

**Joint Partner Response to the
Inner-City Inclusive Commitments (ICI)
Housing Table Report**

Government of Canada

Government of British Columbia

City of Vancouver

**The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and
Paralympic Winter Games**

November 2007

Joint Response

Background

The Inner-City Inclusive (ICI) Commitment Statement was part of the bid for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It pledges that the Olympic partners (Government of Canada, the Province of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver and the 2010 Bid Corporation, later the Vancouver Organizing Committee or “VANOC”) will work together to ensure the legacy of the 2010 Winter Games creates direct benefits and minimizes adverse impacts for Vancouver’s inner-city communities (Mount Pleasant, Downtown South and Downtown Eastside).

The ICI Initiative was established in 2005 by the partners as noted above to provide an integrated framework for delivering the 37 commitments that make up the Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement. Five of the 37 commitments relate to housing:

- Protect rental housing stock;
- Provide as many alternative forms of temporary accommodation for Games’ visitors and workers;
- Ensure people are not made homeless as a result of the Games;
- Ensure residents are not involuntarily displaced, evicted or face unreasonable increases in rent as a result of the Games; and
- Provide an affordable housing legacy and start planning now.

A community-based advisory group (the Housing Table) was established in October 2006 to develop recommendations for the five housing-related commitments. In March 2007, the Housing Table released the “Report of the Housing Table for the Inner-City Inclusivity Initiative” with 25 recommendations. These recommendations are not binding on the ICI partners, however, many are consistent with the direction the partners are already taking.

This document is a joint response by the partners to the Housing Table recommendations.

Response from VANOC, the City of Vancouver, the Provincial and Federal Governments:

Homelessness is a serious social and economic issue in Vancouver that everyone cares about and wants to see addressed in new, more effective ways.

The partners appreciate the time and effort the Housing Table members dedicated to the completion of this report. The recommendations will inform the implementation of current and future housing initiatives.

The partners have made good progress toward meeting the housing-related ICI Commitments since 2003, when the Games were awarded to Vancouver, and look forward to building on this work as the Games approach.

SUMMARY JOINT RESPONSE BY RECOMMENDATION

The following chart summarizes the progress made in achieving the recommendations made by the Housing Table.

Recommendation of Housing Report	Comments
1. Build Social Housing (3200 new units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2003, the government partners have collaborated on commitments to build 1,109 new units in Vancouver (see Appendix A). • The Province has committed to create 2,287 supportive housing units across British Columbia under the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions.
2. Build Social Housing – Olympic Village (increase number of units for those in core need)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 units of affordable housing will be a legacy of the Games. • Once capital costs are known, the degree to which additional core need households can be accommodated can be determined.
3. Purchase or Lease Existing Rental Housing (800 units)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2003, 1,020 units of existing rental housing have been purchased. See Appendix A.
4. Develop Communications Strategy for Landlord Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ICI partners are discussing the development of a communications strategy.
5. Re-examine City of Vancouver SRA Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SRA by-law was recently amended to increase the conversion/demolition fee from \$5,000 to \$15,000. Staff will continue to monitor the rate of change in the stock and report to Council as required. • Other initiatives are underway to identify appropriate measures to protect the rental housing stock.
6. Encourage Municipal Action throughout the GVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various planning resources are available. • The ICI partners await the adoption of the GVRD's affordable housing strategy.
7. Initiate SRA Anti-Demolition and Conversion Practices to Protect Further Loss of Stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent SRA by-law amendments provide additional measures to protect against erosion of existing stock.
8. Proactive Maintenance By-law Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City is identifying a suitable hotel where enforcement (using Section 23 of by-law) might be appropriate.
9. Encourage Maintenance By-laws throughout GVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various planning resources are available. • The ICI partners await the adoption of the GVRD's affordable housing strategy.
10. Property Tax Exemptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are reviewing the City's regulatory powers to create affordability through the Ecodensity initiative.
11. Provide Funds for SRO Management Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing SRO Management Training Program curriculum was recently revamped; stable funding is being sought.
12. Reform Federal Tax System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any potential tax changes in this area would need to be assessed to determine their policy and fiscal implications and weighed against other government priorities through the normal Budget 2008 process.

