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Ministry of Housing
Provincial Executive Steering Committee
Minutes

Friday, March 24, 2023

3:45-4:45 pm

MS Teams

Attendance

BC Government:

Premier's Office (PO)

Shannon Salter, Deputy to the Premier
Matt Smith, Chief of Staff
Don Bain, Deputy Chief of Staff
Jessica Prince, Assistant Deputy Minister
Kelly Newhook, Director
Craig Jones, General Counsel

Ministry Responsible of Housing (HOUS)

Teri Collins, Deputy Minister
Meghan Will, a/ADM, Homelessness, Partnerships & Housing Supports
Sarah Petrescu, Director
Clay Suddaby, Communications Director, GCPE
Nina Karimi, Ministerial Advisor
Sian Madoc-Jones, Senior Ministerial Advisor
Sarah Marriot, Director
Jennifer Miller, A/Executive Director

Attorney General (AG)

Barbara Carmichael, A/Deputy Attorney General
Kate Saunders, Supervising Counsel
Michael Kleisinger, Legal Counsel
Amelia Hill, Ministerial Advisor
Katherine Reilly, Legal Counsel
Maya Engelbrecht, A/Director Executive Operations

Emergency Management & Climate Readiness (EMCR)

David Boone, Assistant Deputy Fire Commissioner
Brian Godlonton, Fire Commissioner

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)

Carolyn Kamper, Assistant Deputy Minister

Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions (MMHA)/ Ministry of Health (HLTH)

Christine Massy, Deputy Minister

Maureen O'Donnell, Associate Deputy Minister

Daryl Sturtevant, Assistant Deputy Minister

Theresa Ho, Chief of Staff

Seamus Wolfe, Ministerial Advisor

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (PSSG)

Glen Lewis, Assistant Deputy Minister

Matthew Brown, Executive Director

Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR)

David Galbraith, Deputy Minister

Raymond Fieltsch, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Delivery Division

City Of Vancouver (CoV)

Paul Mochrie, City Manager

Sandra Singh, General Manager Arts, Culture and Community Services

Mellisa Morphy, Acting Chief of Staff

Taryn Scollard, Deputy General Manager Engineering

Lon LaClaire, General Manager Engineering Services

City of Victoria

Jocelyn Jenkyns, City Manager

Park Board

Betty Lepps, Director Urban Relationships

Vancouver Police Department (VPD)

Howard Cho, Deputy Chief Constable

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS)

Karen Fry, Fire Chief

BC Housing (BCH)

Vincent Tong, Interim Chief Executive Officer

Dale Mcmann, Vice President Operations

Heidi Hartman, Associate VP Operations

Allison Dunnett, ED Homelessness

Sara Goldvine, VP Communications

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCH)

Vivian Eliopoulos, President and CEO

Bob Chapman, VP

Shannon Mc Carthy, Executive Director Indigenous Health

First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)

Darius Pruss, Regional Advisor

Delaram Farshad, Regional Planner

Meeting Summary**Welcome, Introductions and Action Item Log – DM Collins**

DM Collins welcomed new members, confirmed minutes. Updated on tentative announcement Sunday to release DTES plan with Minister Kahlon and Mayor Sim. Noted that the situation on the ground changes daily.

DM Collins advised that we will be moving away from the IN and into weekly situation report with progress and actions.

Presentation: East Hastings decampment*Background*

Allison Dunnet noted that initially the goal was that everyone in the encampment had at least one offer of indoor housing.^{s.16; s.22}

s.16; s.22

Noted that the fire and safety risk has always been a key consideration.

Coordinated Access and Assessment

Heidi Hartman shared that CAA Table faces multiple pressures including fire and repairs, building and shelter closures, and elevator maintenance issues. Current CAA process includes priority allocations based on vulnerability and housing needs of priority populations including Indigenous people, women, seniors. Noted that E Hastings is unique because people continue to come to the site, there are 49 new people in need of housing who were not on the Oct list.

