *“I would like someone that has experienced homelessness, addiction and mental health...”* Another suggested they would like to know that *“they have been through what you’re going through.”* Yet another said: *“Know where people are coming from. Know what the hospital system is like ... know what the streets are like. Don’t say you know ... when all you have is stuff from a book.”*

Some spoke of the need for various professionals to have training in mental health and addictions. Others spoke of the value of strong communication skills, or suggested that basic training in counselling would be helpful.

Youth spoke of how important it is to connect with others who do not have such a troubled past. For example, one said: *“You are just a teenager looking for trouble and in the long run ... it’s not going to turn out good. ... You need to get to know other people who aren’t into the same problems that you are in.”*



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Additional comments on what participants would like the people who are working with them to understand included the following:

- “Some need to understand it’s hard for people to trust them.”
- “We’re not bad people—we might go through a dumpster but we don’t steal.”
- “I’ve been through a lot of unfortunate circumstances, most of which were out of my control.”
- “Unless you’ve been on my side of the counter—don’t tell me how to live my life or how to spend my money.”
- “I’d rather work with people who will listen and try to help me in the ways I need. Government workers act like robots and treat everyone like they have the same problems and needs. We don’t. As a mother trying to get her kids back, how am I the same as some crack addict living behind a dumpster?”

5. HOW CAN WE HELP PEOPLE LEAVE THE STREET?

“Structure is sometimes hard to deal with. Being housed sometimes feels like you’re in a foreign country. I can’t speak the language. You don’t know what to do.”

— Interview participant, 2009

Interviewers asked for suggestions about “what’s keeping people from moving on to more stable housing, and how to deal with that.” Many of the responses confirmed what we learned in the first two rounds of Including Homeless Voices, such as the fundamental point that **homelessness often stems from the gap between low incomes and expensive housing markets, combined with an insufficient supply of non-market housing.** The following comments illustrate the range of people’s perspectives on this theme:

- “It’s impossible to find stable housing with what welfare gives you. You can’t afford it, and even if you work you can’t afford it. It’s too damn expensive. And lists for BC housing are a million years long.”
- “It’s too expensive.”
- “It needs to be more affordable ... Welfare only gives you \$375. You can’t find anything for \$375 except a grimy hotel room on Hastings. No kitchen, shared bathroom: you have to buy all your meals and you run out of money really quick.”
- “Housing is too expensive (at least market housing) and there is not enough affordable housing.”

To address the income issue, several participants spoke of the need for training and practical, realistic pre-employment programs and the connection between employment and housing. For example, one said: “Give me something to go after ... a goal that I can get ... not some bullshit program that gets me to write a resume for jobs I can’t apply for if I don’t have a place to live.”

Several comments echo a point touched on in the previous section: that in a tight rental market, people on income assistance and/or who have had no fixed address face challenges when competing for scarce housing opportunities:

- “It’s difficult to get in to stable housing if you are on income assistance. You get turned away.”
- “People don’t want to rent to people on IA. They see IA and they treat you like you are diseased or something.”
- “Your past holds you back. No good references, no affordable housing...”

Some spoke of the value of having assistance with housing search. For example, one said what was stopping them from being able to secure housing was *“not having someone to motivate me and come to look at a place with me.”* Another said: *“People find out that you are on the street or IA or disability then they think ‘something is wrong with this person’ and they won’t rent to you.”*

Some of the youth interview participants emphasized that they need help with finding their own, private accommodations:

- *“When you are in a shelter ... they just try to put you in a room like where I live now. They don’t help you look for a place to live, like a normal place with your own bathroom and stuff. It’s really difficult to find a place. I looked a million times at 1 bedroom places and they say no because you are on welfare.”*
- *“...we need our privacy. We need a private apartment that any person who rents in a regular apartment building would have.”*

Others spoke of transportation difficulties. For some, their addictions and patterns of street entrenchment have a geographically limiting quality. One suggested that a way to address this is to *“give people bus passes this helps people to move on and out of their comfort zone.”*

Another common theme is the experience of difficulty in making the lifestyle changes associated with moving from long-term homelessness to living indoors. One spoke at length about the different ways of living and patterns of dealing with money that are typical of people who have been on the street for a long time versus those who are housed: *“People on the street have different priorities in life than people who are living in stable housing. People on the street need to find food and money for the day, and when they move to stable housing they don’t have it because nobody ever told them how to live life and save money. People that are in stable housing for a while have the knowledge that rent day is on a certain day ... They’ve had that routine for a while or were taught it.”*



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“I just don’t think people understand how hard it is for people to go back from being homeless to living in a house. It’s so lonely all the time. It’s hard mentally and physically. Mentally because I went from sleeping outside or in shelter and being able to have freedom and have no extra responsibilities and all of a sudden I get a place it’s an added stress. Especially for people who have mental health issues, and it bothers me to have change. To go from having people to do things for you like make a meal and then you have to do it and then you start thinking about it and thinking about it and it causes anxiety. It takes a while to get used to, going to live in what is considered a ‘normal’ existence.”

— Interview participant, 2009

6. HOW CAN WE KEEP PEOPLE FROM BECOMING HOMELESS?

One of the key themes in the Call to Action is preventing evictions. To hear opinions on various program options, the interviewers asked people whether any of the following would have helped keep them or their friends from becoming homeless: a rent bank, a local residential tenancy office, and/or advocates who could go to the Residential Tenancy office when you’ve been threatened with eviction.

Rent bank?

The idea of a rent bank, described to participants as a ‘program to provide one-time help with rent to avoid eviction’, brought out a mixed response. On one hand, the majority suggested that such a resource would be valuable to have available. One person commented that *“it sounds like a good idea ... that would have helped me out.”* On the other hand several suggested it would be abused, with comments such as: *“it goes right to your addiction”* or *“it just gives people an excuse to screw up.”*

Some participants expressed confusion about how a rent bank would work or scepticism about whether such a thing exists.



A Residential Tenancy Office located in your community?

The vast majority of participants agreed with the idea of having access to a Residential Tenancy Office (RTO) located in the community. Some spoke of past experiences with RTO services helping them stay housed. For example, one said: *“I went through the whole process and I got an extra three months to stay. They really helped us out. One in the community would be a good thing.”*

“A community RTB office would be great, and an advocate to accompany you would help as well. No one listens to seniors, and to have someone speak with you and for you would be a great help... People think that you are old and you won’t say anything and you get walked all over.”

— Interview participant, 2009

Just one person spoke against this idea, based on a belief that the system is biased against tenants: *“absolutely no point. It’s way too slanted toward supporting the landlord.”*

Advocates who could go to the Residential Tenancy Office when you’ve been threatened with eviction?

Participants spoke resoundingly in favour of having access to advocates to assist with the RTO process. Comments included the following: *“yes, advocates could be most useful”*; *“That would help. I have never had a damage deposit back yet”*; and *“Advocates would be good in helping fill out forms and appeals.”*



7. CONCLUSION

“...listen to what we are saying – please listen and try to understand. We get very depressed about our situation and we want someone to understand that we feel like we don’t have a word that is valuable to say, we don’t want to be stuck in a place that we don’t want to be and it’s scary.”

— Interview participant, 2009

The third round of Including Homeless Voices demonstrated that it is difficult and only somewhat fruitful to gather feedback on detailed policy recommendations through this process, but that it is possible to engage people using questions that are related to those recommendations. The initial interviews demonstrated agreement with the details of Call to Action. However, the questions were too long and difficult to understand. By crafting plain language, open questions, the team was able draw out rich, meaningful comments that have significance in terms of policy and programs intended to address homelessness.

This report reveals that people in Metro Vancouver who have experienced being homeless have diverse housing needs, dreams and preferences. It confirms that a wide range of housing options is called for, including a variety affordable, supportive, transitional forms. There is no ‘one size fits all’. However, it is also clear that modest sized, high quality, self contained units are what many people would be well served by. Ideally, there would be significant development of housing comprised of units with independent kitchen facilities while also having access to shared amenities such as community kitchens and garden areas that allow for people to connect.

