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Re: Municipality of North Cowichan and City of Duncan – Safer Community Plan – Recommended Actions

Introduction

Thank you for this opportunity to submit the Recommended Actions in this Safer Community Plan (SCP). We have now as of June 6th. completed the Stakeholder Review part of the process. This review was by way of a group meeting with 24 of the original 30 interviewees able to attend and each give their overview comments to the larger group. I thank these Stakeholder attendees for their commitment to this process of moving forward to address the importance of a Safer Community and working together towards that goal.

I'd like to introduce additional comments in the SCP as a result of this Stakeholder input – both are found under Recommended Action #1 Safer Working Group – External Partnerships: 1) Future discussion with Cowichan Tribes as to their sitting on SWG and participating in the work of the Corridor Safety Office (CSO) and 2) Establishing linkage between the SWG and the Cowichan Community Action Team (CAT) which works with matters of substance use, the opioid crisis and issues related to mental health and homelessness. Both of these comments are described under Recommended Action #1 Safer Working Group – External Partners.

The neighbouring municipalities of the Municipality of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan (“the Communities” or the “Local Governments” [LG]), like many other municipalities, are faced with challenges as they deal with crime and public-disorder matters occurring in their respective communities.

To be successful, this SCP needs to include many stakeholders, including mayors and city councils, First Nations, the RCMP, LG departments, provincial ministries, area

businesses, health and social services and local neighbourhoods—all are vital to achieving the common goal of having a safer community.

Your collaborative and respectful relationships with the Cowichan Tribes brings with it a shared concern for the effects crime and public disorder are having on all people—and helps provide a way to move forward together in dealing with the emerging challenges arising from homelessness, poverty, mental health and substance use, crime and public disorder.

While listening to your community speak, I was reminded of the fact that homelessness is not just the result of mental illness and substance use. It is increasing as a result of poverty. This fact is evident in the diversity of the people who are on the street.

Similar to what is occurring in North Cowichan and Duncan, many communities across the province are now sharing their concerns regarding the rising levels of homelessness and public disorder. Many communities report that a rise in homelessness and public disorder began approximately two years ago—a rise that coincides with the opioid crisis and increasing signs of poverty.

Communities will need to face these emerging challenges together given their shared boundaries. Crime and public disorder do not take any notice of which side of the highway they are on or what community they are in.

Although I focus to a large extent on the crime and public-disorder aspects of addressing rising community concern, I want to say clearly that long-term actions to address these concerns will be best achieved through community support for the work being done by the health and social service agencies, and that the future availability of housing is integral to reducing crime and public disorder in all its forms.

Although this report deals specifically with an area known as the Highway Corridor, the specifics of the report and the recommended actions are meant to give the Communities tools they can adapt to address public disorder occurring elsewhere.

The key is to create a new organizational capacity and framework to address community public safety concerns in a variety of circumstances. In the case of the Communities, it starts with the Highway Corridor, but its impact will have further value through building partnerships among local governments, the police, social and health agencies and the business community.

Our ability to respectfully partner with those having differing security and social perspectives is key to successfully developing and implementing an effective SCP. Not only are the police important to lessening crime and disorder, but increased municipal efforts are also required as is the successful delivery of health and social services.

We are in this together for the betterment of all community members. We want to improve the situation for neighbourhoods, social services and businesses as well as for people who are street entrenched, dealing with poverty and dealing with mental illness and substance use.

Reducing crime and public disorder is a community problem and requires a community solution.

The writer interviewed thirty (30+) people in this process, including elected officials, First Nations staff, LG staff, RCMP, fire department staff, business owners, citizens, school officials, service providers, social services providers and healthcare professionals.

I wish to submit recommendations regarding actions that can be taken to lessen the impact of crime and disorder occurring in the Highway Corridor specifically and in the community generally.

Foreword

It is difficult to make recommendations for all the factors that can influence a rise or fall in crime or public disorder. Therefore, this report should be viewed as a submission that offers recommendations based on experience addressing similar factors that are occurring in the Communities, but not giving a guarantee of outcomes.

The SCP is intended to be action-oriented and to provide specific actions to respond to identified issues. This will be evident in the recommendations.

