

**DATE:** December 3, 2020**FILE:** 1700-02/2020/451**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer***R. Dyson*****RE: Reallocation Request – Function 451 Connect Warming Centre**

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board with a request from the Coalition to End Homelessness regarding the reallocation of approved funding to create a permanent drop-in centre to the Connect Warming Centre.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT the remaining \$50,000 allocated for the establishment of a permanent drop-in centre project in 2019 be reallocated to the Connect Warming Centre to cover operating costs;

AND FINALLY THAT the re-allocation be reflected as an addendum to the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness Five Year Action Plan (2020 – 2024).

**Executive Summary**

- The 2020-2024 Financial Plan originally included an allocation of \$60,000 (as carry forward from 2019) to be put towards the creation of a permanent drop-in centre for unhoused and precariously housed residents. The centre is intended to provide support and access to resources.
- The Connect Warming Centre, established in 2020, within a City of Courtenay provided facility, is operated by the Comox Valley Transition Society (CVTS), in partnership with the Coalition to End Homelessness. The Centre is a refuge for vulnerable residents in cold weather months as well as an important resource for residents to connect with outreach workers and obtain peer support.
- The CVTS has secured an agreement with the City of Courtenay to continue use of the space until October, 2021. Earlier in 2020, the CVRD Board approved re-allocation of \$10,000 to reimburse the CVTS for capital upgrades and finishes to the space (e.g. furniture, alarm system, water dispenser, etc.).
- Through the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers and staff have seen continued use of the Centre and have been able to provide support and COVID-related education and resources to citizens accessing the Warming Centre's services. Because of necessary public health restrictions on other public spaces in the community, the Warming Centre is the only indoor space where vulnerable residents can take shelter during the day.
- In order for the Connect Warming Centre to continue its operations into 2021, additional funding for staffing is required.
- Since service establishment, the CVRD Board has primarily focussed funding through the Homelessness and Supports service to bricks and mortar initiatives. Re-allocating funding for operating costs departs from this practice.

- A review of the service is currently underway. Among the questions for consideration is the role of this service in provision of operating costs. Staff will be reporting on the recommendations of the service review through the financial planning process. These recommendations may assist the board in its contemplation of the evolution of this service relative to the housing and supports services needs in our community.
- At this time, staff recommends re-allocation of the remaining \$50,000 intended for the permanent drop-in centre to the Warming Centre to support its continued operations.

Prepared by:

***A. Mullaly***

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Alana Mullaly, RPP, MCIP  
Senior Manager Sustainability and RGS

Concurrence:

***S. Smith***

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Scott Smith, RPP, MCIP  
General Manager of Planning and  
Development Services

**Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness	✓
City of Courtenay	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓

Attachments: Appendix A – “Coalition’s Request Letter”



Alana Mullaly  
Senior Manager of Sustainability and RGS Planning  
Comox Valley Regional District  
770 Harmston Ave  
Courtenay, BC V9N 0G8

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Dear Ms. Mullaly,

The Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness in partnership with the Comox Valley Transition Society have been operating the Connect Warming Centre since January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the closure and reduction of many services in the downtown Courtenay core, Connect has continued to protect community members experiencing homelessness. Hours of operation have increased and with strict health protocols and physical distancing measures in place Connect offers COVID-19 symptom screening and education, a washroom, cell phone charging, access to wi-fi, coffee and hygiene supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer and masks, as well as warm clothing and outdoor gear. Staff remain available to help fill out income assistance forms, pandemic crisis funds, administer Vulnerability Assessments for supportive housing, and offer referrals to other agencies & access to living supports such as bus tickets, laundry tokens, grocery gift cards etc. Through our partnership with the Comox Valley Division of Family Practice, we now have a physician attending Connect regularly to assist people on-site. Despite the pandemic, 20-30 individuals continue to access our services daily. Our current community partners include, AVI, Wachiay Friendship Centre, Dawn to Dawn Action on Homelessness, Ministry of Poverty and Social Development, Nursing Centre, Island Health Mental Health & Substance Use, Indigenous Women's Sharing Society, Division of Family Practice, and continues to grow.

It has recently come to our attention that additional operating funds are needed to keep the doors open at Connect during the upcoming winter season. The Coalition Leadership Team is and has been pursuing options for continued and sustainable funding since the one-year license to occupy extension of the Connect building was extended until October 2021 by the City of Courtenay. Despite our efforts, there is some immediate bridge funding for next 5-6 months required for staffing at Connect.

Through the CVRD Homelessness Supports Service Fund there is currently \$50,000 earmarked for Connect - originally intended for the purposes of capital improvements and renovations for a permanent building. The Coalition is writing to ask the CVRD Board of Directors if we may re-allocate these funds from capital improvements towards Connect's operational budget.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss the details of our reallocation request further. As always, we thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration – especially during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Cupelli".

Andrea Cupelli  
Coordinator, Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness