



November 15, 2023

Mayor Marianne Alto
Council
City of Victoria

VIA E-MAIL

Re: AEHCR Funding Increase Request

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region (AEHCR) (legally known as the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness), we wish to sincerely thank the City of Victoria for inviting us to present on October 26th on the achievements of the organization and for supporting our collective work to end homelessness in the region.

We are writing to you today to request an increase in the funding provided by the City of Victoria to the Alliance. The AEHCR wishes to formally request an annual increase of \$50,000 (from \$100,000 to \$150,000). The AEHCR also requests an annual cost of living indexation. We have attached our audited financial statements and a breakdown of the funding we have received from the City for specific projects and for core funding.

We are also requesting that we present this funding request at the December 6th, 2023, Council meeting for your ongoing budget deliberations.

The City of Victoria has been and continues to be a crucial partner supporting the activities of the AEHCR and its member societies since 2008. This funding increase to the AEHCR will sustain the organization in its operational needs as well as ensuring that one of our flagship initiatives, Face 2 Face with Stigma program continues to be delivered in our community, including to the VicPD, By-Law and others.

During the COVID-19 crisis and in partnership with the City of Victoria, through the Strengthening Communities Program, the AEHCR developed and implemented a comprehensive, cross-jurisdictional (including the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Our Place Society, BC Housing, Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Association, By-Law and Victoria Police) suite of key activities to support the urgent and immediate needs of unsheltered homeless populations, their transition indoor, and to address related community impacts. These funds were dedicated to support the Peer Housing Support Team, the Face 2 Face with Stigma Team and the Inclusion Team. The project was completed in March of 2023.

During the months preceding the dissolution of these programs, the Alliance attempted to find the required funding to set up these programs as a stand-alone entity; however, we were only able to secure \$80,000 (Victoria Foundation) of the \$500,000 needed. The teams were dissolved, and we engaged in conversations with the Victoria Foundation to allow us to use the remaining \$55,000 to re-ignite the Face 2 Face with Stigma team

as it has become one of the flagship advocacy workshops for the organization. With refreshed planning and with the arrival of a new Director of Collaborative Engagement, we were able to revamp and reinvigorate the program in September 2023.

Face 2 Face with Stigma uses storytelling and lived experience to educate about the effects of stigma. Workshops use a common thread around factors that often relate to experiences of homelessness including trauma, addiction, incarceration, mental health and poverty. The program's focus is education for those working in various support roles with people experiencing homelessness and provides practical skills such as person-centered language in addition to increased empathy. Face 2 Face with Stigma has provided training to public sector staff including police, first responders and by-law, colleges and universities, non-profits and charities. We are thrilled that the team has been invited to present their work in a dedicated session at the November 2023 BC Non-Profit Housing Association Housing Central conference. We expect increased demand for these workshops following this presentation.

The program team is comprised of people with lived experience and utilizes shared decision making, a consensus-based model of operation, and participatory budgeting. This includes communication about the program, the development of new workshop formats, participant material, promotion and marketing. This approach ensures workshops are reflective of the voice of lived experience and promote more inclusive practice while building capacity and opportunity for team members.

In early 2024, the team will also review evaluative data collection and impact measurements. With an adequate budget, the current team has the capacity to deliver 3-5 customized workshops monthly and the potential to reach over 300 people a year. This program stands as a proven means of advocacy about key issues of homelessness and a call to action for reducing stigma faced by people with lived and living experience of homelessness and houselessness.

This program has been made possible through ongoing grant funding and occasional donations and adheres to living wage compensation for team members. A minimum required financial contribution is being implemented to defray the costs of the future delivery of workshops. These contributions will increase the programs long-term sustainability, reach and impact. However, the program will require sustained funding for operational purposes such as office space, printing, room rentals, etc. The increased City funding will help offset these ongoing costs.

The overall work of the AEHCR is made possible thanks to these ongoing investments into the community by our partners. The positive impact of initiatives we have launched together focused on ending and preventing homelessness cannot be understated. Homelessness is a global issue that requires leadership, dialogue and collaboration to bring about collective solutions to prevent and end homelessness in our communities. Our collaborative and convening work plays a critical role in transforming the homelessness-serving system in the region through facilitating strategic planning, developing sector-wide advocacy initiatives, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared best practices, building public awareness, advancing policy changes, working to mobilize and distribute funding, and more. The AEHCR staff complement has incrementally increased over the past number of years to support the work of the sector, while the work that is carried out has increased exponentially in nature and scope, especially at the regional level.

Efforts continue to focus on addressing the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness and on preventing homelessness experiences for those at-imminent-risk, with emphasis on preventing youth homelessness. Central to this work, the AEHCR continues to support the CRD with the development of two

crucial regional initiatives: a Coordinated Access system for housing, and a broader Homelessness Management Information System for coordinating housing and support for people experiencing, at risk of or with a recent experience of homelessness. Our support includes ensuring the voice of those experiencing and at risk of homelessness is included in the development and management of these systems. When complete, these two systems will ensure enhanced service efficacy, better resource efficiencies, and that those in need are being rapidly connected to the housing and services that best suit their needs.

In collaboration with the CRD and all community partners, the AEHCR authors and publishes the Community Plan, which is focused on improvements to the housing and homelessness response system and identifies housing supply needs specific to addressing chronic homelessness while projecting future need. The AEHCR also contributes to the development of plans that are indirectly connected to homelessness such as the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy as well as aligning our work with the BC government's Homelessness Strategy, Belonging in BC, and other relevant initiatives in the region, the Island and BC.

Homelessness is a complex issue with all orders of government supporting individual-level solutions while also exerting control over different and sometimes overlapping aspects of the response. This means that much of the work related to significant coordination and integration of systems happens at the community level and in alignment with the CRD's Regional Housing Affordability Strategy. With the recent announcements by Minister Eby and the BC government's investments to prevent and continue the work to end homelessness, the AEHCR is now, more than ever, in a position to build on the collaborative work in the Region and continue to provide backbone services to achieve these goals.

We thank you for your continued support of the AEHCR and the organizations dedicated to a vision of a region, a province and a nation where everyone has a safe place, they can call home. We look forward to your response and are available to answer any questions you may have.

With gratitude,



Sean Dhillon ICD.D
Community Co-Chair



Sylvia Ceacero, MBA, MA MCRM
Executive Director

Attachment A - Audited financial statements for 2022-2023 and breakdown of the supports received through the City.