

January 14, 2019

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

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. Plant:

Re: Coalition Core Funding Request 2019/20

On behalf of the entire Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (Coalition), we wish to sincerely thank the Capital Regional District (CRD) for its sustaining support of our collective work to end homelessness in Greater Victoria. The CRD has been and continues to be a crucial partner supporting the activities of the Coalition and its member societies since 2008/09. As of December 2018, the Coalition is honored to have 34-member societies participating in its work.

The CRD was integral in launching the Coalition with a contribution of \$150,000 per year from 2008/09 to 2010/11 before increasing core funding to \$225,000 per year from 2011/12 to today. The work of the Coalition would not have been possible without this ongoing investment into community from the CRD.

The positive impact of initiatives we have launched together focused on ending and preventing homelessness cannot be understated. Our collaborative work has played a critical role in transforming the homelessness-serving system in the region and has continued to reinforce the importance of the partnership between the Coalition and the CRD. We look forward to continuing this much-needed work well into the future.

Though incredible advances have been made, we are not finished yet as homelessness remains a persistent challenge for this community and across the country. The May 9, 2018 approval of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy by the CRD Board of Directors outlines five goals. The Coalition's ongoing work, as guided by its vision and mission, directly touches on the following four of those goals:

Build the right supply of housing across the spectrum – The Coalition takes a whole-government approach to advocating for increasing housing supply, establishes housing targets specific to chronic homelessness while also contributing to the development of broader targets around housing affordability. The Coalition also plays an important role in bringing potential for-profit and non-profit partners together to explore synergies and opportunities for partnerships.

¹ Please see the Coalition's Annual Report 2017/18: 10 Years of Community for additional detail on the impact of the society 2008 – 2018: https://victoriahomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Coalition-Annual-Report-2017-18-FINAL-Web.pdf

Sustain a shared regional response to existing and emerging housing demand – The Coalition authors and publishes the annual Community Plan, which is focussed on improvements to the housing and homelessness response system and identifies housing supply needs specific to addressing chronic homelessness while projecting future need. The Coalition also contributes to the development of plans that are indirectly connected to homelessness such as the Regional Housing Affordably Strategy. Finally, the Coalition collects data related to its mission and partners with other stakeholders to conduct complex research initiatives related to housing, homelessness, prevention and system transformation.

Develop and operationalize a regionally coordinated housing and homelessness response – The Coalition serves its members through its role as a 'backbone' organization responsible for guiding vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and working to mobilize funding. This effort is focused on addressing the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness while also working to prevent homelessness experience for those at-imminent-risk, with particular emphasis on preventing youth homelessness. Central to this work, the Coalition has engaged in research, advocacy, and advising related to 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 support for people experiencing, at risk of, or with a recent experience of homelessness. When complete, these two systems will ensure efficacy of service, efficiency of resource use, and that those in need are being rapidly connected to the housing and services best suited to their needs.

Create community understanding and support for affordable housing developments — The Coalition supports a Community Engagement and Communication Working Group that is focussed on enhancing the understanding by a broad range of stakeholders on the causes of and the solutions to homelessness. Coalition stakeholders and staff are embedded in an increasing number of community tables, and the Coalition 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 levels 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 true coordination and integration of systems happens at the community level. The Coalition, in part by design but also by its commitment to supporting its members on moving toward a region without homelessness, is perfectly situated to continue its positive impact in community, which is very much in alignment with the CRD's Regional Housing Affordability Strategy.

The existing Service Contract Between the Coalition and the CRD ends March 31, 2019 and the Coalition wishes to formally request an increase in core funding from \$225,000 to \$310,000 for a total annual increase of \$85,000.

The Coalition currently employs just four full-time staff members who 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 Coalition and will also help offset increasing costs and extending the services of the Youth Project Coordinator and a youth with lived experience role. These

positions are currently supported through a Victoria Foundation grant that will be fully expended by the end of June 2019.

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

- Continue Critical Work to Prevent Youth Homelessness The Coalition's Youth
 Task Force (YTF), started in 2017, is significantly shifting the youth homelessness
 landscape in the region. 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 for youth, as we know that 55.8% of
 those experiencing homelessness had their first experience of homelessness before
 their 25th birthday. Please see Appendix A: Youth Task Force Collective Impact
 Summary attached to this letter for additional information.
- Offset Increasing Costs In early 2019 the Coalition will be moving into market rental office space for the first time in its ten-year history. While this move will provide considerably better opportunities to support community in ending homelessness, it also comes with an increase in operational costs. This space presents a significant step forward for the Coalition and will help to enhance ongoing and future efforts through colocation with Ready to Rent, a society focused on efforts related to preventing homelessness.

It is important to also note that, in addition to the Coalition requesting an increase in core funding from the CRD, it has requested a similar increase from Island Health and has invited BC Housing to join our core funders, as the Coalition truly believes in the importance of funders collaborating on this important regional work.

