



Cold/Wet Weather  
Strategy

# 2002-2003 Evaluation

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For the Lower Mainland  
Cold/Wet Weather Strategy

September 16, 2003

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The primary purpose of this evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's 2002-2003 year is to assess levels of effectiveness. The secondary purpose is to provide information for use in action planning and in further development of the Strategy.

The evaluation has three objectives as follows:

1. To provide an overview of the Strategy in 2002-2003;
2. To measure inputs, outputs and outcomes;
3. To analyze strengths and challenges faced by the Strategy.

The consultant used three types of data sources in the preparation of this report: Cold/Wet Weather Strategy (CWWS) documents, shelter service statistics, and Strategy participant surveys.

## Overview of the Strategy

### Mission

The Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy is a regional network of organizations responding together to meet local shelter needs during the winter months.

### Vision

We envision accessible, high quality emergency shelter services as part of a continuum of housing and supports.

### Goals

**Goal 1: Co-operative planning.** Maintain a responsive, effective, and accountable partnership.

**Goal 2: Communication.** Communicate service availability to the homeless and the larger community.

**Goal 3: Funding.** Establish coordinated and sustainable funding to support service delivery throughout the region.

**Goal 4: Service development.** Promote coordination and enhancement of services.

## Inputs, outputs and outcomes

### Inputs

Four organizations provided core funding for operation of the Strategy: United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Ministry of Human Resources (Region 1), BC Housing, and the

Vancouver Foundation. Human Resources Development Canada provided \$50,000 for the Extreme Weather Response project. Total funding for 2002-2003 was \$92,500.

In addition, the Strategy raised \$12,764 in net funds from the December 2002 “Notable Jazz” fundraiser.

## **Outputs**

Outputs during the September 2002 through August 2003 period were as follows:

- 8 Committee of the Whole meetings, which was the same number as in 2001-2002;
- 21 meetings of committees and task groups (Communications Committee, Finance and Development Committee, Extreme Weather Task Group, Data Task Group, and Planning and Evaluation Task Group), up from 15 in the previous year;
- Approximately 12 – 15 meetings of the Notable Jazz Committee to plan and coordinate a two-evening fundraising event;
- Distribution of 2,490 transit tickets to participating emergency shelter providers;
- Extreme Weather Response plans for Langley, New Westminister, Richmond, Surrey and Vancouver;
- Extreme Weather Response Project Final Report;
- Terms of Reference, nominations, and appointments for an Executive Committee;
- 10 meetings of the Shelter Planning Group (initiated by CWWS with participation of other umbrella organizations and funding partners);
- Draft Project Proposal – “Planning for Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing in Greater Vancouver”;
- An evaluation of the 2002-2003 year;
- An update of the 3-year Action Plan;
- A half-day communications workshop, attended by six participants.

## **Outcomes**

***Improved access to emergency shelter and related services.*** The primary indicators of access to shelter and related services are statistics for:

- Number of cold/wet weather shelter beds provided;
- Number of bed/nights available;
- Number of bed nights used (by men, women and children);
- Percentage of occupancy;
- Number of people turned away (men, women, and children).

As shown in the following table, the various participating agencies provided approximately 250 cold/wet weather shelter beds and mats in the 2002-2003 year, up

from 227 in the previous year (a 10% increase), which in turn was up from 185 in 2000-2001 (a 23% increase).

The total number of bed nights available was approximately 41,926, up from approximately 31,837 in the previous year. This represents an increase of approximately 31% in total capacity. In the previous year total capacity had increased approximately 32%, from 24,000 bed nights in 2000-2001.

### Summary of Cold/Wet Shelter Service Statistics: 2002-2003

	Number of CWW beds and mats	Total number of bed nights available	Total number of bed nights used	Breakdown of bed nights used			Occupancy rate	2001-2002 occupancy rate
				Men	Women	Children		
Caring Place	30	4,530	3,524	2,559	965	0	77%	95%
Catholic Charities	10	1,650	1,584	1,584	N/a	N/a	96%	70%
Dunsmuir House	20	3,202	3,135	3,135	N/a	N/a	98%	N/a
Garfield Hotel	6 mats	726	806	806	N/a	N/a	111%	68%
Gateway Shelter	36	6,480	5,223	4,417	806	0	81%	68%
Golden Ears Hotel	4-6	694	444	444	N/a	N/a	64%	67%
Harbour Light	45 mats	8,145	6,279	6,279	N/a	N/a	77%	N/a
The Haven	25	3,775	3,775	3,775	N/a	N/a	100%	100%
Lookout (346 Alexander)	4 (couches)	728	685	550	135	N/a	106%	N/a
Mission Com. Services	1-2 (hotel)	200	200	87	80	33	100%	100%
North Shore Shelter	20-25	3,763	4,335	3,718	617	N/a	115%	99%
Richmond House	3	453	306	306	N/a	N/a	68%	34%
The Umbrella	20	3,120	3,022	N/a	3,022	N/a	97%	85%
Yukon	20-25	4,460	4,135	4,097	38	N/a	93%	N/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>41,926</b>	<b>37,453</b>	<b>31,757</b>	<b>5,663</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>84%</b>

Of 37,453 bed nights reportedly used, men used 85% and women used 15%. The number of bed nights used increased approximately 40% from 2001-2002 (which in turn was up approximately 36% from 2000-2001). The overall average occupancy rate was 90%, up significantly from 84% in 2001-2002 (which, in turn, was up from approximately 83% in the 2000-2001).

