



TOWN OF GIBSONS

PO Box 340
474 South Fletcher Road
Gibsons BC | V0N 1V0

T 604-886-2274

F 604-886-9735

info@gibsons.ca

www.gibsons.ca

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THE HONOURABLE ADRIAN DIX

Minister of Health for British Columbia

Re: Long Term Care Beds – Sunshine Coast

Dear Minister Dix,

As you are aware from the recent letter from the Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice, the long-term care shortage in our community of the Sunshine Coast continues to severely worsen.

This is a crisis. This long delay in adding new beds has not only had a damaging impact on our vulnerable seniors, but is also causing a massive, and growing, drain on resources at our Sechelt/*shishalh* Hospital for all Sunshine Coast residents.

As you know, in Gibsons we have a site that is shovel-ready to address this crisis; it is zoned appropriately, it can easily be connected to services/utilities, it has community and Council support to be used for publicly funded long-term care, it is close to community amenities for residents and visitors, and it even has a covenant that specifies its use for “community health care.”

If we can all learn anything from this process so far, it should be that these integral factors were overlooked when the RFP was initially awarded to a proposed site that was nowhere near as ready to be built and supported.

We understand some of the delay has been due to concerns of location, although Christenson Village next-door has proven to serve the Sunshine Coast extremely well as a long-term care facility. Close to half of the Sunshine Coast’s population lives within a twelve-minute drive to Shaw Road. Sechelt and the *shishalh* Nation are about a twenty-five-minute drive. If some of the concerns about the proximity for relatives/friends of residents were applied to other rural long-term care facilities in BC, your health authorities would need to ensure that a facility were built in every municipality and First Nation territory in the province. Accordingly, we don’t feel this is a fair standard to be applied to the Sunshine Coast only.

We also shouldn’t forget the reality that many visits and supports to residents in fact come from off-Coast, via the Langdale ferry, including by healthcare professionals and services from the Lower Mainland. Furthermore, although the Sechelt/*shishalh* Hospital is twenty minutes from Gibsons, and

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“Nature is our most valuable asset”

actually does need to be accessed on an emergency basis as well as to visit patients and professionals, its proximity is typically not expressed as a problem for Gibsons Area residents.

We've heard your government's concern with maintaining wages, benefits and job security for unionized workers at Totem and Shorncliffe, and we can't agree more. These workers are our community members. But the location has no bearing on this issue, and should not be conflated with whatever important discussions have been taking place to accommodate our health-care workers. The Shaw Road site is still best-prepared to immediately address our region's long-term care crisis, especially in light of the long delays that the Sunshine Coast has already been having to endure.

In short, we continue to be ready to do our part to address this regional crisis. We are prepared to work with Vancouver Coastal Health to issue a development permit for construction of any facility offering publicly funded, long-term care to start within two months. The Town of Gibsons is offering VCH a solution to address long-term care *now*, not another proposal susceptible to more unacceptable delays.

We also call upon VCH and the Government of British Columbia to immediately allocate *more* long-term care beds to our region, perhaps even in the form of renovations to Shorncliffe or Totem. Whether the addition of the next set of beds takes two more years, or at least several as this current RFP will end up taking, both VCH's statistics and local knowledge make it emphatically clear that the Sunshine Coast needs more new beds than the 25 we've already been waiting for, for too long.

Your truly,



Silas White
Deputy Mayor

Cc:
Nicholas Simons – MLA, Powell River – Sunshine Coast
Frank Mauro – Director, Sunshine Coast Regional District
Mary Ackenhusen – President & Chief Executive Officer, VCH
Lauren Tindall – Director, Sechelt Hospital
Jim Petzold MD – Lead Physician, Residential Care Committee
Sunshine Coast Divisions of Family Practice
Editor – Coast Reporter, Sechelt
Editor – The Local, Sechelt

