



Courtenay Winter Shelter Temporary Use Permit Application Description

August 14, 2025

As Lookout Housing and Health Society have been directly awarded the operations of the Comox Valley Winter Shelter by BC Housing for the 2025-2026 Season, we are applying for the space to be utilized as an Emergency Life-Saving Shelter site from the dates of November 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026. This site would provide temporary shelter for 18 individuals who are currently suffering the effects of being unhoused in the Valley. Lookout provides two fully trained staff members 24/7, along with another Outreach position that works within the operation and community to provide the surrounding area and other unhoused individuals with the required support.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lookout Housing and Health Society is a charitable organization that offers a social safety net, providing housing and a range of support services to adults with low or no income who have few, if any, housing or support options. Our mission is to provide respectful, caring, non-judgmental, and non-sectarian services in a flexible manner. Through advocacy, support and minimal barriers, we reduce harm to people who have a diversity of challenges. We assist them in regaining and maintaining stability and achieving a greater quality of life.

Temporary Winter Shelter

A temporary Winter Shelter, operated by Lookout Society, will provide temporary shelter resources for homeless individuals to prevent hardships caused by extreme winter weather conditions within the Municipality of Courtenay/Comox.

The expected outcome of the Winter Shelter is to reduce the health and safety risks to homeless people related to exposure to extreme weather. The Winter Shelter program was initiated to meet the needs of a wide range of homeless people (e.g. men, women, youth, seniors and families) in the community, and be flexible enough to deal with a varying number of people including individuals who may be coping with challenging issues such as disabilities, mental illness, addictions and other health issues. The sheltering site(s) will provide shelter regardless of ethno-cultural background, race, religious beliefs, gender identity and/or sexual orientation. The shelter will endeavour to house those with physical disabilities to the extent that it is safe for the individual.

The Cumberland Winter Shelter will operate 24 hours a day and provide a range of services and support, including crisis interventions, access to a phone and Internet and clothing provisions for guests, there are no drop-in facilities. Shelter Guests are welcome to spend all day within the facility. Many of Lookout's clientele cope with serious challenges such as mental illness, chronic health conditions and



addictions, so shelter staff work to bridge guests with treatment services and financial supports that ultimately can end the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Lookout makes a concerted effort to focus on case plans and work with guests to find suitable housing options – a challenge given the lack of affordable housing.

Site Layouts and Information

971 Cumberland Road

Located at 971 Cumberland Road, Courtenay, BC. The City of Courtenay provides access to their facility for Lookout Housing and Health Society to operate an Emergency Weather Shelter program for up to 18 vulnerable adults within the Courtenay/Comox region.

The area is accessible to all as it is a single-floor space with entry and exit points that are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices. The washrooms are also able to accommodate wheelchairs, the only addition required for full access is a “grab bar” to be mounted on the wall of the bathroom stalls.

The site is a building provided by the City of Courtenay to accommodate 20 persons, 18 shelter guests and 2 staff members. The space is a single large room where Shelter will operate. There is two gender-neutral bathrooms for guests and staff use. There is a mobile kitchenette that will include a small fridge, a microwave and coffee maker for staff use. Mattresses are to be stored on the ground in the main space. There is a staff entry on the southeast wall that can serve as an emergency exit, as well as two additional exits on the southwest side of the building facing Cumberland Road. A staff space is a designated area within the internal building for rest, meals, and a secure environment. Staff will ensure no guests go beyond the designated shelter area. Should staff require respite during their shift, since it is only 1 room, staff have their own area cordoned off.

