REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Paul Thorkelsson   **DATE:** May 31, 2012
               General Manager, Development Services

FROM: Paul Thompson   **FILE:** 1835 03 VIHA
               Manager of Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **VIHA Grant for Capacity Building - Ending Homelessness**

PURPOSE

To provide options and a recommendation for allocating the funds provided to the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) by Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) to build capacity to end homelessness.

BACKGROUND

In 2010 the RDN received a grant of $100,000 from the VIHA with the stipulation that it go "to support capacity building to end homelessness". As the RDN had no homelessness initiatives underway the decision was made to distribute the grant money to the two municipal members that did have active homelessness programs Nanaimo and Parksville. The funding was provided to the two municipalities with the understanding that it would be used to address homelessness throughout District 68 for Nanaimo and District 69 for Parksville.

Even though VIHA had stated that the 2010 funding for ending homelessness was a "one-time grant" they provided a second grant of $130,000 in 2011 and a third grant of $340,000 in 2012. This requires the RDN to determine how $470,000 will be used or distributed.

Regional Homelessness Initiatives

As reported last year, the RDN is not involved in any projects related to homelessness nor is a project related to building capacity to end homelessness a part of any RDN department work plans. The RDN Affordable Housing Study, which included a housing needs assessment, reported that the vast majority of homeless were concentrated in Nanaimo with few homeless in other parts of the region. The study concluded that the main issues to be addressed in the electoral areas were lack of affordable housing across the spectrum of income levels, lack of a range of housing types to meet different individual and family needs, lack of suitable rental housing, and people living in substandard housing. There is additional work to be done on affordable housing in the RDN. The 2012 Work Plan includes opportunity for the Board to consider locations for secondary suites in the electoral areas. Based on the direction provided in the Housing Action Plan, homelessness is not a focus of RDN affordable housing initiatives in the near term.

Municipal Homelessness Initiatives

The City of Nanaimo is very active in addressing homelessness and is involved in a variety of initiatives. The City has chosen to focus on the provision of housing for the homeless and is less involved in

providing programs and services leaving that to non-profit organizations, provincial and federal agencies. The City has adopted the "Housing First" approach as outlined in their Five Year Action Plan. This approach focuses on getting homeless people off the street into safe secure housing. Once a person has a place to live they can then start to get help and get their lives back on track. Through a partnership with BC Housing and the Canadian Mental Health Association, the City has committed to building 160 new units of supportive housing for Nanaimo's homeless population.

Nanaimo is also one of 61 communities across Canada that receives funding from the Federal Government through the Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI). This community-based federal program is aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across the country. To help plan, implement and determine priorities for the Federal HPI funding, the Nanaimo Working Group on Homelessness (NWGH) was established. The NWGH is a broadly based community committee representing key sectors involved in addressing homelessness in Nanaimo, including members of the public. Since 2000, the NWGH's primary role has been to identify community priorities and make recommendations for federal homelessness through public calls for proposals. The NWGH has developed a Nanaimo Homelessness Partnering Strategy Action Plan which is used to provide guidance on the allocation of funds from the HPI.

With the funding received from the RDN last year the City of Nanaimo provided food and clothing for people who are homeless. The City also used a portion of the funding to provide temporary shelter for homeless persons during cold wet weather.

The City of Parksville has established the Oceanside Homelessness Task Force. The purpose of the Task Force is to address homelessness and issues related to homelessness in the School District 69 area. The Task Force will be taking a two pronged approach to addressing the issue. The first is to establish and maintain a strong network of those who are currently working with the homeless or who have the potential to do so. The second is to encourage coordination and sharing of resources amongst organizations participating in this initiative to meet the objectives of the Parksville Homelessness Action Plan. The Task Force does have representation from the Town of Qualicum Beach and the RDN. Responsibilities for administering the Oceanside Homelessness Task Force are now shared with the Society of Organized Services (SOS), a not-for-profit organization helping people by offering services and resources not otherwise adequately provided within District 69.

