



North Shore Homelessness Task Force 2015 Year in Review

I. Highlights and Accomplishments:

ADVOCACY:

- Based on Task Force member concerns, a letter was drafted and sent on behalf of the North Shore Homelessness Task Force (NSHTF) to the Ministry of Social Services (North Shore MLA's, Opposition Spokesperson for Social Development, and Mayors of the three North Shore municipalities were also cc'd) concerning the growing and unacceptable wait times clients are experiencing with service levels and accessing the toll free number for financial assistance.

Resulting from this, letters were received back from Minister Stillwell, and Michelle Mungall, Opposition Spokesperson. However, unfortunately, the issues to date have not been resolved. The NSHTF is continuing to push for improvements in service levels from the Ministry in 2016.

HOMELESSNESS ACTION WEEK (HAW) 2015:

- In partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, many community service providers, and local businesses, the NSHTF coordinated Homelessness Action Week 2015. A full calendar of events ran from October 12 - 17. On Connect Day, the largest event of the week, Vancouver Coastal Health reported that a total of 259 people accessed health services and 142 lunches were served. The number of clients served increased in 2015 than in past years.

HAW also aims to increase public awareness about homelessness. This year, NSHTF media outreach resulted in an article and photo published in the North Shore News, along with another photo from Connect Day that was published following the event. The article resulted in several inquiries from the public.

Additionally, the NSHTF website and Twitter feed was updated regularly and leveraged to communicate the events and volunteer opportunities. Traffic to the site doubled during this time frame.

The following events were hosted on the North Shore during Homelessness Action Week 2015:

- **MONDAY, OCTOBER 12** - Thanksgiving Dinner at the Lookout Shelter
- **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13** - Community dinner was served in cooperation with Sharing Abundance, at the North Lonsdale United Church
- **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14** - Youth Safe House Dinner
- **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15** - North Shore Connect Day
- **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15** – Flicks and Forum, Ambleside Youth Centre
- **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17** - Street Soccer Tournament, John Braithwaite Community Centre (This year was the inaugural Harry Manson Legacy street soccer tournament in honor of the first First Nations to play professional soccer)

For the full HAW 2015 report, please visit www.northshorehomelessness.org.

FEDERAL FUNDING POLICY CHANGES:

- Housing First continued to be discussed frequently around the table, with members sharing information and feedback around a number of challenges with the program, as well as the grant process to access the funding.

Housing First and housing affordability in general was the focus chosen for the NSHTF's council delegations in 2015. The highlight was on housing/lack of affordability and non-market housing as well as explaining the new Federal Government's Housing First funding model, and the implications on North Shore homeless/at-risk individuals.

RENT BANK FEASIBILITY:

- The Financial Assistance Working Group conducted a Rent Bank feasibility project. A practicum student was engaged to help conduct research and prepare a report and recommendations. In the end, it was determined that a Rent Bank was not the best option for the North Shore for a number of reasons. However, the group suggested instead that there is access to smaller, fast-term loans that the taskforce could link into. This could be for rent, or it could be for medical emergencies as well. VanCity offers these loans in part to assist clients in avoiding the high interest rates of payday loan operations and were able to help out several people at Connect Day. Next step is to create a document outlining what is available, and what the loan criteria are for each.

SUBSTANCE USE / MENTAL ILLNESS:

- Dr. Mark Lyshyshyn (Medical Health Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health) was invited and spoke at the September 2015 Task Force meeting regarding the issues around Fentanyl, a growing concern over the past three years; it is an opiate drug and is easy to overdose as the strength of the drug leaves a very small margin for error.
- The Mental Health Working Group coordinated a project to offer front-line training on mental health for transit workers, bylaw, parks & recreation, and library staff. The District of West Vancouver has completed the training and the feedback was very positive. The City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver are also planning to offer this program.

RESEARCH / INFORMATION SHARING:

- Originally spearheaded by the Task Force, the *Housing Vulnerable Populations on the North Shore report, Inventory Summary 2011-2012* was recommended for update by the Task Force Steering Committee in 2015. The work is in progress and being completed by Vancouver Coastal Health staff and an updated report is expected to be completed in 2016.
- The NSHTF Website, www.northshorehomelessness.org, continues to be updated with helpful information, links and resources. The website and @nshomelessness Twitter feed aims to inform agencies, homeless/at-risk and the public in general about homelessness on the North Shore and support services offered in the community. The Twitter feed now has 526 followers, which includes media reporters and news outlets.

II. 2015 Community Highlights:

The following includes just a few of the many community highlights in 2015. For more information and links to NSHTF members and partners, please visit our website: www.northshorehomelessness.org.

- The High Needs Health Connection Clinic, a collaboration between VCH and the Division of Family Practice on the North Shore, continues to operate and grow. The majority of its patients are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and have complex medical, mental health and addictions challenges. The clinic is operating five days a week, and now offers full days on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Additionally, the Health Connection Clinic now has a newly refined app and website. The app includes links to some private companies offering services such as home care and transportation and hosts a complete list of doctors on the North Shore.

- The North Shore Shields Team Awareness was invited to the Pan Am Street Soccer Games in July 2015 in Hamilton, ON. Fundraising was needed, and a number of successful initiatives resulted in seven players being able to travel to Ontario for the tournament.

Team Awareness had a great tournament, winning their first two games, and then lost on the second day to a team that would eventually move on to the final. Two players are now going back to school this September, and another player came back to Vancouver and found a permanent place to live. A team of male players were recruited from this tournament to go to the Homeless World Cup being held in Amsterdam this September. This included a Team Awareness player, but he elected to go back to school instead. Additionally, upon returning, the female players of the team expressed an interest in forming a women's street soccer team and possibly representing Canada in the 2016 Homeless World Cup.

- The Lookout Society on the North Shore has two new social enterprises operating. HOME Moving and Delivery has two to three part-time employees. Capacity includes junk removal, moving work, and food delivery for the HAVE Café. The second enterprise is XL Flooring creating laminated flooring samples for store display, etc. Currently, there are three full-time employees at this operation with expectations for more in the future.
- Dovercourt House opened as an assisted-living dwelling for men transitioning out of the shelters. Operated by Lookout, the emphasis is on sober, supported living for 21 individuals. The results have been positive so far; several tenants have found jobs and moved on to permanent housing, and the local neighbourhood has been welcoming.
- Hollyburn Family Services opened a Seniors Safe House, a five-bedroom unstaffed resource where seniors who have lost their housing can stay for up to 60 days while they are supported in finding new housing.
- SAGE transition house for women and children fleeing abuse, now has two more units of second stage housing. The two bedroom units are fully furnished and allow families to receive support for a longer period of time from onsite staff. Staff work with the families removing the barriers to safe and affordable housing. The units have been fully occupied since they opened.
- The Dunderave Festival of Lights continues to grow and to date the total sum raised is more than \$250,000 to benefit the Lookout Society North Shore shelter. This funding has enabled Lookout to double the transitional support services they provide.