



Making a difference...together

Executive Services  
625 Fisgard Street  
Victoria, BC, V8W 2S6

T: 250.360.3126  
F: 250.360.3076  
[www.crd.bc.ca](http://www.crd.bc.ca)

October 19, 2017

File: 0400-40

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

Dear Minister Duclos:

**RE: Homelessness Partnering Strategy Program**

On behalf of the Capital Regional District (CRD) and the partners we work with to respond to the crisis of homelessness in our region, I want to thank the Government of Canada for announcing its plan to sustain the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Program beyond March 31, 2019. The investments made through HPS in the capital region have substantially improved service delivery and have allowed for the implementation of innovative solutions that address Housing First principles. This has brought about the improvement of both housing and quality of life outcomes for people who were experiencing chronic homelessness in the region.

My reasons for contacting you are threefold. First, the CRD would like to provide you with the attached summary of its perspectives with respect to the significant positive impact the program has had on issues related to homelessness in the region, including recommendations to be considered within the current review of the HPS program. Second, the CRD Board wishes to highlight one of the recommendations, specifically the request that the Government of Canada continue to take a regional approach to coordinating the delivery of the HPS program. Finally, to inform you that the CRD Board of Directors has endorsed a resolution outlining its continued commitment to acting as the HPS Community Entity, responsible for administering the program in BC's capital region.

The regional HPS Community Advisory Board fully supports an ongoing partnership in delivering this program, and has approved a resolution supporting the continuation of the CRD as the Community Entity beyond March 31, 2019. The extension of the HPS Program will allow the CRD and its partners to build on important progress made in creating a more effective and better coordinated homelessness response system.

As the attached summary indicates, the partnership of the CRD with the myriad of partners involved in the Coalition to End Homelessness has helped achieve advancements in service options in the community and a better coordinated system overall. There is much room for additional improvements. Current projects such as the Coordinated Assessment and Access, and the Homeless Management Information System are helping to point the system in some new directions for the future.



A sustained focus on regional planning and delivery is essential to effectiveness in all of the work to eliminate homelessness here in BC's capital region. The CRD trusts that the Government of Canada recognizes how its contributions through the HPS Program plays an integral role in this work and is committed to continuing its support of a regional approach to program delivery.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Barbara Desjardins  
CRD Board Chair

Attachment: 1

cc: Hon. Adam Vaughan, MP, Parliamentary Secretary, Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities  
Catherine Scott, Director General, Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development  
Janet Gwilliam, Manager of Community Development and Homelessness Partnerships Directorate, Employment and Social Development Canada  
Lisa Helps, Co-Chair Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness  
Ian Batey, Co-Chair Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness  
CRD Board of Directors  
Bob Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD





Making a difference...together

## **Submission to the 2017 HPS Program Review**

September 30, 2017

### **Background**

The CRD plays a fundamentally important role in addressing homelessness issues at the regional level. Actions supporting a role in addressing homelessness are outlined in the CRD's Regional Housing Affordability Strategy. A key partner in addressing homelessness is the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, which was established in 2008 to support a systems-oriented and coordinated approach to addressing homelessness throughout the region.

The Coalition is the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for the HPS program in the capital region and is made up of individuals who represent government, the non-profit sector, charitable foundations as well as people with lived experience of homelessness. As the CAB, the Coalition requested that the CRD act as the Community Entity, managing and administering HPS funding at the regional level. Since that time the Coalition and the CRD have played a leading role in supporting a coordinated approach to the delivery of housing and supports in the community. In order to assure the sustainability of the partnership, the CRD provides ongoing annual funding through a service contract with the Coalition.

### **Impacts of HPS Program**

#### *Service Delivery*

Prior to 2014, regional HPS funds were used to support capital developments, and assisted in the creation of units of housing to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. The first is Hope Centre in Sooke which has a specific focus on addressing the needs of youth. The second is Rosalie's Village in Saanich which is designed to support women and lone-parent, female headed households with children who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness.

