



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY
BC SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY FOUNDATION
SUPPORTING THE BC SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY

Medical Advisory Board

Dr. Bill MacEwan, FRCPC
Dr. William G. Honer, MD, RCPC
Dr. Anthony Phillips, Ph.D., FRSC

Attention: Mayor & Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps and Victoria Council Members,
I am writing you in support of the request made by the Victoria City Police Department to add two additional officers to the ACT teams.

As you are likely aware, the specialized services of ACT teams focus primarily on stabilization and management of clients who are experiencing the most severe mental illness or substance use disorders. This same population, when untreated psychosis is present, has a high rate of minor offences. As police are first responders in these situations, it is essential to have police respond in a way that diffuses the situation, but that also connects these people to services they desperately require.

By ensuring the police and ACT teams work together, we ensure the taxpaying public that we are not over-using policing and court services or filling our jails with individuals who are victims of their illness, but rather allowing access to treatment so they can live fulfilling, meaningful lives.

Early intervention the most efficient way to establish a treatment plan for those with mental illness or substance use disorders. The prognosis is much better, particularly for those experiencing severe psychosis, as research has shown that grey matter actually dies when anti-psychotics are not used in treatment. With brain cell death, comes permanent cognitive impairment. With cognitive impairment come a host of required specialized services such as supported housing, vocational programming, cognitive remediation, once again placing the cost of care squarely on the shoulders of the family and taxpayers.

When police work closely with ACT teams we see incredible results. Individuals who need early intervention and support are getting it. Police are able to diffuse situations that may otherwise escalate. Apprehensions under the Mental Health Act are more efficient. Ultimately, repeat offenses from those who are most severely ill decline because the individual is getting the appropriate treatment as opposed to being repeatedly police/justice involved.

In other jurisdictions, such as Vancouver, each ACT team has their own police counterpart, working as a team. Teams are comprised of VPD officers, nurses, peer support workers, rehabilitation specialists, therapists, and clinicians who focus on providing treatment and services. Since inception of the ACT teams in Vancouver, there has been a 40% reduction in hospital emergency department visits, and a 45% reduction in days spent in a hospital for mental health issues. Of ACT clients who were involved in a study regarding police interaction, there was a 50% decrease in Mental Health Act apprehensions, a 51% reduction in violent offences, and a 71% reduction in street disorder.

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Clearly, police resources are being saved. People are being saved. Ill individuals and their family members are being supported in a way that allows for healthy family outcomes and healthy community outcomes.

We encourage you to act on the VicPD request without hesitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Halikowski'.

Dave Halikowski, President

cc Del Manak, Acting Chief Constable
Victoria Police Department