

## **Media Release – April 10, 2017**

### **Count Finds Region-wide Increase in Homelessness**

The 2017 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver found 3,605 people homeless in the region, up 30% from the previous count in 2014.

Aboriginal people continue to make up a significant portion of the total homeless population. This year's count identified 746 Aboriginal people who were homeless, compared to 582 in 2014.

"More resources than what are currently being provided need to be directed to the Aboriginal community by all levels of government to address this unacceptable situation," says David Wells, Chair, Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee. "This is not a situation that can be ignored any further."

The Homeless Count represents a conservative point-in-time snapshot of homelessness on a particular night in Metro Vancouver. This year marks the first time the Homeless Count was held on a night when an emergency weather response was issued. Approximately 1,200 volunteers faced snowy and cold conditions to walk the streets and visit shelters to conduct anonymous surveys over a 24-hour period between March 7 and 8.

"Homelessness is one of the most pressing issues faced by communities across Canada. The harsh effects of homelessness cannot be overlooked," said Lorraine Copas, Chair, Metro Vancouver Homelessness Partnering Strategy Community Advisory Board (HPS CAB). "The findings from the most recent homeless count remind us of the importance of continuing to work together to find ways to address the needs of those who face a constant struggle in finding and keeping a place that they can afford."

For 2017, count organizers tested new approaches in order to better capture the extent and diversity of homelessness throughout the region, including sending teams of volunteers out on boats to trawl local waterways to find people living aboard derelict vessels, giving more attention to rural areas, and returning on three consecutive days to survey the homeless population in the Surrey-Newton area.

"This latest count shows us that the homelessness crisis continues to grow despite all previous efforts and commitments to stem the tide," said Mike Clay, representing the Metro Vancouver Regional District as the Community Entity for the Metro Vancouver region. "Homelessness is no longer a problem isolated to densely-populated urban areas – it now affects every corner of Metro Vancouver."

A final report on the 2017 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver, with detailed analysis of demographics and long term trends, will be released in the summer.

#### **Count Highlights:**

Of the 3,605 homeless individuals, 1,032 were considered "sheltered homeless," meaning they were found in shelters, safe houses for youth or transition houses for women. This category also includes individuals with "no fixed address" staying temporarily in hospital beds, jails or detox facilities. Among those, 256 individuals were found in Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters.

The count found a total of 378 youth under 25, including 199 children under 19 years of age, 117 of whom were accompanied by their parents. Young people represented 16% of the homeless population

in 2017 compared to 20% in 2014, making them the only age group where the count results showed a decrease compared to 2014.

A total of 556 seniors (55 and older) were counted as homeless, compared to 371 in 2014. Seniors represented 23% of the homeless population compared to 18% in 2014. This continues the upward trend of seniors as a growing portion of the homeless population that has been evident since 2008.

The survey also found 607 people who identified as female. Females represent 27% of the homeless population in 2017, which is the same share as in 2014. Twenty-five individuals identified as a non-binary gender, representing 1% of the homeless population.

### **About the Homeless Count:**

Held every three years, homeless counts provide a conservative estimate of homelessness over a 24-hour period in Metro Vancouver.

The 2017 count was carried out by BC Non-Profit Housing Association in partnership with M. Thomson Consulting on behalf of Metro Vancouver Community Entity. The count is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), of which Metro Vancouver Regional District is the Community Entity.

On April 9, 2014, the Metro Vancouver Regional District (formerly GVRD) signed an agreement with the Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada for the purpose of carrying out the Federal HPS program through to March 31, 2019.

Metro Vancouver Regional District's role is through a 'flow-through' funding agreement with the Government of Canada for the administration of the HPS, thereby responding to the Community Plan priorities of the peoples who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness in the Metro Vancouver region.

With an annual Designated Communities allocation for Metro Vancouver of \$8,221,829, HPS funds are allocated to projects, based on Community Plan priorities and recommendations from the CAB.

Additional funding and in kind support for the 2017 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver has also been provided by the Vancouver Foundation, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, the City of Vancouver, the City of New Westminster, the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee, the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, Port of Vancouver, Translink, Transit Police, Vancity, Luma's Community Voicemail Program, and Metro Vancouver Regional District.

Local Homelessness Tables, HPS Community Advisory Boards and community partners are instrumental in organizing and conducting Homeless Counts.

### **About the Metro Vancouver HPS Community Advisory Board (MV CAB):**

The Metro Vancouver Community Advisory Board (CAB) engages with priority stakeholders to ensure effective policy coordination and implementation of the HPS in the Designated Community of the Metro Vancouver Region. The Metro Vancouver CAB is comprised of people representing various perspectives of the homeless serving community across the region. CAB members give voice to the interests of the

homeless population and to the homeless serving community and others working to address homelessness across the region.

**About the Aboriginal Community Entity HPS CAB, the Homelessness Steering Committee (AHSC):**

The vision of the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee is to reduce and prevent Aboriginal homelessness and improve the quality of life for people who are homeless. The Committee was established in September 2000 and includes over 25 members representing Aboriginal service providers and community-based organizations. The Committee agrees that the most effective means of addressing the vision is through Aboriginal best practices and culturally appropriate services.

**2017 Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver Preliminary Data Report**

<Link to report>

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