

A photograph of a person wearing a red and black winter jacket and a grey hood, pushing a metal shopping cart filled with groceries. The person is walking on a sidewalk. The background is slightly blurred, showing a street scene.

11th Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson BC

INSIDE
Rental Market Surveys
for Nelson and the Region

REACHING HOME:
Long-term solutions for homelessness
Working for affordable housing
with our community

JUNE 2019

Researched and prepared by The Nelson Committee on Homelessness



The 11th Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson (JUNE 2019) will help the reader to understand the causes and experiences of homelessness in Nelson. It will explain what organizations and individual members of the Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) are doing in our community to develop long-term solutions through community partnerships. It is designed to both encourage questions and inform solutions.

This report will:

- **HIGHLIGHT** the importance of affordable and supportive housing in the continuum of options needed to address homelessness—and their benefits to our community
- **FEATURE** the work of NCOH participants in the community, and the comprehensive approach being taken, including a NEW DIRECTION: REACHING HOME to develop more coordinated access, assessments and community-level service coordination and data sharing to better assess and report outcomes
- **REPORT** on community indicators and trends that impact poverty and homelessness.

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The Nelson Committee on Homelessness is a community table.

NCOH is volunteer committee of people from community and public services and institutions, with federal program representation, a City councillor, people with lived experience and other interested community members. Since 2001 NCOH has worked with community members, businesses, governments and other stakeholders to prevent, alleviate and find long-term solutions to homelessness and poverty. We do this by:

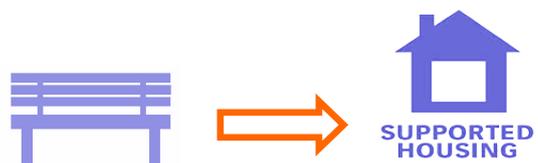
- Encouraging collaboration and supporting new initiatives;
- Leading community research and facilitating information sharing and knowledge-building;
- Developing community partnerships among all stakeholders to participate in solutions.

NCOH is supported through federal government funding and by fundraising for its activities and those it directly supports. Through the *Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives* (2001 - 07) and most recently the *Homeless Partnering Strategies* (2007-19) NCOH has supported a number of initiatives including:

- The Nelson Food Cupboard
- Our Daily Bread
- An initial youth street outreach
- Ward Street Place
- Stepping Stones Emergency Shelter
- Salvation Army showers and laundry

NCOH acts as the Community Advisory Board (CAB) for the federal program, and since 2003 the CAB has chosen Nelson CARES to hold the federal contract for the community. NCOH currently provides funds for the Street Outreach Program, a Transitional Housing Worker and a Community Coordinator who as assists the CAB and its initiatives of Homelessness Action Week in October, Community Connect Day in November, and the Annual Report Card on Homelessness for Nelson.

REACHING HOME: 2019 to 2029 NEW DIRECTIONS FOR NCOH



The new ten year federal homelessness program means NCOH will be undertaking a community planning process over the next year to work with all stakeholders towards a more Coordinated Access approach to assisting people who are experiencing homelessness. This will include using a common assessment tool and more community-level service coordination and data sharing to assess and report outcomes to the community. The goal is to bring more targeted, client-centred wrap-around supports to people experiencing homelessness. (Find out more on Pages 12 & 13.)



Why are people without housing?

First, **NO ONE** chooses to be homeless. There is no one cause. And it usually comes about because of more than one factor.

SYSTEMS FAIL:

There is a lack of - and a lack of access to — affordable safe and appropriate rental housing.

- Affordable housing cannot be provided by the private sector or the community without government assistance. Federal governments withdrew their responsibility for rental housing in the early 1990's. There are decades of neglect and increased homelessness to now address.
- Years of unmonitored huge investments and money laundering in real estate plus other economic factors have driven up market prices to beyond the reach of many people, first in Vancouver, then across the province. The whole region is experiencing increased prices.
- Those most vulnerable - on a fixed income, with mental, physical or addiction health and disabilities issues—face additional barriers when trying to access scarce rental housing.

There are people who lack an adequate income. The poor in BC went a decade before seeing ANY increase in income assistance. They are beginning to see increases now, thanks to the Provincial government, but their income is still **well below the poverty line**. If you only get \$375 per month for rent, utilities and maintenance, could you find a place to live—when a room in a shared apartment averages \$637? People who can only manage part-time work and those working at minimum wage levels are also extremely challenged to find rental housing.

A lack of - and a lack of access to - appropriate medical & social supports. Protocols, policies, workplace cultures, under-staffing and lack of money are often barriers for people getting the help they need when they need it to make a difference in their lives. The lack of a supportive 24/7 housing project to move people from streets to home is one missing link in Nelson, for example.

LIFE HAPPENS and if people have few family, friends, social supports or savings as a safety net, they can find themselves homeless. Stigmas present barriers to securing housing.

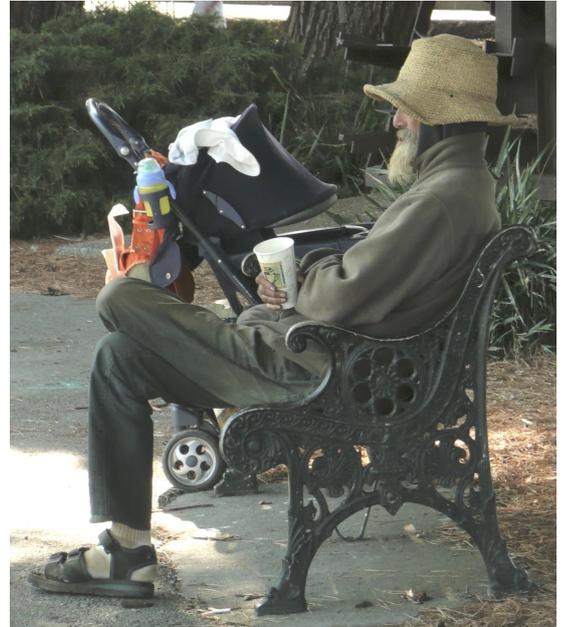
- **Trauma and personal crisis** happen in peoples' lives: Abuse, family or relationship breakdowns, violence - sometimes at an early age - affect one's ability to cope, work and engage.
- **Mental health concerns** often stemming from trauma, genetics, adverse reactions to or misuse of prescriptions, alcohol or street drugs, and social factors all contribute to at least half of people who have no housing reporting mental health issues and substance use disorders.
- **Discrimination** occurs to LGBTQ2S+ and transgender, indigenous, and immigrant people, those with mental and physical disabilities, victims leaving violence, even single parents and kids.
- **Poor physical health or disabilities**, serious injuries or illness can mean job, income and housing loss.

What is it like to be without housing?

More and more Nelsonites may have to contemplate this question. The precariousness of rental housing in Nelson was a major finding in NCOH's 2018 Point-In-Time Survey. 107 of 360 housed people surveyed were in fear of imminent loss of their housing. Many people can only afford rentals by living with others. If you aren't on the lease, if you have a room-mate leave, if the lease ends, if conflicts arise with roommates or landlords – all of this leads to housing insecurity.

To go from housing to losing it may lead to cycles of crashing with family or friends then moving on to the next contact, then the shelter. The Emergency Shelter allows a 30 day stay. If that runs out, some move to a vehicle if they have one, tenting or worse. People can cycle in and out of homelessness, as precarious, temporary living situations fail.

When you experience homelessness, you are often in the public eye much of the day. You may live outside or in abandoned places. You choose to stay up all night because it's safer to sleep in the day. You are in public places because there are few places you can be when you have no money, especially after service hours. You spend all day getting moved along; you never get to rest, and if you do, someone may call the cops.



Anxiety, exhaustion and depression can build as you are devalued because of your appearance and your very presence – receiving abusive comments, being ignored, viewed with suspicion, constantly watched – it starts to feel like harassment and torture to some. It turns into deeper self-doubt.

Your physical and mental health can start to spiral downwards. You try to find some relief from the pressures. Mental health issues and substance use are very common as people use drugs to quell the anxiety, depression and stress. One thing is for sure. Once you lose a permanent housing situation, the longer you are homeless, the harder it gets to secure one again.

For those who can manage work, some live in their vehicles, travelling a distance to work. If their vehicles don't pass inspections and are impounded they lose their housing and their job. Many people haven't been able to find affordable housing in Nelson and live in Salmo or Kaslo or other rural areas where the bus service is poor to non-existent if you are trying to work in Nelson.

There are an increasing number of permanent squats – not the ones seen when travellers or adventurers or itinerant workers come through – just outside town on the way to Ymir, and in the Winlaw area, for example - with RVs, vans and tents - with no facilities, some not even providing water, and some where they are being charged rent. Other areas have crash houses. People can see no other option. Some manage their money by living outside in warmer weather to save up for rental places during the winter. Others, especially middle-aged women of low income, hope to find house-sits.

(Continued page 14.)



Community Indicators: HOUSING

COMMUNITY INDICATORS are a standardized method to document the context of local homelessness, poverty and housing precariousness - and monitor changes over time.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Statistics for Nelson¹

VACANCY RATES:

For purpose-built rent-controlled units in buildings of more than 3 units

FINDING: Vacancy rates remain at effectively 0% for the fifth year in a row.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
OVERALL:	0.06%	0.04%	0.07%	0.00%	0.00%
Studio	0.00%	3.30%	*	*	0.00%
1 Bedroom	0.60%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2 Bedroom	0.80%	0.00%	0.80%	0.00%	0.00%
3 Bedroom	*	*	*	*	*

* indicates too small a sampling to count

TRENDS: Families continue to be challenged to find any three-bedroom rentals in Nelson. Low income singles have fewer affordable studio units to avoid shared living. Low and modest income households are especially challenged to find rental options in a continuing tight housing market that has not seen any relief yet.