Service providers reported a total of 5,421 incidences of turning people away. Of these incidences, 4,588 were due to no vacancy; 501 were due to lack of an appropriate bed, and 332 were for other reasons such as substances or safety. Of the total, 4,133 (76%) of the people reportedly turned away were men, 1,249 (23%) were women, and 39 (1%) were children. In the previous year, 72% were men and 28% were women. (Prior to 2002-2003, the CWWS did not collect statistics for turn aways of children.)

### Summary of Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Turn-Away Statistics: 2002-2003

Facility	Total turn-aways	No. of turn-aways due to <u>no vacancy</u>			No. of turn-aways due to <u>no appropriate bed - gender/age/access</u>			No. of turn-aways due to <u>substances/safety barred, etc.</u>		
		Men	Women	Child ren	Men	Women	Child ren	Men	Women	Child ren
Caring Place	146	0	0	0	0	0	23	85	38	0
Catholic Charities	1,259	1,254	N/a	N/a	0	0	0	5	N/a	N/a
Dunsmuir House	265	243	N/a	N/a	10	0	0	12	N/a	N/a
Garfield Hotel	320	290	N/a	N/a	18	0	0	12	N/a	N/a
Gateway	169	32	0	0	137	0	0	0	0	0
Golden Ears	96	65	N/a	N/a	2	7	0	22	N/a	N/a
Harbour Light	No data	No data	N/a	N/a	No data	No data	No da	No data	N/a	N/a
Haven	No data	No data	N/a	N/a	No data	No data	No da	No data	N/a	N/a
Lookout (346 Alexander)	1,449	906	382	0	46	40	6	55	14	0
Mission Com. Services	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0
North Shore	797	431	126	0	138	44	7	25	25	1
Richmond House	88	79	N/a	N/a	0	2	2	5	N/a	N/a
Umbrella	547	N/a	503	N/a	0	17	0	N/a	27	N/a
Yukon	279	255	22	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,421</b>	<b>3,555</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>1</b>

**Improved planning and coordination of shelter services.** Opinion of Strategy participants indicates continued success in improved planning and coordination of shelter services. Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS “has resulted in improved planning of cold/wet weather shelter services”, the average response was 1.39 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 67% indicated strong agreement, 22% indicated agreement, and 11% indicated “neutral or not sure”.

**Increased community preparedness for extreme weather.** The Extreme Weather Response project was a major focus of the CWWS in 2002-2003. Results included extreme weather response plans for five Greater Vancouver communities. These plans identify the response, the lines of responsibility and thresholds that would lead to an extreme weather alert.

In Richmond, Surrey, Langley, and New Westminster, the planning group typically consisted of representatives from social services, shelter providers, Ministry of Human Resources, emergency services personnel, faith communities, and municipal government. The plans include accessing space for temporary emergency shelters. These spaces, which belong to a range of community organizations, were not formerly used to house the homeless. In total there will be over 300 additional beds in Greater Vancouver when extreme weather alerts are called.

***Improved understanding of seasonal shelter needs.*** The existence and work of the Strategy contributes to raising the profile of homelessness issues at all levels of government and with the public. Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS “has raised the profile of homelessness issues and shelter needs” the average response was 2.17 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 39% indicated strong agreement and 61% indicated agreement. None indicated disagreement.

## **Strengths and challenges**

***The previously identified strengths of the Strategy remain.*** Survey responses confirmed the CWWS strengths identified in the previous evaluation. The following strengths are ranked in order of agreement level among survey respondents, and this ranking was consistent with the previous year:

1. It facilitates information sharing, coordination and support among shelter providers;
2. It brings together funding agencies, planners and service providers;
3. The Strategy group works to continuously improve its performance;
4. It helps facilitate the development of regional shelter initiatives;
5. Participants have high levels of commitment.

***Former capacity challenges became strengths.*** Analysis of participant survey responses suggests that the Strategy has effectively addressed the capacity challenges identified in previous evaluations. Responses suggested that the following four points had become areas of strength, but that ongoing work is needed in these areas:

- Staffing to support the Strategy and capacity to follow up on the Strategic Plan;
- Governance and accountability structure;
- Balanced representation;
- Efficiency of meetings.

***An increased majority of participants believe the Strategy is effective.***

Asked to rate the effectiveness of the Strategy over the past year, 100% of survey respondents indicated that it was either effective or very effective, up from 89% in the previous year.

***The five key ongoing challenges pertain to shelter services and resources.*** CWWS evaluations in the previous two years identified the following five areas of ongoing challenge:

1. Lack of needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements;

2. Accessibility of individual shelters services;
3. Lack of linkages to further services;
4. Service gaps;
5. Coordination of funding.

## **Conclusion**

This evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's fifth year has documented overall performance and analyzed strengths and challenges.

The following are some highlights of CWWS activities and outputs in 2002-2003:

- Developed Extreme Weather plans in five communities, including over 300 additional beds;
- Hosted a two-evening Notable Jazz fundraiser;
- Initiated a collaborative project and prepared a draft proposal to do comprehensive planning of emergency shelter and transitional housing.