In keeping with the concept of ‘housing choice’ that was the theme of the forum that inspired the Call to Action, people who have experienced homelessness have made it clear that providing health and social supports in connection with housing is necessary for some. For others, who have higher capabilities and independence, provision of these services as part of their housing is not needed and could have a debilitating effect.

Homeless people share a commonsense desire to see improved access to housing that is mostly independent and community-based, in some cases with supports built in. To achieve that, there is an urgent need for a greater supply of non-market housing and a range of strategies to overcome the gap between market rents and actual incomes. Some require assistance with gaining employability and with overcoming health problems. Others point out the difficulty of making the transition from street culture to the ‘normal’ community.

For many, the aspiration is simply to be housed. We hope that the voices presented in this report will contribute to learning and action toward that end.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INCLUDING HOMELESSNESS VOICES, ROUND 3

Revised December 10, 2008

STEP 1: Identify potential participants

Participants **must be currently homeless, or have experienced being homeless within the past two years. Also, they should not be in an immediate crisis.** If you're uncertain about whether someone fits these criteria, ask them:

- **Has there been a time in the last 2 years that you did not have a place that you paid rent for? (or owned)?** [If no, don't proceed with the interview.]
- **Are you in any kind of immediate crisis that would get in the way of doing a half hour interview?**

STEP 2: Explain the purpose and ask for consent to participate

The purpose of these interviews is to hear from people who have experienced being without a home so that your voices can be heard by organizations working on homelessness. A network called the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy will present a summary of what we hear in these interviews. (For example, to BC Housing and the Regional Steering Committee Homelessness.)

In this round of interviews, we are gathering input on questions related to the draft recommendations from the Creating Housing Choice forum (3 days of dialogue, in May and October, involving over 100 people)

- **Are you willing to donate about 20-30 minutes to do this? We could sit down at a coffee shop or restaurant if you like.**
- **Your input will be reported anonymously, but we will list your name in the credits if that's okay with you.**
- **Do you want a copy of the report from the last round of interviews?** (If yes, provide a hard copy of the summary version of the report, and/or the full version.)

STEP 3: Sit down, over lunch/coffee if that works well, and do the interview

(see questions on next page – share a copy if appropriate...)

STEP 4: Send in the interview results

Email or fax **word-for-word notes** and participant data along with any receipts for meal/coffee reimbursement, to James Pratt by **January 9, 2009**

The full Report of Listen to What we Are Saying... can be downloaded from www.gvss.ca



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Including Homeless Voices Interview Questions – December 2008

1. What kinds of housing do you want to see built?

- What would it look like?
- Where should it be built?
- Do you want to do your own cooking?
- Are there any kinds of support you think should be provided with the housing?

2. Would you like health services provided at your housing?

- How about doctors and psychiatrists (so you don't have to go to a clinic)?
- How about other services, such as nurses and addictions counsellors?
- Any other services you would like to come to your housing?

3. The people who work with you – shelter staff, building managers, doctors, nurses, counsellors - what would you like them to understand?

4. Is it important to you to live in the same building as your friends and family? (If yes: any comments about this?)

5. Are you a parent? (If yes: How did lack of housing have an impact on your parenting?)

6. We're trying to figure out what's keeping people from moving on to more stable housing, and how to deal with that. Do you have any suggestions?

7. Would any of these have helped keep you or your friends from ending up on the street?

- Rent bank? (a program to provide one-time help with rent to avoid eviction)
- A Residential Tenancy office (for landlord disputes) located in your community?
- Advocates who could go to the Residential Tenancy office with you when you've been threatened with eviction?
- Is there something else that would have helped you or your friends stay housed?

A couple more questions:

8. Are you interested in being involved in future consultations like this?

9. Are you willing to have your name listed in the credits for the report on this consultation?

If yes, participant name (optional): _____

Your age? _____ Gender: _____ Are you Aboriginal? _____

Date: _____ Location/community: _____

Thank you for your time!