

October 25, 2023

Mayor Rob Douglas
Municipality of North Cowichan
Box 278
7030 Trans- Canada Highway
Duncan, BC V9L 3X4

Re: Request For Support - NRHD Key Healthcare Priority Projects

Dear Mayor Douglas and Council:

On behalf of the Nanaimo Regional Hospital District (NRHD), I write to share information about our advocacy work to advance a suite of priority projects in the region which will serve residents across the Central and North Island. These interrelated projects include a new patient tower, cancer centre, cardiac catheterization lab and high acuity unit to be located at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) and a new long-term care home in the region. It is our hope that the Municipality of North Cowichan Council will consider approving a motion to write a letter to Minister Dix expressing support for this critical health infrastructure.

These projects were identified by the Province and Island Health in consultation with health care experts and are included in Island Health's major capital plan. Over the last two years, the NRHD has confirmed its commitment to these projects and has developed an advocacy focus and a financial strategy to see them realized.

Over time, there has been progress. In March 2023 the B.C. government approved the new high acuity unit (HAU) to be developed as part of the new intensive care unit at the NRGH, construction is under way. In May 2023 the Province also approved the concept plan for a new cancer centre to be located at the NRGH. Upgrades to the existing community oncology clinic at the NRGH have also been approved which will increase the number of treatment spaces and replace the current cancer outpatient pharmacy. Business planning for the cancer centre is underway. In October 2023 the Province announced its approval of a long-term care facility to be built in Lantzville, with construction to begin in 2025. The NRHD is grateful to the government for approving the HAU, the concept plan for the cancer centre and the long-term care facility to move ahead. However, there is still an urgent need for the other priority projects.

While we recognize that the Cowichan Valley Regional Hospital District has its own priorities, we note that the NRGH is the designated tertiary hospital north of the Malahat, providing specialized services to patients not just within the NRHD region but also from across the Central and North Island. The Central and North Island have one of the fastest growing and oldest populations in Canada. In the past five years, the RDN's population has increased by twice the national rate and is growing faster than the population in the South Island. Beyond the RDN, the population and complexity of medical needs across the entire

Central and North Island are also growing. The shortage of health facilities is at a critical point, leading to a lower standard of care and poorer outcomes for patients in the Central and North Island, as well as high costs to the health system. For many patients this creates additional financial and transportation burdens associated with travelling to Victoria or Vancouver for treatment. Delaying these projects will only exacerbate the growing gaps in care, putting patients at increased risk and contributing to worsening health outcomes and greater inefficiencies.

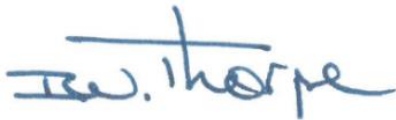
The NRHD is not asking for financial contributions from other municipalities or hospital districts for these projects. We have developed a long-term financial strategy and taken steps to support our financial contribution through a regional tax increase and we are prepared to borrow the difference. The NRHD priority projects will complement your own region's health infrastructure by providing new and enhanced health services, helping to ensure your residents get the care they need closer to their home community.

The NRHD has taken on a strong advocacy role and is committed to investing the resources and energy necessary to work with Island Health and the Province, First Nations, municipal and regional governments, regional hospital districts and other supporters to see these projects through to completion. It is our view that they align with the Province's priorities and will support the government in delivering on its commitments to improving health care for all British Columbians.

I enclose a draft motion and letter of support for the Council's consideration, as well as a fact sheet with more detailed information.

Thank you for your consideration. I am certainly available to provide clarification should you wish further details.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Thorpe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ian" and last name "Thorpe" clearly distinguishable.

Ian Thorpe, Chair
Nanaimo Regional Hospital District
T: 250-713-9135 | Email: ian.thorpe@nanaimo.ca

Attachment 1: Municipalities Draft Motion
Attachment 2: Municipalities Draft Letter of Support
Attachment 3: Municipalities Fact Sheet