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Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Conducting Counts of Homeless Persons in Calgary, 1992-2008

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Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Conducting Counts of Homeless Persons in Calgary, 1992-2008

Prepared by:



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The research and recommendations are the responsibility of the authors of the report and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared for the **Homelessness Partnering Strategy** of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. It involved a retrospective analysis of the methodology used during nine consecutive *Biennial Counts of Homeless Persons in Calgary*. Each count was coordinated by The City of Calgary between 1992 and 2008 and held in mid-May of even-numbered years. Further insight was obtained through discussions with past count coordinators and the manager of the Division responsible for this work. The result is a synthesis of lessons learned and a checklist of best practices developed and used by The City of Calgary for point-in-time counts.

While many of the best practices reported may seem like common sense approaches to undertaking a count of homeless people living in a large city, a few of them may not be immediately obvious to someone undertaking a count for the first time. Things that may seem obvious in retrospect were learned over a long period of time during which homelessness emerged as a significant social issue in Canadian cities large and small, and became a national and international concern. It is therefore hoped that what we have learned by coordinating nine biennial counts of homeless people in Calgary will have transferable value for individuals, agencies, or municipalities that begin to make or modify their own plans for enumerating homeless citizens in their city, town or region.

This report presents an overview of how periodic point-in-time counts of homeless people in Calgary began and evolved over nine count cycles. Best practices developed and employed in Calgary are highlighted, which may be of value to those just beginning to do point-in-time counts of homeless citizens, as well as to those contemplating a review or renewal of existing count practices. Four key areas are profiled—defining ‘homelessness,’ count timing and duration, data collection, and street counts—and checklists for each are provided for ease of reference.

From all that has been learned by coordinating nine consecutive point-in-time counts of homeless Calgarians, three primary lessons emerge. By far, the most beneficial practices that can be adopted to ensure a successful count—one that is methodologically sound, replicable, and provides comparable data over time—are **advance planning**, **adequate resourcing**, and **extensive yet targeted consultation**.

Although Calgary’s count is admittedly large and comprehensive, the time and human resources needed to organize and conduct a count are significant and will be for smaller counts as well.¹ Without the cooperation and support of staff in several City of Calgary departments and numerous homeless-serving agencies in the community, the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary* would not be nearly as rigorous or accurate as it is. To garner this type and degree of support, consultation with key players is essential, and early consultation is strongly advised.

¹ For an overview of the time and staff resources used for Calgary’s count in 2008, see Appendix C.

While the enumeration methods used by The City of Calgary are designed to be as accurate as possible, it is important to note that it is not possible to count every single person that is experiencing homelessness in Calgary. The *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons* provides a 'point-in-time' snapshot of the size and characteristics of the homeless population on one night every two years. As such, it provides a good approximation of the number of people in Calgary who are absolutely homeless *on any given night*. However, as with all cities or regions that conduct a point-in-time count of homeless persons, the City of Calgary's counts cannot capture the true extent or magnitude of homelessness in the city.

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BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED IN CONDUCTING COUNTS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN CALGARY, 1992-2008

This report has been prepared for the **Homelessness Partnering Strategy** of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. It involved a retrospective analysis of the methodology used during nine consecutive *Biennial Counts of Homeless Persons in Calgary*. Each count was coordinated by The City of Calgary between 1992 and 2008 and held in mid-May of even-numbered years. Further insight was obtained through discussions with past count coordinators and the manager of the Division responsible for this work. The result is a synthesis of lessons learned and a checklist of best practices developed and used by The City of Calgary for point-in-time counts.

While many of the best practices reported may seem like common sense approaches to undertaking a count of homeless people living in a large city, a few of them may not be immediately obvious to someone undertaking a count for the first time. Things that may seem obvious in retrospect were learned over a long period of time during which homelessness emerged as a significant social issue in Canadian cities large and small, and became a national and international concern. It is therefore hoped that what we have learned by coordinating nine biennial counts of homeless people in Calgary will have transferable value for individuals, agencies, or municipalities that begin to make or modify their own plans for enumerating homeless citizens in their city, town or region.

1.0 The Evolution of Calgary's Point-in-Time Counts

Assessing best practices first requires an understanding of the story about why and how The City of Calgary has conducted a point-in-time census or 'count' of homeless people every two years in May since 1992. This section provides that historical context. The ninth *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary* was held on 2008 May 14. The findings provide a snapshot of the number and characteristics of people in Calgary who are likely to be experiencing homelessness *on any given night*. A point-in-time count cannot provide an assessment of the number of different people who experience homelessness during the course of the year, however, which requires other methods.

While providing shelter for the homeless is a provincial responsibility, The City of Calgary (2002a) plays an important role in gathering and reporting information on homelessness and affordable housing as part of its Corporate Affordable Housing Strategy. The City of Calgary's recurrent counts of homeless citizens provide important information for community service providers and the provincial and federal governments about the number of people in Calgary "who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose" on the night of each count. Therefore, all of the research reports on homelessness that have been produced by The City of Calgary over time can be downloaded from The City website at www.calgary.ca/cns. Under Featured Information, select *Research on Affordable Housing and Homelessness* to be directed to the research homepage, where several kinds of reports can be located.

1.1 In the Beginning... 1992 and 1994

Between 1989 and 1992, several studies were done in Calgary to understand the extent of homelessness in the city. Definitions and methods varied widely and produced a range of results—from less than 100 homeless people to over 10,000. Acrimonious debates over numbers were the norm. As a result, members of City Council asked for ‘harder’ numbers that used reliable data, were easy to understand, and could be replicated over time. Frontline service providers were called together as a Street Liaison Committee to advise The City of Calgary on the definition, timing, methods, and logistics that were needed to conduct a census or count of Calgary’s homeless people.

From that 1992 request, The City of Calgary’s first point-in-time count emerged as a **survey of facilities and agencies** serving the homeless. It also included a physical count of people observed to be sleeping **on the streets** in a very small area on the east end of the Downtown core and the Beltline. The street count parameters were selected because these were the only locations at the time where homeless people were known to be sleeping on the streets. The first count was held in May, simply because of the deadlines attached to Council’s request for information. In 1994, updated numbers on homelessness were requested and the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons* was born.

To comply with the initial requirement that the count had to be replicable over time, May was established as the month in which Calgary’s second and subsequent counts would take place. In 1994, ‘observed’ demographic data were reported by institutions and recorded by street canvassers, which established a practice that continues to the present. Overall, however, the scope of the first two counts was quite limited. Major non-profit agencies known to be serving the homeless were surveyed about their resident clientele, as were a handful outreach agencies and the Calgary Police Service’s Arrest Processing Unit. The number of people sleeping on the streets was relatively low in absolute terms, so the street count boundaries were also limited.

1.2 Modest Increases in Scope... 1996 through 2002

During the next four counts—held in 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002—the scope of the survey was amended to reflect changes in service provision that had taken place since the previous count. To the extent possible, shelter facilities that opened, closed or changed ownership were identified, as were service agencies that had changed their mandate or publicly acknowledged their role in serving homeless people for the first time. With street homelessness growing—both in volume and location—more ‘zones’ were canvassed during successive street counts. All of these adjustments are standard practice for a census, which is what Calgary’s point-in-time count actually is.¹

¹ A census is defined as “the collection of information about all units in a population, sometimes also called a 100 percent sample survey” (Wilhelm, Dibbs, and Shastri, 1983: 2). As with the census conducted every five years by Statistics Canada, when the target population grows or moves into areas that were not previously surveyed, the census parameters are adjusted to get the most complete count possible. For the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons*, the target population is ‘absolutely homeless persons living in the city of Calgary’ so the parameters are adjusted each time the census is undertaken to ensure that as many homeless people as possible are enumerated.

Knowledge about homelessness in Calgary has grown significantly since the first six counts were undertaken. Changes have been observed in terms of overall awareness and concern about the issue, the location and magnitude of street homelessness in the city, and the number of local service providers that have started, stopped or resumed serving the homeless population or any of its identified sub-groups (such as youth, single adults, families with children, seniors, people with disabilities, Aboriginal or racialized peoples, immigrants or refugees, and people with addictions and/or mental health challenges). This expanding knowledge base ballooned in 2003, leading to a major change in the count methodology used the following year.

1.3 A New Baseline... 2004 and 2006

The *Calgary Community Plan: Building Paths Out of Homelessness* was released by the Calgary Homeless Foundation in November 2003. It provided a comprehensive picture of the number and variety of organizations that were sheltering the homeless, many of which had not previously been identified or included in Calgary's point-in-time counts. Some argued that many of the new agencies listed in the *Community Plan* had simply declared themselves to be 'homeless serving' in hopes of qualifying for funding.

Whatever the reason, The City of Calgary's next count—which is essentially a report on demand data for the night of the count—clearly had to align with the Calgary Homeless Foundation's newly published information on the supply of beds. This resulted in the inclusion of many facilities and services that had not been surveyed for previous counts. It more than doubled the number of participating organizations—from 21 in 2002 to 50 in 2004, even adding Calgary Transit, whose security officers began to report on the number of people staying after hours at remote LRT stations on the night of the count.

The *Community Plan* also categorized the number of beds or units that were available at each institution, based on how they were intended to be used. For the first time, published information was available on bed capacity for use on an **emergency** basis (available for one night only) and on a **transitional** basis (available for longer periods of time). The *Community Plan* also reported on non-market (social or subsidized) housing stock in Calgary, making an explicit link between homelessness and affordable housing.

This new information on bed supply changed the way in which point-in-time data were collected and reported in 2004. Consultations with service providers on the proposed changes were done via the eight 'sectors' that collaborate with the Calgary Homeless Foundation.² Facility operators were asked to report separately for people receiving emergency versus transitional shelter on the night of the count. There was some initial controversy over this request, even though supply data had been provided without concern to the Calgary Homeless Foundation for inclusion in the *Community Plan*.

² Eight sectors serving the homeless were first identified by the Calgary Homeless Foundation (2003: 29; 38-42) in *The Calgary Community Plan 2004-2008*. These sectors are known as Aboriginal, Absolutely Homeless (previously called Singles), Addictions, Families, Mental Health, Seniors and People with Disabilities (previously called Seniors), Women Fleeing Violence (previously called Family Violence), and Youth. A ninth sector, Immigrant Housing, was formed in 2007.

