



United Way
Central & Northern
Vancouver Island

November 11, 2017

To City of Duncan Mayor Phil Kent and Council Members;

Re: a warming station for community members living rough this winter

We are writing to you on behalf of the Cowichan Coalition to Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing. Formed through a strategic community planning process funded by the Government of Canada's Homeless Partnering Strategy (HPS), we are a diverse group of agencies, individuals, and organizations focused on ending homelessness in the Cowichan Valley.

The Coalition hopes to help establish safe, affordable, and supportive housing for everyone in need in the Cowichan Valley, but recognizes it will take time to gain that objective. In the interim, we must house or otherwise support those who are living without shelter. It is our hope that the City of Duncan will help meet this need.

Our latest 'point in time' count found almost 90 people living outside of shelter in the Cowichan Valley. A similar figure was estimated in February of 2016, when the Warmland Shelter was at capacity. Community members caught out-of-doors in the winter need, at minimum, a place to warm up, shower, and get a cup of something hot to drink. Laundry facilities are important as well.

One such model is in the City of Nanaimo. With a combination of provincial and healthcare funding, Harris House provides supported, daytime drop-in space serving citizens who are without places, to take the chill from their bones and shelter from the cold. We believe that similar funding could be found for Duncan, given a suitable location.

We are told the field houses (change rooms and showers) at McAdam Park were made available for this purpose in the past. Given the support of the Province of BC, it could be done again. We are, therefore, asking Council to open the field houses at McAdam Park for use as daytime warming stations this winter. If Council provides the space, heat, hot water, and janitorial services (or some part of them), we are confident the Province can be convinced to support, supervise, and supply them with whatever is necessary to keep our community members warm and clean this winter. With Council making the space available, we will work to ensure that the Province funds the services outlined above.

The space would, of course, be operated as a warming station outside of any hours required by sports teams, although that need appears to be minimal from mid-November to February of most years.

Thank you for helping the citizens experiencing homelessness in our community regain their places as cared for, appreciated, and welcome members of the neighbourhood. Each step taken is a step towards health and healing in our valley.

Yours sincerely,

Melaina Patenaude
Community Impact Officer, United Way CNVI
and Cowichan Coalition Executive Member

On behalf of the Cowichan Coalition to Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing

United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island

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