

REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2025

SUBJECT **Regional Engagement on Supportive Housing and Sheltering**

ISSUE SUMMARY

This report summarizes recent regional engagement on the Capital Regional District's (CRD) potential role in advancing supportive housing and sheltering objectives. The engagement identified key roles that, subject to Board direction, can be incorporated into the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (RHAS) update to better support a coordinated regional response to homelessness and housing affordability.

BACKGROUND

At the September 2024 CRD Board meeting, a report was presented outlining the CRD's past and present efforts to address homelessness in the region. The report noted that experiences of homelessness result from a complex interplay of structural factors (e.g., high rents and low incomes), systemic failures (e.g., challenging transitions from child welfare, correctional, or health systems), and personal or relational circumstances (e.g., trauma, personal crisis, mental health, or substance use challenges). These factors make addressing homelessness complex, as the boundary between being housed and unhoused can be fluid, and recovery for individuals or households is neither linear nor uniform.

During the September 2024 meeting, the CRD Board directed staff to include a one-time amount of \$100 thousand (K) in the 2025 Financial Plan to undertake regional engagement to determine the CRD's potential role in advancing regional supportive housing and sheltering objectives.

Additionally, at its July 2025 meeting, the CRD Board further directed staff to include the following items from the City of Victoria's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan for consideration:

1. Work with other partners to create a regional approach to housing;
2. Create and implement a regional homelessness strategy;
3. Regularly contribute funds through the budget process for the Greater Victoria Rent Bank; and
4. Address homelessness and service provision for vulnerable individuals in their own communities.

When scoping the engagement work directed by the CRD Board, staff determined that the project would best be advanced parallel to the planned update to the RHAS. The updated RHAS is expected to be before the Board in September 2026.

Over the course of September and October 2025, a series of engagement sessions across the region with a wide range of social service organizations, non-profit housing providers, and individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness were undertaken. Four in-person workshops - held in Langford, Esquimalt, and Sidney, along with one online session - were held to ensure broad regional representation. Sessions were facilitated using a roundtable format to allow all participants to contribute, with discussions focused on service gaps, barriers, and opportunities to inform potential CRD future directions.

In addition to the five engagement sessions, staff facilitated a regional coordination workshop on supportive housing and sheltering with municipal staff and other strategic partners involved in homelessness response. This workshop was delivered in partnership with BC Housing.

Feedback from these sessions has informed the development of a *What We Heard* report, which outlines the engagement approach, summarizes key themes and insights from participants, and identifies key roles in building a coordinated regional response. These key roles are further explored in the 'Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies' section of this staff report, with the full *What We Heard* report attached as Appendix A.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That staff be directed to incorporate the key roles identified in the *What We Heard* report into the ongoing development of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy, which is anticipated to come before the CRD Board in 2026.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Hospitals and Housing Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The CRD has a long-standing involvement in addressing homelessness and housing instability, beginning with the 2007 update of the RHAS, which introduced "Strategy 5: Expand the scope of the Victoria Homelessness Community Plan to the region as a whole". This direction was reaffirmed in the 2018 RHAS through "Goal 4: Develop and operationalize a regionally coordinated housing and homelessness response", and continues under the 2023–2026 CRD Corporate Plan through "Initiative 5c-1: Support a coordinated, regional, and collaborative response to homelessness".

Social Implications

On September 24, 2025, the CRD released the results of the 2025 Greater Victoria Point-in-Time (PiT) Count. The count, conducted on March 25 and 26, identified 1,749 individuals experiencing homelessness, compared to 1,665 in March 2023. While the PiT Count provides a snapshot of homelessness at a specific point in time and is not directly comparable year-over-year, the findings can still help illustrate general shifts and patterns over time. The full 2025 PiT Count Report can be found as Appendix B.

Funded through the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Program (RHP), the 2025 PiT Count was supported by more than 130 volunteers, community organizations, and partners. As the Community Entity (CE) administering the federal RHP within the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), the CRD is responsible for coordinating the PiT Count. Beginning in 2025, the federal government transitioned to requiring annual PiT enumerations, accompanied by comprehensive surveys every three years.

