

Comox Valley RCMP Detachment
Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Unit – Community Letters of Support



March 19, 2026

Mayor Bob Wells and Council

City of Courtenay

Honourable Josie Osborne

Minister of Health

Province of British Columbia

Dear Mayor Wells, Members of Council and Minister Osborne,

On behalf of BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) in the Comox Valley, I am writing to express our strong support for the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) program, a partnership between North Island Hospital-Comox Valley, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Comox Valley (RCMP).

Paramedics regularly respond to individuals experiencing mental health and substance-related crises. These calls are often complex and require a compassionate, coordinated response that extends beyond traditional emergency medical care. The MICR program provides an important collaborative model that brings together clinical mental health expertise and policing support to help ensure individuals in crisis receive the right care at the right time.

From the perspective of frontline emergency responders, the benefits of MICR are significant. The program supports safe de-escalation, provides specialized mental health assessment, and helps connect individuals to appropriate community resources. In many cases, this prevents escalation, reduces unnecessary emergency department visits, and diverts individuals from entering the justice system when their needs are primarily health related.

The program also strengthens community safety by supporting first responders, families, businesses, and community organizations who may otherwise have limited options when faced with complex mental health or substance-related situations. Having access to trained crisis response professionals improves outcomes for individuals in distress while helping ensure safer interactions for everyone involved.

As communities across British Columbia experience increasing demand for mental health and substance use crisis response, programs like MICR are becoming increasingly essential. Without this specialized resource, emergency departments, paramedics, and police services



would likely face increased demand and fewer options for safely supporting vulnerable individuals in the community.

BCEHS strongly supports the continued operation and strengthening of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car program in the Comox Valley. Maintaining and expanding access to this service will remain critical as community needs continue to grow.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glen Greenhill".

Glen Greenhill MStJ, AdeC

Manager, Clinical Operations, Comox-Strathcona District
BC Ambulance Service – BCEHS, Island Districts
Provincial Health Services Authority

██████████ O: 250-898-8556, E: Glen.Greenhill@bcehs.ca

1890 Cliffe Avenue
Courtenay BC, V9N2K8

March 19, 2026

To Whom it May Concern,
Re: Mobile Integrated Crises Response Car Program

I have been with British Columbia's Forensic Psychiatric Services Commission (FPSC) as Forensic Nurse Liaison and Senior Lead at the Nanaimo Regional Forensic Psychiatric Clinic for the past twenty-eight years. The FPSC is a health organization providing specialized assessment, treatment and clinical case management services for high risk, high needs adults with mental illness and/or cognitive disorders who are in conflict with the law, supported by the expert advice and opinions from specialized, multi-disciplinary teams of health professionals. FPSC Clinics operated by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) are responsible for the supervision and monitoring of client's who are living in the community, including monitoring the client's progress regarding psychiatric treatment based on the biopsychosocial model and ensuring that the client is adhering to the conditions set out in their court order, as well as conducting Fitness and Not Criminally Responsible assessments that are ordered by BC Provincial Courts.

The Nanaimo Regional Forensic Psychiatric Clinic covers a catchment region from Ladysmith to Port Hardy – including Tofino, Ahousah, Gold River, Port Hardy / Port McNeil, Alert Bay, BC Mainland Coastal Islands and Surrounding Regions as well as Powell River and Northern Gulf Islands. We work as a small, specialized and close-knit interdisciplinary team which typically includes social work, nursing, psychology and psychiatry as well as concurrent disorder specialists. In is within this capacity I have had the pleasure of working with Nanaimo's Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) program since its inception and now the added pleasure of working with Cst. Greg Hall and Nurse Tara Wyton in their capacity as the new Comox Valley MICR team.

There is no room for doubt as to how valuable and how necessary a program like the Mobile Integrated Response Car team is to our communities. MICR plays a critical role in ensuring individuals experiencing mental health or substance-related crises receive the right care at the right time—often preventing escalation, reducing unnecessary emergency department visits, diverting mental health clients from the Court system, and supporting safer outcomes for everyone involved. As demand for crisis response continues to rise, and it indeed continues to rise, the need for this program is not only ongoing but increasing across our Island communities. Furthermore, the individuals subject to such a crises response are increasingly complex in their behavioural presentation and concurrent disordered diagnostic history.

