

# 2. Housing

Community landscapes change. Sometimes the changes create unforeseen problems. The Comox Valley Economic Society noted in a press release that Statistics Canada ranked Courtenay as “the 4th fastest growing community in British Columbia” representing “a 14.47% increase since 2001”.<sup>22</sup> During this period housing prices also soared. Concerned citizens noticed a distressing “side effect” of the population growth and higher housing prices. Homelessness and the “near homeless” were on the increase.



## 2.1 Housing Tenure

BC Stats reports the total number of dwellings in the Comox Valley for 2006 as 25,585. 78% are owned and 22% are rented. The statistics in the 2004 report were sourced from the Comox Valley Economic Development Society, and using their percentages, there appears to be a shift to higher home ownership and fewer rentals. Their total number of dwellings was 25,492 where 71.7% owned and 28.3% rented (2001 Stats).<sup>23</sup>



## 2.2 Housing Costs

The most expensive housing in Canada resides in the western provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. Toronto was the only eastern centre to make the top 10 list. Courtenay’s median value of \$299,241 placed it in the top 50 highest housing costs in Canada, lagging behind Victoria, Duncan, Parksville and Nanaimo on Vancouver Island.<sup>24</sup> In 2004 the average price was \$204,467.<sup>25</sup> (Not comparable to median values.)

A median value is the point of the exact middle in a range of all values. In other words, half of the dwellings (single-detached) in an area have higher values than the median, and half have lower values. An average value divides the total value of all houses by the number of houses. Averages are not as reliable because they can be skewed by

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<sup>22</sup> Comox Valley Economic Development, Comox Valley Population Soars. Accessed April 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Comox Valley Social Planning Society. *2004 Quality of Life Report*, p. 18.

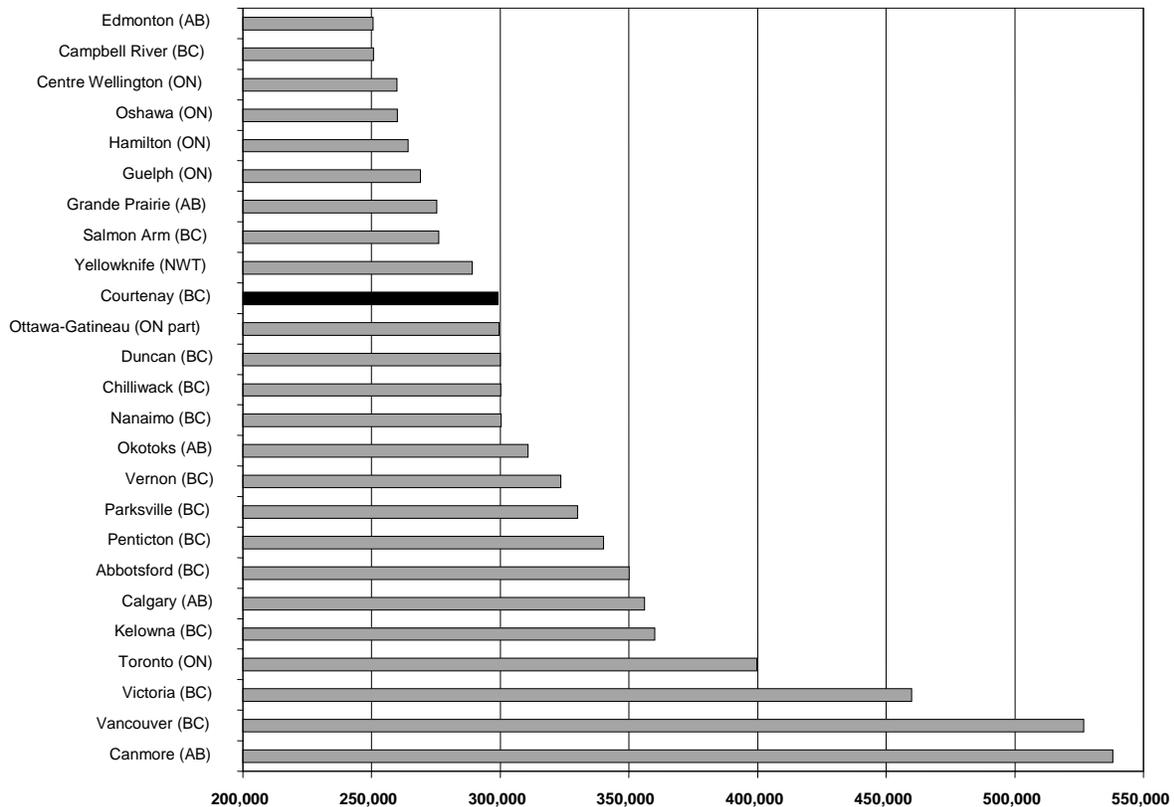
<sup>24</sup> BC Stats. 2006 Census Fast Facts: Housing Affordability in British Columbia. August 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Comox Valley Social Planning Society, *2004 Quality of Life Report*, p 18.