Recommendation of Housing Report	Comments
13. Expand and Change Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RRAP program extended until 2009.
14. Establish Short-Stay Registry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VANOC will work with its ICI partners to develop a short-stay registry.
15. Create Short-Stay Youth Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategy for youth and others will be developed in consultation with local service providers.
16. Build Worker Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using social housing sites for this purpose would mean low-income people would be delayed in occupying the building in favour of workers; this proposal will not be pursued.
17. Eliminate Barriers to Accessing Social Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing policies, practices and outreach projects are ensuring that more people receive the services they require. The City is pleased with the success of the outreach pilot program and encourages the Province to consider further initiatives to ensure those in need are able to obtain and remain on income assistance.
18. Increase Income Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Province increased the maximum shelter rate by \$50 a month, giving employable singles, couples and single parent families the highest shelter rate in Canada. The Province also raised total rates for employable singles by \$100 – giving them the second highest income assistance rate in Canada. The City is pleased that the Province has recently increased income assistance rates and would encourage the Province to consider future increases and additional supports.
19. Increase Funding for Specific Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing programs provide a wide range of services to these groups.
20. Enhance Portable Rental Allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Rental Assistance Program for families introduced in 2006 and enhanced in 2007. Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters program enhanced in 2006.
21. Increase Funding for Addiction and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial and Vancouver Coastal Health initiatives are active or in progress.
22. Improve Local Planning and Service Delivery for Residents with Mental Health or Addiction-Related Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various initiatives are in progress.
23. Increase Services for Tenants and Landlords (Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) in Vancouver)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City and Province are in discussion on how to increase service in the Downtown Eastside (DTES).
24. Increase Advising Assistance for Tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City staff will initiate discussions with the Province to secure matching funds for the \$35,000 grant Council approved February 15 for the provision of tenant services.
25. Amend Residential Tenancy Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partners will obtain more information on the impact these types of regulations are having in other provinces to better understand the implications they would have in BC. The Residential Tenancy Act currently sets limits on rent increases, protects tenants from unreasonable evictions and provides a dispute

Recommendation of Housing Report	Comments
	resolution process to help landlords and tenants resolve conflicts.

DETAILED JOINT RESPONSE BY RECOMMENDATION

COMMITMENT: PROVIDE AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGACY

RECOMMENDATION # 1 – BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING

The Partners to instigate the construction of an average of 800 social housing units (the majority of which are supportive) in each of four years, starting as soon as possible, in Vancouver. This reflects the City's Homelessness Action Plan. The Province to be the lead implementing agency. The specific mix, size, and location of these units are to be determined, but the majority will be targeted for core and deep-core need individuals. As well, a number of units will incorporate universal design and accessibility standard. Units will be managed by not-for-profit housing organizations. Funding to be available to meet operating and support-services costs.

Response:

- All three levels of government are working hard to ensure as many units as possible are completed in the next four years. The government partners will continue to look for new opportunities to create more supportive housing for our most vulnerable citizens.
- Since 2003, the government partners have committed to the construction of 1,109 additional new units of affordable and supportive housing for the homeless in Vancouver. The majority of these units have been created as part of the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions. The Province has committed to create 2,287 supportive housing units across British Columbia under the auspices of this Task Force. In many of these projects, the City of Vancouver has provided land and/or grants. The total capital cost for these developments is approximately \$205 million (including provincial, municipal and federal contributions). The recent Provincial acquisition of 595 SRO units in Vancouver for approximately \$40 million will help protect an important stock of affordable housing until the new supportive housing units are completed (see Appendix A for additional detail).
- VANOC has made a financial contribution to the construction of the Athletes Village, a portion of which is attributable to the 250 unit social housing legacy.
- The Government of Canada confirmed the availability of \$1.4 billion in federal funding for three provincial/territorial housing trusts to help address pressures related to the shortage of affordable housing. Funding for these housing trusts is being allocated over three years. British Columbia's share of this funding is \$156.9 million. The Province of British Columbia is also responsible for allocating these federal funds to Vancouver and other communities in the province.

RECOMMENDATION # 2 – BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING – OLYMPIC VILLAGE

The Partners to secure funding for an operating subsidy that ensures that more than the current 10% of the 250 affordable housing units should accommodate core and deep core families and singles in the Southeast False Creek Olympic Village, following the Games. The proposed subsidy mix to be 40% deep core, 40% shallow, and 20% low-end-of-market.

Response:

- The developer of the Olympic Village has commenced construction of the 250 affordable housing units on behalf of the City. The standard mix in affordable, non-market housing has been 60% core need and 40% market rental. At this point however, the level of affordability that will be achieved is unclear as capital costs have not yet been finalized. Once the capital costs are known, the degree to which additional core need households can be accommodated can be determined and discussion with senior government partners will follow.

