

**Metro Vancouver Extreme Weather Response
Report and Evaluation of the 2007 – 2008 Year**



**Greater Vancouver
Shelter Strategy**

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For: Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy

March 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Each year the Extreme Weather Response has been made possible through the commitment and many hours of work of literally hundreds of community volunteers and staff members of shelters across the region of Metro Vancouver. It is impossible to name all of these volunteers and staff workers; however, it is still important to express our thanks and appreciation. Their dedication and nights of lost sleep assist hundreds of homeless people across this region to be safe in shelter during times of extreme weather.

In addition to those who work directly in the sheltering sites, there are many people who spend hours planning and preparing for the Extreme Weather Response in their communities. Many do this work in addition to their regular tasks due to their commitment to helping some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Their commitment ensures the EW responses operate as smoothly as possible. Further, they provide invaluable community perspective to ensure the response meets the needs of the people who are homeless in their own particular community.

The Extreme Weather Response has been the responsibility of BC Housing since 2005, and they provide operational funding for this program. Despite the pressures and complexity of this particular emergency shelter program, BC Housing has proven their dedication to this area of their portfolio with incredible flexibility and support to all those who have been involved in the Extreme Weather Response program.

The Extreme Weather Responses across Metro Vancouver are supported through the Extreme Weather Task Group (EWTG) of the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy. It was the EWTG that initially identified the need, developed a community planning template, and then secured Federal funds to develop Extreme Weather Response Plans for any community that wished to do such emergent planning. After the initial two year pilot project, the EWTG then secured a three year federal grant to implement these plans. These grants were initially secured upon the recommendation of the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness from the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative, Supporting Community Partnership Initiative.

The EWTG also provides support and guidance to the consultants who have served as Extreme Weather Regional coordinators on this project: Michelle Ninow (pilot project and 2003/2004), Annie McKittrick (2004/2005), Michael Anhorn (2005/2006), and Mary MacDougall 2006/2007 to present.

In addition, since 2006-07, BC Housing funds provided for Extreme Weather community coordinators specifically for Vancouver (Grant Gayman) and for Surrey, (Kevin Campbell). This year's Extreme Weather Response coordination continued to benefit significantly from this added capacity.

The events during Homeless Action Week in October 2007 provided by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness offering public education and increased public awareness has broadened the general understanding of Extreme Weather Responses.

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Personal Special Thanks and Acknowledgements

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Kingsley Okyere, Research Analyst, BC Housing
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Richmond - Deborah Proctor
Tri-cities – Tony Bosnjak
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New Westminster Team – Caroline Bonesky, Dave Brown, Bill Wong

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Objectives of Evaluative Report

2007/2008 was the fifth season of implementation for the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (GVSS) Extreme Weather Response (EWR) program. Funding support for this year came through the two-year extension funding received through the Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) of the National Homelessness Initiative and the funding from BC Housing. This is the fifth evaluation of the Extreme Weather Response program in Metro Vancouver region. This year's report includes information from the **eight** communities that developed and implemented EWR programs.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the program and to make recommendations for the future needs the EWR programs across Metro Vancouver and of the regional coordination that has been provided through the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy.

The evaluation has four objectives as follows:

1. To provide an overview of the EWR Program in 2007 – 2008
2. To identify inputs, outputs and outcomes
3. To analyze strengths and challenges faced by the EWR program
4. To report on the results related to the new financial sustainability because of the operational funding from BC Housing.

1.2 Scope

This evaluation covers the period from September 2007 through March 31, 2008 the period that the Extreme Weather Response program was active at the regional level and in the various communities. Analysis of the strengths and challenges provides information to inform program planning and negotiations with funding agencies and community partners in subsequent seasons.

1.3 Methodology

The evaluator originally developed the design of this study in consultation with members of the Extreme Weather Task Group. Research methods were designed to be consistent with the objectives stated above.

The consultant used various data sources in the preparation of this report including the following:

- GVSS/EWR documents, including meeting minutes
- Service statistics collected and provided by BC Housing
- Ongoing feedback from local and regional EWR organizers
- Planning meetings with local EWR organizers
- Meetings with BC Housing staff and Metro Vancouver staff

2.0 OVERVIEW OF EXTREME WEATHER RESPONSE IN METRO VANCOUVER

2.1 Background

Grassroots and informal extreme weather responses began in and around Metro Vancouver many years ago. For the most part, it was based upon individual agencies responding to people standing and lying outside their doors on the coldest of winter nights. Over the years the City of Vancouver joined in and the ability to offer extra sheltering sites during cold snaps was noticed in other communities across the region.