Given the major shift in parameters for the survey portion of the count, a comprehensive consultation was also undertaken to evaluate and adjust the street count boundaries. Frontline service providers in the community, along with City of Calgary frontline staff, were asked to identify new areas of the city where homeless people had been observed to be living since the previous count in 2002. Many of the new locations identified were thought to be occupied mainly on a seasonal basis by people who were living in Calgary temporarily, either while passing through during the summer months or when camping out during the Calgary Stampede, which is held during the first half of July.

Despite this qualifier, all of the new areas that were identified were incorporated into the boundaries of the 2004 street count. The exceptions were any areas located in dense brush, well away from the perimeter of urban forests, or in wilderness areas within the city limits. These places were excluded because of the logistical difficulties associated with conducting a thorough search through dense vegetation on foot and at night. The result was that the 2004 street count doubled to include 46 zones that were canvassed by trained volunteer street enumerators, up from the 23 zones canvassed in 2002.

The type of comprehensive consultation that was undertaken in 2004 with facilities and service agencies and on street homelessness was replicated in 2006. That year, more modest increases in scope were seen, when 60 facilities and services were surveyed (up from 50) and the street count boundaries grew to include 54 zones, up from 46.

The new baseline that was established in 2004 for facilities, services, and street count zones also provided an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of all past counts coordinated by The City of Calgary. This allowed a fresh look at how agencies were classified from count to count. Any past classification errors were corrected and carried forward in the trend data reported in 2004 and beyond. As well, a review of seemingly trivial data on weather conditions leading up to and during each count was undertaken. An interesting pattern emerged related to increased shelter occupancy and wet weather during the count, regardless of actual air temperature. This proved to be extremely important and valuable information that was used for the 2008 count.

Stemming from all of the changes that were introduced in 2004, much more detailed, comprehensive information was recorded and included in the count report. It painted a fuller picture of the context in which Calgary's point-in-time count of homeless people was developed and included full descriptions of research and consultation methodology. A new section was added on institutional data related to bed utilization, along with an updated (and, where applicable, corrected) section on trends in homelessness in Calgary over time. This level of detail in reporting has since become the standard for all City of Calgary reports on the findings of the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons*.

The major changes in research and reporting methods used by The City of Calgary for the counts of homeless persons held in 2004 and 2006 were stimulated by the results of community-based research on homelessness. Another significant community-driven process moved the 2008 count in a new direction as well.

A Multilevel Shelter Located in Dense Brush...



– City of Calgary, Roads (October 2007)

1.4 Refining the Model... 2008

A group of business, government, and community leaders came together in 2007 to develop a plan to end homelessness in Calgary. Instead of trying to manage the growth of homelessness, *Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* includes “12 guiding principles, five strategies and one objective: ending homelessness in Calgary” (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008: 9-12).

Released in January 2008, the *10-Year Plan* also sets short- and long-term milestones for measuring its progress and success. Strategy 4 is designed to improve data and systems knowledge. Its first goal is to introduce a mandatory Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This will provide “real-time data on how long people are homeless, what their needs are, what the causes of homelessness are, how people are interacting with our systems of care, how effective our interventions are, the number of homeless people, and detailed demographic and biographical information” (Calgary Committee to End Homelessness, 2008: 37).

Once an HMIS is fully operational in Calgary, it will be able to generate point-in-time data for facilities providing emergency or transitional shelter to homeless people on any given day. At that point, there will no longer be a need to conduct a point-in-time census of homeless persons in Calgary. Until then, however, The City of Calgary will continue to coordinate a count every two years.

While mindful of the data strategy in *Calgary's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, two significant changes were made to the methodology used for the 2008 *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons*, which could have an impact on the design of Calgary's HMIS. An idea that was first raised in 2004 but not introduced to facility operators at that time was again suggested by an agency representative in 2008. As a result, The City of Calgary agreed to pilot test the use of the ETHOS classification system in 2008 as a more detailed way of describing the type of shelter used by homeless people in Calgary.³

ETHOS is the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, which is the standard used by European Union member states to report on homelessness and housing stress (FEANTSA, 2007). In the ETHOS typology (see Appendix A), the housing situation of people who are *absolutely homeless* is broadly categorized as roofless or houseless. Similarly, accommodation used by people who are *relatively homeless* is broadly classified as either insecure or inadequate. These four ‘conceptual categories’ are each divided into ‘operational categories’ (e.g., people living rough; people living in emergency accommodation; people due to be released from institutions).

³ Some agencies experienced a lot of anxiety in 2004 about being asked by The City of Calgary to report on emergency and transitional bed capacity and occupancy for the first time. It was therefore decided that proposing an additional reporting change might be overwhelming so the possible use of ETHOS criteria was put on hold by The City.

The operational categories listed in ETHOS are subdivided to show the *range of living conditions* possible (e.g., the living conditions described for ‘people due to be released from institutions’ include penal institutions, medical institutions, and children’s institutions or homes). Finally, generic definitions are also provided to further describe the type of shelter that a homeless person might be accessing. The system can easily be adapted to reflect local conditions through the addition of new operational categories that reflect unique local circumstances.

The level of detail in the typology was expected to be more useful to facilities that participate in the count and also to provide a way to frame the development of a ‘made in Calgary’ HMIS. The proposal to pilot test the use of the ETHOS classification system as part of the data collected during the 2008 count was embraced by the Interagency Committee serving the absolutely homeless. Their support was critical, as this sector includes all large facilities in Calgary that provide emergency and transitional shelter for the homeless. Therefore, they would assume the greatest burden related to reporting data in a new or additional way. The proposal was then presented to the Community Action Committee on homelessness,⁴ which similarly endorsed the idea.

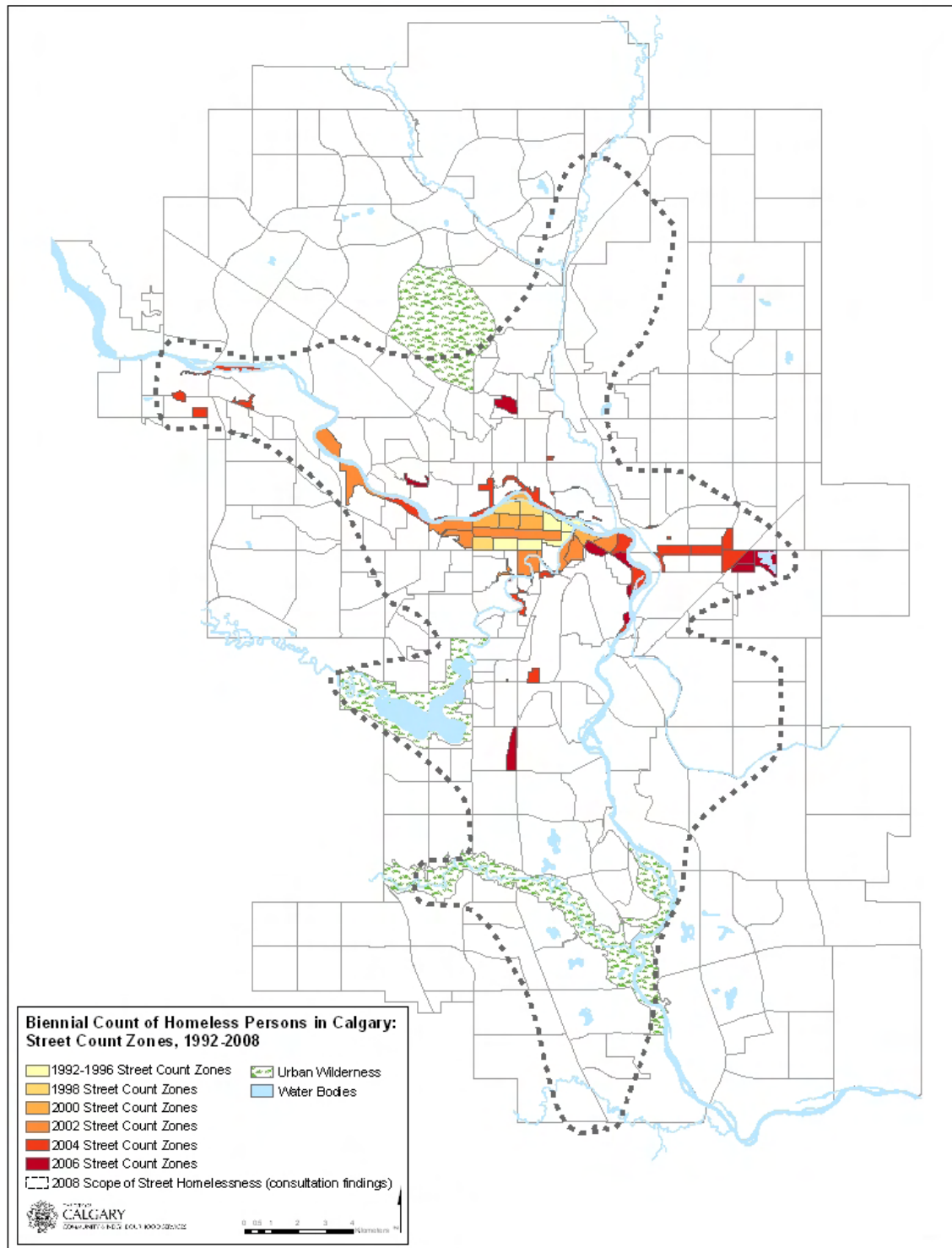
The findings of the pilot project were reported in the 2008 count report (City of Calgary, 2008a: 15-17; 129-130). Complementary research was also undertaken in partnership with a local women’s shelter to determine whether or not data on their *relatively* homeless clients could be easily reported using ETHOS criteria. For that project, demographic information and the housing situation of both sheltered and non-sheltered clients were reported using the full ETHOS classification system.⁵ The conclusions of the case study were that “the value of using the ETHOS Classification System for homelessness research in Calgary cannot be overstated. ... This case study research represents an important step forward towards ensuring that the data management system designed for Calgary, and perhaps Alberta, will serve a multitude of purposes as we seek to end homelessness in our city and beyond” (City of Calgary, 2008c: 17).

The second change in methodology emerged from consultations with community-based frontline service providers and City of Calgary staff on observed changes in the location of street homelessness in the city. The consultations revealed that street homelessness had spread significantly between 2006 and 2008—in location, although not necessarily in volume. The new geographic scope exceeded The City’s ability to coordinate a comprehensive point-in-time count that would locate and count the entire street homeless population of Calgary, which is one goal of the census. As Figure 1 shows, the relatively incremental changes that were made to the street count boundaries from 2004 through 2006 stand in sharp contrast to the significant shift in the spread of street homelessness identified through the consultation process in 2008.

