

August 22, 2022

Dear Mayor and Council:

I write to you today to express my concern over the hours the Youth Center is open to youth in the Municipality of Whistler.

I watched with interest the presentation by Jackie Dickinson, the Executive Director of Whistler Community Services. She shared with you the results of a prevention needs assessment survey taken in 2021. In the survey of grade 6 to 12 students, 100 indicated they had considered suicide in the past year. This should be very concerning to us as a community. Ms. Dickinson stated: "Meeting people where they are at, and where they feel safe is very important"

The Youth Center is such a place. I have been a leader of the Interact program which uses the Youth Center space. The Interact Program is a Rotary Program for high school students building leadership skills and raising funds for projects locally and internationally. I have had an opportunity to speak to youth in the Youth Center. The youth feel safe in this space and the staff are excellent, available and well trained. Students suffering with mental health issues will not speak to people they do not trust.

The communities of Squamish and Pemberton keep their Youth Center open five days a week while Whistler's Youth Center is only open three days a week.

I ask that you consider recommending to staff the opening of the Youth Center 5 days a week. I believe it is the right thing to do.

Anette Martin

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