Those of you familiar with the MICR program already know this, but it is worth reiterating what this program brings to a community – all of which I have witnessed firsthand on multiple occasions:

Key Aspects of the MICR Role:

- **Targeted Response:** These officers focus on proactive outreach, building trust with vulnerable people, and navigating complex mental health scenarios, often in plain clothes to reduce anxiety. It is hard to explain how invaluable this is for allowing a client to retain their dignity and gently coax them to engage with community support agencies.
- **Collaboration:** They connect individuals with mental health centers, addiction services, and counseling, facilitating hospital admissions when required. This has proven highly beneficial for our specialized service and our challenging forensic psychiatric client demographic.
- **Reduced Crisis Calls:** By addressing chronic cases and providing tailored care, these officers aim to improve client outcomes and reduce the strain on regular police patrol resources. Again, this has repeatedly proven to be highly beneficial for our specialized service and our challenging forensic psychiatric client demographic.
- **Community Connection:** They serve as a vital link between the RCMP, local health authorities (like Island Health), and community-based services. Our service works with REVOII type clients (Repeat Violent Offenders); Sex Offenders; and BC Review Board (Unfit or Not Criminally Responsible Due to a Mental Disorder) individuals throughout the province and the MICR program has consistently proven to be a valuable “interface” between community-based stakeholder agencies with regards to navigating client care.

I simply cannot emphasize enough how Nanaimo, and now the Comox Valley MICR program, provides significant value to our communities by bridging the gap between law enforcement, health services, and community resources to manage mental-health-related crises more effectively. It is an absolutely essential program for any community of significant size.

Please feel free to contact me as needed should you require any additional, or more specific, information in relation to my perspective on how invaluable the MICR program is – particularly in regards to my 30 years forensic psychiatric service experience with a high needs / high risk client demographic within the Vancouver Island catchment area.

I am generally available weekdays at our Nanaimo Clinic between 9 am to 4 pm and can best be reached at 250-739-5000 (front office number), or feel free to e-mail : shulme@phsa.ca

Sincerely,

Steve Hulme

Steve Hulme, BScN, RN (he / him)
Senior Lead, Forensic Community and Liaison Nurse
Forensic Psychiatric Services – Vancouver Island
PHSA - BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services
101-190 Wallace Street, Nanaimo V9R 5B1
250-739-5000 office / 250-739-5001 fax
shulme@phsa.ca www.bcmhsus.ca

Forensic Psychiatric Services strives for excellence in working with all unique populations including but not limited to all sexual orientations, genders, ethnicities, and diverse abilities.

PHSA provides specialized health care services to communities across British Columbia, on the territories of many distinct First Nations. We are grateful to all the First Nations who have cared for and nurtured the lands and waters around us for all time, including the Coast Salish Peoples, the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, on whose unceded and ancestral territory our Nanaimo Regional Clinic is located.

Captain Sarah Siano
309 Heritage Blvd,
PO Box 1000, Stn Main
Lazo, BC V0R 2K0
sarah.siano@forces.gc.ca
1-250-339-8267

6 April 2026

Mayor Bob Wells
City of Courtenay
830 Cliffe Avenue
Courtenay, BC V9N 2J7

RE: Support for North Island Hospital and Comox Valley RCMP Detachment Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) program

Dear Mayor Wells,

I am thankful to the joint North Island Hospital and Comox Valley RCMP Detachment Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) program team for their ongoing care and support towards the military members of 19 Wing Comox. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are at increased risk of mental health issues and although we work diligently to care for them at the 19 Wing Comox - 21 Health Services Clinic, there are some instances where more specialized mental health supports are needed. The MICR team has stepped up fill a notable gap in care with their excellent communication, dedication and expertise which has demonstrated a positive outcome for our patient population.

