



January 16, 2017

Dear Mayor and Council,

**Re: VicPD request for 2 Additional Officers**

Victoria Cool Aid Society supports the request of VicPD to add two additional officers to support the ACT teams in our community.

As one of the largest organizations providing services to the most vulnerable individuals in Greater Victoria, particularly those who are homeless or living in poverty and dealing with multiple issues such as mental illness, brain injury, and addiction, we have observed first-hand the benefit of having police officers imbedded within the multi-disciplinary Assertive Community Treatment teams.

It is our understanding that the request for two additional officers is not to start a VicPD mental health team of police officers but rather, to add two additional officers to the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams. There are currently 4 ACT teams that service 320 people and there is only 1 police officer assigned. Adding two more officers will increase the effectiveness of the teams. The 4 ACT teams focus primarily on stabilization and management of clients who are experiencing the most severe mental illness oftentimes coupled with severe substance use disorders and the two officers will help with early identification, contact with health teams, assisting mental health workers when required for assessments and to conduct apprehensions under the Mental Health Act when required.

As an organization that sometimes has to call for police support within our housing and shelter programs, Cool Aid would welcome the ability of VicPD to respond differently to some crisis situations. While it is always important to call on the police when a client may harm themselves or others, the ability of VicPD to respond in a more low key, integrated fashion may help to deescalate a situation. At the same time, a less obtrusive response can also serve to lessen the impact of a crisis on neighbours and neighbourhoods.

It is our hope that an expanded police presence on the ACT teams will, over time, have a positive effect on the way police officers in general respond to those experiencing mental illness in our community; and conversely, that individuals experiencing mental illness will have more trust in the police.

Sincerely,

Kathy Stinson, CPA, CMA  
Chief Executive Officer

copy: Del Manak, Acting Chief, VicPD