With the funding received from the RDN last year the Task Force was able to use the funds to address homelessness. A portion of the funding was used to keep the extreme weather shelter open on additional nights. A portion was used to conduct the homeless census and some of the money was used for Task Force expenses. A small amount was also used to provide clothing and shelter to homeless persons.

DISCUSSION

As outlined above, the municipalities of the RDN are actively involved in addressing the issue of homelessness and have adopted action plans aimed towards ending homelessness. In terms of allocating the funds received from VIHA in the Nanaimo area, the Nanaimo Working Group on Homelessness is currently tasked with allocating funding from the Federal Government's HPI program. Many of the community organizations already involved in providing services to the homeless benefit from NWGH support and would similarly benefit from additional funding. Similarly, The Oceanside Homelessness Task Force is also directly involved in addressing homelessness throughout the entire District 69 area. The Task Force established by Parksville and now administered by SOS has identified several projects related to ending homelessness that would benefit from the additional funding from

VIHA. Given that there are two organized groups working on homelessness initiatives in the Region; that both groups have established action plans that include a range of projects aimed at addressing homelessness in their respective areas; and that both initiatives would benefit from additional funding one approach would be to divide up the funding provided by VIHA based on population in the Region's school districts.

Another approach to the allocation of the VIHA funding would be to establish the monies as an ongoing reserve fund from which specific projects could obtain funding support at the discretion of the RDN Board. A third approach would be a combination of approach one and two; distribute a portion of the funding to the two groups actively working on homelessness initiatives and keep some funds in reserve to be applied to specific projects in the future.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Allocate all of the VIHA funds on the basis of population in District 68 and District 69, to support specific homelessness projects underway that meet the VIHA criteria.

2. Establish a reserve fund and provide funding for homelessness initiatives at the discretion of the RDN Board

3. Allocate a portion of funds on the basis of population for each of Districts 68 and 69, to support specific homelessness projects and retain the remaining portion in a reserve fund to be used for homelessness initiatives in the future.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Alternative 1

VIHA has provided the Regional District with $470,000 to "support capacity building for homelessness". This amount represents the following distribution when apportioned by population and jurisdiction:

Jurisdiction	Population	Funding Allocation
District 68		
Nanaimo	83,810	$270,494
Lantzville	3,601	11,622
Electoral Area 'A'	6,908	22,295
Electoral Area 'B'	4,045	13,055
Electoral Area 'C'	2,834	9,147
Total District 68	**101,698**	**$326,613**
District 69		
Qualicum Beach	8,687	$28,037
Parksville	11,977	38,655
Electoral Area 'E'	5,674	18,313
Electoral Area 'F'	7,422	23,954
Electoral Area 'G'	7,158	23,102
Electoral Area 'H'	3,509	11,325
Total District 69	**44,427**	**$143,387**

Total RDN	146,574[1]	$470,000

Only the City of Parksville and the City of Nanaimo have active homelessness initiatives in place to address homeless issues. In District 69 the SOS is working on an initiative specifically for the northern communities and has established a Task Force which includes representation from the City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and the RDN. Initiatives for 2012 have included community forums on homelessness in Parksville and Qualicum Beach and plans to bump up the extreme weather shelter to a cold weather shelter next winter. The City and SOS is again hopeful of obtaining some funding from the VIHA grants to offset the costs of this program.

The City of Nanaimo also has an active program working on activities to address homelessness within the southern region. Additional funding would be beneficial to the City to assist in their Nanaimo Homelessness Partnering Strategy Action Plan. Should they receive funding from the RDN, proposed initiatives for 2012 include funding for efforts to address homelessness on Gabriola Island, contributions to programs that provide meals for the homeless and the operation of extreme weather shelters.

