



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9th, 2009

SOCIAL PLANNING COWICHAN MEETS WITH VIHA

On Monday, June 22nd Social Planning Cowichan representatives met with Georgina MacDonald, Vice President of Planning for the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the seniors residential health care situation in the Cowichan Region as reported in *Implications of Regional Growth in Cowichan: Part One (2008)*, and to request a more collaborative and community based approach to research and planning of seniors residential health care needs.

VIHA's goal for planning of seniors complex care beds and assisted living units found in the organization's Five Year Strategic Plan states "We are planning towards an overall goal of between 95 and 100 complex care beds and assisted living units for every 1,000 residents aged 75 and over. Currently in the Cowichan Region we have 87 assisted living units and 497 complex care beds serving our 75 + population of approximately 7, 122. We estimate that VIHA has fallen short of their goal to provide residential care beds to seniors in Cowichan by 93 to 128 beds.

In an effort to work with the health authority to better understand the need in the Cowichan Region for seniors care Social Planning Cowichan requested that VIHA track and make public waitlists showing the number of seniors awaiting assessment for residential care; the number of seniors awaiting residential care; and the number of Seniors relocated to other areas due to a lack of spaces in Cowichan. MacDonald indicated that she would have someone from Home and Community Care contact Social Planning Cowichan to discuss this issue, to date we have not heard back from anyone.

MacDonald did mention that VIHA was looking at a community consultation process similar to that used in the North end of the Island in the Mt. Waddington area (Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice, Zebellos, Sointula and Cormorant Island) but, she did state that she did not expect that there would be any money in the upcoming years budget for the provision of additional residential care beds for the Cowichan Region. Michael Pennock, Epidemiologist, Co-lead, Public Population Health Observatory; Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) has been assigned to Cowichan to begin work with the community in planning for the health care needs for all citizens of the Cowichan Region.

"Community groups, including Social Planning Cowichan are eagerly awaiting the community consultation process which we hope will be a collaborative and community based approach which results in relief to our overtaxed health care system & services here in Cowichan" states Candace Spilsbury, Past Chair, Social Planning Cowichan.

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