

**The Lower Mainland
Cold/Wet Weather Strategy:
Evaluation of the 2000-2001 Year**

**Prepared by
James Pratt Consulting**

**Prepared for the
Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy**

October 23, 2001

Executive Summary

Introduction

The primary purpose of this evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's 2000-2001 year is to assess levels of effectiveness and efficiency. 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 2000-2001
2. To measure inputs, outputs and outcomes
3. To analyze strengths and challenges faced by the Strategy.

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

Overview of the Strategy

The mission is stated as follows:

The Cold/Wet Weather Strategy is a regional network of community partners in the Lower Mainland working together to develop and implement a continuum of accessible shelter services in response to local needs during inclement weather.

We are committed to support the hope and respect for people through housing them in their own communities.

CWWS activities in the 2000-2001 year include the following:

- 6 regional Strategy meetings;
- Coordinated planning of cold/wet weather shelter services;
- Information sharing about cold/wet weather shelter services;
- Informal coordination among shelter service providers;
- Participation in related initiatives such as HIFIS (Housing Information System);
- Joint 2000-2001 funding application for the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI);
- Preparation of a draft plan in preparation for periods of extreme weather;
- Evaluation of the 1999-2000 year.

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

Inputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding provided by Ministry of Human Resources, Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (federal government), Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, City of Vancouver, and others. 2. In-kind contributions, including professional services, participation in meetings, provision of facilities, volunteer time, and donation of goods.
↓	↓
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Strategy meetings. 2. Preparation for periods of extreme weather. 3. Coordinated planning of cold/wet weather shelter services. 4. Information sharing about cold/wet weather shelter services. 5. Systematic service tracking, using a standard format. 6. Evaluation and planning.
↓	↓
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of cold/wet weather shelter beds provided. 2. Number of bed/nights available. 3. Number of bed nights used (by men and by women). 4. Occupancy rates. 5. Number of people turned away (men and women).
↓	↓
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved access to emergency shelter and related services. 2. Improved health and reduced risk. 3. Improved coordination of shelter services. 4. Improved understanding of local and regional shelter needs during cold/wet weather. 5. Improved efficiency and effectiveness of shelter services.

Inputs

A diverse group of agencies provided funding for services associated with the Strategy: the federal government Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), the provincial Ministry of Human Resources (Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4), the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the City of Vancouver, Central City Mission Foundation, and Vancouver Community Mental Health. Total funding, including cash donations, exceeded \$1.1 million. This amount was up from the 1999-2000 total funding amount of just over \$0.6 million. The primary reason for the increase was the new SCPI funding for shelter service delivery, outreach activities, and facilities enhancement.

In-kind contributions during the period included provision of professional services, participation in Strategy meetings, provision of a building rent-free (by the City of North Vancouver), volunteer time with individual shelters, and donations of goods.

Outputs

Summary of Cold/Wet Shelter Service Outputs: 2000-2001

	Number of beds	Total number of bed nights available	Total number of bed nights used	Breakdown of bed nights used		Occupancy rate	Number turned away	
				Men	Women		Men	Women
Catholic Charities	10	1,310	675	675	n/a	52%	310	n/a
Covenant House	4	120 ¹	120	84	36	100%	no data	no data
Garfield Hotel	6	906	644	644	n/a	71%	186	n/a
Gateway Shelter	36	5,184	4,344	3,778	566	84%	114	6
The Haven	25	3,775	3,248	3,248	n/a	86%	no data	no data
Hope Com. Services	2	no data ²	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
Marpole Shelter	50	7,821	7,404	no ³ data	no data	95%	Approx 219 ⁴	Approx 55
Mission Com. Services	2	200	143	no data	no data	72%	0	0
North Shore Shelter	21	1,743	960	no data ⁵	no data	55%	0	0
Richmond House	3	363	75	75	n/a	21%	no data	no data
The Umbrella	16	1,936	1,721	n/a	1,721	89%	n/a	219
Urban Native Youth Assoc.	10	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
TOTAL	185	23,358+	19,334+	Not known	Not known	83%	Not known	Not known

¹ Covenant House opened the four additional beds on April 1, 2001. Figures presented here present bed nights through the end of April.

² Hope Community Services reported statistics for a combined total of 4 beds, including the two cold/wet weather beds. Of 904 bed nights, 120 were used (20% occupancy rate).

³ Marpole Shelter did not track client nights by gender, but did track individual clients by gender. Of 728 individuals served in the 2000-2001 season, 584 (80%) were men and 144 (20%) were women.