EWR plans were developed for Surrey, Langley, Richmond and New Westminster by 2003 and Vancouver's response was documented. These plans set the framework for expanding community resources for homeless persons during the winter months to prevent hardships due to extreme winter weather conditions.

In Richmond, Surrey, Langley, and New Westminster, the EWR Plans were developed by local steering committees. The community members involved in this planning process represented a broad array of organizations and agencies. The Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (formerly the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy), through funding from the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative, provided assistance through a consultant with the planning process. In Vancouver the plan reflected the EWR that was already being implemented, primarily through provincial funding.

In 2004 – 2005, the second year of operation, Richmond, Surrey, Langley and New Westminster continued to fine tune their EWR plans and five communities implemented their plans. In addition, planning was begun on the North Shore (District of North Vancouver, City of North Vancouver, and District of West Vancouver) and Tri-Cities (Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, and Port Moody) with initial discussions on EWR planning started in Burnaby.

During the 2005 – 2006 year the implementation of the North Shore's EWR Plan occurred. Both Burnaby and the Tri-Cities finalized all aspects of their plan except for one item each. Burnaby continued to search for an appropriate shelter site while the Tri-Cities required an organization that would supervise and schedule volunteer staff for their EWR shelter.

The EWR season for 2006 – 2007 had formal agreements developed through EWR policy requirements from BC Housing that was developed and had consultation and input from the GVSS/EW Task Group. The EWR now had structured, funding supports though the communities were required to meet the BC Housing Policies and Procedures to access funds.

For the season of 2007/08, the EWR regional coordinator organized the 8 communities to meet the BC Housing policy standards and orientated them to file the necessary reports by proper time deadlines and format. Information, support and training was also provided to the community of Squamish while they established their first year of EWR. Volunteer training was provided to the communities of Tri-Cities, Richmond and Langley.

It was identified that a major piece of work for an EWR coordinator will continue to be responding in an organized and effective manner to the media inquiries particularly at times of extreme weather.

2.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Program

The overall purpose of the EWR is to protect homeless people in Metro Vancouver from contracting a critical illness, becoming hypothermic or dying, due to exposure to extreme winter weather.

According to the HPI funding proposal, the objectives of the project are to:

1. Provide safe and adequate temporary extreme weather shelter to homeless people (in Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond, New Westminister, Burnaby, Tri-Cities, North Shore and Langley) during periods of extreme winter weather;
2. Co-ordinate community based co-operative approaches for all aspects of the EWR including meal provision, shelter, transportation, and media communication;
3. Coordinate communication among communities implementing EWR;
4. Foster increased public awareness about homelessness in Metro Vancouver and the potential impacts of extreme weather on the homeless;
5. Develop trained volunteers to support the EWR;
6. Increase the response's sustainability through further community development and,
7. Provide daily reports to BC Housing regarding the EWR implementations.

The HPI proposal identifies the following as the indicators of success used to monitor this project:

- The communities will implement their EWR plans as the weather requires in a safe and effective manner;
- Homeless people in the EWR communities requiring shelter will receive it during extreme weather;
- Information about the extreme weather alerts within a community will be circulated quickly and effectively – homeless people will know when there is alert and what resources are available to them; and.
- Broader communication will be maintained to the media requests through the EWR regional coordinator and at times with assistance of local community resources.

2.3 Program Logic Model

The following logic model chart shows inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes for the EWR.

Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding provided by the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative and BC Housing. 2. Planning time given by staff and volunteers from non-profit service agencies, faith groups, municipalities and others. 3. Community donations from individuals, corporations, service clubs, faith groups and others. 4. In-kind contributions, including facility space, food, blankets, winter clothing, hygiene kits, and volunteer time.
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and revision of the 8 EWR Plans to meet BC Housing policy. 2. EWR volunteer training. 3. EWR implementation during periods of extreme weather. 4. Response tracking coordinated with BC Housing. 5. Media relations. 6. Communication among EWR Communities. 7. Communication with funders.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of EWR shelter space nights provided. 2. Number of nights EWR shelters available by community.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved access to emergency shelter during extreme weather. 2. Reduced risk during extreme weather. 3. Improved co-ordination of sheltering services during extreme weather. 4. Improved understanding of local and regional needs during extreme weather. 5. Increased public awareness of homelessness and extreme weather.

2.4 Activities

Extreme weather this year occurred with less severity than last year. Furthermore it was geographically more centralized, especially in the Tri-Cities, Burnaby and New Westminster.