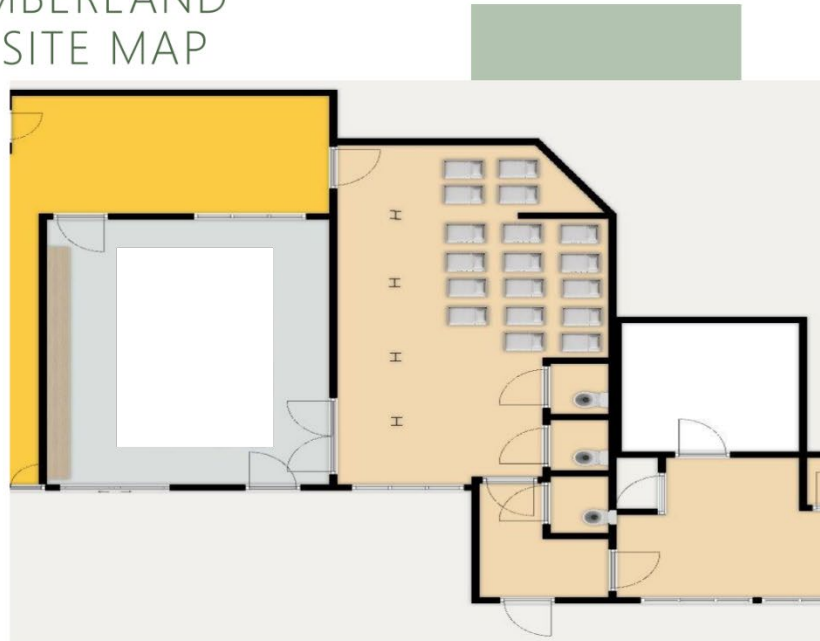
3 meals will be provided to shelter guests, a small breakfast, lunch and dinner, prepared by our sister site, The Junction. Given the vulnerability of our guests, great care with food safe practices must be taken. These steps are in place at the Lookout Facilities:

- Written Food Safe, Sanitation, and Communicable Disease Response Plans
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all cleaning chemicals used in the kitchen (updated within 3 years, if available)
- Monitoring the temperatures of cooked food, cold storage, and dishwashing
- Careful monitoring of donated food when used
- Lead staff have Food-Safe certification and receive ongoing training
- Recipes (with Critical Control Points) are in place for the main foods served
- Recycling and composting systems are in place for all appropriate materials

The Lookout Food Services teams provide food with respect, and given the challenging circumstances that their clients come from, trauma informed care is an area we must all seek to understand more. Compassion is as important as the nutrients in the food we serve.

The site map highlights in light brown the areas accessible to shelter guests, with the sleeping area marked by small grey rectangles. The yellow section is restricted to staff only. All entry and exit points are shown by the door swings on the diagram, along with the washrooms indicated by the toilets.

EWR CUMBERLAND SHELTER SITE MAP



STAFFING

Staffing at the Cumberland Winter Shelter.

We are 24/7, with our doors locked, and always monitored with staff available to provide entry for shelter guests 24/7. All guests are encouraged to arrive at the shelter before 8 pm as space is limited. Our minimum staffing requirements are 2. During daily operating hours, the Shelter will operate with as many as four front-line and supportive staff roles, including Outreach, and the site Manager or Coordinator. We have both male and female workers, ranging in age from 20 to 60 years old.

The following are the staffing schedules:

- 2 Shelter resource workers:
 - o 0700 - 1500 7 days/week
 - o 1500 - 2300 7 days/week
 - o 2300 – 0700 7 days/week
- One Outreach worker
 - o 0600-1400 Sunday- Thursday
 - o Program Coordinator (0800-1600) Sunday - Thursday
 - o Program Manager (0800-1600) Monday– Friday



All staff are required to hold a valid Occupational Level 1 First Aid certificate, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training, WHIMIS training, and a Food Safe certificate (for staff handling food). All staff are also required to attend at least 3 fire drills per year to keep their training up to date.

The staff schedule is structured so that there are no scheduled work-alone shifts. However, under unavoidable and extreme operational circumstances, staff may be required to work alone due to a lack of casual coverage or emergency absenteeism. In those cases, Lookout's Work Alone safety procedures are in effect.

Safety and Security:

All doors are keyed to a master. All staff keep a set of keys that includes a master key with them for the duration of their shift. The keys are then passed on to the next staff member at the end of each shift.

There are five fire 5 extinguishers throughout the building. There are emergency lights and smoke detectors throughout. All building fire and emergency safety measures are maintained on an annual basis or as needed. The building is monitored by an external company for building emergencies, such as fire. The Fire Department will be notified in addition to staff calling in response to site emergencies. The Fire Safety Plan is to be located within the main lobby in a locked, marked, metal box.

