



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

## STAFF REPORT

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**To:** Council

**File No.:** 4940-20

**From:** Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

**Date:** September 27, 2023

**Subject:** Comox Valley Community Substance Use Strategy – Phase Two Report Back

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### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is for Council to receive for information the draft Community Substance Use Strategy Phase Two Report prepared by the Comox Valley Substance Use Committee.

### BACKGROUND:

The work of the Comox Valley Community Health Network and the development of a Community Substance Use Strategy is critical to the health and well-being of all members of the community. Phase One of the Community Substance Use Strategy was presented to Council in October 2021 and included the following recommendations:

- Request from all local governments for funding to collaborate on phase two
- Act on lived experiences of people who use substances
- System gap and strength analysis of substance use support network
- Ongoing involvement and leadership from peers and elders / traditional knowledge keepers
- Form a CV Substance Use Collaborative to coordinate recommendation implementation
- Collaborative to become a part of the Community Health Network
- Align work of the Collaborative with intersecting work in the Regional Poverty Assessment and Reduction Plan
- Ongoing data collection and review

At the October 18, 2021 council meeting, Council resolved the following:

1. *THAT based on the October 18th, 2021 staff report "Report back on Phase One of the Community Substance Use Strategy and request from Comox Valley Community Health Network for Continued Support", Council approve OPTION 1 and receive for information the Community Substance Use Strategy Phase One Report; and,*

2. *THAT Council direct staff to continue to work in partnership with the Comox Valley Community Health Network (CVCHN) to support Phase Two and subsequent phases of the Community Substance Use Strategy; and,*

3. *THAT annual operating budget funds of up to \$30,000 be included in the 2022 operating budget, and \$15,000 annually in the long-term financial plan to support Phase Two and subsequent phases of the strategy; and,*

4. *THAT staff work with the CVCHN to update the memorandum of understanding with Phase Two deliverables; and,*

5. *THAT the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services be authorized to execute the memorandum of understanding*

Phase Two of the Community Substance Use Strategy is now complete and attached to this report for Council's information. Please see Attachment 1: Draft CVSUS Community Substance Use Strategy – Phase Two Report. The strategy identifies recommendations and actions to support a fair and equitable plan to reduce substance-related harms in the Comox Valley. The City continues to work with the Comox Valley Community Health Network and recently established Substance Use Collaborative in support of the coordination of various local agencies in the development and implementation of the strategy.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

As directed by Council, staff updated the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and Comox Valley Community Health Network (CVCHN) on February 25, 2022 (Attachment 2). The MOU:

1. Identifies the respective roles and responsibilities between CVCHN and the City;
2. Requires a detailed work plan be submitted by CVCHN as the facilitator of this project, which identifies deliverables, project schedule with key project milestones, project community interest holders, public engagement, and performance measures along with annual reporting requirements.

A summary of how the Phase Two report meets the deliverables established by the MOU agreement between the City and CVCHN can be found in Attachment 4.

In addition, staff revised and signed an MOU with the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) (Attachment 3) to confirm the terms and conditions of the CVRD acting as fiscal host of the City's annual operating funds dedicated to the development of the strategy. The CVRD acts as a fiscal host for the CVCHN as it is not a non-profit organization and does not have the resources to administer the funds.

CVCHN assembled the Comox Valley Community Substance Use Strategy Committee (the Committee) comprised of a multi-sectoral group of people and community organization stakeholders. The Committee led the phase two strategy development with the involvement of community members with living and lived experience of substance use, including through a partnership with Walk With Me.<sup>1</sup> [Walking Together: Towards a Stronger, More Integrated Substance Use Support Network in the Comox Valley](#) written by Walk with Me, is complementary to the Substance Use Strategy Phase Two Report and together both reports form the full picture of the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy Phase Two learning and recommendations. It is recommended that the Walking Together report be read alongside the Phase Two Strategy Report.

#### *Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy – Phase Two Report*

The Substance Use Committee completed significant work during phase two including securing \$140,000 in funding towards Phase two and three, establishing the partnership with Walk With Me, community engagement and research, shared leadership with peers and an elder Strategy committee, establishment of the Substance Use Collaborative, initial engagement in the Collective Impact process and ongoing data collection and review.