There were 67 calendar nights where one or more of the 8 communities implemented an EWR plan. With BC Housing Emergency Shelter program operational funding EWR plans that met their policy expectations, this affirmed financial support allowed the communities to respond to the needs of homeless people without the pressure of securing private donations.

Each community plan, however, still relied heavily upon services in kind and direct donations e.g. shelter sites, food, blankets and most of all volunteerism.

As in the previous year, both Vancouver and Surrey each had designated EWR coordinators who were responsible to activate their community EWR. This was a significant factor in an orderly response. Likewise, the remaining 6 communities diligently coordinated their responses through their EWR committees with great success.

Additional EWR Coordinator activities included:

- Managing media relations (provided information, participated in interviews for print, radio and television)
- Updating media information
- Liaising daily during responses with BC Housing
- Updating the 8 EWR community plans for submission
- Developing EWR Volunteer Training and delivered training events
- Attending local Extreme Weather Response planning meetings in all 8 EWR communities, and several Community Task Force meetings on Homelessness
- Providing administrative support to the local EWR programs
- Purchasing and distributing 70 sleeping mats
- Preparing to attend and report to Extreme Weather Response Task Group meetings
- Providing information and support to other EWR communities outside the region in particular the community of Squamish to develop an EWR plan
- Preparing and submitted the reports for HPI on a monthly basis
- Preparing the evaluation of EWR for the 2007 – 2008 year

3.0 SERVICE STATISTICS (OUTPUTS)

3.1 *Richmond*

Through the co-operation of the City of Richmond and various community services, the Richmond EWR committee reviewed the local EWR community plan. This year with the interest and commitment of a local church community increased the shelter space capacity of EWR in Richmond with a potential of 30 additional shelter spaces.

Richmond had two shelter sites available this year, Richmond House-Salvation Army and St. Alban's Anglican Church. A total of 18 nights had extreme weather alerts, with 23 males being served (no females), and a total of 23 shelter spaces (bed nights) were provided this season.

3.2 *Langley*

Langley reviewed appropriateness of the location of their previous EWR shelter site, and decided to seek another site. The Langley Evangelical Free Church offered to be the shelter site this season, with strong volunteer support from other community churches. Langley accessed the Volunteer Training program and over 40 members of the community participated in the one evening's training session.

In Langley this winter, Extreme Weather Alerts were issued for 19 nights and 146 shelter spaces (bed nights) were utilized.

The Task Force on Homelessness in Langley has developed a building plan and located a site to build a year-round shelter for that community. It is rewarding to see a community with no shelter having a plan of action occurring.

3.3 New Westminster

New Westminster was one of the communities that experienced more snow and extreme weather patterns this year. There were 2 shelter sites available; the Lower Mainland Purpose Society and the Salvation Army-New Westminster.

Extreme weather alerts were issued for 51 nights with the shelter sites serving 1,166 males and 201 females. A total of 1,396 shelter spaces (bed nights) were utilized. The year round shelter capacity in New Westminster is undergoing changes and this community is working diligently to find housing for the homeless.

3.4 North Shore

The North Shore EWR has a primary shelter site within the North Shore Shelter and has planned additional shelter space at the North Shore Neighbourhood House.

There were 31 nights of extreme weather called during which 368 males and 48 females were served. A total of 416 shelter spaces (bed nights) were occupied during this season.

3.5 Burnaby

Burnaby has one primary extreme weather shelter site, St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, with the back-up support of other community churches. There were 43 nights of Extreme Weather Response in Burnaby this year compared to 18 extreme weather nights last season.

The weather patterns this season were harsher within the region as both Burnaby and New Westminster experienced heavy prolonged snowstorms. Such weather is particularly difficult in Burnaby as there currently is no year round or other program to house homeless other than the EWR program.

The EWR offered 665 males and 122 females refuge from the weather, with total number of 787 shelter spaces (bed nights) used this season. This compares with 249 shelter spaces used last year. It is hoped that the Homeless Task Force for Burnaby will be able to move forward to address the needs of their community to find more permanent and constant housing accommodation.

3.6 Tri-Cities

This year the Tri-Cities Homeless Task Force was successful in applying for HPI funds to develop a plan for Cold/Wet Weather (CWW) shelter sites to be open and available for the homeless, as no year round shelter is available. This program was created and opened various churches in all three communities on a monthly rotation basis through the months of November to March. In spite of many barriers within the communities, the program was launched and offered to the homeless on a carefully developed plan.