RENTAL RATES: For purpose-built rent-controlled apartments & townhouses with more than 3 units

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2017-18 Change	2016-17 Change	2013-18 Change	RTB Increase Allowed
OVERALL:	\$710	\$743	\$741	\$772	\$816	\$853	4.50%	5.70%	20.1%	15.8%
Studio	\$527	\$550	\$572	\$605	\$591	\$634	7.30%	-2.30%	20.3%	
1 Bedroom	\$657	\$686	\$684	\$714	\$704	\$757	7.50%	-1.40%	15.2%	
2 Bedroom	\$792	\$829	\$809	\$830	\$917	\$936	2.10%	10.50%	18.2%	
3 Bedroom	\$1,125	\$1,111	\$1,106	\$1,106	\$1,114	**	n/a	0.70%	n/a	

TRENDS: Purpose-built rental units continue to hold closer to the allowed RTB rental increases, offering a more affordable alternative to newer secondary suites, condo and short-term rentals—often the only advertised choice, especially for singles who are sharing.

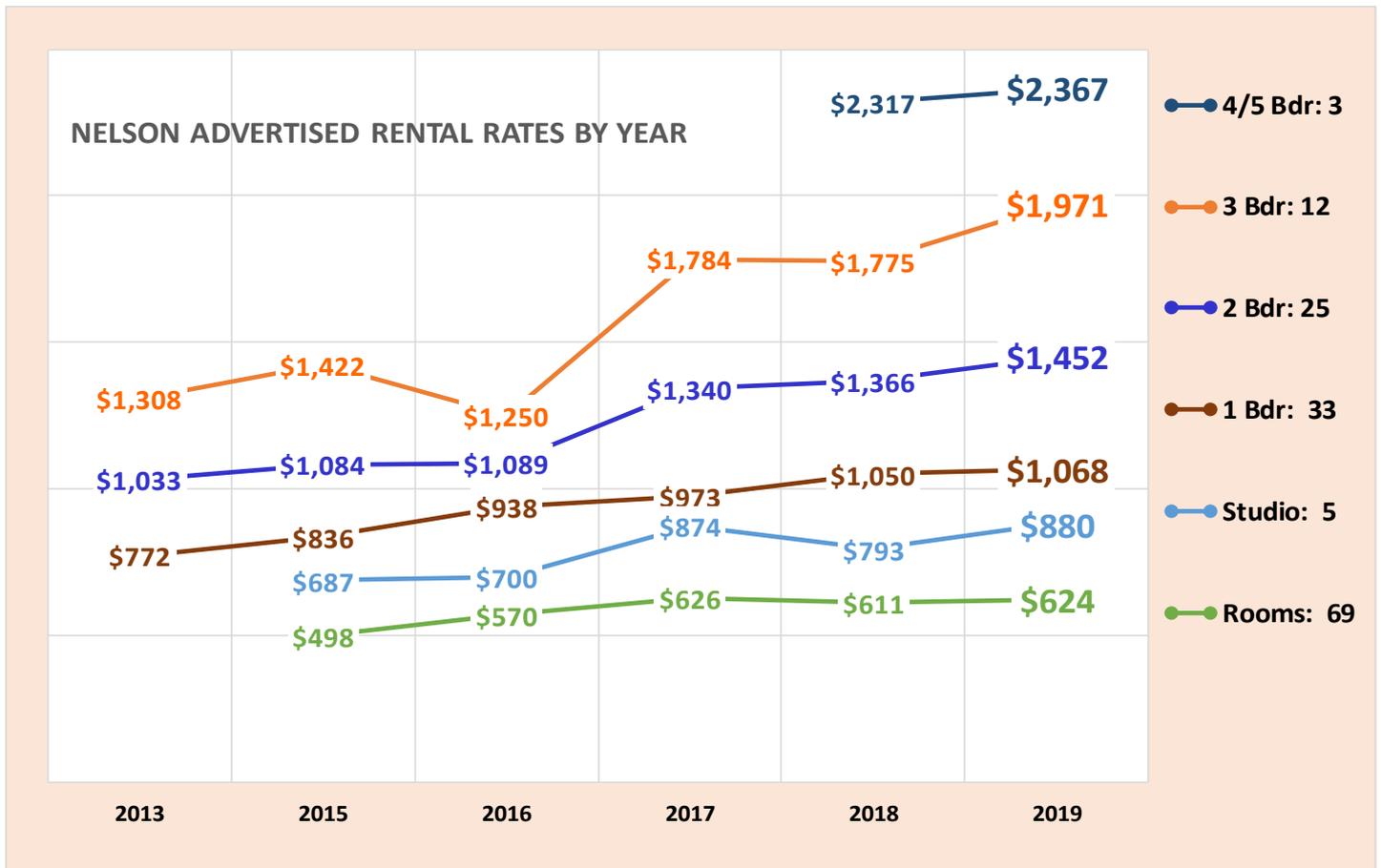
FINDINGS: That said, rental rates climbed over 7% in 2017-18 for studio and 1-bedroom units, though the overall rental increase rate slowed. The sharp increase in 2 Bedroom rental rates eased off considerably from last year. **Nelson saw an overall 20.1% increase in rental rates in rent-controlled units in the last 5 years of 0% vacancy.** A 2.5% increase is allowed for 2019.



Community Indicators: HOUSING

Advertised Average Rental Rates in Nelson

Once a year NCOH undertakes a survey of advertised rental rates in Nelson in April and May.



FINDINGS: ALL advertised rents were significantly higher than those in purpose-built CMHC surveyed rental units. Studio, 2 and 3 bedroom rentals saw larger increases 2018-19 at 11%, 6.3% and 11.0% respectively. Rooms were by far the most advertised rental unit, yet rental rates for them remained fairly steady 2018-19 overall, rising only 2.1% since 2018 and 1 bedrooms only up 1.7%.

TRENDS: Advertisements reflected singles and couples seeking affordable housing through share living situations. 30 of the 74 room advertisements indicated sharing a 2 or 3 bedroom unit with someone not a landlord owner. People seeking shared living were often seasonal workers or students, but others significantly mentioned cost as their important factor. Housing instability increases as shared living situations come and go. Some Nelson households, and those moving to the area seeking housing indicated a willingness to live out of town. Though rental rate increases have slowed for rooms and 1 bedrooms, Nelson's Median Household Income affords a rent of only \$916 at 30% of income (Census Canada 2016). A few more expensive rental advertisements were seen to lower initial asking prices over the survey time period.

NCOH Advertised Rental Market Survey: April - May 2019: Black Press, Pennywise, I Love Nelson, Kijiji, Craig's List, WK Rentals, Remax, Prop2Go, Selkirk College Off-Campus Hsg. List, FACEBOOK Nelson, BC-Homes & Rooms For Rent & FACEBOOK WK Available Rentals; phoned landlords & property managers.



Community Indicators: HOUSING

Rental Housing Stock in Nelson

Private Market Rental Housing Stock
- City of Nelson

	2016	2017	2018	2016-18 change
# of Rental Units *	1228	1238	1229	0.08%
Secondary Suites Reported	458	468	509	11.14%
# reported as Short-Term Rental		19	21	
Waivers for secondary suites (not for rent)	45	54	63	40.00%
Approved Short Term rental licenses	41	54	76	85.37%

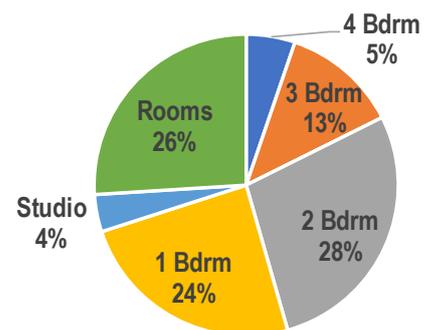
FINDINGS: The private sector has not been able to meet the need for increased rental units. Short-term rentals have almost doubled since 2016, again not serving the critical need for stable rental units in Nelson. (*From Water and Sewer City of Nelson Statistics)

RISKS OF SHARED LIVING: Roomers have no tenancy rights if they pay rent directly to the leaseholder or tenant who is on the rental agreement with the landlord, nor do renters sharing a kitchen or bathroom with the landlord. This can put their housing at-risk. They have recourse through small claims court but if locks are changed, for example, possessions may take a long time to reclaim.

Regional Advertised Rental Findings: (not Nelson)

- Continued posting of formal and informal RV sites for rent;
- Short term rentals remain consistently higher in price per month, possibly having an upward pressure on the rental market—though they are often newer, more expensive builds or renovations;
- There was an increase in the number of ads for shared living;
- Trail :** On average, rents rose 13.7 % in 2 bedrooms (20) and dropped 4.8% in one-bedrooms (14). With a smaller sampling, room rentals (7) rose 14.2%;
- Rural Nelson:** With smaller samplings, average rental prices jumped substantially with a 29.8% increase for 1 bedrooms (7), 18.7% for 2 bedroom (11), and 23.5 % for 3 bedrooms (6);
- Castlegar:** Average room rates (30) remained unchanged; 2 bedrooms (19) saw only a 3.1% increase after the substantial increases of last year; average 1 Bedroom rents (12) fell by 2.7%;
- Rossland:** High incidence of short term rentals; Increases of 20.5% for 1 bedroom units (9).

