



April 28, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing to lend my voice to the growing number of community leaders stepping forward in support of the establishment of an Accredited International Clubhouse in Greater Victoria.

In March 2014 a group of moms came to see me at City Hall. They all have adult children struggling with mental health challenges. They had recently learned of the Clubhouse International approach to psychosocial rehabilitation during a visit to the Pathways Clubhouse in Richmond B.C. They sat me down, shared their stories, and outlined the struggles their children face. They then outlined the gaps in the continuum of care in Greater Victoria and pointed to Clubhouse as a patient-centered, recovery-based, employment-focused approach to psychosocial rehabilitation.

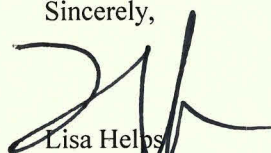
They said they were advocating for the establishment of their a Clubhouse in Greater Victoria not only for their own children, but for other adult children, already homeless, already street-entrenched who don't have "mom's like us," as they said.

Since our initial meeting in March 2014 I've been working with the parents group to help bring together relevant stakeholders and make something happen. What moved me to help is that the Clubhouse model is focused on a work-ordered day. In the Clubhouse, members (not patients!) work alongside staff. And, in order to become accredited, Clubhouses must have a transitional employment program where they partner with local businesses who agree to hire Clubhouse members. If a member is unable to attend her/his shift at the business, a staff member fills in so their employer is not put out. Access to meaningful, regular work is a key challenge for people living with mental health challenges, yet it is so important for dignity and empowerment.

In the many months that have followed, mental illness, homelessness, lack of affordable housing and poverty are reaching a crisis level in Greater Victoria and in the City of Victoria in particular. As a result, our most vulnerable residents are struggling and need our care, support and attention. While the City of Victoria is taking proactive measures to combat these concerns, it can't be overstated the value that an accredited Clubhouse would provide to the citizens of our region. Since our largest challenge is prevention, and to help people *before* they end up on the streets, the Clubhouse model would have a major role in the resolution process.

To put it simply, the innovative Connections Place initiative to develop a Clubhouse in the Greater Victoria region is just the type of hands-on community problem solving that we need to encourage. This evidence-based model is a model well worth piloting as homelessness, mental health and housing affordability continue to affect those in our region. The social return on investment is high and the potential savings in policing and health care/acute care costs could be significant. I look forward to continue working with the Mom's Like Us, Island Health and others to move this initiative to fruition.

Sincerely,



Lisa Helps
Mayor of Victoria