



November 10, 2023

The Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Dear Deputy Premier Farnworth,

On behalf of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, I would again like to sincerely thank you and your staff for securing funding earlier this year to enable another year of essential work by the Pacific Centre Family Services Association's Crime Reduction & Exploitation Diversion (CRED) program in association with Greater Victoria's Mobile Youth Services Team (MYST).

This said, we wish to echo our original advocacy letter of Oct. 7, 2022 (which was supported with motions from the CRD Board of Directors and municipal councils in Metchosin, Colwood and Sooke) by re-stating the following:

- * The critical need for stable, long-term funding for CRED/MYST;***
- * The extension of MYST police officer postings to five years given the extended period required for officers to deliver the unique skills required to work with vulnerable youth; and***
- * The creation of two additional CRED/MYST teams in Greater Victoria to deal with the rising case load.***

We have continued to hear this year from CRED's Mia Golden and her MYST partner, Constable Gord Magee from the Victoria Police Department. As the only two-person CRED/MYST team in the region, the pair continue to handle 150+ active case files involving children and teenagers at severe risk of exploitation, homelessness, sexualized violence, drug addiction and gang recruitment.

Ms. Golden noted at our Oct. 26 meeting that gang representatives from the lower mainland continue to recruit new members in Greater Victoria. These gangs include Glory Boys, Brothers' Keeper and Red Scorpion. The tide of violence on our streets is rising and online exploitation is increasingly normalized, she said. Young victims are experiencing trauma, including suicidal ideation. Even more disturbingly, the perpetrators themselves are often very young themselves.

VFCYJC members, who include municipal councillors, school district trustees and Capital Regional District appointees, recognize the complexity of these issues and applaud the response by all orders of government, your Ministry and Greater Victoria Integrated Police Units very much included.

On this latter subject, Const. Magee told us at a recent VFCYJC meeting that he believes 24/7 MYST service is required given the heavy case load of at-risk children, the necessary work required with parents and families, and the critical upstream intervention needed within the school system.

This round-the-clock effort would be possible if two additional councillor/police officer MYST teams were established, making three in all.

Sincerely,

Marie-Terese Little,
Chair, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee
<https://www.victoriafamilycourt.ca>

cc Regional Governance Council - Integrated Police Units
Kevin Murdoch, Co-Chair, RGU-IPU
Paula Kully, Executive Assistant, Oak Bay Police Department

cc Premier David Eby
cc Hon. Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development
cc Hon. Grace Lore, Minister of State for Child Care
cc Hon. Niki Sharma, Attorney General
cc Hon. Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
cc Liz Nelson, Executive Director, Pacific Centre Family Services Association
cc CRD Chair Colin Plant
cc CRD Vice Chair Maja Tait
cc CRD Municipalities
cc SD#61, SD#62, SD#63, SD#93
cc Mitzi Dean Esquimalt-Metchosin Constituency Office