

**Municipality of North Cowichan
Regular Council
ADDENDUM AGENDA**

Wednesday, September 16, 2020, 1:30 p.m.
Electronically

	Pages
11. NEW BUSINESS	
11.3 <i>Letter from Island Health regarding the Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre</i>	2 - 4
<u>Purpose:</u> To discuss the September 10, 2020 letter from James Hanson, Vice President, Clinical Operations, Central/North Vancouver Island for Island Health in response to Mayor's Siebring's letter regarding the Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre.	

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everywhere, every time.



Ref # 20744

September 10, 2020

Mr. Al Siebring,
Mayor, North Cowichan
7030 Trans-Canada Highway
Duncan, BC
V9L 6A1

Via email: mayor@northcowichan.ca

Re: Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre

Dear Mr. Siebring,

Thank you for your recent letter to Leah Hollins, Board Chair of Island Health. Your letter was forwarded to me for response as Vice President, Clinical Operations for Centre and North Island.

I would like to begin by confirming the comments made by Island Health's Medical Health Officer for Central Vancouver Island, Dr. Shannon Waters, and Island Health's Mental Health and Substance Use staff on the call you attended August 14, 2020. Their statements confirm the safety and security of individuals – particularly children and youth – is Island Health's top most concern and priority. This includes both children and youth who attend area schools, as well as young people who require the mental health and substance use services Island Health provides.

Thank you for recognizing the need for a holistic approach to mental health and substance use services, offered in a single location providing wrap-around supports including primary care, case management, treatment and harm reduction. The services that will be offered from the Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre, along with significant new investments in mental health and substance use services in the Cowichan Valley, will improve access to programming for local residents living with substance use challenges. While the overdose prevention component of this service model is generating the most concern, only 25% of the Centre will house overdose prevention services, with the remainder of the site designated for client engagement and clinical services, including treatment. [An overview of the Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre is available on Island Health's website.](#)

Island Health

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I appreciate your understanding of the challenges Island Health has faced securing a location for these services. This process was ongoing for over a year, involved extensive discussions with Island Health's Capital Planning team, a local real estate agent, owners of publicly-owned properties at both the provincial and local level, and a public Request for Proposal seeking space. This extensive search resulted in only one site option emerging – 5878 York Avenue. Given the dual public health emergencies of the opioid crisis and COVID-19, and this location being very accessible to clients, Island Health entered into a lease agreement.

Extensive consultation involving multiple potential site options would have been optimal; however, in this case, there was only one site available. Additionally, under [Ministerial Order M488](#) health authorities, including Island Health, are to provide overdose prevention services during the opioid public health crisis as part of the health care services we deliver across the spectrum.

The Request for Proposal for a service provider concluded in mid-May, and contract discussions have been underway since then. These discussions were pushed out by COVID and renovation-related delays that will now see the Cowichan Valley Wellness and Recovery Centre opening delayed until June 2021.

I am pleased to advise that Lookout Housing and Health Society has been selected to operate the overdose prevention service as well as the new Tablet Injectable Opioid Agonist Therapy (TIOT) treatment program at the new Centre. Lookout has extensive experience operating similar services in the Lower Mainland. They are one of the service providers in The Harbour supervised consumption service in Victoria, and have been selected by BC Housing to be the operator of the new supportive housing site that will open on Drinkwater Road in North Cowichan in 2021. Lookout will assume operations of the overdose prevention service on January 1, 2021 and also operate TIOT beginning in January.

Your letter requests Island Health pause the project pending more fulsome community engagement. Island Health's Executive and Board Chair are aware of this request. Public consultation on a location is no longer a viable option, however, given renovations are expected to take approximately six months, we are supportive of engagement on the service model taking place during this time. To ensure clients are not impacted by a delay, renovations will begin this fall.

Lookout has a deep and ongoing commitment to community engagement on the service model. This work will get underway in September/early October and will continue up to, and after the site opening. Additionally, a Community Advisory Committee will be established for the Wellness and Recovery Centre and key stakeholders are being invited to designate a representative for this Committee.

Island Health recognizes the impacts the societal challenges of poverty, mental health, substance use and homelessness are having on individuals and communities across Canada, British Columbia and in the

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Cowichan Valley, including the long-standing challenges related to congregation, illegal activity and certain behaviours in the York/Beverly area. We remain committed to working with the new service provider, local governments and neighbours to ensure a service model that both mitigates community impact while ensuring safe, accessible and critical health care services.

Thank you for taking the time to write. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer for Central Island at Shannon.Waters@viha.ca.

Sincerely,



James Hanson
Vice President, Clinical Operations, Central/North Vancouver Island
Island Health

cc: Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health
Honourable Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Leah Hollins, Board Chair, Island Health
North Cowichan Council
Cowichan Leadership Group
Ted Swabey, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer
Kathy MacNeil, President & CEO, Island Health
Cathy Schmidt, Board Chair, CMHA Cowichan Valley
Florie Varga, Chair, Citizens Action Group; "A Voice For Our Children"

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