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Government of Canada, through Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund, Supports Launch of North Okanagan Rural Response Initiative

Lumby & Cherryville, BC — May 12, 2026 — The Village of Lumby is pleased to announce the launch of the North Okanagan Rural Response initiative, made possible through funding from the Government of Canada via Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund (ETF). This collaborative project will expand access to integrated, culturally safe substance use and mental health services for residents of Lumby, Cherryville, and surrounding rural electoral areas.

The North Okanagan Rural Response initiative brings together key community partners, including the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Vernon, Whitevalley Community Resource Centre, Cherryville Community Food & Resource Society, and local Indigenous partners. Together, they will deliver trauma-informed, mobile outreach services designed to meet people where they are, addressing barriers such as stigma, transportation challenges, and limited access to care in rural communities.

"This investment from the Government of Canada, through Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund, represents a significant step forward in supporting the health and wellbeing of our rural residents," said Lumby Mayor Kevin Acton. "By working collaboratively and meeting people directly in their communities, we are building a more responsive, compassionate, and effective system of care."

The initiative will offer a range of services, including:

- Mobile outreach support for youth ages 12–24
- Mental health engagement, supports, and prevention programming
- Harm reduction education
- Peer support training
- Indigenous-led healing circles and culturally grounded programming

Through these coordinated efforts, the project aims to strengthen local capacity to prevent overdoses, support recovery journeys, and address critical gaps in wraparound care. A strong emphasis is placed on culturally relevant and community-based approaches, ensuring services are inclusive and respectful of the diverse populations they serve.

THE CORPORATION OF THE VILLAGE OF LUMBY

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“We recognize that local and Indigenous communities are best positioned to understand the impacts of this crisis and the unique needs of their people,” said the Honourable Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health. “Their leadership ensures that care is delivered with compassion, respect, and cultural understanding. The initiatives announced today expand access to substance use health services, strengthen social supports, and enhance the availability of culturally appropriate programming for those who need it most.”

“In rural communities like Cherryville, residents often face significant gaps in accessing the full range of supports they need, from mental health care and substance use services to basic social supports,” said Meghan Derkach, Executive Director of the Cherryville Community Food & Resource Society. “This project is critical to help build a more complete, wraparound system of care right here in our community, connecting people to the right services at the right time and ensuring no one falls through the cracks simply because of where they live.”

“This initiative reflects the importance of meeting people where they are, not only with substance use services but with meaningful mental health support and early engagement,” said Christine Lishman, Executive Director of Whitevalley Community Resource Centre. “By strengthening prevention efforts and creating more opportunities for connection, we are helping individuals and families access the supports they need sooner and building stronger, healthier rural communities.”

By expanding access to essential supports across the rural North Okanagan, and with CMHA Vernon supporting service delivery in rural areas by working alongside and taking the lead from community partners who know their communities best, the initiative promotes early intervention, improves health outcomes, and enhances overall community wellbeing.

The Village of Lumby extends its sincere thanks to the Government of Canada, through Health Canada’s Emergency Treatment Fund, for its leadership and commitment to addressing substance use and mental health challenges in rural communities.

This project is one of several initiatives funded across Canada through Health Canada’s Emergency Treatment Fund, which supports communities in responding to the ongoing toxic drug crisis. Through investments in treatment, harm reduction, mental health services, and community-based supports, the fund is helping expand access to essential services nationwide, with a focus on addressing gaps in care in underserved and rural regions.

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