



# Richmond PRC Newsletter

❄️ Winter 2014 ❄️

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## Chimo to take over rental registry

Great News! We are happy to announce that Chimo Community Services is taking over the Richmond Rental Connect program late next year.

Nothing changes in the meantime — from November 2014 until November 2015, the Richmond Poverty Response Committee (PRC) remains involved with Richmond Rental Connect (RRC) community engagement activities and information sharing with the Richmond Homelessness Coalition, the City of Richmond and Richmond Health Services. We will also still be working with service providers such as the Richmond Drop In Centre, Richmond Women's Resource Centre and Chimo, and invite their clients to join the rental registry.

As well, PRC volunteers will be distributing promotional materials on workshops and events to agencies, libraries, community centres and businesses with bulletin boards. Throughout 2015, we are again holding a series of bi-monthly free "Building Successful Tenant Landlord

Relations" workshops, mandatory for registry users, to further build the community of tenants and landlords in the database.

On alternate bi-monthly dates, there are another set of free workshops planned for Chimo volunteer advocates focused on "Keeping your Clients Housed — Tips and Strategies," in order to combine Chimo's knowledge base with the PRC's and to facilitate a smooth handover. Training will be provided to Chimo staff to take over the coordination and administration of the RRC project including the website, rental registry and workshops.

"Our staff is anxious to learn from members of the Poverty Response Committee and transition the program to Chimo during 2016," said Mark Miller, executive director of Chimo.

"We anticipate the transition will be smooth and look forward to adding the program to our long term programs that continue to serve the needs of some of our community's most vulnerable."

# Vacant houses transformed into temporary residences

When a developer purchases land on which to construct a new property, there is often one or more existing residences that remain vacant until torn down to make room for new ones. Rather than going this conventional route, Richmond builder Balandra Development has chosen a more philanthropic approach by turning old residences into temporary housing for people and families in crisis.

"Typically, when we buy a property the house is still fairly liveable. Many times we are waiting for construction to start for a subdivision. This could take anywhere from eight to 12 months depending on the project, and it could be as long as 18 months," said Balandra president Clive Alladin, whose company specializes in family dwellings.

"When we get these properties, as long as they're liveable, we provide them to Chimo Community Services," he said.

Chimo then takes such a property and converts it into a transitional interim living space for those that need it until they can get back on their feet.

The initial undertaking of this sort occurred two years ago, with an immigrant family on Williams Road in Richmond. A woman on disability, who had limited English language skills and four children, had no place to turn and found Chimo that arranged for their stay in one of Balandra's homes. The community organization also got in touch with various charities and individuals to furnish the interior.

"That was the first candidate — she lived in our house for about eight months and we charged her \$1 a month," said Balandra. Others include a two-parent family with two grown sons on disability housed in a bunaglow on No. 2 Road, and six low-income women, also placed in a No 2. Road property.

Chimo program coordinator Neena Randawa said this type



of arrangement addresses a gap in services right now, and in fact is being used by BC Housing. The crown corporation offers emergency living accommodations to women in need, but only for a limited time period.

"This city has no second stage housing. Often, clients leave domestic abuse situations and have a good experience at the transition home in our community for one month," she said, adding many still require further support before they are completely ready to live independently. That's where Alladin and his firm come in. He hopes that more local developers will join in, although getting started had its challenges.

"If no one can get through all this red tape, it's no wonder more of us aren't stepping up to the plate. — Benjamin Yong, Richmond PRC



## 2015 Meetings

- Jan. 17: PRC 2015 planning day  
8440 Williams Rd.  
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Feb. 5: PRC monthly meeting
- March 5: PRC monthly meeting

April 2: PRC monthly meeting

\*All regular meetings are open to members of the community and take place from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in Room 320 of the Richmond Caring Place, 7000 Minoru Blvd.