The current policies in place for Health and Safety to minimize the risk of violence are:

- **Universal Precautions:** Ensures the safety of staff and clients by consistently applying health and safety measures, reducing the risk of infection and promoting a sense of security, which is vital for individuals who may have experienced trauma related to health and safety concerns.
- **Harm Reduction:** Prioritizes respectful, non-judgmental support that acknowledges clients' choices, helping to minimize negative consequences of their behaviors. This approach fosters trust and empowers individuals, supporting their recovery and stability.
- **Work Alone Policy:** Implements safety protocols for staff working solo, promoting a secure environment that visibly values staff well-being, which in turn creates a safe, consistent space for clients who may feel vulnerable or unsafe.
- **Accompanying Clients of Site Policy:** Encourages staff to support clients through transitions or activities, demonstrating respect and empathy. This helps build trust and a sense of safety, especially important for clients with trauma histories.



- **Building Orientation Guide:** Provides clear, accessible information about the shelter environment, policies, and resources, reducing confusion and anxiety, and promoting a sense of control and predictability for traumatized individuals.
- **Lock Down Policy:** Establishes structured procedures for emergencies, ensuring safety without creating unnecessary fear, which helps clients feel protected and supported during crises.
- **Violence Policy:** Clearly defines responses to violence, emphasizing safety and respectful conflict resolution. This reassures clients that their well-being is prioritized, helping to create a trauma-informed environment where trust can develop.

These policies collectively promote safety, trust, and empowerment, which are essential elements in a trauma-informed approach to supporting homeless individuals during their most vulnerable times.

Existing violence prevention policies and procedures:

The following Policies and Procedures are in place for the purpose of violence prevention –

- **Routine Practices (formerly Universal Precautions):** Maintains consistent safety and health protocols, reducing the risk of illness and providing a reassuring environment where clients feel cared for and protected.
- **Incident Report Policy:** Ensures that any occurrences of violence or safety concerns are documented and addressed promptly and transparently, fostering trust and accountability while demonstrating that clients' safety is a priority.
- **Harm Reduction:** Encourages respectful, non-judgmental responses to challenging behaviors, valuing clients' dignity and promoting safer interactions, which reduces the likelihood of escalation and trauma.
- **Work Alone Policy – All Sites:** Implements safety measures for staff working solo, ensuring their well-being and, consequently, a stable environment where clients feel secure knowing staff are protected.
- **Accompanying Clients Off-Site Policy:** Supports clients during off-site activities, providing reassurance and a sense of safety, which is especially important for clients with trauma histories or those feeling vulnerable.
- **Lockdown Policy:** Defines structured, transparent procedures during emergencies to ensure safety, minimizing fear and confusion for clients by emphasizing a protective, rather than punitive, approach.
- **Violence Policy:** Clearly states acceptable behaviors and responses to violence, emphasizing safety and de-escalation, which reassures clients that their well-being and that of staff are safeguarded.



- **Behavior and Management Policy:** Promotes respectful, consistent, and non-punitive responses to behaviors, fostering a sense of predictability and safety that is crucial for clients with trauma backgrounds.
- **Eviction/Service Suspension/Barred List Policy:** Outlines fair and transparent processes for addressing behavior issues, ensuring clients understand boundaries while maintaining dignity and promoting accountability without retraumatization.

Collectively, these policies foster an environment of safety, respect, and trust—key components of trauma-informed care—by proactively preventing violence and promoting a supportive atmosphere for all clients and staff.

SUMMARY

The 2024-2025 Emergency Weather Response Cumberland Shelter demonstrated the significant need of operating a full-time, 24/7 shelter instead of a nightly, on-call model. During 46 nights of operation, the shelter supported 668 individuals, providing consistent access to shelter, meals, safety, and supportive services, which fostered community, trust, and dignity among guests.

A fully operational, around-the-clock shelter allows for continuous support, enhances safety, and improves accessibility for vulnerable populations—such as women, Indigenous individuals, seniors, and those with disabilities—many of whom face barriers to accessing limited-hours services. It also reduces reliance on emergency services and minimizes dangerous off-site behaviors, as evidenced by incident reports that were primarily manageable with trauma-informed and consistent care.

The shelter's full-time operation facilitated ongoing outreach, community collaboration, and peer programming, which empowered individuals to give back, rebuild community ties, and support their peers. This level of service is essential for addressing complex needs, providing safety, and fostering long-term stability, which nightly on-call models cannot adequately support.

Implementing a 24/7 emergency shelter is critical for creating a safe, accessible, and stable environment that effectively supports the community's most vulnerable members and reduces the adverse impacts of homelessness.