Shelter providers and funding partners significantly expanded the volume of seasonal services in the region, but demand for service expanded even more:

- The number of seasonal beds increased by 10% from 2001-2002, and the number of bed nights available increased 36%;
- Meanwhile, the number of bed nights used increased 40%;
- Overall occupancy rates jumped from 84% to 90%;
- Service providers reported over 5,400 incidences of turning people away, and 85% of those were due to no vacancy;
- Demand from women grew less rapidly than from men, with bed nights used down to 15% from 18% and reported turn-aways down to 23% from 28%.

Responses to the CWWS participant survey suggest high levels of consensus that:

- The Strategy is a highly effective multi-stakeholder group;
- It continues to have strong core capacities, e.g., to facilitate the development of regional shelter initiatives;
- It has transformed internal challenges, including staff resources and governance structure, into strengths;
- It continues to face serious challenges such as needs assessment, accessibility of services, linkages with further services, service gaps, and coordination of funding.

Documentation of these findings contributes to accountability and provides a basis for further action planning. As the Strategy moves forward, the information presented in this evaluation and previous ones can be used to help analyze trends, identify priorities for action, and strengthen performance.

## **Acknowledgements**

### **Many thanks to:**

Participants in the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy member survey;

Cold/Wet Weather service providers, who collected shelter statistics using a standard format;

Data Task Group members, who provided direction to the collection of shelter statistics by service providers;

Planning and Evaluation Task Group members, who provided direction to the evaluation process.

### **Funding for this evaluation provided by:**

BC Housing;  
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# **1.0 Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose and objectives**

The primary purpose of this evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's 2002-2003 year is to assess levels of effectiveness. The secondary purpose is to provide information for use in action planning and in further development of the Strategy.

The evaluation has three objectives as follows:

1. To provide an overview of the Strategy in 2002-2003;
2. To measure inputs, outputs and outcomes;
3. To analyze strengths and challenges faced by the Strategy.

## **1.2 Background**

Participants engaged in four previous evaluations of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy (CWWS) covering the 1998-1999 through 2001-2002 years. These evaluations analyzed the capacity of the CWWS to deliver on its goals and priorities and provided initial evidence of outcomes achieved. The evaluations also identified key strengths and challenges.

## **1.3 Scope and definitions**

This evaluation covers the period from September 1, 2002 through August 31, 2003. Analysis of strengths and challenges provides qualitative information that may contribute to action planning. The evaluation measures inputs, outputs, and outcomes, defined as follows.

Inputs are resources dedicated to a program, such as money, staff time, volunteer time, facilities, equipment and supplies.

Outputs are the quantities of services provided.

Outcomes are the changes for individuals or systems that evidently resulted from the program.

## **1.4 Methodology**

### **Design**

The evaluator developed the design of this study in consultation with members of the Planning and Evaluation Task Group. Research methods and tools were designed to be consistent with the previous evaluations and with the objectives stated above.

## **Data Gathering and Analysis**

The evaluator used three types of data sources in the preparation of this report: CWWS documents, service statistics, shelter user surveys, and Strategy participant surveys.

- CWWS documents included meeting minutes, Action Update, Communications Plan, and past evaluations.
- Service statistics included numbers of bed nights provided, numbers used, and incidence of people being turned away.<sup>1</sup>
- 18 Strategy participants participated in a written survey<sup>2</sup>.

This report derives from both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Quantitative analysis included:

- Calculation of shelter use statistics;
- Calculation of average responses to scaled questions in the Strategy participant survey.

Qualitative analysis included:

- Review and synthesis of Strategy participant survey comments;
- Review of CWWS minutes and other documents.

## **1.5 Organization of Report**

The body of this report consists of three sections, as follows:

- “Overview of the Strategy”, which contains information on the CWWS strategic plan, governance structure, activities in 2002-2003, action taken on past recommendations, and a revised program logic model;
- “Inputs, outputs and outcomes”, which presents information on the volume of resources invested in the Strategy in 2002-2003, the quantity and types of services delivered in that year, and evidence of the results of these services;
- “Strengths and challenges”, which contains analysis of member opinions on the capacity of the CWWS and issues it may need to address.

The conclusion provides highlights of the CWWS’ 2002-2003 year analysis of the evaluation findings and their implications.

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<sup>1</sup> Service providers tracked data on numbers of people turned away using standardized definitions of “no vacancy”, “no appropriate bed” and “other”. To address the problem of variable capacity on the ground to track turn aways, Shelter Net BC provided two workshops on turn aways for shelter service providers in 2002-2003 and plans to deliver additional sessions in 2003-2004.

<sup>2</sup> An additional participant responded after the results were already tabulated, so just the qualitative content of the response was incorporated in this report.

## 2.0 Overview of the Strategy

### 2.1 Strategic Plan

#### Mission

The Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy is a regional network of organizations responding together to meet local shelter needs during the winter months.

#### Vision

We envision accessible, high quality emergency shelter services as part of a continuum of housing and supports.

#### Goals

**Goal 1: Co-operative planning.** Maintain a responsive, effective, and accountable partnership.

**Goal 2: Communication.** Communicate service availability to the homeless and the larger community.

**Goal 3: Funding.** Establish coordinated and sustainable funding to support service delivery throughout the region.

**Goal 4: Service development.** Promote coordination and enhancement of services.

#### Core Values

We share the following three core values:

- ❖ Housing people in their own communities;
- ❖ Balance among the continuum of emergency, second stage, and independent affordable housing;
- ❖ Respect for the dignity and the diversity of shelter users.

