

# PoCo mayor wants to find homeless Homes for Good

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A new program through which the public can donate to get a homeless person off the street is gaining steam in Port Coquitlam.

"Our No. 1 goal is to be able to provide a roof over someone's head so that they don't have to worry about where they're going to stay tonight — or next week or next year," said Mayor Greg Moore, who spearheaded the program.

The Homes for Good Society, created in January as a successor to the Mayor's Action Team on Homelessness, plans to rent market-based transition housing to people in need, Moore said.

The program is aimed at helping the city reach its goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2015.

About 200 homeless people were living in Port Coquitlam as of 2009, the society's website says.

The vacancy rate for rental or subsidized rate is "virtually non-existent" at 1.5 per cent.

A welfare recipient's shelter allowance — \$375 a month — doesn't go very far, so the society is working with provincial housing authorities to find a way to supplement that allowance with community donations.

Legislation states that only the provincial government can subsidize shelter, Moore explained. Any additional funding, no matter the source, is taken off the \$375, leaving the welfare recipient no better off.

"We have to figure out how we overcome being able to maintain that \$375, yet still provide some funding to get people into homes," he said.

"We're very close now, which is quite exciting."

Based on the average rental costs in the Tri-Cities, the society figured



Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore says a donation of a dollar a day will help take someone off the streets. — SUBMITTED PHOTO

that \$520 in donations, used to top up the shelter allowance, will pay to house one person per month, Moore said.

"We're going to basically copy the World Vision fundraising

drive, which is a dollar a day," he said. "We're going to say a dollar a day will help take someone off the streets in your community.

"Of course, we need 17 people to give a dollar a day to get someone

off the street [at \$520 per month], but it's tangible."

The society also plans to partner with mental health, food banks and other service agencies to provide "wraparound" help, he said.

The local Soroptimists chapter has already donated funds to house one person for two years, Moore said, and the provincial government hopes to duplicate the society's model in other cities.

Once they've donated, people will be able to track their sponsored homeless person's progress through the society's website.

"You won't get to know the person's name or see a picture of them, but you'll get to know a little history about them," Moore said, "and then you can go back month after month to see their progress.

"You can actually see that this person is succeeding, hopefully."

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