There is one shelter site for the EWR, Trinity United church (in Port Coquitlam). Unfortunately, the EWR was unable to open as early as needed due to the lack of municipal permission. Also, an agreement of service between the CWW program and EWR program was made so that the EWR would not open unnecessarily if sufficient spaces were available within the CWW site. The EWR response was called for 16 nights and during those evenings provided a total of 212 EWR shelter spaces (bed nights).

The EWR volunteers within the Tri-Cities were also provide an evening of volunteer training through the Volunteer Manual and in-kind services of two seasoned outreach workers.

3.7 *Surrey*

EWR for Surrey this year was again well-developed and organized with sites in several geographic location thanks to the diligent work of the community and in particular, the sub-regional EWR Coordinator Kevin Campbell. The infrastructure was developed for shelters sites including: arranging food donations, recruiting volunteer workers and distributing mats and blankets. There was the added assistance of out-reach workers provided through BC Housing contracts, and volunteer outreach also were developed through the local addiction recovery programs that enabled the large number of homeless in Surrey areas to find shelter or receive supplies to assist them.

A new geographic area for EWR shelter was developed in South Surrey through the assistance of Hyland House

Surrey has several EWR shelter site locations, including Cloverdale Christian Fellowship, Surrey Urban Mission and Kla How Eya (an Aboriginal friendship center). All were used at various extreme weather times this season.

This year there were 17 nights that the EWR was activated, during those nights, 724 males and 142 females were accommodated with a total of 865 shelter spaces (bed nights) and other humane comforts were provided.

3.8 *Vancouver*

Vancouver for the second year had an official Extreme Weather Response sub-regional coordinator, Grant Gayman. With the monitoring and planning with various shelter sites in particular geographic locations, the goal of coordinated response delivered through a large number of shelter providers serving such a large number of clients was successful and orderly. Communication among shelters and the notification of EWR alerts and shelter openings (including contact names, telephone numbers and descriptions of services) to emergency services, health authorities, community agencies, faith-based groups and outreach workers was effective, resulting in more orderly openings and appropriate closures. Not all shelters in high volume areas were opened for every alert; some were kept in reserve in case the weather stayed cold for an extended period, thereby reducing the “burnout” of shelter staff and volunteers that had occurred in the past as a result of prolonged openings without respite.

This official plan for Vancouver through the EWR committee and designated Coordinator made a significant impact upon the orderliness and cooperation between various agencies and that shelter sites were readily available to the homeless. This year's plan included the Aboriginal Response to be an active part of the community response.

Vancouver has 10 extreme weather shelter sites that were capable of responding during the 30 nights that extreme weather alerts were activated. The coordinator would pre-plan which sites were to open on specific nights to ensure shelter availability and the program's sustainability.

The shelter sites in Vancouver included: Evelyn Saller Centre, Gathering Place, First Baptist church, Grandview Baptist church, Tenth Avenue Alliance church, Powell Place, Belkin House/Salvation Army, Harbour Light/Salvation Army, St. Mark's Church and Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre.

In Vancouver, extreme weather alerts were issued for a total of 30 nights during this winter season. During those nights, 1401 males and 210 females occupied a total of 1,606 individual shelter spaces (bed nights), primarily in the Downtown, Downtown Eastside, South Side, Kitsilano, and Grandview neighbourhoods.

3.9 Summary of 2007 – 2008 EWR Data

The eight designated communities in Metropolitan Vancouver **all** implemented their Extreme Weather Response Plans with a variance of between 16 to 53 nights of Extreme Weather Alerts activated in the winter season, November 13th – March 29th of 2007-2008. The communities with EWR programs provided **5,457** shelter spaces (bed nights) that offered shelter and other human comforts on the coldest and most severe weather nights of this year.

4.0 OUTCOMES

The logic model developed for the Extreme Weather Response program lists five outcomes. A few of these outcomes have quantitative indicators; most, however, use qualitative indicators.

4.1 Improved access to emergency shelter during extreme weather

During 2007 – 2008 winter season, there were 600+ extra emergency shelter spaces available to be opened during extreme weather. The availability of these shelter spaces lead to 5,457 shelter spaces of emergency shelter being offered that would otherwise have not been available. There were 48 reported turn-aways at EWR shelters, with efforts made to assure the safety of those individuals as much as possible.

Two communities provided EWR service that are without emergency shelters to meet the needs of the homeless in times of weather duress, while one community provided a Cold/Wet Weather shelter program through HPI funding and volunteer church sites. Thus, there was some community expansion enabling homeless persons to access to emergency shelters during extreme weather occurrences.

