

MAYOR'S OFFICE

JAN 23 2017

VICTORIA, B.C.

619 – 50 Songhees Road  
Victoria, B.C. V9A 7J4

January 23, 2017

To: Mayor Lisa Helps  
and all members of Victoria City Council.  
City Hall, Victoria, B.C.

**Re: Request to add 2 police officers to the 4 ACT teams**

I have followed the discussion during the current month relating to the above request that is now before you for a decision. My interest results from my 2008-2009 involvement as the first co-chair, with the Mayor of Victoria, of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. It was during that period that the First Assertive Community Treatment team was formed, followed quickly by the additional three teams. I was also given the privilege of further involvement in 2015 as chair of the Governance Review of the Coalition. Over recent years I have also kept close to the issue raising funds for Victoria Cool Aid Society whose good works are well known to you.

That background has assisted me in observing and assessing the benefit that the four ACT teams have been to the City of Victoria and its residents. I support wholeheartedly the request of the Victoria Police Department and I encourage all Members of City Council to do likewise.

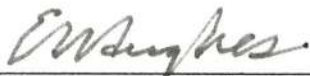
We have many among us who suffer with mental illness. The four ACT teams are presently serving 320 of these people. Some of them also have severe substance disorders and some of them are, at times, homeless.

Fortunately, many of the challenges these folks face are dealt with by the dedicated members of the ACT teams. That participation by team members is also to the benefit of those of us who want our community kept safe, secure and well.

On each ACT team there is a psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse with mental health experience, social worker, occupational therapist, substance abuse specialist, vocational specialist, peer support specialist and other clinical staff. One police officer divides his or her time between the 320 being served by the four teams. Experience has shown that to be a very inadequate police presence.

Based on my indicated involvement and also on answers to questions I have recently posed to the A/Chief Constable of VPD, I understand that a police officer is of tremendous help with early identification, assisting mental health workers with assessments and is often a re-assuring influence on those with whom they are called upon to assist. The experience has been that the presence of a police officer lowers the risk of undesirable behaviour during the assessment process resulting in a more accurate and beneficial review of needs. If the need arises, it is a police officer who has the authority to make an apprehension under the Mental Health Act.

Victoria is presently the safe, secure and well community of which I have spoken. That is due to the efforts of many, including those of you holding elected office but also including the dedicated commitment of the VPD. Its members have served us well in the past, they have made a reasonable and supportable request that is presently awaiting your approval and the future of all within our community will be enhanced by your favorable consideration and action on that request.



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Ted Hughes, O.C., Q.C., LL.D. (Hon.).