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extremes like very expensive mansions. Figure 13 below displays the median house values of the top 25 most expensive places in Canada as of 2006.

**Figure : Median Value of a Single-Detached House, Canada's Top 25, 2006**



Source: BC Stats, 2006 Census Fast Facts: Housing Affordability in British Columbia, August 2008.

The recent economic recession slowed house sales; however, the Vancouver Island Real Estate Board (VIREB) has reported a recent stabilizing of prices. Comparing the end of May 2008 to the end of May 2009, average sale prices in the Comox Valley decreased 14% to \$327,844.<sup>26</sup>



## 2.3 Housing Starts

Table 6 below depicts housing starts in the Courtenay region as reported by BC Stats. Housing starts peaked in the main areas at different times with Cumberland ending the peaks in 2008. (Peaks are indicated by a grey background.)

<sup>26</sup> VIREB, news release, June 1, 2009. Available at <http://www.vireb.com/pages/news-stats/article.php?id=91>.

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**Table : Housing Starts for the Courtenay Area, 2000 to 2008 (Peak years marked in grey.)**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Courtenay Centre</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>517</b>
Comox	28	47	42	92	159	114	87	210	189
Courtenay	55	103	241	268	334	472	471	324	115
Cumberland	1	2	5	6	12	33	62	58	135
Other	29	35	68	86	173	94	65	58	78

Source: BC Stats, March 2009. British Columbia Housing Starts for Urban Areas and Communities.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, housing starts in the last quarter of 2008 dropped 42.7% compared to the starts in the last quarter of 2007.<sup>27</sup>

### **2.4 Vacancy Rates and** **Rents**

The vacancy rates in BC remained low in 2008, but the average rent for a two bedroom apartment increased 5.3 per cent, about double the general rate of inflation. The Courtenay and Nanaimo rates were among the lowest on Vancouver Island at 1.2%. Only Victoria and Parksville were lower at 0.5% and 0.2% respectively.<sup>28</sup> Courtenay's vacancy rate in the 2004 report was 3.7%.<sup>29</sup>

**Table : Vacancy Rates (%) in the Comox Valley by Dwelling Type and Number of Bedrooms**

Dwelling Type	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Row Housing	N/C	N/C	N/R	N/C	1.9	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.9
Apartments	0.8	0.0	0.8	1.6	0.2	1.1	1.7	0.9	0.5	1.2
N/C Data Not Collected										
N/R Not Reliable or Suppressed for Confidentiality										

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Rental Market Report: British Columbia Highlights, Fall 2008.

The rest of BC, except Abbotsford, posted vacancy rates below one per cent. Because of rising migration and increasing house prices, demand for rental housing has increased.<sup>30</sup> People often rent before buying in a new area, competing with local renters

<sup>27</sup> CMHC, *Housing Now – British Columbia*, 64151, First Quarter 2009.

<sup>28</sup> CMHC, *Rental Market Report: British Columbia Highlights*, Fall 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Comox Valley Social Planning Society. *2004 Quality of Life Report*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> CMHC, "National Rental Vacancy Rate Decreases in 2008", News Release, December 11, 2008.

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for the few available rental units. As demand increased, rent increased, and became unaffordable for people on fixed or low incomes.

