



Mr. Colin Plant
Chair - Capital Regional District Board
625 Fisgard Street, Victoria, BC V8W 1R7

SENT VIA EMAIL

Re: AEHCR Core Funding Request

Dear Chair Plant,

On behalf of the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region (AEHCR) (legally known as the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness), we wish to sincerely thank the Capital Regional District (CRD) for sustaining our collective work to end homelessness in the region.

We are writing to you today to request an increase in the funding provided by the CRD to the Alliance. The AEHCR wishes to formally request an annual increase of \$120,000 (from \$225,000 to \$345,000). The AEHCR also requests an annual cost of living indexation. Attachment A presents the audited financial statements for the last fiscal year.

The CRD has been and continues to be a crucial partner supporting the activities of the AEHCR and its member societies since 2008. As of December 2022, the AEHCR is honoured to have 28 local and regional organization members who primarily provide services in the homelessness sector as well as 26 individual members. In addition to the CRD, the AEHCR's partners include Island Health and BC Housing. Attachment B shows current member organizations and Attachment C shows our current Board of Directors and AEHCR Staff Positions.

The CRD was integral in launching the Alliance with core funding of \$150,000 per year for 3 years from 2008 to 2010. The CRD core funding was increased to \$225,000 in 2011 and has continued at that amount for 13 years. AEHCR has had two other core funders since its inception. The City of Victoria and Island Health have each provided \$100,000 annually for many years.

Each year the AEHCR enters into separate Service Agreements with the CRD and Island Health which include specific AEHCR deliverables. The AEHCR submits a report on the deliverables achieved to CRD staff each year prior to the next Service Agreement.

The AEHCR Board has approved making requests for increased funding to each of our 3 core funding partners and we are seeking a total increase of \$170,000 in annual core funding for 2024. Our recent request has been declined by Island Health and we have a request to the City of Victoria concurrent with this request to the CRD.

The rationale for an increase in core funding is that while the challenges in addressing Homelessness have increased over the past 13 years and the deliverables in our service agreements with the CRD and Island Health have increased, core funding to the AEHCR has not increased over the past 13 years, non-staff operating costs have risen, and AECHR staff salaries have not seen an increase since 2012. The requested increase is necessary to retain and recruit excellent staff, achieve the deliverables in our Service Agreements, and meet the expectations of our member organizations and community at large.

It should be noted that while the AEHCR has annual core funding, it also applies and receives grants for varying time periods to conduct programs or projects. An example in 2023, is the AEHCR received \$157,000 of funds from the Federal Reaching Home Program, which is administered by the Community Entity held by the CRD in our region as well as other project granting sources such as UBCM, the Victoria Foundation, the Donnelly Foundation and many individual donors.

The work of the AEHCR is made possible thanks to this ongoing investment into the community by the CRD. The positive impact of initiatives we have launched together focused on ending and preventing homelessness cannot be understated. Our collaborative work plays a critical role in transforming the homelessness-serving system in the region and continues to reinforce the importance of the partnership between the AEHCR and the CRD. Now, more than ever, the CRD's support is needed to achieve our shared vision.

The 2018 Regional Housing Affordability Strategy approved by the CRD Board of Directors as well as the 2019-2024 Community Plan to End Homelessness in the Capital Region, inform this AEHCR, ongoing work and as such, the AEHCR takes a whole-government approach to advocating for increasing appropriate housing supply, establishes housing targets and eviction interventions specific to chronic homelessness while also contributing to the development of broader targets around housing affordability. The AEHCR also plays an important role in bringing a wide range of partners together to explore and create synergies and opportunities for partnerships and system-wide transformation.

The AEHCR serves its members through its role as a 'backbone' organization responsible for guiding vision and facilitating strategic planning, developing sector-wide advocacy initiatives, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared best practices, building public awareness, advancing policy changes, working to mobilize and distribute funding and more. The AEHCR staff complement has incrementally increased over the past number of years to support the work of the Sector, while the work that is carried out is exponential in nature and scope.