Regional Survey Rental Make-up:
250 Total



² NCOH Regional Advertised Rental Market Survey: April - May 2019:

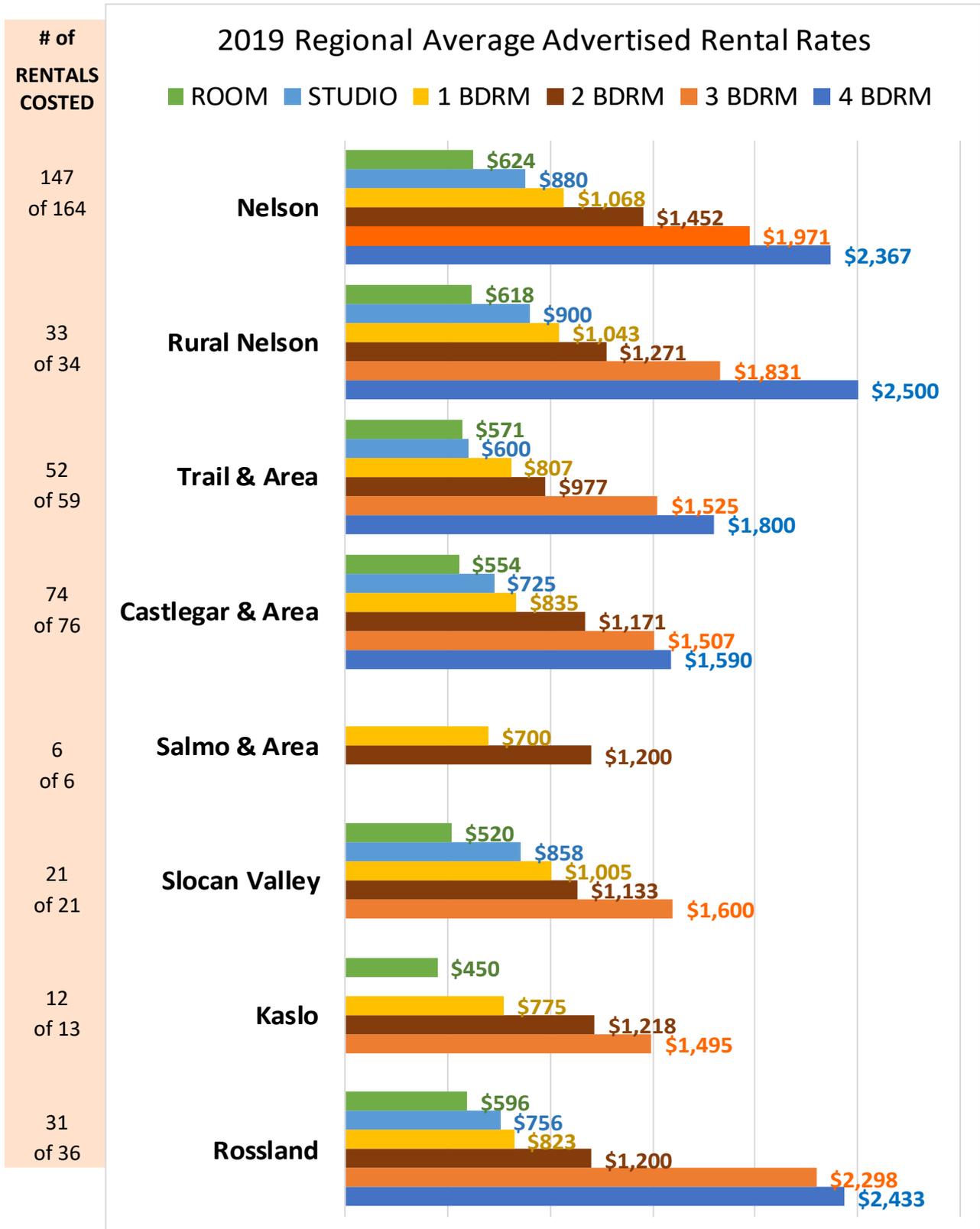
Black Press, Pennywise, I Love Nelson, Kijiji, Craig's List, WK Rentals, Remax, Prop2Go, Selkirk College Off-Campus Hsg. List, FACEBOOK Trail & Area Rentals, FBNelson, BC-Homes & Rooms For Rent & FB WK Available Rentals; Bhubble.com, realestate.mitula.ca.



Community Indicators: HOUSING

Regional Average Advertised Rental Rates²

Low vacancy rates and climbing rental rates in Nelson and the ripple effect of household and investment capital migration from larger markets contribute to some added pressure on other housing markets in the region.





Community Indicators: HOUSING

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	5 Year Change	2019
Residential Tenancy Board Allowed increases (%)	2.2	2.5	2.9	3.7	4.5	15.8	2.5
Nelson rent increases (%) (CMHC)	4.6	-0.3	4.2	5.6	5.8	19.9	

# of Rent Supplements in Nelson ¹	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Chg
Seniors (SAFER: Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters)	61	68	68	76	90	89	-1%
Families (RAP: Rental Assistance Program)	74	80	70	71	59	39	-34%
Homeless (Homeless Prevention & Outreach)	10	30	30	30	30	30	0%

FINDING: Purpose-built, rent controlled units saw rental rates rise over 5 years by 4.1%, slightly higher, on average, than RTB set limits but much lower than advertised rental rates.

FINDING: The number of RAP Family rental supplements dropped sharply. Rent supplements for seniors remained the same despite growing reports of seniors at-risk. The number of program rent supplements for the Homeless Outreach and Prevention programs have remained the same since 2015 despite growing costs of the rental market.

Housing affordability VS. Income is a challenge for many

Household Type / Income Source	Gross Annual Income	Rent Afforded @ 30% of income
Single on Income Assistance	\$9,210	\$375
Single on Disability Benefits	\$14,196	\$375
Senior on GIS / OAS only	\$17,997	\$450
Single earning Minimum Wage	\$27,008	\$675
Census (2017): Median 1-Person Household Income	\$29,696	\$742
Census: MEDIAN RENTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$36,647	\$916
Average Advertised One-Bedroom Unit in Nelson (2019)		\$1,108



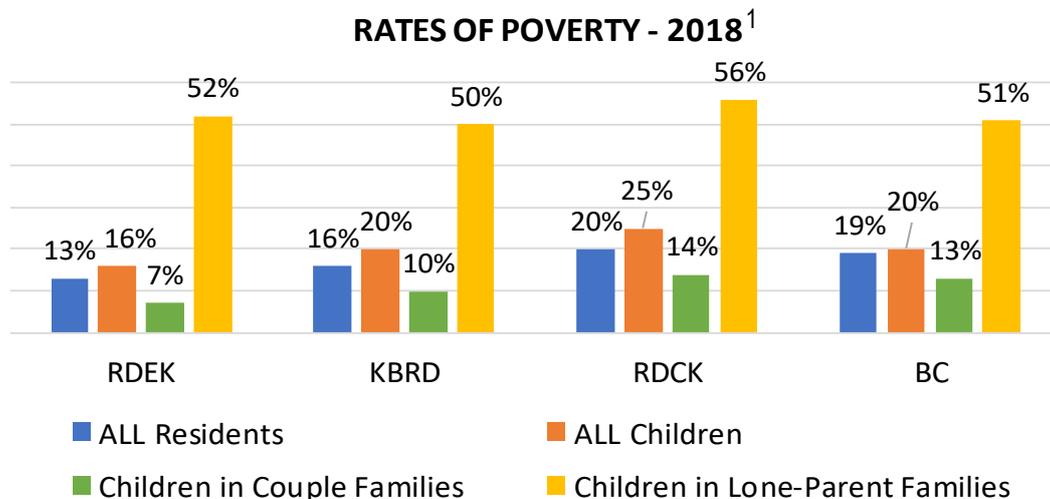
Community Indicators: INCOME

FINDING: The BC minimum wage has risen 32.5% since 2015, rising faster than rental rates. Minimum wage earners are better off, but still do not make a **Living Wage** - in Nelson: \$18. 46

Minimum Wage in BC						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Change 2015-19
Basic Hourly Wage	\$10.45	\$10.85	\$11.35	\$12.65	\$13.85	32.5%
Yearly Income @ 37.5 Hrs/Wk	\$20,378	\$21,158	\$22,133	\$24,668	\$27,008	
Rent afforded at 30% of income	\$509	\$529	\$553	\$617	\$675	

in 2019 for a two-parent household. Minimum wage rates allow for only \$675 per month for rent and utilities @ 30% of income.

FINDING: Recent child care benefits from the provincial government have decreased the living wage needed in Nelson and throughout the province. The living wage is the hourly amount that each of two working parents with two young children must earn to meet their basic expenses (including rent, child care, food and transportation).



FINDING: Our Regional District of Central Kootenay has the highest rate of poverty for all residents, children, children in couple families and children in lone-parent families compared to the surrounding regional districts of Kootenay Boundary and East Kootenay (and Okanagan-Similkameen.)

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (2002 = 100)			
	2017	2018	2017-18 Change
Canada	130	133	2.3
BC	125	128	2.7

The CPI rose more in BC than Canada. Gas rose by 12.8 pts, Transportation by 7.4 pts & Owned Accommodation by 4pts.

KOOTENAY ECONOMIC REGION			
	2016	2017	2018
Unemployment Rate (%)	8	7.3	5.3
Employment Rate (%)	67.4	71.9	71.2

The Kootenays have seen a marked decrease in unemployment the last two years.

REACHING HOME in NELSON:

A New Direction for the Federal Homelessness Program

The Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) hopes to enhance our work addressing homelessness under the new 5-year federal *Reaching Home* program. *Reaching Home* introduces a “data-driven, performance-based” approach with the goal of showing year-over-year progress towards a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness by 2027/28. The program defines “chronic” as being without permanent or safe housing at least 6 months in the past year or 18 months in the past 3 years.

The new contract for the Nelson Community Advisory Board (CAB) will see NCOH start to work towards newly mandated program goals over the next year, starting with a community planning process involving all stakeholders—to set goals and outcome measurements. NCOH has received federal funding since 2007 through the *Homeless Partnering Strategies (HPS)* program, one of ten “Designated Communities” under the federal program in BC. This ended March 31, 2019 and NCOH approved Nelson CARES as the continuing “Community Entity” to hold the contract for the new *Reaching Home* program.

The program calls for year-over-year progress towards a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness by 2027/28.

Community CAB’s will be asked to report publicly on their progress in an annual Community Progress Report to include such information as the number and demographics of new and returning individuals experiencing homelessness who are:

- assessed
- diverted from shelters through supports to retain or find other appropriate housing,
- diverted from homelessness to shelters, or
- “exiting” homelessness or shelters into appropriate housing.

CABs will also report on other outcomes that the community prioritizes to report.