Since 2014, HPS funds have helped support key programs and services within the homelessness response system. Homelessness outreach and case management programs continue to be supported through HPS funding, including Streets to Homes, Peers Society, Our Place Society and Siem Lelum House. These programs provide supportive assistance to successfully house over 300 individuals and families who would otherwise be unsheltered in our communities. Other projects currently being supported include a landlord liaison to help identify and coordinate access to units in the private rental market as well as assistance to help homeless individuals successfully access needed income supports. Overall, service providers have been responsive to the requirements of the HPS program, but have expressed concerns about the high level of administration required to support delivery of the program.



Making a difference...together

### *Addressing the Needs of Indigenous People*

Over the past two years, additional Social Infrastructure Funding (SIF) has been allocated to a culturally informed program providing housing and supports to Indigenous people identified through the Priority One Task Force. The partners in delivery are the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, Cool Aid Society and Island Health. So far, 16 individuals have been housed.

The CRD is also working to develop stronger ties with Indigenous groups and First Nations in order to be more responsive to homelessness and the need for attainable, and appropriate affordable housing that meets the needs of these communities. The Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness was created two years ago, and the CRD has been working closely with them to use HPS funds to engage local Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in order to better understand their unique needs, and to deliver a program that provides culturally informed supports that has helped 16 individuals achieve sustained housing in the past year.

### *Regional Homelessness Planning*

Over the past two years, the CRD's partners within the Coalition to End Homelessness have coordinated several planning projects designed to inform the delivery of the HPS Program the RHFP and overall operation of the homelessness response system as a whole. A Process Mapping project, completed in 2016, identified that there were serious gaps and barriers to individuals accessing needed housing and supports. The Coordinated Access to Supportive Housing was identified as having addressed some of these issues, but people with very low or very high needs were not effectively included in the system of access.

BC Housing has announced that it will be leading the development of coordinated assessment and access systems throughout the province. To ensure the adopted approach takes into consideration regional needs and approaches, Island Health and BC Housing have agreed to steer a project through which a regionally-informed Coordinated Assessment and Access service will be developed to address all needs in the capital region. HPS funding has been approved and a procurement process is under development and will be issued in late summer with a recommendation report to be submitted in 2018.

To support effective operation of the homelessness response system and provide for timely outcome reporting, a homelessness management information system (HMIS) that can be used by multiple housing and service providers is being created. Regional housing and service providers are working to explore the use of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) as a preferred system. Through HPS funding, Dr. Alina Turner, an expert in homelessness systems planning, has been contracted to assist in the development of an integrated regional HMIS and the Coalition to End Homelessness is facilitating coordination between RHFP partners and other housing and service providers. BC Housing is scheduled to implement HIFIS within its

funded programs by March, 2018, and has indicated that it would support a phased approach that includes other programs and services.

A HPS funded project was recently completed that saw the development of a comprehensive, outcomes-based strategy to support better coordination of housing and supports and to better champion a Housing First approach within the region's homelessness response system. There is a need for sustained collaboration and clear and open communication among partners as the coordinated access and information management systems move toward full implementation and new resources are introduced through BC Housing, Island Health and the RHFP. There will also be emerging priorities identified as a result of follow-up to the Coalition Priority One Task Force recommendations and the work of the Coalition Youth Homelessness Task Force.

### **Regional Capital Investment Partnership**

In 2016, the CRD introduced the Regional Housing First Program (RHFP) through which the CRD has key partnering relationships with BC Housing, Island Health and the Coalition to End Homelessness. The CRD committed to investing \$30 million and BC Housing has matched this with an additional \$30 million to provide capital funds to build units of housing that specifically meet the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness in the region. Island Health has committed to providing the support services needed to ensure successful long-term housing stability for these individuals. The planning completed through HPS investments will contribute to the development of a homelessness management information system as well as a coordinated assessment and access system that meets the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness and supports the effective use of resources in the community.

### **Recommendations**

This report summarizes the substantial contribution that the HPS program has had on the capital region of British Columbia. The CRD is eager to continue its work in partnership with the CAB and other key stakeholders in government and community. To this end, the CRD recommends the following:

- That the Government of Canada continue to partner with regionally-based organizations as Community Entities in the delivery of the HPS program.
- That the HPS program operating principles continue to require a proportion of investment in Housing First approaches to address homelessness.
- Continue to provide a specific funding stream to support services and supports that address the needs of Indigenous people.
- That ESDC work with CE representatives and service providers over the next 18 months to discuss and develop strategies to improve the administrative efficiency of the program.

