

DATE OF MEETING November 25, 2019

AUTHORED BY LAURA MERCER, DIRECTOR, FINANCE

SUBJECT **NANAIMO POLICE BASED VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report:**

At the 2019-NOV-18 Council meeting, Council directed Staff to prepare a report regarding the \$100,000 funding request from the Victim Services Program.

## **BACKGROUND**

There are ninety-two (92) police victim services programs operating out of BC's RCMP and municipal police departments. In these programs dedicated staff, sometimes supported by highly trained, security cleared volunteers from their community, work directly with police. They provide emotional support, information, community referrals court support, assistance with forms and crisis intervention to victims, and some witnesses, of all kinds of crime and trauma. They do not provide counselling but make appropriate referrals to counselling services in the community.

Some detachments within BC have staff that are either public service employees or exempt municipal employees. This ensures that the program will remain in place for the community in which they serve and funding will keep up with the needs of the service

### **Provincial Legislation**

In British Columbia, two key pieces of legislation guide the delivery of victim services:

1. The *Victims of Crime Act*, and
2. The *Crime Victim Assistance Act*.

Under the *Victims of Crime Act*, if you are a victim of crime in BC, you are entitled to receive information about:

- The victim services available to you
- The opportunity to have admissible evidence concerning the impact of the offence presented to the court before sentence is imposed for the offence
- The benefits and financial assistance for criminal injury
- How the criminal justice system works
- The status of the police investigation
- The charges laid against the offender
- The status of the court case
- The outcome of court appearance
- The administration of the offender's sentence such as length of sentence, location of jail, eligibility and review dates of the offender's custody status

- Your rights to privacy

The *Crime Victim Assistance Act* applies to those who have been injured physically or psychologically as a result of certain crimes. Under this *Act*, victims of certain types of crime are eligible for compensation to assist with the costs of criminal injuries. For example, one may qualify for counselling expenses or medical expenses not covered by medical service plan and income support.

### Federal Legislation

On 2015-JUL-23, the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights came into force providing victims of crimes with statutory rights at the federal level to information, protection, participation and restitution, and ensures that a complaint process is in place for breaches of these rights. The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights:

- defines who victims of crime are and who can act on their behalf.
- legislates the rights of victims to: Information, Protection, Participation and Restitution.
- sets out conditions limiting the exercising of rights and administering of the bill.
- introduces new measures to support rights to information, protection, participation, restitution and remedy.

### Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services

Nanaimo Victim Services was established in Nanaimo prior to 1989 and was funded by the Province and the City of Nanaimo. Their office was located in the Community Services Building on Fitzwilliam Street with one (1) manager and one (1) volunteer.

In 1994, the Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services Society was incorporated.

In 2004, a new manager was hired following the retirement of the previous manager. Along with hire of the new manager, the Society also provided funding for an assistant manager and the volunteers continued to support the two (2) staff members. By 2004, Victim Services had moved into the old library building on Fitzwilliam Street alongside the Community Policing Unit of the Nanaimo Detachment.

Today, the Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services is a non-profit society with three (3) main funding sources:

1. The Province – Ministry of Solicitor General and Public Safety
2. The City of Nanaimo
3. Regional District of Nanaimo

The Society, which funds the services of one (1) full time program manager, one (1) full time assistant manager, and two (2) part time staff members that work a total of three (3) days per week runs the Nanaimo RCMP Victim Services program. Eight (8) volunteers support the paid members of the Nanaimo Victim Services Unit.

Staff and volunteers can provide information of the status of a police investigation and the justice system. They can also assist with filling out Crime Victim Assistance Forms, Victim Impact Statements, Correctional Services of Canada Forms and Restitution.

Staff also provide information on the role of the various players in the justice system, the practicalities of testifying as a witness and updates on court appearances and accompany victims and witnesses to court.

The Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services now resides within the RCMP Nanaimo Detachment at 303 Prideaux Street where they presently have their office space. Each manager has an office and there are two (2) workstations for the volunteers and the part time paid staff.

