

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS– STATUS UPDATE**  
**June 2023**

This briefing provides a brief background and current status on the Board’s direction from the January 31, 2023 strategic planning session concerning social development supports.

Board resolution – January 31, 2023:

*THAT the Comox Valley Regional District Board, in alignment with Appendix D in the staff report dated January 27, 2023:*

- a) Support continued implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy by reinforcing current efforts to work with Community Health Network as a convener/facilitator and working with Comox Valley Community Foundation to collect, analyze and action community data related to poverty reduction strategy;*
- b) Support the ongoing efforts to meet legislative requirements under the Accessible British Columbia Act and develop an accessibility plan in partnership with community organizations and accessibility committees;*
- c) Send correspondence to member municipality Councils and the Electoral Areas Services Committee to solicit interest for a regional grant service that would provide funding for community societies and non-profit organizations to develop social development support activities;*
- d) Support a social planning position to help implement the poverty reduction strategy and work with community organizations.*

**Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation**

- The Poverty Reduction Assessment and Strategy (Strategy) was completed in 2021 to define actions that reduce poverty across the region. The Strategy incorporated a game changer approach to identify the big ideas that can reduce poverty at many different levels.
- As the complex social challenges related to poverty are influenced by a multitude of interconnected issues and systems, the Strategy identified that a coordinated and collaborative approach is required to best effect meaningful change.
- To support this approach Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) staff, alongside the Comox Valley Community Health Network, have engaged the Tamarack Institute to provide coaching on the use of the collective impact model to implement the Strategy. The coaching process is scheduled to be completed this summer, to be followed by the identification of next steps in the collective impact process.
- Staff have also participated in the launch of the Comox Valley Community Foundation’s Vital Signs Data Hub and are reviewing for potential application and use with the Strategy and other CVRD initiatives.
- While not exclusively related to implementation of the Strategy, staff are also making progress with respect to bringing forward a proposed update to the Community Partnerships Framework policy. With the growing practice of grant funders embedding a role for local governments in their funding program requirements, the updated policy is intended support the Board in:
  - Making informed decisions when community requests for capacity support come forward;
  - Considering the practical implications of providing various levels of support on CVRD’s administrative functions, services and capacity; and

*The Comox Valley Regional District respectfully acknowledges the land on which it operates is on the unceded traditional territory of the K’ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.*

- Being proactive in working with organizations and groups as a partner and collaborator where alignment exists with CVRD strategic priorities and services.
- It is also noted that earlier this year the Board supported the nomination of Lisa Kilpatrick, Economic Recovery and Community Resilience Coordinator, to the Union of BC Municipalities to serve as a representative on the Provincial Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee. The outcome of this nomination is still outstanding.

### **Accessible British Columbia Act**

- The *Accessible British Columbia Act* (the “Act”) was adopted in 2021 with its first regulation being released the following year. The Act and the subsequent regulation obligate local governments and other public bodies to establish an accessibility committee, develop an accessibility plan and establish a process for receiving public feedback. These requirements come into force on September 1, 2023.
- The Comox Valley has two existing accessibility committees, the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee (Committee) and the Village of Cumberland’s Accessibility and Inclusion Committee. The Committee was established in 1998 and was administered by the City of Courtenay until 2017-2018. In 2020 the Committee formed a collaborative relationship with the Comox Valley Social Planning Society who received funding in 2021, 2022 and 2023 from the CVRD to support the Committees administration needs.
- The CVRD, together with the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and the Comox Valley Social Planning Society identified a collaborative approach to addressing the requirements of the Act. This approach provides for the following:
  - A single accessibility framework is developed by the CVRD, City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland that describes shared principles relating to accessibility and inclusivity across the Comox Valley;
  - Based on the collective framework of shared principles, each local government will be responsible for the development of their action plans;
  - Engagement with the Committee and Cumberland’s Accessibility and Inclusion Committee provides content and input to the accessibility framework and subsequent plans;
  - An agreement with the Social Planning Society to define roles and obligations and provide annual funding to the Society to support the administration of the Committee.
- This collaborative approach was endorsed by the Board on April 18, 2023 and subsequently by the other parties.
- Staff have developed a draft agreement, met with the Committee and initiated the drafting of the accessibility framework in partnership with municipal staff. Aligned with the legislative requirements, staff are working towards finalizing the framework before September 1, 2023. A report with the draft framework is planned to be presented to the Board later this summer for consideration.

### **Social Development Grant Service**

- Over the past several years a few community-based organizations working to address social development issues have come forward with requests for ongoing financial assistance. Without an established regional service for the purpose of providing grants for social services, the Board has traditionally forwarded the requests to the member municipalities and electoral areas for consideration as part of their grant-in-aid programs, or more recently, relied upon the Administration and General Government Service to provide one-time regional grants.

- The Administration and General Government Service (Functions 110 to 119) is unsuitable for the provision of ongoing external grants as its function is to cover regional administrative expenditures for services such as legislative, financial, human resources, information technology, communications etc.
- In 2022 the CVRD undertook a scoping study for the potential creation of a regional service to support social initiatives and services. In summary, the study identified four areas of potential activity by the CVRD:
  - Building Buy-In (i.e. advocate, champion, educate and inform);
  - Convening and Coordinating (i.e. facilitate/convene, coordinate, and build capacity);
  - Data and Policy (i.e. research, policy, enforcement); and
  - Resource Provision (i.e. partner, funder, asset provider).
- At the January 31, 2023 strategic planning session, the Board resolved to seek feedback from the member municipalities and the Electoral Areas Services Committee on a potential regional grant service (resource provision) for social development support activities. Correspondence was subsequently sent in early February with two potential service concepts, one tailored to the provision of operational grants and the other to special project grants.
- To date, formal responses have been received from all the jurisdictions except the City of Courtenay. Once feedback from the City is received staff will bring forward a report to summarize the results, provide options and analysis on the possible next steps and seek direction from the Board.

### **Social Planning Position**

- As already noted, the Poverty Reduction Assessment and Strategy was completed to serve as a foundational outline for addressing poverty in the Comox Valley. This was followed in 2022 with completion of a scoping study on local government social development activities as well as a review of the CVRD's existing Community Partnerships Framework policy.
- The above-noted assessments, strategies and studies identified the social and wellbeing challenges being faced and the need for a coordinated, collective-impact approach to act on the identified recommendations.
- A social planner position was identified as means to advance this work by building buy-in, convening and coordinating as well as collect data and recommend policy for poverty reduction work. The position could also serve as a resource or liaison between non-profit organizations and the CVRD while helping to build capacity within the CVRD to be an effective partner and contributor in addressing the social development challenges with the Comox Valley.
- As part of the 2023-2027 Financial Plan the Board resolved to include provision for a social planner position funded by Function 512, Regional Growth Strategy Service. Staff have consulted broadly with stakeholders concerning the scope of the position, confirmed such details with the Board and now plan to undertake a recruitment process later this summer.

### **CONTACT**

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