



Social Planning Cowichan
135 Third Street
Duncan, BC V9L 1R9
tel: 250.746.1004
website: www.socialplanningcowichan.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2014

HOMELESSNESS SURVEY IDENTIFIES COWICHAN REGION'S MOST VULNERABLE

In February, a three day count of homeless and precariously housed community members yielded interesting data on housing challenges in the Cowichan Region. Involving more than 40 volunteers with the Regional Affordable Housing Directorate of Social Planning Cowichan, the Homelessness Survey surveyed 259 individuals, 22% (58) of whom were absolutely homeless and living on the street, 29% (76) who were relatively homeless and staying in temporary accommodation and 48% (125) who were precariously housed in insecure or unstable living conditions.

Of those who were absolutely and relatively homeless, more than 60% had been without housing for more than a year and 75-85% reported having at least one health condition. The most common reason given for homelessness was being unable to afford rent.

The majority of respondents who were precariously housed had had previous experience with homelessness. Over 70% reported being homeless at some point in their lives.

The Regional Affordable Housing Directorate believes that the Homelessness Survey data highlights a key issue when it comes to housing security in the Cowichan Region. Joy Emmanuel, Affordable Housing Coordinator explains, "It is clear that affordability is the critical factor that is causing homelessness in our Region. More than 70% of those surveyed identified cost of housing as the reason they are or have been homeless."

Individuals who were surveyed were also asked to give their opinions on what actions would improve their situation. The top two responses were having access to more affordable housing and having a higher and more regular income.

The Regional Affordable Housing Directorate will be presenting the full results of the Homelessness Survey at a public meeting on March 25th at 7:00 pm at the Island Savings Centre, Somenos Room. An Executive Summary is available now and the full report will be available in early April for download at www.socialplanningcowichan.org.

Social Planning Cowichan researches, forms partnerships, creates strategies and informs the Cowichan public about community health and well-being.

In 2007, Social Planning Cowichan founded the Regional Affordable Housing Directorate (RAHD) as a central body bringing together interested stakeholders from all backgrounds. In 2010, RAHD completed the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy. Social Planning / RAHD are now in the process of creating an Affordable Housing Society for the Cowichan Region. In addition to working on homelessness prevention, the Directorate is engaged in developing resources and programs to facilitating the creation of more affordable housing in the region.

Social Planning Cowichan is always looking to involve the community in the work it does. Community members are encouraged to contact Social Planning Cowichan at (250) 746-1004 or www.socialplanningcowichan.org.

-30-

Media Contact

Joy Emmanuel

Affordable Housing Coordinator, Social Planning Cowichan

(250) 746-1004 ex 260