

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2023-12-07

From: Theresa Alexander, Planner 1

File No: 6840-20-010

Subject: 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Survey Final Report

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board receive the final 2023 Homeless Point-in-Time Count and Survey;

AND THAT the report be forwarded to local government partners, federal and provincial ministers, and agencies responsible for the broad range of issues relating to homelessness.

BACKGROUND

Since 2004, communities in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) have worked together to conduct a tri-annual Point-in-Time (PiT) Count and Survey of individuals experiencing homelessness within the region. The results help improve supports for individuals experiencing homelessness, identify unmet housing needs, determine potential gaps in related health services, and support funding applications for local housing and homelessness initiatives.

In 2023, staff from the FVRD, Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission worked in collaboration with local service agencies and other organizations to plan, prepare, and administer the 24-hour PiT count and survey of individuals experiencing homelessness across the region. As with past PiT count and surveys, this project would not have been possible without the generous in-kind contributions, such as staffing resources, expertise, and other supports provided by countless individuals and organizations within the region.

In the context of the 2023 PiT Count and Survey, **individuals experiencing homelessness are defined as persons with no fixed address, with no regular and/or adequate nighttime residence of their own where they pay rent or which they own and where they can expect to stay for more than 30 days.**

Point-in-Time Counts are an undercount of actual populations experiencing homelessness. This is largely due to the voluntary nature of the survey, the challenge of administering the survey, and less visible populations experiencing homelessness, such as women, youth, and those living in rural or remote areas.

Although enumeration is not able to, or intended to, count every person experiencing homelessness in the region, the consistent application of enumeration methodology associated with point-in-time counts helps to uncover trends related to the extent of homelessness regionally and locally.

DISCUSSION

The 2023 FVRD Homeless PiT Count and Survey took place on March 7-8, 2023 within Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Mission, Kent, Harrison Hot Springs, Hope and select locations in the Chilliwack River Valley and Boston Bar. A preliminary report was prepared for and presented to the FVRD Board and the Regional and Corporate Services Committee in July 2023.

The final report provides a regional analysis of the 2023 FVRD PiT Count and Survey results, including recent and long-term trends. The report includes sub-community results for Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Mission, and the Eastern Fraser Valley, which provide municipalities with critical data needed to support funding applications and the allocation of local resources.

2023 Enumeration and Survey Findings

The results of the 2023 FVRD PiT Count and Survey indicate an upward trend in the experience of homelessness within the region, as well as a shift towards longer periods of homelessness. In 2023, the PiT Count and Survey resulted in the enumeration of 1,094 individuals experiencing homelessness in the FVRD, of which 1,022 participated in the survey.

More than 80% of survey respondents had been experiencing homelessness a period greater than six months, half of which had been experiencing homelessness for periods greater than 2 years.

Of those surveyed, 567 or 52% had stayed in a shelter on the night of the count, 277 or 25% had stayed outside, 91 or 8% had spent the night in a vehicle, 98 or 9% had couch-surfed, 59 or 5% were in the hospital, 2 or less than 1% had been in jail on the night of the count.

Rates of physical and mental health challenges continue to increase among survey respondents within the region. Of all survey respondents, 44% reported experiencing mental health issues, 41% a medical condition, 35% a physical disability, 24% an acquired brain injury, and 22% a learning disability.

In 2023, 58% of survey respondents identified as currently experiencing addiction, of which 41% were either seeking or receiving treatment. Of those who identified as currently experiencing addiction, 54% also reported experiencing mental health challenges.

Indigenous populations continue to be overrepresented among populations experiencing homelessness. In 2023, 38% of survey respondents identified as Indigenous (including First Nations, Metis, Inuit, or other Indigenous ancestry), compared to 7.6% of the region's general population.

Those who have previously been in government care as children or youth made up 31% survey respondents in the region, comparatively children and youth in government care make up 6% of B.C.'s general population and 26% of Indigenous populations in B.C.¹

People of all ages experience homelessness; however, in the FVRD, nearly half of those included in the 2023 PiT Count and Survey were between the ages of 30 and 49. Notably, the proportion of survey respondents under the age of 19 has continued to decline since 2017, while the proportion of respondents aged 60 and older has steadily increased.

COST

Costs for the 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Survey are in accordance with the 2023 budget.

CONCLUSION

PiT Counts and Surveys provide critical information regarding the scope and nature of homelessness within a given area, with the objective of improving supports and services individuals experiencing homelessness and monitoring homelessness prevention strategies.

Results from the 2023 FVRD Homeless PiT Count and Survey indicate an upward trend in the experience of homelessness within the FVRD, a shift towards longer periods of homelessness, a high prevalence of health issues, and increases to aging populations.

Dr. Ron Van Wyk of Anron Consulting Inc. will present on the report findings at the **FVRD's Board meeting on December 14, 2023 and be available to respond to questions at the FVRD's Regional and Corporate Services meeting on December 7, 2023.** Municipalities can request similar presentations be made to their respective mayor and councils.

COMMENTS BY:

Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning and Initiatives: Reviewed and supported

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsbrough, Director of Corporate Services/CFO: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.

¹ Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Children and Families [web] Children in Care, 2021/22
<https://mcf.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/children-in-care>