⁴ Marpole Shelter did not track turn away incidences by gender. The approximate figures presented here derive from multiplying the total number of turn away incidences reported (274) by the percentages of male and female clients (80% and 20% respectively).

⁵ North Shore Temporary Emergency Shelter did not track client nights by gender, but did track individual clients by gender. Of 102 individuals served in the 2000-2001 season, 88 (86%) were men and 14 (14%) were women.

As shown in the table above, the various participating agencies provided 185 cold/wet weather shelter beds in the 2000-2001 year. Participating agencies provided 167 beds in 1999-2000 and provided 155 beds in 1998-1999. The overall average occupancy rate was 83%.

Additional outputs in 2000-2001 included facilities development, outreach services, and added hours.

Outcomes

Analysis of cold/wet weather shelter user survey data provides evidence pertaining to the key outcome of the Strategy: improved access to emergency shelter. Asked, “if space at this shelter wasn’t available, where would you be staying?”, 33% indicated they would be on the street or outdoors and 21% indicated that they did not know. These findings suggest that a significant percentage of cold/wet weather shelter users would have otherwise been without shelter if these services were not available.

Opinion of Strategy participants indicates continued success in improved coordination of shelter services. Survey respondents rated their levels of agreement with the following statement: “*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...*” The average survey response on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = “strongly agree” and 5 = “strongly disagree”) was 1.44.

Strengths and challenges

The following five strengths pertain to capacity of the Strategy and are listed in order of agreement level indicated by survey respondents:

1. It brings together funding agencies, planners and service providers (average agreement level 1.13);
2. It facilitates information sharing, coordination and support among shelter providers (1.44);
3. The Strategy group works to continuously improve its performance (1.5);
4. It helps facilitate the development of regional shelter initiatives (1.69);
5. Participants have high levels of commitment (1.75).

Strengths 6 through 10 pertain to the impact of the Strategy on shelter services. Again, they are listed in order of agreement level:

6. It has resulted in provision of low-barrier shelter beds (1.31);
7. It provides a forum for planning of cold/wet weather shelter services (1.56);
8. It mobilizes funding and other resources to meet needs for cold/wet weather shelter services (1.63);

9. It spans the Lower Mainland and encourages local responses (1.81);
10. It raises the profile of homelessness issues and shelter needs (2.13).

Challenges 1 through 5 (listed in order of agreement level) pertain to the capacity of the Strategy:

1. Staffing to support the Strategy (1.38);
2. Capacity to follow up on the Strategic Plan (2.00);
3. Governance and accountability structure (2.06);
4. Balanced representation (2.06);
5. Efficiency of meetings (2.13).

Challenges 6 through 10 (listed in order of agreement level) pertain to shelter services:

6. Service gaps (1.63);
7. Accessibility of individual shelters services (1.75);
8. Lack of linkages to further services (1.88);
9. Lack of needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements (2.13);
10. Coordination of funding (2.25).

Conclusion

This evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's third year has documented overall performance and scanned internal strengths and challenges. The Strategy continued to address its mission and strategic goals through a multi-stakeholder approach to service development, delivery, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation.

SCPI funding in 2000-2001 resulted in a substantial increase in inputs. The volume of cold/wet weather shelter service increased from previous years. Due to improved service monitoring, the evaluator was able to calculate a baseline figure for overall occupancy rates of shelter beds associated with the Strategy (83%).

Findings from a shelter user survey and from a survey of Strategy participants provide some evidence of two key outcomes: increased access to emergency shelter; and improved coordination of shelter services.

The participant survey validated the ten strengths and ten challenges identified in the 1999-2000 evaluation. Survey feedback resulted in the reframing of some strengths and challenges and sorting in order of agreement level indicated by respondents.

Documentation of these findings contributes to accountability and provides a basis for detailed action planning. As the Strategy moves forward, the information presented in this evaluation can serve as a baseline and a reference point.

Acknowledgements

James Pratt Consulting prepared this report with funding from the Ministry of Human Resources. Lookout Emergency Aid Society served as the contract manager.

