

**A Survey on the Extent of
Substandard Housing Problems
Faced by Immigrants and Refugees
in the Lower Mainland
of British Columbia
Summary Report**

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Foreword

The long-term vision of M.O.S.A.I.C. is to create a sustainable social environment for newcomers to actualize their full potential in Canada. Through a variety of services, programs and community partnerships, M.O.S.A.I.C. supports immigrants and refugees in their settlement, adjustment and integration into Canadian society. Although sustainability may be defined by different outcomes, for a community-based organization such as M.O.S.A.I.C., our goal is to promote a meaningful participation of the community members in all walks of life—social, economic, cultural and political. To achieve this basic goal we engage our community partners in a life long learning for change.

It is important to lay strong and knowledge-based foundations so that support and assistance remain sustainable. In the case of the housing challenges faced by many immigrants and refugees in the Lower Mainland, this task is achieved through:

1. gaining an understanding of the issues surrounding housing issues
2. incorporating inputs from the key stakeholders—the immigrant and refugee communities and the housing service sector (municipal, provincial and federal levels), and
3. developing future policy framework that acknowledges the aspirations and limitations of all parties involved

I believe that this report will serve an important and useful tool by adding a new dimension to the ‘housing’ debate. The research incorporates the immigrant and refugee issues around housing into the forefront. Indeed, similar to all the people who actively participated in the project, I am hopeful that the document will remain relevant to everyone involved in the development of policies, alternatives and community strategies that will address the housing challenges faced by immigrants and refugees.

It is my pleasure to present this report on behalf of M.O.S.A.I.C. and the Project Team. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Kwantlen University College as well as all of those who funded and supported this project.

Thank you.

Eyob G. Naizghi
Executive Director

1. Background:

Project Goals

To document the extent of housing needs and substandard housing problems among immigrants and refugees.

To recommend policy direction, alternatives and community strategies that incorporate effective and comprehensive action plans to address the substandard housing problems faced by immigrants and refugees.

Partnership

This project was a joint partnership between the Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (M.O.S.A.I.C.) and Kwantlen University College, carried out from January 14 to April 30, 2002.

This report highlights the findings from a community-based project that focused on determining the extent of substandard housing problems faced by immigrants and refugees in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (namely, Burnaby, Surrey, Richmond, Delta, New Westminster, Langley, Vancouver, North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody).

2. Methodology

A survey was planned and implemented by a Project Team that consisted of a Director, Principal Investigator, Project Manager, eleven Focus Group Facilitators and an Executive Assistant.

A triangulation approach was implemented to ensure that the goals of the project could be adequately and efficiently met. This approach included the formation of an advisory committee, an extensive literature review, a questionnaire/survey, key informant interviews, a public forum and, finally, focus group meetings that included immigrants and refugees from the ethnocultural minority communities. These focus groups were designed to include a range of ethnocultural groups to round out the research (namely the African, African Francophone, Russian, Iranian (Persian), Chinese, Polish, Vietnamese, South Asian, Korean, Arabic and Kurdish communities).

In total, seventeen questionnaires were returned and sixteen interviews were organized. In addition, 51 males and 72 females participated in the project as part of the eleven Focus Groups and 32 people took part in the Public Forum.

3. Indicators of substandard housing and being at risk of homelessness

The housing standards that reflect societal expectations are based on several broad categories: suitability, adequacy, affordability and a healthy surrounding community (see, for example, The National Occupancy Standards).

Indicators of substandard housing conditions (these are often a culmination of the following):

- Suitability: overcrowding, inadequacy of space given number of potential occupants

- Adequacy: impoverished housing is identified by poor living conditions and poor sanitation as well as irregular and/or inadequate maintenance of the electricity, plumbing, heat, roof, floor, appliances, etc.
- Affordability: the household spends more than 30% of its income on shelter. (Consideration will be given to the difference between a single person choosing to use more than 50% of his income in rent and a family of five spending more than 50% of their total income in rent.)
- Houses or dwellings put on the market for demolition, redevelopment or conversion
- Imminent notice of eviction
- Healthy Community: social problems associated with the surrounding community (may include drug or alcohol addicts living in or close to the building in question)
- Isolation from local conveniences such as public transportation and social support networks
- Level of crime within and close to the housing complex in question

The following indicators are aimed toward immigrants and refugees who, in particular, are:

Sponsored by their families or sponsorship agreement holders and are currently facing some sort of sponsorship breakdown.

