
From: Carol-Ann Flanagan <carolannf@burnabyhomeless.org>

Date: May 9, 2023 at 3:10:42 PM PDT

To: Mayor <Mayor@burnaby.ca>

Subject: Shelter requests

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Good afternoon Mayor Hurley and City Councillors,

Please find attached a letter from The Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby and our Task Force requesting the urgent need of 2 shelters in Burnaby.

Thank you for your consideration.

Carol-Ann Flanagan

Executive Director

Society to End Homelessness in Burnaby

Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness

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Your donation can assist in the following ways:

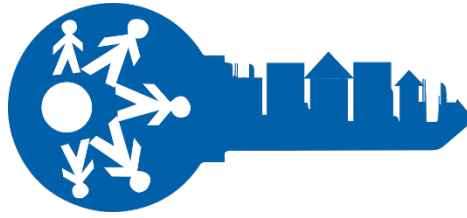
- *\$8 will purchase one comfort kit (socks, toiletries, sustaining food (fruit & nut bars, granola bars, etc.), and basic necessities in a carry bag).*
- *These comfort kit items are augmented with donated items when available.*
- *\$12 will purchase 10 pairs of men's socks*
- *\$15 will purchase 10 toques or 10 gloves*
- *\$50 will purchase a one week supply of nutritional fruit or veggies for the approximately 120 people who attend the Outreach Resource Centre*

- **\$50** will purchase 25 waterproof shells
- **\$60** will purchase 28 one-zone compass tickets
- **\$100** will purchase plates, cutlery, cups, juice, granola bars for one week at the Outreach Resource Centre
- **\$200** will purchase 100 deodorant
- **\$500** will purchase 238 one-zone compass tickets
- **\$800** will purchase 100 comfort kits- socks, toiletries, food, and basic necessities

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The Task Force and Society acknowledge that our work is provided within the ancestral, traditional and unceded territory of the Coast Salish nations.

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The Society To End Homelessness In Burnaby

Working Together To End Homelessness In Burnaby

www.burnabyhomeless.org

Mayor Mike Hurley
4949 Canada Way
Burnaby BC
V5G 1M2

May 9th, 2023

Dear Mayor Hurley and City Councillors,

Re Requesting critically needed 24/7 shelters in Burnaby

I am writing on behalf of the Task Force To End Homelessness in Burnaby, the diverse planning table collaboratively working towards local homelessness solutions.

People experiencing homelessness are diverse and span all ages, genders and ethnicity. Many also have complex health conditions. The commonality is that they are all poor and vulnerable, subject to significant stigma, and most need assistance to move successfully from homelessness to stability and homes. For example:

- Single women who will not stay at a co-ed shelter as they feel unsafe – they may have been physically or sexually abused;
- Youths aging out of foster care;
- Disabled man requiring handicapped suite who cannot stay in current accommodation due to their disability;
- A person living with complex medical conditions such as mental health and/or substance use;
- Senior aged out, or no longer able to afford their accommodation;
- Non-status Indigenous person 'choosing' to sleep outdoors, experiencing much stigma as they don't feel comfortable or welcome in the few existing services for people experiencing homelessness, and facing high barriers to accessing housing, training and education;
- Persons discharged from hospitals no longer requiring acute care but requiring a supervised environment and assistance locating to the most appropriate accommodations for themselves.
- A family living at the poverty line in a RV or mobile home with their children, unable to afford more appropriate housing;
- Youths and young adults couch surfing at friends or with family while trying to find affordable housing;
- Newcomers to Canada and refugees finding themselves without a roof due to the cost of housing and the challenges and barriers to employment especially at a living wage.

*The Society To End Homelessness In Burnaby
PO Box 54662 Highgate PO, Burnaby BC V5E 4J6*

Recognizing this diversity of people and their needs, the Task Force To End Homelessness in Burnaby believes that to truly end homelessness in Burnaby, a continuum of sheltering and support services is required. However, all starts with the life-saving and life-altering accommodation as the first step.