The Communities will need to weigh the benefits of the proposed SCP options as they consider costs, budgets, goals and future developments.

This report is not intended as any form of legal advice.

Recommended Actions

Recommended Action #1: Joint LG – Safer Working Group 4

Recommended Action #2: Corridor Safety Office 8

Recommended Action #3: Impact on Business and the Highway Corridor	12
Recommended Action #4: Health and Social Service Roles	13
Recommended Action #5: RCMP Crime Reduction – Crime Analyst	17
Recommended Action #6: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design	18
Recommended Action #7: Dealing with Problem Properties	20
Resourcing Considerations: Staffing/Office – Corridor Safety Office	22

Recommended Action #1: Joint LG – Safer Working Group

That the Communities jointly align LG staff and RCMP resources to create a Safer Working Group in order to coordinate actions to address crime and disorder occurring in the community.

That the Safer Working Group guides the operations of the Corridor Safety Office highlighted in Recommendation #4.

That the Communities consider harmonizing municipal bylaws that can lessen the impact from crime and public disorder, including those dealing with nuisance properties, overnight camping, drinking in public, littering and nuisance activities.

The SWG will serve as a permanent working and advisory body. It will be responsible for providing advice and/or making recommendations to councils and LG staff on matters related to crime, public disorder and safety within the Communities.

Crime and public disorder are of rising community concern, and the Communities will need to collaborate closely to address these issues. Closer coordination and communication can be achieved through the creation of a single SWG. This group will coordinate actions between internal LG departments and the RCMP, which will allow for their more effective joint engagement on matters regarding crime and disorder.

The SWG will also provide joint mayors and councils, senior LG staff and the RCMP detachment commander with an operational arm they can utilize when crime and disorder matters arise that are a concern within the community.

This includes, but is not limited to, developing operational responses to the following:

- Addressing community-wide and corridor-security issues
- Improving the protection of parks and facilities

- Developing the coordination and community between LG/RCMP enforcement personnel
- Integrating enforcement and health/social service responses on issues of community safety
- Giving operational focus to the goal of reducing crime and public-disorder activities as well as finding effective community-level responses
- Supporting the rollout of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) actions and dealing with problem properties

This recommendation potentially has significant short-, mid- and long-term impacts on the ability of the Communities to address crime and public disorder. This joint LG-led working group aligns LG and RCMP resources to address crime reduction by implementing strategies that are based on problem-solving and by launching a partnership that can focus available resources more effectively.

Safer Working Group (SWG)



The SWG can function in the following ways:

- Reduce conflict, crime and public disorder in our community by developing a collaborative LG-staffed working group

- Take actions that recognize the fact that integrated health, social and enforcement responses succeed if they are collaborative and coordinated
- Oversee the operation of the CSO if approved
- Realize the ability of LG departments and the RCMP to collaboratively impact crime and public disorder occurring in the community,
- Provide a collective LG-led response to matters of security in the community
- Respond operationally to public-safety problems and develop Action Plans aimed at achieving an effective LG/police response to manage public disorder in both an ethical and practical framework
- Reduce criminal and disorderly behaviour on our streets while protecting the interests of the most vulnerable citizens in the Communities

Key Internal LG departments and police involved: RCMP, Fire, Bylaws, Parks, Public Works, Business Licensing and Planning

Key External partners: Cowichan Tribes, Provincial Health Services, Provincial Social Services, Business Community, Health & Social Service Providers

The SWG serves as a joint LG-led working group. The SWG is responsible for maintaining and enhancing a safe and healthy community that promotes and supports quality of life while encouraging resident involvement and input.

The SWG will invite other groups to attend meetings and engage with them as issues arise that would benefit from collaborations with those agencies or organizations to facilitate joint problem-solving. These groups could also help by providing advice with regard to crime and public disorder issues.

Under the category Key External Partners, I'd make two further comments based on Stakeholder input during the review stage.

