



**United Way**  
British Columbia

Working with communities in BC's  
Interior, Lower Mainland, Central  
& Northern Vancouver Island

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**Canada**

NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Local responses to homelessness for those in need**

### *Government of Canada invests additional 3.7 million to support programs addressing homelessness in Nanaimo, Cowichan, and Duncan, including Indigenous and urban communities*

**Cowichan, B.C.** – Homelessness, the housing crisis, and inflation are issues at the forefront of Canadian and British Columbian minds. These concerns touch lives in personal and visible ways. From seniors to young families worried about rent increases, food costs, and living on a fixed income – their unease is real and valid.

Addressing these concerns while also helping individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness in accessing or sustaining safe, stable, and affordable housing is the focus of the Government of Canada's Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. The federal government is investing more than \$3.7 million through the Reaching Home program in central and northern Vancouver Island. In 2024-2025, \$2,957,025 will be invested in services and programs offered in Nanaimo, Cowichan, and Duncan, including Indigenous and urban communities. An additional \$802,788 this past winter has allowed the Community Advisory Boards to top up funding for cold weather supports. This funding has helped many agencies to continue supporting the most vulnerable population.

"Homelessness impacts every community across Canada, and there is no single cause or blanket solution," said the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, on behalf of the Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities. "That is why we are investing in community-led projects in Nanaimo, Cowichan, and Duncan. By working closely with provincial partners and supporting grassroots networks, we can continue building on local solutions and making sure all Canadians have paths to safe and stable housing."

While the current state of homelessness, including those who are at risk of homelessness, paints a raw and somber picture, the responses to addressing the concerns are inspiring. Cowichan Women Against Violence's new shelter Cedar Branches supports 20 clients with shelter, as well as health and wellness support. At the Hiiye'yu Lelum House of Friendship, the homelessness breakfast program provides client support services addressing basic needs like breakfast, lunch, access to a shower and laundry facility, and referrals for counselling and health care. These are just two examples of local programs in their community to help those in need.

"Homelessness is something we know is increasing in our communities. The latest Point in Time (PIT) Counts have indicated significant jumps, and we hear about the struggles many face with increasing costs and their fears of losing their homes or not being able to afford living in their apartment. Reaching Home funding is crucial to addressing the unique issues and causes within a community," says Vicky Trill, United Way British Columbia Reaching Home Manager, Central & Northern Vancouver Island. "Our team supports local agencies one-on-one to help them continue delivering services where they are needed."

Since 2013, United Way British Columbia has been a trusted partner and the Community Entity (CE) for the Reaching Home program for Duncan Indigenous Homelessness and in 2020 became CE for the Cowichan as a Designated Community. The organization has fostered close relationships with agencies and First Nations in the region to address many issues, including homelessness. Over that period, Reaching Home has helped 472 individuals in Nanaimo, Cowichan, and Duncan find more stable housing

and over 1300 to maintain their current housing. Over 65% of people who accessed services funded by Reaching Home remained housed or successfully exited the program. A further 97% of individuals who accessed programs remained housed three months after receiving prevention services.

As social challenges continue to increase so does the need, and the funding opportunity was oversubscribed this year. Thirty-five (35) applications were received, and 22 agencies were approved for funding by the Community Advisory Boards (CAB) with some receiving a partial portion of their request.

“It was a difficult choice and the Advisory Boards had to consider priorities and sustainability for programs,” says Julie Rushton, United Way BC’s Community Impact Manager. “As much as we would like to fund everybody, we have to make decisions based on the Board’s community priorities, the Government of Canada’s priorities, and desired outcomes.”

To learn more about the projects, visit [www.uwbc.ca/program/reaching-home/](http://www.uwbc.ca/program/reaching-home/).

To learn more about Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, visit: <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/index-eng.html>.

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### **About United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC’s North, Interior, Lower Mainland, and Central & Northern Vancouver Island**

United Way supports healthy, caring and inclusive communities by strengthening vital connections that support people in need. Representing the regions of Central and Northern Vancouver Island, North, East Kootenay, Lower Mainland, Southern Interior, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, and Trail and District, our organization serves a population of more than 4 million people, with a focus on kids and youth, seniors, poverty, mental health and food security.

[www.uwbc.ca](http://www.uwbc.ca)

### **About [Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy](#)**

Launched in April 2019, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. This program provides direct support and funding to Designated Communities (urban centres), Indigenous communities, territorial communities and rural and remote communities across Canada to help them address their local homelessness needs. Through Reaching Home, the federal government has committed \$4 billion over 9 years to address homelessness.

### **Interview Opportunities**

Interviews are available with Julie Rushton, Manager, CNVI Region, United Way British Columbia.

To coordinate interviews with local spokespeople, please contact Chantal Beesley  
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