



Frequently Asked Questions

Why has the City allowed people to camp on public property?

The camp is not sanctioned by the City of Nanaimo. On May 17, activists cut locks and breached the perimeter fencing at 1 Port Drive to establish the camp. The City filed an injunction with the BC Supreme Court to close the tent city.

On Sept. 21, the Supreme Court of BC issued an interlocutory order to occupants of 1 Port Drive to vacate the city's property, take their belongings with them, and refrain from re-entering the property. The judge allowed 21 days for occupants to leave 1 Port Drive.

What is the City doing about the tent city?

The City has been working closely with BC Housing to find immediate and long-term solutions to homelessness in Nanaimo.

On Oct. 5, BC Housing announced that it had purchased land at 250 Terminal Avenue for temporary modular housing units, and eventually permanent social housing. In addition, the City provided available land at the public works yard at Labieux Road for temporary modular housing. In total, BC Housing is providing 170 units of temporary, supportive housing that is expected to be open by late November.

Homeless people who live in Nanaimo and are suitable for the type of temporary housing BC Housing will locate and manage at Terminal Avenue and Labieux Road.

The City is collaborating with provincial agencies whose mandates include social services, public health, housing and public safety to minimize the impact of the tent city on vulnerable people and local residents and businesses.

Nanaimo Fire Rescue, Bylaw Enforcement and RCMP make regular and frequent visits to try to reduce threats to public safety and health in and around the camp.

Why does the City not enforce its bylaws?

Municipal governments facing tent cities have learned that writing bylaw infraction tickets to homeless people is not an effective way to stop encampments. Bylaw enforcement options include issuing a fine or seeking an order to the offender to cease their illegal behaviour. Typically, homeless people do not have the means to pay fines and when they have no clear alternative housing options, courts are reluctant to impose penalties or force them to move.

How long will this tent city be downtown?

The City is working to close the tent city in an orderly way, respecting the needs of businesses and residents downtown, and the needs of homeless people. With the Supreme Court injunction ordering occupants to leave 1 Port Drive, the City has the necessary tools to remove fire hazards, clean up the site and prevent the current occupants from returning to camp there.

What can I do to help homeless people in Nanaimo?

Social service agencies in Nanaimo welcome your donations and have the experience and awareness to ensure your contributions are distributed fairly and effectively. There are many service agencies who support homelessness, a few include;

- Salvation Army (meal program, men's shelter),
- Aids Vancouver Island (health),
- Nanaimo Women's Centre (women),
- Island Crisis Care Society (women's shelter),
- Tillicum Lelum Friendship Centre (Aboriginal),
- United Way of Central Island (distribute funds equitably among services)
- Find more agencies on the [City website](#)

Recognizing the humanity of people experiencing homelessness is important and helps combat the stigma of poverty, mental illness and addiction. You can demonstrate your awareness and compassion in many ways, including communicating respectfully with people who are less sympathetic, countering misinformation within your social, business and professional networks, and staying informed.

How much is the City spending on the camp and why?

The City is currently providing toilets, water and garbage collection on the site. These services are necessary to protect public health and meet basic human needs.

The City is also incurring staffing costs related to fire inspections, Bylaw enforcement in the area, RCMP patrols and staff costs associated with inter-agency meetings. Costs for legal advice and intervention have also been incurred.

City Council voted to increase security and maintenance budgets for the downtown area and for city parks, through to the end of December, in recognition of the impact of tent city and homeless campers.

BC Housing has the responsibility to provide interim and long term housing. The 170 units of temporary modular housing announced Oct. 5 and the cost of operations will be paid by BC Housing.

Will my taxes go up because of tent city?

The City has been able to absorb the costs of tent city through budget reallocations. Health, social services, and housing costs are the responsibility of senior governments.

What do I do if I see something illegal happening in or near the encampment?

Public safety is the top priority. If you see something suspicious or to report a crime please call Nanaimo RCMP non-emergency line at 250-754-2345. To report an emergency or crime in progress please call 9-1-1.

The City has a list of [who to call](#) to report or get information on public safety issues and community outreach.

What do I do if I find a needle or 'sharp'?

Please call Public Works at 250-758-5222 if you find a needle. They will dispose of ones on public property and will provide you with information on how to properly dispose of one if found on private property.

How will the City prevent future tent cities from popping up once this one is shut down?

Nanaimo is experiencing low vacancy rates and rising costs for rental homes as a result of factors within and outside of its control. The City is working with government agencies to develop a range of housing options for middle and low-income earners, and is eager to explore approaches that fit well in our communities.