If the Board supports Alternative one, approximately $326,600 of the VIHA grants would be allocated to the City of Nanaimo's Working Group on Homelessness with the expectation that this program will have both a local and regional benefit on addressing homeless issues in our southern communities. The remaining $143,400 would be allocated to the Oceanside Homelessness Task Force with the same expectation that this program benefits the broader homeless community of District 69. There would be no direct financial implications to the RDN or a requirement of additional staff resources to support these initiatives.

Alternative 2

For this alternative a reserve fund would be established and then as projects are identified each project would be considered on an individual basis. As well, should a municipality or electoral area identify a homelessness initiative at a later date then resources would be available through the reserve fund. In this alternative a work plan would not be required to try and identify where all the funding would be spent but rather when projects are identified or when there is a request for funding that meets the VIHA criteria the Board would have the option of providing moneys from the reserve fund.

Alternative 3

The final alternative provides the Board with a choice of providing significant funding to the municipalities of Parksville and Nanaimo to assist in their programs while establishing a reserve fund to be used in the future for other projects that meet VIHA criteria. For example, the Board could initially distribute a portion of the funds to the District 68 Communities and the District 69 Communities for their programs and retain the remaining funds to either distribute to new programs or to consider additional requests from all four municipalities or the electoral areas at a later date.

Staff is not aware of any projects other than those highlighted in this report that could specifically meet the VIHA criteria and would be eligible for funding within this timeframe. The District 69 program has been designed to work as a partnership between the City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach and RDN and appears to be a good fit for the funding. The City of Nanaimo program covering the District 68 area is part of the Federal Government program on Homelessness and is also aligned with the objectives of the VIHA funding of capacity building.

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[1] Includes 949 residing on Lands Governed by First Nations

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

A safe, comfortable and affordable place to live for everyone is a vital part of a sustainable region. The State of Sustainability Report identified two particular social sustainability characteristics of particular relevance to homelessness - poverty is minimized and residents can meet their basic needs; and, housing is affordable with availability of different types and sizes of housing. Of concern is that the indicators for these two characteristics show the region is well below average compared to other areas and the trends are worsening. Additional efforts to end homelessness are needed to improve the region's social sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

The Vancouver Island Health Authority has provided $470,000 to the RDN to fund capacity building initiatives in the Region to end homelessness. The municipalities in District 68 and District 69 already have programs in place that are specifically aimed at addressing this important issue. Within these established initiatives there are a number of groups and actions that could benefit from the available grant funding.

This report outlines a number of options for dispersing the VIHA grant monies. Staff recommend Alternative 3 as the best approach to fair, equitable and impactful allocation of the available funding for the following reasons: the involvement of Nanaimo and Parksville in current actions underway in District 68 and 69; the potential for those actions to benefit from additional funding; that VIHA funding provided last year was spent on initiatives to address homelessness; and, that the RDN does not currently have any homelessness initiatives of its own. In this way the two jurisdictions with active homelessness programs will benefit immediately but should a very worthwhile project be identified in the future or should the two jurisdictions need additional funds in future years the Board will have the option of contributing as money will be available in the reserve fund.

As the two municipalities with active homelessness programs have identified projects for 2012-2013 that would benefit from the VIHA grant, staff recommend that 60% of the available $470,000 be distributed to the City of Nanaimo on behalf of District 68 and to SOS on behalf of District 69 and the Oceanside Homelessness Task Force based on population of the school districts with the remainder to be placed in a reserve fund for use at a later date. The amounts to be distributed at this time would equal approximately $196,000 to Nanaimo for use in District 68 and $86,000 to Parksville and SOS for use in District 69.

RECOMMENDATION

That the RDN Board allocate 60% of the VIHA funds to the City of Nanaimo and SOS on behalf of the Oceanside Homelessness Task Force, distributed on the basis of population in District 68 and District 69, to support their specific homelessness projects underway that meet the VIHA criteria of supporting capacity building for homelessness and retain the remainder in a reserve fund for distribution at a later date.

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Report Writer   CAO Concurrence

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General Manager Concurrence