Although there were fewer vacancies in the Comox Valley, average rental rates continued to increase – overall by 7.9% between October 2007 and October 2008.<sup>31</sup> The current tight rental market increases renters' vulnerability to housing affordability problems.

**Table : Average Rents in the Comox Valley by Dwelling Type and Number of Bedrooms**

Dwelling Type	Bachelor		1 Bedroom		2 Bedroom		3 Bedroom +		Total	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Row Housing	N/C	N/C	N/R	N/C	\$672	\$706	\$789	\$786	\$717	\$740
Apartments	\$449	\$511	\$554	\$591	\$655	\$706	\$673	\$700	\$611	\$657
N/C Data Not Collected    N/R Not Reliable or Suppressed for Confidentiality										

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Rental Market Report: British Columbia Highlights, Fall 2008*.

A seniors' housing survey conducted by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in May and June of 2008 indicated that average rent for standard spaces on Vancouver Island ranged from \$2,177 for a bachelor unit to \$2,560 for a one bedroom unit. Units with a den or second bedroom averaged between \$3,069 and \$3,565.<sup>32</sup> A standard unit is defined as a "unit occupied by a resident who receives the standard level of care provided by the residence."<sup>33</sup> The survey targeted private and non-profit residences where the majority of residents were over 65 years old, and had access to services not offered in traditional rental structures such as laundry, meals, or housekeeping. Nursing homes and long-term care facilities were not included in the survey.

Vancouver Island's vacancy rate remained low for independent living seniors' residences. The Courtenay/Comox area reported a vacancy rate of zero in 2007 for independent residences.<sup>34</sup>



### **2.5 Affordable Housing**

Housing affordability becomes a problem when a household spends more than 30% of the generated income on shelter. In BC, homeowners with mortgages were spending

<sup>31</sup> CMHC, *Rental Market Report: British Columbia Highlights, Fall 2008*.

<sup>32</sup> CMHC, *Seniors' Housing Report, British Columbia, 2008*, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> CMHC, *Seniors' Housing Market Survey, British Columbia, 2008*, p. 4.

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34.4% on shelter. Ontario followed at a distant second with 29.5%. Renters in the province had the highest rate of all households at 43.7%.<sup>35</sup> In the Comox Valley, the rate was higher still at 47.2%.<sup>36</sup>

Among all household types, lone-parent family households had the greatest challenge with housing affordability. 43.1 percent spend 30 per cent or more of their household income on shelter. Of those households that owned their home with a mortgage, over half (51.3%) had affordability problems. The figure was similar for lone-parent family households that were renters, with 52.5 percent spending 30 percent or more of their household income on shelter.<sup>37</sup>

“Couple family households without children fared best, whether the home was owned (with or without a mortgage) or rented, with only 16.8 per cent spending 30 per cent or more of their household income on housing costs. In addition, 44.9 per cent of couple families without children owned their home without a mortgage, the highest percentage among the household types.”<sup>38</sup>

Housing affordability problems have sinister implications for the community: increased stress that compromises physical and mental wellness of its citizens, and increased risks of temporary or permanent homelessness. Without safe, adequate shelter, children suffer, also. They may experience developmental impoverishment that continues to affect their adult health and mental stability.

“In 2006, there were an estimated 181,000 low-income children in the province, with British Columbia reporting the highest before-tax child poverty rate (21.9%) in Canada (15.8%) for the fifth year in a row. This was the news in the 2008 Child Poverty Report Card recently released by the First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. Many of these families lived on incomes that were at least \$11,000 below the before-tax low-income threshold (First Call, 2008a). These figures tell us that thousands of BC families

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<sup>35</sup> BC Stats, *Business Indicators: Housing Affordability in British Columbia*. September 2008.

