



Understanding Homelessness in Richmond

Living on the street is a difficult experience and causes physical and mental suffering. Homelessness is not something that most people want to experience for themselves or for their loved ones. People experiencing homelessness are living outside with nowhere safe to sleep, shower, or access to regular meals.

There are many factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness and many aspects of its causes and effects are sometimes misunderstood. The following provides some information on homelessness in Richmond.

STATEMENT: There are no people experiencing homelessness in Richmond

FACTS:

- ✓ Although homelessness may not be visible in Richmond, the most recent 2017 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count estimated that at least 70 people are experiencing homelessness – an increase of 84% since 2014. Non-profit service providers estimate this number to be over 120.
- ✓ More supports are already needed to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in Richmond. For example, The Salvation Army Richmond House (emergency shelter) turns away approximately 130 people seeking shelter every month. Chimo Community Services Nova House, for women fleeing violence, turns away approximately 60 women seeking shelter every month.

STATEMENT: Having supportive housing/services will attract people experiencing homelessness from all over the region to Richmond

FACTS:

- ✓ Every community throughout Metro Vancouver has people experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ Most people choose to stay in their own neighbourhood where they feel safe, have friends, family and a community, and are connected to any supports that may be available.
- ✓ According to non-profit housing providers such as the Salvation Army, most people experiencing homelessness in Richmond have ties to the community.
- ✓ The 2017 Metro Vancouver Homelessness Counts demonstrated that the majority of people experiencing homelessness in Richmond have lived in Richmond for longer than one year.

STATEMENT: All people experiencing homelessness have mental health and addictions challenges

FACTS:

- ✓ Mental illness is one of many causes of homelessness. However, a recent study of homelessness in Canada found that the main cause of homelessness is poverty. Rising housing costs mean there are limited options where people can afford to live.
- ✓ Recent studies demonstrate that people experiencing homelessness exhibit mental health issues as a result of the stress, victimization and social isolation that stem from being homeless.
- ✓ Providing housing with support services can help stabilize people with mental health and substance use challenges by helping them access health care, counselling and treatment services, take medication for their mental illness, and linking them to social services.

STATEMENT: People chose to experience homelessness

FACTS:

- ✓ There are a number of factors that may lead someone to experience homelessness, including lack of adequate income, lack of access to affordable housing and medical services, experiences of discrimination, a traumatic event in someone's personal life or a personal crisis, physical health problems or disabilities and mental health concerns.
- ✓ People who are homeless over a longer period of time appear to be making a choice to remain homeless. However, outreach workers need to work extremely closely with vulnerable people to build trust so that they feel comfortable seeking supports and housing.

STATEMENT: Crime will increase in neighbourhoods with supportive housing

FACTS:

- ✓ The City of Vancouver has reported that there has not been an increase in crime in areas around supportive housing buildings in its 25 years of experience with supportive housing.
- ✓ The presence of staff at a supportive housing building will result in adequate surveillance to ensure tenant safety and discourage unwanted activity in the building.
- ✓ A review conducted with the City of Vancouver's Licenses and Inspection Department and Vancouver Police Department reveals that few calls have been made by neighbours of supportive housing sites.

STATEMENT: Providing supportive services will encourage people to continue experiencing homelessness

FACTS:

- ✓ Supportive services, including physical and mental health care, employment and life skills, community engagement and housing support, assist people towards housing stability and full participation in the community.
- ✓ Individual support plans help each resident of supporting housing to work through their own unique barriers.

The City of Richmond and BC Housing are committed to ensuring everyone has a place to call home.

STATEMENT: Supportive housing is not an efficient use of government funding

FACT:

- ✓ Supportive housing is the quickest way to address street homelessness and therefore results in direct savings to the public by reducing the use of expensive interventions to homelessness.
- ✓ According to the Homelessness Hub, the hidden costs of homelessness per person can include the use of emergency medical services (approximately \$10,900/month) or the judicial system (approximately \$1,932/month). Therefore, there is an economic benefit to ensuring people have access to stable housing with supportive services to mitigate the demand placed on emergency services.

STATEMENT: People who are experiencing homelessness should seek employment to afford housing

FACTS:

- ✓ Employment does not necessarily remove someone from homelessness.
- ✓ Housing affordability remains a critical issue throughout Metro Vancouver and places significant pressure on low-income households to maintain suitable housing.
- ✓ Approximately 40% of people living at The Salvation Army Richmond House Emergency Shelter are employed part time, but cannot find an appropriate and affordable place to live.
- ✓ Research shows that people experiencing homelessness want to work. People experiencing homelessness face challenges to employment, including lack of education, physical disabilities and mental health challenges, limited access to transportation, lack of experience and discrimination.

STATEMENT: I will never experience homelessness

FACTS:

- ✓ Homelessness is never planned and can happen to anyone.
- ✓ Richmond continues to face a housing affordability crisis, and low-income people and those experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable.
- ✓ Unexpected loss of jobs, evictions due to redevelopment and family violence are just a few reasons that can lead to homelessness.
- ✓ In 2017, 680 Richmond households were on the BC Housing waitlist for subsidized housing.