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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

October 14, 2011

The Editor  
Globe and Mail  
[letters@globeandmail.com](mailto:letters@globeandmail.com)

### **BC responding to needs of homeless – all year round**

A recent article does not fully describe the province's ongoing efforts to end homelessness in Vancouver. (B.C. puts homeless out in the cold, Oct. 12, 2011).

Over the last five years we have made significant investments in housing and supports to help those who are homeless find shelter and move off the streets permanently.

Through investments in outreach services, emergency shelters, and housing that helps people stabilize, regain their independence and rebuild their lives, the province is working in partnership with the City of Vancouver and community agencies to help break the cycle of homelessness. This collective effort is making a difference with the 2011 homeless count indicating a reduction in the number of Vancouver's street homeless from 815 to 145 – an 82-per-cent decline since 2008.

Opening 309 new supportive apartments since April this year has reduced the need for the 160 temporary Winter Response spaces that we have funded for the past two years. Additionally, the 340 HEAT shelter spaces that were to be phased out as this new supportive housing was opened will be funded and remain open this year. These actions help ensure that there are more beds available for homeless individuals this winter than there were last year.

In cases of extreme weather – particularly with forecasters predicting a colder than normal winter – the province is adding 100 spaces to Vancouver's Extreme Weather Response shelters located around the city. The additional funds will allow for more than 300 available spaces this winter when extreme weather alerts are activated by the community.

The province also provides more than \$17 million each year to support more than 600 permanent year-round shelter beds in Vancouver. Across the Metro area there are more than 900 year-round spaces. Yet, our focus is on housing that helps people move off the street permanently – targeting public funds where they can have the greatest impact.

I can appreciate the concerns that winter brings, but while the four winter shelters may not be open, other spaces are, and the number of beds available in Vancouver this winter has not been reduced.

Rich Coleman  
Minister Responsible for Housing  
250 952-0617