Tara and Greg from the MICR team have shown their commitment to this program with their professional communication to key stakeholders at 19 Wing Comox. They have met with both Military Police and Clinical Team Leads to ensure that we understand their jurisdiction and how they can be of support to the military patient population. They have taken the time to answer our questions and promote collaboration between the MICR team and the clinical team from 21 Health Services Center Comox to the support of our patient population. They have shown a real understanding of the specific challenges faced by serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces which has resulted in them gaining the trust of our clinical team.

The MICR team has positively impacted the actively serving members of 19 Wing Comox. Their continued support, dedication and expertise have proven not only important but vital to bridging the gaps between the military medical system and the provincial health care system with our most complex and vulnerable patients. An example of a situation that we require the MICR team support occurs when a CAF member is in a mental health crisis and cannot be stabilized with our available on-site resources. We rely on the MICR team attending 21 Health Services Center to support patient de-escalation, complete a needs assessment for in-patient treatment and transport of patients under the Mental Health Act to the local Hospital. We also rely on the MICR

team's expertise related to available community resources and experience with patients in crisis to inform the decisions of our clinical care team.

As the population of 19 Wing Comox is increasing over the next few years and the lived military experiences of CAF mbrs are increasing in intensity, I feel that an MICR program is not only needed but necessary to safely and effectively care for our most vulnerable mental health patients. I am proud to work alongside of Tara and Greg and feel that their involvement of the MICR team promotes safer outcomes not only for the patients in crisis, but their families, their clinical care teams as well as the community.

Sincerely,

Captain Sarah Siano RN
Primary Care Nurse
21 Health Services Center - Comox



OUR VISION:

Excellent health
and care for
everyone,
everywhere,
every time.

March 20, 2026

To: Mayor Bob Wells & Council, City of Courtenay
Minister of Health, Honorable Josie Osborne

Dear Mayor Wells, Council Members, and Minister Osborne,

On behalf of the Emergency Department, Intensive Care Unit, Telemetry, and Respiratory Therapy teams at Comox Valley Hospital, I am writing to express our strong support for the continued operation and further development of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) Team in the Comox Valley.

This collaborative model of pairing a dedicated RCMP officer with a Registered Psychiatric Nurse has become an essential component of our region's mental health crisis response. The MICR team consistently delivers timely, skilled, and compassionate care to individuals experiencing acute mental health crises in the community.

By integrating law enforcement with specialized psychiatric expertise, the team is uniquely equipped to safely de-escalate high-risk situations, reduce harm, and connect individuals to appropriate supports in real time. This approach not only enhances safety for patients and providers, but also helps prevent unnecessary criminalization, reduces trauma, and strengthens trust between community members, police, and healthcare services.

From a hospital perspective, we have observed a clear and meaningful impact. Emergency departments are frequently the default destination for individuals in crisis, even when the hospital environment may not be the most therapeutic or appropriate setting. The MICR team's ability to assess and manage situations in the community has significantly reduced the number of mental health-related presentations to the Emergency Department. This has helped alleviate pressure on acute care services, allowing our teams to focus resources on patients with urgent and complex medical needs.

The benefits of this program extend across the entire healthcare system and into the community. The MICR team represents a forward-thinking, compassionate model of care that improves outcomes for individuals in crisis, supports first responders, and enhances overall system capacity.

We strongly advocate for sustained and expanded funding to ensure the ongoing success and growth of this vital service.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering this important investment in the health and well-being of our community.

X *S Palmer*

Sarah Palmer

Manager, CVH Emergency, Intensive Care Unit, ...