COMMITMENT: PROTECT RENTAL HOUSING

RECOMMENDATION # 3 – PURCHASE OR LEASE EXISTING RENTAL HOUSING

The Partners to instigate and fund the acquisition or lease of a minimum of 200 units, for each of four years, through purchase or lease of existing low-income rental housing or the conversion of non-residential premises (these are in addition to the 800 new units proposed in Recommendation #1). Units to be managed by a non-profit housing organization(s). Units likely to require renovation. Tenants may need support services.

Response:

- The Province has spent approximately \$57 million to purchase and renovate 915 SRO hotel rooms in Vancouver. As well, the City has spent about \$13 million to purchase and renovate SRO hotels and rental housing in Vancouver. As shown in Appendix A, 1,020 affordable housing units have been protected since 2003.
- These units will help to stabilize the current situation and protect residents from involuntary displacement, and protect an important element of affordable housing stock for low-income people and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Vancouver. These units will be repaired as required in order to bring them up to an acceptable standard so people can feel safe and secure in their homes. The Province and the City are in discussions about a funding contribution from the City to assist in these repairs.
- City Council's policy is to purchase one SRO or rental building annually in partnership with senior governments. The City will continue to search for appropriate buildings for purchase, and if successful, even more units will be protected by the end of 2010.

RECOMMENDATION # 4 – DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Partners to retain a consultant who will develop a multi-faceted communications strategy (directed toward landlords, to minimize potential evictions or involuntary displacements). VANOC, the City of Vancouver, and the B.C. Apartment Owners and Managers Association to be the lead agencies. Additionally, the Partners will fund the production and distribution of materials to carry out the specific elements of the strategy.

Response:

- All partners want to ensure that landlords and tenants have the appropriate information on Olympic-related housing needs, and that no one is evicted as a result of the Games. The ICI Partners will develop a communications strategy to address this need.

RECOMMENDATION # 5 – RE-EXAMINE SINGLE ROOM ACCOMMODATION (SRA) POLICIES

The City of Vancouver to review its SRA policies with the aim of achieving a better than one-to-one replacement in all three neighbourhoods, and that replacement housing be provided generally in the same area of the converted or redeveloped housing. Additionally, the City to consider higher demolition/conversion fees per unit through its SRA By-law to cover some of the cost of replacement housing, and to extend the geographic scope of the by-law to cover Mount Pleasant. This measure should be considered alongside incentive measures such as federal tax changes.

Response:

- **More than One-for-One**
The development of the one-for-one policy in the DTES was a result of an intensive community consultation and Council approval process that was part of the "DTES Housing Plan". The DTES Housing Plan sets out a carefully balanced vision which includes one-for-one replacement, more housing for low-income singles outside the DTES and more market housing, as well as encourages the development of non-market housing in other parts of the city. The stock will

continue to be monitored through the biennial "Survey of Low-income Housing in the Downtown Core".

➤ **Increase SRA Fee**

On May 1st, Council amended the by-law to increase the fee from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

➤ **Extending geographic scope of SRA By-law**

In developing the SRA by-law, careful consideration was given to the geographic scope of the by-law. The scope was restricted to the downtown core since the majority of SRA stock is located in this area.

Other policy work is underway to address the loss of rental housing in Mount Pleasant through the Mount Pleasant planning process currently underway. On May 24th, 2007, Council adopted a Rate of Change Policy to regulate the rate of change and preserve rental housing in Mount Pleasant, as well as in other parts of the city (this will apply to the RM, FM and CD-1 districts). Whether or not other options to preserve rental housing are needed in Mount Pleasant will be examined through the Mount Pleasant planning process. The City will also be initiating a comprehensive rental study in partnership with the Province, the GVRD and others to evaluate the need for rental housing in the city and region, and the appropriate regulatory framework for protecting the stock. The results of that study are to be reported to Council no later than the end of 2009 with an interim report in 2008. Staff will continue to monitor the stock and evaluate the effectiveness of the rate of change policy and will report back as part of the Mount Pleasant planning process.

RECOMMENDATION # 6 – ENCOURAGE MUNICIPAL ACTION

The GVRD to encourage and work with member municipalities to implement some form of "no net loss", "replacement housing", or "rate of change" regulations. This is consistent with the GVRD's initiatives to encourage housing diversity and affordability as part of its Livable Region Strategy.

Response:

- The Province publishes the *Rental Housing Planning Guide*, which outlines and provides examples of conversion and demolition policies. The *Local Government Guide to Improving Market Housing Affordability* is another resource available to local governments.
- The GVRD, through its Affordable Housing Strategy, has an opportunity to undertake measures to support this recommendation. The ICI partners await the adoption of the GVRD's Affordable Housing Strategy and its implementation by GVRD's member municipalities.