⁴ Members of the Community Action Committee on homelessness include the co-chairs of all nine homeless-serving sectors, staff of the Calgary Homeless Foundation, which is charged with implementing *Calgary’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, and representatives from government and other partners affiliated with the health, justice, and non-market housing sectors.

⁵ See *Research Summary #08 – Absolute and Relative Homelessness: A Case Study of the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter Using ETHOS Criteria* (City of Calgary, 2008c).

FIGURE 1. BIENNIAL STREET COUNT ZONES IN CALGARY, 1992-2008



Previous street counts were conducted by teams of trained volunteers who canvassed specific geographic areas where homeless people had been observed to reside. This included the downtown core, other commercial and residential areas, inner city parks, more remote parks and river pathways, and areas frequented by sex trade workers. Given the consultation findings for 2008, Chris Branch, the Director of Community and Neighbourhood Services for The City of Calgary observed at the time that “the logistics are really a problem.” He publicly stated that homeless people were believed to be “living all along the riverbanks, along each transportation corridor, in heavily forested parks” (Guttormson, 2008).

Due to the logistical challenges related to coordinating teams of three to four people to canvass manageably sized zones—on foot and at night—in all areas where people had been observed to be living out of doors, the 2008 count did not include a street count. Instead, the extent of street homelessness in 2008 was *estimated* using a probability model developed and tested by The City of Calgary (Nelson, 2008). The model was based on past count data and weather conditions leading up to the night of the count.⁶

While the availability of sufficient historical data enabled the total number of people believed to be living on the streets on the night of the count to be estimated, this solution was not without limitations. Most notably, demographic information traditionally obtained by observing people who were surveyed about their living conditions would not be available. As a result, the trend data reported for homeless children and youth, homeless females, homeless Aboriginal peoples, and homeless people observed to belong to a visible minority group were all skewed since only those people who were *enumerated* by shelters and services could be included in The City’s analyses.

Tracking this kind of information is important to many service providers who work with Calgary’s homeless population. Therefore, a number of organizations⁷ formed a ‘project collective’ to conduct independent research on the same night that The City of Calgary surveyed facilities and service agencies for the *2008 Count of Homeless Persons*. The resulting *Voices from the Street* survey was not the same as nor did it substitute for a street count.⁸ Rather, it was an interview-based survey of people living on the streets. Volunteers collected observed demographic data about the age, sex, and population group of the people they interviewed, but they also sought information on the length of time that people had been in Calgary, where they previously lived, their employment status, and their use of shelter services (City of Calgary, 2008a: 11).

⁶ See *Fast Facts #10 – Estimating Street Homelessness* (City of Calgary, 2008b).

⁷ Project Collective members were drawn from staff of Alpha House, the Calgary Drop-In and Rehab Centre, the Calgary Homeless Foundation, The City of Calgary (Community and Neighbourhood Services), CUPS Community Health Centre, the Mustard Seed, and the Salvation Army (City of Calgary, 2008a: 11)

⁸ The *Voices from the Street* survey used 117 volunteers to canvas 46 geographic zones in the city (McIntyre and Hackman-Carty, 2008: 3). This is comparable to The City of Calgary’s 2004 street count, when 123 volunteer enumerators canvassed 46 geographic zones (City of Calgary, 2004: 12). In contrast, the 2006 City of Calgary street count involved 157 volunteers who covered “over 50” [54] geographic zones in the city (City of Calgary, 2004: 10).

As part of the *Voices from the Street* survey conducted on 2008 May 14, a total of 338 homeless people who were “sleeping rough” were enumerated and interviewed by community volunteers (McIntyre and Hackman-Carty, 2008: 5). This is far fewer than the 569 people who were estimated to be living on the streets that night by The City of Calgary, a finding that was not unexpected given the limited geographic scope of the *Voices* survey. Nonetheless, the demographic profile of street homelessness that emerged from the *Voices from the Street* survey findings could be taken as a general indicator of the proportions of demographic subpopulations that are likely to be among The City of Calgary’s estimated street homeless population. Therefore, the findings of the *Voices from the Street* survey were applied to the street population data estimated by The City of Calgary for the 2008 count. While this was not an ideal situation, the solution proved helpful for examining long-term demographic trends in homelessness.⁹

To summarize the changes made in 2008, a detailed survey of facilities and service agencies was conducted in the same way that it had been for the previous eight counts. The facilities surveyed included all known emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities in Calgary, where *shelter is provided* for people who do not have a permanent residence of their own (homeless shelters, women’s shelters, supportive mental health or addictions facilities). Service agencies reported on people they *served* who had no permanent residence, were unable to seek emergency or transitional shelter, were likely to be discharged into homelessness, or who were observed after hours at remote LRT stations that were outside the boundaries normally included in a street count.

The European Union’s typology for describing the living conditions of people who are *absolutely homeless* was added to the survey completed by facilities and services on the night of the 2008 count. Using the ETHOS criteria provided a much richer understanding of the actual housing circumstances of the homeless population that is enumerated as part of the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary*. For the first time, however, a street count was not conducted in 2008. Instead, street homelessness was estimated using a regression analysis based on past count data and weather conditions. A community organized street survey held the same night permitted the subsequent proportional application of demographic trend data to the street estimate.

1.5 Coming Soon... 2010 and Beyond

In the spring of 2009, the Calgary Homeless Foundation prepared a comprehensive proposal for developing, testing, implementing, and funding a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for Calgary. The HMIS that is ultimately developed will have to address the operational needs of the broader homeless serving community. It needs to be able to receive data from government departments that serve homeless clients and from non-profit providers who shelter the homeless or provide wraparound services as part of the Housing First model adopted in Calgary. The HMIS must also be able to offer ease of reporting to funders and the general public who are interested in the progress of Calgary’s 10-year plan to end homelessness.

⁹ See *Research Summary #09 – Updated Trends in Homelessness: Applying the “Voices from the Street” Findings to Data from the 2008 Count of Homeless Persons* (City of Calgary, 2008d).

The development and testing of a locally tailored Homeless Management Information System is critically important foundational work that is needed for monitoring and reporting on efforts to end homelessness in Calgary. The same is true for other cities that are developing similar data capture systems to meet local needs. Because of this, Calgary's HMIS is not expected to be fully operational until some time in 2011, when it will be able to generate comprehensive point-in-time data on homelessness in Calgary (Tanasescu, 2009). To coincide with this shift to a fully operational HMIS, The City of Calgary expects to conduct its tenth and final *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary* in May 2010.

1.6 Continuous Learning... 17 Years and Counting

Over the past 17 years, staff members in Community and Neighbourhood Services at The City of Calgary have learned a great deal about what to do (and what not to do) when coordinating successive counts of homeless people in the city. The lessons learned have emerged from the Calgary context but, in many cases, have transferable value for individuals, agencies, or municipalities that are either just beginning to formally enumerate homeless citizens or are thinking of modifying their existing practices.

Remembering that Calgary's point-in-time count is a census is helpful since it is well understood that census parameters—such as geospatial scope, survey questions, and reporting protocols—are routinely re-examined, refreshed, and renewed for each cycle. The remainder of this report is divided into topic areas related to the coordination of counts of homeless people. Each section provides a synthesis of the key lessons learned by doing nine successive counts. A checklist is also provided for each topic to help with new local planning or cross-checking established count coordination plans.

2.0 Defining 'Homelessness' – The Critical First Step

Defining 'homelessness' is a critical issue for any count. As the Government of Canada observed over a decade ago (Casavant, 1999):

All definitions present some difficulties in terms of their application, posing substantial challenges to research in, for example, the choice of the environment for data collection, evaluation of the representative sample, the extent to which the results can be generalized, and comparison of results. Though most researchers in Canada adopt the definition used by the United Nations, it is hard to use from the methodological standpoint. How, in fact, can one locate the people living in dwellings that do not meet the basic UN criteria? Given these difficulties, most of the empirical research in Canada relies on the first part of the UN definition—that is, homelessness as meaning literally without shelter. The research methods are therefore focused on the services directed to the homeless. So the definition is cited in terms of theory, but in practice is used only in part. In Canada, however, it is acknowledged that these methods make it impossible to have the full picture of the situation, whose gravity is therefore underestimated.

Based on consultations with its quickly formed Street Liaison Committee in the spring of 1992, The City of Calgary adopted a definition of homelessness that has been used for every count that The City has conducted. The definition was formalized in 1996 with the first published count report.¹⁰ For The City of Calgary, *homeless persons* are considered to be “those who do not have a permanent residence to which they can return whenever they so choose.” Whether by good luck or good planning, this definition aligns with the first half of the two-part definition of homelessness adopted by the United Nations in 1981 (Casavant, 1999).

Subsequent consultations with the homeless-serving community in Calgary found that a majority of agencies preferred the two-part definition of homelessness used by the United Nations, which clearly differentiates between people who are *absolutely homeless* and others who are *relatively homeless* (see Figure 2). This definition was used for both the *2002 Calgary Homelessness Study* (Gardiner and Cairns, 2002: 33; Appendix B, n.p.) and *The Calgary Community Plan 2004-2008: Building Paths Out of Homelessness* (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2003: 9).

FIGURE 2. THE UNITED NATION’S DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS, 1981

When the United Nations declared the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1981, a broad definition of homelessness was introduced. As described by Gardiner and Cairns (2002: 33), the UN definition includes both of the following:

- **Absolute Homelessness** – “Individuals living in the street with no physical shelter of their own, including those who spend their nights in emergency shelters.”
- **Relative Homelessness** – “People living in spaces that do not meet the basic health and safety standards” including protection from the elements; access to safe water and sanitation; security of tenure and personal safety; affordability; access to employment, education and health care; and the provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding.

Within this two-part definition, people who are classified as *absolutely homeless* do not have a permanent residence of their own. People who are classified as *relatively homeless* have shelter which fails to meet basic criteria considered essential for health or human and social development. Therefore, the right to a home is a basic humanitarian principle, as recognized in the United Nation’s *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which was proclaimed in 1948.¹¹

Source: Casavant (1999); Gardiner and Cairns (2002: 33; Appendix B, n.p.); and United Nations (1948).

¹⁰ This definition was formalized for the count undertaken for the first published report of the research findings (see City of Calgary, 1996: 2; 1998: 1; 2000: 2; 2002b: 2; 2004: 3; 2006: 4; and 2008: 2).

¹¹ Article 25 (1) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, **housing** and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (United Nations, 1948) [emphasis added].

'Absolute Homelessness' Means Roofless or Houseless...



