

**Howe Shelter Consultation Report
Summary of Correspondence
July 24, 2009**

The Granville and Howe Shelters opened in December 2008 and February 2009 respectively. The City began receiving a small number of public inquiries about the shelters in April and May 2009. In June and July 2009, the City received a significant number of emails from local residents. The City felt that the views expressed in this correspondence should be considered in the consultation and the report to the Minister of Housing and Social Development on the future of the Howe Shelter.

This document summarizes the correspondence regarding the Granville and/or Howe Shelters received by the City from June 1 to July 22, 2009.

Total Correspondence Received

From June 1 to July 22, 2009, the City received approximately 220 emails from 110 individuals regarding the HEAT shelters at 1435 Granville Street and 1442 Howe Street. Over one-quarter of these emails (60 emails in total) came from 9 individuals.

Of the 110 individuals who sent correspondence, 99 expressed concerns about the shelters and generally wanted the shelters to close. 11 individuals emailed expressing support for the shelters.

Key Themes from Correspondence Expressing Negative Opinions (98 individuals)

- The shelters are having negative impacts on the local neighbourhood, including:
 - Decrease safety and increased fear in the neighbourhood;
 - Drug-related issues, including drug use, drug dealing and improperly disposed syringes;
 - Increased garbage in public areas;
 - Use of public and private property as toilets;
 - Increased crime in the area;
 - Increased police presence in the area;
 - Loitering and noise in the alley between Granville Street and Howe Street;
 - Inappropriate behaviour in the neighbourhood around the shelter, including public acts of sex;
 - Reports of residents being threatened or assaulted; and,
 - Reductions in property values.

- Concern about the “low barrier” approach used at the shelters. Suggestion that “low barrier” means that there are no rules.

- The shelters were opened last winter, and then had funding extended to June 30, 2009, without consultation with neighbours. The shelters were opened without due process.

- There were no homeless people in the neighbourhood prior to the shelters opening and the shelter brought homelessness to the neighbourhood.
- Acknowledgement that shelters might be needed, but that this is not an appropriate location for shelters. The following points were made related to shelter location:
 - It is a residential neighbourhood where many children and seniors live;
 - There is a Montessori school and daycare in the neighbourhood;
 - Tourists use the neighbourhood, either staying in hotels or passing thought on the way to the Seawall, and the shelters give a negative impression of Vancouver;
 - Shelters should be located where there are services for homeless people, and there aren't any in this neighbourhood;
 - Shelters should not be located in affluent neighbourhoods; and,
 - Shelters should be located in industrial areas where no one lives.
- The opinion that the shelters should close and not re-open was strongly expressed.

Key Themes from Correspondence Expressing Positive Opinions (11 individuals)

- The concerns of other neighbours are significantly overstated. The shelters are having only minimal impact on the neighbourhood, and have had a positive impact on other parts of downtown (e.g. fewer people sleeping on beaches).
- All neighbourhoods in the city should be involved in solutions to homelessness.
- The City needs to engage residents in a dialogue about the shelter and solutions to homelessness in the neighbourhood.
- Support for the shelter remaining open.