Systems Coordination:

- ***Common Vulnerable Assessment Tools***
- ***Coordinated access***
- ***Shared Data***
- ***A more integrated case management approach***

While Community Plans will be developed to set yearly goals, communities are asked to use community-level data to assess outcomes and evaluate the community-wide performance of the homelessness system. This may include factors around more systems coordination: more common assessment tools, coordinated access and shared data, and a more integrated case management approach among services providers.

Over time, communities will gain a better understanding of local system performance and identify what is working well and where adjustments need to be made. Reporting on outcomes will begin once coordinated access has been in place long enough to measure year-over-year progress against an established baseline.



Reaching Home embeds two essential strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness: **By Name Lists and Coordinated Access Systems.**

A By-Name List is a real-time list of all people experiencing homelessness in a community, including where they are at in accessing, moving through and leaving homelessness, shelter, housing and service options. This real-time data supports triage to services for people and system performance evaluation. The *Reaching Home* program sees this real-time data as key to measure and achieve federal objectives.

Coordinated access systems are “designed to streamline the process for people experiencing homelessness to access the housing and support services needed to permanently end their homelessness.”

By standardizing the intake and assessment process, sharing information in real-time, adopting uniform prioritization policies and coordinating referral processes, coordinated access systems connect people to the right housing and supports as efficiently as possible based on their preferences and level of need. This ensures communities get the most out of limited resources and can more rapidly and effectively prevent and end homelessness for those in greatest need.

The importance of Supportive Housing to the success of *Reaching Home*

Key to success will be the provision of supported housing. Supporting the transition of people from streets and shelters to home doesn’t work for people who have experienced chronic homelessness UNLESS they have a place where they can make that transition with 24/7 supports to help stabilize their health and their lives. It takes time to feel safe and move out of survival mode to begin to deal with other aspects of one’s life. It is extremely challenging to stabilize one’s physical, emotional and mental health (as many have histories of trauma even before experiencing homelessness), to re-learn daily life skills, and to begin to socially interact again and re-integrate into a community you have largely been marginalized from—whether seeking housing, or work or skills training or education. It takes support and time. People are more able to move into housing in community once their health and lives are stabilized. This can take up to two years.

BC Housing will be tying outcomes to the provision of supported housing.



Homelessness Action Week (HAW) 2018: Youth At Risk & Homeless

A public forum on Youth who are At-Risk and Homeless drew over 100 people to the Adventure Hotel during HAW (Oct. 8-12) to learn about the realities of paths into homelessness for youth and what services are available. Council

candidates, Chamber of Commerce members, business people and professionals, employees of School District 8, Selkirk College, MCFD and IHA, service providers and youth all took the time to begin to explore what we can do better as a community to address this issue.

It was an informative, impactful, inspiring evening with speaker Katherine McParland from *A Way Home Kamloops* and the *BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness*, indigenous speaker Nipawi Kakinoosit, and panellists from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Nelson and District Youth Centre, Nelson Community Services Youth Services, ANKORS, Freedom Quest Youth Services, Nelson Police Department, SD8's REACH Program, Stepping Stones Emergency Shelter and Selkirk Students' Union. School Principal Tim Mushumanski did an incredible job as Honourary HAW Chair. Thanks to all for sharing their important time, insights, knowledge and experience, and to all the sponsors.



To be without housing (continued)

Vulnerable seniors are open to exploitation especially if they have mental health or addiction problems like alcohol. If they get a little money in, it makes them a target on the street, with heavy offers of "protection" to accompany them to go cash their cheque, but in return for a payment. Vulnerable seniors feel they can't refuse.

A person without ID cannot open a bank account or get direct deposit from the Ministry. Often they hold onto their entire cheque, which can lead to loss of money, and theft. Persons now out of town have to travel to Nelson every month to pick up their cheque and find a way to cash it.

Without access to sufficient income, affordable housing and supports and services, people who are homeless can find their situation becomes more chronic and find it increasingly difficult to generate income, maintain health, keep safe, nurture healthy relationships, obtain permanent housing and participate in community. **Homelessness costs everyone.** There is a need for more community housing options for low-income singles, seniors and families precariously housed in Nelson.

Monthly
Cost of a
Homeless
Person



\$ 1,932
Shelter Bed



\$ 4,333
Provincial Jail



\$ 10,900
Hospital Bed



\$ 701
Rental Supplement



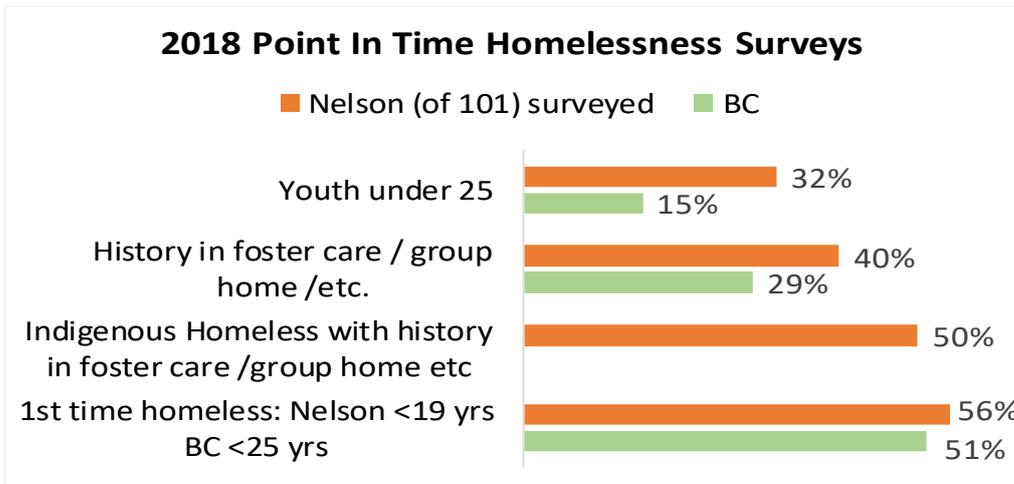
199.⁹²
Social Housing

Tackling Youth Homelessness

The NCOH April 2018 Point-In-Time survey showed an over-representation of youth who were homeless compared to the rest of the province. This may be due to methodology, putting an extra effort into surveying *hidden homeless* youth not in contact with any services ...but there were still troubling statistics.



HIGH HIDDEN YOUTH HOMELESSNESS:
57% crashed at someone's place the night before
75% did so at least 1 time in the previous 12 months.



That almost 60% who experienced homelessness did so before Age 19 spoke to the entrenchment and cycles of homelessness & poverty, the challenges to leave it and the need for early interventions.

LGBTQ2S, transgender and indigenous youth are overrepresented among Nelson's homeless population. Many leave home when individual and family problems become overwhelming. The legacy of colonization, residential schools and the 60's Scoop still deeply affects this generation of indigenous youth.

Nelson Community Services brought together staff from MCFD, community youth services, and the school district to brainstorm. The need for a more coordinated, supported approach to at-risk youth service initiatives was identified as a priority, including:

- mentorship opportunities & role models to experience success
- supports for youth transitioning to adulthood (19+yrs)
- a range of supported housing options (to prevent, transition out of and end homelessness).

Since last fall, services have seen an increase in the complexity of needs in the youth they are serving. ANKORS and Nelson Community Youth Services both report seeing younger kids aged 12 to 16 using harder drugs, having more complex mental health issues, and identifying earlier as LGBTQ2S or transgender, all leading to greater complexities in the services they need.

Youth services see a greater need for emergency housing/shelter options, more outreach outside of MCFD purview which some youth shy away from, as well as more upstream prevention including coordinated assessments, triage and stabilizations of youth at-risk and their families, youth mentors and a range of supportive housing options including more homes for youth placements. Youth themselves want mental health, tenant rights and supports and temporary employment services.

Nelson Street Outreach: Year 2 - Making a difference*

NCOH has contributed over \$30,000 annually to the Downtown Nelson Street Outreach project, one strategy developed by the Nelson Street Culture Collaborative, a group of social service sector, business, municipal police, faith community, school district, health authority, local college, and local government members. The project seeks “to positively affect the lives of individuals on the street and to positively influence community and service system stakeholders’ awareness and understanding of street-related challenges” by:

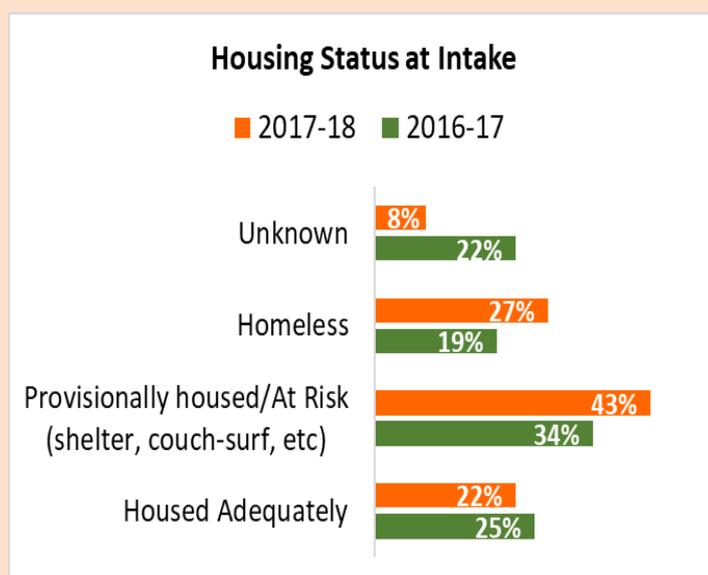
1. assisting people to make the transition to an improved quality of life
2. increasing understanding among stakeholders about street-related people and their challenges
3. identifying and addressing service gaps and systemic barriers that they face.

The Street Outreach Team are two part-time people (.60FTE) working flexible hours between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday, focusing on the downtown streets. They also connect with people as they access food, meals and others services at the Salvation Army, Our Daily Bread and Stepping Stones Shelter, and have responded to calls as needed or requested at the Police station, library, hospital, and Mental Health & Substance Use office. They have been assisted by a volunteer, Selkirk College nursing students and a social service worker practicum student .