Efforts continue to focus on addressing the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness and in preventing homelessness experience for those who are at-imminent-risk, with particular emphasis on preventing youth homelessness. Central to this work, the AEHCR continues to support the development of two crucial regional initiatives: a Coordinated Access and Assessment system for housing, and a broader Homelessness Management Information System for coordinating housing and supports for people experiencing, at risk of, or with a recent experience of homelessness. When complete, these two systems will ensure enhanced service efficacy, better resource efficiencies, and that those in need are being rapidly connected to the housing and services that best suit their needs.

In collaboration with the CRD and community partners, the AEHCR authors and publishes the Community Plan, which is focused on improvements to the housing and homelessness response system and identifies housing supply needs specific to addressing chronic homelessness while projecting future

need. The AEHCR also contributes to the development of plans that are indirectly connected to homelessness such as the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy as well as aligning our work with the BC government's Homelessness Strategy and other relevant initiatives.

The AEHCR collects data related to its mission and partners with others to conduct complex research initiatives related to housing, homelessness, prevention and system transformation. The AEHCR Board of Directors passed a Motion at their February 22nd meeting as follows: The GVCEH Board indicate to the CRD and CAA Working Group that it wishes to be the lead organization for the holder of data and the creation of the By Name List. This Motion, and development of a Regional Data Dashboard are key to supporting the development of a baseline to measure both the progress toward Functional Zero homelessness in the Region, and also support evidence-based decisions regarding resource allocation and re-allocation.

The AEHCR convenes and facilitates working groups and supports and participates with community groups on collaborative advocacy and solutions to homelessness. The AEHCR partners and staff are embedded in an increasing number of community tables, and the AEHCR continues to work with partners to develop and distribute information tools and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of collective efforts.

Homelessness is a complex issue with all orders of government supporting individual-level solutions while also exerting control over different and sometime overlapping aspects of the response. This means that much of the work related to significant coordination and integration of systems happens at the community level and in alignment with the CRD's Regional Housing Affordability Strategy. With the recent announcements by Minister Eby and the BC's government investments to prevent and continue the work to end homelessness, the AEHCR, is now, more than ever, in a position to build on the collaborative work in the Region and continue to provide backbone services to our members to achieve these goals.

AEHCR staff bring together leaders and decision-makers at the regional, provincial and national scale through a unique partnership that continues to make significant inroads in housing, health care, prevention and research around homelessness and its root causes. This request for an increase in core funding will help support the operations of the AEHCR and will also help offset increasing costs.

Any opportunity to increase annual funding will support operations related to:

- Continue Critical Work to Prevent Youth Homelessness – The AEHCR's Youth Task Force (YTF), started in 2017, is significantly shifting the youth homelessness landscape in the region. As we know 55.8% of those experiencing homelessness had their first experience of homelessness before their 25th birthday. The YTF is both working to address the estimated 259 individuals under the age of 25 currently experiencing some form of homelessness and is collaborating to prevent youth homelessness with the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness and other social services agencies for further strengthen our collective reach.
- Offset Increasing Costs – In early 2019 the GVCEH moved into market rental office space for the first time in its ten-year history. While this move provided considerably better opportunities to support community in ending homelessness, it also came with the corresponding increase in operational costs.

In 2023, we are required to move, once again, and the costs associated with relocation have also increased due to a very strong commercial rental market.

Although we continue to make significant advances, homelessness persists as a challenge for this community, across BC and across the country. As the community continues to emerge from the heights of the COVID crisis, the economic crisis, labour shortages and increased inflation, continue to be felt in the region and we are looking to CRD to support the AEHCR's sector-wide advocacy and communication, collaboration, research, and engagement, to achieve collective impact on our common goals.

It is important to also note that, in addition to the AEHCR requesting an increase in core funding from the CRD, it has requested a similar increase from Island Health and will be presenting to the City of Victoria in September as well and will be seeking other sources of funding through Trust Based Philanthropy and potentially fundraising, as we believe in the importance of funders and the community collaborating on this important regional work.

Thank you so much for your continued support of the AEHCR and the organizations dedicated to a vision of a region, a province and a nation without homelessness and we look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



Jeff Bray
Community Co-Chair



Sylvia Ceacero
Executive Director