#### Operating Principles

The Strategy upholds the following three principles:

- ❖ Multi-stakeholder collaboration;
- ❖ Representation of diverse communities and interests;
- ❖ Consensus decision-making.

## 2.2 Governance

The CWWS is an unincorporated entity that is governed by an open multi-stakeholder group referred to as “Committee of the Whole”. In 2001-2002 the Committee of the Whole formally established five sub-committees: Communications Committee; Finance and Development Committee; Data Task Group; Extreme Weather Task Group, and Planning and Evaluation Task Group.

In 2002-2003 the Committee of the Whole established an Executive Committee, to begin functioning in September 2003.

## 2.3 Action on past recommendations

The October 2000 evaluation report provided the following four recommendations:

- Purchase staff support;
- Implement the Action Group and Regional Committee structure;
- Develop and use an annual action plan;
- Implement consistent monitoring and evaluation.

The October 2001 evaluation report documented action taken on these recommendations, and did not make any additional ones. As of September 2003, these four recommendations were fully implemented.

The 2001-2002 CWWS evaluation offered four additional recommendations. The CWWS acted on all four.

***Recommendation 2002-1: Continue to address CWWS capacity challenges.***

As discussed in Section 4.1, the former capacity challenges have become areas of strength.

***Recommendation 2002-2: Work with Shelter Net BC to address service challenges.***

Action taken in 2002-2003 included work with Shelter Net BC to provide two workshops on turn-aways.

***Recommendation 2002-3: Implement the CWWS Communication Plan.***

Action taken in 2002-2003 included development of “Media Relations and Presentation Guidelines”, deliver of a half-day workshop, updating and wide distribution of shelter listings, and production of laminated “shelter open tonight” signage.

***Recommendation 2002-4: Continue using the CWWS Action Plan to guide the work of the Strategy and to monitor progress***

A May 2003 “Action Plan Update” documented further implementation of the plan and items yet to be done.

## 2.4 Program logic model

The following logic model chart shows inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes for the Strategy. The list of “direct outcomes” was modified and updated in 2002-2003.

### Cold/Wet Weather Strategy: Revised Program Logic Model

<b>Inputs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Funding provided by United Way of the Lower Mainland, Ministry of Human Resources, BC Housing, Vancouver Foundation, Human Resources Development Canada, and private donors.</li> <li>2. In-kind contributions, including professional services, participation in meetings, volunteer time, meeting facilities, catering, and document production.</li> </ol>
↓ ↓	
<b>Activities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information sharing about cold/wet weather shelter services.</li> <li>2. Coordinated planning of cold/wet weather shelter services.</li> <li>3. Systematic service tracking, using a standard format.</li> <li>4. Joint fundraising and distribution of resources to shelters.</li> <li>5. Support to communities preparing for periods of extreme weather.</li> <li>6. Evaluation and planning.</li> </ol>
↓ ↓	
<b>Outputs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of regional Strategy meetings.</li> <li>2. Number of committee and working group meetings.</li> <li>3. Number of Shelter Planning Group meetings.</li> <li>4. Number of transit tickets purchased and distributed.</li> <li>5. Special project documents such as extreme weather response plans.</li> <li>6. Action plan, strategic plan, extreme weather project report.</li> <li>7. Annual evaluation report.</li> </ol>
↓ ↓	
<b>Outcomes - direct</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved access to emergency shelter and related services:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of cold/wet weather shelter beds provided;</li> <li>Number of bed nights available;</li> <li>Number of bed nights used; number used by men and by women;</li> <li>Occupancy rates;</li> <li>Number of people turned away (men, women children).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Improved planning and coordination of shelter resources.</li> <li>3. Increased community preparedness for extreme weather.</li> <li>4. Improved understanding of seasonal shelter needs.</li> </ol>
↓ ↓	
<b>Outcomes - indirect</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved efficiency and effectiveness of shelter services.</li> <li>2. Improved health and reduced risk.</li> </ol>

## **3.0 Inputs, outputs, and outcomes**

### **3.1 Funding and in-kind resources**

Four organizations provided core funding for operation of the Strategy: United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Ministry of Human Resources (Region 1), BC Housing, and the Vancouver Foundation. Human Resources Development Canada provided \$50,000 for the Extreme Weather Response project. Total funding for 2002-2003 was \$92,500.

In addition, the Strategy raised \$12,764 in net funds from the December 2002 “Notable Jazz” fundraiser.

In-kind contributions during the period included: participation in Strategy meetings by diverse participants; contract administration services provided by Lookout Emergency Aid Society; and meeting facilities, copying and refreshments provided by BC Housing and Ministry of Human Resources.

### **3.2 Outputs**

Outputs during the September 2002 through August 2003 period were as follows:

- 8 Committee of the Whole meetings, which was the same number as in 2001-2002;
- 21 meetings of committees and task groups (Communications Committee, Finance and Development Committee, Extreme Weather Task Group, Data Task Group, and Planning and Evaluation Task Group), up from 15 in the previous year;
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- Draft Project Proposal – “Planning for Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing in Greater Vancouver”;
- An evaluation of the 2002-2003 year;
- An update of the 3-year Action Plan;
- A half-day communications workshop, attended by six participants.

