



North Shore Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing – 705 West 2nd Street Overview

Establishment of the North Shore Homelessness Task Force

In 1998 a Harvest Project staff member, John Day, brought his concerns about rising homelessness to the attention of municipal staff and the Health Region. As a result, an ad hoc task force of service providers, health region and municipal social planning staff came together to develop a North Shore strategy to address the growing homelessness issue.



One of the group's first actions was to develop a survey of the homeless, administered by the agencies that served homeless people. Over a period of 9 months from 1999 to 2000, more than 82 homeless people (men and women, youth and adults) found in North Vancouver and West Vancouver participated in the survey. This was considered to be a significant under-estimation of the true numbers.

In the fall of 2000, the survey findings and recommendations to undertake specific initiatives to address local homelessness were presented to the three North Shore municipalities and the NS Health Region Board for their endorsement. The immediate priority was for a temporary shelter, and a planning committee developed the funding submission for the initial overnight emergency shelter for the winter of 2000-01.

Other Task Force priorities were a Youth Safe House (separate process previously underway), a permanent adult emergency shelter, and transition housing. An August 2001 report, "Standing Outside in the Rain Without an Umbrella" documented the survey and initiatives taken by the newly established North Shore Homelessness Task Force.

2001 Temporary Emergency Shelter

The North Shore's first temporary emergency shelter operated in a City-owned building located at 166 block West Esplanade from February through April 2001 with \$80,611 in federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) funding for a Cold, Wet Weather Shelter. The shelter was managed by seconded Lookout Emergency Aid Society shelter manager and Harvest Project staff and provided:

- Overnight accommodation (8:00pm to 7:00am)
- Maximum of 30 clients on floor mats on raised platforms in a very poorly heated concrete floor building
- Served single men and women

- Few amenities and services (showers; coffee, donuts/muffins and occasional donated food)

The City of North Vancouver's contributions to the 2001 North Shore temporary emergency shelter include the following:

- City Council leadership in responding to the need on the North Shore of an emergency shelter with staff resources and a temporary location in a City-owned building
- Forgiven lease revenue (\$25,000 for 3 months)
- Staff time (Social Planning, Lands, Planning, Engineering) related to site search, funding submission, community liaison and renovation process)

North Shore municipal staff led the seven month search for the temporary shelter site. While searching for a temporary shelter location, a permanent shelter facility site was also sought.

Adult Emergency Shelter Operator

As the result of a March 2001 Expression of Interest process, the North Shore Homelessness Task Force selected Lookout Emergency Aid Society as the organization to seek funding for a permanent adult emergency shelter and transition housing project on behalf of the North Shore community.

Purchase of Permanent Shelter Site

In November 2001, City Council authorized \$1,053,000 to purchase a site located at 705 West 2nd Street for the permanent adult shelter and transition housing with Lookout Emergency Aid Society as the operator. The City's contributions included:

- 50% discount lease for sixty years (\$263,296 contributed from Affordable Housing Reserve Fund)
- \$250,000 allocated for utilities connections, site preparation, pedestrian crossing and environmental survey costs during the 2 year development and construction process
- Council also approved the waiving of \$109,000 of various City fees and City DCCs for the permanent emergency shelter
- In November 2004, Council approved the waiving of \$75,000 City fees and City DCCs for the transition housing component of the development

The facility was occupied in early 2005. The total capital-related costs to the City were approximately \$2 million. The commitment to the shelter project on the part of the City Mayor and Councillors and their role in lobbying the federal and provincial governments for sufficient capital and operating funding were instrumental in the development of the permanent shelter and transition housing facility.

Temporary Emergency Shelters

For three winter seasons (October – April) from 2001-02 through 2003-04 a temporary adult emergency shelter was located in a City-owned building located adjacent to the West 2nd site purchased for the permanent shelter.

The temporary shelter provided the following:

- Open seven days a week, 24 hours a day
- Minimum of 2 staff,
- Beds for 20 adults (women accommodated in a separate room).
- Services included 3 daily meals, showers, laundry, crisis counseling, case planning and referrals to professional care and community resources.

Federal funding (\$350,000 – 390,000 annually) provided the majority of the operating budgets of the temporary shelters, supplemented by Ministry of Human Resources funding and fundraising by Lookout in the North Shore community. It continued to be an overnight shelter (8:00pm – 8:00am) due to inadequate operating funds. However, during the cold, wet weather months October through March, provincial funds enabled a 24 hour operation.

City contributions for the West 2nd temporary shelter included:

- Waived property taxes and business licence (\$11,000 annually)
- Permit Fees (\$600 electrical, plumbing, permits) for renovations
- Staff time in processing shelter-related requirements and addressing on-going community concerns.

Permanent Shelter & Transition Housing

Construction of the permanent NS Adult Emergency Shelter and Transition Housing project began in the spring of 2004. The shelter opened in January 2005, and the transition housing was occupied several months later.

The North Shore Adult Emergency Shelter provides:

- 25 beds emergency shelter (single/double rooms)
- 15 – 20 beds dorm style (lower floor of building) during cold, wet weather season
- 25 units (studio) transition (2nd stage housing) (up to 2 years) on the second floor of the shelter facility

The permanent emergency shelter continued to be an overnight shelter (8:00pm – 8:00am) until provincial funds were made available in April 2007 to enable a 24 hour operation year round. In the meanwhile provincial funds enabled 24 hour operation for the cold, wet weather months October through March. A Community Liaison Committee was established in 2001 as a means of responding to and resolving community issues or concerns related to homelessness and the emergency shelter operation.

City contributions to the development of the facility included:

- \$250,000 allocated for utilities connections, site preparation, signal pedestrian crossing and environmental survey costs during the 2 year development and construction process
- Council also approved the waiving of \$109,000 of various City fees and City DCCs for the permanent emergency shelter
- In November 2004, Council approved the waiving of \$75,000 City fees and City DCCs for the transition housing component of the development

The total cost to the City for the capital costs for the emergency shelter and transition housing facility was approximately \$2 million. The shelter facility operator, Lookout Emergency Aid Society, is granted an annual property tax exemption for the shelter facility (\$9,969 in 2008).

Community support from local businesses and citizens has been essential for the temporary emergency shelter operations as well as the permanent facility. This support has ranged from provision of furniture, clothing and bedding, to fundraising events, and community and youth group initiatives gathering notions and gifts for shelter residents. On an ongoing basis since the initial temporary shelter opened, volunteers have enhanced the services provided in the shelters.

Homelessness Related Services

The increase in staff responses to address issues related to the shelter and homeless persons living rough in adjacent areas (RCMP, bylaw, parks, and community development staff) led to the development of Homeless Protocols in 2005. The Protocols assist all responders in assessing, and responding appropriately to homeless persons and related issues.

In 2006, \$71,699 City Safety Initiative Program was provided for two part-time community outreach programs responding to homeless adults, and community issues related to the adult emergency shelter (Salvation Army outreach workers \$40,000; Lookout North Shore Adult Emergency Shelter community liaison position \$31,699). Since this time the City provides \$35,000 annual funding in support of each of these two programs.