– City of Calgary, Roads (October 2007)



– *The Many Faces of Poverty and Homelessness*
Calgary Board of Education Website (2007)

For its *Biennial Counts of Homeless Persons*, The City of Calgary reports on **absolute homelessness** in Calgary on the night of the count. Not included in the data are people who may be ‘couch surfing’ by staying with friends or relatives; camping in remote or secluded areas; sleeping in cars, tents, or abandoned vehicles; or living in conditions that are overcrowded or otherwise unsafe. For the 2008 count, however, The City pilot tested the use of ETHOS criteria and was therefore able to describe the conditions associated with absolute homelessness in much greater detail than before.

One way in which **relative homelessness** can be identified is through research on housing need. The City of Calgary reports on housing *affordability*, housing *adequacy* (the need for major repairs), and housing *suitability* (a measure of crowding) among low-income households. These are analyzed by tenure to enable comparison of the housing circumstances of low-income renter and owner households. This information is profiled in The City of Calgary’s *Research Briefs on Housing Need* and its *Research Summaries on Affordable Housing and Homelessness*, all of which are available online. In addition, The City completed a case study that coincided with the 2008 count, in which ETHOS criteria were used to assess both *absolute* and *relative* homelessness for one agency in Calgary that operates an overnight shelter and provides day programs.

In a 2008 report on defining homelessness, the Government of Canada again observes that “no single definition of homelessness is ‘official’ in Canada, and advocates, researchers, and policy makers have interpreted the issue in a multitude of ways.” The authors note that **housing circumstances** and the **duration of homeless episodes** are often included in research definitions. The ETHOS typology is also mentioned as a “comprehensive schema” developed by the European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA, 2007). This succinct 2008 report prepared by Havi Echenberg and Hilary Jensen for the Library of Parliament is an excellent primer on defining homelessness. It clearly explains how measurement approaches reflect different value sets and theories about homelessness.¹²

The authors raise an interesting point about what is measured. In Calgary, biennial counts have always focused on *housing circumstances* alone. In essence, the first eight of The City of Calgary’s counts reported on the number of homeless people who were in one of three places: staying in shelter facilities, receiving services during count hours, or living on the streets. The last three counts have also described whether people staying in facilities were provided with *emergency* or *transitional* beds.

Although the duration of homeless episodes is not captured through this measurement, the length of time people can live in transitional shelter facilities while awaiting access to permanent supported housing or non-market (social or subsidized) housing hints at the duration of *support* provided for people who are in transition from emergency shelter to permanent housing. While interesting, these descriptions still say very little about the specific kinds of facilities that people are staying in, the supply and demand numbers for various facility types, or where there may be pressure points or relief valves in the overall shelter system.

¹² The report is available online at www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/prb0830-e.htm.

Some Places that are Not Canvassed...



– City of Calgary, Roads (October 2007)



– City of Calgary, Roads (August 2007)

The use of ETHOS criteria in 2008 to describe the situations where absolutely homeless people might find themselves if they were *roofless* or *houseless* elevated those simple measurements to a new level (see Figure 3). It also provided insight that was previously unavailable about where capacity and occupancy for different facility types might be adjusted in Calgary. For example, the ability to identify potential supply for an emergency winter response to street homelessness is now possible.¹³

In contrast, for the 2008 Metropolitan Vancouver count, a person was considered to be homeless “if they did not have a place of their own where they could expect to stay for more than 30 days and if they did not pay rent. This includes people staying in emergency shelters, safe houses, and transition houses, as well as those sleeping outside or in other public places or places unfit for human habitation.” Questions on the duration of homelessness are also included in the Metro Vancouver Count (SPARC BC, *et al.*, 2008: 1-2; 66-67).

What is noteworthy here is that, unlike Calgary, the Metro Vancouver count includes criteria that span both absolute and relative homelessness but excludes people who are staying in transitional shelter facilities for longer than 30 days (SPARC BC, *et al.*, 2008: 4). The Metro Vancouver street count is also more constrained geographically than Calgary’s because of the same logistical challenges Calgary now faces and therefore provides an ‘undercount’ of homeless people in the region (SPARC BC, *et al.*, 2008: 7):

Homelessness by its very nature is difficult to measure. All counts underestimate homelessness, because of the difficulty in finding those who do not use services or spend time where homeless people congregate. This initiative was especially challenging because of the vast geographic scope. ***Thus, the Homeless Count did not enumerate every homeless person in the region on March 11, 2008, and is an undercount.*** It does not include all people staying in detox facilities, recovery houses or hospitals who do not have a place to go when they leave. It does not include all people who were sofa surfing.

The result is that the number of absolutely homeless people reported in Calgary always far exceeds the number of homeless people reported in Metro Vancouver because all transitional housing is included in Calgary’s data, which accounts for about half of all people enumerated in facilities. The key lesson here is that while consistency *across* counts is highly desirable in order to compare different cities or regions directly, consistency *within* counts is essential in order to be able to provide comparisons of local trends in over time. Towards the former aim, the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness is launching a process in the fall of 2009 to develop minimum standards for all point-in-time counts conducted in Alberta (Scarbeau, 2009). This will enable the comparison of homeless populations to be made across all Alberta municipalities over time, as well as within them, and is part of the Alberta Government’s own 10-year plan to end homelessness in the province.

¹³ For more information on the ETHOS findings for 2008, see the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary: 2008 May 14* (City of Calgary, 2008a: 15-17; 129-130).

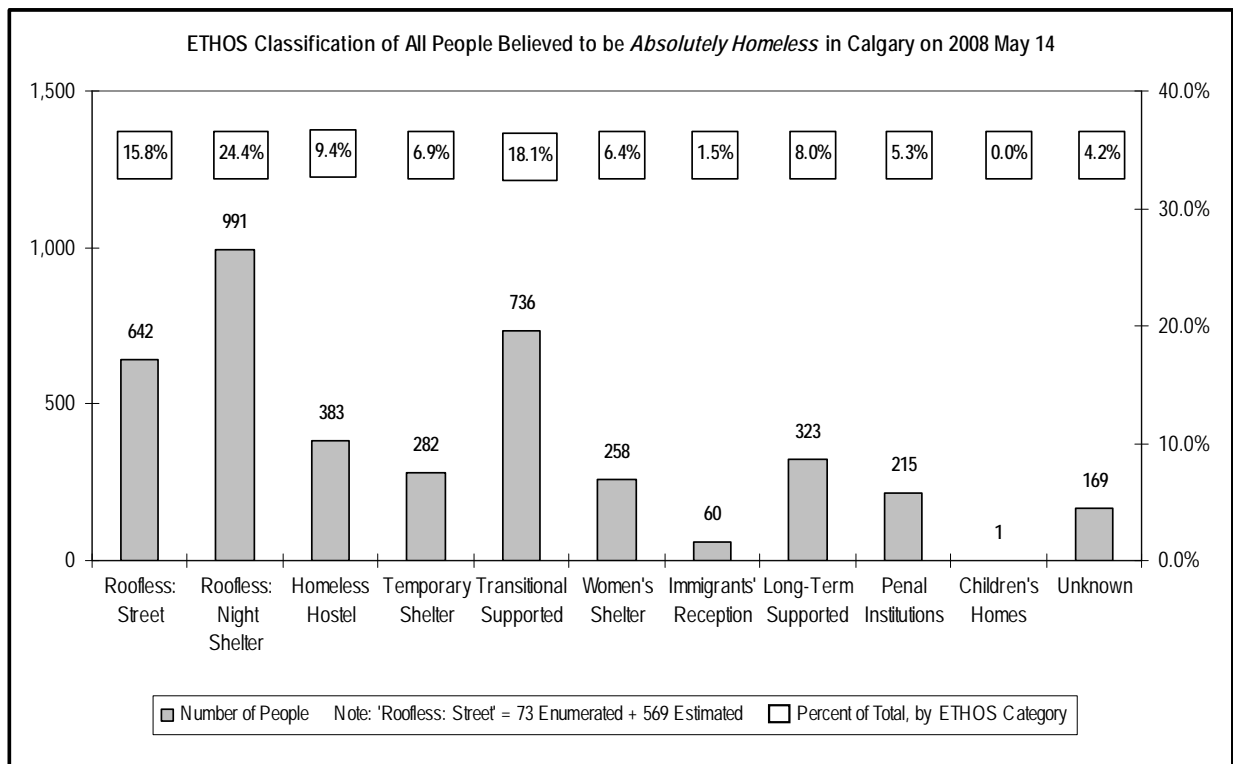
FIGURE 3. CUSTOMARY VERSUS COMPREHENSIVE REPORTING

Customary Reporting Used in Calgary from 1992 to 2008, Showing 2008 Data

ALL PEOPLE BELIEVED TO BE ABSOLUTELY HOMELESS IN CALGARY ON 2008 MAY 14, BY LOCATION		
LOCATION ENUMERATED	NUMBER	PERCENT
INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED BY FACILITIES	3,195	78.7%
INDIVIDUALS ENUMERATED BY SERVICE AGENCIES	296	7.3%
INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE LIVING ON THE STREETS	569	14.0%
TOTAL – ALL PEOPLE BELIEVED TO BE ABSOLUTELY HOMELESS IN CALGARY ON THE NIGHT OF 2008 MAY 14	4,060	100.0%

Source: City of Calgary (2008a: 14).

Comprehensive Reporting Using ETHOS Criteria, First Used in Calgary in 2008



Source: City of Calgary (2008a: 17).

The City of Calgary has never conducted comprehensive interviews with people as part of its biennial counts, so detailed information on the duration of *episodic homelessness* is not collected. These data are collected in Calgary, however, just not by The City. Comprehensive ‘homeless studies’ were completed in Calgary in 1997 and 2002, during which this type of information was sought.¹⁴ More recently, as part of the ‘re-housing’ strategy in *Calgary’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*, a series of detailed interview studies are being conducted with homeless people in Calgary in order to determine their level of vulnerability and assist them in finding housing.

Members of the Re-Housing Triage and Assessment Team collect data on the duration and recurrence of homelessness experienced by the people they interview (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2009: 15-17). Similarly, the same information is requested on the intake form used for the Calgary Homeless Foundation’s Project Homeless Connect events that are held several times a year (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2008). These bring together numerous agencies to serve homeless people under one roof on the same day but also provide an opportunity to learn about the life circumstances of the people who are seeking assistance. The Re-Housing Triage and Assessment Survey has also been implemented in shelters and the Calgary Remand Centre, and will be incorporated into the ‘common intake process’ which will become part of Calgary’s planned Homeless Management Information System (Tanasescu, 2009).