<sup>36</sup> BC Stats, Local Health Area 71 - Statistical Profile, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> BC Stats, *Business Indicators: Housing Affordability in British Columbia*, p. 3, September 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

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are struggling economically, whose children are dealing with the effects of poverty. The current economic recession will further intensify the challenges many families face in earning an income sufficient to support their families.”<sup>39</sup>

In November of 2007, the City of Courtenay and the Town of Comox adopted affordable housing policies/strategies. They are available online at the following addresses:

- <http://www.city.courtenay.bc.ca/news/affordable-housing-policy.aspx>
- <http://comox.ca/town-hall/other-documents/planning-documents/HOUSING%20AFFORDABILITY%20STRATEGY.pdf>

BC Housing has invited a number of municipalities to take part in a new federal-provincial agreement that provides \$123.58 million to create up to 1000 housing units over the next 2 years for seniors and people with disabilities.<sup>40</sup> The province will provide the capital for construction of modular homes. Local governments are being asked to consider providing municipally-owned sites for the developments. These developments will be managed by non-profit housing organizations. On May 15, 2009, the Comox Valley Regional District publicly announced a region-wide proposal to take advantage of the BC Housing initiative. The proposal will designate up to \$500,000 toward land acquisitions for supportive housing projects. Costs of buying land will be shared across the Valley. The Regional District will establish bylaws to allow the initiative to move forward. The bylaws will need public approval.<sup>41</sup>

A number of local initiatives and organizations have created or are creating affordable housing within our communities. For instance, in 2004, 2006 and 2007, Habitat for Humanity Vancouver Island North Society built three duplexes in Courtenay, providing six families the opportunity to become homeowners in the Comox Valley. Their next project is slated for completion in Campbell River, May 2009.<sup>42</sup>

### **2.6 Non-Market Housing**

Non-market housing is generally owned by government or registered societies that provide housing for those who cannot afford to pay market rents. Rents are determined

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<sup>39</sup> Margaret White, March 2009. *Poverty and Education Report*.

<sup>40</sup> BC Housing, Seniors' Rental Housing Initiative.

<sup>41</sup> *Comox Valley Echo*, May 15, 2009, p.1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Vancouver Island North, Habitat for Humanities.

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by an individual's ability to pay. Most non-market housing target specific groups, such as low-income families, seniors, or people with disabilities. People must apply for non-market housing, and must meet the eligibility requirements. An undetermined waiting time is usual.

Housing options for families are limited to two facilities. Laketrail has 36 units, and First Nations families have priority. Lions Valley View Estates (built in 1990) has 32 family units.<sup>43</sup> Non-market housing for single low-income earners remains unavailable in the Valley. The one organization that has contacted all the municipalities for support to build new non-market rental units is the Comox Valley Affordable Housing Society.

**Table : Non-market Housing Units for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, Comox Valley**

Name	Location	Number of Units
D'esterre Gardens	Comox	16
Quadra Gardens	Comox	28
Kiwanis Village	Courtenay	62
Laketrail	Courtenay	5
Centennial Place	Cumberland	15
Union Square	Cumberland	28
Total Number of Units		149

Source: *The Link: Choices for Seniors and Adults with Disabilities, Zone 9 - Vancouver Island North and Nanaimo.*

Seniors and people with disabilities have more non-market housing options, as seen in Table 9 above. Vancouver Island Health Authority's Assisted Living program provides rental accommodations with services and personal care assistance for seniors and people with physical disabilities. Casa Loma Seniors Village has 35 of its 125 units that are rent supplemented. "Residents pay 70% of their after-tax income for the full package of services. Residents under age 65 receiving income assistance pay a pre-determined set rate. Residents with higher incomes pay up to a maximum amount based on comparative private services."<sup>44</sup>

The Comox Valley Seniors Village opened March 2009, and provides an additional 96 independent/assisted living units and 146 residential care units (provides 24 hours professional care and supervision for complex health care needs). Of the assisted living

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<sup>43</sup> BC Housing, *The Link: Choices for Families, Zone 9 - Vancouver Island North and Nanaimo.* Nov 08.

<sup>44</sup> Vancouver Island Health Authority. Accessed April 2009.

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units, 60 are subsidized through the VIHA program. Residential care units have 90 subsidized under VIHA.<sup>45</sup> Categorized as a “campus of care” development, the Comox Valley Seniors Village offers different levels of care allowing seniors to move from one part of the facility to another as their health needs change.