### 3.3 Outcomes

This evaluation provides evidence of four outcomes:

1. Improved access to emergency shelter and related services;
2. Improved planning and coordination of shelter resources;
3. Increased community preparedness for extreme weather;
4. Improved understanding of seasonal shelter needs.

#### Improved access to emergency shelter and related services

The primary indicators of improved access to emergency shelter and related services are statistics for:

- Number of cold/wet weather shelter beds provided;
- Number of bed nights available;
- Number of bed nights used (by men, women, and children);
- Percentage of occupancy;
- Number of incidences of people turned away (men, women, and children).

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Lookout (346 Alexander) <sup>5</sup>	4 (couches)	728	685	550	135	N/a	106%	N/a

<sup>3</sup> Gateway Shelter was able to provide 23 additional days of service in April/May thanks to funding from the City of Surrey and the local firefighters union.

<sup>4</sup> Harbour Light mat statistics were unavailable for March and April 2003, so those numbers were estimated based on average monthly figures for the season.



Mission Com. Services	1-2 (hotel)	200	200	87	80	33	100%	100%
North Shore Shelter	20-25	3,763	4,335	3,718	617	N/a	115%	99%
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### **Total beds**

As shown in the table above, the various participating agencies provided approximately 250 cold/wet weather shelter beds and mats in the 2002-2003 year, up from approximately 227 in the previous year (a 10% increase), which in turn was up from 185 in 2000-2001 (a 23% increase).

### **Bed nights available**

The total number of bed nights available was approximately 41,926, up from approximately 31,837 in the previous year. This represents an increase of approximately 31% in total capacity. In the previous year total capacity had increased approximately 32%, from 24,000 bed nights in 2000-2001.

### **Bed nights used**

Shelter providers reported a total of 37,453 bed nights used, an increase of approximately 40% from 2001-2002 (which in turn was up approximately 36% from 2000-2001). The overall average occupancy rate was 90%, up significantly from 84% in 2001-2002 (which, in turn, was up from approximately 83% in the 2000-2001). Men used 85% of bed nights and women used 15%, whereas in 2001-2002 men used 82% and women used 18%.

### **Extreme weather services**

During the 2002-2003 season, the two facilities funded by the City of Vancouver to provide shelter services during extreme cold and/or wet weather - the Gathering Place and Evelyne Saller Centre - did not do so because of relatively mild weather.

### **Incidences of people being turned away**

Service providers reported a total of 5,421 incidences of turning people away.<sup>6</sup> Of these

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<sup>5</sup> Lookout's downtown shelter began offering it's 4 additional spaces to as a seasonal measure, but decided to continue providing these spaces year-round. The figures here cover statistics up to March 31, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Some services did not provide turn away data. Also, the evaluator believes many incidences of turn aways were not recorded due to variable tracking capacity among service providers.

incidences, 4,588 were due to no vacancy; 501 were due to lack of an appropriate bed, and 332 were for other reasons such as substances or safety.<sup>7</sup> Of the total, 4,133 (76%) of the people reportedly turned away were men, 1,249 (23%) were women, and 39 (1%) were children. In the previous year, 72% were men and 28% were women. (Prior to 2002-2003, the CWWS did not collect statistics for turn aways of children.)

### Summary of Cold/Wet Weather Shelter Turn-Away Statistics: 2002-2003

Facility	Total turn-aways	No. of turn-aways due to <u>no vacancy</u>			No. of turn-aways due to <u>no appropriate bed - gender/age/access</u>			No. of turn-aways due to <u>substances/safety barred, etc.</u>		
		Men	Women	Child ren	Men	Women	Child ren	Men	Women	Child ren
Caring Place	146	0	0	0	0	0	23	85	38	0
Catholic Charities	1,259	1,254	N/a	N/a	0	0	0	5	N/a	N/a
Dunsmuir House	265	243	N/a	N/a	10	0	0	12	N/a	N/a
Garfield Hotel	320	290	N/a	N/a	18	0	0	12	N/a	N/a
Gateway	169	32	0	0	137	0	0	0	0	0
Golden Ears	96	65	N/a	N/a	2	7	0	22	N/a	N/a
Harbour Light	No data	No data	N/a	N/a	No data	No data	No da	No data	N/a	N/a
Haven	No data	No data	N/a	N/a	No data	No data	No da	No data	N/a	N/a
Lookout (346 Alexander)	1,449	906	382	0	46	40	6	55	14	0
Mission Com. Services	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0
North Shore	797	431	126	0	138	44	7	25	25	1
Richmond House	88	79	N/a	N/a	0	2	2	5	N/a	N/a
Umbrella	547	N/a	503	N/a	0	17	0	N/a	27	N/a
Yukon	279	255	22	N/a	2	0	0	0	0	N/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,421</b>	<b>3,555</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>1</b>

### Provision of low-barrier shelter beds

Whereas year-round shelter beds funded by the Province normally require a referral through the Ministry of Human Resources Emergency Services, the cold/wet weather beds do not have this barrier. Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS has “resulted in provision of low-barrier shelter beds”, the average survey response was 1.53 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 50% indicated strong agreement, 39% indicated agreement, and 6% indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. A respondent commented on how the CWWS has accomplished this: *“By bringing shelter providers together to identify priorities and opportunities. Linkages with funders.”*

<sup>7</sup> “No vacancy” is defined as “all beds/rooms full”. “No appropriate bed” is defined as not having a bed due to facility criteria for gender, age, or wheelchair access. “Other” reasons for people being turned away include substances, safety considerations, and people having been barred.

