

NEWS RELEASE

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City of Nanaimo welcomes expert report on repeat and violent offenders

Province to bring back prolific offender management program

Summary

Communities across BC have urgently pressed government for help to deal with criminal activity and public disorder from a small group of repeat offenders. Their efforts spurred the BC Attorney General to commission two health care and criminal justice system experts to quickly investigate and prepare a report and recommendations. "A Rapid Investigation into Repeat Offending and Random Stranger Violence in British Columbia," by Dr. Amanda Butler, and ex-police chief Doug LePard, calls for changes to criminal justice and health care approaches, among other recommendations.

The report acknowledges that communities are experiencing the result of changes to federal laws and systemic issues such as poverty, mental illness and addiction. Mayors from 13 BC municipalities, including Nanaimo, have worked together to ensure senior government understands and responds to increased violence, theft and street-level disorder.

The City and Nanaimo RCMP continue to work together to address the complex public safety issues that are the subject of the expert report. The City funded a dedicated mental health liaison patrol team developed by Nanaimo RCMP and Island Health that is similar to the approach recommended by Butler and LePard.

The Province says it is now working on three of the recommendations:

- bringing back the prolific offender management program that ran from 2008 until 2012;
- establishing a dedicated provincial committee to co-ordinate supports for people with complex health-care needs in the criminal justice system; and
- supporting work by the BC First Nations Justice Council to develop a pilot program based at the Prince George First Nations Justice Centre to better support Indigenous people who come into conflict with the law.

Strategic Link: Creating a safe community for all contributes to a livable and economically healthy city.

Key Points

- The expert report on repeat offending and random stranger violence is a response to the concerns raised by the Urban Mayors' Caucus of the Union of BC Municipalities, of which Nanaimo's mayor is an active member.
- City of Nanaimo is implementing the Downtown Safety Action Plan to provide more support to residents and businesses downtown. The Plan includes hiring 12 Community Safety Officers, to act as a liaison and support for both businesses and people experiencing mental illness, addiction and/or homelessness.

Quotes

"The Mayor, Council and City staff have worked hard to find solutions to the personal and public safety issues that continue to disrupt our community. We are heartened to see the expert report recommendations, especially those that address repeat offenders and people experiencing severe mental illness."

Jake Rudolph
City Manager
Nanaimo

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