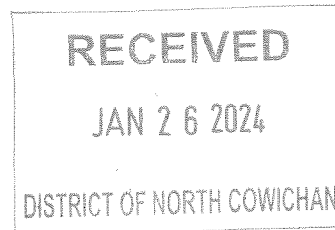


# COWICHAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

January 23, 2024

To: Municipality of North Cowichan  
Council Members  
7030 Trans-Canada Hwy  
Duncan, BC, V9L 6A1



Dear Council Members,

**RE: URGENT APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE IN ADDRESSING SAFETY CONCERNS ARISING FROM THE HOMELESS AND SUBSTANCE USE SITUATIONS IN THE COWICHAN VALLEY.**

I am writing on behalf of the Cowichan District Hospital Foundation, a longstanding charitable organization supporting this community for the past 40 years. We, as many, are committed to the well-being of our Cowichan Valley residents. We wish to bring to your attention a pressing matter that requires immediate consideration and coordinated action.

Our office, located on the corner of James and Garden Street, has become increasingly impacted by the escalating homeless and substance use situations in the Cowichan Valley. While we understand the broader challenges associated with homelessness and substance use, we find it necessary to highlight the specific safety concerns our organization faces on a daily basis.

The safety of our staff has become a paramount concern due to the rising number of incidents of unauthorized access, aggressive behavior, open substance use, vandalism of personal property, and general instability in the vicinity. To mitigate some of these risks, we are compelled to keep our doors locked at all times, thereby hindering our ability to provide seamless services to our community.

One of the most alarming issues we have encountered is the frequent occurrences of fires being started outside our building. These fires seem to be happening with more frequency, along with the "Tent Cities" being erected on our property, leaving behind garbage, drug paraphernalia, human excrement, and damaging property. This not only poses a direct threat to our property and a potential loss of donor funds, but also requires us to involve law enforcement and emergency services to address these hazardous situations.

The presence of drug paraphernalia left on the ground around our premises is frequent. As well, air pollution caused by exhaled mainstream drug smoke by our doors and on the street creates an additional health and safety risk for the whole community, including our staff, our

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constituents, children walking to and from schools and daycare, visitors of the food bank, and persons with disabilities visiting Clements Centre nearby.

Instances of overdoses and encounters further compound the challenges we face in maintaining a safe and secure environment for the staff and the community at large.

Recognizing the complexities of addressing homelessness and substance use, we implore the Municipality of North Cowichan to take urgent action.

We respectfully request the following:

- Increased police presence and patrols in the vicinity to deter criminal activities and address safety concerns promptly.
- Collaboration with local social service organizations to enhance outreach programs and supports for individuals experiencing homelessness and/or addiction.
- Reviewing and revising bylaws to restrict open substance use within a specific distance of businesses, schools, parks, healthcare centres, and community centres.
- Consideration of additional resources or measures specific to our area to address the unique challenges faced by the Cowichan District Hospital Foundation and surrounding community members.

We believe that through collaborative efforts between local authorities, social service organizations, and the broader community, we can create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone in the Cowichan Valley.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working together to find an effective solution as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



David Robertson  
Board Chair  
Cowichan District Hospital Foundation  
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