The consultant thanks the following 21 people for taking the time to provide input and feedback by participating in extensive key informant interviews and/or by responding to a lengthy Cold/Wet Weather Strategy survey.⁶

Laura Clarke	South Fraser Health Region
Brenda Dennis	Vi Fineday Society
Jim Edwards*	Covenant House
Judy Graves*	City of Vancouver
Bev Grieve	City of Burnaby
Kimiko Karpoff*	Lower Mainland Network for Affordable Housing
Cheryl Kathler	City of North Vancouver
Jean Krueger*	Ministry of Human Resources, Region 2
Thor Kuhlman	City of New Westminster
Mary MacDougall*	Catholic Charities
Bonnie Moriarty	Elizabeth Fry Society
Michelle Neilly*	BC Housing
Pastor Norman Oldham*	Vancouver Urban Core Community Workers Association
Jeanine Ratcliffe	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Jennifer Semenoff*	Ministry of Human Resources, Region 1
Karen O'Shannacery	Lookout Emergency Aid Society
Trudi Shymka	St. James Community Services Society
Linda Siseloff	South Fraser Community Services
Gregory Steves*	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Linda Western	United Way of the Lower Mainland
Su-Jan Yeo	Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services

The consultant is especially grateful to Michelle Neilly, Karen O'Shannacery, and Jennifer Semenoff for serving on the Evaluation Working Group and for providing direction throughout this project.

⁶ Individuals with an asterisk beside their name participated in both an interview and the survey.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and objectives

The primary purpose of this evaluation of the Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's 2000-2001 year is to assess levels of effectiveness and efficiency. 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 2000-2001
2. To measure inputs, outputs and outcomes
3. To analyze strengths and challenges faced by the Strategy.

1.2 Background

Participants engaged in two initial evaluations of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy (CWWS) covering the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 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.

In October 1999, members completed a strategic plan for 1999-2000 through 2001-2002.

Having completed a third year of operation, members of the CWWS engaged James Pratt Consulting in June 2001 to conduct a third annual evaluation to develop an action plan.

1.3 Scope and definitions

This evaluation covers the period from September 1, 2000 through August 31, 2001. Analysis of strengths and challenges provides qualitative information that informs the Action Plan. 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 (e.g., number of bed nights).

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 Evaluation Working Group. Research methods and tools were designed to be consistent with the previous evaluations and with the objectives stated above.

Data Gathering

The consultant used five types of data sources in the preparation of this report: CWWS documents, service statistics, shelter user surveys, key informant interviews, and Strategy participant surveys.

- CWWS documents included meeting minutes and the report of the Extreme Weather Task Group.
- Service statistics included numbers of bed nights provided, numbers used, and incidence of people being turned away.⁷
- 49 shelter users participated in verbal surveys.
- 14 Strategy participants participated in key informant interviews.
- 16 Strategy participants responded to a survey.

Analysis

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

- Calculation of total inputs and outputs;
- Tabulation of shelter user survey responses;
- Calculation of average responses to scaled questions in the Strategy participant survey.

Qualitative analysis included:

- Review and synthesis of key informant interview responses;
- Review and synthesis of Strategy participant survey comments on strengths and challenges.

⁷ Service statistics collected by the Strategy for the November 2000 through March 2001 period and from additional service data collected by the consultant.

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 2000-2001, action taken on the October 2000 recommendations, and a program logic model;
- “Inputs, outputs and outcomes”, which presents information on the volume of resources invested in the Strategy in 2000-2001, the quantity of services delivered in that year, and the results of these services;
- “Strengths and challenges”, which contains analysis of member opinions on statements on strengths and challenges from the 1999-2000 evaluation.

The conclusion provides general analysis of the evaluation findings.

2.0 Overview of the Strategy

2.1 Strategic Plan

The October 1999 CWWS Strategic Plan states the following mission, vision and strategic goals.

Mission

The Cold/Wet Weather Strategy is a regional network of community partners in the Lower Mainland working together to develop and implement a continuum of accessible shelter services in response to local needs during inclement weather.

We are committed to support the hope and respect for people through housing them in their own communities.

Vision

The Lower Mainland Cold/Wet Weather Strategy will be effectively and efficiently working when fewer emergency shelters are required and more second stage and long term housing will have been developed in response to homelessness. There will be recognized, universal shelter standards and practices for the provision of services throughout the continuum of housing. There will be an established community response in each municipality.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Establish coordinated and sustainable funding to support the Strategy throughout the region.*
- 2. Create more beds to meet local needs.*
- 3. Provide a coordinated and accessible range of services.*
- 4. Communicate service availability to the homeless and the larger community.*
- 5. Maintain a responsive, effective and accountable Strategy partnership utilizing a universal shelter user database and communications systems.*
- 6. Develop and maintain community awareness and participation.*

2.2 Governance

The CWWS is an unincorporated entity that previously had two components: the Committee of the Whole and the Alert Team. The idea of an “alert team” has been used in other regions where cold weather shelter strategies include a mechanism that activates in response to extreme weather.