Women and children in abusive situations.

4. Housing Situation in British Columbia and the Lower Mainland

Reviews of literature produced by BC Housing, the Tenants' Rights Action Coalition, the National Housing and Homelessness Network, and Gray revealed the following.

47% of renters in British Columbia spend more than 30% of their incomes on shelter. About one third of those without decent housing suffer from a mental illness. Approximately 10,000 singles, families and seniors are on waiting lists for BC Housing units; this figure, however, excludes the thousands of people on housing lists coordinated by non-profit housing associations. Approximately 13,000-15,000 individuals live in dilapidated hotel rooms, with up to 17 people sharing a single bathroom. Each month, more than 500 people are turned away from shelters. Most welfare recipients spend 75% of their incomes on shelter. Approximately 155,000 families or households across the province are in what is known as 'core housing need,' i.e., they cannot afford housing within their own communities that is both large enough and in satisfactory condition without spending over 30% of their household income on rent.

Secondary suites provide an alternative form of affordable housing equating to about 20% of BC's rental housing supply. Although these suites number between 100,000 and 120,000 throughout the province, municipalities seem to be divided on the subject of enforcement of satisfactory living conditions (given zoning by-laws).

In regard to generic research on housing issues in the Lower Mainland, the City of Vancouver Housing Center has extensive information and data on both its housing stock and homeless population. The number of individuals living in Vancouver's streets is currently estimated to be between 600 and 1,000 people, with numbers on the rise in nearby municipalities like New Westminster and Surrey. Approximately 330 emergency-shelter and hostel beds exist in the

region, mostly in Vancouver. The Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing stock is diminishing due to the conversion, redevelopment or demolition of hotels that contain such units.

Approximately 13,000 households in Greater Vancouver are on social housing waiting lists. More than 66,200 households devote 50% or more of their incomes to rent. About 1,200 SRO units were lost during the 1990's, mostly in the downtown eastside. As of September 1, 2001 there were 20,133 social housing units occupied in the city; these accounted for about 8.5% of the city's total housing stock. Another 910 social housing units are under construction and 1,289 units have been funded and are currently under development.

5. Immigration to British Columbia

Between 1986 and 1996 BC experienced a dramatic increase in international immigration. 12,500 arrivals in 1986 grew to more than 50,000 in 1996. "Immigration increased steadily between 1986 and 1996. By 1996, BC was receiving 23% of all immigrants to Canada with only 12% of the national population, making it the highest per capita immigrant receiving province." (MMI, 1986-1996) Between 40,000 and 45,000 immigrants and refugees settle annually in BC.

Between 1986 and 1996 births, inter-provincial migration patterns and immigration increased BC's population by 28.4% or 810,125 individuals. BC's Canadian-born population increased by 24.2% while the foreign-born population grew by 43.2%. Due to changes in immigration patterns, 25% of BC's population is now foreign-born. In Vancouver alone, 30% of the population is foreign-born.

Approximately 85% of new immigrants to BC decide to live in the Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley areas.

The population of foreign-born individuals living in Greater Vancouver has increased by 250,000 over the last ten years. Immigrants (both those established and recent) make up 48% of the population in Richmond, 42% in Burnaby, 45% in Vancouver and 32% in both Coquitlam and North Vancouver (MRMI, 1997).

Immigration continues to be a major factor in the growth of the South Fraser region. The 1996 Census shows that 28.6% of Surrey's, 17.5% of Delta's and 6.1% of Langley's population is made up of visible minorities. Recent immigrants most commonly originate from the Asian-Pacific countries. India, Taiwan, the Philippines, Fiji, Korea and China are the top countries of immigrants' origin.

