



February 15, 2024

sent by email: minister-ministre@infc.gc.ca

The Honourable Sean Fraser
Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities
180 Kent Street, Suite 1100
Ottawa, ON K1P 0B6

Dear Minister Fraser,

Re: Designated Community Reaching Home Funding - Nanaimo

At the Regular Council meeting on January 15, 2024, Council for the City of Nanaimo unanimously passed a motion directing me to seek additional funding supports from the Federal Government of Canada through the Reaching Home program.

The City of Nanaimo has experienced a crisis-level influx of people experiencing homelessness. According to the *Estimate of Homeless Population in British Columbia* report, the number of individuals who experienced homelessness in Nanaimo in 2021 was 996. The findings of *Everyone Counts – Nanaimo Point-in-Time Count 2023*, counted in a 24 hour period, 515 individuals as homeless. This is an increase of 20% from the 2020 point-in-time count where 433 individuals were counted. 78.4% of those individuals counted in 2023 are unsheltered, meaning they have no access to shelter of any kind on a daily or nightly basis. There are only 63 year-round funded shelter beds in Nanaimo. Many people experiencing homelessness are unable to meet their basic needs and have little or no access to emergency shelters or housing due to the lack of services and supports available locally.

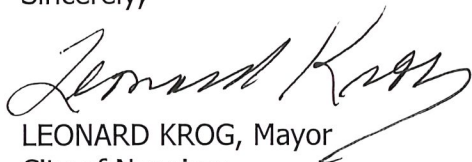
The Provincial government is responsible for health care and social services in British Columbia and the City works closely with our Provincial counterparts. The current Provincial funding framework reveals service gaps for people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo. For instance, there are only 109 shelter beds in Nanaimo provided by the Provincial government over the winter season. In response, the City provided \$496,763 to community partners to open three daytime warming centres from November 2023 to March 2024 to provide a warm, safe place for unsheltered people to access during cold weather. The City also provided \$212,559 in bridge funding to support Nanaimo's only breakfast meal program from August 2023 to December 2023 until Provincial funds could be allocated to provide stable funding. Unfortunately, these funds were not available and the breakfast meal is no longer being provided.

As you are aware, Nanaimo receives both the Designated and Indigenous Reaching Home funding streams and annually this provides the Nanaimo region \$773,522. In 2020, Nanaimo received additional funding to support the impacts of COVID-19 on those experiencing homelessness. For the past three years, this has provided a combined base of funding for \$1,703,686 annually and has assisted us in addressing homelessness and has provided supports for the agencies delivering much needed services in Nanaimo. We understand that Nanaimo's Designated Community Reaching Home funding will be reduced back to pre-pandemic levels, a reduction of almost 60%, in the 2025/2026 fiscal year. We are concerned about the decrease in funding levels and, as reflected in the data, Nanaimo's need has increased not decreased and note that the homelessness crisis in Nanaimo requires more federal support, not less. We also understand that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has engaged with both Infrastructure Canada as well as the Ministry of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to express the importance of the Reaching Home program and to reiterate the importance of community based homelessness funding at levels necessary to meet the scale of need that cities are facing.

We are asking the Federal Government and the Ministry of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to reconsider the decrease in funding levels and to scale up the Reaching Home program and make funding levels more sustainable to meet the urgent and growing need in Nanaimo.

We look forward to hearing back from you. In the meantime, should you have any questions or like to discuss this further, we would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,



LEONARD KROG, Mayor
City of Nanaimo

cc: Dale Lindsay, CAO, City of Nanaimo
Grace Kerr, Engagement and Program Officer, Infrastructure Canada: grace.kerr@infrc.gc.ca
Vicky Trill, Manager, Reaching Home Nanaimo: vickytrill@uwbc.ca