As part of a 1999 strategic planning process, participants agreed to establish an Action Group that would be nominated by the Regional Committee.⁸ The Action Group would meet more frequently (once per month during the winter months) and would have the following responsibilities:

- Appointing a chairperson of the Action Group;
- Maintaining meeting minutes and reporting back to the Regional Committee;
- Calling ad hoc meetings, including Regional Committee meetings;
- Providing direction for contracted staff for the Strategy;
- Coordination of goods and services;
- Information sharing with strategy partners and stakeholder groups;
- Data collection and reporting pertaining to the performance of the Strategy;
- Establishing links to the housing sector and the full continuum of housing.

The intent of this structure was for the Action Group to provide overall planning and leadership. The Regional Committee was to nominate representatives to this group and provide input and feedback.

2.3 Activities

CWWS activities in the 2000-2001 year include the following:

- 6 regional Strategy meetings;
- Coordinated planning of cold/wet weather shelter services;
- Information sharing about cold/wet weather shelter services;
- Informal coordination among shelter service providers;
- Joint application for funding through the 2000-2001 SCPI program;
- Participation in related initiatives such as HIFIS (Housing Information System);
- Preparation of a draft plan in preparation for periods of extreme weather;
- Evaluation of the 1999-2000 year.

⁸ This governance structure was not yet implemented as of August 2001.

2.4 Action on 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 Strategy endorsed all of these recommendations. The following shows details of each recommendation, in italics, and summaries of action taken.

Recommendation 2000-1: Purchase staff support.

The CWWS should secure a contracted staff person to provide coordination, communication, and meeting facilitation support. The volume of professional services may be approximately the equivalent of 0.5 of a full time position.

Action taken on Recommendation 2000-1: The Strategy mobilized in-kind staff support for the January 2001 through August 2001 period. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services provided the time of a Co-op student for that period.

Recommendation 2000-2: Implement the Action Group and Regional Committee structure.

Full implementation of the adopted structure could create more consistency of meeting participation by Strategy partners by enabling less involved organizations to remain active and have input without being expected to come to monthly meetings.

Action taken on Recommendation 2000-2: No action was taken on this recommendation.

Recommendation 2000-3: Develop and use an annual action plan.

An action plan, which specifies responsibilities and completion dates, could contribute to the effectiveness and accountability of the Strategy. The action plan should include communications activities, both for internal communication (among strategy partners) and external communication (targeted to broader audiences).

Action taken on Recommendation 2000-3: No action was taken on this recommendation.

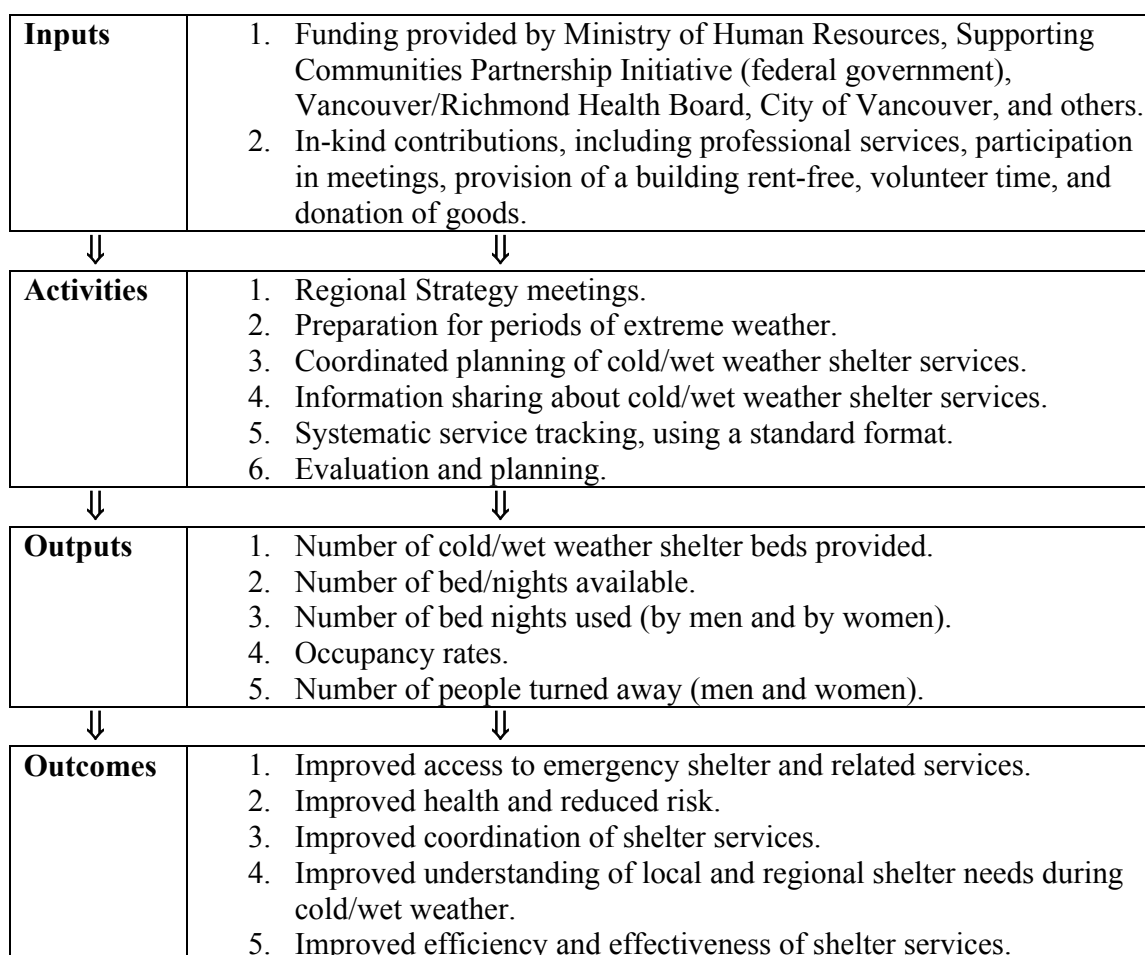
Recommendation 2000-4: Implement consistent monitoring and evaluation.