RECOMMENDATION # 7 – INITIATE INTERIM ANTI-DEMOLITION AND CONVERSION MORATORIUM; FINANCIAL PENALTIES

- A. The City of Vancouver to introduce a package of policies aimed at saving the loss of further SRA buildings pending the initiation of new construction, acquisition, and other measures. These policies would include an immediate one-year suspension, with an annual review, of the acceptance of applications for demolition and conversion of SRA units. (Note: This could be waived where the City/developer agree on a one-for-one replacement.)
- B. The City to also apply a financial penalty to SRAs that are closed after a certain date and held empty for more than three months and whose owners have not submitted an application for conversion or demolition. The City would determine the method of assessing this penalty. The time period would be through 2010.
- C. Concurrent with these measures, the City to engage the private sector in discussion to develop a mixture of initiatives to protect SRAs and the rental stock.

Response:

➤ **One-year suspension on the acceptance of SRA permits applications**

On May 1, City Council approved a number of amendments to the SRA by-law that included increasing the fee, requiring Council to consider the recent history of an SRA hotel when deciding a SRA permit application and other provisions to improve the effectiveness of and promote compliance with the by-law. On February 15th, 2007 Council considered a motion to place a moratorium on SRA conversions and demolitions and decided this was not necessary as the amendments to the by-law provide similar and adequate protections. Staff will continue to monitor the stock and report back as required.

➤ **Apply a financial penalty to closed SRAs**

The City does not have the Charter authority to prevent or penalize owners for leaving their buildings vacant.

➤ **Initiatives to protect SRAs and the rental stock**

The City has a number of initiatives underway to protect SRAs and the rental housing stock including the SRA by-law, the Standards of Maintenance by-law, the one-for-one replacement policy, and the recently approved rate of change policy to regulate the loss of purpose built rental housing.

The City also partners with other levels of government on initiatives to protect SRAs and the rental housing stock. For example, the Vancouver Agreement's Pilot Project provides RRAP funding, tenant support and a rent supplement to assist owners who operate older buildings that provide accommodation for hard to house tenants. Initiatives to protect the SRA and rental housing stock will continue to be explored.

RECOMMENDATION # 8 – PROVIDE PROACTIVE ENFORCEMENT

The City of Vancouver and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to provide more resources for the consistent and proactive enforcement of existing provisions for inner city neighbourhood SRA units, especially with respect to the City entering and repairing sub-standard premises at the owner's cost.

Response:

- On February 15, Council directed staff to search for a potentially suitable hotel where the use of Section 23 of the Standards of Maintenance by-law might be appropriate. Staff will report back to Council on procedures, timeline and budget estimates.
- An intergovernmental working group has also been formed to develop an implementation strategy for the recommendations of the "54 Hotel Analysis Project." Staff will report back on these initiatives once they are fully underway.

RECOMMENDATION # 9 – ENCOURAGE MUNICIPAL MAINTENANCE BYLAWS

The partners to encourage the GVRD to work with member municipalities to investigate similar provisions to the City of Vancouver regarding standards of maintenance by-law and remedies.

Response:

- The *Community Charter* allows local governments to enact standards of maintenance bylaws to enforce basic levels of maintenance for rental accommodation. The Province has also published a *Standards of Maintenance Guide and Model Bylaw* to serve as a starting point for local governments to use in ing a bylaw suited to local conditions. See <http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/housing/pubs.htm>.
- The GVRD, through its Affordable Housing Strategy, has an opportunity to undertake measures to support this recommendation. The ICI partners await the adoption of the GVRD's Affordable Housing

Strategy and any measures related to this matter.

RECOMMENDATION # 10 – USE OF PROPERTY TAX INCENTIVES

City of Vancouver to exempt designated SRAs from property taxes associated with new improvements for up to 10 years where the owner enters into an agreement to rehabilitate vacant or underutilized buildings and maintain rents accessible to low-income renters. The exemption would be transferable to new property owners.

Response:

- During the recent legislative session, the provincial government approved amendments to the Vancouver Charter that would provide Council the tools to provide general purpose property tax exemptions (School Taxes would continue to apply) for these types of properties. However, staff are reviewing a number of policy and practical issues to consider before extending an exemption to these properties. For example, the property taxes on a typical SRA average \$40-\$50 per room, per year, only about half of which is general purposes taxes. It is unclear whether this limited tax relief would be of sufficient benefit to encourage owners to enter into a service contract.
- As directed by Council (November 2, 2006), staff are also reviewing the City's regulatory powers to create affordability and to look at what other powers the City might seek to create affordability, such as the transfer of density or property tax relief. Staff are undertaking this review as part of the EcoDensity initiative, as well as the rental housing study to be initiated in 2007.

