



Mayor and Council
Corporation of the Township of Esquimalt
1229 Esquimalt Road
Esquimalt, BC, V9A 3P1

July 27, 2017

Dear Mayor and Council:

I am writing to request financial support to be used to offset the costs of running our Counselling Services – *mental health and supportive counselling for adults*. This request is primarily to provide financial help for this year – not an ongoing request.

Our organization has offered free and accessible (*meeting people where they are at, at no cost, days/evenings/weekends, and sooner rather than later*) mental health and supportive counselling, for 22 years. 70% of people accessing are residents of Esquimalt. Our program is 1 of 2 free mental health counselling services offered. The other free service is provided by The Salvation Army's paid clinical mental health workers specifically targeting people who have completed prison sentences.

Six years ago, Island Health shifted mental health funds from the Capital Regional District to address the needs in other areas of Vancouver Island. Unfortunately, that shift in funds, directly impacted our Counselling Services. Since then, we have managed to keep this 'essential' mental health service operating through small grants and donations; in the meantime, we continually strive to secure more sustainable funding.

Our Counselling Service is a community volunteer based program that provides short-term supportive counselling to vulnerable people presenting with mental health issues (such as anxiety, depression, trauma); as well as with issues impacting their mental health (poverty – food security, housing, safety, abuse, poor health, grief). Our Counselling Service offers preventive, risk-reducing, meaningful support for adults of all ages who may be experiencing pain, stress, anger, hopelessness and isolation. Annually, we train 15-16 new volunteers in our 10-month training program. Upon graduation, our volunteers go on to providing counselling support to the many clients self-referred and otherwise referred to us from Island Health, family doctors, psychiatrists, social workers, police victim services, probation, schools, employment programs and others.

This year and as notified most recently, one of our main supporters, the Provincial Employees Community Services Fund (PECSF), were unable to continue funding this service. The PECSF has generously supported our free and accessible mental health counselling, for the past 6 years. This year we were counting on receiving approximately \$25,000 through their generosity; however this support was never intended to be long term. We are hoping The Township of Esquimalt will help us get past this financial hurdle. We will continue to look for other areas of financial support. If The Township of Esquimalt decides to help us, we will gladly return any unused funds, in the event we are successful in securing other funds. The Township of Esquimalt provided short-term financial help for this same 'essential' community service about six years ago – we truly appreciated that support and are hoping The Township of Esquimalt can help again.

I would gladly provide additional information to assist in your decision. Thank you for considering our request!

Sincerely,

Mary Lynn McKenna
Executive Director