6. Housing Barriers for Immigrants and Refugees

Various research projects illustrate how a combination of factors can work against immigrants and refugees trying to access housing. The allocation of housing is based on formal criteria, including ability to pay (in reference to market housing) and various definitions of need (in reference to social housing).

Informal criteria are defined as either primary or secondary barriers, as follows (Hulchanki, 1997):

Primary barriers include:

1. Skin Colour ('Race')
2. Ethnicity/Culture/Religion
3. Gender

Secondary barriers include:

1. Level of income
2. Source of income
3. Knowledge of the housing system
4. Language/Accent
5. Household type and size
6. Knowledge of institutions and culture
7. Experience with the dominant institutions and culture

As a result of such criteria immigrants and refugees have more difficulties seeking housing than their non-immigrant and non-refugee counterparts.

7. Substandard Housing Problems for Immigrants and Refugees in Toronto

Literature reviews revealed that the situation in the Lower Mainland is similar to the housing problems that immigrants and refugees in Toronto face.

One quarter of Canada's immigrants and refugees live in Toronto and make up half of that city's population.

The primary problems that homeless immigrants and refugees face are similar to the difficulties encountered by others who are homeless—poverty and lack of affordable housing. The problems of the former group are, however, intensified by the fact that they are trying to learn the language and customs of a new country. Refugee claimants are at a higher risk of becoming homeless due to the lack of opportunities and support systems available to them (for example, refugee claimants are illegible for federal settlement programs). In addition to generic services being implemented for the homeless, an increased number of programs specifically designed to reduce the risk of homelessness for immigrants and refugees have been introduced.

8. Substandard Housing Problems for Immigrants and Refugees in the Lower Mainland

8.1 Findings from Immigrants and Refugees

Housing issues and concerns

A number of issues relating to the housing situation of immigrants and refugees were discussed by the focus groups. Participants revealed that they are living in over-

crowded, unaffordable, substandard, 'dirty,' unpleasant, and poorly maintained accommodations. These dwellings do not meet basic maintenance standards, neither regarding the cleanliness of the unit itself nor the structural state of the entire property. Focus group participants also stated that it is not uncommon for complaints to landlords and housing managers of substandard dwellings, regarding such concerns as drafts, leaks, mold, pests, broken appliances and insufficient heat during winter, to be ignored.

Some added that their security deposits were often not returned to them. Others said they were forced to pay higher-than-normal six-month deposits (newcomers are unable to access their deposits before six months). These regulations seem to be implemented by landlords who require some assurance of security from immigrants and refugees who often cannot provide proof of credibility based on financial credit, employment, income tax returns or references from previous landlords.

Interactions with Service Providers

Individuals mentioned that their dealings with service providers were not always fruitful. Many agencies are having difficulty managing caseloads due to an overloaded system. Individuals often felt they were being passed on from agency to agency or being given the 'run around'. Language difficulties often led to children or another third person being relied upon for interpretation. Respondents did state, however, that some advocacy bodies/agencies had been helpful by listening to and acknowledging their concerns.

Interactions with Landlords/Housing Managers

The views expressed by the newcomers towards landlords and housing managers were very negative. Individuals stated that the attitudes of landlords towards immigrants and refugees frequently shows prejudice and makes use of stereotypes. This is the case no matter what the landlord's own ethnocultural background is. Respondents claimed that some landlords rent housing only to applicants of their own religion and cultural background (despite the landlords' themselves being immigrants).

Often the financial status of immigrants and refugees (whether they are currently employed or relying on income-assistance) becomes a factor. Larger families are often denied accommodation based on the number of family members. With regards to substandard housing conditions, participants claimed that some complaints are followed-up by government inspections. However, if the findings require landlords to upgrade the units, tenants may experience an increase in rent as a result of the repairs.