RECOMMENDATION # 11 – PROVIDE FUNDS FOR EDUCATION

The Partners to secure additional funds to support Vancouver Agreement-initiated programs such as the skill upgrading of SRO hotel owners and managers, and projects with the private sector that result in improvements to low-income rental housing. To enhance the take-up of the skills upgrading program, the City to consider requiring participation in a training program as a condition of obtaining a license to operate an SRO.

Response:

- An initiative of the Vancouver Agreement, the program was recently revamped to better suit the training required to manage SROs. Funding for the continuation of the program is currently being sought. Once stable funding has been secured, requiring training as a condition of a business license for an SRO can be considered.

RECOMMENDATION # 12 – REFORM FEDERAL TAX SYSTEM

The federal government to implement changes to the tax system, possibly, as part of a broader National Housing Framework. These include:

- Providing rebates to fully offset landlord GST expenses;
- Allowing small rental investors to qualify for the small business deduction;
- Restoring the Capital Cost Allowance pooling provisions to encourage capital re-investment in new rental projects; and
- Enabling the creation of a labour-sponsored investment fund specifically for affordable housing.

Response:

- The federal government shares the concern that there be an adequate supply of affordable accommodation for Canadians and has focused on providing more direct forms of assistance for affordable housing. Following on the Budget 2006 commitment, the federal government provided additional funding of \$1.4 billion to the provinces and territories through three third-party trusts to help address short-term pressures with regard to the supply of affordable housing. On December 19, 2006,

the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development announced \$526 million over the next two years for the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy and the extension of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's housing renovation programs for low-income households. The federal government is also investing \$1 billion by the end of 2009-10 through the Affordable Housing Initiative with the provinces and territories to increase the supply of affordable housing in Canada, and \$1.8 billion each year to support existing social housing (rent-geared-to-income) units. Taken together, these investments represent a significant contribution toward addressing the affordable housing needs of Canadians and in assisting the homeless.

Any potential tax changes in this area would need to be assessed to determine their policy and fiscal implications and weighed against other government priorities through the normal Budget 2008 process.

RECOMMENDATION # 13 – EXPAND AND CHANGE RRAP PROGRAM

The Federal government to maintain and expand the RRAP program for rooming houses, hotels, and rental apartment units. In particular, CMHC is requested to adjust the program to be more appealing to SRO operators, and to establish maximum rents that are appropriate for Vancouver's SROs to ensure affordability. The federal government is requested to expand the program to ensure a long-term sustainable response.

Response:

- In December 2006, the federal government announced a two-year, \$256 million extension of CMHC renovation programs for low-income households, including RRAP Rental and Rooming House. Between 1995- 2006, CMHC has provided approximately \$11.9 million in RRAP funding for SRO hotels in the Downtown Eastside. This represents 1,123 units.
- In a recent pilot project initiated by the Vancouver Agreement, CMHC, approved over \$1 million in RRAP funding to help renovate the adjoining Silver and Avalon Hotels in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a project that provided 86 new units of affordable housing to those most at risk of being homeless. CMHC also requires that SROs in receipt of RRAP assistance offer rents at or below median market rents to ensure rents are affordable for the Vancouver market.
- CMHC continues to look at measures to simplify administrative procedures where possible. Nevertheless, the intent of the RRAP program is to bring a unit up to a minimum level of health and safety and with the adaptations lasting for 15 years given normal care and maintenance. The program is not intended to carry out day-to-day building maintenance repairs.

COMMITMENT: PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

RECOMMENDATION # 14 – ESTABLISH A SHORT-STAY REGISTRY

The Partners endorse VANOC's establishment of a short-stay registry to match visitors and Vancouver homeowners that are able to provide/rent temporary accommodation.

Response:

- The Partners are committed to the establishment of a Home Stay Accommodation Registry facilitating local residents' ability to provide temporary accommodation to visitors such as athletes' families during the Games. The Home Stay Accommodation Registry will be in place by 2009.

RECOMMENDATION # 15 – CREATE SHORT-STAY FACILITIES

The Partners to instigate the creation and operation of up to 300 beds of temporary accommodation for short-stay visitors, primarily teens and young adults, in both Whistler and Vancouver. The

accommodation will be required before, during, and for a period after the Games. These beds should be located in a number of facilities and will need to be conveniently located and attractive to youth. Youth and adult accommodation must be separate. Partnering with the School Board and the Parks Board to use community centres may be a viable option.