Summary of Funding 2010 – 2019:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Operating Grant	\$ 48,229	\$ 48,229	\$ 48,229	\$ 48,229	\$ 53,229	\$ 53,229	\$ 53,229	\$ 53,229	\$ 53,229	\$ 53,229
Space Rental Grant	6,809	6,809	6,809	6,809	6,809	6,809	6,809	6,809	6,806	6,804
	<u>\$ 55,038</u>	<u>\$ 55,038</u>	<u>\$ 55,038</u>	<u>\$ 55,038</u>	<u>\$ 60,038</u>	<u>\$ 60,038</u>	<u>\$ 60,038</u>	<u>\$ 60,038</u>	<u>\$ 60,035</u>	<u>\$ 60,033</u>

**DISCUSSION**

At the 2019-NOV-13 Special Finance and Audit Committee meeting, Jennifer McAskill, Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services Society Board Co-Chair, and Cheryl Zapotichny, Nanaimo RCMP, Victim Services Program Manager, gave a presentation with the following ask:

- That the City of Nanaimo increase their funding of the program to cover two (2) full time positions, including benefits. (This request is equivalent to \$100,000),

or,

- If this is not possible, we request the City of Nanaimo increase their funding of the program to cover one (1) and a half full time positions, including benefits. (This request is equivalent to \$75,000.),

or,

- If this is not possible, we request the City of Nanaimo increase their funding of the program to cover one (1) full time position, including benefits. (This request is equivalent to \$50,000.)

At that meeting, the Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to prepare a report regarding the \$100,000 funding request from the Victim Services Program and that letters be sent to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and the Regional District of Nanaimo requesting that they increase funding to the Victim Services Program.

In their presentation, Ms. McAskill and Ms. Zapotichny expressed that the current workload and the complexity of the files is becoming too much for the small Victim Services group that supports the Nanaimo Detachment. Support is not only provided to primary victims, but also to secondary victims – family/friends/witnesses, etc. In any given week, one of the managers attends court with victims to provide support. In some weeks, they can attend court three (3) out of five (5) days.

Although the RCMP recognizes Victim Services to be an integral component of the continuum of comprehensive police services delivered to the citizens of Canada, E Division (Headquarters for the BC RCMP) provides no monetary support to the Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services Society. The service the RCMP provides is that the commanding officer of the Division recognizes the Society to enable them to provide the victim services program to the Nanaimo area. Support and/or guidance comes from the E Division Program Director.

There is always a risk that the Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services program could collapse at the Nanaimo Detachment due to funding and staffing challenges. Should that happen, it would become the responsibility of the RCMP members to provide these services to the public.

Staff are finding that funding for the program is not keeping pace with requirements. All volunteers and staff are required to pass an enhanced reliability security clearance, which sometimes can take up to a year to process. This along with the emotional demands of the position can make it challenging to attract and maintain volunteers. Additional staffing will help improve consistency of service for clients and compassion fatigue for staff and volunteers.

### Financial Implications

The funding for the Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services program is a line item in the 2019 – 2023 Financial Plan. As this is an ongoing operating cost, any increase to the budget will be funded from general taxation.

The approximate impact on the 2020 property tax increase is as follows:

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|---|-------|
| 1. Funding of two (2) new full time positions (\$100,000)         | 0.09% |
| 2. Funding of one and a half (1.5) full time positions (\$75,000) | 0.07% |
| 3. Funding of one (1) full time position (\$50,000)               | 0.05% |

### CONCLUSION

Based on the information presented, Council will need to determine what level, if any, of additional funding they will approve during the 2020 – 2024 Financial Plan deliberations.

### SUMMARY POINTS

- Victim Service programs operate out of RCMP and municipal police departments to provide emotional support, information, community referrals court support, assistance with forms and crisis intervention to victims, and some witnesses, of all kinds of crime and trauma.
- Nanaimo Victim Services was established in Nanaimo prior to 1989 and the Society was incorporated in 2004.
- Currently, the Nanaimo Victim Services has:
  - one (1) full time program manager,
  - one (1) full time assistant manager, and

- two (2) part time staff members
- eight (8) volunteers
- Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services has asked that the City of Nanaimo increase their funding of the program to cover two (2) full time positions, including benefits. (This request is equivalent to \$100,000).

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: 2019-NOV-13 Nanaimo Police Based Victim Services Presentation |

**Submitted by:**

Laura Mercer  
Director, Finance |

**Concurrence by:**

Anita Halabourda  
Manager, Police Support Services |