Thank you so much for your continued support of this coalition of organizations dedicated to a vision of a region without homelessness and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mayor Lisa Helps

Co - Chair

Greater Victoria Coalition to End

Homelessness

Community Co – Chair

Greater Victoria Coalition to End

Homelessness

Cc: Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD
Kevin Lorette, General Manager, Planning and Protective Services, CRD
Christine Culham, Senior Manager, Regional Housing, CRD
Don Elliott, Executive Director, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness



APPENDIX A: Youth Task Force Collective Impact Summary

INTRODUCTION

Youth homelessness is unique in that the complexity of youth growing up through homelessness establishes a high-level rationale for intervention through both a holistic health and human rights lens. This summary details the role of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (Coalition) in supporting this work and identifies key opportunities for addressing youth homelessness through a collaborative, community-based approach.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

A key component of youth homelessness is the importance of youths' connectivity to a support system. The typology of connectivity introduced below, adopted by the National Alliance to End Homelessness in the U.S., captures the relational elements of a youth homelessness experience rather than a simple and static definition of housing situations. This typology is specific to youth and helps to better identify the level and range of clinical, social, and peer-based supports necessary to prevent homelessness or to support recovery from homelessness.

Temporarily Disconnected - youth experience homelessness for a short time and rarely return into homelessness. This group is typically younger, has more stable connections with family members, and is likely to remain in school.

Unstably Connected - youth may have a more complicated housing history with multiple episodes of homelessness. They likely are disconnected from school and struggle to secure and maintain employment. They may have some connection to family members and are less likely to have mental health and/or substance misuse concerns than are the third group.

Chronically Disconnected - make up the smallest group of unhoused youth but have the most complex needs. Typically experience longer-term homelessness with repeat episodes. They are more likely to struggle with mental health and/or substance misuse concerns. Connections with family members are often unstable or completely severed.

SHARED RATIONALE

Social Determinants of Health - The social determinants of health² are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, and improving these conditions as well as improving the quality of relationships will create a healthier population,

² For a Canadian explanation of the Social Determinants of Health, see https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html. Accessed January 11, 2019.

society, and workforce. This is particularly important for young people, as too many are growing up at-imminent risk of, or are experiencing, homelessness.

In addition to the more material attributes of "place," patterns of social engagement and a sense of security and well-being are also affected by where people live. Resources that enhance quality of life can have a significant influence on population health outcomes. Examples of these resources include safe and affordable housing, access to education, public safety, availability of healthy foods, local emergency/health services, and environments free of life-threatening toxins.

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child – The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a human rights treaty which sets out civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of the children and includes

- Article 3.3: Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible
 for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by
 competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and
 suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.
- Article 6.2: Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Canada signed on to this treaty in 1990 and ratified it in 1991.

COALITION ROLE

The Coalition is the convenor of the Youth Task Force and continues to provide staff resourcing to support the collective efforts of stakeholders, including youth with lived-experience, community-based service agencies, housing providers, Island Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, BC Housing, and Victoria Police. Currently, this collaborative effort is supported through one full-time contractor and one part-time casual youth employee with lived experience.

YOUTH TASK FORCE ROLE

At the heart of the Youth Task Force is a commitment to taking a **collaborative approach**. The Youth Task Force bring support and service organizations into in one room with 'bricks and mortar' housing providers. Diverse participation in the conversation ensures that the community can co-create solutions to address the complexity of intervention at the local/community level.

Another key component of the task force is the ongoing and successful effort to directly engage youth with a lived experience of homelessness in the discussions. This **inclusive approach** has created a group of service clients who are able to inform the system changes needed and advise on the likelihood of success.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

Already the Youth Task Force has

- Brought PHS and Threshold Youth Housing Society together to collaborate on an Expression of Interest application to BC Housing's call for youth supportive housing.
- Increased transparency and coordination of comprehensive continuum/options in better alignment of Housing First for Youth principles.

- Engaged the participation of Island Health representatives to explore need for Tier 5
 high level health needs for youth and opportunities for youth-specific intensive case
 management.
- Empowered youth with lived experience of homelessness to inform changes and review outputs and outcomes.
- Established a shared sense of responsibility among all stakeholders to move forward together.

IMPACT AT SCALE

Unfortunately, the ongoing challenge of youth homelessness cannot be solved through focussing only on initiatives at the regional level. Strategically elevating specific pieces of the regional success story to the provincial and national-level are critical to achieving long-term success.

The Youth Task Force is currently working to scale the impact of the ongoing regional collaboration:

- Built trusting relationships and brokered a high-level meeting between two key provincial funders active in the youth homelessness service system to explore opportunities for better policy alignment at a systems level.
- Working independently and collaboratively with province-wide organizations to identify specific opportunities and advocate for enhanced coordination between different provincial-level departments with different mandates.
- Establishing a shared understanding of the implications of youth transitioning out of
 - Hospital
 - Ministry Care
 - o Incarceration
 - Treatment
 - o **Detox**
 - Women's Shelters
- Detailed the opportunity to high-level provincial government representatives to consider better coordination of Ministry and Crown Corporation Service Plans with shared outcomes and performance measures.
- Integrating work, where appropriate, with the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness to develop provincial-level strategies to end and prevent youth homelessness.
- Exploring opportunities to prototype youth social enterprise initiatives with the intent to look at scaling successful initiatives provincially.

ONGOING SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

The Youth Task Force work will require the ongoing support of 2FTEs

- 1FTE Project Manager/Coordinator
- 1FTE Youth with Lived Experience of Homelessness

Approximate cost for staffing and related project costs \$150,000 per year for core components. Additional youth with lived experience engagements could cost an additional \$100,000 per year but would be supported through grants and/or project specific funding on an as available basis.

CONCLUSION

Critical to the effort of better preventing youth homelessness will be the ability to work effectively at the community and the provincial-level. Much of the change required to transform the system is beyond the scope and decision-making authority of local actors. However, community must inform the policy and program changes at the provincial-level, so the policies and programs can then support successful practice and implementation at the community-level.