Response:

- The Partners will work with service providers to determine the need for additional shelter beds (for youth and others) from December 2009 through March 2010 and to develop a strategy for how best to meet the need.
- VANOC has set aside \$500,000 to create temporary accommodation during the Games.

RECOMMENDATION # 16 – BUILD WORKER HOUSING

The Partners to instigate the construction of 200-250 units of housing by June 2009 which would be leased to Games sponsors that need to accommodate workers before and during the Games, and then converted into social housing following the Games. Consideration for the use of temporary trailers should be given.

Response:

- Using existing City-owned sites such as 1321 Richards Street was considered but using such a site would mean low-income people would be delayed in occupying the building in favour of workers.
- Time constraints also pose a barrier - for buildings to be ready before the Games, sites would have to be already acquired and construction would have to be underway by August 2007.
- Temporary trailer parks for construction workers have been proposed. This would be an expensive undertaking and it is not considered necessary at this time. The situation will be monitored for a response by the partners if appropriate.

COMMITMENT: ENSURE HOMELESSNESS DOES NOT INCREASE

RECOMMENDATION # 17 – ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO ACCESS SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Province to eliminate barriers for low-income people to access basic income assistance. (Cross-reference: Support accessible training and employment initiatives through the Employment and Training Table.)

Response:

- There are a number of employment programs offered by the Province including: the BC Employment Program; the Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities; and the Community Assistance Program.
- People in emergency need are exempt from work searches and independence tests. In fact, the majority of new clients – 58 per cent – do not perform a work search and are processed on a priority basis. We recognize that some individuals for various reasons, including drug addiction, homelessness and mental illness, will not or are not able to approach a ministry office for the assistance they need.
- This is why homeless outreach projects have been developed across the province in partnership with municipalities, local social agencies and the Canadian Mental Health Association to connect people living on the street with the services and supports that will make a difference in their lives. From July 2006 to March 2007, the homeless outreach project in the City of Vancouver made contact with 572 people, with an outcome of 82 per cent on income assistance and 77 per cent in housing.
- The City is pleased with the success of the outreach pilot and encourages the Province to consider further initiatives to ensure those in need are able to obtain and remain on income assistance.

RECOMMENDATION # 18 – INCREASE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Province to increase the current basic shelter rate and the basic income assistance by at least 50 per cent and allow earning exemptions to permit people to supplement their income and rebuild their lives. The Province to ensure that future changes are tied to a “cost of living allowance”. Consideration may also be given to enabling individuals on income assistance to access provincial housing allowance programs.

Response:

- The 2007 Budget increased the maximum shelter rate by \$50 a month, giving employable singles, couples and single parent families the highest shelter rate in Canada. The Province also raised total rates for employable singles by \$100, or 20 per cent to \$610 a month, giving them the second highest income assistance rate in Canada. Rates were increased for families and children as well, with increases ranging from \$97 to well over \$200 a month, depending on the number of children.
- The City is pleased that the Province has recently increased income assistance rates and would encourage the Province to consider future increases and additional supports.

RECOMMENDATION # 19 – INCREASE FUNDING FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS

In the business case that is developed as part of Action #1 and #2, the lead implementing agency to ensure attention is given to the provision of safe and appropriately designed supportive housing and those groups who are most vulnerable and who are multi-barriered. These groups include youth (13 to 25), women in poverty, the Aboriginal population, people who are homeless or have been evicted, people with mental health challenges, those waiting for treatment, the disabled and those facing other challenges such as medication problems, illegal drugs and participation in the sex trade.

Response:

- The provision of a wide range of support services to the groups identified in this recommendation is critical to successfully getting the homeless off the streets and keeping them housed. The Province's recent purchase of ten SROs is a welcome initial step in providing supportive housing (currently determining the nature of the supports that will be required). Other Provincial initiatives such as the development of housing for Aboriginals who account for a disproportionate number of families and individuals in core need, and the additional funding set out in the 2007 Provincial budget to provide 24/7 staffing in transition houses are positive.
- The Federal Budget 2006 announced a one-time investment of \$1.4 billion for three housing trusts to address immediate pressures for affordable housing, including transitional and supportive housing. Funding will be distributed among provinces and territories through third-party trusts over a period of three years. The trusts are intended for use by provincial and territorial governments, according to their respective needs and priorities.
- The Shelter Enhancement Program is an important component of CMHC's suite of housing renovation programs, which assists in repairing, rehabilitating and improving existing shelters for women, children and youth, as well as men who are victims of family violence. The SEP can also assist in the acquisition or construction of new shelters and second stage housing where needed.
- On April 1, 2007, the new Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) was launched with funding of \$269.6 million over the next two years. The HPS provides structures and supports for communities to assist homeless individuals, including Aboriginal persons and those living in major urban centres, rural communities and in the North. The federal government recognizes that housing stability is a precondition to positive socio-economic outcomes and full participation in Canadian society. The HPS is therefore focusing on transitional and supportive housing as longer term solutions to help persons overcome homelessness.
- The partners will continue to look for opportunities to support the groups identified in this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION # 20 – ENHANCE PROVINCIAL PORTABLE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The Province to enhance portable rental allowances, including the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters program (SAFER), and the Rental Assistance Program. This is not intended to be a replacement or to overshadow the need for the creation of new housing.

