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REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026

SUBJECT **Options for Immediate Actions to Advance Supportive Housing and Sheltering**

ISSUE SUMMARY

This report outlines options for immediate actions to advance supportive housing and sheltering spaces in municipalities across the region. It also provides a high-level overview of the Capital Regional District's (CRD) relevant service and legislative authorities related to supportive housing and sheltering.

BACKGROUND

On December 10, 2025, the Honourable Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs, presented to the CRD Board on a regional approach to homelessness and sheltering. The Minister called for more supportive housing and sheltering facilities outside the City of Victoria and emphasized the importance of a coordinated, region-wide response to homelessness. During a question-and-answer period, the Minister noted that communities have a role in identifying suitable land for supportive housing and sheltering. The Minister further indicated that where appropriate sites are identified, the Province would welcome engagement and that provincial resources may be available to support such projects.

At this same meeting, CRD staff presented a report summarizing recent regional engagement on the CRD's potential role in advancing supportive housing and sheltering objectives. The staff report provides an overview of the CRD's current role in regional homelessness and the actions that are being undertaken under the CRD's mandate and authority. The engagement involved a wide range of partners - including non-profit housing providers, social service organizations, community partners, municipal staff, and those with lived and living experience - to gather perspectives on service gaps, barriers, and opportunities to inform potential future actions for the CRD pertaining to homelessness. The engagement identified key roles that could be incorporated into an update of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (RHAS) to support a coordinated regional response to homelessness and housing affordability. Work is ongoing to update the RHAS, which is expected to be presented to the Board in September 2026.

Three key potential roles emerged from this engagement and were captured in the December 10 report:

- 1) **Regional alignment:** Aligning jurisdictions, partners, and strategies across the region is essential to effective coordination in addressing homelessness.
- 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, 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.

Following the presentation of the report, the CRD Board directed staff to incorporate these key roles into the ongoing development of the RHAS. The Board also approved the following motion:

“And that staff be further directed to report back to the Board at its March 2026 meeting on options for immediate actions to advance supportive housing and sheltering spaces in municipalities across the region.”

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board (CRD):

1. That the CRD Chair, on behalf of the CRD Board, sends a letter to member municipalities (Appendix A) requesting that they identify potential sites for supportive housing and sheltering and report this information to the Province; and
2. That the CRD Chair, on behalf of the CRD Board, sends a letter to the Minister of Housing (Appendix B) requesting continued provincial support and direction to advance the Mount Tolmie Project, including clarification of next steps and timelines.

Alternative 2

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

IMPLICATIONS

Service Delivery Implications:

Since 2019, the CRD has served as the Community Entity (CE) for the federally funded Reaching Home Program (RHP) within the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). The RHP is a community-based program that helps prevent and reduce homelessness across Canada by providing funding to urban, Indigenous, rural, and remote communities to address 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 \$27.9 million (M) in RHP funding. For the current 2025–2026 fiscal year, 18 projects in the Victoria CMA are supported through the program (see Appendix C for a full list of projects).

A call for proposals for the 2026–2028 funding period, providing over \$5.4M, was issued in December 2025. CRD staff have received 24 applications from community partners totalling over \$13.1M. Applications are currently under review, and funding agreements are being implemented with selected projects in accordance with RHP administrative requirements. The CRD team administering the RHP are currently at full capacity and would require additional staffing to implement any further initiatives advancing supportive housing and sheltering.

Intergovernmental Implications

Request to Member Municipalities:

An immediate proposed action to advance supportive housing and sheltering in municipalities across the region is to advance a letter (suggested wording attached as Appendix A) from the CRD Board Chair to member municipalities. The draft letter requests that municipalities work to identify publicly owned or otherwise viable lands or facilities within their jurisdictions that may be suitable for supportive housing or sheltering. Municipalities are encouraged to report any identified

sites directly to the Province, consistent with the Minister’s suggestion from the December 2025 presentation to the CRD Board.

Letter to the Honourable Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs:

A second proposed immediate action to advance supportive housing and sheltering in municipalities across the region, is to advance a letter (suggested wording attached as Appendix B) from the CRD Board Chair to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. The letter thanks the Minister for her presentation and requests continued provincial support for the Mount Tolmie Project, located in the District of Saanich, including a request that the Province provide clarification on timelines and next steps to advance the project.

The Mount Tolmie Project, which is being developed in partnership between the Capital Regional Hospital District (CRHD), BC Housing and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will convert the former Mount Tolmie Hospital into approximately 50 units of BC Housing-funded deeply affordable rental housing with on-site support services. In December 2023, the CRHD approved a contribution of \$10M through the Regional Housing First Program (RHFP), enabling purchase of the land and development of units. Key milestones achieved to date include:

- May 2022: Letter of Intent between BC Housing and the CRD confirming the parties’ mutual intent to enter into a formal agreement to acquire the property through the RHFP.
- October 2022: CRHD Board authorized Chief Administrative Officer to purchase the property and enter a 20-year lease with BC Housing to renovate and operate the housing.
- December 2023: CRHD approved the \$10M necessary to acquire the lands under the RHFP.
- November 2024: CRHD acquired lands and improvements at 3690 Richmond Road, Saanich.
- December 2024: CRHD and BC Housing executed a 20-year lease at a nominal value where BC Housing agreed to undertake necessary renovations within two years and then operate the housing.

