

July 30, 2014

Chamber Endorsement of Cool Aid's Housing Campaign

To whom it may concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce to endorse the Victoria Cool Aid Society's planned contribution to end homelessness in the Capital Region by building and renovating 360 supportive housing apartments by 2018. Cool Aid's plan shows ambition – the ambition needed to end homelessness in the region. Ending homelessness would improve the community's quality of life, health and police/justice services for *all* residents, businesses and tourists.

In particular, The Chamber supports the following projects identified for development in the Cool Aid Housing Plan, all of which will be staffed 24/7:

1. Cottage Grove: 45 apartments for seniors located in Saanich at 3207 Quadra, near Tolmie, on an undeveloped property owned by Cool Aid.
2. Cedar Grove: a net increase of 39 supportive housing apartments for people who are homeless by redeveloping a property at 210 Gorge Road East currently owned and operated by Cool Aid.
3. Additional suitable properties, as identified.

Chamber policy calls for a federal strategy to end homelessness that includes a housing-first orientation with a top priority to develop new supportive housing. The Chamber recognizes that the prevention and elimination of homelessness will reduce government costs while dramatically improving the lives and abilities of hundreds of people in Greater Victoria.

On average, each homeless person in British Columbia costs the public system in excess of \$55,000 per year, while the provision of adequate housing with supportive services is estimated to reduce this cost to \$37,000 per year. According to an SFU study, housing would allow an overall cost avoidance of about \$211 million per year in BC alone. Reducing and eliminating homelessness will also lower the costs of businesses coping with the situation today where hundreds of people remain without housing of any kind in our community.

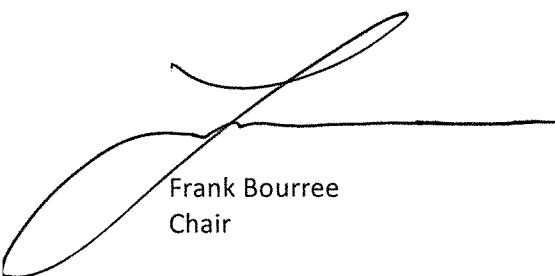
Homelessness has a direct financial impact on businesses because it deters customers, damages employee recruitment and retention, harms tourism and discourages companies from setting up offices in areas with a visible homeless population.

The Chamber, and myself, are proud of our own leadership to end homelessness in the region. Some of the actions we have taken include:

- The Chamber is an active participant in the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, where I am a director and sit on the Leadership Council.
- In 2010, the Victoria Chamber co-sponsored a national Chamber resolution brought forward by the Burnaby Board of Trade calling on the federal government to develop a national housing strategy to deal with homelessness. The policy, which was an update of the Victoria policy brought to the CCC in 2007, was also supported by delegates.
- Many Chamber members actively support various organizations, including Cool Aid, that are working to end homelessness in the community. As well, many members provide direct support to people who are homeless in a variety of ways, such as the provision of food and employment opportunities.

Greater Victoria is fortunate to have such a long-serving and competent organization as the Victoria Cool Aid Society, who is working to end homelessness. The society has opened up nine buildings in the last ten years, and has the strong business sense to successfully deliver 360 new supportive housing apartments for people who are currently not housed. Cool Aid deserves the strong support of the business community and government to implement this vision that will improve the life of the community immeasurably.

Sincerely,



Frank Bourree
Chair