The Committee has submitted the draft Substance Use Strategy Phase Two report to be received by Council, following which it will be released as a final report to other local governments and the public. The report identifies twenty-one new recommendations: one to eleven were developed by Walk With Me are outlined

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<sup>1</sup> Walk With Me utilizes an arts based platform to create awareness of the ongoing toxic drug poisoning crisis by bringing forth and sharing the stories of people with lived and living experience of the opioid crisis.

in the Walking Together report and twelve to twenty-one were developed by the Substance Use Committee during the phase two process. The recommendations are summarized below with further details supporting each recommendation in the appendix of the Phase Two Report.

### **Walking Together Report Recommendations (Walk With Me)**

1. Create and implement medical detox service in the Comox Valley
2. Create and implement a recovery-based supportive housing service
3. Expand managed alcohol program services
4. Expand safer supply services
5. Relocate and expand overdose prevention site (OPS) and services
6. Pursue Improvements in opioid agonist therapy (OAT) delivery
7. Pursue a series of networking improvements
8. Create a services hub
9. Pursue service and transportation improvements for remote places, and places without strong transit systems (Hornby and Denman Islands, Cumberland, and others)
10. Address the need for culturally safe services
11. Work to reduce/eliminate stigma in the system

### **Community Substance Use Strategy Recommendations – Phase Two**

Note: Recommendations #12 and 13 are overarching recommendations and apply to all other recommendations and work of the Collaborative.

12. Actively engage and support peers to be involved in every aspect of planning and implementation of the recommendations in the Strategy.
13. Actively practice cultural safety and humility, anti-racism; anti-queer-phobia; anti-ableism, anti-classism and anti-ageism and ensure that Cultural Safety principles are enacted in implementation of all Strategy Actions.
14. Comox Valley Substance Use Collaborative will provide oversight and leadership to Implement Phase Three and ongoing recommendations.
15. Update and increase substance use awareness programs for youth and their families.
16. Increase awareness about substance use and access to substance use services specifically for seniors
17. Launch a project that focuses on including business owners and employers as part of the conversation on substance use and harm reduction.
18. Develop or review existing municipal bylaws and policies related to alcohol and cannabis selling establishments to reduce negative impacts to community health, safety, and liveability. Work with municipalities to obtain the necessary data.
19. Actively advocate to Federal and Provincial governments for an easily accessible safer supply of drugs
20. Implement a Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT) in the Comox Valley
21. Advocate for more non-market affordable housing for all ages and circumstances.

### **The following are carry-forward recommendations from Phase 1:**

22. Act on lived experience of people who use substances, their families and the people who support them in the design and implementation of policies, services, changes to existing services, and as qualitative evidence that supports action in our community response to substance use.
23. Engage more intensively with members and organizations from key priority groups such as youth, Indigenous, spiritual and religious, community organizations (e.g., Rotary, Indigenous, and SLGBTQIA).

24. Leverage existing political will in the community to advocate for organizational commitment (e.g., coordination, funding and staffing) from service providers (e.g., VIHA, AVI, John Howard Society, etc.) and stakeholders (e.g., RCMP, SD71) for ongoing implementation of the strategy actions.
25. Advocate for peer delivered services and paid positions within all organizations for people with lived/living experience.
26. Secure commitment of key partners & regional stakeholders to apply for provincial and national funding when available. Seek endorsement letters from key partners.
27. Establish ongoing data sharing agreements between the Comox Valley Substance Use Collaborative and local data collectors, including agency program and service evaluation data (e.g., number of individuals who access service, number of naloxone kits distributed, demographic data).
28. Advocate for ongoing provincial and regional collection of data on social determinants about substance use (e.g., why people use substances, social determinants and how they contributed to death or drug poisoning, etc.).
29. Increase collection and reporting of data around access to services & service impact and data on the benefits of substance use.
30. Innovate ways to collaborate across government, academia, and community agencies on the collection of data.

While the Phase Two Strategy was in development, progress and action on some of the recommendations began with work on these initiatives to be furthered in the next phase. Emerging initiatives include:

- March 9, 2023 - the Comox Strathcona Regional Hospital District Board approved a memorandum of understanding with Island Health that supports the development of a Community Health Services Hub located in the Comox Valley.
- July 7, 2023 - the Province of BC announced funding for a Peer Assisted Care Team in the Comox Valley
- The Community Action Team (CAT) is supporting the initiation of a peer- run Overdose Prevention Site
- The Community Action Team (CAT) is part of a multi-CAT Safer Supply Working Group through Health Quality BC that has recently published the CAT Safer Supply Project Tool Kit that will assist with local, provincial and federal advocacy for safer supply

Additionally, during phase two CVCHN helped facilitate the formation of the Comox Valley Substance Use Collaborative. The Collaborative is a multi-sector group of local government representatives, peers, community members and community organizations from across the region who will oversee the implementation, monitoring, and updating of the strategy to meet the community's needs.

#### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

8 (2) A municipality may provide any service that the council considers necessary or desirable, and may do this directly or through another public authority or another person or organization.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The grant budget of \$15,000 to support the development of the Community Substance Use Strategy is in the 2023 Operating Budget and the five-year operating plan.

After phase three is completed and a lead agency is identified, the annual budget to support the ongoing implementation of the strategy will be assigned subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the lead agency, subject to the approval of Council.

**ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

The ongoing development of the Community Substance Use Strategy is part of this department’s core services and has been identified in the staff member's annual work plan. The City’s role including the involvement of other departments will be identified in Phase Three.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Social Infrastructure - Identify roles for the City in the delivery of social infrastructure outlined in the OCP; Implementation plan for delivery of social infrastructure
- Social Infrastructure - Continue working with community agencies to deliver day services. Explore role in the provision of social support services, including future of Connect Centre.

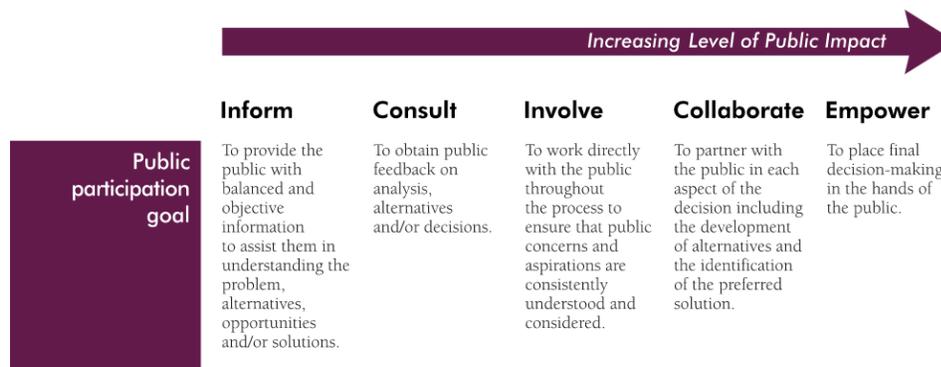
The direction of these strategic priorities are guided by the objectives established in the Social Infrastructure chapter of the Official Community Plan, 2022:

1. All Courtenay residents experience equitable access to services
2. Coordinated, inclusionary, and systems-based responses are in place to address evolving complex social issues

OCP Policy SI 12 states: Work regionally to further recommendations of the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy Phase 1 Report (2021) including identifying an appropriate role for the City.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Staff will inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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**OPTIONS:**

1. THAT the Comox Valley Substance Use Strategy – Phase Two Report (Attachment 1) be received for information.

2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

**NEXT STEPS:**

With completion of phase two, the Comox Valley Substance Use Committee will shift into Phase Three with a focus on initiating collective action for implementing the recommendations in the Phase 2 Report. Ongoing implementation and strategy review will continue to be overseen by the Collaborative supported by a local substance use support agency.

The Comox Valley Community Health Network's role as facilitator of the Community Substance Use Strategy will end at the end of phase three after which it is expected that a lead substance use agency will take on the facilitation role and ensure the Strategy is implemented. The Collaborative will continue to inform the Strategy as a living document to ensure it responds to the evolving needs of this community. The strategy will also support the removal of the existing siloed system through the formation of the Comox Valley Substance Use Support Network. Specifics for how this will be done will be developed over the coming year by the Collaborative and the substance use support agency.

The City will continue to provide financial support to the Comox Valley Substance Use Committee, as well as staff participation, in the development of Phase Three of the strategy.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Comox Valley Community Health Network has completed phase two of the Community Substance Use Strategy and has begun phase three of the strategy which includes the implementation of the recommendations identified in the report. After phase three is completed, staff and CVCHN will return to provide a final report on this phase to Council and discuss next steps to ensure the strategy will continue to support a fair and equitable plan to reduce substance-related harms in the Comox Valley.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft Community Substance Use Strategy Phase Two Report
2. Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Comox Valley Community Health Network dated January 1, 2022
3. Memorandum of Understanding between the City and CVRD dated January 1, 2022.
4. CVCHN Phase Two MOU Deliverables Summary

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