NEW SERVICES IN THE SECOND YEAR INCLUDED:

1. Co-locating with Nelson Community Services’ Homeless Prevention program, building on Street Outreach subsuming the Housing Outreach Program. This means a more dynamic workplace to assist clients to find and maintain adequate housing, along with being able to offer a small, time-limited rental supplement. This approach will relate well to the planned changes under the new *Reaching Home* Coordinated Access approach.

- **214 people** were served in year two.
- **There were higher rates of people homeless and precariously housed** served in year two, with fewer having adequate housing.
- **The highest frequency of a needed service was housing support**, then relationship building, transportation and food, followed closely by the need for accompaniment to appointments, information and referrals.



2. recreational and social inclusion activities: Toonie Pool days at the Rec Centre (shower, pool, gym etc) and an art and culture show, showcasing street culture talent;
3. IHA now funds Street Outreach Overdose Prevention Services, including interventions, Naloxone training, Naloxone kits distribution, harm reduction supply distribution and reporting on overdoses. This has increased peoples’ access to harm reduction supports which has led to decreased risk.

The majority of referrals were to MHSU (Mental Health and Substance Use services) including residential treatment. Referrals related to housing were next, followed by health care and government financial assistance.

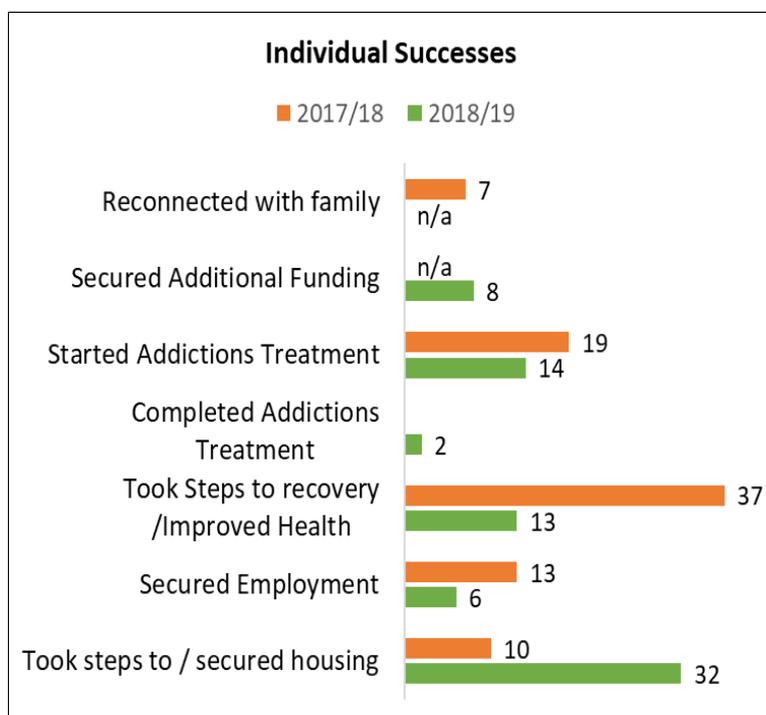
IMPROVING INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH:

The number of people with mental health and substance use (MHSU) issues seeing the Emergency Department (ED) for 4+ visits a year, saw significant reduction from 2015/15 to 2016/17 (Year 1) and kept this reduction in 2017/18.

MHSU Emergency Department presentations admitted to acute care decreased to 14% between Oct 2017 and Sept 2018 compared to the previous fiscal year at 21%.

Almost half of all referrals made by Street Outreach were for addictions treatment for people struggling with significant challenges and barriers to improve their quality of life. By providing for immediate needs and actively helping to connect people to services to address short and longer-term needs in a caring, non-judgmental way, the team has helped people take significant steps towards changing their use of substances, their housing situations, their employment or income status, their connections to family and community and, for some, their involvement in the streets and street life.

	Oct 2015 to Sept 2016	Oct 2016 to Sept 2017	Oct 2017 to Sept 2018	Reduced by
# Unique Patients	31	20	18	41.9%
Total ED Visits	174	96	96	44.8%



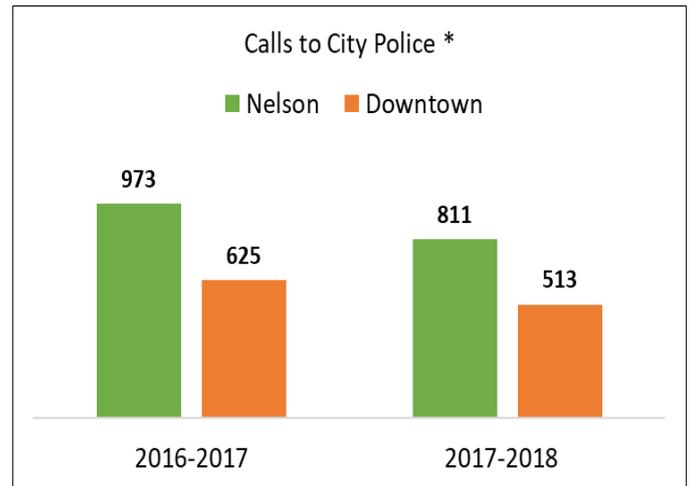
82% of respondents said that Street Outreach helped them make improvements in their life, or were helped in some way. 79% felt they had an advocate downtown to help them.

IMPROVING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Service providers have seen safety concerns and other street-related challenges reduced as a result of the Street Outreach project. By getting people's needs met and connecting them to services they are less likely to become a safety concern, for themselves or others.

Community services noted that the work of the Street Outreach team had reduced their need to contact the police as frequently and may have diffused situations that did occur where the police would normally have

been called. The downtown area accounted for 63% of the reduced number of calls to Police from 2016/17 to 2017/18 for Mischief, Assault, Break and Enter, Drugs, Safe Streets Act [panhandling], Threats, Robbery, Fraud, Weapon Offences and Liquor Act violations. While this can't be attributed solely to Street Outreach Team's work, it is likely they were a factor.



HELPING TO TAKE A COORDINATED APPROACH

Service providers noted many benefits to clients through working in partnership with the Street Outreach Team. In addition to connecting clients to services, this collaboration has also helped service providers work with clients they previously had difficulties connecting with.

12.6% or 17 of the 214 people Street Outreach connected with had contact more than 20 times.

There is a growing awareness a large proportion of the resources are spent on about 10% of the homeless ...around 15 individuals. These are

who need targeted systemic supports. Systems have been working well, creating interventions. Nelson Police Department, community services and MHSU have worked collaboratively to assist individuals and develop case plans for some. This approach will relate well to the planned changes NCOH considers under the new Reaching Home Coordinated Access approach.

The Two Year Pilot Project Evaluation Report recommends that the Street Outreach program continue in a low-barrier, non-judgemental, harm-reduction, client-centered manner to work closely with other service providers to provide seamless, wrap-around responses. It calls for expanded hours of service, if possible, and evolving social inclusion activities.

It also urges on the work of Street Culture Collaborative to fill gaps in services and reduce systemic barriers through developing a drop-in centre, supporting housing and temporary work options, and community education to increase understanding and decrease stigma.

"I liaise with this Team for mutual client needs: housing, addiction, mental health, safety and referrals. They have been a great back up in times when no other service was the right fit for the client. They are a critical part of my network."
-- Service Provider

"They provide advice on different services and supports. They pointed me in the right direction."
— Client

NCARES Transitional Housing Worker: Helping people move from homelessness to housing

The recognition of “Housing First” and “Rapid Re-housing” of people experiencing homelessness has grown across Canada. It is a huge challenge in Nelson, where vacancy rates remain at 0% for the fifth year in a row. Nelson CARES has been able to use some of its own housing units to help people—many with histories of chronic homelessness or evictions — to begin to make a move from homelessness to housing and a more stable life. It does not meet all the serious needs for this in Nelson, but it is a start, and much experience and knowledge has been gained.

Demographics of Clients		2018-19
Mental Health or Substance Use issues		37
On MHSU caseload		15
Seniors 55 to 60 yrs		20
Seniors 65+		5
Indigenous Ancestry		12
Trans/Non-Binary Gender		2
Female		20
Male		54

The part-time Transitional Housing Worker helps bridge Emergency Shelter clients into more stable housing, working with Nelson CARES property managers and shelter staff. He also helps support and link them to support services, including employment and life skills programs, medical services, addictions treatment or mental health services. Via walk-ins and outreach, he helps develop and support client-centred Personal Service Plans (PSP) for the client to locate and utilize community resources like food, housing, medical care, income assistance, social/recreational activities, employment opportunities and referral to external agencies such as Mental Health and Substance Use. He accompanies clients to obtain services if necessary and attends monthly meetings of service providers to discuss how all can better assist individuals who are homeless.

The Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) affords up to 5 people at one time into a transitional housing program at Nelson CARE’s Ward Street Place for three months to a year or more, with a goal of moving to a Residential Tenancy Agreement or to private rental housing when ready.

Moving out of homelessness can be rough when you are no longer in survival mode and all of your life’s issues start coming to the fore. The program supports people through this. A TAP agreement allows for rules and goals to be set to provide housing security and gain tenancy and life skills.

Transitional Housing Program	2017-18	2018-19
Clients Supported in TAP Program Housing	5	12
Client appointments kept with TAP Clients	32	156
New referrals	32	74
Housing placements referred from Shelter	13	15
All clients placed in TAP/non-TAP Housing and supported	8	20
Still housed after 12 months		12
Clients supported to:	2017-18	2018-19
Find employment	2	4
Take job training / course	1	3
(Re)Gain Income source	4	10
Other assistance / support given		30

When ready, the worker can accompany clients to rental interviews, be a resource for landlords as issues arise to maintain tenancy and assist clients to find suitable roommates.

TRENDS:

The program is seeing more seniors living below the poverty line and accessing more social services (e.g. food bank). Mental health concerns and addiction issues are up year over year as is youth homelessness.



