

ATTACHMENT H



**Royal Canadian
Mounted Police**

**Gendarmerie royale
du Canada**

Security Classification
/Designation
Classification/désignation

RCMP Nanaimo
303 Prideaux Street
Nanaimo, BC V9R 2N3

Your File - Votre référence

Our File - Notre référence

Mr. Dale Lindsay
General Manager, Development Services
City of Nanaimo
411 Dunsmuir Street
Nanaimo, BC V9R 0E4

Date

April 9, 2021

Re: Homeless Camps in Nanaimo

Nanaimo RCMP Resourcing

Nanaimo Detachment has been working in a high capacity workload environment for a significant number of years.

Further, due to addiction/mental health challenges, the number of police calls for services to check on the well-being and mental health related calls has increased from approximately 300 to 1200 per year.

The Bike Unit has no further capacity to take on additional roles.

If the City Council wants to pursue the Camp Format, it will require four (4) additional full bike members to conduct additional patrols on a 7-day a week basis.

Currently, we are unable to meet the demands of the Downtown Core areas with existing Bike members and have been relying on overtime shifts.

Under normal circumstances, overtime would not be an available option due to bar watch, city festivals and night markets.

CAMP

The history of tent cities within Nanaimo has demonstrated a very strong propensity for violence, weapons, and sexual exploitation. The criminality continued even with private security. Encampments have the potential to become a magnet for other criminal behaviours like drug dealing in surrounding areas. A Camp environment versus a tent city will not prevent weapons or drugs from entering into the sites.

Without sufficient detail, it is difficult to respond to a public safety perspective as the infrastructure and resources will vary the outcome considerably. On one end of the spectrum, we could see the security issues noted above, if done well, perhaps this attempt could see the opposite materialize quicker and cheaper than rolling out permanent or modular housing facilities.

The Cowichan model in concept does not vary greatly from any of our fully established permanent housing buildings. It is not an uncontrolled tent encampment. They are staffed (rotating), have rules and program agreements, service support, food provision, security measures and provide better shelter than the parks and doorways equating to a less stressed occupant.

To be successful, a camp would require additional personnel support through Provincial Partners, skilled private security and additional police resources. Any decision to proceed must also have a planned exit strategy that does not rely on the civil injunctions and Court authorizing police to remove individuals. The exit process must not contribute to the criminalization of homeless, nor did increase the risk to RCMP personnel who are ordered to physically remove protracted individuals.

Duncan/Cowichan has introduced the camp model because they lack the supportive housing equivalents of Labieux and Newcastle. Why would Nanaimo implement a model that is less than the supportive housing model? Tent models are being eliminated in other jurisdictions for the reasons stated above.

SUPPORT

Well-managed supportive housing units have reduced our calls for service in comparison to camp formats.

When facilities are not provided, theft occurs to support basic needs. The only potential benefit is from the individual, who is homeless, who may feel that the camp may afford some more safety and stability; however, the predator personality is likely to infiltrate the camp and still victimize others.

The tract record for Nanaimo is approximately one supportive housing facility every year or two over the past decade, which equates to about 40 to 50 people housed every few years.

Our street population has been growing faster than this, regardless of the capacity increase, so unless there was a major shift in political will, resources and funding we will never keep up. This leaves us a community in an untenable situation.

There are about a dozen factors applicable to housing street entrenched individuals that affect public safety and social disorder. Physical layout of the location, neighbourhood composition, staffing levels and quality, demographics of residents, legal arrangement of the accommodation, service provision to non-residents, collaboration, and resource commitment from stakeholders are some of the more important ones.

I spoke to the Watch Commander of the day and the local bylaws personnel and it was their opinion that the "Cowichan" model has been beneficial to the community; however, they do not have a supportive housing model to compare to the camps.

Lastly, I am wary that there may be an impression from those pursuing this model that housing will solve the bulk of disorder and petty crime in our neighbourhoods. While it helps, it is not a panacea as the smaller percentage of homeless, who display predator anti-social behaviour, have repeatedly shunned or not succeeded in our most robust and experienced programs and they will continue to target those who are more vulnerable and unwilling to protest or report.

Yours truly,

Inspector Lisa Fletcher, Acting Superintendent
Officer in Charge
Nanaimo RCMP Detachment