
FACTSHEET

February 1, 2010

Ministry of Housing and Social Development
Government of British Columbia

Emergency Shelter Services

Situations arise that can compel people to seek emergency shelter. As a part of an overall housing strategy underway since 2006, the Province of British Columbia provides resources to help people cope with emergency situations through the Emergency Shelter Program (ESP).

The Province provides nearly \$56 million to emergency shelters and support services across B.C., including more than \$10 million to the Downtown Eastside and the immediate vicinity to support 441 emergency beds at 10 shelters. In fact, ESP has undergone a major expansion, with more than 1,500 permanent, year-round beds in 2009, compared to 850 beds in 2001.

Emergency Shelter Program in Action

- ESP provides services and support vital to helping homeless people cope with emergency situations – such as taking shelter during the cold winter months.
- There are approximately 60 emergency shelters in 31 communities across British Columbia.
- Approximately 90 per cent of shelters are now open 24/7, so people can access services for more permanent housing, income supports and assistance – and 95 per cent now provide three meals a day.
- Eligibility for shelter varies from location to location.
- Some shelters are for women only – some focus on families – some allow people to bring their pets into the shelter.
- ESP works with the Extreme Weather Response Program to allow communities to temporarily increase the number of shelter beds available during extreme weather that threatens the safety and health of homeless people.
- Announced in December, 2008, low-barrier HEAT shelters help Vancouver's homeless citizens during an extremely cold winter. The Province is continuing to fund three shelters until April, 2010.

CONTACTS

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BC Housing is a provincial Crown agency that develops, manages and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options across the province. Fergus McCann can provide information on provincial housing programs and link reporters to key contacts, including social housing service providers and clients.

VISUAL RESOURCES

- Contact Fergus McCann above.

WEB RESOURCES

Housing-related websites:

- Housing Matters BC – explains the provincial housing strategy, which includes the Homelessness Intervention Project: www.housingmattersbc.ca/
- Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness – explains what B.C. is doing to break the cycle of homelessness: www.bchousing.org/breakingthecycle
- Vancouver Housing Update – provides an update on homelessness from community partners: www.vancouverhousingupdate.ca/

MEDIA COVERAGE

- *Shelters, supplies beefed up for new cold front, Vancouver Sun Dec 5, 2009*
<http://www.globaltvbc.com/world/Shelters+supplies+beefed+cold+front/2306917/story.html>
- *Homeless get help to find shelter – The Daily News, Nanaimo October 19, 2009*
<http://www2.canada.com/nanaimodailynews/news/story.html?id=281d745b-db11-4415-85c0-eca946003615&p=2>

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For assistance or more information:

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