

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Duclos:

On behalf of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, thank you for your leadership in implementing the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). As the Community Advisory Board for the Greater Victoria metropolitan census area, and as a key stakeholder in the homeless-serving system in our region, we deeply appreciate the difference the HPS is making in our community. We applaud the Federal government for committing 2.1 billion to continue and expand the Homelessness Partnering Strategy for another 11 years, in addition to other significant commitments towards a National Housing Strategy.

Despite many investments and interventions, including the HPS, homelessness continues to be a crisis in our country. In Greater Victoria, our last Point in Time count indicated that 1 in 260 members of our community may be experiencing homelessness on any given day. However, improvements are being made; in year one of a five year plan for the Coalition, we expressed two priority goals:

- To house and support 50 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness; and,
- To secure a total of 88 affordable housing units with an occupancy target of 2018/19.

By March 31, 2015, a total of 111 individuals meeting the definition of experiencing chronic homelessness had been and remained housed, and 134 units of rental housing had been announced, with 113 being net new units.

Moreover, the Coalition's focused effort in housing people experiencing chronic homelessness is showing great results. This year in Victoria (April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017) we observed an incredible drop of 21.8% in chronic shelter user rates over the previous year's shelter rates. This dramatic reduction was accompanied by an overall decrease of 2.6% in total shelter use over the same period.

While we celebrate those successes, we cannot pause in our efforts. There remains an urgent need for housing and prevention strategies to intervene in youth homelessness, and increased efforts to serve the numbers of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness. The community of housing, social and health service providers in greater Victoria have identified two immediate priorities:

- Youth Transitional Housing for unstably connected youth and chronically disconnected youth, alongside a pilot initiative for early identification and assessment of at-risk youth; and,

- Indigenous housing with appropriate, culturally-based support services to house 100 individuals who have self-identified as Indigenous and experienced chronic homelessness over the next 4 years.

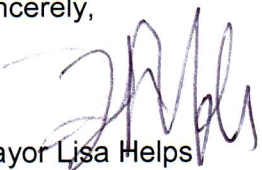
As an organization, the Coalition has worked to transform the homeless-serving system in our region since 2008. We have a strong mandate from the community and have representatives within our organization from the majority of local funders and service providers as well as from provincial and local governments. Since the HPS was introduced in 2014, the Coalition has served as the Community Advisory Board (CAB) in the Greater Victoria Metropolitan Area. We are confident that our depth and breadth of knowledge can be a contribution to any consultation processes you may be undertaking for the continuation and expansion of the HPS. We are eager to provide our insight and expertise to that redesign and ask to be specifically engaged beyond the public survey.

As the local CAB we have played a key role in the implementation of the HPS for Greater Victoria. With our asset-based focus and broad community engagement, we are uniquely positioned as regional experts in homelessness. The ongoing work of the CAB would not be possible without the strong support and the shared focus on collaboration from the Community Entity (CE). The Capital Regional District has been a critical piece of our regional efforts and we are delighted to recommend that this organization continues to support our collective work in the role of CE moving beyond 2019.

It will take continued and coordinated effort by all of us to create communities that are safe, healthy, vibrant, welcoming and supportive of people from all walks of life and stages of their life journey. This is the vision of the Coalition and of our many stakeholder organizations. It's a vision we share with you in hopes of deeper engagement in making it come true nationally.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Mayor Lisa Helps

and



Ian Batey

Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Co-chairs

Attached: Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Community Plan Phase 2: 2017/18
Priority 1 Task Force Report

CC: MP Adam Vaughan

MP Murray Rankin

MP Elizabeth May

MP Randall Garrison

MP Alistair MacGregor

Catherine Scott, Director General, Community Development and Homelessness
Partnerships Directorate, Employment and Social Development Canada