Response:

- The improvements to the Rental Assistance Program announced in the recent budget will benefit thousands more British Columbians. The average monthly assistance per household has increased from \$185 to \$330. The income threshold for eligibility was increased from \$20,000 to \$28,000.
- The SAFER program was enhanced in 2006: maximum rent levels were increased, manufactured home pad rentals were included and changes were made reducing the residency requirements.

RECOMMENDATION # 21 – INCREASE FUNDING FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Partners to secure increased funding over the next four years for increased health professionals, outreach workers, and community-based treatment and recovery services in the inner city.

Response:

- In 2006, the Province announced the Provincial Homeless Outreach Program. Twenty organizations are providing outreach in 18 communities across the province. Funding for the three-year program totals \$3.6 million.
- The Ministry of Health recognizes that there is a need for additional housing and support services for people with severe addictions and/or mental illness and has undertaken a needs and gap analysis of Housing and Support services for this client population. A report is under development which will provide estimates of British Columbia's current supported housing capacity as well as the unmet need. This Report can be expected in July 2007.
- Vancouver Coastal Health Authority is enhancing its mental health and addictions case management services and community living supports in developments such as Woodward's, 1321 Richards, InSite, and Fraser Street.

RECOMMENDATION # 22 – IMPROVE LOCAL PLANNING & SERVICE DELIVERY

The Province to encourage municipalities in Greater Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health to investigate ways, in collaboration with community-based groups and service providers, to improve the local planning and delivery of services to residents with mental health or addiction-related needs. To be effective, these services need to be integrated with the new housing that is constructed.

Response:

- The nearly 2,300 units announced under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative will include appropriate support services. These vary from development to development, but include supports such as alcohol and drug addiction services, mental health services, and a range of supports designed to help people regain their independence. As well, VCH funds non-profit organizations to provide on-site support staff in 16 supported housing developments in the DTES.
- The February 2007 Throne Speech indicated that municipalities with populations greater than 25,000 would be required to identify and zone appropriate sites for supportive housing and treatment facilities for persons with mental illnesses and addictions in official community plans by 2008.
- In addition, the Province will develop a new assessment class and new tax exemptions for small-unit supportive housing over the next year.
- Following the approval of the City's Supportive Housing Strategy (approved June 6, 2007), the Mayor,

on behalf of City Council, will send the Supportive Housing Strategy to the GVRD, its member municipalities, and the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness urging, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Valley Health Authorities, the development of a regional supportive housing strategy and encouraging GVRD municipalities to develop local supportive housing strategies.

COMMITMENT: ENSURE RESIDENTS ARE NOT INVOLUNTARILY DISPLACED, EVICTED OR SUBJECT TO UNREASONABLE RENT INCREASES

RECOMMENDATION # 23 – INCREASE SERVICES FOR TENANTS AND LANDLORDS

The Partners to secure funding for a permanent and full service office of the Residential Tenancy Branch in Vancouver, ensuring there are adequate staff levels to ensure reasonable wait times (in person and on the phone), and to cover emergency situations outside normal working hours. This office should include provision for a full range of services. Additionally, a Court Services representative should be assigned to this office to provide advice and assistance in the enforcement of RTB dispute resolution judgments.

Response:

- The RTB is interested in exploring ways to increase service in the DTES, and will engage in discussions with the City and the community. This might include the possibility of outreach services, placing a staff person in a community services organization office or other government office in the DTES on a part-time basis.

RECOMMENDATION # 24 – INCREASE ADVISING ASSISTANCE FOR TENANTS

The Province to fund community advocates in community agencies to advise tenants on their rights, assist in preparing documents and, where necessary, appear with tenants at RTB dispute resolution hearings.

Response:

As directed by Council, staff will initiate discussions with the Province to secure matching funds for the \$35,000 grant Council approved (February 15) for the provision of tenant services.