Coordination of tenanting

Priority for tenanting modulares include:

- Location – connection to E Hastings or CRAB Park
- Long-term shelter stays
- Indigenous people and women and gender-diverse people
- Priority to those with physical/mental health and substance use issues

VCH

6 units in each modular site targeted for high needs, but the supports are available to everyone in the building. Supports include mix of personal care aids, nursing (LPN), peer supports, in-reach, overdose prevention and MAP.

s.16

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Betty Lepps noted that in CRAB park tents are increasing as well, from 40 to 45 tents, and there is a need to look at how to support our work re: increase.

3. Partner Roundtable:

No time for roundtable.

4. Communications

Clay Suddaby shared that there will be a noon news conference with Minister Kahlon and Mayor Sims, and they are working on common messaging. Releasing the Plan/Strategy (calling it a working document), with the overall message that all partners have been working the plan as we go. Reinforcing the message is the safety and security of people on the street and people living working in the community.

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2023HOUS0022-000392
March 26, 2023

Ministry of Housing

Downtown Eastside response plan drives co-ordinated efforts to improve access to housing, supports

VANCOUVER – The Province has provided an update about ongoing work with its partners to create a comprehensive Downtown Eastside response plan, including 330 new homes by the end of June.

“Everyone in the Downtown Eastside deserves a safe, stable and supportive place to call home,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “Over the past several months, we’ve led work with Indigenous, community and government partners to develop a co-ordinated response plan to help people get off the streets and into homes, and make the Downtown Eastside a healthier, safer and more hopeful place for everyone. As safety concerns increase, we are urging people to take up the offers of indoor spaces that are available right now as we continue to open long-term housing.”

In July 2022, the Vancouver Fire Rescue Service issued an order to remove tents and structures along East Hastings Street. Since then, the Province has been working with a variety of partners – including all levels of government, service providers and Indigenous and community organizations – to develop and implement a comprehensive Downtown Eastside response plan.

Through this plan, more than 90 people sheltering outside on East Hastings Street have accepted housing offers and moved into safe homes. The Province is working with partners to open an additional 330 units of housing for people in the Downtown Eastside by the end of June 2023.

There are currently approximately 117 people sheltering outside on East Hastings Street, 70 of whom have expressed a desire for housing. Offers of indoor spaces have been made to a majority of people sheltering outside on East Hastings Street. The number of structures along East Hastings Street has been reduced from 180 to 74 since July 2022.

“The challenges we see in the Downtown Eastside are real and significant— today marks an important step forward,” said Ken Sim, mayor of Vancouver. “I know that by working together, we will secure quality housing for our city’s most vulnerable residents and deliver a better future for the Downtown Eastside.”

In anticipation of new homes opening, the Province is working with the City of Vancouver to ensure there is sufficient shelter space to help people move indoors and transition to more permanent housing when it's available.

Key measures in the response plan include:

- Since July 2022, 139 new or renovated single-room occupancy (SRO) units have opened,

with an additional 330 homes to open between now and the end of June, for a total of more than 460 new homes to support people in the Downtown Eastside. The 330 homes opening include the 89 units from the two temporary supportive housing projects opening this spring (1525 and 1535 Western St. and 2142 Ash St.), and a mix of renovated SRO units and other supportive housing units.

- Access and co-ordination will be strengthened for health, mental-health and addictions services for people in the Downtown Eastside, including through:
 - establishing a new multidisciplinary team that will work to identify the needs of people facing homelessness so they can quickly access health and social services and support transitions to indoor spaces as a pathway to appropriate housing options;
 - expanded addiction treatment options, such as the new Road to Recovery model of addictions care at St. Paul's Hospital; the first 45 beds are expected to open by fall 2023; and
 - expanded mental-health crisis response teams.
- Community organizations will get help to improve and expand services, such as drop-in centres and outreach services.
- A new Community Connections Hub at Orange Hall (341 Gore Ave.) will be established so people have a centralized place to access referrals and information about housing and services.

The plan recognizes that people are better able to access supports when they have safe, stable shelter and their basic needs are met. The plan respects people's human rights and agency, while protecting their health and safety and minimizing disruption. It also takes an anti-racist, trauma-informed and culturally safe approach, including recognizing the unique history and culture of the Downtown Eastside.

Quick Facts:

- Since 2018, the Province, through BC Housing, has opened more than 1,400 new supportive homes in Vancouver for people experiencing homelessness, with nearly 900 more underway.
- The Province has also opened more than 800 affordable rental homes since 2018, with more than 3,100 more underway.