Service Delivery Implications

Currently, the CRD's role in regional homelessness includes both the administration of services on behalf of other levels of government and direct service delivery, as authorized under two services:

Land Assembly, Housing and Land Banking Service

Through the Land Assembly, Housing and Land Banking service, the CRD supports several initiatives designed to support homelessness response and increase housing supply for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

The Regional Housing First Program (RHFP) launched in 2016 as a \$120 million (M) housing supply partnership between the CRD, BC Housing and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The program model sets rent for 20% of units at the Government of BC's Income Assistance Rate Table Shelter Maximum (Shelter Rate) for persons experiencing or at-risk of homelessness who can live independently. At full build-out, the RHFP is expected to deliver up to 1,494 total units of affordable rental housing by 2028 (20% of which, will be set at shelter rate).

Since 2019, the CRD has served as the CE within the Victoria CMA for the federally funded RHP. The RHP is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. This program provides funding to urban, Indigenous, rural, and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs. The RHP aligns with the goals of the National Housing Strategy to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable, and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2028. Between 2019 and 2028, the CRD will administer approximately \$27.9M in RHP funding.

Since 2020, the CRD has administered over \$34M in Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) funding from CMHC, supporting 202 units across four below-market and supportive housing projects in the capital region. These include developments on Albina Street in Saanich, Prosser Road in Central Saanich, Catherine Street in Victoria, and Admirals Road on Songhees Nation land.

In 2021-2022, the CRD received \$292K through the Province's Strengthening Communities' Services Program to support unsheltered residents on Salt Spring Island during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative provided emergency supports for vulnerable populations and temporary increases in bylaw services to ensure public spaces remained safe and inclusive during high-use periods.

Community Health Service

It is through the Community Health service that the CRD provided operational funding to the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) and, until 2025, the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region (AEHCR).

The 2024–2025 Service Agreement with the AEHCR identified a series of deliverables intended to enhance understanding of homelessness needs and responses across the region. These deliverables were completed by March 2025 and include the following:

- [2025 Capital Region Resources Guide](#): An online resource that outlines accessible and essential services available to individuals in need.

- *Supportive Housing Impact Assessment*: A report that summarizes provincially provided community-level supportive housing guidelines, examines the relationship between supportive housing and communities, and identifies related best practices (attached as Appendix C).
- *Affordable and Supportive Housing Development: An Informational Resource for CRD Communities*: A document developed to support dialogue and collaboration among local governments and stakeholders in the planning and development of appropriate, safe, and affordable housing throughout the region (attached as Appendix D).
- *Regional Overview of Permitted Sheltering Spaces*: A report that identifies municipal areas within the CRD where individuals experiencing homelessness may legally camp, shelter, or park overnight in a vehicle (attached as Appendix E).

Together, these resources provide a foundational understanding of the current landscape of homelessness and housing-related supports across the region, and can help inform future planning, policy development, and intergovernmental collaboration.

In June 2025, the AEHCR provided notice to the CRD that, following a special general meeting, its members had voted to cease operations by the end of the year. The AEHCR ceased operations on September 30, 2025. The CRD has confirmed that it would act as the custodian of the organization's records, maintaining access to key documents and resources that support regional homelessness response.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

This regional engagement on the CRD's potential role in advancing supportive housing and sheltering objectives provides the foundation for updating the RHAS, anticipated for publication in 2026. More specifically, the *What We Heard* report identifies three key roles in building a coordinated regional response to homelessness: regional alignment, strengthened housing and service capacity, and improved regional data systems.