Cycle of deprivation

Immigrants and refugees experience increasing deprivation because they seem to be caught in a cycle that many find difficult or impossible to break out of. This cycle includes the following factors and hardships: little knowledge of Canadian culture; lack of acknowledgement of immigrants' educational achievements and credentials; lack of available information on services offered to newcomers and instructions on application processes; lack of legal information on tenants' rights and landlords' responsibilities; a low stock of affordable rental housing; and difficulties encountered in finding employment or by working for minimum wage. All of these factors contribute to immigrants and refugees becoming caught in this cycle.

Cultural and racial differences

Respondents added that landlords and service providers make cultural and racial differences apparent to them. Given the difficulties in understanding the language and the system many felt they are being abused and taken advantage of based on their vulnerable situation. Respondents said they feel ‘bullied’ by some landlords who know of their housing dilemmas but continue to act insensitively.

Risk of homelessness

Participants said that they are at greater risk of becoming homeless given their status in the housing market. Individuals claimed that they feel neither safe nor comfortable in their current housing situation (often described as ‘temporary’ accommodation). The fear of being at risk of homelessness seems an issue particularly felt by abused women with young children and women fleeing from their spouses due to marital problems. Sponsorship breakdown often means that individuals will be left with no permanent address, no security of tenure, no basic health and safety standards and with only the option of temporary lodging with family and/or friends. Family-class immigrants—particularly parents relying on sponsorship from grown children—may find themselves in a vulnerable situation if they do not get along with their offspring (who often expect that the system will take over the responsibility for their parents).

The process of settlement

Many respondents revealed that they had to change accommodation several times before feeling settled, safe and comfortable. The majority stated that the average amount of time it takes to settle down is three to four years.

Lack of support services

Individuals were concerned about the lack of systematic support services dedicated to helping individuals facing housing and homelessness issues. Individuals felt they had to seek service providers, advocates and other forms of information for and by themselves, and that even then they were not fully aware of all the services available to them in their communities. One respondent claimed, “Some refugees after they are released from the detention center, do not know where to go. There is no comprehensive package of services for them.”

Meeting needs

Immigrants and refugees said that building more housing is necessary to meet their needs. These new units need to be placed close to services such as schools, shopping areas, transportation and their ethnic communities. Eligibility-criteria for subsidized housing also need clarification. Agencies who assisted in the integration process were deemed crucial especially with regards to job assistance. Service providers as well as landlords and housing managers need to be open-minded in regard to different cultures and customs. Since substandard housing is unacceptable, municipal housing policies need to further address this issue and enforce tighter regulations on landlords who take advantage of vulnerable newcomers.

8.2 Findings from Service Providers

Housing needs

Service providers stated that immigrants and refugees desire to find permanent residence, to acquire more space, to pay lower rent, to be provided with appliances that work and to obtain clean and safe accommodation. Refugees who arrive alone cannot generally afford a one-bedroom or bachelor suite on their own. Therefore, one apartment may be shared by several strangers. The primary objective in the search for accommodation is to acquire shelter. The second is to be close to work, school, cultural or religious centers and in a good neighborhood.

The time taken to deliver immigration documentation (i.e. identification) prevents people from gaining welfare and shelter. Similarly, the time taken for work permits to be issued to refugees places them in a vulnerable position. Recognition of pending immigration status, lack of English skills, racism, foreign cultures, family size, low income and problems accessing transportation add to their plight.

Contributing factors of homelessness

The discrimination and racism expressed towards immigrants and refugees by some service providers (irrespective of ethnocultural background) as well as the stereotyping of tenants may be factors that contribute to homelessness. Other reasons may be: large families, low incomes, substandard housing, little knowledge of services, marginalization, lack of references, inadequate credit history, irregular or menial employment, poor education, reliance on income assistance, high rent, 'no children/no pets' policies, poor family relations, family-sponsored immigrants living in abusive relationships (especially seniors and women) and problems with roommates.

Services offered

A range of services is offered by various agencies. These include advocacy, referrals to emergency shelters, affordable housing, legal information on the Residential Tenancy Act, sessions on tenant rights and obligations, mediation between tenants and landlords (especially in relation to damage deposits), form completion, interpretation and translation, representing cases in the arbitration process and filing complaints and coordinating appeals to the tenancy branch. Respondents added that an effort to better distribute funds and to create easier access to affordable housing is being pursued with the help of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (specifically in the creation of a Housing Registry to advocate on behalf of tenants).