**Table : Total Universe by For-Profit and Non-Profit Residences by Zone and Market Type, BC, 2008**

PROFIT					
	Bachelor	1 Bedroom	1 Bedroom + Den	2 Bedrooms	Totals
<b>BC</b>	3,721	6,017	548	1,218	11,528
<i>Standard Units</i>	2,498	5,555	532	1,192	9,781
<i>Non-market rent or Subsidy Units</i>	482	449	**	**	962
<b>Vancouver Island</b>	633	1,530	137	292	2,592
<i>Standard Units</i>	456	1,503	126	282	2,367
<i>Non-market rent or Subsidy Units</i>	105	**	**	n/u	141
NON-PROFIT					
	Bachelor	1 Bedroom	1 Bedroom + Den	2 Bedrooms	Totals
<b>BC</b>	1,615	2,386	**	147	4,184
<i>Standard Units</i>	842	779	**	133	1,773
<i>Non-market rent or Subsidy Unit</i>	636	1,499	n/u	6	2,141
<b>Vancouver Island</b>	414	887	**	40	1,345
<i>Standard Units</i>	147	163	**	31	345
<i>Non-market rent or Subsidy Unit</i>	228	688	n/u	**	920

\*\* Data suppressed to protect confidentiality or data is not statistically reliable.

n/u – No units exist in universe for this category

Source: CMHC, *Seniors' Housing Report, British Columbia, 2008, p.7-8.*

Other non-profit facilities providing some subsidized rents include:

- Centennial Place (Independent), Cumberland.
- Glacier View Lodge (Residential Care), Courtenay. Affiliated with VIHA.
- Laurel Lodge (Residential Care), Courtenay. Affiliated with VIHA.
- Quadra Gardens (Independent), Comox. Operated by the Comox Legion.

It should be noted that only 5.7% of BC's seniors aged 65 and over lived in “collective dwellings”, and of those, 94.4% lived in health care facilities like hospitals, nursing homes and residences for senior citizens.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Sue Bennett, Marketing Coordinator, Comox Valley Seniors Village. Conversation: May 2009.

<sup>46</sup> BC Stats, *Infoline*, Issue 08-18, May 2, 2008, p. 4.

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Supportive living is also provided for people with mental illness and/or addictions. Units include Family Care Homes, housing subsidies, and the Washington Inn residential rehabilitation program.<sup>47</sup> Registered clients of the rehabilitation program at Mental Health and Addictions Services receive psychosocial support and housing subsidies.<sup>48</sup>

### **2.7 Homelessness and Emergency Shelter Usage**

According to a United Nations report presented in 2007, Canada is in the midst of a national housing crisis. The Special Rapporteur was dismayed and shocked that a country as wealthy and developed as Canada had such a devastating state of homelessness and inadequate housing.

“Canada is one of the few countries in the world without a national housing strategy. The federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, along with civil society organizations (including the charitable sector) have introduced a series of one-time, short-term funding initiatives that have been described by housing experts in Canada as a “fraying patchwork”.<sup>49</sup>

Because of this patchwork status, the Government of Canada was unable to provide the Special Rapporteur with reliable statistics on homelessness. “While the National Homelessness Secretariat has suggested that there might be 150,000 homeless people, experts and academic institutions have suggested that the actual number of homeless people may be at least double that amount.”<sup>50</sup>

In 2006, AHERO (Ad Hoc Emergency Resources Organization) conducted the first Homeless and Housing Survey in the Comox Valley. Of the 173 people they surveyed, 42% were living in someone else’s place and 19% were absolutely homeless, living outdoors.<sup>51</sup> A *Homeless “Needs Survey”*, completed in January 2008 and then presented to the City of Courtenay, revealed the following statistics:

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<sup>47</sup> VIHA, Residential Services. Available at [http://www.viha.ca/mhas/locations/cv\\_cr/residential.htm](http://www.viha.ca/mhas/locations/cv_cr/residential.htm).

<sup>48</sup> VIHA, Rehabilitation Services. Available at [http://www.viha.ca/mhas/locations/cv\\_cr/rehab.htm](http://www.viha.ca/mhas/locations/cv_cr/rehab.htm).

<sup>49</sup> *Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, Miloon Kothari. Addendum. MISSION TO CANADA (9 to 22 October 2007), pg. 7-8.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Press Release, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Comox Valley Homeless and Housing Survey Results: “Moving into Action” November 2006.