CHECKLIST 1. DEFINING ‘HOMELESSNESS’

- ☐ Read *Defining and Enumerating Homelessness in Canada* (Echenberg and Jensen, 2008) to learn about **definitions of homelessness** or just as a refresher. How ‘homelessness’ is defined will have an impact on the methodology that is used for the count.
- ☐ Identify the **information needed** from conducting a count (housing circumstances, duration of homelessness, or both), which may guide the choice of a definition. If data are not available from other sources, questions on the *duration of homelessness* may provide valuable information for emergency response planning or for a comprehensive plan to end homelessness in the community.
- ☐ Choose a definition that **aligns with established counts** so regional, provincial/territorial, and national data can be rolled up or at least compared. If starting from scratch or revamping existing practices, use the **United Nations’ definition of absolute homelessness** because it is widely used in Canada and elsewhere. To obtain greater detail at the local level, use the **ETHOS criteria** to describe the housing circumstances of people who are absolutely homeless (*roofless* or *houseless*). **Keep using the same definition over time.**
- ☐ **Consult on the count parameters** with local organizations that will be providing the bulk of the data being sought since their participation is critical to the success of the count.

¹⁴ See Arboleda-Flórez and Holley (1997) and Gardiner and Cairns (2002).

3.0 Count Timing and Duration

In Calgary, the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons* takes place every two years on a Wednesday in mid-May. As previously noted, the first count was held in May because of the deadlines attached to a request for information from Council. A second request for updated information was made two years later. To comply with the requirement that the first count had to be replicable over time, May was established as the month in which Calgary's counts would take place and the request for updated information two years later established the biennial timing of Calgary's subsequent counts.

There are advantages to holding the count of homeless persons at about the same time every two years because it permits a reasonable comparison of findings over time. This practice does not account for **seasonal variation**, however, which "may minimize the extent of homelessness by counting at a time when street homelessness is less visible" (Crawley, 2001: 9). Seasonal variation in the number of homeless people in Calgary, especially those living in parks and natural areas, has been consistently reported over time by homeless-serving agencies and frontline workers. The summer months see a significant increase in the 'transient' homeless population passing through Calgary, as well as a visible increase in homeless youth (City of Calgary, 2008a: 9).

The '**mid-month, mid-week**' timing was arrived at by consultation with service providers, who identified the need to select a date when the effects of income receipt on homeless persons are moderated.¹⁵ Income support payments provide homeless people with more options as to where they might stay (e.g., motels). Date selection takes place by mapping relevant income support payment dates in both a table and a planning calendar (see Figures 4 and 5). While specific payments will vary by jurisdiction, the list provided can serve as a guide for other municipalities about which types of income assistance might affect the choice of dates for local counts. Once a proposed date is identified for Calgary's counts, consultation with the Interagency Committee serving the absolutely homeless takes place. Their agreement on the date is essential as this sector includes all of the large facilities that provide Calgary's homeless population with emergency and transitional shelter.

The **duration of the count** is also standardized. Facilities are asked to enumerate all persons who *seek shelter from them for the night of the count*, the actual time of which varies by organization based on their respective intake hours. Service agencies are asked to enumerate the homeless people they *serve during a 12-hour period on the night of the count*, starting at 6:00 p.m. and ending at 6:00 a.m. the next morning, but only if these people are not discharged to an emergency or transitional shelter or other temporary housing such as a motel. In comparison, the Metro Vancouver count spans a full 24-hour period, during which both a day and night survey are used (SPARC BC, *et al.*, 2008: 66-67).

¹⁵ The Canadian Council on Social Development (2001: 21-22) reports that, in Calgary, "the timing for the count was determined in 1992 by members of the Street Liaison Committee, based on their experience that peak need generally occurs on a week night during the third week of the month, just prior to the issuing of various income support payments."

FIGURE 4. SCHEDULE FOR VARIOUS INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENTS, 2008

Government of Canada Programs

INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS	PAYMENT SCHEDULE	2008 DATES
CANADA CHILD TAX BENEFIT (CCTB)	Deposits are made on the 20th of each month or on the preceding Friday when the payment date falls on a weekend	May 20
NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT (NCBS)	Payments for eligible recipients are included with the Canada Child Tax Benefit deposit	May 20
CHILD DISABILITY BENEFIT (CDB)	Payments for eligible recipients are included with the Canada Child Tax Benefit deposit	May 20
UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE BENEFIT (UCB)	Deposits are made on the 20th of each month or on the preceding Friday when the payment date falls on a weekend	May 20
GST / HST REBATE	Payments are made quarterly (January, April, July, and October) on the fifth day of each month or on the preceding Friday when the payment date falls on a weekend	April 4 July 4

Source: Service Canada (2008).

Government of Alberta Programs

INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS	PAYMENT SCHEDULE	2008 DATES
INCOME SUPPORT (IS)	Deposits are made four business days before the first of each month	April 25
ASSURED INCOME FOR THE SEVERELY HANDICAPPED (AISH)	Deposits are made four business days before the first of each month	April 25
ALBERTA FAMILY EMPLOYMENT TAX CREDIT (AFETC)	Semi-annual payments are made on the 27th of January and July (one week after the CCTB) or on the preceding Friday when the payment date falls on a weekend	July 25

Source: Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit (2008) and Alberta Works Contact Centre (2008).

Source: City of Calgary (2008a: 109-110).

FIGURE 5. INCOME SUPPORT CALENDAR FOR MAY 2008						
The City of Calgary – Biennial Count of Homeless Persons PLANNING CALENDAR FOR MAY 2008						
Key: Federal Programs: CCTB = Canada Child Tax Benefit NCBS = National Child Benefit Supplement CDB = Child Disability Benefit UCB = Universal Childcare Benefit Provincial Programs: AISH = Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
20	21	22	23	24	25 Income Support and AISH payments deposited for May 2008	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 TARGET DATE Mid-week, mid-month, and midway between various income support payments	15	16	17
18	19 Victoria Day	20 CCTB, NCBS, CDB and UCB payments made for May 2008	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 Income Support and AISH payments deposited for June 2008	28	30	31
Notes: 1 The nearest payment dates for GST/HST Rebates are 2008 April 4 and 2008 July 4, which do not affect the proposed count date for May 2008. 2 The nearest payment date for the Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit is 2008 July 25, which does not affect the proposed count date for May 2008.						

CHECKLIST 2. COUNT TIMING AND DURATION

- ☐ Establish a **count cycle** of every one, two or three years, depending on local needs and resources. Annual variations in numbers may not warrant the logistical challenges and expenses related to conducting a count every year. Cycles of two or three years (such as those used in Calgary and Vancouver respectively) provide sufficient information to track local trends in homelessness over time.
- ☐ Choose a **time of year** that is subject to the least seasonal variation and provides the data needed from a local count. This could be the 'shoulder season' in the late fall before winter sets in but after most transient summer campers are likely to have left the area. It could be mid-winter, when inclement weather places people on the streets at extreme risk from exposure to the elements. It could be mid-summer if a goal of the count is to identify the maximum number of homeless people in the community during the year.
- ☐ Select a standardized **day of the week** that places the least strain on agencies that will be asked to report on their homeless clientele. If a street count is being conducted, choose a day that is likely to encourage volunteers to participate as enumerators. In most cases, this would be during the middle of the week, avoiding days that could either run into or become long weekends, thereby affecting both agency staffing and volunteer participation.
- ☐ Propose a **date** that moderates the effects of income support programs in order to count the maximum number of visible homeless people living in the community—either in shelters or on the streets. While some slight variation will occur from count to count, a reasonable comparison of trend data will still be possible even though calendar dates may vary.
- ☐ Choose a **count duration** that provides data needed from a local count. In Calgary, data are collected overnight for approximately 12 hours, with street counts completed between 9:00 p.m. and midnight. In Metro Vancouver, data are collected for a full 24-hour period.
- ☐ **Consult on the proposed count date and time** with local organizations that will be providing the bulk of the data being sought since their participation is critical to the success of the count.
- ☐ **Apply the chosen parameters consistently over subsequent counts.**

4.0 Data Collection

Calgary's counts have shown that the types of data collected over time have grown to provide a more complete picture of the *characteristics of the homeless population* in the city. *Institutional data* have also been added to the count survey in order to compare 'demand data' on the night of the count to 'supply data' published by other agencies in Calgary. Recent enhancements to the institutional data reported have been realized by adopting the well-established ETHOS criteria on people's housing circumstances.

The count methodology can be designed to collect information through *observation*, which is what is done in Calgary, or via *interviews*. An excellent model for interview-based survey questions comes from Metro Vancouver (see SPARC BC, *et al.*, 2008: 66-67), which has been adapted by the Calgary Homeless Foundation for its Project Homeless Connect intake forms and its Re-Housing Triage and Assessment Surveys.

In any case, ***minimum collection criteria*** should be established from the outset to provide a range of demographic data that can be compared over time. Although this may seem onerous, most facilities that provide data on their homeless clientele are able to generate reports based on their intake data for the date and time parameters chosen for the count. Based on Calgary's 2008 enumeration forms, demographic data on the ***characteristics of the homeless people*** counted can be tallied, as shown in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6. MINIMUM COLLECTION CRITERIA FOR DEMOGRAPHIC DATA									
[OBSERVED] SEX	MALE				FEMALE				ALL PEOPLE COUNTED, BY [OBSERVED] AGE GROUP
[OBSERVED] POPULATION GROUP	CAUCASIAN	ABORIGINAL	RACIALIZED	UNKNOWN	CAUCASIAN	ABORIGINAL	RACIALIZED	UNKNOWN	
PRESCHOOLERS (AGE 5 OR YOUNGER)									
SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN (AGE 6-12)									
YOUTH (AGE 13-17)									
YOUNG ADULTS (AGE 18-24)									
WORKING AGE ADULTS (AGE 25-44)									
MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS (AGE 45-64)									
SENIORS (AGE 65 OR OLDER)									
UNKNOWN									
TOTALS									

Additional information can be collected to meet local needs. For example, two versions of the form shown in Figure 6 are provided to Calgary facilities to enable them to report separately on the characteristics of the people who are assigned to **emergency beds** and to **transitional beds** on the night of the count. As well, at the request of the homeless-serving Youth Sector in Calgary, data are collected on the **child welfare status** of all individuals staying at youth facilities on the night of the count (reported by observed age and observed population group only).