The Welcome House and the YMCA and YWCA hostels were reported to have little space to accommodate newcomers. In emergency cases accommodation can be paid for by income assistance, but only if the individual concerned is eligible for such assistance. In other cases clients have to rely on friends, inexpensive motels, market-housing, apartment buildings or private homes (i.e. secondary suites) of substandard quality.

Adequacy of services

A majority of service providers reported that much time and effort are spent finding suitable accommodation for families. The task is a difficult one, given the scarce number of available units. Most services are provided in English; this poses a barrier to service recipients. The Vancouver Housing Registry, credited with providing 'excellent

services,' has recently closed and needs to be replaced by an agency with similar objectives. It was also suggested that more emergency shelters in Vancouver need to be made available to refugees.

Housing related services

Service providers said that most agencies offering housing services are limited and that the issue of interpretation and translation is still a concern, as many agencies do not have bilingual staff. Respondents also stated that greater communication within different departments of an agency, as well as between agencies, needs to be encouraged in order to ease the pressure on the system as a whole and aid immigrants and refugees in the search for suitable housing.

Attitudes of landlords/housing managers

Respondents varied in their assessment of landlords and housing managers. Some said that landlords are fair to all tenants irrespective of their race, culture or background. Others were adamant that some landlords discriminate on the basis of status, source of income and ethnocultural background. They added that some landlords, aware of the vulnerability and inexperience of immigrants and refugees regarding entitlement to services and laws, use this knowledge against potential tenants. Inter-cultural racism was also highlighted as a problem in that landlords are either not aware of the laws and regulations of tenancy agreements themselves or choose to disregard them completely.

The settlement process

Service providers revealed that immigrants and refugees often face problems in settling down permanently as a result of having to first obtain regular employment/steady income. Individuals may move three to five times, sharing spaces with others in similar circumstances in cheap and substandard housing before settling down. A respondent added, "This forced matching does not work." In many cases individuals move from 'couch to couch,' while trying to find adequate housing. In cases of emergency, some respondents mentioned that they would approach agencies such as the Inland Refugee Society, Maple House, and YWCA and YMCA hostels.

Relationship to substandard housing

Service providers were aware of the impact substandard housing has on immigrants and refugees and its relationship to homelessness. Respondents added that factors such as language, prejudice, the social adjustment period and a general lack of knowledge of the system place immigrants and refugees at the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. Their lack of power in the housing market and their inability to negotiate tenancy agreements properly often results in individuals being taken advantage of. Groups most vulnerable to homelessness are immigrants, refugees, singles and those involved in abusive relationships.

From theory to practice

A majority of participants stated that services for immigrants and refugees in the Lower Mainland are inadequate. The Residential Tenancy Act can only work effectively if tenants are fully aware of their rights and are familiar with the legislation's components on landlords' responsibilities. The Welcome House is believed to be too small to handle all government-sponsored refugees arriving in Vancouver. While the majority of agencies are *theoretically* prepared to respond to the needs of immigrants and

refugees, they are not always able to deal with newcomers' housing issues adequately *in practice*.

Cultural awareness and understanding

It was expressed that service providers are not always mindful of the needs and issues of immigrants and refugees in terms of cultural awareness and understanding. Many landlords and housing managers were deemed to have a negative attitude towards immigrants and refugees, based most frequently on preconceived notions of each particular client groups' backgrounds. Respondents stated that the monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices within organizations to ensure cultural appropriateness are often not completed due to time and cost constraints. The larger housing providers, however, have more resources with which to monitor services to ensure suitability and to accommodate many different types of clients.