4.2 Reduced risk during extreme weather

For homeless people who stayed at the EWR sheltering sites during extreme weather, the risks of illness, hypothermia and death were greatly reduced. Seven communities with EWR plans also have outreach teams to travel to areas known to be frequented by people who are homeless to disseminate information about the location of EWR sheltering site and to distribute hot drinks and blankets to those who choose to remain outside. In Surrey, recruited outreach volunteers also provided this type of service on a regular basis. These outreach activities in 2007-2008 made a significant impact upon the success of the homeless being aware of the EWR sites, and feeling comfortable to access these sites. It was with the forethought and planning of BC Housing to establish formal Outreach programs in communities in their first year of managing the Emergency Shelter Program for the province that made this social change possible.

4.3 Improved co-ordination of sheltering services during extreme weather

During extreme weather periods, the Extreme Weather Regional Coordinator provided daily updates to BC Housing and to designated EWR communities as needed. This coordination helped with the overall sheltering services across the region.

The continued appointment of the two sub-regional coordinators for Vancouver and Surrey had the most profound impact to assure there was excellent community information and action to meet the needs of the homeless those more populous communities.

In addition, each EWR planning group in each community would communicate among themselves as well as with other service providers working with people who are homeless to ensure proper community services knew which shelters were open that particular night.

4.4 Improved understanding of local and regional needs during extreme weather

Work with people who are homeless during extreme weather periods this past year taught many communities of the importance of Outreach Teams provided by BC Housing funding to spread the word about the availability and location of EWR shelters. .

Lessons learned from previous years were reviewed and steps made to correct and alleviate the issues that were identified. For example, as had happened the previous year in Burnaby, when an alternate shelter site (in a church) was opened to provide respite to the ongoing church shelter site, in an area far from the main homeless area even though transportation to the shelter and back could be offered, few would go to the EWR shelter. So it was noted that in successful planning, the EWR shelter sites need to be in the area or at least close to the area that their intended clients reside in.

Previously, the demand for media interviews demonstrated the need for ongoing regional coordination of EWR. The media demands were moderate for the Extreme Weather Coordinator who does not have the responsibility to implement actual EWR Plans. If media demand was placed upon the local EWR leaders who are working to ensure sheltering sites are open, their job

tasks are made much more difficult and would likely become overwhelming. Therefore, it encouraged that all media interest be filtered through the EWR regional coordinator who would respond to the media, and arrange media access to EWR sites at appropriate times, so as not to interfere with the work at hand—to open shelters.

4.5 Increased public awareness of homelessness and extreme weather response

This year, the Homeless Action Week (HAW) developed by the Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness once again served to focus media and public attention on the issue of homelessness.

The HAW public and media awareness events again were critical for the EWR this year. The media attention contributes to the finding of shelter sites, volunteers and other resources. Further, they allow the public to learn about the support of the immense volunteer work of the local EWR communities and the need for longer-term solutions such as year round shelters, as well as affordable and supported housing.

Each EWR community had opportunity to be showcased within their local community media resources.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 Local Extreme Weather Responses

The financial sustainability of local EWR programs has been addressed by BC Housing's commitment to provide funding to communities that have developed an EWR Plan and that have negotiated a nightly operational budget with BC Housing. Communities are required to continue to be responsible to raise funds for any capital expenses (i.e. for mats and blankets). The Canadian Red Cross has committed to assist various EWR communities with emergent supplies such as hygiene kits, and blankets to meet needs during EWR. This is a welcome community partner in this program.

With the financial sustainability of EWR plans secured, the availability of sufficient and trained volunteers continues an ongoing matter. Although encouragement was made for communities to hold volunteer training four communities did so.

BC Housing also enabled some of the work during EWR that are coordinated by staff people in local agencies to receive monetary compensation for their time. This also strengthened the endeavours to meet the needs of the homeless during EWR.

5.2 Regional Extreme Weather Coordination

The original vision of the GVSS Extreme Weather Task Group was to have the regional coordination phase itself out over time. The Regional Extreme Weather Coordinator, however,

has continued to provide important services to the local EWR that if they not provided at a regional level would make the local planning groups' tasks more difficult. This year again, the regional coordination helped to consolidate and initiate the new expectations from BC Housing to the various EWR communities including Squamish.