Establishing coordinated data collection for winter shelter services, along with an internal evaluation process, will help the Strategy continue to build on its success.

Action taken on Recommendation 2000-4: The Strategy worked with participating cold/wet weather shelter providers to use the HIFIS system for collection of shelter user data in a coordinated manner (see outputs information in section 3.2). In addition, the Strategy designed and conducted a cold/wet weather shelter user survey. Rather than conduct an internal evaluation, the Strategy contracted with James Pratt Consulting to provide follow-up evaluation services and to prepare this report.

2.5 Program logic model

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



3.0 Inputs, outputs, and outcomes

3.1 Funding and in-kind resources

As shown in the table below, CWWS inputs in the September 2000 through August 2001 period included funding from the federal government SCPI program, the Ministry of Human Resources (Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4), the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the City of Vancouver, Central City Mission Foundation, and Vancouver Community Mental Health.

Total funding, including cash donations, exceeded \$1.1 million. This amount was up from the 1999-2000 total funding amount of just over \$0.6 million. The primary reason for the increase was the new SCPI funding for shelter service delivery, outreach activities, and facilities enhancement.

Cold/Wet Weather Strategy Funding: 2000-2001

Funding agencies	Facilities/Programs	Funding
Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative – Human Resources Development Canada	Covenant House Gateway Shelter Marpole Shelter North Shore Temporary Emergency Shelter The Umbrella Urban Native Youth Association	\$481,000
Ministry of Human Resources (MHR) Region 1	Marpole Shelter Catholic Charities Men’s Hostel The Haven The Umbrella CWWS (evaluation and action planning services)	\$285,000
MHR Region 2	Richmond House; contribution to The Haven	\$90,000
MHR Region 3	Garfield Hotel Mat Program Hope Community Services Arthur Cartmell House (Chilliwack) Mission Community Services William Booth House (Abbotsford)	\$48,600
MHR Region 4	Gateway Shelter	\$56,000
V/R Health Board	Marpole Shelter	\$75,000
City of Vancouver	Marpole Shelter	\$53,988
Central City Mission	Marpole Shelter	\$20,000
Van. Com. Mental Health	Marpole Shelter	\$10,000
TOTAL		\$1,119,588

Additional funding included \$9,240 in cash donations to the Marpole shelter.

In-kind contributions during the period included provision of professional services, participation in Strategy meetings, provision of a building rent-free, volunteer time with individual shelters, and donations of goods.

Provision of in-kind professional services included the following:

- Secretariat services (approximately 0.8 of an FTE over eight months, provided by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services);
- CWWS coordination (provided by Lookout Emergency Aid Society and the Ministry of Human Resources);
- Administration of cold/wet weather shelter user survey (provided by City of Vancouver).

During the one-year period there were six meetings of the Strategy group: October, November, February, March, April and May. There were a total of approximately 88 incidences of participation in these two-hour meetings. Sub-committee meetings included three meetings of the Extreme Weather Task Group (during the February March period of 2001).

