

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Emergency Shelter at Our Place**

### ***Cold snap strains resources at hub for homelessness in Victoria***

**VICTORIA, B.C.** – The cold snap that has gripped Vancouver Island this week has placed extra pressure on Our Place to open its facility for longer hours and serve up more hot meals.

“People have few places to go,” says Don Evans, executive director of Our Place. “And we don’t want them freezing on the streets.”

And while the provincial government’s Extreme Weather Response program provides some additional funding for emergency overnight shelter, Our Place’s facility on Pandora Avenue is bulging at the seams with people needing a respite from the cold.

“We’ve been keeping our doors open,” adds Evans, “despite the added strain on our resources because the need is so great. For overnight shelter, we have government funding for 30 mats, but some nights we’ve seen triple that number showing up.”

Our Place works with other shelters in the region to transport people where any empty beds are. The majority of funding for the programs and services at Our Place comes from individuals and businesses.

“Thanks to the generosity of individuals over Christmas, we actually have a great supply of winter coats and gloves to hand out to people in need,” says Evans. “And that has been a blessing.”

To help meet the cold weather needs of people living on the street, Our Place has a separate Warming Station where those who don’t want to sleep can get a hot drink, something to eat and a place to get warm.

“Not everyone can sleep at night,” says Evans, “and they avoid the shelters because of it. Whether it’s from mental illness or safety concerns, we want to give those people a place to get warm, too.”

Our Place is an inner-city community centre serving Greater Victoria’s most vulnerable: working poor, impoverished elderly, mental and physically challenged, and the homeless. Individuals and businesses provide the majority of financial support for its programs and services. Our Place provides 45 transitional housing units, over 1,200 meals per day, hot showers, free clothing, counseling and outreach services. Most importantly, it provides a sense of hope and belonging to our neighbours in need.

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