Community Partnerships

Affordable Housing means Healthy Communities

Nelson has been fortunate to have a history of organizations and non-profits that have worked hard to provide affordable housing options for our community.

“Housing affordability is defined as housing and utilities that cost less than 30% of a household’s before tax income (CMHC, 2014). When housing costs are less than 30% of income, (and) ...when there are a variety of affordable, long-term housing options available, housing stability increases.

Housing stability means that housing becomes more secure for individuals and the likelihood of losing housing or having to move decreases. As housing stability increases, financial stresses decrease and as a result, there is a decrease in food insecurity (ability to purchase healthy foods), reduction in the prevalence of obesity, and people experience improved physical and mental health (PHSA, 2014). In addition, overall social well-being increases as people develop relationships with neighbours and increase their sense of belonging to the community (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2014).

Unaffordable housing can lead to housing instability which causes financial and psychological vulnerability and stress. People living in unaffordable housing are likely living under financial constraints. As a result individuals may be forced to live with inadequate or unsuitable conditions to compensate (for example without heating during winter months), be forced to continually move or may even experience homelessness. Although there are many complex, inter-related factors that can lead to homelessness, it is clear that homelessness is strongly associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes, including high rates of infectious and chronic diseases, and severe mental illness (Cdn. Observatory on Homelessness, 2017). In fact, people experiencing homelessness in Canada are eight to ten times more likely to die prematurely when compared to those who are housed (Raphael & Mikkonen, 2010). ”



Kiwanis Projects Society: Villas 1, 2, 3



Nelson CARES: Cedar Grove Estates



Ward Street Place: Nelson CARES



*Cicada Place
Nelson Community Services*



Anderson Gardens, CMHA



Community Partnerships

Affordable Housing contributes to the Local Economy

- Millions in capital dollars have and are being invested in our community.
- Affordable housing pays taxes to our City.
- Rental subsidies allow tenants to spend more money at local businesses
- Jobs have been created in construction, renovations, on-going maintenance, property management and housing support services.
- Operating subsidies and service program dollars support businesses who supply the projects, programs and organizations.

There are new housing projects under development:

SHARE Housing project plans for workforce, singles & seniors

The SHARE Housing Initiative Society is to build a five-storey building in partnership with BC Housing, with 39 one-bedroom units plus some commercial space on its property on Falls Street. The site is behind Kootenay Christian Fellowship and Our Daily Bread.

Nelson CARES Lakeside project for seniors & people with disabilities

Lakeside Place in lower Fairview on Nelson Avenue is being redeveloped into a modern, four-storey, wood-frame building that will provide 47 affordable rental apartments for seniors and people with disabilities, including studio, one and two-bedroom units.

Both of these projects above were first applied for under a former provincial government program which provided only capital and no rent or operational subsidies. This was the only option at the time. Both have experienced significant increased capital costs during the development period, due to the heated construction market, and this has delayed the projects moving forward.

Nelson CARES Hall Street Subsidized Project under construction

A four-storey, 43 unit mixed-use residential building broke ground in late April and is expected to have residents moving in by Christmas of 2020. It will be for a mix of incomes, offering studio, one, two and three bedroom units. Rents will be a mix of deep subsidy (Income Assistance and PWD shelter rates), rent-gear-to-30% of income and market rates. This BC Housing program offers the first non-labelled, mixed-income housing project delivery since the early 1990s.

As developer Michael Culos noted in a Nelson Star article “These [projects] just don’t happen... without committed partnerships.” Affordable and supportive housing take partnerships with BC Housing, the Columbia Basin Trust, community non-profit staff and volunteers, the City and other important partners to make them a reality for our community.



Community Partnerships

Waitlists continue to grow for affordable & supportive housing

Pressure remains on non-profit housing providers

(Updated June 26 /19, after publication date:)	# of Units	# on Waitlist	Turnover Last Year	Rental Rates ¹
	309	508	36	
NELSON CARES AFFORDABLE HOUSING	131	321	11	
Disabilities (MHSU)	8	n/a	0	RGI
Families	55	74	3	RGI
Seniors	22	43	2	RGI
Singles	46	74	6	LEM
New Lakeside ⁺ & Hall Street [*] Projects		130		⁺ LEM/ [*] Mixed income & 70% subsidized
NELSON COMMUNITY SERVICES				
Cicada Place: Youth Transitional Housing (13 beds)	10	34	7	Program
CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOC.				
Anderson Gardens: Seniors (20) & with Disabilities (13)	33	109	2	RGI
NELSON KIWANIS PROJECTS Seniors	62	35	16	LEM
LINKS HOUSING CO-OP Families, singles & disabled	31			Mixed Income 18 Subsidized
MOUNTAIN LAKES ASSISTED LIVING Seniors	29			29 Subsidized of 42
GOLDEN LIFE LAKEVIEW VILLAGE: Seniors	13			13 Subsidized of 90
SHARE HOUSING INITIATIVE SOCIETY Singles / Cples - New 1 Bdrms		9		Under Development

Even with new units, Nelson is losing ground on affordable rental housing
 Nelson has experienced a loss of over 150 affordable and subsidized rental units

This includes losses of:

- The Kerr Block lost to fire (75 people)
- Baker Street SROs² lost above businesses
- Rental subsidies at Marianne Apts./Alpine Suites
- SROs² at the Stirling Apts. due to renovations
- Kiwanis: Villa 4 cabins lost to age & funding agreement's end
- Conversion of Jubilee Place rental units to program uses
- Interim loss of units from Lakeside Place redevelopment

...and from the wave of rental apartments and town homes converted to condominiums, plus losses to short-term rentals. At the same time, Nelson's housing stock is aging, with 50% being over 60 years old and 10% in need of major repairs. (Census Canada 2015).



Nelson Community Service’s Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) workers focus their supports primarily on youth leaving care, people of indigenous ancestry, women leaving violence and people leaving institutional care (e.g. hospitals, treatment, prison). By offering a limited number of rent supplements and supports, HPP helps prevent homelessness by helping people secure not only housing, but also income and other government assistance, and supports tenants and landlords to help maintain tenancies. The program’s rental supplement capacity has been reached and they have begun a wait list for this aspect of the program.

HPP Workers Allison Murray and Mike McGaw noted that Nelson’s low vacancy rate, high rent, and desirability with renters continues to create challenges for low income tenants. Many HPP clients experience repeated hospitalizations, and for other reasons are not able to find ongoing income to replace the supplement. Many clients seem to have accepted that low quality living conditions are their only options.

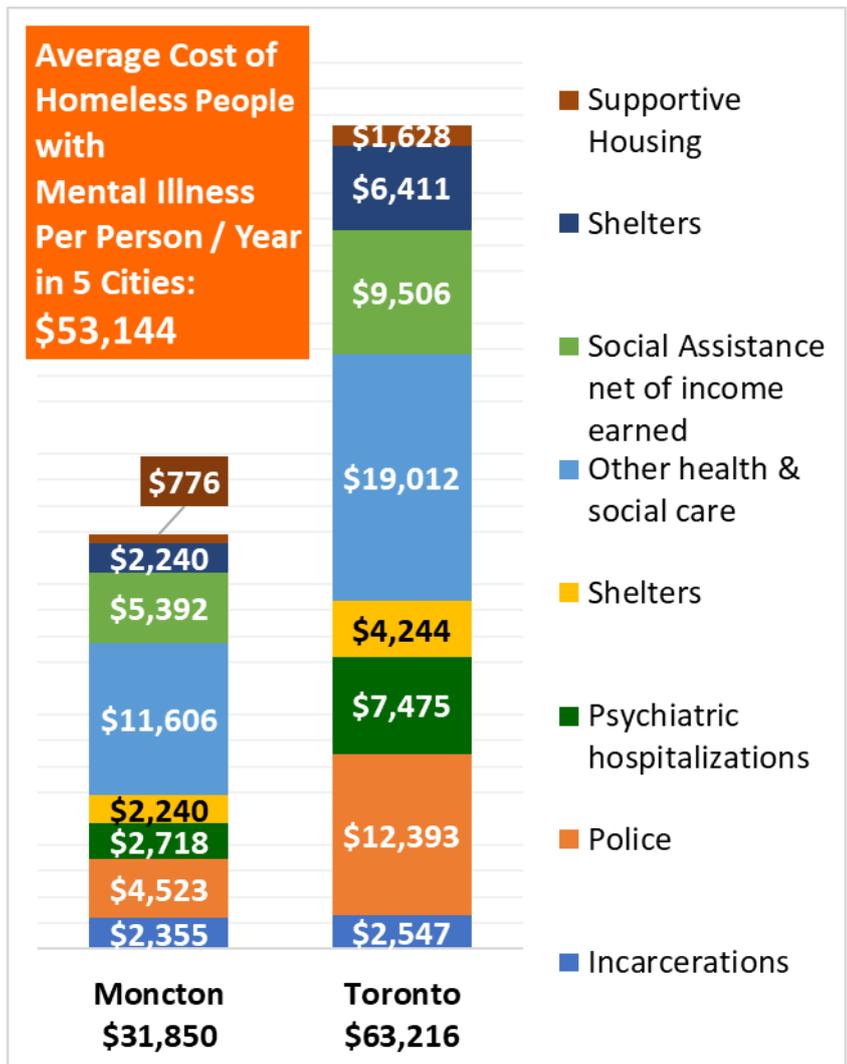
HPP also teams up with Street Outreach to offer a “smorgasbord” of services to clients who are on the continuum of the housing crisis. At a “housing workshop” people without housing and those who are marginally housed are able to access computers, email support, sign making, discourse about housing, practice speaking with landlords and find other related resources (such as print materials on housing, etc). Street Outreach also has some capacity to provide rent supplements to eligible clients.

# of HPP Clients	2018-19
# of Referrals	135
# of Clients Served	135
Total # Receiving Rent Supplements	97
# Who Secured Housing	57
# Who Remained Housed at 3 months	53

Homelessness costs everyone

“...preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and rehousing people who already are homeless is both a humane and cost-effective solution.”

