



Downtown Victoria Business Association
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January 24, 2017

Dear Mayor & Council,

Re: VicPD Request for Additional Officers

Downtown Victoria is very much affected and touched by the homeless issue and the difficulties they face such as mental health and addiction. Victoria is behind in dealing with these issues in a proactive way as the approach has always been reactive. Due to "tent city" a spotlight has been shone on these issues and more housing is coming on line which is a great first step. However, housing is only one piece of a much larger puzzle that needs to be addressed. VicPD is proactively addressing these next steps as the new ACT team officers would be a resource to not only those who need their services but the Downtown as a whole.

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. All of the above are great facts and show a proactive approach to policing and taking care of those who require the services.

Downtown businesses work very hard every day in order to take care of their stores which in turn is their livelihood. Mental health and addiction affects them directly on an ongoing basis and they have limited places to turn in order to help. Social workers and downtown service providers are unable to assist in difficult situations as police officers are the only ones who can apprehend anyone under the Mental Health Act and take them to hospital or elsewhere for treatment. Our Downtown businesses are active members of our community and request to have officers who are available to effectively help them in their times of need.

Internationally modern policing spends more time on proactive policing than the traditional reactionary approach which provides better care and service for everyone involved and this includes our businesses. We are asking council to be forward thinking and stop thinking reactively, and to start thinking proactively to help support our businesses downtown who are faced with these growing issues on a daily basis. The Downtown Victoria Business Association is very much in support of VicPD's request to add to more officers to the ACT team.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to reach out to me anytime.

Respectfully

Kerri Milton
Executive Director
Downtown Victoria Business Association