



**LOOKOUT
EMERGENCY AID
SOCIETY**

SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

Members of St. Francis de Sales Church
6610 Balmoral Street
Burnaby, B.C.

September 28, 2009

Dear parishioners,

I send this letter to express Lookout's sincerest appreciation for your support and dedication to the Extreme Weather Shelter for these past three years. I also write on behalf of the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness that sponsors this shelter and provides leadership to end local homelessness.

St. Francis de Sales provided refuge and comfort to those at high health risk for three critical winter seasons. Over that time, the Extreme Weather Response provided shelter 2,209 times over 106 openings. Last year was an incredible winter; we opened 47 times and providing a warm, safe space to sleep 1,173 times! This was surely a long way from the opening of 10 days per winter, the regional average up to 2005/2006!

Many members of your congregation volunteered in the EWR regularly; every night it was open the volunteers supported the service! We particularly want to acknowledge and thank Rose Hare, Peggy Hare and Lynn Dwan who did so much, including recruiting, training and coordinating other volunteers.

Friendships were made, fears were faced and overcome, and understandings were shared over the time of this partnership. We well remember one dedicated Sister who would sing beautifully to herself (although many people would quietly gather around to listen!) as she cooked onions and make other preparations for the evening meal for guests of the shelter. With a graceful smile she would say simply "what else are you to do? These are our people and I am here to help them".

St. Francis de Sales volunteers gave the gift of listening authentically to the stories shared by guests; what a remarkable gift this was! Gentle compassion, literally "walking with and for others" was evident in the laughter – and sometimes tears – that we shared. It is not an overstatement to say that together we saved lives. On one occasion, we took to hospital a guest who had become unwell, and we were with him when he received a diagnosis of cancer. Another time, a guest experienced a horrific asthma attack. When the paramedics arrived they told us she would not have survived had she had the attack while on the street. Your care and kindness to whoever was in need was offered in a spirit of dignity and generosity, and for that we are grateful.

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Lookout is a charitable, non profit Society and is financially supported by the Province of B.C. through BC Housing & Ministry of Employment & Income Assistance, by the Federal Gov't through Service Canada & Canada Mortgage & Housing, by Fraser & Vancouver Health Authorities, Foundations and private donations

It is through the support of many individuals that we are able to continue services for Burnaby's homeless population. We have not yet found another location, but we are confident that another very suitable place will be found.

Again, on behalf of Dave Brown, the rest of us at Lookout as well as members of the Burnaby Task Force, thank you for helping to make these services a reality. We look forward to working with you in a different kind of partnership!

In appreciation,

Karen O'Shannacery
Executive Director
Lookout Emergency Aid Society