–“The Real Cost of Homelessness”- S. Gaetz, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2012)



Costs of services for homeless people with mental illness in 5 Canadian cities: a large prospective follow-up study, Latimer et al, CMAJ Open

¹www.mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/costs-associated-homelessness-are-high-suggesting-need-shift-programs-end-homelessness-269176



Community Partnerships

Harm Reduction Initiatives Improve Individual & Community Health

Nelson's Fentanyl Task Force, ANKORS, Mental Health and Substance Use office, Street Outreach and other community partners have been making strides this past year to improve health outcomes for both individuals who use substances and the community—taking a health-based, harm reduction approach to substance use. Harm Reduction focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support.



In the face of the opioid crisis in BC, hundreds of naloxone kits have and are being distributed and people trained in Nelson and throughout the region on how to use them - both substance users and staff and volunteers at non-profits, public institutions, schools and colleges, businesses and other locations.

ANKORS now offers free, fast, anonymous drug checking using an FTIR Spectrometer and Fentanyl test strips, to help check the safety and potency of substances. ANKORS offers education on safe injection, inhalation, HIV and hepatitis-C. There is also information on how to survive the winter while living homeless.

Through one-time funding from the BC Opioid Emergency Response Centre and with approval from City Council, Police and Fire, ANKORS opened an overdose prevention site (OPS), offering a safe, private space to go and use, an alternative to public alleys or bathrooms on Baker Street. There are two trained people to support someone when they use, and respond with naloxone or call emergency medical services if needed. If people want, they can also discuss access to detox or treatment or Opiate Agonist Therapy. They have seen the use of the OPS increase and are seeking additional funding to continue this important service. ANKORS programs are provided in a non-judgmental manner without prejudice ensuring the individuals right to anonymity and confidential access. ANKORS serves those living with and at the greatest risk of acquiring HIV / AIDS and/or HCV, who have difficulty obtaining services elsewhere, especially due to substance use, mental illness, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity, and/or other social barriers. ANKORS offers supports, services and a drop-in for transgender people and has a Men's Health Network staffer based in their offices.

Acclaimed video series addresses stigma: Consumer engagement and involvement in decision-making, program development and service delivery is a fundamental value at ANKORS. Peers and staff teamed up with film maker Amy Bohigian and her Watershed Productions to produce an acclaimed series of five videos: *Beyond the Stigma of Drug Use: People Who Use Drugs Speak Out*. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWTISYQM58JKm9R5q3ZVnvQ>. Peers also do an important service reinforcing the safe use and disposal of needles and doing needle pick-ups, when necessary, throughout the community, being quick to respond.



Support Recovery Program Helps Stabilize Health

The Support Recovery Program provides housing and support for people who need this while receiving treatment for problematic substance use. It is managed by ANKORS in partnership with Interior Health and Nelson CARES. It offers individualized supports and lifeskills and works to arrange for on-going supports in the community or other institutions for as long as they are needed after the program, which can run up to 6 months.

The program’s first year evaluation highlighted positive feedback about the program, as well as areas for growth, from past participants, program staff, and community partners.

People exit the program with new skills around self-care and harm-reduction that they actively put into use as they return to the community, even if their time in the program did not end with a "graduation".

“We continue to note the need for supported harm reduction housing within the community and are hopeful that some of the new housing initiatives going in will fill some of this gap. We have also noted a large gap in the Kootenay Boundary for youth and would love to see a youth shelter, youth support recovery, and youth detox made available.”

	2017-18	2018-19
# OF BEDS	8	8
# of Program Entries	18	23
Female	10	9
Male	8	13
Transgender		1
# of people using program in past year (based on exits from program)	19	22
Female	9	10
Male	10	11
Transgender		1
# of clients Successfully Completing Program: *	7	4
# of clients leaving not completing program	13	18
# at Intake with a Concurrent Disorder	11	15
Average length of stay	3 months	2.5 months
Total number of People on wait list or admitted over the year:	28	27
# of clients who:		
Secured Permanent Housing	6	6
Returned Home	3	5
Referred to the shelter	11	9
Referred to detox		1
Moved into a hotel		1

- Nelson’s Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) office has averaged about 1,245 clients per year over the last three years. This is from all income ranges and types of housing.
- Many services, housing providers and community members have expressed a need for evening and weekend mental health outreach services.
- Services are seeing an increase in use of crystal meth in fentanyl users (who use it to come down), and among youth. They see a need for strategies around poly-substance use and the mental health issues that arise.
- There are no substance use residential treatment beds in the West Kootenay.

(*based on accomplishing goals set themselves OR 6 months program)



Community Partnerships

Addressing basic and emergency needs: SHELTER

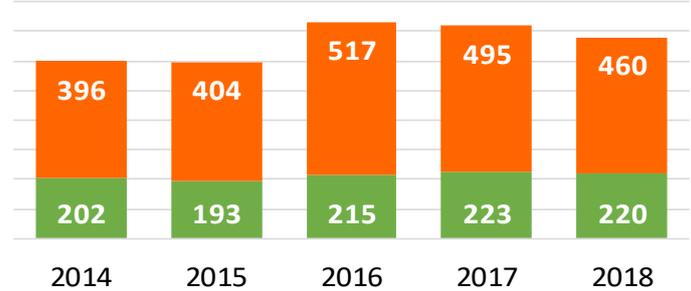
Stepping Stones offers 24/7 shelter & more!

Stepping Stones continues to offer 17 beds with two emergency beds for people experiencing homelessness. The Shelter supports men, women and trans-gender people to stay up to 30 days with at least two people on staff at all times.

Stepping Stones staff offer people support and help to connect them with income, mental health, harm reduction, treatment, housing and other services that can help them stabilize their health and their lives. They have added laundry facilities, and with the shower and in-take clothes, are even better equipped to prevent bed bugs. A winter Temporary Shelter program allows five more individuals per night. Staff empowers clients to express their needs, provide ideas, and share concerns of their experience in the shelter and out in the community. The shelter provides some programming and social get-togethers and gardens, and served a combined 22,000 meals in 2018, based on 3 meals a day for their clients, drop-in meals for previous clients and meals for Temporary Shelter stays.

EMERGENCY SHELTER USE PER YEAR

■ # of individuals ■ # of bed stays



Shelter Seeing More Youth and Seniors At-Risk

Shelter staff echo other agency reports of youth showing up exhibiting more complex needs. Use of crystal meth at younger ages is reported - which contributes to increased mental health issues, addictions, victimization and exploitation of youth into drug selling and even sex work. Some are the age of majority but haven't had a social support network or experiences with systems to get the help and the housing they need. They may come from families who have experienced generations of abuse, or where the parents themselves were foster kids. The Shelter is bound by law to report the children to MCFD. Some of the youths' experience in care can often be exceedingly complex due to trauma and systemic barriers they sometimes face. Some kids are fearful of being triaged into a system described by other youth who may have had bad experiences. Services find it hard to maintain contact with some of the youths long enough. The shelter tries to keep contact with them - offering clothing, food, supplies, camping gear and information to keep them connected—and for them to connect with the services and assistance they need. **Agencies are calling for youth emergency housing and shelter options.**



The shelter is seeing more seniors, some from family breakdowns, some who are chronically homeless with serious health problems from living in spaces not meant for habitation - vulnerable to exploitation, pressured into paying protection. Health issues arise for seniors with low incomes renting worse places as rents rise, with long waiting lists for affordable assisted living.

The shelter continues to see a need for supportive housing to help stabilize people's health and lives and prevent homelessness.



Community Partnerships

Addressing basic and emergency needs: SHELTER

The Aimee Beaulieu Emergency Transition House is a 24/7 residence for physically, emotionally and/or sexually abused women and their children leaving domestic violence. The program's **Reduced Barrier mandate** means that they also provide support for women who have experienced violence and who have varying levels of mental wellness and substance use.

“Leaving an abusive relationship may be one of the most difficult decisions to make—the cycle of abuse is complex. The Transition House helps with the first step in that journey to a life free from violence. The confidential residence has space for eight women and children and offers a safe and secure environment, a place of connection, help with basic and immediate needs, a warm bed and meals, a fully stocked playroom for children, supportive counseling, and space to simply heal after the experience of abuse and make plans for the future. Transition House staff are skilled in helping women process what has happened and are trained to conduct risk assessments, develop safety plans, help navigate legal and other systems, and provide supportive counselling. The staff team works from an intersecting feminist perspective which honours and acknowledges women’s strengths, accepts and validates women’s experiences and feelings, and honours that women are the experts of their own lives.” ¹

Need for 2nd Stage Housing

The T-House had no successful referrals to Second Stage Housing in the East or West Kootenay this past year due to lack of availability. The number of women without children accessing the Transition House’s service has increased. There is no subsidized housing for single women who are not seniors and have no disability.

The number of women whose stays were extended also increased, largely due to complex situations, including the lack of housing and not having any referral housing in place at the time they are to leave. Nelson Community Services is working with BC Housing around the possibilities of developing some second stage housing for women and children locally.

	2014-15	2015-16	2018-19	(2016-17 n/a due to renovations)
# of referrals		330*	403	*232 women & 98 children
# of women housed		63	74	
# of children housed		37	33	
TOTAL # of Residents housed	69	100	110	
Finding permanent residence when leaving	29%	26*	16	* and 25 children
Finding only temporary situations	69%	37*	24	* and 12 children
# of women turned away	91	108	139	
# of children turned away	27	40	30	
# of people turned away	118	148	169	
Longest Stay			139 days	

“Without ID, a person cannot open a bank account. This means that they cannot get direct deposit from the Ministry, and often they will hold on to their entire cheque. This means frequent loss of money, especially if homeless, due to theft.”

- Street Outreach Worker

1 - From <https://www.servicesfyi.ca/aimee-beaulieu-transition-house/>



Community Partnerships

Addressing basic and emergency needs: FOOD SECURITY

“POVERTY IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF FOOD BANK USE.

