

NEWS RELEASE

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City receives funding to support unsheltered residents and overdose response

Summary

The City of Nanaimo has received \$442,752 in federal funding from Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund to strengthen its overdose response capabilities and better support unsheltered individuals in the community.

This funding is being used to purchase and equip three new responder vehicles for the City's Community Safety Officers (CSOs), outfitted with medical and computer equipment and survival supplies. The initiative aims to improve response times and increase life-saving interventions until emergency first responders arrive on scene; CSOs will be able to spend more time in the field assisting vulnerable populations.

The need for enhanced services is underscored by the results of Nanaimo's 2024 Point-in-Time Homeless Count, which found that 621 individuals are experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo. Of those participating in the survey count, nearly 70 per cent were unsheltered, and 74 per cent reported substance use issues, while 66 per cent reported mental health challenges.

CSOs provide consistent outreach across Nanaimo, patrolling the city 16 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2024 alone, CSOs administered 1292 doses of naloxone and performed CPR 31 times. Between 2022 and 2024, they conducted over 6,500 wellness checks for individuals affected by substance use, often serving as the first point of contact and a stabilizing presence until emergency responders arrived.

The City of Nanaimo remains committed to addressing the overdose crisis and supporting its most vulnerable residents through proactive, compassionate and coordinated efforts.

Strategic Link: The work of Community Safety Officers supports City Plan's "A Healthy Nanaimo" goal by enhancing safety and wellbeing through proactive presence, early intervention, collaboration and overdose response.

Key Points

- The City of Nanaimo received \$442,752 from Health Canada to purchase and equip three new responder vehicles with medical and computer equipment as well as survival supplies, enhancing the City's ability to respond to overdose incidents.
- The initiative aims to improve response times and life-saving interventions for Nanaimo's unsheltered population, where 74 per cent report substance use issues and 66 per cent report mental health challenges, according to the 2024 Point-in-Time Count.
- Nanaimo's Community Safety Officers provide outreach patrols 16 hours daily. They conducted over 6,500 wellness checks between 2022 and 2024. The new vehicles will allow them to spend more time in the field and provide critical support until emergency responders arrive.

Quotes

"This investment will significantly enhance our ability to respond quickly and effectively to overdose incidents. It's a critical step in saving lives and supporting those who are most at risk in our community. Our Community Safety Officers face demanding work requiring special skills and we are grateful to equip our growing team for success."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

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<https://www.nanaimo.ca/NewsReleases/NR251024CityReceivesFundingToSupportUnshelteredResidentsAndOverdoseResponse>