Data on **homeless families** in Calgary are also gathered, but not cross-referenced to individual demographic characteristics. For Calgary's biennial counts, a 'family' is defined as *a couple, a couple with one or more children, or a lone adult with one or more children*. Facilities are asked to report on the number of homeless families who sought shelter, received shelter, and were refused shelter on the night of the count and to indicate how many of those families had children with them. Services are asked to report on the number of homeless families who were served (but not housed) on the night of the count and to indicate how many of those families had children with them.

Data on facility **refusal and referral rates** are also collected in Calgary (reported by observed sex and observed population group only). Based on the advice of shelter operators, seven coded options can be selected to describe the reason for refusal:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. Facility is Full | e. Behaviour |
| b. Barred from Facility | f. Outside of Target Population |
| c. Alcohol | g. Other – <i>Please Describe</i> |
| d. Drugs | |

It is important to note that refusal data are not included in the total number of homeless people counted since it cannot be determined if people who were refused shelter at one facility received shelter at another, whether or not they may have been referred there.

Institutional data that are collected in Calgary include **bed capacity and occupancy**, which are reported by *emergency and transitional beds* and, for 2008, also by *ETHOS criteria* for people who were absolutely homeless on the night of the count. Also in 2008, service agencies reported the housing circumstances of their homeless clients by using ETHOS criteria.

Facilities and services in Calgary are also asked describe any **unusual circumstances** that may have affected the number of people who were enumerated on the night of the count. This can range from weather conditions to police activity in the area, from facility renovations to influenza outbreaks within facilities that require people to be turned away even though beds may be available. For some sectors (especially Families and Women Fleeing Violence), shelter is often designed for families so when family composition does not match bed availability, a facility can be "full" but appear to be operating below capacity. This is because even though all rooms or units are occupied, some beds within those rooms are not being used.

Facilities and service agencies are also asked to provide **organizational and sectoral information** for classification purposes, as well as contact information for the person who completed the survey to enable follow up as needed. As well, all respondents are invited to provide **additional comments** about the count.

In summary, for Calgary's biennial counts, data are collected based on the observed characteristics of all the homeless people enumerated—but are limited to observed age, observed sex, and observed *population group*. Demographic data are also reported for the *type of bed assigned* in facilities (emergency or transitional beds), the *child welfare status* of all people staying in youth facilities, and whether or not people are with other *family members* (and if so, whether the family includes children). The observed sex and population group of all people who are *refused shelter* are reported, along with a record of whether people who were refused shelter were *referred* to another facility.

In contrast, for the triennial counts conducted in Metro Vancouver, most data are collected through interviews with homeless people, although information on sex is recorded based on observation only. Survey questions cover a wide array of subjects including where the person last stayed at night, the duration of homelessness, the length of time in the city, the person's home city, reasons for being homeless, age or year of birth, shelter use (recent and in the past year), companions (people or pets), Aboriginal and ethnocultural identity, all sources of income, health status, and health services received in the past year.

Comparable information is collected by the Calgary Homeless Foundation at Project Homeless Connect events, by its Re-Housing Triage and Assessment Team, at various shelters, and at the Calgary Remand Centre. These types of interview questions will also be incorporated into the 'common intake process' which will become part of Calgary's Homeless Management Information System by 2011 (Tanasescu, 2009). Of note, the 2008 Metro Vancouver count report states that "there was an absolute increase in the number of individuals who were just counted with no other information provided. Filling in the forms can be a burden for already busy shelter staff, especially as people are coming in and trying to get settled. The BC Housing shelter database would be a more effective and efficient way of gathering information for the sheltered homeless in the future" (SPARC BC, *et al.*, 2008: 51).

Clearly, the automatic generation of comprehensive reports as part of a provincial shelter database or a local Homeless Management Information System is a preferred approach in both Calgary and Metro Vancouver. This way of garnering detailed demographic and ancillary information could well become a 'best practice' in the future.

Other types of data may also be collected as part of a count of homeless persons. For instance, weather conditions leading up to and occurring on the day of the count in Calgary have been recorded since the first count was undertaken in 1992. This proved to be extremely important in 2008, when these data—along with the total number of people enumerated in facilities and by service agencies—were used in a regression analysis to estimate street homelessness in Calgary over time.

Since the number of people living on the streets was estimated in 2008, a variety of supplementary data were collected to provide additional insight and evidence-based support for The City of Calgary's consultation findings on the spread of street homelessness. The types of additional data reported in 2008 are shown in Appendix B.

CHECKLIST 3. DATA COLLECTION

- ☐ Establish reporting criteria about the ***characteristics of the homeless people counted*** from the outset to ensure that a range of demographic data can be compared over time. At minimum, these criteria should include sex, age group, and *population* group.
- ☐ Design the count methodology to collect basic ***demographic information*** about the homeless people who are enumerated, either through ***observation*** or via ***interviews***. Comprehensive information about the life circumstances of the homeless people who are interviewed can also be included in a survey completed as part of an in-person interview, either during a street count or under other circumstances.
- ☐ Design the count methodology to collect ***institutional information*** from facilities and services that complete the count surveys, if these data are considered important at the local level. This is a significant component of Calgary's counts. Bed capacity and occupancy are reported in two ways: by *bed type* (emergency and transitional bed availability and use, overall and by homeless-serving sector) and by *housing circumstances* for people staying in facilities or enumerated by service agencies on the night of the count (health, justice, emergency social services, and transit) using ETHOS criteria for people who are absolutely homeless. Qualitative information is also gathered on *unusual circumstances* that may have affected count, *organizational and sectoral information*, *contact information* for the survey respondent, and any *additional comments* that respondents wish to provide.
- ☐ Devise a ***data entry*** and cross-checking protocol and prepare ***data analysis templates*** well in advance of the count.
- ☐ Record and report locally relevant ***contextual data*** such as weather conditions as part of a count. Gather ***supplementary data*** as needed for locally specific initiatives on a one-time or ongoing basis. An example would be the proxy indicators related to the spread of street homelessness that were reported in Calgary for 2008 only.
- ☐ Update all ***agency contact lists*** at least two months in advance of the count. Identify staff members who will be completing the count surveys and remind them 'early and often' about the upcoming count. Send the survey forms out in advance to enable respondents to review them ahead of the count. Send them again on the day of the count. Most of this can be done via e-mail.
- ☐ Allow two to four weeks after the count for ***data checking*** and verification with respondents as needed, prior to completion of a research report and press material on the count findings.

5.0 Street Counts

Although The City of Calgary no longer conducts a street count as part of its *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons*,¹⁶ a great deal was learned during the eight consecutive cycles in which street counts were undertaken (from 1992 through 2006). The most significant lessons learned about conducting a street count is the need for **extensive consultation** well in advance of the count. Advance planning (in Calgary, this means at least three months ahead of the planned count) helps to ensure that a thorough count is undertaken using a rigorous methodology. Early consultation determines where street count boundaries might need to be adjusted, engages shelter operators in discussions about potential reporting changes, and generates interest among potential volunteers.

For the 2008 count, consultations on the spread of street homelessness in Calgary were undertaken with the city's homeless-serving interagency group which includes nine homeless-serving sectors (representing dozens of agencies) and other community partners including the health region, police services, non-market housing providers, and other orders of government. Targeted consultations were also held with 10 community workers on the spread of street homelessness and with a community-based interagency research group comprised largely of major shelter operators and outreach agencies. In addition, 37 staff members drawn from eight City of Calgary business units and the Calgary Police Service were consulted on the spread of street homelessness or engaged in supporting the count (e.g., map making or supplementary data provision).

The eight street counts done in Calgary were held from 9:00 p.m. to midnight. That time frame was recommended by service providers to minimize the likelihood that homeless persons would be counted more than once, since people seeking indoor shelter would most likely have been admitted through agencies' intake procedures by 9:00 p.m.

Depending on the planned duration of the street count, the number and configuration of **zones or areas to be canvassed** will need to be determined. In Calgary, zone sizes were kept small enough (a few square blocks or the equivalent in parkland) to enable teams of volunteer enumerators to safely and easily cover the entire area during a three-hour period. Taken together, the number of zones, size of each zone, number of canvassers to be assigned to each zone, and the duration of the street count will determine how many **volunteer enumerators** are needed for a street count. Additional participants may be required for **logistical coordination** at the staging area.¹⁷

¹⁶ Street homelessness in Calgary is now estimated using a regression analysis developed by The City of Calgary. The model uses variables for facilities and services data for each count undertaken from 1992 through 2006, along with the weather conditions reported for the days leading up to each count. See *Fast Facts #10 – Estimating Street Homelessness* (City of Calgary, 2008b).

¹⁷ Volunteers based at the staging area completed and filed volunteer registration and liability forms; handed out clipboards, zone maps, enumerations forms, pens, contact numbers, and flashlights; distributed 'giveaway' packages that teams could provide to the people they surveyed; checked in with teams by telephone at fixed intervals during the count; provided refreshments for volunteers before and after the count; collected survey data from teams as they returned to the staging area; and solicited feedback from volunteers through a short survey that was completed at the end of the count.

Street Homes Hidden Beneath an Underpass and at the River's Edge...



– City of Calgary, Roads (April 2003)



– City of Calgary, Roads (July 2007)

In Calgary, three or four people were **assigned to teams** for each walkable zone, while two-person teams from Emergency Medical Services were each assigned to survey two or three smaller but more remote areas, which they drove between. The last time a physical street count was coordinated by The City of Calgary was in 2006, when 157 volunteers canvassed 54 geographic zones in the city or provided logistical support at the staging area.

As for **volunteer recruitment**, the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons* never provided volunteer opportunities for the general public. Interested members of the public were directed to the Calgary Homeless Foundation in order to learn about other opportunities to help the city's homeless. Instead, street count volunteers were solicited from staff in Community and Neighbourhood Services at The City of Calgary, which includes community social workers and community recreation coordinators who are comfortable with face-to-face meetings with citizens. Select staff in other departments were also recruited if they had prior experience in frontline community work through, for example, emergency medical services, fire responses, parks maintenance, community-based land use planning, and affordable housing development.

Similar calls for volunteers were made to the homeless-serving community through the Community Action Committee on homelessness, the intersectoral group working on issues related to homelessness in Calgary. Due to the disproportionately high number of Aboriginal people who are homeless in Calgary, special efforts were made to solicit volunteers from a wide range of Aboriginal service agencies. Depending on the overall response received, wherever possible, each team was assigned at least one male volunteer and at least one Aboriginal person.