The driving factor behind food bank use is poverty. Economic disruptions, low incomes, and government policies that don't provide adequate support are what keep the number of food bank users persistently and unacceptably high. Food banks from coast to coast to coast are there when people must choose between shelter, clothing, and feeding their family. While it is essential that people in need have access to food today, changes in government policy to support people out of poverty are what will truly drive down the number of people turning to food banks across Canada.”

59.0% of households accessing food banks list social assistance or disability-related supports as their primary source of income.

- HungerCount 2018
Food Banks of Canada

The Salvation Army

saw a decrease in the number of family households & singles receiving food hampers, but an increase in numbers of hampers received.

Note: Figures unavailable for January 2018 for Food Bank.

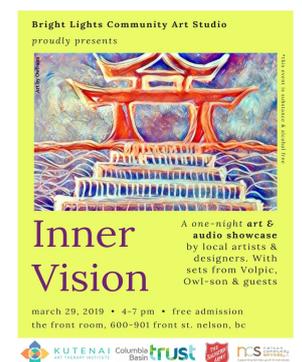
# of times served by Food Bank Hampers	2017	2018
Children under 12	773	573
Teenagers	349	312
Single Parent Households	382	268
Two-Parent Households	224	223

# of hampers given out	1180	1471
Food Bank	1309	963
School Lunch	571	508

Bright Lights Studio at Salvation Army Drop-In Creates Art & Community

The Bright Lights Open Studios are a partnership between the Salvation Army and the Kutenai Art Therapy Institute (KATI). Two afternoons a week, people can come to the Salvation Army's drop-in centre or stay on after their morning meal there to participate in a comfortable, safe, inclusionary and calm space to express themselves, create art, and in a way, create a community among participants. This is made possible through KATI student practicums – which also serve other social service agencies, schools and organizations – making very real contributions to health and well-being in our community.

The Bright Lights program participants held a successful art display of their works at *Inner Vision - an Art & Audio Showcase* in March, assisted by KATI, Salvation Army, Nelson Community Services and Columbia Basin Trust. Community turnout was great, and very supportive. They are now working towards pieces being included in Nelson's annual Art Walk. Bright Lights is working on more sustainable funding for the program.





Community Partnerships

Addressing basic and emergency needs: FOOD SECURITY

Statement after receiving an increase in Income Assistance:

“I went shopping for food after receiving my cheque and spent \$101, which is my limit, and walked out with 7 bags of groceries! I could afford fresh vegetables for the first time! It’s been so long since I could buy fresh vegetables...”

*In 2018
the Good Food Bank
fed an average of
278 people a week.
**1,800 people
were supported***

***1,279
healthy meals
were served
and sent home***

***2,137 lbs
of food
were harvested
from the garden***

St. Saviour’s Food Pantry
3,481 visits for food
in 2018

Also providing fresh produce and fruit from their garden, as available.

Nelson’s Community Food Centre transforms their space and programming

The new name better describes the breadth of programming and indicates their joining a national network of 12 Food Centres—all focused on creating environments where all people gather to learn, cook, share, grow and advocate for good food. Renovations and new lease arrangements improved space and access for The Good Food Bank and for programming. While the loss of past garden space is missed, the Food Centre is planting new space along Josephine.

The Good Food Bank changed hours to one afternoon and one morning a week, with people able to come for the food bank one of those times. People take advantage of the welcoming atmosphere with snacks and refreshments, feel comfortable and want to stay a while.

Food Skills expanded this year with more sessions and meals for more people. They offered programs for youth: Kids Cooking Club is an afterschool program which taught cooking skills, fed the youth, and had them making their own snacks. In the garden, youth harvested vegetables and learned how to make a healthy meal from ingredients they picked.

The garden was a “hotbed” of volunteerism with most of the produce going to the Good Food Bank for distribution—many times within minutes of being picked.

The Harvest Rescue Program was helped by scheduled work days for volunteers and social media coordination between volunteer pickers and tree owners.

“Without your help, I’d only be eating 3-4 days a week.”

Food Bank Participant

The Salvation Army

is serving 120-160 meals a day.

Our Daily Bread

(Kootenay Christian Fellowship)

is serving 50 to 70 meals a day.

Meals Served by Salvation Army



Supportive Housing - The Missing Link: It works!

The Province of BC's Supportive Housing Fund represents a major investment to deliver an additional 2,500 new homes with 24/7 support services for people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness.

Supportive Housing is the missing link to effectively help both prevent homelessness and help the most vulnerable and chronically homeless people to home. It offers the time and the supports to help people stabilize their health and their lives and re-engage in community life. The support services offered, at minimum, include:

- A meal program;
- Supporting residents to maintain their residencies, such as: directly assisting with room de-cluttering, resident rent contribution and/or repayment plans;
- Individual or group support services such as: life skills, community information, social and recreational programs;
- Connecting residents to community supports and services such as: education, employment, health, life skills, long-term housing;
- Case planning and resident needs assessment, including the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT);
- Assistance in accessing income assistance, pension benefits, disability benefits, obtaining a BC identification card, or establishing a bank account as appropriate.
- On-site medical supports can also be offered.

The buildings themselves can offer a private room or self-contained suites with a lockable door, private or shared bathrooms and kitchen, access to laundry facilities and the other services offered above. Combined with *Reaching Home*, the federal homelessness program, the goal is more coordination among community services, institutions and Ministries to bring client-centred wrap-around services to people experiencing homelessness or at-risk who have high needs, often related to physical or mental health, disabilities or substance use. In Nelson, the identification of land for such a project is key. Studies show that well-managed 24/7 housing adds to the safety of a community and is neutral to or can increase property values with new construction.

*"...the report found that once construction was completed on a supportive housing project, the value of properties located within 500 feet of the supportive housing actually increased relative to other properties in the neighborhood."*¹

A number of small communities throughout BC have begun development, including Powell River, Gibsons and Smithers.





**Powell River's
Supportive Housing
Project under
development.**



People of Indigenous ancestry are over-represented among people who are homeless

“Homelessness amongst Indigenous Peoples can be traced back to historical trauma, oppression, racism and discrimination. Homelessness amongst Indigenous Peoples should be considered as a consequence resulting from Canada’s history of colonization and exploitation of Indigenous land and populations. Significant abuse and cultural trauma occurred through the use of residential schools to house and educate Indigenous children. Furthermore, the 60’s Scoop – which took Indigenous children and placed them in white foster homes within the child welfare system has led to unstable families and homes.

“Many of the personal issues (including familial dysfunction, substance use, addictions, health issues, community violence) faced by Indigenous Peoples and that act as contributors to homelessness can be directly linked to various types of historical trauma. Structural issues can include transitions from reserves to urban living, racism, landlord discrimination, and low levels of education and unemployment. As a result, research has shown that Indigenous populations disproportionately experience lower levels of education, poorer health, higher rates of unemployment and lower income levels compared to non-Indigenous people. There are also serious social issues stemming from the historical trauma including high incarceration rates and high suicides rates amongst youth.” ¹

“...in building the National Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada for the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness... In many ways, my own understanding of homeless has broadened after hearing [indigenous peoples’] stories. I am now convinced that from an Indigenous perspective, Indigenous homelessness is not about not having a structure to live in; it runs much deeper than that—it’s about not having healthy social, physical, spiritual, and emotional relationships. It’s about not having one’s indigeneity. And these relationships—known in the Anishinabek worldviews as All My Relations—have been eroded and/or destroyed by processes of colonization since Euro-style settlement began on Turtle Island in the 1600s.” ²

-Homeless Hub, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH)



The Nelson Committee on Homelessness

is a coalition of citizens and stakeholders dedicated to long-term solutions to homelessness, housing and poverty in Nelson, BC.

We invite you to learn the facts about homelessness issues and solutions, attend a monthly NCOH meeting, volunteer at one of our events or with a local community group working to address poverty and homelessness. **Please share this with your family, friend and networks.**

YOU CAN HELP!

- Support the development of a continuum of housing options to meet affordable housing needs in Nelson—for youth and adults - from emergency and supportive housing to help prevent homelessness – to independent affordable rental housing;
- When you see people experiencing homelessness, make eye contact, smile warmly and remember that compassion is a better cure than indifference;
- Speak out for respectful treatment and support for people experiencing homelessness;
- Support local organizations and inter-agency groups that support people who are homeless.

What's ahead this year? **COMMUNITY CONNECT DAY: SATURDAY, NOV. 23rd 2019**

A FREE NO-BARRIERS EVENT AT WILDFLOWER SCHOOL GYM (CENTRAL SCHOOL)

Are you someone who is struggling to make ends meet? Over 70 service providers offer free dental, eye and health consultations, a free café, winter coats, boots and more! Connect with community services in town that can help with your health, employment, housing, income and more!

Everyone welcome! Can you volunteer? Offer a service? Let us know!

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Editor: Ann Harvey, Community Coordinator, NCOH

Contributors: Joyce Dahms-Whiffen, Lori Camilleri, Leisa Talbot, Julie Lepine, Mike McGaw, Allison Murray, Jeremy Kelly, Shonna Hayes, Anna Maskerine, Rona Park, Sandra Hartline, Jasmine McMechan, Amanda Erickson, Chris Jury (City of Nelson), Adam Collinge (BC Housing), Amy Taylor, Andrew Creighton, Marya Skrypiczajko, Valerie Sheriff, Anne-Marie Haynes, Cheryl Dowden, Marjie Hills, Dustin Cantwell, Laura Kearns, Ted Campeau, Jenny Robinson, Phyllis Nash

Photos: NCOH Archives; Ann Harvey

Apologies to anyone missed, and to those whom I didn't have room to include.

Canada

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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

This report is available at <https://nelsoncares.ca/portfolio-items/committee-on-homelessness/>
For inquires on this Report, or for more information about NCOH contact:
Nelson Committee on Homelessness ncoh@nelsoncares.ca 250.352.6011 x5