- 1) That during the Implementation discussions occur with Cowichan Tribes to ascertain their interest to partner in both the SWG and the CSO. CT are integral partners to the LGs and would be a natural fit for both the SWG and CSO as their community deals with similar issues. As this report was proposed to address matters focussed on crime and public disorder occurring in the LGs, it started only considering the 2 LGS current involved in the SCP. Now having met with many stakeholders in the community, I believe inclusion of the CT in this process should be considered. It would definitely increase the effectiveness, collaboration and communication required for a successful outcome of the SCP.

- 2) It is important to recognize the importance of linkage between the SWG and the Cowichan Communities Action Team (CAT). This has been evident through input during the Stakeholder interview process. CAT deals with collaborative efforts in dealing with substance use, the opioid crisis and issues related to mental health and homelessness. CAT will be one of the key External Partnerships that we will promote effective operational actions by SWG. SWG is an operational group comprised of joint LG staff. I suggest during Implementation phase of SCP we have communication to promote collaborative and effective communication.

The purpose of the SWG is to provide mayors and councils with an ability to do the following:

- Align LG and policing resources to more effectively address crime and public-disorder matters
- Develop a proactive and integrated approach to issues of crime prevention, public disorder and safety
- Partner with First Nations, social, health, neighbourhood and business groups to address issues arising from crime or public-disorder matters that require LG involvement
- Provide co-ordinated services to support public safety throughout the Communities
- Reduce the adverse effects arising from public disorder or criminal activities
- Integrate enforcement and LG departmental responses to issues regarding community safety
- Respond to emerging issues related to public safety,
- Access services and joint strategies that lead to the protection of vulnerable persons
- Bring together those LG resources capable of lessening the crime, security and public-disorder impacts in the community

The SWG is a valuable tool that can help address issues concerning crime and disorder occurring in the whole community. In conjunction with LG bylaw enforcement officers, RCMP officers and private security ambassadors, the SWG can bring a joint focus to lessening crime and public disorder in the Highway Corridor.

Another area that requires consideration by the joint Communities is the fact that municipal enforcement bylaws and policies can differ along the Highway Corridor. This can lead to confusion within the public, business and street population. These bylaws and policies need to be harmonized where possible. The Communities could consider harmonizing municipal bylaws that lessen the impacts from crime and public disorder,

including those dealing with nuisance properties, overnight camping, drinking in public, littering, dealing with chattels and nuisance activities.

Recommended Action #2: Corridor Safety Office

That the Communities create a Corridor Safety Office “storefront” to coordinate and address crime and disorder occurring in the Highway Corridor.

That the Communities commit bylaw enforcement officers to being part of a coordinated presence in the Highway Corridor and as part of the increased enforcement presence addressing public disorder and supporting health and social responses.

That the Communities contract a daytime security ambassador to provide “eyes” on the street and a presence in the Highway Corridor to discourage crime and public-disorder activities.

That the RCMP addresses crime reduction in the Highway Corridor area and assigns supportive, investigative and analytical resources, as able, to reduce crime and public-disorder activities occurring in this area.

That the Communities create a separate “Who Do You Call?” information brochure that lets business owners and the general public know how to report suspicious occurrences, illegal activities and LG-maintenance issues to the right service provider.

This recommendation identifies actions that can be taken to assist in reclaiming, maintaining and protecting the future of the Highway Corridor and the general community as a safe place to visit, shop, work and live.

The Highway Corridor area is the first “Welcome” sign for visitors and travellers alike to the Communities. It is the doorway into downtown Duncan. It needs to be supported and public disorder needs to be addressed. The CSO will be a base for LG bylaw enforcement officers, contracted security ambassadors and RCMP investigative officers.

The Communities are changing rapidly, and public expectations for a safe community continue to increase and will continue to do so as the population grows. Provision of a secure Highway Corridor environment where the RCMP, bylaw officers and private security ambassadors have a visible presence will support that goal.

Public disorder will continue to increase if enforcement and security responders are not a more visible presence in the daily life of the Highway Corridor.

Coordination and communication are the key tools to regaining a sense of order in dealing with the stresses that can occur. To achieve that goal necessitates the daily presence of security resources centred in the core area that is under duress.

This will be actioned through the creation of a CSO. The CSO can help deliver daily street-level enforcement of bylaws as well as a police and security response that can help meet the needs of residents, business owners, property owners, social and health service providers and visitors to the community.

