



## Calgary Drop-In Board Conducting Independent Workplace Culture Review

Members of the Board of Directors of the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Society (DI) are deeply concerned about the allegations of inappropriate behaviour that have recently been levelled at the organization through the media by a few former employees. The Board and leadership of the organization are taking these allegations extremely seriously and responding appropriately.

Commenting on this situation, DI Board Chair Ken Uzeloc said, "For an organization with respect and kindness as two of its core values, it is highly troubling to hear these allegations. Everyone should be able to expect a safe and inclusive workplace. The DI can be a stressful environment, because staff are so often dealing with people in crisis. We are also an organization that believes deeply in giving people second chances, including employees. But tolerance for occasional mistakes cannot be used as an excuse for disrespectful behaviour or shaming people who speak up to voice concerns."

The DI cannot comment on any of the specific allegations because they are personnel matters and the privacy of all individuals involved must be respected. However, the Board has followed through with independent investigations of all serious allegations that have been brought to its attention, and has responded to breaches of policy with appropriate actions where required.

The DI leadership team, supported by the Board, has been working for some time on improving the organization's human resources practices, having established a strategic objective in 2013 of becoming an employer of choice. Efforts over the last few years include:

- Strengthening policies and procedures to ensure best practices in human resources management and workplace protections;
- Instituting a psychological health and safety program in the workplace, through the Mental Health Commission of Canada;
- Bringing on a third-party ombudsperson, which is a confidential service for staff that can also assist with conflict resolution;
- Hiring a trauma counsellor to be available to staff to deal with any personal or workplace concerns;
- Conducting surveys to measure employee satisfaction; and
- Launching a *Respect in the Workplace* training program for all staff (delivery to begin this spring).

Following recent events, the Board of Directors of the DI is also reinstating a thorough independent review to understand the current workplace culture and to determine whether further changes are required. This review continues a process that the Board started some time ago but was required to suspend when it launched a formal investigation into an allegation that was subsequently discussed in the media. The Board will seek independent expertise and will continue to work closely with its funders. The Board expects this review to take several weeks.



DI Executive Director Debbie Newman added, "These allegations have been upsetting for the DI team and for me personally. As the leader of the organization, I am reflecting on what I personally can do to ensure that every employee is proud to work here. Our employees do wonderful work, providing approximately 3,000 meals and sheltering more than 1,000 people every day of the year. We need to ensure that they can do so in a supportive, respectful environment free from harassment or intimidation."

For 50 years, the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre (the DI) has been a community of kindness. Each year, more than 10,000 Calgarians experiencing homelessness, marginalization and extreme poverty count on the DI for access to affordable housing, health services, community resources and emergency shelter supports. The DI offers a complete range of programs and services, including affordable housing and the accompanying supports needed to keep people healthy and housed.

**Monday, Feb. 26, 2018**