**UBCM 2021 Meeting Notes: Monday, September 13 21 at 2:00pm**

**Issue: Opioid Crisis, Treatment Facility for Addiction and Mental Health Issues**

**Attended by:**

**Town Of Gibsons:**

Mayor Beamish

Councillor Croal

**District of Sechelt:**

Mayor Darnelda Siegers

**SCRD:**

Chair Lori Pratt

**Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions:**

Hon. S. Malcolmson

Christine Mackie, D/Minister

**Minister Nicholas Simons, MLA also attended the meeting.**

**Background:**

The Sunshine Coast, like many other communities, has been impacted by the current opioid crisis, which has resulted in homelessness, overdoses, increased crime and hardship for many individuals and families. This is occurring at a time when police resources are already stressed to provide an adequate and effective level of policing in our communities.

It is apparent that mental health and opioid problems disproportionally impacts the ability of our police to provide an adequate and effective level of policing and law enforcement in our community and that there are inadequate resources available on the coast to provide treatment beyond criminal sanctions.

Recently the RCMP advised that several police positions are not filled or that members have been temporarily reassigned (i.e. to FERRY Creek) and that decisions have been made to cut back on programs like youth and GIS. However, the problems on the coast persist and communities have to deal with mental health issues by their own means. When police do respond to mental health calls it requires 2 members to attend and will tie them up for several hours as they investigate, apprehend and transport people under the Mental Health Act to the hospital.

The Minister referred to the ongoing initiative to review the **BC Police Act** and Mayor Beamish informed her that he has made a presentation to the **Police Act Review Committee** on this issue and the need for resources to work with the RCMP in the community to respond, as a team to issues.

Mayor Beamish suggested that a greater effort is needed and that perhaps a task force approach involving several ministries, the RCMP and local governments to identify a model or models that would work to provide communities with appropriate response options. In some communities the RCMP and mental health workers work together to respond to mental health calls.

Mayor Beamish cited a very recent example of having to move a squatter from public property and then have Town employees deal with the very significant amount of garbage and filth left behind. Not onoy is this a drain in our workers, it is a significant costly to deal with a homeless and mentally disturbed person who should be in care or supportive housing. Minister Malcolmson also referred to this as an example of a ‘complex care issue’ and suggested that the government is working to develop options to deal with cases like the one referred to.

The lack of any appropriate in-patient treatment for addicts and others with mental health issues was discussed.

Mayor Siegers indicated she received a letter from the Chair of the Sechelt Fire Protection District indicating that calls for pre-hospital medical assistance as First Responders by volunteer Fire Fighters have increased 100% from 2010 to 2019 and another 100% since 2020. Volunteer fire fighters are stressed and experiencing high levels of burn out. The opioid crisis, BCEHS staffing shortages and the pandemic have pushed the situation to crisis levels. This is unsustainable and, if it continues, the SVFD will have to make adjustments to their medical response model to ensure the health and safety of their volunteers and their ability to provide fire and rescue services to the taxpayers.

Request:

1. That Police resources & funding be provided to work with people impacted by crime from the opioid crisis & mental health issues.
2. A study be initiated to determine what in-patient facility would serve people with addiction & mental health issues on the Sunshine Coast & be established within 2 years.

Deputy Minister Mackie committed to following up with the Town on this issue.

B Beamish