The City of North Vancouver provided \$5,000 worth of free building rental and waived permit fees for the North Shore Temporary Emergency Shelter.

Several cold/wet weather shelter programs used community volunteers, particularly for tasks such as food preparation and laundry.

Donations of goods included items such as blankets, winter clothing, and food. For example:

- The Vancouver Food Bank donated approximately \$4,500 worth of food to the Marpole Shelter;
- Lions Gate Hospital and the North Shore Health Region provided approximately \$3,000 worth of free linens/laundry as well as staff time in coordination of donations from businesses (e.g., muffins, coffee, free meals, and clothing)
- Tim Hortons provided approximately \$2,000 worth of baked goods to the North Shore Shelter.

3.2 Outputs

Summary of Cold/Wet Shelter Service Outputs: 2000-2001

	Number of beds	Total number of bed nights available	Total number of bed nights used	Breakdown of bed nights used		Occupancy rate	Number turned away	
				Men	Women		Men	Women
Catholic Charities	10	1,310	675	675	n/a	52%	310	n/a
Covenant House	4	120 ⁹	120	84	36	100%	no data	no data
Garfield Hotel	6	906	644	644	n/a	71%	186	n/a
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Hope Com. Services	2	no data ¹⁰	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
Marpole Shelter	50	7,821	7,404	no ¹¹ data	no data	95%	Approx 219 ¹²	Approx 55
Mission Com. Services	2	200	143	no data	no data	72%	0	0
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Urban Native Youth Assoc.	10	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
TOTAL	185	23,358+	19,334+	Not known	Not known	83%	Not known	Not known

⁹ Covenant House opened the four additional beds on April 1, 2001. Figures presented here present bed nights through the end of April. Covenant House continued to provide the additional beds throughout the year.

¹⁰ Hope Community Services reported statistics for a combined total of 4 beds, including the two cold/wet weather beds. Of 904 bed nights, 120 were used (20% occupancy rate).

¹¹ Marpole Shelter did not track client nights by gender, but did track individual clients by gender. Of 728 individuals served in the 2000-2001 season, 584 (80%) were men and 144 (20%) were women.

¹² Marpole Shelter did not track turn away incidences by gender. The approximate figures presented here derive from multiplying the total number of turn away incidences reported (274) by the percentages of male and female clients (80% and 20% respectively).

¹³ North Shore Temporary Emergency Shelter did not track client nights by gender, but did track individual clients by gender. Of 102 individuals served in the 2000-2001 season, 88 (86%) were men and 14 (14%) were women.

As shown in the table above, the various participating agencies provided 185 cold/wet weather shelter beds in the 2000-2001 year. Participating agencies provided 167 beds in 1999-2000 and provided 155 beds in 1998-1999.

The overall average occupancy rate was 83%. Data for all but two services shows that 23,358 bed nights were provided, and 19,334 bed nights were used. Data for all but five services shows that there were at least 1,109 incidences of people being turned away. Of these, approximately 829 involved men and approximately 280 involved women.¹⁴

The total bed nights available was increased from 21,038 in 1999-2000, which in turn was increased from 18,294 bed nights in 1998-1999. Occupancy rates for previous years were not known due to less consistent monitoring and reporting than in 2000-2001.

Additional outputs in 2000-2001 included facilities development, outreach services, and added hours. Examples of facilities development included: creation of four permanent beds at Covenant House; heating and wiring at the North Shore Shelter; and upgrades to the laundry facilities at Gateway/The Front Room. Arthur Cartmell House in Chilliwack added two hours per day (opening at 7:00 PM instead of 9:00) for four months. William Booth House in Abbotsford added two hours per day (opening at 5:00 PM instead of 7:00 PM) for just over two months.

Shelter user survey

Cold/wet weather shelter service users responded to a survey conducted through verbal interviews by a City of Vancouver representative at seven shelters. As shown in the table below, 49 users participated.¹⁵

Survey Locations

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Catholic Charities	6	12%
Garfield	3	6%
Gateway	10	20%
The Haven	7	14%
Marpole Shelter	14	29%
North Shore Shelter	6	12%
The Umbrella	3	6%
TOTAL	49	100%

¹⁴ The Haven and Richmond House did not submit turn-away data.

¹⁵ In three cases shelter users responded as a couple. Therefore, the total number of individuals participating in the survey was 52.

Demographics

Analysis of cold/wet weather shelter user survey data provides information about user demographics: gender, age, and family types.

