



January 13, 2023

Mayor and Council  
Municipality of North Cowichan  
2730 Trans-Canada Highway  
Duncan BC, V9L 61A

Mayor and Council  
City of Duncan  
200 Craig Street  
Duncan BC, V9L 1W3

**RE: Proposed Semi-Permanent Daytime Warming and Cooling Shelter at  
2687 James Street, Duncan, BC.**

'Uy' skweyul sii'em nu siiye'yu (good day my respected friends),

I am writing today on behalf of the Board of Education for the Cowichan Valley School District to express our deep concern with the proposed disposal, and rental of, the jointly owned property at the west end of 2687 James Street, for the purpose of a semi-permanent daytime warming and cooling shelter.

The Board of Education is the local governing body for all public schools, and a valued and contributing partner in several community groups who are advocating for, and making real change, in the lives of those who are experiencing homelessness, drug addiction, and/or mental health issues. As a collective we work hard to create a system of supports for those who experience those issues. However, our priority is, and will always be, the safety of students, staff, and families in our school communities.

Our Board was dismayed by the complete lack of communication or consultation regarding this latest proposal. Allowing a valued partner, and significant landowner, in both the Municipality of North Cowichan and City of Duncan, to be blindsided by this proposal, and to find out from probing questions from the local media is completely unacceptable.

As the property owner of the soon-to-be constructed new Cowichan Secondary School and operator of the current Cowichan Secondary School, we have grave concerns for the safety of our students, staff, and families if this proposal moves forward. This proposed semi-permanent shelter will be operating 100m from the entrance of our new school and less than 200m from our current Cowichan Secondary. Additionally, this location is just over 100m away from our incoming Childcare Centre. This proposed warming and cooling shelter will have direct, negative, and lasting effects on the safety of our students, staff and families.

We know this through the direct lived experience of our students. On a daily basis students, staff and families from Quamichan School, Alexander Elementary, and Wendy's House Children's Play and Discovery Centre, must navigate the myriad of social issues that have ended up on their doorstep and in their neighbourhood along the York Road and Beverly Street corridors. From very visible drug use and the paraphernalia that goes with it, to mental health issues unfolding on the street, to the general lack of a sense of safety and well-being, members of our school communities are forced to traverse this area on daily basis. The Board does what it can to mitigate these issues with things like extra funding for fencing at the School Board Office compound and extra off-site noon-hour supervisors for Quamichan students, and mobile security for these central schools which include Cowichan Secondary, however these are band-aids to a real solution.

We have also been active participants in trying to provide for those who are experiencing homelessness, drug addiction, and/or mental health issues. An important example of this was through the rental of our concession stand on the site of the new Cowichan Secondary School to the Cowichan Women Against Violence (CWAV) for a women's only shelter. While we are happy to have been a part of providing a safe, clean, and affordable shelter, there were direct, negative consequences of this act on our learning community and capital budget. With the arrival of CWAV and their clients, came a group of associates who caused damage, indirectly intimidated families coming to Wendy's House, and created general havoc. Regardless of staff supervision or security, these sites attract those that either enable or prey on the more vulnerable users. While not always directly at the shelters, these associates are in an area of influence around it. Within a block, or blocks, of these locations we can clearly see increased undesirable behaviours. This latest proposal puts that area of influence at the front doors of our current school, at the properties of our new school and childcare centre, and at the doorstep of other community partners like Vancouver Island University and the Clements Centre.

The rush to have this proposal approved, the absolute lack of communication and consultation, and the unaddressed safety concerns created by the proposed location are all of great concern to the Board. We ask that the location of this semi-permanent daytime warming and cooling centre not be approved for this location, and that any other proposed locations for the shelter which may have direct, negative, or lasting effects on the safety of our students, staff, and families include a robust and open conversation with the Board.

Huy tseep 'u sii'em

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Cathy Schmidt', with a stylized, flowing script.

Cathy Schmidt,  
Board Chair  
Cowichan Valley School District

cc: Trustees  
Robyn Gray, Superintendent  
Jason Sandquist, Secretary Treasurer