



Mayor Lisa Helps and Council
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC
V8W 1P6

RE: Application for Temporary Use Permit for 1450-52 Elford Street – Out of the Rain Youth Shelter

Dear Mayor Helps and Councillors,

Thank you for considering this application for a three-year Temporary Use Permit for Beacon Community Services' for the *Out of the Rain Youth Shelter* located at 1450-1452 Elford Street property. Your approval will allow Beacon Services to continue to meet important community needs and provide homeless youth with access to safe, seasonal shelter.

In addition to various year-round programs at this site, the seasonal youth shelter has operated at this location for more than 12 years and it only recently came to our attention that the youth shelter required a different zoning from what has applied. As the shelter operates from mid-October to mid-April every year, it is critically important that we obtain a timely approval in order to provide this important service.

Beacon appreciates the City of Victoria's support over the years as well as ongoing support from a broad cross-section of the community. Beacon's 260 staff and 500+ volunteers deliver a wide range of services and programs in the CRD, including:

- child, youth and family services (including child care, assistance for at-risk youth and families, and programs to encourage healthy development in children's early years);
- services and supports for seniors and family caregivers;
- a diverse array of volunteer services;
- thrift shops that raise funds for community programs and help people in need;
- counselling and mental health supports;
- employment services and training; and
- affordable housing, homelessness prevention and shelter services.

A core service is the cold season *Out of the Rain Youth Shelter*. Beacon has coordinated and delivered the service on behalf of a coalition of community organizations, faith groups, and other community members for many years. We provide caring, non-judgmental support and services to young people who are grappling with housing and other challenges, including providing counsel and connections to other community resources as needed.

During the coldest nights of the year, *Out of the Rain* provides donated meals and a safe, warm place to sleep for up to 30 homeless youth (aged 15 to 25), and an alternative to sleeping rough in the neighbourhood and exacerbating risks for vulnerable youth and the community. The shelter is open nightly from October 15 - April 15, usually 8:00pm-8:00am (with youth generally accessing the shelter from 8:30pm-7:30am).

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www.beaconcs.ca

Child, Youth & Family Services _ Seniors Services _ Counselling & Mental Health Services _ Volunteer Services _ Housing _ Employment Services

Charitable Registration No. 12995 1174 RR0001

Out of the Rain has operated since 1998 and Beacon has hosted the shelter at 1450 Elford Street since 2009. At that time, the Victoria Fire Department approved that facility for *Out of the Rain* overnight accommodations.

We recently became aware that the property is incorrectly zoned, as the shelter's youth clients do not live full-time. We understand that a complaint was registered with the City which has precipitated the investigations and prompted this request. We note that since 2009, there have been only a very few, isolated concerns; they were very quickly and successfully ameliorated, with neighbours sometimes even donating clothing, gift cards, or other supports for youth at the shelter.

We are very mindful of neighbours and strive to keep a very neat, orderly and quiet environment for both our neighbours and clients. We have established procedures that have served well to mitigate potential effects on the neighbourhood. Policies and procedures include:

- 3 trained staff members are onsite and awake to monitor the site/support youth during shelter hours;
- Shelter clients are not permitted to gather or wait in the front yard or on the street front;
- Staff regularly patrol outdoors during shelter hours;
- After the shelter closes in the morning, staff check Elford Street and surrounding areas to ensure the grounds and street are clean of any litter and that youth don't loiter.

Our request for a three-year Temporary Use Permit is needed to support the continuation of important programs and services at this property and enable *Out of the Rain* to come into compliance over time. A Temporary Use Permit would bring no change for the neighbourhood or site. This proposal includes no changes to the site infrastructure, landscaping, or actual use of buildings or property at the address but, rather, is to keep the operational 'status quo' for the time being.

It's especially important to note that many youth who turn to *Out of the Rain* have no other safe options. *Out of the Rain* is widely recognized as an important alternative to staying at adult shelters. Even for youth who are technically old enough to use such services (when there's room) adult shelters may present immediate risks to safety and well-being. They may also increase potential exposure to influences and activities that can significantly harm vulnerable youth (and the community) over the longer term.

Pre-COVID, as many as 150 youth were estimated to be homeless in Greater Victoria at any given time. Surveys also show that half of unhoused people first experienced homelessness as a youth.

Local residents continue to recognize the value of this service and acknowledgment of how it is managed. Attached with this letter are only a few expressions of support we have received from neighbours, including comments from the house that is closest to the 1450 Elford building/shelter space.

In closing, a Temporary Use Permit will support the continuation of these and other community benefits at Elford Street at a time when they are sorely needed.

Thank you very much for your understanding and your timely consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tricia Gueulette
CEO

Enclosures

1450-52 Elford Street

(1) Overview of 1450-52 Elford Street property from near corner of Elford/Pandora



(2) 1450 Elford Street, from front yard



(3) Close up of 1450, which hosts seasonal Out of the Rain Shelter for homeless youth



(4) Elford Street frontage