DR. VERENA LANGHEIMER
MD, FRCPC, ISAM (Cert.)
PSYCHIATRIST

April 9, 2026

Honourable Josie Osborne
Minister of Health
PO Box 9050 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V9W 9E2

RE: Urgent Support for North Island Hospital and Comox Valley RCMP Detachment Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) Program

Dear Minister Osborne,

As a child and adolescent psychiatrist working at Comox Valley Hospital on the North Vancouver Island, I am writing to express my strongest support for the North Island Hospital and Comox Valley RCMP Detachment Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) program. The need for this program in our region is both urgent and profound. Our patient population in the North Island is among the most vulnerable in the province. Many of the children and youth I care for are neurodevelopmentally complex, living with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, and other significant mental health challenges. These young people are also disproportionately affected by complex trauma, poverty, and social marginalization. The resources available to them and their families are extremely limited compared to urban centres, and the North Island remains critically underserved in terms of specialized mental health services.

Having previously worked in Vancouver, I have seen firsthand the positive impact of programs like Car 87, which pairs mental health clinicians with police officers to respond to individuals in crisis. The MICR program is the North Island's essential equivalent, and its presence is transformative for our community. Without it, our youth and families are left to navigate crises alone or with inadequate support, often resulting in unnecessary emergency department visits, police involvement, or out-of-community transfers that further destabilize already fragile situations.

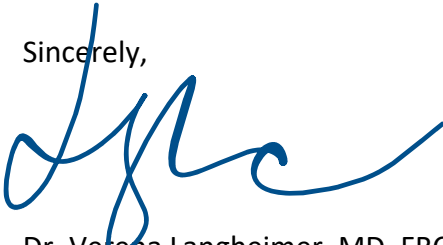
The MICR team brings a trauma-informed, collaborative approach that is desperately needed in our region. Their expertise in crisis de-escalation, assessment, and linkage to community resources has already made a tangible difference for our most complex cases. In situations where a young person is in acute distress—whether due to suicidal ideation,

psychosis, or severe behavioural dysregulation—the MICR team can respond rapidly, assess risk, and support both the patient and their family in the least restrictive, most compassionate manner possible. This not only improves safety and outcomes for the individual but also reduces the burden on our emergency and inpatient services. The MICR team’s commitment to communication and partnership with local clinicians, schools, and social services has fostered a sense of trust and reliability that is invaluable in a region where families often feel isolated and unsupported. Their presence allows us to bridge the gaps between hospital, community, and law enforcement, ensuring that young people in crisis are met with understanding and expertise rather than fear or punitive measures.

As our region continues to grow, and as the complexity of our patient population increases, the need for the MICR program will only become more acute. The North Island cannot afford to lose this vital service. I urge you to prioritize ongoing funding and support for the MICR program. This service is a real-life, local, practical approach for mental health care in our community which can make a significant difference fast and directly.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I am available at any time to discuss the unique needs of our community and the essential role the MICR program plays in meeting them.

Sincerely,



Dr. Verena Langheimer, MD, FRCPC, ISAM (Cert.)
Psychiatrist - Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
Associate Clinical Professors UBC Department of Psychiatry
Department of Psychiatry - Comox Valley Hospital
101 Lerwick Road, Courtenay, BC
Verena.Langheimer@islandhealth.ca

Excellent care, for everyone,
everywhere, every time.



March 26, 2026

To whom it may concern,

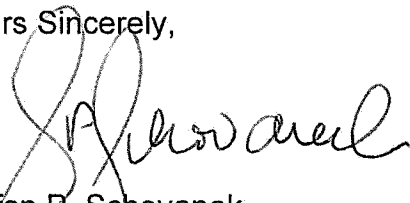
RE: MICR Crisis Car Program

As a Geriatric Psychiatrist who has provided care to frail and vulnerable seniors in the Comox Valley for almost 30 years, I am most appreciative of the MICR Crisis Car Initiative.

Over the past 6 months, their assistance in supporting home intervention for severely unwell seniors has been critical in saving lives and preventing significant harm to property and to others in our community.

The combination of specialized law enforcement and mental health nursing makes for a sensitive and effective approach to the care of distressed and fragile seniors. It's absence would be a backward step for our health care system, in my opinion.

Yours Sincerely,



Stefan-P. Schovanek
Geriatric Psychiatrist

Cc: City of Courtenay, Mayor Bob Wells and Council
Ministry of Health – Minister of Health Honorable Josie Osborne

Excellent health and care,
for everyone, everywhere, every time.



