

DATE OF MEETING FEBRUARY 13, 2023

AUTHORED BY CHRISTY WOOD, SOCIAL PLANNER

SUBJECT BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES FUND – UPDATE AND CONSULTATION WITH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide Council with an update on the Building Safer Communities Fund and to receive input on risk and protective factors for children and youth connected to gun and gang violence.

BACKGROUND

In March 2022, Public Safety Canada announced new federal funding to address community safety through the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF). The objective of this fund is to help municipalities and Indigenous communities prevent gun and gang violence by addressing their root causes. The City of Nanaimo has been allocated \$1.8 million from Public Safety Canada until March 2026 to develop and implement a strategic plan to address gun and gang violence. At the 2022-JUL-04 Regular Council meeting, the following motion was passed by Council:

“It was moved and seconded that Council accept the funds from the Building Safer Communities Fund to address gun and gang violence, endorse Staff to use year one funds to build a 3 year strategic plan with pilot programs, and commit Staff to providing overall grant management.”

Since that time, the City has entered into a contribution agreement with Public Safety Canada, hired a project coordinator, and engaged consultants to support the development and implementation of Nanaimo’s Gun and Gang Violence Prevention Strategy (the Strategy).

DISCUSSION

The BSCF objective, as identified by Public Safety Canada, is to support communities by addressing local risk factors that put youth at risk of gun and gang violence, finding ways to support resiliency among youth, and to increase community safety. Developing Nanaimo’s Strategy will include identifying current risks and protective factors existing in Nanaimo, what programs are working well, where there may be gaps in supporting children and youth, and what evidence based programs and initiatives might work well for Nanaimo. An overview of the BSCF Project Activities for Year One are outlined in Attachment A.

Consultants and Staff are currently engaged in the consultation phase. In addition to the consultations with service providers and direct service workers, young people, parents, Newcomers, and Indigenous communities, the consultants and Staff would like to engage Council in a dialogue around challenges, needs, and ideas to prevent gun and gang violence in Nanaimo.

The consultation phase is expected to be complete by the end of February 2023. Staff will return to Council with a draft Strategy in March 2023 for endorsement prior to submitting to Public Safety Canada for final approval. The Strategy will include recommendations of new programs and initiatives to be implemented in Years Two to Four (2023 to 2026).

Risk factors and protective factors associated with youth gun and gang violence

Working upstream means addressing the underlying causes of gun and gang violence for youth by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors at the individual, family, peer, school, and societal levels. Risk factors are defined as negative influences in the lives of individuals or a community. They may increase the presence of violence, victimization, or fear of crime in a community and may increase the likelihood that individuals engage in violence or become victims. Protective factors are positive influences that can improve the lives of individuals or the safety of a community. These may decrease the likelihood that individuals engage in violence or become victims. Building on existing protective factors makes individuals and communities stronger and better able to counteract risk factors. For some examples of risk factors and protective factors, see Attachment B for a listing.

Thinking about risk factors and protective factors, the consultants and Staff will be consulting community stakeholders with the following questions:

Identifying Strengths and Concerns:

- What child/youth programs are you aware of in Nanaimo that specifically support children and youth that struggle?
- Which organizations and programs in your experience, do well in working with children and youth?
- In your experience, to what extent are gangs and guns an issue in Nanaimo? What are some key locations of concern?
- What risk factors do you think are present in Nanaimo that cause children/youth to become involved with gangs in the first place?

Identifying Opportunities and Solutions:

- What recommendations do you have to prevent and/or intervene with the reasons children/youth become involved in gangs (discussed in the previous question)? Consider programs, services, policies, etc.
- What do you think should be done in Nanaimo to support young people exiting gangs?

Sustaining the Momentum:

- If the community wants to have a lasting impact building on the strategy, what can organizations do now and into the future to keep up the momentum of prevention and intervention?
- More concretely, what can Council do to create lasting changes in the community (e.g., policies, programs, collaboration efforts, etc.)?

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- At the end of the 3 years of funding, how will we know if our strategy has been successful? What are the possible impacts on children, youth, and community safety in Nanaimo?
- In your opinion, what indicators can show us whether Nanaimo has been successful in achieving the goals for the strategy?

CONCLUSION

Council's input along with other key stakeholders will help to inform Nanaimo's Gun and Gang Violence Prevention Strategy by identifying local risk and protective factors for children and youth and help to build a safer Nanaimo by increasing youth resiliency. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City has been awarded \$1.8 million by Public Safety Canada's Building Safer Communities Fund to address gun and gang violence in Nanaimo over a four-year period.
- City Staff have hired consultants to develop a plan as well as staff coordinator to support the development and implementation of Nanaimo's Gun and Gang Violence Prevention Strategy.
- The Strategy will identify local risk and protective factors and will include recommendations on new programs and initiatives to be implemented in Years Two through Four (2023 – 2026).
- Council is being engaged to provide input on local risk and protective factors for children and youth in Nanaimo.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: BSCF Project Activities – Year One (December 2022 to 2023-JUN-30)

ATTACHMENT B: Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Youth Gang and Gun Violence Prevention |

Submitted by:

Lisa Brinkman
Manager, Community Planning

Damon Johnston
Manager, Recreation Services

Concurrence by:

Lisa Bhopalsingh
Director, Community Development

Darcie Osborne
Director, Recreation & Culture

Laura Mercer
Director, Finance

Supt. Lisa Fletcher
Officer in Charge, Nanaimo RCMP

Dale Lindsay
General Manager, Development Services
/Deputy CAO