

March 1, 2001

MOA No. 5040-20

Kim Marshall, Director  
Mental Health Centre (Okanagan Similkameen Health Region)  
1340 Ellis St.  
Kelowna, B.C.  
V1Y 1Z8

*Draft*

Dear Ms. Marshall:

Re: Referral for Locating Housing for Mental Health Clients

It has come to the City's attention, through its Community Housing Needs Committee, that the means by which various agencies are securing housing for their clients with mental illnesses or disabilities lack coordination and funding. The City agrees that safe and secure housing for these people is essential to their health and can prevent high costs of hospitalization and worsening conditions for mental health clients who fail to secure adequate housing.

As a result of letters of support received from Colleen Evans, the Central Okanagan Mental Health Advocate and Mavis N. Richardson, Forensic Liaison Worker, the Committee heard of the work that is being conducted by Gerry Mann. Mr. Mann is a mental health services client, who is providing referral services to various mental health agencies. He initiated this work under the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) with the provision of some seed money. Now the seed money has run out, Mr. Mann continues to offer these services and is paying his expenses out of his savings account. The fact that agencies in the City are referring mental health clients to Mr. Mann, a client himself, with no compensation for his expenses does not seem fair. Mr. Mann advised the City that the task of finding housing with a housing allowance of \$325/month is extraordinarily stressful to mental health clients, and he tries to save them from this stress by locating housing for them. Mr. Mann has had 163 clients to date and has been able to place 138 for a success rate of 78%. Currently, Mr. Mann has 18 clients. It was clear to the City that Mr. Mann's health may also be threatened by the stress of providing this service when he is receiving a disability allowance for his own mental illness. Agencies identified as referring clients to Mr. Mann to locate housing include:

- McNair Unit and Crisis Stabilization Unit– Kelowna General Hospital
- Okanagan Independent Living Society
- Central Okanagan Brain Injury Society
- Mental Health Centre
- Forensic Psychiatric Services
- John Howard Society
- Salvation Army
- Community Care Workers
- B.C. Schizophrenia Society (pays \$50/month for gas mileage)
- Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security – Financial Assistance Workers
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Central Okanagan Mental Health Advocate
- Various Churches

*Draft*

March 2, 2001

The City has also received a grant application from the CMHA for a housing registry to serve mental health clients in this year's round of Community Social Development grants. This grant program cannot provide on-going funding. There is clearly a need to provide a centralized service of this nature to ensure that mental health clients are properly housed. The cost of not doing so far exceeds the benefits, due to the crisis situations generated by mental health clients without housing who are therefore unable to manage their health problems or gain control over other aspects of the lives.

The City strongly advises that this Health Region provide long term funding to support a properly managed, centralized housing referral service for mental health clients. Whether or not this service uses its own clients to provide referral services, and which agency provides the service, should be decided by mental health care professionals. The CMHA indicates that such a service would require an annual budget of approximately \$8,000. In the budget presented to the City, \$2,000 is requested from the City, and no funding is anticipated from the Okanagan Similkameen Health Region. The City would appreciate a response to this letter.

Yours truly,

Mayor Walter Gray, on behalf of City Council

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