

June 28, 2017

CLIFF #18918

Lisa Helps,
Mayor, City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square, Victoria, BC
Sent to: mayor@victoria.ca

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the City of Victoria to Island Health's Board Chair Don Hubbard regarding funding for Victoria Police Department officers assigned to the Assertive Community Treatment Teams (ACT). Mr. Hubbard has requested that I respond on his behalf.

Island Health is appreciative of the partnership with the City of Victoria as we continue to work together with other stakeholders to collectively support marginalized populations in our community. In addition, I am personally grateful for the leadership and support you individually demonstrate as we work together to address the challenges that often can arise when dealing with this population.

As you are aware, there has been a significant expansion in services and supports for people living with mental health and substance use in recent years. Island Health has made significant investments in initiatives that include outreach services and teams (including ACT), beds and spaces that provide services for mental health and substance use patients, supports associated with housing facilities, and a series of costly initiatives to respond to the current opioid crisis. These enhancements reflect Island Health's commitment to improving the health of our residents and the communities in which they live.

We note that this is the third letter Island Health has received since December 2015 requesting funding for police members who are assigned to ACT teams. Our position, and ability to fund, has not changed. As a publicly-funded agency, we recognize the challenges public organizations, including the City of Victoria and Township of Esquimalt, face in meeting demands for public services. As financial resources are limited, it is important that government agencies fund services according to their mandates. Island Health has been, and will continue to provide health service-focused resources to support early identification, outreach and prevention for vulnerable people, which is our mandate.

While we are not able to provide the requested funding, please be assured that police members on the Victoria ACT team are highly valued as part of the multi-disciplinary ACT service approach. We will, of course, continue to work closely with the City and Township and Police to identify priority areas for health care services as resources allow. We look forward to continuing our excellent relationship as we collectively address the very real and significant challenges this community faces with respect to homelessness, mental health and substance use.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Damstetter
Chief, Community Health and Care
Island Health