Volunteer enumerators were required to attend a **mandatory orientation session**, which addressed safety, emergency, and check-in procedures for the night of the count. They were coached on how to approach and speak with the people they encountered, who may be homeless persons, street workers, or others. The volunteers were instructed on how to complete the Street Enumeration Form provided to every team, and were given a set of screening questions to help them identify homeless people and avoid 'double counting' people who indicated they were planning to sleep at a facility that night. Teams were also provided with the telephone numbers of a number of shelters to enable them to call to check for bed availability if anyone they met was interested in knowing where they could go to find shelter in a facility.

Using this method—in which homeless people were approached in a non-threatening way and asked to report on their housing situation—demonstrated **trust and respect** for Calgary's homeless population and encouraged the development of mutual trust. This may have helped to increase the accuracy of the information collected by volunteer street enumerators. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that every point-in-time count is merely a snapshot of homeless people enumerated on one night and does not convey the true magnitude of homelessness in any city or region.

CHECKLIST 4. STREET COUNTS

- ☐ Undertake **extensive consultation** with community outreach workers, shelter operators, and frontline municipal staff well in advance of the planned count. Modify the **street count boundaries** as needed to reflect new information provided through the consultation process.
- ☐ Determine the **size of the zones** or areas that volunteers will be asked to canvass, based on the duration of the street count and the number of volunteers that will be assigned to canvass each zone.
- ☐ Calculate the **number of street count volunteers** who need to be recruited to form teams of enumerators that will canvass each zone during the time frame chosen for the count or who will provide **logistical coordination** at the staging area. Once these numbers are determined, book a staging venue and arrange to have light refreshments available before and after the count for the number of volunteers expected to participate.
- ☐ Develop a **recruitment plan** that reflects local needs and values. In Calgary, volunteers were sought from among frontline staff in select The City of Calgary business units, outreach workers at homeless-serving agencies, and staff from a wide variety of Aboriginal agencies.
- ☐ Create a **volunteer registration protocol** that is as 'user friendly' as possible. Advance registration and liability form completion using online forms proved successful in Calgary. Blank forms were attached to recruitment e-mail bulletins. The applications received were reviewed for completeness, returned to the applicant for amendments as needed, and then printed and arranged alphabetically in binders. These were distributed to logistics coordinators for use at set stations on the night of the count. Upon arrival at the staging area, volunteers only had to find their 'station' and sign their completed forms in front of the coordinators, who witnessed the signatures.
- ☐ Establish a team of volunteers for **logistical coordination** at the staging area. They may also be asked to shop for and assemble **'giveaway' packages** for street teams to enable the enumerators to provide gifts to the homeless people they encounter.
- ☐ Assign volunteers to **street teams and zones** to be canvassed on the night of the count. This should be left until about one week ahead of the count to allow for withdrawals or requests to be assigned to the same team as other volunteers. Create a **back-up plan** to identify other people who would be able to 'step in' if there was a high number of last-minute cancellations by registered volunteers.
- ☐ Plan a mandatory **volunteer orientation session** to address safety, emergency and check-in procedures for the count; review the enumeration forms and how to complete them; and provide coaching on how to approach people on the streets who may be homeless.

6.0 Conclusions

This report provided transferable information on the lessons learned by The City of Calgary when conducting nine consecutive *Biennial Counts of Homeless Persons* from 1992 through 2008. It presented an overview of how periodic point-in-time counts of homeless people in Calgary began and evolved over nine count cycles. Best practices developed and employed over time in Calgary were highlighted, which may be of value to those just beginning to do point-in-time counts of homeless citizens, as well as to those contemplating a review or renewal of existing count practices. Four key areas were profiled—defining ‘homelessness,’ count timing and duration, data collection, and street counts—and checklists for each were provided for ease of reference.

From all that has been learned by coordinating nine point-in-time counts of homeless Calgarians, three primary lessons emerge. By far, the most beneficial practices that can be adopted to ensure a successful count—one that is methodologically sound, replicable, and provides comparable data over time—are **advance planning**, **adequate resourcing**, and **extensive yet targeted consultation**.

Although Calgary’s count is admittedly large and comprehensive, the time and human resources needed to organize and conduct a count are significant and will be for smaller counts as well.¹⁸ Without the cooperation and support of staff in several City of Calgary departments and numerous homeless-serving agencies in the community, the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary* would not be nearly as rigorous or accurate as it is. To garner this type and degree of support, consultation with key players is essential, and early consultation is strongly advised.

While the enumeration methods used by The City of Calgary are designed to be as accurate as possible, it is important to note that it is not possible to count every single person that is experiencing homelessness in Calgary. The *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons* provides a ‘point-in-time’ snapshot of the size and characteristics of the homeless population on one night every two years. As such, it provides a good approximation of the number of people in Calgary who are absolutely homeless *on any given night*. However, as with all cities or regions that conduct a point-in-time count of homeless persons, the City of Calgary’s counts cannot capture the true extent or magnitude of homelessness in the city.

CHECKLIST 5. KEY LESSONS

- ☐ Advance **planning**, adequate **resourcing** and extensive yet carefully targeted **consultation** are critical to the success of any point-in-time count.

¹⁸ For an overview of the time and staff resources used for Calgary’s count in 2008, see Appendix C.

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Appendix A. The ETHOS Classification System

ETHOS is the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion and is the standard used by member states in the European Union for reporting on homelessness and housing exclusion (FEANTSA, 2007).¹⁹ In the ETHOS classification system, the housing situation of people who are *absolutely homeless* is broadly categorized as **roofless** or **houseless**. Similarly, accommodation used by people who are *relatively homeless* is broadly classified as either **insecure** or **inadequate**.

ETHOS 2007 – EUROPEAN TYPOLOGY OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING EXCLUSION

ROOFLESS	People living rough or in emergency accommodation.
HOUSELESS	People in accommodation for the homeless, in accommodation for immigrants, receiving longer-term support due to homelessness, or due to be released from institutions.
INSECURE ACCOMMODATION	People living in insecure accommodation, under threat of eviction, or under threat of violence.
INADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION	People living in temporary or non-conventional structures, in unfit housing, or in extreme overcrowding.

These four ‘conceptual categories’ are each divided into ‘operational categories’ (e.g., people living rough; people living in emergency accommodation; people due to be released from institutions; and so on). The operational categories are further divided to show the *range of living conditions* possible (e.g., in the operational category ‘people due to be released from institutions,’ the living conditions described include penal institutions, medical institutions, and children’s institutions or homes). Finally, generic definitions are provided to further describe the type of shelter that a homeless person might be accessing.

ROOFLESS

PUBLIC SPACE OR EXTERNAL SPACE	Roofless people living rough in the streets or in public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters.
NIGHT SHELTER	Roofless people in emergency accommodation with no usual place of residence, who make use of <u>overnight</u> , low threshold shelter. [e.g., hotel; motel]

¹⁹ For more detailed information on the development and use of ETHOS, see Edgar, Meert and Doherty (2004) and Edgar and Meert (2006).

HOUSELESS

HOMELESS HOSTEL	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
WOMEN'S SHELTER ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for the homeless, where women are accommodated due to the experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be <u>short term</u> , normally less than one year.
IMMIGRANTS' TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION OR RECEPTION CENTRES	Houseless people in accommodation for immigrants, where immigrants are in reception or <u>short-term</u> accommodation due to immigrant status, normally less than one year.
MIGRANT WORKERS' ACCOMMODATION	Houseless people in accommodation for immigrants, staying in accommodation for migrant workers.
RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR OLDER FORMERLY HOMELESS PEOPLE	Houseless people receiving longer-term support in <u>long-stay</u> accommodation with care for older, formerly homeless people, normally more than one year.
SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR FORMERLY HOMELESS PEOPLE	Houseless people receiving longer-term support in <u>long-stay</u> accommodation with care for formerly homeless people, normally more than one year.
DUE TO BE RELEASED FROM PENAL INSTITUTIONS	Houseless people due to be released from institutions, where no housing is available prior to release.
DUE TO BE RELEASED FROM MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS	Houseless people due to be released from institutions, where they stay longer than needed due to a lack of housing.
DUE TO BE RELEASED FROM CHILDREN'S INSTITUTIONS OR HOMES	Houseless people due to be released from institutions, where no housing is identified (e.g., by their 18th birthday).

INSECURE ACCOMMODATION

TEMPORARILY WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS	People living in insecure accommodation, in conventional housing but not their usual place of residence due to a lack of housing (e.g., 'couch surfing').
NO LEGAL TENANCY OR SUB-TENANCY	People living in insecure accommodation, occupying a dwelling with no legal tenancy or sub-tenancy or illegally occupying a dwelling (e.g., living in an 'illegal suite').
ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF LAND	People living in insecure accommodation, occupying land with no legal rights to do so (e.g., 'squatting').
LEGAL ORDERS ARE ENFORCED (RENTED)	Renters living under threat of eviction, where orders for eviction are operative.
RE-POSSESSION ORDERS (OWNED)	Owners living under threat of eviction, where the mortgagor has legal order to re-possess.
POLICE RECORDED INCIDENTS	People living in insecure accommodation, where police action is taken to ensure a place of safety for victims of domestic violence.

INADEQUATE ACCOMMODATION

MOBILE HOMES	People living in temporary or non-conventional structures, not intended as place of usual residence (e.g., campers; trailers).
NON-CONVENTIONAL BUILDINGS	People living in temporary or non-conventional structures, such as a makeshift shelter, shack or shanty.
TEMPORARY STRUCTURES	People living in insecure accommodation, such as a semi-permanent structure, hut, or cabin.
OCCUPIED DWELLINGS UNFIT FOR HABITATION	People living in unfit housing, defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations.
HIGHEST NATIONAL NORM OF OVERCROWDING	People living in extreme overcrowding, defined as exceeding the national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms.

Source: FEANTSA (2007).

Appendix B. Proxy Indicators Related to Street Homelessness, 2008

The street homelessness consultation undertaken in preparation for the *2008 Count of Homeless Persons* revealed that street homelessness had spread throughout the city since 2006, in location although not necessarily in volume. Therefore, several community outreach programs were asked to provide data related to service provision and various City of Calgary Business Units were asked to provide data that may be related to homelessness.

Not all agencies or Business Units that were approached had collected data specific to street homelessness. Those that could provide proxy indicators could not link them to specific geographic locations in the city, either because data were not coded in that way or because they did not have the capacity to generate maps to show locations. This was partly remedied by the inclusion of custom-run data provided by The City of Calgary's 3-1-1 Call Centre. Wherever possible, data were provided for the years 2006 and 2007, along with the growth rate between those years. In all cases, ***not all data reported can be attributed to homeless people***. Proxy indicators are shown below.