Learn More:

To view the Downtown Eastside response plan, visit:

https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Strategy_DTES_provincial_response_plan.pdf

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Supporting the Downtown Eastside: Provincial Partnership Plan Working Document



Ministry of Housing

March 2023

Acknowledgement

This Plan acknowledges the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples upon whose land it is set. The area of the present-day Downtown Eastside was once a site where the ancestors of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples lived, utilized, and protected the natural area. We also acknowledge the Métis, Inuit and Indigenous Peoples from other territories who make the Downtown Eastside home. This plan recognizes that definitions of Indigenous homelessness are unique and dimensional, the ongoing impacts of colonization, and government's commitments to Reconciliation including through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act³.

Our Vision

To see a healthier, hopeful and safer Downtown Eastside, where people from all walks of life can access the housing and wraparound supports they need to establish a positive community and thrive together.

Our approach

The Province is taking a lead role in restoring community health, wellness and safety in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

The Supporting the Downtown Eastside: Provincial Partnership Plan will help DTES residents access integrated housing, health, social and cultural supports. It will also resolve and prevent unsafe encampments, improving the community for all residents and visitors.

The Plan is being led by the Ministry of Housing and will require a coordinated and inclusive process and actions resulting in improvements for everyone in the community. Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, and community partners will inform the implementation of the Plan, to ensure it builds on important work and relationships established in the Downtown Eastside.

The Province is taking a "Housing First" approach to homelessness, which recognizes that people are better able to access supports when they have safe, stable shelter and their basic needs are met.

This plan respects people's human rights and agency, while protecting their health and safety and minimizing disruption. It also recognizes that people experience homelessness differently based on their demographics and unique and intersecting needs.

The Province will continue working on a coordinated and inclusive process and actions with all levels of government, Indigenous governments, BC Housing, Indigenous organizations, service providers and community partners. The Province also supports Indigenous-led initiatives.

³ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>

The Province recognizes the unique history and culture of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the value of maintaining community-based affordable housing and honouring established support networks.

Since December 2022, engagements with DTES service providers, representatives from all levels of government and Indigenous leadership have highlighted the need for collaboration, better coordination among government partners, support for community inclusion and the need for Indigenous-led responses to address distinct needs; such as preventing violence against women.

The Plan supports the 2022 mandate to the Minister of Housing to, "Lead government's work to better coordinate services to deliver improved outcomes for people living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, with support from the Ministers of Mental Health and Addictions, Health, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Public Safety and Solicitor General, as well as Indigenous Peoples, external partners, and others."⁴

The Province is prioritizing the dignity, health, and safety of vulnerable people and work to prevent encampments from growing and becoming entrenched long-term. This Plan also supports the City of Vancouver's goal to reduce health and safety dangers to the vulnerable people sheltering outside in the Downtown Eastside and the surrounding community – including all who live, work in and visit the area.

Since July 2022, the Province has worked across ministries and through BC Housing to support the City of Vancouver's efforts to minimize dangers that prompted a fire order from the Vancouver Fire Chief and to assist people sheltering on the streets to move indoors. While some progress has been made, it remains an unsafe and untenable situation for all involved. It is a humanitarian

Distinct Needs

Ministries, Indigenous and community partners recognize the necessity for plans and supports to address the distinct and intersecting needs of people on the Downtown Eastside. This includes:

- Indigenous-led and collaborative planning and supports.
- Addressing specific needs of women at risk of violence, including Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people (in recognition of the National Inquiry into MMIWG Calls for Justice 4.7).
- Addressing specific needs of youth, seniors, 2SLGBTQQ+ people.
- Addressing specific needs of people living with disabilities and those with brain injury.
- Addressing specific needs of racialized and immigrant populations.
- Addressing specific needs of those who face additional barriers to housing security—including pets, family, and community situations.

This work will centre the voices and contributions of people sheltering in the Downtown Eastside, as well as people with lived experiences of homelessness and those who support them, and draw from community-based knowledge such as Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the DTES SRO Collaborative

⁴ https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/premier-cabinet-mlas/minister-letter/hous_-_kahlon.pdf

issue which needs all levels of government and community members to come together to improve.