## **Mobilization of resources**

Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS “has helped mobilize funding and other resources to meet needs for cold/wet weather shelter services”, the average response was 2.12 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 28% indicated strong agreement, 33% indicated agreement, 28% indicated “neutral or not sure” and 6% did not answer. None indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“I think this is true. Of course we can always do better, we can have no homeless population, but I do think things have improved dramatically in terms of coordinated response.”*
- *“Helps ensure that expandable component of new shelters is able to be realized.”*
- *“Not sure how much can really be done given fiscal restraint by government. I believe the Strategy has maximized the resources that are available.”*
- *“Not enough.”*

## **Improved planning and coordination of shelter services**

Opinion of Strategy participants indicates continued success in improved planning and coordination of shelter services. Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS “has resulted in improved planning of cold/wet weather shelter services”, the average response was 1.39 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 67% indicated strong agreement, 22% indicated agreement, and 11% indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. A respondent commented as follows:

- *“Difficulty quantifying needs in various regions and populations at risk. Principal response by funders has been on agency-by-agency basis...”*

## **Increased community preparedness for extreme weather**

The Extreme Weather Response project was a major focus of the CWWS in 2002-2003. The following excerpt from the project report summarizes evidence of outcomes achieved:

- *Extreme Weather Response (EWR) plans have been developed for five Greater Vancouver communities. These plans identify the response, the lines of responsibility and thresholds that would lead to an extreme weather alert.*
- *In Richmond, Surrey, Langley, and New Westminster, project planning was undertaken by a planning group, which usually consisted of representatives from social services, shelter providers, Ministry of Human Resources, Emergency Services Personnel, the Faith Communities, and municipal governments. In each case the plans were developed through a highly collaborative process. The plans themselves require ongoing community collaboration to be implemented.*

- *In Surrey, Vancouver, Richmond, Langley, and New Westminster, the EWR Plans have been developed through accessing space for temporary emergency shelters. These spaces, which belong to a range of community organizations, were not formerly used to house the homeless. In total there will be over 300 additional beds in Greater Vancouver when Extreme Weather Alerts are called.*
- *Awareness has been raised through the following means:*
  - *Conducting an open planning process in five Greater Vancouver communities;*
  - *Fostering newspaper and TV coverage of the local EWR processes;*
  - *Providing presentations to Committees of Council in Burnaby, Port Coquitlam, and New Westminster;*
  - *Presenting at the Surrey Housing and Homelessness Conference;*
  - *Hosting an information booth at the two-day Surrey Housing and Homeless Conference.*

Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS “has helped improve the ability of communities to prevent illness and death due to extreme weather”, the average response was 2.28 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 17% indicated strong agreement, 50% indicated agreement, and 33% indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“We are on the way through raising awareness in communities not having a current response.”*
- *“Not yet – next year.”*

## **Improved understanding of seasonal shelter needs**

The existence and work of the Strategy contributes to raising the profile of homelessness issues at all levels of government and with the public.

Asked about their level of agreement that the CWWS “has raised the profile of homelessness issues and shelter needs” the average response was 2.17 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 39% indicated strong agreement and 61% indicated agreement. None indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“Especially through Notable Jazz.”*
- *“Minimal public info.”*

## 4.0 Strengths and Challenges

### 4.1 Strengths

#### Capacity of the Strategy

##### **The previously identified capacity strengths of the Strategy remain.**

Survey responses confirmed the CWWS capacity strengths identified in previous evaluations. Strengths 1 through 5 pertain to capacity of the Strategy. These strengths are ranked in order of agreement level indicated by survey respondents, and this ranking remained the same as the previous year:

1. It facilitates information sharing, coordination and support among shelter providers;
2. It brings together funding agencies, planners and service providers;
3. The Strategy group works to continuously improve its performance;
4. It helps facilitate the development of regional shelter initiatives;
5. Participants have high levels of commitment.

##### **Strength #1: It facilitates information sharing, coordination and support among shelter providers.**

Increased sharing of information, coordination, and collaboration among shelter providers helps to create a cohesive continuum of services. It can also lead to sharing of best practices and improved service quality.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.17. This number represents an increase in agreement levels indicated in the previous year (the average response then was 1.38). No respondents indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“Sharing information, resources, coordinating adding extra beds.”*
- *“Has made it possible to learn first-hand how other shelters are doing.”*
- *“...Each month participants share personal/professional knowledge of services which benefits us all...”*

##### **Strength #2: It brings together funding agencies, planners and service providers.**

The multi-stakeholder nature of the Strategy exemplifies an emerging model of partnership that brings together diverse interests to jointly address a shared challenge in an effective manner.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = “agree strongly” and 5 = “disagree strongly”), was 1.33. No respondents indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“I agree strongly with this statement. Many ideas and innovative ways of working collaboratively come out of this working group.”*

