



Tri-cities homelessness task group

Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam—Port Moody

Homelessness and Business in the Tri-Cities

Why should the business community invest in solutions to homelessness?

The number of homeless persons in the Tri Cities is significant. Based on day-to-day contact with homeless persons, outreach workers from the Hope For Freedom Society (HFFS) estimate the number of homeless in the Tri-Cities at over 180 persons.

Reports¹ on homelessness estimate the annual cost to the public system for a homeless person with severe addictions and mental illness can be in excess of \$55,000. The cost of housing and supports for the same person is estimated to be only \$37,000.

The savings, province-wide, could be \$211 million annually.

Loitering, obstructing pedestrian traffic, discouraging potential customers, and the loss of a sense of community can have real costs to businesses. Neither customers nor employees will frequent areas with questionable public safety.²

You have a vested interest in the Tri Cities and what happens here matters!

Are there any emergency shelters in the Tri-Cities for homeless persons?

There are currently no permanent shelter spaces in the Tri-Cities.

What is being done to meet the needs of homeless persons in the Tri-Cities?

The City of Coquitlam has made city-owned land at 3030 Gordon Avenue available to the Provincial Homelessness Initiative for a 24 hour/day, full-service, permanent emergency shelter facility with 24 to 36 shelter beds and 25 transitional housing units. Project planning will proceed as soon as provincial funding is available.

As an interim measure, five community churches partnered with the Cold Wet Weather Mat program to offer mat spaces and meals to more than 350 individuals during the winter months of 2007/08 and 2008/09. Even with the minimum supports available at the Cold Wet Weather Mat program, over 60 clients were able to leave the street to go into housing, detoxification program, or a recovery facility.

Funding has been granted to continue this program over the next 2 fall/winter seasons. During periods of extreme cold and snow, an Extreme Weather Response shelter will continue to augment the capacity of the Cold Wet Weather Mat Program.

¹ Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addictions, Feb. 2008

² Wilder Research at www.wilderresearch.org

The Hope For Freedom Society operates a program of outreach to persons homeless or at risk of homelessness in the Tri-Cities. Three outreach workers, including a psychiatric street nurse, seek out homeless persons and connect them with available services.

There are food banks, soup kitchens, clothing programs, and hot meals available across the Tri Cities. A listing of these services is available at www.tricityshomelessness.ca.

As a business leader, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Educate yourself and your employees. Visit www.tricityshomelessness.ca for the most current data, dates of information sessions, or to access a speaker on the issue of homelessness in the Tri Cities.

Be part of the larger coalition. Attend the Tri Cities Homelessness Task Group meetings. Get involved in implementing solutions to homelessness. Work with the Task Group to identify a specific project to address.

Consider hiring someone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Be aware that homelessness might be an issue that your employees or their families are facing.

Support outreach to homeless persons and non profits who serve the homeless population.

Encourage your employees to volunteer at the Cold Wet Weather Mat program or other services for homeless persons.

Contribute your ideas, energy and leadership to those working to address the issue.

Use your influence and champion the need to address homelessness in the Tri Cities. Encourage those in your business network to work on implementing solutions to homelessness.

Recognize that changes in an employees' personal hygiene, work habits, attitudes towards others, or increased tardiness and sick days may be indicators of an addiction. Awareness of these indicators and sensitivity to the wreckage occurring in their families may open a door for help.

Speak up – let our municipal, provincial and federal politicians know that homelessness is unacceptable.

If you are interested in volunteering visit www.tricityshomelessness.ca/howtohelp