07-Apr-2026

Re: Funding for the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) Program

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in my role as a Social Worker with Community Health Services to express my strong support for the continuation of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Program.

This program has significantly enhanced our ability to respond effectively and compassionately to some of our community's most vulnerable members. In my work supporting seniors living with cognitive impairment, I regularly encounter situations that require timely, specialized, and nuanced intervention to ensure individuals can remain safely in their homes and communities. I can personally attest to the program's effectiveness in providing rapid, appropriate responses to complex situations that might otherwise result in unnecessary hospitalization or the misuse of emergency services.

The integrated model—pairing nursing professionals with RCMP—offers a uniquely balanced and highly skilled response. It allows for engagement that is grounded in mental health expertise, reducing the likelihood of escalation that can sometimes occur when individuals in crisis are approached solely by law enforcement. Beyond immediate crisis response, this program plays a critical role in broader community safety and well-being. It contributes meaningfully to de-escalation, destigmatization, and proactive support, particularly in the downtown core, where there are ongoing challenges related to homelessness, as well as increasing incidents of violence and vandalism. These issues have led to growing concern and public outcry from community members and local businesses. In this context, the program represents a practical, evidence-informed approach that helps address safety concerns at their root, while supporting individuals in a more appropriate and effective manner.

The loss of this program would have immediate and detrimental impacts—not only for the individuals it serves, but also for frontline providers and the community as a whole. I would strongly urge Council to support ongoing funding for this vital service.

Sincerely,



Haley Sullivan
Registered Social Worker
Community Health Services
Tel: 250-331-8522 ext. 61235
Haley.Sullivan@islandhealth.ca



April 9, 2026

To: City of Courtenay, Mayor Bob Wells and Council
Ministry of Health – Minister of Health Honourable Josie Osborne

I am writing to provide my full-throated support for continuation of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR). I have been a Crown Prosecutor for 21 years, including for over 10 years in Courtenay. For the past 4 years I have served as the Administrative Crown Counsel for the Comox Valley.

In the short time that this initiative has been operational I have seen massive positive contributions to community safety and individual well being. Over the decades that I have worked in the criminal justice system I have observed the ongoing challenge of coordinating the mandates of front-line police work and front-line healthcare. Unfortunately, many individuals engaging with police are in difficult and complex situations regarding their mental health that influence criminality. Understanding the complexity of these cases is very challenging. Management is difficult. Solutions are rare.

Over the years, I have seen various initiatives to attempt to address this challenge come and go. I am confident that the MICR program is the single most effective program I have witnessed in improving community safety and assisting individuals with mental health issues who are engaged with the criminal justice system. The results are even more impressive given the relatively modest resourcing required.

Crown Counsel communicate with MICR multiple times per month. They are my first call for assistance regarding Accused persons, victims or witnesses that may be acutely impacted by mental health issues. Without question, this resource enhances Crown's ability to protect the community from harm. In the short term, by understanding potential volatile situations when arise. In the long-term, by setting up meaningful and effective bail and probation plans aimed to reduce recidivism and move clients from their current situations toward more stability.

Provision of this program has been of significant tangible benefit to the community. The program provides value that far exceeds it's cost. In my opinion, continuation of the MICR is a worthy priority.

I would be happy to discuss my support for MICR in person or over the phone.



John Boccabella

Administrative Crown Counsel
480 Cumberland Road
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 2C4
Tel: (250) 331-8183



April 13, 2026

Greg Hall - Greg.Hall@recmp-grc.gc.ca
RCMP Comox Valley,
800 Ryan Road,
Courtenay, BC V9N 7T1

Dear Greg,

Re: Support for the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) Program

I am writing to express my full support for the North Island Hospital and Comox Valley RCMP Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car (MICR) program. MICR has become an essential resource in our community, providing timely, skilled, and compassionate responses to mental health and substance-related crises.