Recognizing that experiences of homelessness are impacted by unique and intersecting needs, this Plan includes demographic considerations and community partnerships that serve:

- Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh (MST) Peoples
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples and leadership
- Women and families
- Seniors and Elders
- Racialized and immigrant communities
- People living with disabilities, including those with brain injury and cognitive issues
- People with mental health and substance use challenges
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people
- Youth (including those in care, and those with familial connections in the DTES)

Collective Approach: Aligning with the Province’s approach of putting people first, this Plan is grounded in the following principles:

- Person-centered and human rights approach
- Minimize trauma and disruption; prioritize safety
- Indigenous led ceremony, cultural supports, and cultural safety
- Collaborative planning and integrated services delivery
- Inclusive, distinct, and culturally informed transitions
- Housing and shelter options that provide a pathway to improved health and housing stability
- Strong partnerships across the community
- Ensure mental/emotional health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers supporting this work
- Provincially-led with clear roles and oversight

What we’ve learned

The Province believes in the “Housing First” approach to homelessness, which recognizes that people are better able to access health, income, social and other supports when they have the safety and stability of shelter and their basic needs met. Poverty and a lack of suitable housing options are key drivers of encampments, compounded by mental health issues and addictions. By addressing the need for stable housing, this approach seeks to overcome a significant persistent cause of homelessness. The Housing First approach is recognized around the world and has been used by the Province in some form since 2009, with the goal to implement it across settings.

This approach is Housing *First*, not housing *only*, and it is essential to ensure that housing is accompanied by a model of integrated supports that meet individual and intersecting needs. These supports include primary health care, mental health services, addictions and substance use treatment and harm reduction, income and legal supports, as well as housing, social, cultural and basic needs met through coordinated outreach and system navigation.

This approach will integrate learnings from *Red Woman Rising* and acknowledges that women and Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness face barriers to Housing First models due to concerns over safety and experiences of hidden homelessness. It requires unique and distinctive supports to both access and find safety and success in housing. Partnerships with community and Indigenous organizations will help inform how to support these populations in a Housing First approach.

The Housing First approach is supported through numerous government initiatives, including the 2018 Homes for BC: 30-Point-Plan⁵, 2019 TogetherBC: Poverty Reduction Strategy⁶, Complex Care Housing Initiative⁷, Youth Transitions⁸ and Budget 2022 and 2023 Homelessness Actions.

In Vancouver, the Housing First approach is supported through a 2021 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)⁹ signed by the Minister Responsible for Housing, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Park Board to establish roles and responsibilities in encampment response and emphasizes a humanitarian and collaborative approach with access to housing and a spectrum of supports.

Through the MOU, the Ministry commits to provide housing and shelter options, and to act as the provincial liaison through BC Housing to coordinate health, housing, cultural and social supports to address the needs of people sheltering in encampments in parks and public spaces. The City has committed to working with government and community partners to provide outreach, supports and connections, to make land available for housing, to expedite necessary land use decisions, and when suitable spaces are available indoors, to enforce the City of Vancouver's bylaws. The Vancouver Parks Board has committed to working with government and community partners to provide standard amenities and to facilitate outreach and services to unsheltered people, and to enforce Park Board bylaws when suitable indoor spaces are available for people. The Province recognizes that people may need to shelter outdoors when they have no other option, and that they may find a sense of community and safety. However, encampments are not a safe or suitable form of long-term housing. The City is also served by the *Vancouver Charter*¹⁰, which provides unique abilities to manage bylaws, zoning and other responses – including the protection of low-income housing through the Single Room Accommodation *Bylaw*¹¹ and the City's SRO Revitalization Action Plan¹² and 10-year Housing Strategy.¹³

The Provincial approach to encampments is to prioritize the dignity, health and safety of people sheltering, and to connect them to the integrated supports and housing they need to move forward. We have learned from experience that when encampments grow, become entrenched, and unsafe, the best practice is for partners to work together to implement a decampment and housing transition plan. This experience has led to cross-government development of guidelines and best practices in

⁵ https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/homesbc/2018_homes_for_bc.pdf

⁶ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/about-the-bc-government/poverty-reduction-strategy>

⁷ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/mental-health-support-in-bc/complex-care-housing>

⁸ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/youth-transitions>

⁹ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021AG0043-000637>

¹⁰ <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/the-vancouver-charter.aspx>

¹¹ <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/single-room-accommodation-bylaw.aspx>

¹² <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/sro-revitalization-action-plan.pdf>

¹³ <https://council.vancouver.ca/20171128/documents/rr1appendixa.pdf>

cooperation with First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and BC Housing, local governments, persons with lived experience and services providers.