Function of Corridor Safety Office

The CSO will be able to provide the following functions:

- Be a central office in the Highway Corridor for communication and coordination of all enforcement and security matters
- Provide a “uniformed” presence in the Highway Corridor by all three enforcement tiers – bylaws enforcement officers, RCMP officers and contracted security ambassadors
- Function as an office for bylaw enforcement officers, RCMP officers and security ambassadors
- Help coordinate and manage the daily activities of contracted security ambassadors
- Allow the RCMP to have a supportive “come and go” presence focussed on crime reduction
- Work closely with Cowichan Tribes enforcement staff
- Allow enforcement personnel to work closely with health and social service providers by referring those in need to these services
- Assist with street-outreach programs that are being run by health and social service providers
- Assist with RMCP crime-reduction efforts
- Allow LG bylaw enforcement officers, RCMP officers and contracted security ambassadors to have a daily presence in the Highway Corridor depending on the most efficient scheduling of those resources,
- Be a point of contact for security problem-solving in the Highway Corridor
- Help promote effective communication within the Highway Corridor area
- Promote research on best practices in public safety and security for the area and for the community

- Help distribute written public safety as well as fire and emergency planning information
- Be a point of contact for merchants, residents and property owners on bylaw enforcement and security-patrol matters,
- Work with the business community and encourage the distribution of security-advisory notifications
- Explore the use of volunteers for communication and on-going educational aspects of service delivery on public-security matters

The CSO office will not be a full-service office. Staff will come and go as required and there will be no clerical support. When no staff are present in the office, the door will be locked.

Any complaints made to the CSO will occur as laid out in the recommended “Who Do You Call?” pamphlet.

Contracting of a Daytime “Security Ambassador” for the Highway Corridor

Business owners and citizens alike can experience crime and public-disorder matters in the Highway Corridor. This has been an on-going concern and a source of frustration in the community. One of the most effective tools to address and counter these concerns is to hire a contracted private security firm to provide “security ambassadors” (SA) to work in the Highway Corridor during key hours. The actual hours can be assigned based on input from the business community and on input from the RCMP regarding reported crime. One of the key times to have a street security presence is in the hour before businesses open so that potential disorder can be addressed in a timely manner.

This security ambassadors will become the constant “eyes” on the street that will enable RCMP and bylaw staff to respond to concerns based on immediate information when incidents are occurring. They can also provide focussed patrols in problematic areas.

The private security contractor who provides these security ambassadors will be required to provide staff who can communicate and engage the street population, work with enforcement personnel, have an understanding of the health and social services resources available, be able to support the work of street-outreach workers, be able to represent the community in an ambassadorial way and, most importantly, be able to work in a respectful way with the street population.

It is important that the same one or two security ambassadors be utilized in order to develop good relationships with all stakeholders—street people, business owners, enforcement personnel, the public, neighbours and visitors alike.

The following is the rationale for hiring a contracted security patroller service:

- Security ambassadors provide enforcement services with “eyes” on the Highway Corridor during key business hours
- Security ambassadors will be part of a coordinated effort by all enforcement services, including bylaw enforcement officers and RCMP officers, to increase their “visible” presence in the Highway Corridor
- Security ambassadors provide a connection to the public in the Highway Corridor
- Security ambassadors are a cost-effective way to address or prevent public-disorder activities—the people in this role will receive a higher wage based on their skill in building effective relationships with the varied clientele they encounter in their duties
- Security ambassadors can commence an early morning patrol before the start of each business day and help resolve any unwanted activity
- Security ambassadors provide the community with a contact person who can assess minor matters before they escalate to a criminal or public-disorder level
- Security ambassadors allow bylaw enforcement officers and RCMP officers to respond effectively to crime as well as bylaw and disorder matters when they are occurring
- Security ambassadors provide appropriate recording and reporting of incidents

Who Do You Call?

This simple recommendation will have a positive impact to help the public and merchants know who to call to report specific situations. The brochure/card will lay out what services are available and how to contact those services. It will be a handy guide to keep available for merchants and citizens alike who are often confused regarding who to call for a variety of public-disorder, security or bylaw matters.