Gender of Survey Respondents

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Male	41	84%
Female	5	10%
Couple	3	6%
Transgender	0	0%
TOTAL	49	100%

Age of Survey Respondents

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
18-25	7	14%
26-44	28	57%
45-60	12	24%
Over 60	2	4%
TOTAL	49	100%

Family Type of Survey Respondents

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Single person	46	94%
Couple	3	6%
TOTAL	49	100%

3.3 Outcomes

Improved access to emergency shelter

Analysis of cold/wet weather shelter user survey data provides evidence pertaining to the key outcome of the Strategy: improved access to emergency shelter. Asked, “if space at this shelter wasn’t available, where would you be staying?”, 33% indicated they would be on the street or outdoors and 21% indicated that they did not know. These findings suggest that a significant percentage of cold/wet weather shelter users would have otherwise been without shelter if these services were not available.

Responses: “If this space wasn’t available, where would you be staying?”

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
On the street/outdoors	20	33%
Another shelter	15	25%
Don’t know	13	21%
Friends/family	5	8%
Other places	5	8%
No answer	3	5%
TOTAL	51	124% ¹⁶

Of the 49 respondents, 24 (49%) indicated that they had been turned away from a shelter in the past. The most commonly cited reasons for being turned away were: lack of beds (27%); and lack of a Ministry referral (8%). These findings suggest that the increased supply of beds and the minimum-barrier approach contributed to improved access to emergency shelter.

Responses: History of Being Turned Away

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Never turned away	25	51%
No beds	13	27%
Other reason	6	12%
Not referred by welfare	4	8%
Barred	1	2%
TOTAL	49	100%

Of the 49 respondents, 28 (57%) indicated that they had an open file with the Ministry and 16 (33%) indicated that they did not. This further suggests that the minimum-barrier approach contributed to improved access to emergency shelter.

¹⁶ Some respondents gave multiple answers to the question about where they would be staying.

Responses: “Do you have an open file with the Ministry/welfare?”

	Number of respondents	Percent of respondents
Yes	28	57%
No	16	33%
Not sure	4	8%
No answer	1	2%
TOTAL	49	100%

Improved coordination of shelter services

In past evaluations of the Strategy, data on improved coordination of shelter services derived from semi-structured interviews with participants. In this evaluation, opinions of participants expressed through the survey serve as an indicator of improved coordination.

As indicated in section 4.1 below, survey respondents indicated high levels of agreement with the following statement: ***“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 (where 1 = “strongly agree” and 5 = “strongly disagree”), was 1.44. No respondents indicated disagreement.

4.0 Strengths and Challenges

4.1 Strengths

Capacity of the Strategy

Strengths 1 through 5 pertain to capacity of the Strategy. These five strengths are listed in order of agreement level indicated by survey respondents:

1. It brings together funding agencies, planners and service providers;
2. It facilitates information sharing, coordination and support among shelter 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 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 1.13. No respondents indicated disagreement.

Strength #2: 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 1.44. No respondents indicated disagreement. One commented: *“The Strategy, and resulting partnerships, enhances shelter services providers communication and relations in many other areas relating to mutual operational considerations, i.e., blankets, client transportation, and mutual support initiatives.”*

Strength #3: The Strategy group 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 1.5. No respondents indicated disagreement.

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 1.69. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4).

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 1.75. No respondents indicated disagreement.

Impact of the Strategy on shelter services

Strengths 6 through 10 pertain to the impact of the Strategy on shelter services. These strengths are listed in order of agreement level indicated by survey respondents:

6. It has resulted in provision of low-barrier shelter beds;
7. It provides a forum for planning of cold/wet weather shelter services;
8. It mobilizes funding and other resources to meet needs for cold/wet weather shelter services;
9. It spans the Lower Mainland and encourages local responses;
10. It raises the profile of homelessness issues and shelter needs.

Strength #6: It has resulted in provision of low-barrier shelter beds.

Whereas year-round shelter beds funded by the Province normally require a referral through Ministry of Human Resources Emergency Services, the cold/wet weather beds do not have this barrier.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.31. No respondents indicated disagreement. One commented: *“The low barrier shelter beds provide people with an alternative, otherwise they would prefer the outdoors. Entry into services is then an option.”*

Strength #7: It provides a forum for planning of cold/wet weather shelter services.

Without the Strategy, funding agencies, service providers, and planners would lack a forum for joint planning of cold/wet weather shelter services.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.56. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4).

Strength #8: It mobilizes funding and other resources to meet needs for cold/wet weather shelter services.