We learned from the Vancouver decampments of Oppenheimer Park in 2020 and Strathcona Park in 2021 how best practices resulted in transitions to stable housing for the majority of those sheltering and real-time wrap-around health and social supports available throughout the process. There is acknowledgement that some people may not transition to indoor options or may be challenged to sustain housing due to health, mental health or substance use issues, or individual barriers or circumstances. As such, there is a need to ensure that parks or other outdoor shelter options where shelter is permitted overnight are known to people experiencing homelessness, in alignment with Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms¹⁴.

With a strong view to Reconciliation, the learnings from previous decampments and best practices were also informed by anti-racist and trauma-trained practices, understanding that addressing encampments must include maintaining individual dignity and self-agency. This has included engaging peer workers, centering Indigenous ceremony, and partnering with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and Indigenous organizations.

History and Current State

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside has been a diverse, vibrant community with a range of businesses and affordable housing since the 1930s, and has faced numerous waves of gentrification, displacement of low-income residents, health and social crises since. Large encampments have formed in public spaces over the past two decades but only recently have they occurred in multiple numbers each year – and the encampment along Hastings Street is one of the most concerning due to its location and multiple safety issues for those sheltering and the surrounding community.

All levels of government have worked for decades to protect affordable housing in the DTES, like the thousands of SRO hotel rooms, increased shelter and supportive housing spaces. Various levels of government have also provided centralized legal, harm reduction, substance use, primary and mental health services and social supports through various initiatives – such as the Vancouver Agreement¹⁵ and Homelessness Intervention Program¹⁶. While the proliferation of resources for people facing homelessness, and with complex needs, has made the area a hub for supports, it has also resulted in a challenging landscape for people to navigate, find stability in, or move on from. This is compounded by increasing housing affordability challenges in the DTES and surrounding areas of Metro Vancouver, many of which have far fewer resources or choices for vulnerable people. Recent research from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) tracks clients receiving income or disability assistance in the DTES, including those who have no fixed address (NFA). Of the small segment flowing in or out of the DTES, the majority largely come from, or go to, other Metro Vancouver communities, and many cycle in and out – sometimes for years. The overall proportion of

¹⁴ <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd/check/art7.html>

¹⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20050316205956/http://www.vancouveragreement.ca/TheAgreement.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/corrections/research-evaluation/iom-hip-report.pdf>

those on income and disability assistance is approximately 10 times higher in the DTES than the rest of Vancouver, with nearly 94% of clients being single people. The proportion of NFA income and disability assistance clients in the DTES has more than doubled between 2012 and 2022. At the same time, the number of clients residing in SROs has declined.

Additionally, many of the individuals sheltering and living in the DTES have complex health needs. Addressing the challenges in the DTES requires responses that take into consideration the complexity of those that suffer from chronic, poly-substance use, and often mental illnesses, neuro-developmental disorders and/or cognitive impairment, and often physical health problems. A key challenge is the growing understanding that many now also suffer from acquired brain injury because of repeated overdose treatment and intervention. Now more than ever, treatment solutions need to be individualized as many often experience significant barriers in accessing mainstream services. Over the past three years, the Ministry of Housing has engaged peers and people with lived experiences of homelessness – including those throughout Metro Vancouver – who shared personal insights into challenges faced.