## End child care clawbacks

Did you know the B.C. government currently has a policy of removing financial support for child support? PRC chairperson De Whalen wrote a letter to Premiere Christy Clark on behalf of the PRC to ask for a reversal of the policy. Here it is in its entirety:

*I am writing on behalf of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee (PRC) to urge your government to rescind the policy of clawing back child support payments from single parent families receiving income assistance.*

*Child support payments should rightly belong to the child and not be viewed as extra discretionary income for the parent. Courts have awarded these funds to single parents so they can provide the basic necessities to ensure a child's wellbeing. Since income assistance rates have been frozen since 2007, clawing back these payments only serves to keep these parent providers in poverty.*

*British Columbia has the shameful record of having the highest level of child poverty in Canada. And almost half of children living below the poverty line are from single parent families, mostly single mothers. It is unacceptable for the government to say they do not have the funds to right this wrong. It is akin to a schoolyard bully taking lunch money from a vulnerable child. This is by no means, "Families First."*

*For your information, members of the Richmond PRC include the Richmond Food Bank Society, Richmond Women's Resource Centre, Richmond Food Security Society, Volunteer Richmond Information Services, Richmond Family Place, Richmond Youth Services Agency, Richmond Health Services, Chimo Community Services, Family Services of Greater Vancouver, KAIROS, ISS of BC and representatives of various Faith Groups, among others.*

*The Richmond PRC urges you to take action immediately.*

## PRC poverty fast facts



### Metro Vancouver Homeless Count 2014

- The Homeless Count is a research study held every three years to help with planning, funding and services for homeless people.
- According to this year's survey results, 38 homeless were counted in Richmond, although the actual number is likely much higher.
- Richmond represents one per cent of Metro Vancouver's population of 2,777 visibly homeless people.
- Children and young adults under 25 represented 20 per cent of the total count.
- Low income and high rents were among the most common reasons for homelessness.
- One-third of survey respondents reported having some form of mental illness.
- Richmond has no year-round homeless shelter for men or women.

## Transportation Task Force



It's going to be a busy 2015 — we're presenting to Richmond City Council in early January on the need for a regional homeless transit plan and how the city can help make it a reality. It is an

important step to ensuring that homeless people have better access to transit for meetings, services, and appointments.

We're also holding another transportation forum in May and look to follow it up with a workshop on transit in the fall. We hope to encourage more citizen engagement and respectful civic dialogue through the addition of a workshop. — Alex Nixon, TTF co-chair

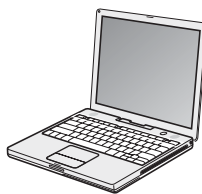
# Systemic change needed

The PRC submitted a report to the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Affairs advocating for action to reduce poverty among Richmond residents. Below are some of our recommendations.

- \* Raise income assistance rates and index them to inflation
- \* Adopt a childcare plan so that women can afford to work and pay taxes

- \* Raise thresholds upon which the rent subsidies apply
- \* Address the structural barriers faced by marginalized groups
- \* Re-commit to building thousands of new social housing units per year
- \* Provide essential health care services and MSP at no cost
- \* Ensure the affordability of fruits and vegetables in food retail

Find the full report on our website: [richmondprc.org](http://richmondprc.org)



## Refurbished CPUs available

The City of Richmond, Reboot Vancouver and St.

Alban Angelican Church have partnered to offer a refurbished computer program. For the price of \$84, tax included, Richmond residents who qualify in the low income bracket (for example, a family of two with a gross income under \$24,269) are eligible to purchase a package that includes the computer itself loaded with Microsoft Windows 7, a flat-screen monitor, a keyboard and a mouse.

The systems were formally used by the city and have been completely "refreshed" by Reboot, and include a one-year warranty. If interested, contact Michael Jarman, manager at the Richmond Drop-in Centre, at 604-278-2770 ext. 105.



*.... a coalition of Richmond residents and agencies working together to reduce poverty and the impacts of poverty with research, projects and public education.*

The Richmond Poverty Response Committee has a strong track record of identifying gaps in services to the poor in our community, and partnering with suitable agencies to implement effective solutions. We have many ongoing and new projects that need your support.

**VOLUNTEER:** The RPRC welcomes the participation of all members of the community. There are regular meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. at the Richmond Caring Place. We also always need help at events, doing outreach, and putting together our newsletters.

**DONATE:** As a non-profit organization, the RPRC depends upon generous donors like you. Your tax-deductible gift will help support our research, education, and projects.

To get involved: Phone: 604.205.4700 or email [info@richmondprc.org](mailto:info@richmondprc.org).

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