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- 250 people were defined as absolutely homeless
- 3,100 people were at risk of becoming homeless
- 46 children were either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Over half of the respondents were female, some with children
- The average age for females was 39.5, and for males, 41.3
- 86 people had an average annual income of \$10,848, about \$900 per month
- 85% of the homeless reported they were from the Valley<sup>52</sup>

Further, the report suggested that low average household incomes in the Comox Valley, rising housing costs, and inadequate assistance programs together created a sure path to more homeless citizens.<sup>53</sup> Estimated cost to the system for the average homeless person in BC is \$55,000 per year; however, cost to provide housing and supportive services for a homeless person is estimated at \$37,000 per year.<sup>54</sup>

“A number of homeless counts have been conducted across BC. Homeless counts typically involve surveys sent to emergency shelters and transition houses asking staff to enumerate all clients during one evening, as well as a day-time component where volunteers visit locations frequented by homeless people. In addition to the at-risk for homelessness population, homeless counts typically exclude people in detox facilities, recovery houses, correctional facilities, and hospitals who do not have a place to go when they leave. The majority of homeless counts have provided estimates of the proportion of the homeless population suffering from mental illness and addiction; however, it should be noted that these estimates are based on observation by untrained volunteers and self-report.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Homeless! City of Courtenay Mayor’s Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness in the Comox Valley, March 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Housing Matters. *Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness: Housing First with Supportive Services*, BC Housing, January 2009.

<sup>55</sup> *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, February 2008, p.36.

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In other words, these surveys are under-reporting the prevalence of the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. Gathering data on the homeless is also hampered by the generally mild weather of the Comox Valley. It allows more people to live outdoors, and to move between the three major communities, thus making accurate counts of absolute homelessness difficult.<sup>56</sup>

**Table : Summary of Results of Homeless Counts in VIHA Communities.**

Location	Absolutely Homeless			At-risk for Homelessness	
	Estimated Number	% Couch Surfing	% with Mental Illness and/or Addictions	Estimated Number	% with Mental Illness and/or Addictions
<b>Campbell River</b>	30 (city) 300		80%	500 (substandard) 5,000 (low income)	25-50%
<b>Courtenay</b>	250	50%	35% A & 25% MI 30% both	1,000	
<b>Duncan</b>	130	25%	95% A 60% both	100 (substandard) 4,000 (low income)	5-30%
<b>Parksville/ Qualicum</b>	25	50%	90-100%		
<b>Port Alberni</b>	100-250		70-100%		?
<b>Port Hardy</b>	30-40		80% A 50% MI	80-100	50% +FASD*

\* FASD is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Source: Section taken from *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, February 2008, p.40.

As the only OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) country without a national affordable housing policy,<sup>57</sup> and without a national poverty reduction strategy,<sup>58</sup> vulnerable populations such as women and aboriginal peoples often become trapped in poverty. "It is estimated that 41% of all Aboriginal peoples in BC are at risk of homelessness and 23% are absolutely homeless."<sup>59</sup>

All survey communities also reported a high prevalence of addictions and mental illness among the surveyed population: from 60 – 100% of the absolutely homeless, and about 30% of the at-risk populations. Addiction was the most prevalent problem, followed by

<sup>56</sup> *Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia*, February 2008, p.38-9.

<sup>57</sup> Clark Brownlee, *Canada's Housing Crisis: Public Forum*, November 2008.

<sup>58</sup> United Nations Press Release, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations Press Release, p.9.

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“concurrent disorders and, less frequently, mental illness alone”.<sup>60</sup> One in five British Columbians, about 882,000 people, will experience some form of mental health disorder.<sup>61</sup> Few of the 882,000 will end up homeless, but when they do, community resources are few and ill equipped.

“Although many supported and social housing units currently exist province-wide, they are designed for seniors, low-income families and other vulnerable sub-groups. Also many housing units provide rental subsidies but do not offer adequate support (i.e., case management services, community living support, and on-going follow-up).”<sup>62</sup>

Of all the groups challenged by shortages of safe, affordable housing, people with mental illness appear to have the fewest options.