The Strategy has mobilized funding and other resources from several sources to expand the supply of cold/wet weather shelter beds.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.63. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4).

Strength #9: It spans the Lower Mainland and encourages local responses.

The Strategy has a mandate that spans the Lower Mainland, while also being a catalyst for local community responses to cold/wet weather shelter needs.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.81. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4).

Strength #10: It raises the profile of homelessness issues and 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.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.13. Three respondents (19%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4). One respondent commented: *“The CWWS has a good level of profile at the municipal and provincial levels of government, but it lacks visibility in the public...”*

Survey respondents did not identify any additional key strengths.

4.2 Challenges

Capacity of the Strategy

Challenges 1 through 5 pertain to the capacity of the Strategy. These challenges are listed in order of agreement level indicated by survey respondents:

1. Staffing to support the Strategy;
2. Capacity to follow up on the Strategic Plan;
3. Governance and accountability structure;
4. Balanced representation;
5. Efficiency of meetings.

Challenge # 1: Staffing to support the Strategy.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.38. No respondents indicated disagreement. One commented: *“Staffing is the single most important consideration to goal attainment.”*

Challenge # 2: Capacity to follow up on the Strategic Plan.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4).

Challenge # 3: Governance and accountability structure.

Being an unincorporated inter-agency entity, and being relatively new, the Strategy has faced a challenge in developing a clear governance and accountability structure.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.06. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4) and another (6%) indicated strong disagreement (a rating of 5).

Challenge # 4: Balanced representation.

There have been uneven participation levels among categories of stakeholders and among geographic areas.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.06. One respondent (6%) indicated disagreement (a rating of 4) and another (6%) indicated strong disagreement (a rating of 5). A respondent commented: *“City officials, in particular, have had very low (almost no) representation at the table during meetings.”*

Challenge # 5: Efficiency of meetings.

The duration, structuring, and content of meetings has remained an issue.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.13. One respondent (6%) indicated strong disagreement (a rating of 5).

Shelter services

Challenges 6 through 10 pertain to shelter services. These challenges are listed in order of agreement level indicated by survey respondents:

6. Service gaps;
7. Accessibility of individual shelters services;
8. Lack of linkages to further services;
9. Lack of needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements;
10. Coordination of funding.

Challenge # 6: 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., youth shelter and transportation).

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.63. No respondents indicated disagreement. One commented: *“Supported second stage and independent housing are continuum of care considerations that require consideration in the plan – longer term remedial action.”*

Challenge # 7: Accessibility of individual shelters services.

Some shelter services have problems with accessibility, particularly in terms of their capacity to serve relatively challenging clients.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.75. No respondents indicated disagreement.

Challenge # 8: Lack of linkages to further services.

Cold/wet weather shelter services are presently limited to keeping people off of the street.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 1.88. One respondent (6%) indicated strong disagreement (a rating of 5) and commented: *“this is not an issue.”*

Challenge # 9: Lack of needs assessment to determine shelter resource requirements.

Volume of funding is not based on assessed need for cold/wet weather shelter services.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.13. One respondent (6%) indicated strong disagreement (a rating of 5).

Challenge # 10: Coordination of funding.

Having multiple agencies providing cold/wet weather shelter funding poses a coordination challenge.

The average survey response regarding level of agreement with this statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, was 2.25. Two respondents (13%) indicated strong disagreement (a rating of 5). One commented: *“I think it’s a strength, not a challenge.”*

Survey respondents did not identify any additional key challenges.

5.0 Conclusion

This evaluation of the Cold/Wet Weather Strategy's third year documented overall performance and scanned internal strengths and challenges. The Strategy continued to address its mission and strategic goals through a multi-stakeholder approach to service development, delivery, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation.

SCPI funding in 2000-2001 resulted in a substantial increase in inputs. The volume of cold/wet weather shelter service increased from previous years. Due to improved service monitoring, the evaluator was able to calculate a baseline figure for overall occupancy rates of shelter beds associated with the Strategy (83%).

Findings from a shelter user survey and from a survey of Strategy participants provide some evidence of two key outcomes:

- Increased access to emergency shelter
- Improved coordination of shelter services.

The participant survey validated the ten strengths and ten challenges identified in the 1999-2000 evaluation. Survey feedback resulted in the reframing of some strengths and challenges and sorting in order of agreement level indicated by respondents.

Documentation of these findings contributes to accountability and provides a basis for detailed action planning. As the Strategy moves forward, the information presented in this evaluation can serve as a baseline and a reference point.