

# TRI-CITIES COLD WET WEATHER MAT PROGRAM

## INFORMATION SHEET

### **Overview**

The Tri-Cities Cold Wet Weather Mat Program will provide overnight shelter to homeless persons in the Tri-Cities during the fall and winter months when they are most susceptible to illness due to inclement weather while living outdoors. The mat program is an interim step to the creation of a permanent emergency shelter in the Tri-Cities.

The program will be operated by the Hope for Freedom Society with the support of host churches in the Tri-Cities. The Hope for Freedom Society (HFFS) is a non-profit, registered charity operating residential programs for men and women recovering from addiction. Since April 2006 HFFS has been operating a program of advocacy and outreach to homeless persons in the Tri-Cities, under contract to BC Housing.

### **Need**

There are currently no emergency shelter facilities for homeless persons in the Tri-Cities. The Tri-Cities Homelessness Task Group has identified the creation of emergency shelter beds in the Tri-Cities area as the highest priority for this area.

### **Period of Operation**

The mat program will operate nightly from 10 PM – 7 AM the following morning, from December 1<sup>st</sup> '07 – March 31<sup>st</sup> '08, and from October 15<sup>th</sup> '08 – March 31<sup>st</sup> '09. This is the span of funding currently available from the federal government's Homelessness Partnership Initiative. BC Housing will be approached to provide funding for subsequent years as necessary pending the opening of the permanent shelter.

### **Capacity**

The mat program will accommodate up to 30 homeless adult men and women a night, 19 years and older. Clients will sleep on mats and be provided with blankets.

### **Location**

The mat program will be housed in a participating host church for a period of one month at a time during each season of operation. After 1 month at a host church, the program will move on to another host church. The host churches that have currently confirmed their participation are:

- ♦ Northside Foursquare Gospel Church, 1477 Lougheed Hwy, Port Coquitlam;
- ♦ Coquitlam Alliance Church, 2601 Spuraway Avenue, Coquitlam;
- ♦ Eagle Ridge Bible Fellowship, 1160 Lansdowne Drive, Coquitlam;
- ♦ Calvary Baptist Church, 1636 Regan Avenue Coquitlam;
- ♦ St Andrew's United Church, 2318 St. John's Street, Port Moody.

To date, the order of participation of host churches has not been determined.

### **Transportation**

Clients will be bused from designated pick-up points in the Tri-Cities to the shelter site and returned to a designated pick-up point the following morning via two HFFS passenger vans. Homeless people within walking distance of the shelter site will likely choose to walk to the site.

### **Barriers to Entry**

Persons demonstrating obvious intoxication will not be admitted to site, and no alcohol, drugs or aggressive behaviour (verbal or physical) will be tolerated on site.

### **Staffing**

Two paid staff, trained and experienced in working with homeless persons, will be on duty at all times during the hours of shelter operation. Volunteers from the host church will assist with shelter set up and take down, cleaning and food preparation. Neighbours of the host churches will have a name and phone number they can call at any time should they have a concern or complaint about shelter operation.

### **Zoning**

Use of the host church facilities to house the mat program will require amendment of the applicable zoning bylaw. Applications for zoning amendment are currently being processed by each of the cities. The process in each city will include a public hearing which will be advertised in advance. To date the following public hearings have been *tentatively* scheduled:

Port Coquitlam: Monday, October 22, 2007

Coquitlam: Wednesday, November 21, 2007

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For further information, contact:

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