The program consistently improves safety, supports effective de-escalation, and connects individuals to appropriate care while reducing unnecessary emergency department visits and involvement with the Court system. Since its introduction, I have seen clear improvements in how crisis situations are managed and in the support available to individuals, families, service providers, and local businesses.

A reduction or loss of MICR services would leave a significant gap in crisis response, increasing risks for vulnerable individuals and placing additional strain on families and frontline systems. As community needs continue to grow, maintaining—and ideally expanding—this program is vital.

Thank you for your attention to the future of this important service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyla Talbot".

Kyla Talbot
Director of Operations, Comox Valley MCFD
2455 Mansfield Drive, Courtenay, BC V9N 2M2
250-334-5820

KT/jj

CC: Scott Mercer, Scott.Mercer@rcmp-grc.gc.ca



Comox Valley
Transition Society

To: Mayor Bob Wells and Council & Ministry of Health-
Honorable Josie Osborne.

From: Nicole Backhouse- Coordinator @ Connect Warming
Center and Shelter

I am writing to you today to in support of the MICR (mobile integrated crisis response) program and to inform you of how detrimental it would be to our community if you cut the funding for this integral and important team that does really great work for our entire community and has elicited very positive changes for a wide range of our community members.

My name is Nicole Backhouse, I am the current Connect Warming center and shelter Coordinator but just prior to my position here I spent 4.5 years as the Nurse Team Lead at Ryan Hill Supportive Housing, which is a Harm reduction focused supportive housing complex that Island Health currently operates that supports clients with moderate to severe mental health and substance use disorders.

For the past 5 years I have the pleasure to work alongside and in community partnership with both Greg and Tara and have witnessed first hand the important crisis response work they have done with some of our community's most complex and intense client's. They have assisted with keeping these client's out of our hospital, jails and from losing their housing by intervening in a timely manner to offer first hand supports, wellness checks and debriefing with both the client's and staff/employees as necessary to help de-escalate potentially very violent and unstable circumstances. Their innate ability to help calm and soothe situations that very quickly could have had very negative outcomes is a true gift to our community and the loss of such an integral crisis response team would be a huge loss for this community that so desperately needs MORE support NOT LESS.

Not only have I seen their deeply integral work in my professional life on a regular basis, I also have had the privilege to have them assist me in my personal life with my teenage son, who has his own mental health and emotional challenges. They assisted my family in de-escalating a personal matter with him and supported me as his mom to continue to be able to support him with all the necessary tools I needed in that moment to make the healthiest choice for both me and my son. I'm happy to report that I have seen a positive shift in my son's emotional and mental well being since that incident.

The MICR team is absolutely, positively and deeply needed in our community, not just with our marginalized and stigmatized community members but for anyone who is experiencing mental health and emotional challenges and may be in crisis and unsure of where to turn for support. Tara with her incredible and profound knowledge as a crisis nurse and Greg with his RCMP background and professionalism make a really excellent team and are able to offer the wrap around supports for persons who are severely struggling. Please don't take away such important pieces of our community support network. Do the right thing and keep offering this type of integral work where we need it most.

Thank you for your time and for reading this letter.

Signed, Nicole Backhouse



Comox Valley
Transition Society

Comox Valley Transition Society

625 England Ave.
Courtenay BC, V9N 2C5
(250) 650-6853
shelterandsupportivehousingmanager@cvts.ca

March 27, 2026

City of Courtenay, Mayor Bob Wells and Council
Ministry of Health, Minister of Health Honorable Josie Osborne

Dear Mayor Wells, Council Members, and Minister Osborne,

Re: Support for Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) Car Initiative

I am writing on behalf of The Comox Valley Transition Society to express our strong support for the continuation and expansion of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) Car initiative.

Through our work at The Lodge Supportive Housing, Connect Shelter and other programs, we are seeing a growing number of individuals who are unhoused or living in unstable housing, many of whom are also experiencing complex mental health and substance use challenges. This increase in vulnerably housed populations has led to more frequent and higher acuity crisis situations, placing significant strain on community services and emergency response systems.