- 1) **Regional alignment**: Aligning jurisdictions, partners, and strategies across the region is essential to effective coordination in addressing homelessness. Achieving this requires a clear mandate, well-defined responsibilities, including relevant service authority, and adequate resources for local governments. A clearer provincial mandate is essential to enable local governments to act with clarity and authority. Regional alignment also includes aligning all jurisdictions and partners through a coordinated, "whole-of-region" approach grounded in a shared purpose and understanding of the region's interconnected needs.
- 2) **Strengthened housing and service capacity**: A coordinated response must reflect the unique context of each jurisdiction and leverage local experience addressing complex health and social issues. Participants emphasized the importance of a system-wide perspective to identify existing resources, opportunities for scaling, and areas needing coordination, while breaking down service silos, reducing redundancies, and using resources effectively.
- 3) **Improved regional data systems**: Accessible, real-time, and up-to-date data on housing and services supports a coordinated approach. It helps identify gaps, streamline access for people experiencing homelessness, and enables communities to track individuals, document needs, prioritize housing, and connect people to appropriate supports.

Subject to Board direction, these key roles can be integrated into the RHAS update, ensuring the strategy supports a coordinated response to homelessness and broader housing affordability. This update will set out potential actions for implementation, which can be considered through the annual service planning and financial planning processes.

First Nations Implications

CRD staff invited First Nations within the region to participate in a two-phased engagement process related to the update of the RHAS. Phase 1 of this project focused on the CRD's potential role in advancing supportive housing and sheltering objectives. Phase 2, running from September 2025 until December 2025, will inform the broader RHAS update. This engagement is intended to support a better understanding of Indigenous housing priorities and perspectives, and to ensure that regional housing planning reflects the diverse needs of communities across the region.

Financial Implications

Between 2008 and March 31, 2025, the CRD supported core operations of the AEHCR to advance coordination, research, engagement, and strategy development activities related to homelessness intervention. What began as an annual commitment of \$150K in 2008 increased to \$225K in 2010 and though the initial commitment was for 10 years, this was revised in 2018 to be ongoing. The CRD also provided a one-time funding increase of \$120K in 2024/25, the final year in which the CRD provided operational funding prior to the AEHCR's closure. Over 18 years, the CRD provided more than \$3.6M in core operational funding to support the work of the AEHCR.

The ACEH was initially provided with three years of seed funding at \$150K per year from 2020 through to 2022. This was then extended by one year into 2023 before the CRD Board renewed a three-year commitment of \$155K starting in 2024 and then increasing based on inflation. The CRD provided core funding to the ACEH of \$158K in 2025 and has included \$161K in the provisional CRD 2026 Financial Plan. Since 2020, and including the 2026 commitment, the CRD will have provided core operational funding to the ACEH totalling approximately \$1.1M, with no additional funding currently budgeted for 2027 onward.

At their September 2024 meeting, the CRD Board authorized a one-time increase of \$100,000 in the CRD's 2025 Financial Plan for CRD staff to undertake regional engagement to determine the CRD's potential role in advancing regional supportive housing and sheltering objectives. The accompanying *What We Heard* report being presented to the Board represents the culmination of this work.

As the limited funding available in support of homelessness intervention is either committed (as with the ACEH), not included in the provisional 2026 Financial Plan in an effort to help mitigate requisition pressure, or was one-time (as with the regional engagement on homelessness initiative), additional activities directed by the CRD Board, as identified in the RHAS, can be considered through future service and financial planning processes. This will enable staff to undertake full costing, and any identified actions can be advanced to the CRD Board alongside other corporate priorities for consideration.

Intergovernmental Implications

Provincial Alignment Project:

When the AEHCR formed in 2008, there was a clear need for collaboration among community organizations, governments, and other partners to lead efforts to end homelessness. Since then, the landscape has become significantly more complex with multiple orders of government advancing distinct strategies to address homelessness. This evolving context presents an opportunity for the CRD to work with member municipalities, senior governments, service delivery organizations, and other partners to explore a more coordinated regional response that better addresses local needs while aligning with federal and provincial strategies.