RECOMMENDATION # 25 – CHANGE THE RESIDENTIAL TENANCY ACT

The Province to consider amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). The intent is to ensure that health and safety of existing residents, particularly residents of SRAs, is protected and that these residents are not faced with unreasonable rent increases or displacement. The recommended action should be combined with incentives such as changes to the federal tax system. The private sector is not in agreement with the following three recommended changes to the Residential Tenancy Act:

- To ensure that a landlord finds replacement housing or provides compensation for tenants who are evicted for renovations that relate to tenant safety;
- To provide tenants for a right of first refusal following renovations at a rent not to exceed that allowed under the Act (recognizing this essentially as a continual tenancy); and
- To ensure, for SRAs, that rental rates are tied to the unit, rather than tenant occupancy.

Response:

- The Partners will obtain more information on the impact these types of regulations are having in other provinces to better understand the implications they would have in BC. The Residential Tenancy Act currently sets limits on rent increases, protects tenants from unreasonable evictions and provides a dispute resolution process to help landlords and tenants resolve conflicts.

Appendix A – Supportive and Non-Market Housing Units Allocated Since 2003

New Supportive and Non Market Housing Units Allocated Since 2003		
Building	Number of Units	Current Status
Grace Mansion (Salvation Army) 596 East Hastings Street	85 units	Completed <i>Opened</i>
Passlin Hotel 768 Richards	46 units	Under construction <i>Estimated opening 2007</i>
Triage Emergency Services and Care Society 65 E. Hastings	92 units	Under construction <i>Estimated opening mid 2008</i>
Woodward's (Portland Community Services Society and Affordable Housing Society) 131 W. Hastings and 1222 W. Cordova	200 units	Under construction <i>Estimated opening mid 2009</i>
Union Gospel Housing Society 601 E. Hastings	117 beds/units	In development <i>Estimated opening mid 2009</i>
Kindred Place (More than a Roof) 1321 Richards	87 units	In development <i>Estimated opening 2008</i>
337 West Pender Street	100 units	In development <i>Estimated opening 2010</i>
966 Main Street	80 units	In development <i>Estimated opening 2010</i>
Olympic Village	250 units	In development <i>Estimated opening for social housing tenants late 2010</i>
Triage Emergency Services and Care Society 5616 Fraser Street	30 units	Completed <i>Opened</i>
Kate Booth House (Salvation Army)	22 units	Completed <i>Opened</i>
	1,109 units	

Note: The total government partner contributions (City, Province, Federal government) towards the capital cost of these new units is \$205 million with the City contributing \$65 million as part of the total capital costs (land and grants).

Protection of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotels and Affordable Rental Housing		
Building	Number of Units	Current Status
Granville Residence 1261 Granville	82 self contained units	Purchased and renovated in partnership with the City
Helping Spirit Lodge 1495 Kingsway	36 self contained units	Purchased and renovated in partnership with the City and Province
Hampton Hotel (Motivation Power and Achievement Society) 122 Powell Street	47 rooms	Purchased and renovated in partnership with the Province
Vivian (Triage Emergency Services and Care Society) 512 E. Cordova	24 rooms	Purchased by a private benefactor and renovated in partnership with the Province
Jackson Ave. Co-op 230 Jackson	23 self contained units	Purchased and renovated in partnership with the City
Serena's House for Women (Atira) 143 Dunlevy Ave	57 rooms	Grant provided for lease and renovation
Stanley/New Fountain Hotel (PHS Community Services Society) 35 W. Cordova	109 self contained units	Purchased and renovated in partnership with the City and Province
Marble Arch Hotel, 518 Richards St.	150 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
St. Helens Hotel 1161/63 Granville St.	96 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
Carl Rooms 335 Princess St.	47 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
The Rice Block 404 Hawks St.	43 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
Molson's Bank Building 166 E. Hastings St.	45 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
The Park Hotel Apartments 429/433 W. Pender St.	56 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
Walton Hotel 261-265 E. Hastings St.	51 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
Orange Hall 329-341 Gore Ave.	27 self contained units	Recently purchased by the Province
Orwell Hotel 465 E. Hastings	55 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
Savoy Hotel 258-260 E. Hastings St.	28 rooms	Recently purchased by the Province
Pennsylvania Hotel 411 Carrall St. (PHS Community Services Society)	44 rooms	Purchased and renovated in partnership with the City
	1020 rooms/units	

Note: The total Provincial contribution is approximately \$57 million and the total City contribution is \$13 million. The City is under discussion with the Province for the provision funding to support renovations to the 595 recently purchased SRO units.