



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 1, 2020

Cowichan Region Receives \$392,000 for Emergency Homeless Response to COVID 19

DUNCAN, BC – The COVID-19 Vulnerable Population Cowichan Task Force is pleased to be receiving funding in order to implement phase one of the community emergency response. The Rapid Relief Fund, organized by the Victoria Foundation, Jawl Foundation and Times Colonist is providing \$220,000 for Cowichan, and BC Housing is providing \$172,000 to Support the Plan.

Task Force Chair John Horn of the Cowichan Housing Association says, “these funds will be used to create temporary accommodations for homeless individuals. To provide support services that include peer supports, site maintenance and cleaning, shower facilities, laundry services, security, portable washrooms and handwashing stations. This supports the Provincial mandate to provide Shelter in Place options in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines and keep people safe.”

The plan proposes that people throughout the Cowichan Region will be housed in a variety of ways including, small-scale, “family cluster” serviced outdoor tenting sites housing up to and no more than 12 people per site. None of these will be located in any parks or public green space.

The funding from the Victoria Foundation’s Rapid Relief Fund has enabled the task force to include hotel rooms, and additional funding for outreach workers, food and security.

While the original plan had included and favoured indoor sites, local service providers are not able to provide the level of staffing required due to the impact of COVID 19 on the workforce.

Set up will begin immediately and phase one of the plan is funded until June 30th. Mayor Michelle Staples adds, “We are grateful for the support of the Victoria Foundation, The Jawl Foundation, Times Colonist, and BC Housing for supporting our regional application. Throughout this process the task force has been thoughtful to not lose sight of what happens after June 30th, and from the start included Phase 2 planning to work with the Provincial and Federal Governments to provide permanent and supported housing options for people to transition out of hotels and tenting sites.”

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Up to this point, the COVID-19 Task Force for Vulnerable Populations has included participation from the following organizations:

- Canadian Mental Health Association
- City of Duncan
- Community Action Team
- Cowichan Division of Family Practice
- Cowichan Housing Association
- Cowichan Neighbourhood House
- Cowichan Tribes
- Cowichan Valley Regional District
- Cowichan Women Against Violence Society
- Island Health
- Island Health Mental Health and Substance Use
- Ladysmith Resource Centre Association
- Municipality of North Cowichan
- RCMP
- School District No. 79
- Service Canada
- Social Planning Cowichan
- Sonia Furstenau, MLA
- Town of Ladysmith
- Town of Lake Cowichan
- United Way