As of January 2026, BC Housing staff have shared that they are currently awaiting approval, but that the high cost of renovation and the 20-year timeframe are presenting challenges for their ministry partners. Therefore, BC Housing is unable to provide a timeline for project approval or for construction to commence on the renovations.

As the project’s progression depends on provincial action, the letter acknowledges the Minister’s commitment to collaboration, reiterates the CRD’s interest in advancing the project promptly, and requests clarification on the timelines and next steps to move the project forward.

Provincial Alignment Project:

Through the RHP, CRD staff are participating in the Alignment Project, a joint federal-provincial-community initiative launched in 2024 by BC Housing, Housing Infrastructure and Communities Canada, and Reaching Home CEs in British Columbia. This project is being implemented in phases across the province to make changes to existing Coordinated Access (CA) processes and expand the use of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).

The project intends to bring greater coordination to the many roles, responsibilities, technology, and tools across programs that support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, ensuring they operate in a more integrated and effective way.

A key component of the Alignment Project is the creation of the Homelessness Response Leadership Table (HRLT). This table will support regional partners with planning, implementation, reporting, and aligning funding streams to prevent and reduce homelessness, helping to coordinate a regional approach to homelessness. A focus of the HRLT is to help guide changes to existing CA processes and the use of HIFIS across the region. Through its role as a CE, the CRD supports the work of the HRLT in accordance with the administration requirements set out in the RHP. The table is co-chaired by staff-level representatives from the CRD, BC Housing, and the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), with additional members including municipal, provincial, and non-profit executives from the region.

Legal Implications

CRD staff engaged external counsel to conduct a legal review to clarify the CRD's authority related to supportive housing and sheltering.

In general, the opinion confirms staff's understanding of the relevant service authorities:

1. The Land Assembly, Housing and Land Banking Service authorizes long-term development of housing projects. This service could be used to purchase land, which then could be leased to an operator for direct delivery of support services or banking the land for future development. However, the service cannot fund the stand-alone construction of shelters or the immediate direct delivery of services to unhoused individuals.
2. The Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC) may participate in development of supportive housing projects but does not have authority to provide direct services to individuals experiencing homelessness under its Articles of Incorporation. It has no separate funding source, beyond rents or reliance on the Land Assembly, Housing and Land Banking Service funding.
3. The Regional Housing Trust Fund can provide capital funding for housing projects, which could include housing with support services. The current purposes of the service do not include the funding of emergency shelters.
4. The CRD's Community Health Service could support direct provision and administration of community health services to address health needs of the unhoused population but would require the authorization of the Minister of Health prior to service delivery.
5. The CRD's Emergency Management powers could be used, with agreement amongst all municipalities, to develop a regional strategy to support the unhoused in an emergency. Homelessness on its own, absent of a disaster, is not enough to declare a state of emergency.
6. The CRD's corporate power of assistance may be used to provide funds in the form of grants to community organizations or projects to support work with the unhoused population, which may provide funds to support individuals with supportive housing needs. A service would need to be identified (such as Community Health) which could tie the form of assistance to the purpose of the service.

The CRD and the CRHC have limited authority to take additional actions in the immediate to near term to advance supportive housing and sheltering spaces in the region. Any additional work in this area may require amending existing or establishing new service authorities as well as additional staffing capacity and resources to advance.

Financial Implications:

No new or additional resources are available to support actions beyond those identified in this report. CRD staff administering the RHP are at full capacity and would require additional staffing to support any further actions. Any initiative requiring additional funding would need to be considered through the CRD's future financial planning process.

CONCLUSION

This report outlines two immediate actions to advance supportive housing and sheltering in the region: engaging municipalities to identify potential sites and seeking continued provincial support for the Mount Tolmie Project. The CRD and CRHC have limited authority to advance initiatives in the immediate to near term specific to supportive housing and sheltering for households experiencing homelessness, and any further work in this area may require amending existing or establishing new service authority. Both of the actions identified in this report align with the approach outlined by the Minister on December 10 to increase housing options with on-site support services outside the region’s core. Any additional actions would likely require additional staffing capacity and resources to advance.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board (CRD):

1. That the CRD Chair, on behalf of the CRD Board, sends a letter to member municipalities (Appendix A) requesting that they identify potential sites for supportive housing and sheltering and report this information to the Province; and
2. That the CRD Chair, on behalf of the CRD Board, sends a letter to the Minister of Housing (Appendix B) requesting continued provincial support and direction to advance the Mount Tolmie Project, including clarification of next steps and timelines.

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ATTACHMENTS:

- Appendix A: Draft CRD Request for Municipal Supportive Housing and Shelter Site Identification
- Appendix B: Draft Letter to the Honourable Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs
- Appendix C: Reaching Home Program Funded Sub-Projects: 2024-2026