The MICR program plays a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing timely, compassionate, and skilled crisis intervention. Equally important is its ability to support continuity and consistency in care planning for high system users, who frequently interact with emergency services, healthcare systems, and community agencies. A coordinated and consistent approach helps build trust, reduces fragmentation of care, and leads to more effective, long-term outcomes for individuals who might otherwise cycle repeatedly through crisis.



Comox Valley Transition Society

Without MICR, we would expect increased pressure on emergency departments, law enforcement, and community agencies, along with heightened risk for individuals and the broader public. Disruptions to this program would also undermine the progress being made toward more integrated, person-centered systems of care.

As community needs continue to grow, the importance of sustained, coordinated crisis response cannot be overstated. The MICR initiative is an essential component of a responsive and effective system, and we strongly encourage your continued investment in its future.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the health and safety of our community.

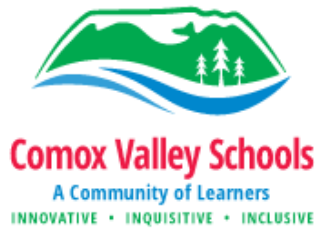
Sincerely,

Eric Lopatinsky

Shelter and Supportive Housing Manager

Comox Valley Transition Society





School District No. 71 (Comox Valley)

Board of Education of School District No. 71

2488 Idiens Way
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 9H1
Fax (250) 334 5552
Telephone (250) 334 5500

April 8, 2026

Mayor Bob Wells and Council
City of Courtenay

RE: Mobile Integrated Crisis Response Car

We are writing to express our support for the **Joint North Island Hospital and Comox Valley RCMP Detachment Mobile Integrated Response Car (MICR) Program** and its continued operation in our community.

From our perspective, the MICR program has improved responses to individuals experiencing mental health crises, substance use challenges, and acute distress. The pairing of health professionals and RCMP officers allows for safer, more compassionate, and more effective responses, with a clear focus on de-escalation and connection to appropriate care rather than enforcement.

This program has had a particularly positive impact in the area where our office is located, where many unhoused and highly vulnerable individuals live and gather. We regularly witness the MICR team providing calm, respectful, and trauma-informed support, building trust with individuals who may otherwise avoid services. Their presence has contributed to an improved sense of safety in our neighbourhood.

The MICR program has also demonstrated a strong commitment to collaboration, including its work within local schools. Their willingness to partner with school counsellors has strengthened crisis responses involving children and youth. This provides our school teams with a resource that is both responsive and proactive in supporting our students, ensuring situations are handled with care, professionalism, and a focus on well-being.

The MICR program is a vital community asset that enhances public safety while prioritizing health-centred responses. We strongly support its continuation and encourage the City's ongoing advocacy for this program as an essential service for our community.

Sincerely,

Joe Heslip
Associate Superintendent
Comox Valley Schools

Tara Ryan
District Vice Principal of Inclusive Education
Comox Valley Schools

April 7, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to share our family's experience and to strongly urge the continued funding of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) car, which pairs psychiatric nurses with police in the community. This service is not just valuable, it is life-changing.

Over the past two years, our mom has faced challenges with addiction and mental health. She lives between Comox and Victoria, while my sister and I live in Port Moody and Seattle. Being far away made it incredibly difficult for us to know what was happening or how to help her, leaving us worried and unsure of how to support her.

The MICR team, and specifically Tara and Greg, became a lifeline for us. They were able to check in on our mom, complete assessments, and keep us informed. Being in regular contact with this team gave us reassurance and a sense of hope during a time when we felt powerless.

As her mental health declined, her behavior became increasingly erratic. She was aggressive, neglecting her dog and her condo, harassing people in the community, and making impulsive, unsafe plans, such as suddenly planning an international trip with very little planning. All behaviors that we knew were out of character for mom. Despite our best efforts—filing a Form 10 and connecting with her mental health team—she continued to struggle, presenting well in appointments but declining behind the scenes.