Without this information being readily available, citizens and businesses often call the RCMP for matters that could be handled more efficiently by the LG department responsible for that area of LG operations.

The brochure will need to differentiate between the services being delivered in the two separate cities: the Municipality of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan.

The creation of this simple brochure will be an effective tool to lessen crime and public disorder by giving the public access to information that will allow them to receive a timely and appropriate response to their concerns.

Recommended Action #3: Impact on Business and the Highway Corridor

That the Communities look for ways to address the stress being experienced by the business community and citizens in the Highway Corridor.

That the Communities take joint actions to collaborate and coordinate their efforts to lessen the impact of crime and public disorder occurring in their respective communities.

That the broader business community consider ways to partner on actions that could support the collective lessening of crime and public disorder.

The Highway Corridor business community has been significantly affected by crime and public disorder during the last two years. They are a small group of businesses that are highly committed to the community and support it in many ways. They are concerned and are looking for input regarding strategies to deal with the on-going public disorder and crime they are experiencing in their daily work.

The last two years have seen a deterioration in the quality of experience for their clientele as the stress being experienced across the province increases through the effects of homelessness, fentanyl, poverty, lack of housing, mental health issues and substance use issues. Many of the businesses have taken on substantial costs to remedy the public-disorder issues associated with needles, garbage, loitering, disturbances, theft and break-ins. Also, the costs of installing CCTV and hiring private security in response to crime and public disorder are high. These businesses range in size but are predominantly smaller in size and do not have the ability to withstand the continued drain of their energies and finances without broader community involvement towards finding resolutions to the on-going pressures of crime and public disorder.

From meeting and talking to these owners, I can say without hesitation that each one I have spoken with understands the health and social needs of the street population, but that does not solve their need to have their business thrive in the face of issues not of their making. Hence, they are looking to local government to consider what would help lessen the effects of crime and public disorder they are facing daily in the Highway Corridor.

The Highway Corridor itself is the Welcome/Entranceway to both communities and perceptions related to public disorder can change how visitors and the travelling public see the whole community. This is an important factor for consideration, and it is important that the business and tourism community work together on possible solutions. Levies could be considered as a way to bring forth other solutions that could be cost-shared by the business community.

I have worked with organized business groups that bring new ideas and positive change to public-disorder matters. It typically starts by focussing collaborative efforts on a single aspect of the problem that could be jointly addressed in order to bring about a positive result for all businesses. Once this problem has been addressed, the group could build off their success by looking at other initiatives to implement.

Recommended Action #4: Health and Social Service Roles

That the Communities recognize the important role of health and social service providers in the Communities and see them as key partners towards reducing crime and public disorder.

That Communities recognize the important work already being done by health and social service providers, such as the Cowichan Valley Basket Society (Food Bank), the Canadian Mental Health Association Sobering Centre, the Canadian Mental Health Association Peers (Clean Team/Sharps Team, Island Health Mental Health and Substance Use/Royal Canadian Mounted Police Car 60 & Integrated Response and the Island Health Overdose Prevention Site, towards reducing crime and public disorder.

That the Communities consider ways to collaboratively address the problem of garbage, waste and needles left in the community and in the Cowichan River and also consider how the existing CMHA Peer Group could be engaged to assist business owners and property owners in dealing with this problem.

That Communities consider taking on a staff facilitation and communication response role, through a Good Neighbour Agreement process, when issues arise between service providers and neighbourhoods.

That the Communities recognize the importance of the Cowichan River to Cowichan Tribes, and all our communities, and work to address the effect of needles being thrown in the river and people not feeling safe while walking on the dikes.

During my time spent in the communities of North Cowichan and Duncan interviewing stakeholders, I had the opportunity to speak with stakeholders with many perspectives on the issues, their causes and the ways to address them.

Goals aimed at lessening crime and public disorder are not in conflict with health or social goals. They are compatible and mutually supportive processes. I can say clearly that the most significant long-term action to lessen crime and disorder is found in the support of health and social service providers dealing with mental health, substance use and poverty reduction as well as building a range of housing for those in need.