In the Comox Valley, there are only 10 units for short-stay housing available to mental health clients at the Washington Inn. In 2008, the new owners of the Inn applied to the province for rental increases of 14 to 35% in order to “normalize” the cost across all units.<sup>63</sup> A judge ruled in favour of a 16% increase for the smaller units and an 18% increase for the larger units.<sup>64</sup> This incident highlights the true vulnerability of people with housing challenges. Whatever affordable resources are available in the community; those resources are not guaranteed to remain affordable.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information observes that a “housing first approach and other community mental health programs can be effective in improving the housing and health outcomes of homeless individuals with mental illness”.<sup>65</sup>

The Simon Fraser University report concludes:

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<sup>60</sup> Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia, February 2008, p.38.

<sup>61</sup> BC Ministry of Health Services, Mental Health and Addictions. Visited May 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup> Marcel Tetrault, *Comox Valley Echo*, November 21, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> Marcel Tetrault, *Comox Valley Echo*, February 17, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information, *Improving the Health of Canadians: Mental Health and Homelessness* (Ottawa: CIHI, 2007), p. 50.

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“An increase in the supply of affordable housing will be a key strategy in addressing homelessness among people with SAMI (Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness). New construction is needed to increase the availability of rental stock, as well as the provision of rental subsidies to increase access to existing rental accommodation.”<sup>66</sup>

To extrapolate further, for all vulnerable sections of the population, an increase in the supply of affordable housing will be a key strategy in addressing homelessness.

In addition to the homeless and near-homeless numbers, there are people who are not counted in surveys that require emergency shelter for a variety of reasons. (See 5.6 Crisis Support Services on page 47 for additional details.)

From June to December 2007, 139 women and 66 children stayed at Lilli House seeking safety from abusive partners. The Lilli House has 11 shelter beds: six for women and five for children. Their stays ranged from 1 to 78 days. The Comox Valley Transition Society considers all of their clients at the Lilli House as homeless. Many are forced to leave the Valley to find safe and affordable housing. The Society also has one bed for detox, the only one available to women needing this service in the Valley.

Other emergency shelters include:

- The Wachiay Friendship Centre provides emergency shelter for Aboriginal clients. Most are at risk for homelessness. In their 2008/09 fiscal year, they had 600 contacts (points of service) and a base client list of 300 using the homeless prevention/intervention project. The homeless outreach program had 180 points of service and a base client list of 180.<sup>67</sup>
- The Salvation Army Shelter has 11 beds for men and 6 beds for women.
- The Comox Valley Recovery Centre has 20 residential treatment beds and five detox beds for adult males only.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Housing and Support for Adults with Severe Addictions and/or Mental Illness in British Columbia, February 2008, p.69.

<sup>67</sup> Wachiay Friendship Centre, planning documents provided to CVSPS director, June 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Homeless! City of Courtenay Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness in the Comox Valley. March 1, 2008.

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Additional housing exists in the Valley; some are temporary, and others permanent. They include:

- The Bee's Nest: a recovery home for men – 4 units plus 2 under renovations.
- Comox Valley Understanding Men: transitional housing for men who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – 5 units.

Recently, the Province awarded two grants totalling \$31,360 from the Housing Endowment Fund (HEF) to The Bee's Nest recovery home and Comox Valley Understanding Men housing project. The Hornby Island Elder Housing Society also received funds from the Housing Endowment Fund to build four "green" seniors' units.<sup>69</sup>

NB: The CVRD is planning a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), a process that will potentially have a big impact on the way development happens in the Comox Valley. That will in turn affect the affordable housing initiatives and where they will be located. In 2008, all four Comox Valley local governments entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and hope to adopt the RGS in 2010. The RGS mandate is "to provide a process for making choices for a sustainable future, which preserves the region's high quality of life".<sup>70</sup> Visit [http://www.comoxstrathcona.ca/section\\_rgs/](http://www.comoxstrathcona.ca/section_rgs/).

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<sup>69</sup> BC Housing news release, *Housing Fund Grants of \$31,360 for Courtenay*, April 6th, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> CVRD, *Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy*.