Meeting needs

Greater advocacy on behalf of immigrants and refugees is considered crucial. So is the need for more *total* government (federal, provincial *and* municipal) involvement in tackling the issues surrounding housing and homelessness (i.e., in providing affordable housing and making efficient use of existing buildings). It was felt that service providers (the Co-op Housing Boards in particular) need better training and must make an effort to remain up-to-date in order to increase their own knowledge and understanding of key issues. Other improvements crucial to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants include: more information in different languages, improving the financial incentives to purchasing one's own home, more research into the housing needs of immigrants and refugees and the management of co-operatives by immigrants and refugees from different communities.

9. Gender Analysis for Immigrant and Refugee Women

A gender-based perspective was applied to the research project to ensure that the unique experiences of women would be included.

A 1987 Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) survey states that women account for approximately 30% of the homeless population in Canada. Female homelessness is linked to a number of risk factors such as lack of affordable housing, drug-abuse, mental and physical health problems, alcoholism, family violence and poverty. The financial implications after a deteriorated marriage, divorce or loss of spouse have severe consequences for women. Recent research from the Center for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA, 2002) states that since homelessness is still perceived to be a male issue the experiences of women and children are often ignored.

Oppression based on race, class and gender exists for refugee and immigrant women, as well as economic, cultural and linguistic alienation and exclusion. Very few female refugees understand the basic human rights legislation on tenancy rights. As a result, in regards to housing, many pay more for less. Often, female-led immigrant households living in poverty end up in areas that are unsafe and 'ghetto-like.' This residential segregation further adds to social exclusion and marginalization, thereby sustaining racial inequality. Landlords are more likely to take advantage of immigrant and refugee women; the consequences of this are that either these women are forced to make frequent moves or they will simply tolerate poor maintenance and service by the landlord. (Novac, 1996)

Our own research uncovered that, in total, more women than men are seen by service providers regarding housing issues on a monthly basis.

The fear of homelessness is an issue that seems to pertain in particular to abused women with young children and to women fleeing spouses due to marital problems. Sponsorship breakdown often means that the individual is left without a permanent address, without security of tenure, without basic health and safety standards and with only the option of temporary lodgings with family and/or friends.

Families with many children are often refused accommodation. Arab/Muslim women are experiencing increased difficulties post September 11th. Other respondents added that the sexual harassment of women (especially single women) needs to be given more attention, as landlords may 'bully' women and may reinforce their behaviour with sexual connotations.

10. Recommendations

The shortage of affordable housing

To aid individuals and families unable to pay the current market prices, the stock of affordable housing must be increased. To establish and maintain partnerships between public and private agencies, since the key to tackling housing issues and homelessness is the creation of more affordable housing.

Representing immigrants and refugees

To encourage immigrant and refugee representatives to participate in housing-related strategic planning discussions and (particularly) to join the Greater Vancouver Regional District Homelessness Steering Committee.

Managing security deposits

To submit security deposits to a third agency/body rather than to the landlords themselves. This would establish a Trust Fund for the purpose of eradicating 'underground landlords' and the practice of acquiring illegal deposits.

Responding to language difficulties

To inform immigrants and refugees, through the municipal and provincial governments, of their rights in relation to tenancy laws. The dissemination of information in different languages would alleviate the need for a third party, often the children of newcomers, to translate and interpret.

Beyond the legal aspects of tenancy legislation, it is crucial to add a 'skills-development' aspect to the information. This would allow individuals to become more independent by highlighting tactics and strategies in seeking suitable housing.

The impact of changes to income assistance

To consider additional impacts on immigrants and refugees (of having less money while rent remains the same) and to consider the contribution of income assistance policies to the escalation rather than alleviation of social problems.

To focus on accountability in that the public and the government both need to be held accountable and responsible for their actions.

Greater involvement of immigrants and refugees

To establish support systems so that immigrants and refugees are involved in accessing services, knowledge and support immediately upon arrival.

To establish initiatives to create more short-term and emergency shelters and to equip individuals with the information they need in order to be fully aware of their rights *and* responsibilities, especially with regards to the law.

The reality of a 'one-stop-shop'

To improve coordination and the sharing of information so that agencies will be able to work more efficiently together. Public places such as city halls, community centres, immigrant-serving agencies and income assistance offices could be places where information could be disseminated. A database of referral agencies could also be organized so clients will not feel as though they are being given the 'run around'.