On housing and shelters:

“I brought the street in my home, and those two don't mix, because you can't keep going and getting stuff and stuff and stuff, because that's your addiction, you know...I didn't know how to live, you know, in a home by myself. I found it really hard and lonely. It was more scarier in a home than it was on the street.” – Participant, Vancouver

“And the one thing I remember when I went into that shelter the first night is the compassion, the checking on me, and the food. They fed me that night and they fed me good food. The caring that I didn't feel when I was on the street, I felt that later.” – Participant, Vancouver

On health and social supports:

“It's pretty tough because I didn't have ID, and I didn't have all those things you needed to prove who you are, you know, and it took forever to try and get that stuff, so I just never bothered to get that stuff, because as soon as I would get it, I would lose it.” – Participant, Vancouver

“I couldn't find treatment. I actually went online trying to find places to get help. But between wanting to get more drugs or just not being able to find. I couldn't navigate the system, and I can navigate a lot of stuff. I could not find what I needed to do. I had to get help” – Participant, Vancouver.

The Way Forward

This Plan aims to address the immediate health and safety issues of the DTES and encampments, and to lay the groundwork to support prevention of future encampments and improve the community for all residents and visitors. This work will help resolve encampment issues through municipal maintenance of public spaces, health, safety and accessibility, new housing options and an increased coordination of wraparound supports and services. The Plan includes support for people sheltering along Hastings Street, in Crab Park and in other areas, to stay safe, healthy and connect to indoor

spaces and housing. These supports and services will be modelled off the Integrated Support Framework (ISF), a new system of health, social, cultural, and housing supports for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We heard from the Downtown Eastside community members and service providers about the need to prioritize safe and suitable housing options, how people are struggling to meet basic daily needs like food and places to rest and connect, the importance of harm reduction, safe supply and treatment, and how organizations are struggling with burnout and trauma. We also heard about the need to support Indigenous-led responses, to support peer-based employment and ensure better access to health services at all hours.

The Province commits to deliver this plan centred on Indigenous collaboration and peer inclusion – which aligns with Government’s commitments under the *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), the principles of Reconciliation, and the “Path Forward” responses to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Calls for Justice¹⁷. For example, in Vancouver this includes a commitment to regular and ongoing engagement through working groups and advisory tables with Indigenous partners such as Lu’ma Native Housing Society and the Aboriginal Housing Management Association and others, people with lived experiences of homelessness, partnership with Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations as well as other Indigenous, Metis and First Nations leadership, cultural supports and Indigenous outreach and housing providers. Indigenous ceremony has been a powerful tool in centering community and health throughout encampment responses; and the Province supports Indigenous partners in developing culturally supportive models and providing an Indigenous-lens to planning and actions. This plan will work to support Indigenous-led initiatives, knowledge and data sharing, housing and support actions and strategic planning through regular and continued engagement.

Goals:

The Province will work in partnership with BC Housing, the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Federal government, Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh governments, Indigenous and Community Partners, to achieve the following goals:

Goal One: Engaged Community: Clear, coordinated, and regular communication with people sheltering outdoors in the Downtown Eastside, MST communities, Indigenous partners, advocates, and community members to reduce fears, encourage engagement and bring together the community in support of those most vulnerable. This includes:

- **Increased communication and transparent planning:** The City of Vancouver, BC Housing and partners will share resources for people sheltering in public spaces to access safer

¹⁷ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/mmiw/mmiwg-status-update-2022.pdf>

indoor options, health, social and cultural supports, as well as pathways to housing, and best practices when sheltering outdoors.

- **Coordinated supports:** BC Housing will work with ministry and community partners to share information where people can continue to access housing, health and social supports.
- **Public accountability:** The Ministry of Housing will work with the City of Vancouver, BC Housing and partners to ensure information about actions within the plan, including housing, as well as progress are shared regularly and that community engagement sessions are ongoing.

Goal Two: Safe Communities: Transition the DTES back to a safe and manageable area where all community members can thrive. This includes:

- **Safety of marginalized people** – The City of Vancouver and Vancouver Police Department will work to ensure community safety measures prioritize those at higher risk of violence and predators such as women and Indigenous women, girls, LGBTQ and Two-Spirit people.
- **Women at risk** – BC Housing, ministry and community outreach partners will work to ensure women and other marginalized people at risk of violence are connected to supports; and that shelter and housing spaces are identified specifically for women at risk.
- **SRO safety** – To ensure people are better able to use available Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing spaces, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Fire Rescue Services and BC Housing will work to address SRO safety issues, track fire data, address fire code violations, provide fire prevention supports and education, utilize and train peer captains, and increase health and safety inspections.
- **Encampment response** – To support resolution of the Hastings encampment, the City of Vancouver, in consultation with provincial partners, is implementing an Encampment Response. The City of Vancouver and the Province will support BC Housing, MST governments, Indigenous organizations, and community partners to explore alternative shelter models, such as tiny homes and culturally aligned supports, recognizing space is constrained in the DTES and downtown core.

