



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 11, 2022

**Duncan and North Cowichan Fund Canadian Mental Health Association's
Enhanced Sharps Collection Program**

DUNCAN – After a successful year-and-a-half operating with provincial grant funding, the Peer Sharps Collection team will continue through a municipal funding arrangement and in cooperation with Canadian Mental Health-Cowichan Valley Branch. The City of Duncan and the Municipality of North Cowichan have agreed to continue the enhanced Mobile Peer Clean-up Crew program now that the grant funds have been expended.

The base funding for the Peer Clean-up Crew continues to be funded by Island Health and provided coverage for a total of eighteen hours a week. The expanded program runs seven days a week and the collection routes cover the core area of the region from Beverly Street to Boys Road and Government Street to Lakes Road, and municipal parks. In addition to increased hours and collection routes for the pick-up of sharps, the expanded program provides the Clean-up Crew with access to a vehicle, which enables them to collect garbage and debris in addition to sharps. The municipalities are also reviewing the possible inclusion of the Cowichan Commons area.

In 2020, the City of Duncan received a \$49,000 grant from the Ministry of Health's Community Action Initiative to enhance the Mobile Peer Clean-up Crew sharps collection program, which is administered by the Cowichan Valley Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, to provide seven-day-a-week coverage and increase service levels. Duncan took the lead in applying for the funding with support from the Municipality of North Cowichan, the Community Action Team, Island Health, Canadian Mental Health Association-CVB, and the House of Friendship. Thanks to this funding, the expanded program ran from October 26, 2020, to March 31, 2022. During that time the team received 318 phone calls and collected 16,848 sharps and 23,496 kgs of garbage and debris. Both Duncan and North Cowichan have recently decided to allocate municipal funding.

"Having a phone number for businesses and residents to call when they encounter sharps adds another piece of support as we all work to address the complexities and impacts associated with the opioid crisis," said Mayor Staples.

North Cowichan Mayor Al Siebring added: "This is an important service for area businesses and residents, and I'm pleased that Council agreed to work with the City of Duncan to see it continue. It's another piece of the overall structure we need to address these issues."

Canadian Mental Health Association – Cowichan Valley Branch Executive Director, Lise Haddock, stated: “The expanded Mobile Peer Clean-Up Crew program helps decrease stigma, support social stabilization, and community inclusion by increasing recognition of peer activities.”

The Peer Clean-Up Crew started in 2017, with funding from Island Health, and operated by CMHA-CVB, in response to the heightened concern of residents and businesses to the increase in discarded sharps.

The Mobile Peer Clean-up Crew responds to requests from residents and businesses. The phone number is 250-732-7736.

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For more information, please contact:

Michelle Staples
Mayor
City of Duncan
250-746-6126
mayor@duncan.ca

Al Siebring
Mayor
Municipality of North Cowichan
250-710-3416
mayor@northcowichan.ca

Lise Haddock
Executive Director
CMHA – Cowichan Valley
250-597-1372
Lise.haddock@cmha.bc.ca