The launch of the federal National Housing Strategy in 2017 and the RHP in 2018 marked a substantial shift. As the CE for the RHP in the Victoria CMA, the CRD administers federal funding for multiple program components, including the ongoing implementation of Coordinated Access (CA) and the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). CA is a response to homelessness that streamlines access to housing and supports, by coordinating services using real-time data from HIFIS to drive outcomes. CA, currently anticipated to be implemented in 2026, can enable a broad range of housing and support service organizations to collaborate more effectively and report on regional data and outcomes.

The CRD delivering its obligations under the RHP requires strong collaboration with the provincial government, particularly BC Housing. The Provincial *Belonging in BC: A Collaborative Plan to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness* outlines a phased approach to system transformation. There is strong alignment between the CRD's responsibilities under the RHP, particularly related to CA and HIFIS, and the provincial plan's goals for system transformation.

To support more integrated local governance and better coordination of services, BC Housing, in partnership with Housing Infrastructure and Communities Canada and Reaching Home CEs in BC, launched the Alignment Project. This joint federal-provincial-community initiative, which began in 2024, is being rolled out in phases across the province. Its goal is to bring together all the different programs, services, and systems that help people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, so they work better together. This includes aligning roles, responsibilities, systems (like HIFIS), and service delivery requirements.

The project builds on successful approaches already in place in BC and across Canada, including the Coordinated Access model, stronger governance, and the use of quality data to guide decision-making. BC Housing and CRD staff presented a high-level overview of the Alignment Project to the CRD's Hospital and Housing Committee in February 2025 (presentation attached as Appendix F).

Consideration of July 2025 Board Direction:

In carrying out the regional engagement on supportive housing and sheltering, CRD staff considered the Board's July 2025 direction. Key areas of focus include:

- "Working with other partners to create a regional approach to housing" and "addressing homelessness and service provision for vulnerable individuals in their own communities" are being advanced through the broader RHAS update, which identify region-wide housing priorities and outline opportunities for coordinated planning and service delivery.

- Exploring a regional approach to homelessness directly connects with the key roles for building a coordinated regional response to homelessness outlined in the *What We Heard* report. A regional approach to homelessness is also being explored via the Alignment Project, specifically the creation of a Homelessness Response Leader Table which is intended to support local leadership with planning, implementation, reporting and funding alignment to prevent and reduce homelessness across the region.
- The Greater Victoria Rent Bank provides financial assistance through interest-free repayable loans and is administered by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC). Loan programs are ineligible for RHP funding; however, the CRD, through the RHP, funded non-loan components of the Rent Bank from 2020 to 2022 and currently funds CSPC's Eviction Prevention Project, which complements the Rent Bank by supporting households ineligible for loans. Additionally, since 2018 the RHP has provided over \$5M in Prevention and Shelter Diversion funding, supporting people before a crisis occurs by reducing risks and preventing homelessness, including those at imminent risk of losing their housing or being discharged from public systems.

CONCLUSION

The recent regional engagement provides a foundation for the CRD's consideration of its potential role in advancing supportive housing and sheltering objectives. Subject to Board direction, the key roles identified through the engagement underpinning the *What we Heard* report can be incorporated into the 2026 RHAS update.

This will help ensure the RHAS considers the findings through the recent engagement work and so that staff can return to the Board with opportunities to support a more coordinated regional response to homelessness alongside other identified properties as may be identified within the RHAS.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That staff be directed to incorporate the key roles identified in the *What We Heard* report into the ongoing development of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy, which is anticipated to come before the CRD Board in 2026.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: What We Heard: A Report of the Findings from the Capital Regional District's Engagement on Sheltering and Supportive Housing
- Appendix B: 2025 Greater Victoria Point in Time Homelessness Count and Survey
- Appendix C: AEHCR Supportive Housing Impact Assessment
- Appendix D: AEHCR Affordable and Supportive Housing Development: An Informational Resource for CRD Communities
- Appendix E: AEHCR Regional Overview of Permitted Sheltering Spaces
- Appendix F: Presentation: Aligning Federal/Provincial Homelessness Response