

May 14, 2021

To: Mayor and Council, City of Victoria

Re: Critical Need for Housing Outreach Support Worker

Dear Mayor Helps and Councillors:

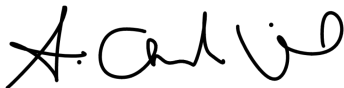
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group has encountered a dramatic rise in the number of single people and couples at risk of or in the process of losing their housing. While trying to meet these increased demands (and with limited capacity) our organization has been overwhelmed and feel as though we are not meeting the needs of our clients.

We are writing in support of the proposed Housing Outreach Worker, employed through Quadra Village Community Centre. This position would be connected to the other Community Centres/Neighbourhood Associations and will build our collective capacity to support our communities in addressing this urgent challenge.

As you know, the current housing market, especially for affordable rentals, is a challenge. And it is particularly difficult for individuals if they are contending with barriers such as low literacy, limited support, social isolation, and anxiety and depression. Based on this experience there is an undeniable need to enhance resources and create a system for one-on-one support for clients. A specific position/person is needed who can be dedicated to attempting to find short- and long-term housing options, before folks end up living outside, in their vehicles, or couch surfing.

The proposed Housing Outreach Worker will provide an opportunity for tailored one-on-one support to folks who do not meet current emergency housing definitions but are at risk of losing access to shelter. These folks often slip through the cracks and struggle to find support. While engaging in this work in our own community we have developed a great deal of experience in assisting single adults and couples in these situations; however, a Housing Outreach Worker will help increase the skill sets of our staff as well as act as an important resource for other Community Centres/Neighbourhood Associations. Quadra Village Community Centre is well situated to provide this critical service at this critical moment and the annual cost of service at \$60,000 is a worthwhile investment.

Thanks for your consideration and please see the key components below.



Chantille Viaud (she/her)

Executive Director

Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group

Housing Outreach Worker Overview

The Issues:

- Single adults and couples losing their housing with limited time, opportunity (affordable housing stock), resources.
- Limited affordable market housing stock, long waits for affordable housing and narrow definition of eligibility for emergency housing.
- People on the precipice of homelessness who lack the knowhow to navigate such a competitive housing market.
- Busy staff in Community Centres who have great relationships with folks in the community, but are busy with other mandates central to their roles.

The Solution:

- A QVCC practicum student gathers resources to help this new Housing Outreach Worker can hit the ground running.
- A housing outreach (worker, 1FTE) support pilot facilitated by QVCC with referrals from the other Community Centres and Neighbourhood Associations. It is basically trying to assist adults (single and couples) who are at risk of homelessness, couch surfing, newly homeless etc.
- Building and bridging the skills and confidence to get the process of finding housing started (and keep it going).
- Helping people navigate the housing system including locating low rent options and seeking long term solutions through waitlists.
- Raising awareness among Community Centre and Neighbourhood Association staff/volunteers in order to ensure that folks have easy access to information to provide housing access support at the neighbourhood level.