The Task Force therefore requests that the City of Burnaby take urgent action to immediately provide locations for two 24/7 shelters to open, effective October 1, 2023. One shelter should operate within a minimal-barrier, inclusive mandate for people some of whom may have persistent and multiple episodes of homelessness. The temporary Douglas Shelter is an example. The other shelter should be dedicated to people for whom homelessness may be one time: for example, vulnerable women and seniors. The outcome would be a more effective response to homelessness.

The shelters should be located in separate areas of the city for access: preferably one in the northern part of the city, the other in the southern half. We believe that the City is willing to work with BC Housing, ourselves and the shelter provider(s) to find locations that can open starting for this coming winter.

We know that creating sheltering space takes time, but these two can be temporary year-round services until more suitable spaces can be found or built.

The urgency is because the homelessness situation in Burnaby has again worsened over this past winter. People living outdoors are now at higher health risk than before.

- The sole shelter in Burnaby (Douglas) is full and turning people away most days; people have given up hope of getting in. Stays are lengthening and this causes additional stress and frustrations.
- The EWR sheltering site opened a total of 104 nights and provided **1,320** bednights of service – the highest since opening in 2005. The complexity and seriousness of their conditions has deepened significantly, with more indigenous peoples, seniors and people with serious health conditions coming in. Lookout served 190 people with disabilities, including an 85 year old woman in a wheelchair.
- The City emergency warming site has opened 6 nights this past winter.
- The HUB drop in on Sixth Street was very busy, with 20-40 people coming in daily for day shelter services, resulting in their programming being overwhelmed and neighbourhood concerns. Effective April 1, 2023, Progressive transitioned back to their core programs and away from the drop-in model. They will no longer be able to back up the EWR next season.
- The weekly drop in Outreach Resource Centres (ORCs) also remain busy, serving both people who are homeless and others that are at risk of homelessness.

In March 2023:

- 828 guests were served including 30 nurse practitioner clients, vs. a total of 603 served in November 2023.
- The Food Hub program fed 1,933 people. These high numbers are now constant and a significant increase from the prior average of 100 – 120 persons per week.

The intermittent based-on-weather nature of the EWR means too many vulnerable people ‘fall through the cracks’. Moreover, people cannot access the health care and services they require with an overnight-only service. This perpetuates homelessness vs. addressing it, one person at a time.

- Burnaby has:
 - the third highest homeless count of Metro Vancouver (2020), with 124 individuals although local Task Force experts believe the true numbers are in the range of 350 – 450.
 - The City of Burnaby 2020 Housing Needs Report estimates 430 people who are homeless in addition to the 124 individuals identified during the 2020 homeless count.
 - Experienced seven deaths of homeless individuals in 2021, more than double the 3 deaths in 2020. This ties Burnaby with Chilliwack for the 8th highest number of homeless deaths (*Coroners Service: Deaths of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness in BC, posted Oct 12, 2022*)
 - the ninth highest overdose deaths in the province. These factors disproportionately affect people who are homeless – they are already vulnerable, the majority grappling with two or more health conditions, compromised immune systems, and extreme poverty (*2020 Burnaby Homeless Count*). In 2022 there have been 68 illicit drug toxicity deaths (*BC Coroners Service, Mar 2023*) including people who are homeless. To March 31, 2023, Burnaby has 6 further deaths, including those experiencing homelessness.


Homelessness is deadly, the BC Coroner¹ found that in 2021 alone, there were 247 deaths of homeless individuals in BC. This is a 75% increase over 2020 and a 91% increase over the number of deaths in 2019. Half of the individuals who died met the criteria for street homelessness. 93% of the deaths in the homeless population died of accidental illicit toxic drugs. Our members believe these numbers will continue to escalate given the weather and lack of resources.

All of this leads to our request for the City of Burnaby to take urgent action to immediately provide space for two 24/7 shelters effective October 1, 2023.

Considering the urgency of our request, we ask to meet with you to discuss action on this critical need. With your consent, I can follow up on this letter immediately to set up a zoom call. Please let me know.

Thank you for your attention,

Sincerely

Carol-Ann Flanagan
Executive Director
The Society To End Homelessness in Burnaby


¹ BC Coroner's Service Report on Deaths of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, 2012 – 2021 (*October 12, 2022*)