



BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 21, 2024

Reference: 66802

Chief Michael Wyse
Snuneymuxw First Nation
668 Centre Street
Nanaimo BC V9R 4Z4
Email: michaelw@snuneymuxw.ca

His Worship Leonard Krog
Mayor of the City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo BC V9R 5J6
Email: leonard.krog@nanaimo.ca

Dear Chief Wyse and Mayor Krog:

Thank you for your correspondence of April 2, 2024, addressed to the Honourable David Eby, Premier, regarding your request for funding for additional shelter spaces in the City of Nanaimo. As Minister of Housing, I am pleased to respond on behalf of Premier Eby.

I appreciate your commitment to support Nanaimo's most vulnerable community members. The Province remains committed to working with the City of Nanaimo to provide housing solutions for people in the community experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The Province, through BC Housing, is working with partners to provide people living outdoors and in encampments with better access to a range of support services, new shelters, and housing options through new programs funded by the Province under the Belonging in BC Homelessness Plan: Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH).

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**Office of the
Minister of Housing**

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Through this program, transitional housing locations are in development, including:

- 50 units at Newcastle Place (250 Terminal). These spaces are becoming available as the former tenants currently move to a new 51-unit supportive housing on Prideaux Street.
- 50 units at 1300 Island Highway South coming later this year.
- Additional sites are currently underway and in discussion between BC Housing, City staff, and non-profit organizations.

These spaces are also intended for people who have been staying long-term in shelters so as people enter this transitional housing, shelter spaces will be freed up.

Additionally, BC Housing is working to bring 35 permanent supportive housing units to 355 Nicol Street and 50 more units are in development, increasing the number of permanent, purpose-built supportive housing buildings in the community.

Nanaimo is also a priority community for the new Supported Rent Supplement Program, which provides a range of health and social supports to people as well as up to \$600-a-month for rent costs.

Currently, BC Housing is asking community partners to have planning underway for the 2024/2025 Extreme Weather Response shelter program. For more information, please contact Jennifer Fox, Island Regional Director, Operations, at jfox@bchousing.org for more information.

BC Housing continues to work on strategies to support the capital funds needed for the Salvation Army's expansion of the New Hope Centre. The site currently has 24 low-barrier emergency shelter spaces, and an expansion would add an additional 18 spaces. BC Housing is also working with the Salvation Army to complete an application for ongoing operating support.

Thank you again for writing. I look forward to continued engagement with the City of Nanaimo to create housing options that support the needs of people in the city.

Sincerely,



Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Housing

CC: The Honourable David Eby, KC, Premier
Donna Stennes



Snuneymuxw First Nation



2024-APR-02

Sent by email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Honourable David Eby
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V1X4

Dear Premier Eby:

RE: Funding Support for Shelter Space in the City of Nanaimo

We are writing today to bring attention to the acute and immediate need for shelter space for homeless individuals living in Snuneymuxw First Nation and the City of Nanaimo.

The findings of Everyone Counts – Nanaimo Point-in-Time Count 2023, counted 515 people as homeless in the City of Nanaimo. This is an increase in 20% from the 2020 point-in-time count where 433 individuals were counted. Homeless Point-in-Time counts are estimates and service providers in Nanaimo indicate that the real numbers of people experiencing homelessness are higher and likely between 800 – 1000. Almost 80% of the homeless population counted are unsheltered, meaning they do not have access to emergency shelter beds. Of those surveyed, over 33% identify as First Nations, Metis, Inuit or having Indigenous ancestry.

At this time, the City of Nanaimo only has 63 year-round provincially funded shelter beds and 35 temporary winter shelter beds, leaving a vast number of people without shelter of any kind on a daily/nightly basis. To put this into perspective, while the City of Vancouver has a homeless population of roughly 2,420 people, only 25% of them are unsheltered, meaning they do not have access to emergency shelter. In Nanaimo, 78.4% of our homeless population have nowhere to go at night. This is an inequitable humanitarian crisis that needs to be addressed.

The request for additional shelter spaces in Nanaimo has been made a number of times, as seen in the attached letters dated 2021-MAY-27 and 2023-MAY-12. It was also noted as a priority during a meeting of Nanaimo City Council and Premier Eby in Nanaimo on 2023-APR-12 and during the 2023 UBCM convention this past fall. Despite repeated calls for support, the number of homeless individuals living in our community has continued to rise, but the housing and supports to assist them have not.

Nanaimo City Council discussed this matter in length during a Special Council meeting held 2023-NOV-1. In the absence of Provincial funding and response, Council took action to allocate funding for warming centre services for the 2023/2024 winter season; however, the needs of our unsheltered community members far surpass the resources available.

We are seeking provincial funding that will match the scale of this crisis so that the basic shelter and health needs of this vulnerable population can be met. We implore the Province to do everything they can to help us support these individuals.

The City's *Health and Housing Action Plan (2020)* identifies the following priority actions:

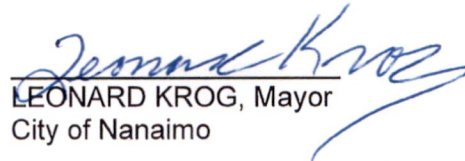
- House and support most people experiencing long term homelessness by creating appropriate, accessible, and culturally competent housing options along the housing spectrum;
- Reduce social disorder and rough sleeping by supporting community health and safety through planning and partnerships;
- Make better use of health, justice, and social service resources by supporting system coordination;
- Improve health and housing equity for all; and
- Embody Nanaimo's tangible response to the Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action.

Our community is in desperate need of significant provincial funding and support to achieve these goals. We look forward to hearing back from you to secure funding for the shelter needs for Snuneymuxw and Nanaimo's most vulnerable citizens in the immediate future. In the meantime, should you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, we would be happy to meet with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL WYSE, Chief
Snuneymuxw First Nation



LEONARD KROG, Mayor
City of Nanaimo

cc: Snuneymuxw Council
Nanaimo City Council
Joan Brown, Chief Administrative Officer, Snuneymuxw First Nation
Dale Lindsay, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Nanaimo