By Email: planning@northcowichan.ca

October 28, 2026

Planning Department
Municipality of North Cowichan
7030 Trans-Canada Highway
Duncan, BC V9L 6A1

Re: Letter of Intent – Temporary Use Permit for a Temporary Winter Shelter at the Math Annex, 2670 James Street (PID 005-738-369)

Dear Planning Staff:

The Cowichan Housing Association (CHA) is applying for a Temporary Use Permit to operate a temporary winter shelter in the existing Math Annex at the former Cowichan Secondary School, 2670 James Street. The permit would be valid for one winter season and expire on May 14, 2027. The shelter would be delivered in partnership with the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) through Emergency Management Cowichan (EMC). The proposed use would provide a safe, warm, and professionally managed space for people experiencing homelessness during the cold, wet winter months and periods of extreme weather, while supporting a coordinated regional response to winter shelter needs. CHA is applying as agent for the registered owner, The Board of School Trustees of School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley), whose authorization is provided in the attached Agent Authorization.

- **Site:** The Math Annex is a portable complex comprising units P6–P12, installed in 1999, in the southwest corner of the school site adjacent to Elvins Street. The legal description is Lot 1, Section 18, Range 6, Quamichan District, Plan 7264, Except Plan 695RW.
- **Use:** The premises would accommodate the Cowichan region's 2026/27 Temporary Winter Shelter (TWS) and Extreme Weather Response (EWR) program, funded by BC Housing.
- **Capacity:** Approximately 25 TWS beds would be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the season, with approximately 10 additional EWR beds available only on nights when an extreme weather alert is issued.
- **Works:** Proposed work is limited to interior fit-out, including beds, furnishings and any life-safety measures required by Building and Fire officials, and the temporary placement of waste dumpsters, privacy fencing around the Math Annex, and two 20-foot storage containers, as shown on the attached site plan. No additions, new buildings, or changes to the zoning or Official Community Plan are proposed.
- **Access and parking:** Existing school driveways and parking would remain in use, with no changes proposed.

The proposed shelter would address an important community need by providing people experiencing homelessness with a safe, warm place to stay during the winter. The previous season's program operated from a leased motel in Duncan that is no longer available for this use.

The program delivers benefits beyond immediate shelter. Of the 25 people accommodated in 2025/26, 11 progressed to the next step toward permanent housing. Continuing this service would sustain a vital pathway to housing stability while protecting vulnerable residents from winter weather. The partnership between CHA and the CVRD also supports a coordinated community response, linking local program administration with EMC.

The Math Annex is an existing, weatherproof building of suitable size, located on serviced land that is no longer used for classroom instruction. Its use would allow existing community infrastructure to address immediate seasonal needs. Without this location, the alternative would be a modular facility on leased land, which would provide fewer beds and reduced operating hours.

A Temporary Use Permit is an appropriate mechanism for this limited, seasonal proposal. The use is requested for a single winter season, and the work is limited to the interior fit-out and temporary site items described above. Approval would not affect the long-term use of the property, which remains a decision for School District No. 79.

The shelter would be managed by a BC Housing pre-qualified operator under a formal agreement, with staff on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week. CHA would serve as the local program manager, overseeing day-to-day administration and coordinating with BC Housing in partnership with the CVRD through EMC. This partnership is central to the proposed delivery model. The following operating and neighbourhood measures would support responsible site management:

- **Daily operation:** Meals would be catered, with no commercial cooking on site. Sleeping areas would be communal, with washrooms on site and showers provided off site. Established intake protocols would govern guest admission.
- **School district oversight:** CHA and School District No. 79 (SD79) would meet monthly to review operations, concerns and neighbourhood impacts.
- **Community liaison:** A plan prepared with the approval of SD79 would address incident response and communication protocols.
- **Contact:** A designated contact would always be available to neighbours, the Municipality and the RCMP.
- **Compliance:** The shelter will operate in accordance with the Building, Fire and permit conditions established by the Municipality. The operator is responsible for on-site compliance under its agreement with BC Housing; CHA, as local program manager, will monitor compliance and serve as the Municipality's point of contact.

CHA's lease with School District No. 79 (SD79) runs from November 1, 2026, to April 30, 2027. Equipment removal, cleaning and site restoration would be completed by May 14, 2027. The lease is conditional on issuance of the Temporary Use Permit (TUP), and either party may terminate it if the TUP is not issued. CHA therefore requests a permit term ending May 14, 2027, and does not anticipate seeking a renewal.

In view of the approaching winter season, CHA respectfully requests timely consideration of this application. We would be pleased to provide any additional information required and are available to attend a pre-application meeting on short notice.

Thank you for considering this application and the opportunity it presents to sustain an important community service. In partnership with the CVRD, CHA is committed to delivering a professionally managed winter shelter that offers a safe place to stay, supports progress toward permanent housing, and maintains clear communication with neighbours and public agencies.

Yours truly,



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