Goal Three: Integrated Health and Social Services: Help people sheltering outdoors, and in shelters, with coordinated transition to indoor spaces and housing and provide access to integrated health, social and community services, pre-employment and employment services, across Metro Vancouver communities.

- **Coordinated services** – the Province will work with Community Service Providers to implement a multidisciplinary team dedicated to serving those needing supports in the Downtown Eastside. This coordinated DTES team will bring together the City of Vancouver, BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, Community Integration Specialists, Indigenous governments and organizations, peers and community service providers. The team will operate seven days a week and work to identify the needs of people facing homelessness so they can quickly access health, mental health, addictions and social services, and support

transitions to indoor spaces as a pathway to appropriate housing options. The team will coordinate outreach and assessment through a healing-informed lens – so people sheltering can connect with a single contact and are not required to share traumatizing stories repeatedly and that every door will be the right door.

- **Expanding Community Integration Specialist services** – to support individuals residing on Hastings St. with on-the-spot intake assessments, housing and health referrals, low-barrier employment opportunities, family reunification benefits, assistance to obtain identification and fire safety education.
- **Continuity of health supports and services** – Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, BC Housing and partners are ensuring that supports move with people to interim and long-term spaces (wound care, mental health services, substance use support, safe supply and more).
- **Treatment options** – the Province’s recently announced Safer Communities Action Plan¹⁸ lays out concrete steps at the provincial level to make communities safer, including expanded treatment and intervention services. These will support those in the DTES through:
 - Expanding mental-health crisis response teams into more communities so police can focus on crime, and people in crisis are met early on by health-care workers and community members.
 - Creating a new model of addictions care at St. Paul’s Hospital so people can seamlessly move from crisis response in the emergency room, to detox, to treatment services, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care, with plans to expand this model in the future.
- **Transition supports** – Vancouver Coastal Health will provide health supports, mental health and harm reduction transition planning to ensure a standard of harm reduction, safe supply and other supports follow from encampments to indoor spaces and housing.
- **Support for service providers** – The Province will assist in providing additional support for service providers to address funding gaps and staffing challenges, including administrative support. Partners will also work to support community providers to facilitate community inclusion, wellness, skills and employment supports for people facing homelessness.
- **Enhanced crisis supplements** – To help individuals with unexpected needs, supplements will be provided for food and clothing.
 - SDPR will partner with local community organizations to facilitate access to pre-employment and employment services, as well as access to work experience and peer employment grants for DTES residents who are ready for supported low-barrier employment opportunities with local employers.
 - SDPR will use the full range of income and disability assistance, and pre-employment and employment services through local community organizations.
 - Low-Barrier employment with service partners like the Open Door Group, the Lookout Society and EMBERS/Eastside Works.

¹⁸ <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/safer-communities/>

- Providing increased access to work experience and peer employment grants for DTES residents who are ready for supported low-barrier employment opportunities with local employers.

Goal Four: Accessible Shelter & Housing Options: Coordinated access to a range of interim and permanent housing options to meet people’s needs.