Before the extreme weather season starts, the Regional Extreme Weather Coordinator has proven to be an important position to ensure that each EWR community in Metropolitan Vancouver reviews and updates its EWR plan. As in the past, the Regional Coordinator serves as the catalyst to start EWR planning, provided administrative support to the planning groups and has been an important source of information exchange among the communities. These functions continued this year, including the two sub-regional co-ordinators, to assure all communities were ready and activated their EWR plans.

During the times of extreme weather, the Regional Coordinator has acted as a communication hub. During times of planning and evaluation, the Coordinator has exchanged information between the EWR communities in Metro Vancouver (as well as other areas of BC) so that they each know what the others are doing and are aware of both the troubles and successes other communities are experiencing. This has helped to maintain some level of consistency across communities. The Coordinator has also proved to be an important link between the EWR communities and BC Housing as funder of extreme weather shelter sites. By keeping the funder informed of what is happening in the local community responses and has helped bridge communication between the various communities and the funder—a role both funder and community groups have appreciated.

In particular, the Regional Coordinator has been the main contact for all news media. Having one regional contact for the media has shown important benefits. It has protected EWR planning groups from the dealing with the onerous task of media relations while their time and energy needs to be focused on serving the homeless people in their communities. It has also allowed consistent messaging with the media across the region.

For the reasons outlined above, it is important that there continue to be regional coordination of the Extreme Weather Response program in the Metro Vancouver region. Presently, sustained funding has not yet been secured for this task. It is recommended that the Extreme Weather Task Group begin negotiations with funders for ongoing funding to support this function.

6.0 Metro Vancouver EWR Strengths and Challenges

6.1 *Strengths*

1. Local communities were able to respond appropriately based on availability of local emergency beds and local weather conditions.
2. Developing centralized media relations and common key messages helped to manage requests for news regarding the homeless, especially at times of adverse weather conditions.
3. Region-wide communication during the extreme weather event via email worked well and helped to keep many people 'in the loop.'

4. Experience of EWR in several communities has contributed to positive movement towards more permanent services for homeless people.
5. Support for EWR in communities remains high both among those directly involved in planning and implementing the response and among the public.
6. Communities appreciated the exchange of information and resources from other EWR communities as this helped to minimize the amount of work they had to do and allowed them to take advantage of the lessons learned in other communities.
7. Availability of assured funding from BC Housing supported communities to activate their EWR. This allowed their concentration upon providing shelter and relieved a large amount of stress they have experienced in previous years.
8. Collecting statistics and invoices from the sheltering sites proved through BC Housing in an orderly and pre-determined method ensured the statistics for this season were reported and funds could be disbursed smoothly.

6.2 Challenges

1. Some communities at times experience difficulty in determining when to issue Extreme Weather Alerts due to significantly different forecasts issued by different weather services. Communities outside of Vancouver seemed to rely mostly on the Weather Network whereas Vancouver relied mainly on Weather Canada. However, the EWR strategy is for each community to make its own decision to activating their EWR.
2. More recently, the world community has become cognizant of the weather changes that are also impacting upon summer weather conditions that also could cause significant health risks for the homeless. This issue of extreme weather related to high temperatures and lack of access to cool accommodation or proper water for hydration will also have to be monitored.
3. It is evident that many of the challenges previously identified have been eliminated through the directions and planning by BC Housing through its policy and procedures for EWR and by the Outreach programs they implemented.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The EWR coordinators offer the following recommendations for consideration and action by the Extreme Weather Task Group:

1. To better address the sleeping needs of people who are homeless, the Extreme Weather Task Group (EWTG) needs to encourage EWR shelters to open no later than 9:00 pm. They also need to encourage local EWR to make provisions to deal with people whose normal routine may require them to remain awake all night.
2. The EWTG and the Extreme Weather coordinators need to encourage local EWR programs to develop partnerships with organizations that have pools of emergency/disaster response volunteers.

3. The EWR coordinators need to encourage all EWR communities to have open EWR planning tables and current communication lists as required by BC Housing policy.
4. EWR communities need to ensure support is available from as many organizations as possible for both the planning and implementation of their EWR Plans.
5. The establishment of sub-regional EWR co-ordinators for Vancouver and Surrey needs to be maintained, so that service providers and other involved in EWR planning can continue to foster the development of strong communication and collaboration among extreme weather sheltering sites and other organizations serving the homeless in those more populous centres..
6. The EWR coordinators should encourage each EWR community to include in their EWR Plan the weather service they will use to call their alerts.
7. The EWTG needs to review the EWR coordination, both regional and sub-regional, to identify what may be needed for sustainability and then to seek the required resources.