Since my focus is specifically on reducing crime and public disorder, I'd like to recognize particular programs that fit those topics closely, while also filling other important roles for their clients. In particular, I'd like to mention the following (not in any prioritized order) programs:

- 1) Cowichan Valley Basket Society (Food Bank)
- 2) Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Sobering & Assessment Centre
- 3) CMHA Peer Group (Clean Team/Sharps Pick-up Team)
- 4) Island Health MHSU/RCMP Car 60 & Integrated Response
- 5) Island Health Overdose Prevention Site (OPS)

These services, in addition to all the valuable work they do for their clients, have a significant effect on the reduction of crime and public disorder in the community and should be recognized for the value they bring to lessening the impact of these issues.

The following are challenges I've learned about in your community that need community-wide assistance to lessen the impacts of crime and public disorder:

Needles

Needles are a magnet for community anger, angst, frustration and fear as well as a feeling of being victimized by those who discard of them improperly. It is particularly evident in talking to business and property owners that face the often daily need to move people along from their properties—and then dispose of the numerous needles as well as the garbage and waste left on their property.

Needles are a source of a high percentage of the frustrations I hear from the general community in almost every interview. Solutions are not there yet. I understand that addicts seek the instantaneous feeling they get from injecting. It is one of the preferred methods of drug use. I see great efforts to educate the public on how to dispose of

needles, but public concern for improperly discarded needles on private and public properties remains. In fact, the complaints appear to be increasing in the community.

Health and social service providers together with the community can help to resolve this disorder. Their existing programs, such as the Sobering & Assessment Centre, and CMHA Peer Group (Clean Team/Sharps Team) adds value to the community's effort to reduce crime and disorder while supporting people who are using substances.

Discarded needles and garbage left by the street population is one of the biggest "frustration factors" in the community, and we need to support efforts by health and social service programs to recognize the importance of these needle pick-up services to the community,

Without doubt, needles left on the street, which require the community to clean them up on its own, is a very concerning community issue. Health and social service programs that can help abate the problem and help with clean-ups need to be strongly supported by the entire community.

Efforts by the CMHA Peer Group need to be supported and appreciated. When the community sees the street population involved in solutions, it gives the community a sense of cohesion.

Needles in Cowichan River

The Cowichan River receives its name from the Cowichan Tribes "People of the Warm Land." The river is culturally and historically important in the lives of the people and to the salmon that are in it during the various stages of their lifecycle. This ancient heritage and culturally important river on the edge of the Highway Corridor and is under stress from literally 100s of needles being dropped into its waters. This is an example of public disorder that can be worked on by the whole community.

There needs to be a community-wide recognition of the harm being done to this river and the need to address needles in the river. There needs to be a willingness in the community to be part of the solution by recognizing, addressing, remediating and preventing this from happening in the future.

This could be part of the Safer Highway Corridor project or handled as a separate Communities-supported initiative. It is also a good project for the SWG in partnership with Cowichan Tribes and community services.

Island Health - Overdose Prevention Site

When I first started working on the SCP, I read newspaper articles about the opening of the OPS on Trunk Road and the concerns of the neighbourhood. I understand the community frustration, but I've also seen how these sites can fit in well with neighbours and significantly help influence safe needle disposal.

I encourage neighbours to engage and participate with any Good Neighbour Agreement (GNA) process that occurs. Discuss how community engagement in the beginning went, but then focus on opening up good lines of communication through the GNA process. The process works and I have been part of that experience on many other projects. The LGs have a role to play in helping facilitate collaboration within the community and resolution of community concerns.

From a crime and public-disorder perspective, the work of the OPS is exactly where the community needs to be in regard to full support. The OPS makes a significant difference to the levels of public disorder experienced on the street. Many in the community want needles off the street but they also want people to have a safe place use their drug of choice. The OPS provides this valuable role in the community.

The OPS is part of the solution, not part of the problem. It is an important way to reduce crime and public disorder in the community. A respectful GNA process involving the neighbourhood, local governments, the RCMP and Island Health will help everyone get through these often challenging start-up phases. The OPS can also encourage and communicate safe disposal practices with its client base as part of the solution.