- *“Has helped build a better relationship among service providers.”*
- *“Glad to see no one come with any particular agenda and that we are concerned how to provide CWW beds and funding, not individual issues and needs.”*
- *“Municipal participation seems to be decreasing.”*

**Strength #3: The Strategy works to continuously improve its performance.**

The Strategy has made a concerted effort to learn from experience and continuously develop its effectiveness. Evaluation and strategic planning processes have contributed to this learning.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.67. No respondents indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“I think those involved in the CWWs constantly look at the mandate and direction of the committee. Very task-oriented group – lots of expertise around the table. Good overall direction by [facilitator].”*
- *“I support the strong self-evaluation component of the strategy.”*
- *“To increase bed capacity, to increase participation, to deal with extreme weather.”*

**Strength #4: It helps facilitate the development of regional shelter initiatives.**

Having increased communication, rapport, and relationship among cold/wet weather shelter providers and related stakeholders has been a catalyst for regional shelter initiatives.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.67. No respondents indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“Supports [regional initiatives] strongly!”*
- *“I strongly agree with this statement – by looking at statistical information that all the service providers submit monthly and joint stats.”*
- *“Moved forward a giant step this year.”*
- *“The Extreme Weather Task Group is bringing a lot of new initiatives to communities.”*

**Strength #5: Participants have high levels of commitment.**

Strategy participants have worked together as a result of their shared commitment to reduce the risks faced by homeless people due to lack of access to shelter in the cold/wet weather season.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.72. No respondents indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“The majority of members commit and attend monthly meetings and participate extensively at those meetings, as well as many members also sit on sub committees. Each person is very passionate about the work the committee does as a whole.”*

- *“Good working group.”*
- *“Time commitment is an issue, not for lack of want. Joint action – e.g. Jazz event fundraising – has been a failure for the group.”*
- *“Attendance at meetings has been very encouraging.”*

### **Former capacity challenges became strengths.**

Analysis of participant survey responses suggests that the Strategy effectively addressed the capacity challenges identified in previous evaluations. Responses suggested that the following four points had become areas of strength, but that ongoing work is needed in these areas:

- Staffing to support the Strategy and capacity to follow up on the Strategic Plan;
- Governance and accountability structure;
- Balanced representation;
- Efficiency of meetings.

#### **Strength # 6: The Strategy has an adequate amount of staffing to carry out its action plan.**

Of the 18 respondents, 83% (15) indicated agreement with this statement and 17% (3) indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement.

#### **Strength # 7: It has an effective governance and accountability structure.**

Of the 18 respondents, 94% (17) indicated agreement with this statement and 6% (1) indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

#### **Strength # 8: It has balanced representation.**

Of the 18 respondents, 83% (15) indicated agreement with this statement, 11% indicated “neutral or not sure”, and 6% (1) did not answer. None indicated disagreement.

Comments were as follows:

- *“I think each of us take the responsibility to ensure that there is equal representation of gender, region, government and not for profit, etc., sitting at the table...”*
- *“Like to strengthen health authority and municipal participation regionally.”*
- *“Concern that there is no mechanism for smaller providers to participate.”*
- *“There could be more representation from outside Vancouver – especially Maple Ridge and Langley.”*

#### **Strength # 9: Its meetings are efficient.**

Of the 18 respondents, 94% (17) indicated agreement with this statement and 6% (1) indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. Comments were as follows:

- *“Topics requiring discussion are given enough but not too much time. Things that need to go to vote do so appropriately. Minutes of the meeting are always high quality and go out to the group in a timely fashion.”*
- *“I get much out of these meetings.”*

- “Range – at times bog down.”
- “Needed discernment on this over past couple of years. Time wasted on fundraising activities.”
- “The coordinator is doing a very good job of facilitating the meetings.”

**An additional strength of the Strategy is its capacity to inform policy makers.**

Asked about “other strengths or challenges”, a respondent commented as follows:

- “This network is invaluable and provides much needed information and context for government and other policy makers. People making decisions about shelter services need good information (data AND first hand stories about what’s happening at the street level.). I think it would be valuable to continue this data gathering and also to provide further written documentation of front-line perceptions about trends in shelter use and client outcomes. CWWS is positioned to do this work without ‘lobbying’...”

**An increased majority of participants believe the Strategy is effective.**

Asked to rate the effectiveness of the Strategy over the past year, 100% of survey respondents indicated that it was either effective or very effective. This was a significant increase from 89% in the previous year.

**How would you rate the effectiveness of the Strategy over the past year?**

	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
<b>Very effective</b>	6	67%
<b>Effective</b>	12	33%
<b>Neutral or not sure</b>	0	0%
<b>Ineffective</b>	0	0%
<b>Very ineffective</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	18	100%

## 4.2 Challenges

CWWS evaluations in the previous two years identified the following five areas of challenge:

1. Lack of needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements;
2. Accessibility of individual shelters services;
3. Lack of linkages to further services;
4. Service gaps;
5. Coordination of funding.

These five areas of challenge, which are ranked according to order of priority expressed by respondents in the 2001-2002 evaluation, all relate to shelter services and resources.



### **Challenge # 1: Lack of needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements.**

Volume of funding has not been based on systematically assessed need for cold/wet weather shelter services. The CWWS Action Plan calls for collaboration with organizations concerned with year-round shelter, so that needs assessment can be addressed in a comprehensive way. In 2002-2003, the CWWS initiated an ad hoc Shelter Planning Group and led the preparation of a draft proposal to link evidence of need and demand with planning for new emergency shelter and transitional housing services.