- **Transitioning indoors** – BC Housing, in collaboration with the City of Vancouver, MST governments, Indigenous and community partners will continue to help people transition to indoor spaces with supports as a pathway to moves to stable, permanent housing options.
- **Regional housing approach** – The Province, BC Housing, City of Vancouver, Federal partners, MST government, and First Nations will work collectively to leverage potential spaces and opportunities for temporary and permanent housing options – including a regional approach that takes into account that individuals have diverse housing needs.
- **SRO Revitalization Plan** – The Province, BC Housing, City of Vancouver, and community partners will continue the work of the City of Vancouver SRO Revitalization Plan, in recognition of the key role SRO’s play in housing stock for the DTES.
- **Expansion of year-round shelters** – The Province, through BC Housing, will work to expand year-round shelter access and work to ensure the shelter system better provides access to adequate housing and supports and identify barriers to access and address existing gaps to improve shelter access for all shelter guests.
- **More indoor options** – To provide shelter and housing to support people as they transition indoors. This includes recently acquired or coming spaces:
 - 139 new or renovated SRO spaces (since July 2022) and more undergoing renovations.
 - 330 homes to open between now and the end of June 2023, for a total of over 460 new homes to support people in the Downtown Eastside.
 - Included in the 330 homes, are two new modular supportive housing buildings in the Downtown Eastside that will provide 89 homes by Spring 2023.
 - The Province is working with the City of Vancouver to ensure there is sufficient shelter space to help people move indoors and transition to more permanent housing when available.
 - The Province will also work with the City of Vancouver and surrounding First Nations and local governments to increase housing and supports across the region to reduce inflows of people to the DTES for services they cannot access elsewhere.
 - The Province will also leverage existing programs and initiatives to support the response efforts:
 - New Supported Rent Supplement Program – provides for up to 150 individuals to live independently with supports in Vancouver. Indigenous people and areas with significant encampments are prioritized.
 - Vancouver Coastal Health has six Assertive Community Treatment teams accessible to the DTES population that provide client-centred, recovery-oriented services that facilitate community living support and psychosocial

rehabilitation for persons with severe and persistent mental illness, and/or substance use disorders.

- Support access to housing through increasing the maximum shelter rate by \$125 across the Province, effective August 1, 2023.
 - Support for community-based, peer based and Indigenous governments and organizations to lead services, engagement, and outreach through Homelessness Community Action Grants (\$6M announced as part of Budget 2022).
 - Identify opportunities to leverage existing programs to support community-based, peer workforce and life skills training.
- **Family reunification** – support family and community reunification when requested through transportation and travel assistance provided through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.
 - **Community coordination** – BC Housing will lead a Coordinated Access and Assessment Table with ministry and community partners to inform indoor placement options for people experiencing homelessness. This includes supports for people with distinct needs (couples, seniors, youth, racialized, Indigenous, women, 2SLGBTQ+) and creating flow in supportive housing buildings – including with supported rent supplements funding through Budget 2022.

What's Next - Medium & Long-term Plans:

Encampments across the province are indicative of the continuing impacts of the toxic drug and housing crises, poverty, crime, discrimination, mental health issues and stigma against those that are most vulnerable, all of which has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Prevention of encampments, response, and long-term resolution of homelessness in the province will require policies and programs that address the underlying root causes.

The Ministry of Housing is developing a Provincial Encampment Framework with partners to respond to and address unsafe encampments with a Housing First and person-centered approach to achieve the following:

- Housing loss prevention, and a shelter diversion plan where indoor options are pathways to permanent housing.
- Increased funding and support for Indigenous and community-led programs and housing.

Additionally, there is a need for medium to longer-term strategic planning for the Downtown Eastside. The unique context of the history and population that resides in the community must be honored and receive consideration when working to prevent future unsafe encampments from forming and sustaining the long-term health and wellness of the community. This preventative planning will include:

- Preserving and increasing dignified and appropriate social and affordable housing, including through an SRO Strategy, in partnership with community providers and the Federal Government.
- Partnering with the City of Vancouver and MST governments in re-visioning and community engagement for an updated Downtown Eastside Plan (including redevelopment of Balmoral and Regent blocks).
- Continuing investments in new supportive housing, shelters, supported rent supplements, acquisitions and complex care across Vancouver. This is in recognition that, for many, self-contained modular units with supports are preferable to SROs or shelter options.
- Systems-mapping of existing supports and services in the DTES to streamline and improve service provider capacity, integration, coordination, skills, and training.
- Taking action to address climate change adaptations and needs, especially into Spring 2023 to prevent displacement of SRO residents during extreme weather events in the Spring and Summer.

The Provincial Encampment Response Framework and the Supporting the Downtown Eastside: Provincial Partnership Plan will complement the Provincial Homelessness Plan, a component of the Housing Action Plan.

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