Things reached a critical point when mom went missing for four days. On the fifth day, she hit a road stop and was given a DUI. She was brought in by police, and it was at that moment that Tara was able to assess her in person. Because we had been in regular contact, Tara already knew our mom's history and was able to quickly recognize that she was unwell and in need of immediate care. She made the assessment and our mom was sectioned under the Emergency Health Act, allowing her to be brought to the hospital for urgent care and treatment. This outcome was such a relief to us.

As someone who works in social services—and my sister is a nurse practitioner—we have supported many people living with mental health illness, but experiencing this with a loved one was completely different. The support, knowledge, and responsiveness of Tara and Greg gave us safety and reassurance at a time when we had little ability to help. It was a lifeline for our family and for our mom.

This service is invaluable—not just for individuals in crisis, but for families who are desperately trying to navigate the complexities of addiction and mental health. The peace of mind and rapid support it provides cannot be overstated. We are incredibly grateful for the dedication of the MICR team and the difference they made in our lives.

Please continue funding this vital program. It is saving lives, supporting families, and making our community stronger and safer.

With deep gratitude,
Margaret Flynn and Alicia Gibbs

Sandy Lipovsky

Courtenay

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Josie Osborne, Ministry of Health Josie.Osborne.MLA@gov.bc.ca

Mayor Bob Wells, City of Courtenay, BC mayor@courtenay.ca

Courtenay City Council info@courtenay.ca

Tara Wyton, MICR Crisis Nurse tara.wyton@islandhealth.ca

I am writing to express my support for continued funding for the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) team and vehicle in the Comox Valley. This is an important service for the Valley and is consistent with municipal and Provincial goals to increase support for individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance-related crises.

The MICR team fulfills the three T's – Trained, Team, and Timely.

- The combination of a trained psychiatric nurse and a trained RCMP constable as a team offers a necessary breadth of support
- A designated team offers the benefits of partnership and consistency, both for the MICR team and the community
- A vehicle deployed and “on the road” during service hours saves time since they are ready to respond at a moment’s notice. This saves, for example, phoning 911 and waiting for an RCMP car to pick up a crisis nurse and then respond.
- While I do not have any financial numbers, I am thinking that the MICR team saves the taxpayers and communities money in that an appropriate response to a crisis might result in resolution without having to use hospital/ER and legal/judicial services.
- An individual experiencing a crisis benefits from the crisis nurse/RCMP team approach as being less potentially intimidating as a response from two RCMP vehicles and constables might be. I sometimes see a crisis response with two vehicles.

While this is a new program and will be evaluated, I hope that it eventually can be funded to expand to include nights and weekends with additional teams available. The needs in our community are increasing and the MICR team is an important component of service in the Comox Valley.

Yours sincerely,

Sandy Lipovsky

Sandy Lipovsky

March 24, 2026

City of Courtenay, Mayor Bob Wells, counsel

Honourable Josie Osborne

We, Reinhold and Esther Wilzewski, wish to express our support for the continuation of the Mobile Integrated Crisis Response (MICR) program and a campaign for its expansion. This team is a vital component in the health care and safety of those struggling with mental health and substance use disorders. Our community has limited mental health and addictions resources available. This team aids in addressing this gap for patients and their families in crisis management. Increasing resources to allow 7 day coverage, as opposed to the three days a week we currently have, would provide consistent support without having to rely on already strained emergency rooms as the only way to assist those in crisis.

We have had personal experience with the team on numerous occasions with our loved one and found them to be caring and professional. They provide safety and calm in a very high charged situation. They continue to monitor our loved one when they are in the community to ensure their well being and our peace of mind. Our care team includes a caseworker, psychiatrist and crisis team who assist us in ensuring that our loved can live independently as a part of our community.

This MICR team devotes their time, skills, and care to the well being of vulnerable members of our community and their families. We wish to extend our gratitude to the MICR for providing exceptional care to our loved one. Increased investment and resources are required to assist this team in addressing the present care gap and support community members in their times of need.

Reinhold Wilzewski

Esther Wilzewski

March 24, 2026