Asked about their level of agreement with the statement, “the Strategy has helped initiate needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements,” the average survey response was 2 on a scale of 1 to 5. Of 18 respondents, 22% indicated strong agreement, 56% indicated agreement, and 22% indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. One commented: *“At a time when there are so many more sleeping rough due to MHR cutbacks, this is difficult to assess.”*

### **Challenge # 2: Accessibility of individual shelters services.**

Some shelter services have problems with accessibility, particularly in terms of their capacity to serve relatively challenging clients. Cold/wet weather services generally have less barriers and therefore higher accessibility than year round services.

Asked about their level of agreement with the statement, “the Strategy has helped improve the accessibility of individual shelter services,” the average survey response was 2. Of 18 respondents, 22% indicated strong agreement, 56% indicated agreement, and 22% indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement. One commented: *“Has highlighted the need for minimal barrier beds and that access should e based on need.”*

### **Challenge # 3: Lack of linkages to further services.**

Cold/wet weather shelter services have been focused primarily on keeping people off of the street.

Asked about their level of agreement with the statement, “the Strategy has helped improve shelter providers’ capacity to link clients to further services,” the average survey response was 2.11. Of 18 respondents, 33% indicated strong agreement, 22% indicated agreement and 44% indicated “neutral or not sure”. None indicated disagreement.

- *“The further services seem to have less capacity.”*
- *“More beds means less on the street and more opportunity to refer people on. In this case I’d score a ‘1’, but I disagree that shelters have more resources to link people to services.”*

### **Challenge # 4: Service gaps.**

The Strategy has addressed some identified gaps in the continuum of cold/wet weather shelter services (e.g., women's shelter). However, several identified gaps remained unresolved (e.g., transportation).

Asked about their level of agreement with the statement, "the Strategy has helped reduce gaps in shelter services" the average survey response was 2.39. Of 18 respondents, 28% indicated strong agreement, 56% indicated agreement and 17% indicated "neutral or not sure". None indicated disagreement.

- *"Statistics given demonstrate need for greater capacity of shelters not just within CWW, but throughout the year."*

### **Challenge # 5: Coordination of funding.**

Having multiple agencies providing cold/wet weather shelter funding poses a coordination challenge. Asked about their level of agreement with the statement, "the Strategy has helped improve coordination of shelter funding" the average survey response was 2.25. Of 18 respondents, 11% indicated strong agreement, 33% indicated agreement, 33% indicated "neutral or not sure", 11% indicated disagreement, and 11% did not answer.

- *"It may be a stretch, but the links made at the CWW enabled the mobilization of shelter responses to Woodward's."*

### **Other challenges**

Asked about their perceptions of other challenges related to the capacity of the Strategy, respondents commented as follows:

- *"Fundraising jointly to create a coordinated regional system is difficult due to regulations/rigidity. Can be divisive."*
- *"Fundraising issues: should we or not?"*
- *"Joint action with resource management (Goods Centre) and joint fundraising efforts were shifted away from during the year, moving to an information sharing model."*
- *"Networking; media efficiencies; possible to dialogue with other cities; feedback regarding HIFIS."*
- *"Public relations/education campaign."*

### **Suggestions**

Suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the CWWS were as follows:

- *"Have reps from all areas to balance out issues."*
- *"Continue Extreme Weather Response work."*
- *"Keep hands-on work of private fundraising off the table."*

## 5.0 Conclusion

This evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's fifth year has documented overall performance and analyzed strengths and challenges. The following are some highlights of CWWS activities and outputs in the 2002-2003 year:

- Received SCPI resources for the Extreme Weather Response project and expanded its core funding through a Vancouver Foundation contribution;
- Developed Extreme Weather plans in five communities, including over 300 additional beds;
- Hosted a two-evening Notable Jazz fundraiser, and distributed almost 2,500 transit tickets to CWWS shelters;
- Initiated a collaborative project and prepared a draft proposal to do comprehensive planning of emergency shelter and transitional housing.

Shelter providers and funding partners significantly expanded the volume of seasonal services in the region, but demand for service expanded even more:

- The number of seasonal beds increased by 10% from 2001-2002, and the number of bed nights available increased 36%;
- The number of bed nights used increased 40%;
- Overall occupancy rates jumped from 84% to 90%;
- Service providers reported over 5,400 incidences of turning people away, and 85% of those were due to no vacancy.
- Demand from women grew less rapidly than from men, with bed nights used down to 15% from 18%, and reported turn aways down to 23% from 28%.

Responses to the CWWS participant survey suggest high levels of consensus that:

- The Strategy is a highly effective multi-stakeholder group;
- It continues to have strong core capacities, e.g., to facilitate the development of regional shelter initiatives;
- It has transformed internal challenges, including staff resources and governance structure, into strengths;
- It continues to face serious challenges such as needs assessment, accessibility of services, linkages to further services, service gaps, and coordination of funding.

Documentation of these findings contributes to accountability and provides a basis for further action planning. As the Strategy moves forward, the information presented in this evaluation and previous ones can be used to help analyze trends, identify priorities for action, and strengthen performance.