Although the concept of a 'one-stop-shop' is appealing, it is, in reality, difficult to achieve given the current funding situation faced by many agencies. Hence 'multi-level services' and specialized training are only possible if supported by additional funding.

Quantifying the numbers of substandard housing units

To take an inventory of substandard housing units and illegal secondary suites. Often, individuals living in these suites are not aware that they are illegal and if they are substandard, landlords pay minimum lip service to complaints. The majority, if not all of the immigrants and refugees participating in the research, felt they are living in housing that is substandard.

Reviewing the secondary suite policy

The secondary suite policy and housing inspection practices must be reviewed and updated so that inspections will occur on a complaint basis. If, upon inspection, the accommodation in question is found to be substandard, it will either have to be brought up to the required standards or it will be closed as a rental property.

Greater education for landlords

To ensure housing is kept at reasonable standards of maintenance and repair landlords need to be educated and made aware of the need for such standards and the consequences if they do not meet requirements. Hence, the need for greater enforcement of municipal by-laws and provincial laws against landlords who neglect to maintain their buildings.

Tackling issues of scapegoating

To actively tackle problems of tension, conflict, hostility and preconceived notions of immigrants and refugees that affect the standard of housing in particular localities and contribute to escalating racial problems.

Greater community initiatives

To build alliances and networks through neighborhood associations. This neighborhood approach or local community approach to local issues such as housing would aid all individuals in the community to 'take pride in the neighborhood' and thereby act as an advocacy group to tackle issues of substandard housing.

Establishing a Housing Registry

To establish a housing registry that will illustrate a listing of accommodations available in the Lower Mainland. The listing will indicate affordable market and non-market housing and also act as a filtering system to acknowledge and promote fair and reasonable landlords and housing managers.

Further funding for a Report Card

To apply further funding towards a 'report card' monitoring and highlighting the changes that take place over one to two years. Substandard housing and its relationship to immigrants and refugees in the Lower Mainland could be revisited in a data-collating-exercise analyzing the impact of government policies and any changes that may occur as a result, such as the impact of SCPI Homelessness Initiatives and changes to income assistance.

The Political will

Political will at the national, provincial and local levels was seen as crucial in ensuring that the key issues regarding housing and homelessness are acknowledged and given serious thought. If the federal government intends to keep encouraging people to come to Canada they must allocate funding and attention to providing more affordable housing. The government has a duty and responsibility to inform people overseas, either through the immigration office or the embassy, about the reality and challenges that new immigrants and refugees face in regard to housing. This will, at the very least, help to paint a more accurate picture of how life will be arrival in Canada.

11. Participating Organizations and Communities

Many individuals and organizations contributed to the completion and success of this survey. These participants are the senior management, settlement practitioners and staff of various settlement and social service agencies settlement service sector umbrella organizations, housing service providers, academics, researchers, city planners and provincial ministry representatives.

- AMSSA
- BC Housing
- BC Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services
- BC Non-Profit Housing Association
- BC Settlement and Integration Workers' Association
- Burnaby Multicultural Society
- City of Richmond
- City of Vancouver
- Columbia Housing Advisory Association
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Immigrant Services Society of BC
- Inland Refugee Society

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- Jewish Family Services
- Kwantlen University College
- Mennonite Central Committee
- M.O.S.A.I.C.
- North Shore Multicultural Society
- Salisbury Community Society
- Seniors Housing Information Program
- Store Front Orientation Services
- SUCCESS
- Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society
- Surrey Social Future Society
- Tenants Rights Action Coalition
- University of British Columbia/Metropolis Project
- Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture
- Watari Research Association
- Working Group on Poverty

Also members of the following ethnocultural minority communities have contributed to the survey:

- African
- African Francophone
- Arabic and Kurdish
- Chinese
- Iranian (Persian)
- Korean
- Latin American
- Polish
- Russian
- South Asian
- Vietnamese