TABLE 1. INDICATORS OF NEED FROM SELECT CITY OF CALGARY BUSINESS UNITS, 2006-2007
RESPONSES MADE BY BYLAW SERVICES (VERIFIED BY THE 3-1-1 CALL CENTRE) TO REPORTS THAT <u>MAY</u> BE RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS (<i>FOR ILLEGAL CAMPING INFRACTIONS; PANHANDLING INFRACTIONS; SHOPPING CARTS LEFT ON PUBLIC PROPERTY; AND SQUATTERS IN PARKS</i>)
RESPONSES MADE BY THE CALGARY FIRE DEPARTMENT TO REQUESTS FOR USED NEEDLE PICK-UPS (<i>EXCLUDING NEEDLE BOXES</i>)
RESPONSES MADE BY THE CALGARY FIRE DEPARTMENT TO REQUESTS FOR OVERDOSE / INGESTION CALLS
RESPONSES MADE BY THE CALGARY POLICE SERVICE TO REPORTS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS, <u>SOME OF WHOM</u> ARE HOMELESS ¹
ANNUAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES EVENTS (<i>TOTAL RESPONSES</i>)
ANNUAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES EVENTS INVOLVING THE TOP 30 FREQUENT USERS OF EMS
RATE OF TOP 30 FREQUENT USERS OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PER 1,000 EMS EVENTS
HOMELESS PEOPLE WHO ARE AMONG THE TOP 30 FREQUENT USERS OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TRANSPORTS – NO NAME / ADDRESS
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES RESPONSES – NO NAME / ADDRESS
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TRANSPORTS – FREQUENT USER, NO PAYMENT
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES RESPONSES – FREQUENT USER, NO PAYMENT
<p><u>Notes:</u></p> <p>1 As the Canadian Population Health Initiative (2007: 13) reports: “Many studies show that people who are homeless are more likely to experience compromised mental health and mental illness than the general population. For some, these issues can precede the onset of homelessness or, through their interaction with other determinants such as income and employment influences, contribute to homelessness.” Specific to policing, a recent study reports that 31% of Vancouver police calls tracked over a 16-day period in 2007 “involved at least one mentally ill person; in some areas of the city this figure rose to almost half of all incidents” (Wilson-Bates, 2008: 1).</p>

TABLE 2. INDICATORS OF NEED FROM THE CITY OF CALGARY'S 3-1-1 CALL CENTRE, 2006-2007
CALLS RELATED TO HOMELESSNESS
CALLS RELATED TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING
CALLS RELATED TO POVERTY
CALLS RELATED TO SOCIAL DISORDER

TABLE 3. INDICATORS OF NEED FROM SELECT COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROVIDERS, 2006-2007
CALLERS REFERRED TO A HOMELESS SHELTER BY THE 2-1-1 CALL CENTRE OPERATED BY THE DISTRESS CENTRE CALGARY
CLIENTS SERVED BY THE ALEX COMMUNITY HEALTH BUS
CLIENTS SERVED BY CUPS COMMUNITY OUTREACH
CLIENTS SERVED BY THE DOWNTOWN OUTREACH ADDICTIONS PARTNERSHIP, JOINTLY OPERATED BY CUPS AND ALPHA HOUSE
CLIENTS SERVED BY THE OF THE ELBOW RIVER HEALING LODGE, STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM, CALGARY HEALTH REGION
CLIENTS SERVED BY EXIT COMMUNITY OUTREACH, AN OUTREACH PROGRAM FOR STREET YOUTH OPERATED BY WOOD'S HOMES
CLIENTS SERVED BY THE EXIT OUTREACH VAN, AN OUTREACH PROGRAM FOR SEX TRADE WORKERS OPERATED BY WOOD'S HOMES
CLIENTS SERVED BY THE SAFEWORKS OUTREACH TEAM, A STREET OUTREACH PROGRAM OPERATED BY THE CALGARY HEALTH REGION
CLIENTS SERVED BY THE STREET OUTREACH AND STABILIZATION PROGRAM OPERATED BY THE CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION ¹

TABLE 4. STREET HOMELESSNESS OUTSIDE OF THE 2006 STREET COUNT BOUNDARIES, 2008	
AGENCY IDENTIFYING NEW LOCATIONS OF STREET HOMELESSNESS	NEW LOCATIONS
THE ALEX COMMUNITY HEALTH BUS	13
CUPS COMMUNITY OUTREACH	8
DOWNTOWN OUTREACH ADDICTIONS PARTNERSHIP	19
EXIT OUTREACH, A PROGRAM FOR STREET YOUTH, WOOD'S HOMES	6
ELBOW RIVER HEALING LODGE, STREET OUTREACH, CALGARY HEALTH REGION	0
SAFEWORKS OUTREACH PROGRAM, CALGARY HEALTH REGION	0
STREET OUTREACH AND STABILIZATION PROGRAM, CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOC.	10
TOTAL	56

Source: City of Calgary (2008a: 61-72).

Appendix C. Estimation of Time and Human Resources Needed, 2008

The human resources associated with conducting a point-in-time count of homeless persons can be estimated using full-time equivalents. The costs associated with these time and resource components will vary by municipality, based on the complexity of the count being done, the extent of consultation required, and the supplemental data that are gathered for and included in the count report. The following provides an estimate of the time and human resources that were needed to complete the *Biennial Count of Homeless Persons in Calgary* in 2008.

DESCRIPTION	TOTAL TIME REQUIRED HOURS, DAYS, WEEKS, OR MONTHS AS 'FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS' (FTE)
<i>Primary Responsibility for 2008 Count of Homeless Persons – City of Calgary</i>	
Senior Researcher as Count Coordinator, Social Policy and Planning, Community & Neighbourhood Services – all aspects of count development and execution, consultation, reporting, and media plus subsequent presentations	5 months FTE
Research Analyst, Social Policy and Planning, Community & Neighbourhood Services – consultation assistance, preparation of data entry templates, data tables and charts, data verification for 72 surveys, specialized analysis for Count report and queries subsequent to report release	4 months FTE
<i>Technical Support – City of Calgary</i>	
Administrative Assistants, Social Policy and Planning, Community & Neighbourhood Services – data entry for 72 surveys, arranging meeting rooms, catering, and supplies for press conference and pre-release briefing meeting, memo and mailing label generation, thank-you card design and production, stuffing envelopes with reports for participating agencies and stakeholders who were consulted on street homelessness, distributing reports requested after Count release	4 weeks FTE
Geomatic Cartographer, Land Information and Mapping – Amended 2006 street count maps so they could be used for the 'Voices from the Streets' research project (time sensitive); created detailed and outline maps showing the location and extent of street homelessness based on 2008 consultations; printed wall maps	2 weeks FTE
<i>Research Contributions – City of Calgary</i>	
Researchers, Calgary Police Service (CPS) – Three researchers each provided some form of assistance related to gathering CPS data on incidents that may be related to homelessness for the 2008 Count report	3 days FTE
District Commanders, Calgary Police Service (CPS) – As part of a regularly scheduled meeting, 19 senior managers provided input on the extent of street homelessness in their districts or related to their special divisions; admin support to arrange meeting and report review; plus senior staff member time to review CPS content written for 2008 report prior to publication	2 hours FTE x 19 people (senior management) 0.5 days FTE (admin support) 0.5 days FTE (senior staff reviewer)
Research and Business Solutions Staff, 3-1-1 Call Centre – Significant time provided by staff to mine the call centre database for incidents that may be related to homelessness, organize data and prepare maps for use in the 2008 Count report	0.5 days FTE (business solutions leader) 2 weeks FTE (business advisor) 3 weeks FTE (research assistant)

(continued)

DESCRIPTION	TOTAL TIME REQUIRED HOURS, DAYS, WEEKS, OR MONTHS AS 'FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS' (FTE)
Research and Policy Analyst, Animal and Bylaw Services – Data compilation for 2008 Count report	2 days FTE
Quality Assurance Strategist, Clinical-Organizational Effectiveness, Emergency Medical Services – Significant data compilation and analysis plus narrative text for 2008 Count report	5 days FTE
Business and Policy Planner, Strategic Planning and Research, Calgary Fire Department – Data compilation for 2008 Count report	0.5 days FTE
Frontline Staff, Parks and Natural Areas – Consultation with frontline area managers on issues related to homelessness	0.5 days FTE (senior staff) 2 hours FTE x 9 people (managers)
Executive Assistant to the Director, Roads, Transportation – Consultation with senior staff on frontline issues related to homelessness	0.5 days FTE (senior staff)
<i>Research Contributions – Outreach Service Providers</i>	
Frontline Community Workers from 7 agencies (15 individuals) – Each provided some form of assistance related to gathering data on incidents that may be related to homelessness for the 2008 Count report	2 hours FTE x 15 people (average)
Consultation with 2 Community Interagency Groups – Four consultation meetings with Interagency Groups serving the homeless	1.5 hours FTE x 30 people 1 day FTE x 10 people
<i>Research Contributions – Facilities and Service Agencies Surveyed</i>	
72 Facilities and Service Agencies Surveyed – 69 facilities and 11 service agencies completed the 2008 Count survey on 2008 May 14	0.5 days FTE x 72 people (average)
<i>Communications and Publication Support</i>	
Design and Consulting Staff, Creative Services – Creation of charts showing key findings for use in presentations on the 2008 Count and for the production of poster boards for use at pre-release Briefing Meeting and Press Conference	1.5 weeks FTE – designer 3 days FTE – consultants
Communications Strategist, Customer Service and Communications (CSC) – Communications support related to press advisory, press release, briefing note for Council, post-release media inquiries, and co-authoring of speaking notes for CNS Director Chris Branch and Ald. Farrell for Press Conference held to release results	3 days FTE (includes time for Team Leader to review work)
Print Shop Staff – Provided advice on cost-effective printing and produced the bound copies of the final 2008 Count reports (time sensitive)	2.5 days FTE
Printing Costs – Printing of 350 copies of the 2008 Count report, which was 187 pages long (printed back to back with 10 colour pages inserted, cover stock on back and front); 248 reports have been distributed since the 2008 Count report was released on 2008 July 14 (to all stakeholders who were consulted about or participated in the 2008 Count, as well as to libraries and others on request)	<i>Cost not available</i>
Web Designer – Uploaded web update and files related to release of 2008 count to launch at same time as start of Press Conference held to release results	0.5 days FTE
Issue Strategist, Social Policy & Planning, CNS – Managing guest relations for pre-release Briefing Meeting and Press Conference	0.5 days FTE (senior staff)