Public Disorder Increases When There's Nowhere To Go

CMHA Warmland House offers services that are successful and vitally important to the community. However, it does not allow the use of drugs on its premises. This is not a criticism, simply a comment on the model. When a person takes opioids over a period of time, their body becomes dependant on it which leads to withdrawal symptoms within hours after the last use. The OPS is open from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and they have funding for six hours per day. Many people who use opioids need to use first thing in the morning or they start to feel the symptoms of withdrawal, which can be unbearable. People who use substances who cannot or do not want to stay at CMHA Warmland House or the Cowichan Women Against Violence (CWAV) Women's Shelter because of their need to use a substance to stay well, stay on the street. They have nowhere to go, so they sometimes stay on private property during the night and leave behind waste and needles for the property owner to address.

Cowichan Valley Basket Society (Food Bank) is one of the few places during the day that feeds and allows people to stay, play cards and talk during opening hours. Otherwise, the street entrenched spend a lot of hours each day with no place to be personally safe, or use substances safely (except during opening hours) and no place to sleep each night if they are unable to stay at a shelter. This is one factor as to why so many people living on the streets are leaving needles and garbage on the ground and camping rough.

The Communities, businesses, residents, police services, First Nations, visitors and neighbourhoods see the resulting crime and public disorder that occurs daily as the homeless population lives on the street in the Highway Corridor area. Are there other community solutions?

Recommended Action #5: RCMP Crime Reduction – Crime Analyst

That the Communities support crime reduction to address crime occurring in the whole community as well as in the Highway Corridor that is affecting the personal safety of the homeless population on the streets.

That the Communities consider supporting a full-time RCMP criminal intelligence analyst position at the North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP Detachment.

That the RCMP criminal intelligence analyst be part of the Safer Working Group (see Recommended Action #1).

Criminal Intelligence Analyst

The criminal intelligence analyst researches, collates, evaluates and analyzes information to develop intelligence products that assist management in decision-making and provides recommendations to further intelligence and investigations. The analyst develops and applies specialized knowledge in specific fields and in law enforcement specialities and makes ongoing decisions regarding products, identification of crime trends and insights into the criminal environment. Analysts are considered an expert resource for detachments.

A RCMP crime intelligence analyst employed at the North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP Detachment will, in addition to having a full-time role dealing with community-wide crime analysis, be able to assist in identifying key predatory offenders in the community who cause violent crimes within the homeless population and who use fear, drugs and intimidation to organize thefts in the business and general community.

One of the most effective tools to reduce crime and public disorder that I have seen deployed through crime reduction is having a crime analyst working full time. There are many examples on Vancouver Island of a crime analyst working with police investigators to deal with chronic/prolific offenders. North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP Detachment currently has the use of crime analyst services one day of the week.

The Communities would be well served by having a full-time person in this role. This greatly multiplies the ability of police investigators to achieve crime reduction in the whole community. It will also be a valuable tool to lessen resulting public disorder in the Highway Corridor.

It is also important as a tool to reduce violence towards the homeless. The street population is victimized by predatory individuals who use fear and violence to intimidate them into acts that can involve organized shoplifting, break-ins, other crimes or forced prostitution.

In most cases, predation occurs when the victim is a vulnerable person entrenched on the street and has their own mental health and/or substance use issues. These predators are a very small percentage of the street population but cause significant violence and harm if not identified and dealt with by the police and courts.

Recommended Action #6: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

That the Communities and the RCMP Detachment jointly learn, practice and apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles as another crime and public disorder reduction tool.

That the Communities use the upcoming Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design training hosted in the City of Duncan by Cowichan Community Policing as an opportunity to increase their knowledge regarding this valuable crime reduction tool in the community.

That the Communities consider hosting a presentation for community businesses, so they can learn about Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design practices and how to lessen crime and public disorder on their properties.

A successful action that a local government can take to assist a downtown, neighbourhood or business area, such as the Highway Corridor, under stress from crime and disorder is to train LG staff, enforcement officers and police to be able to provide a

CPTED assessment of specific areas under the most stress and to provide advice on the actions property owners can take to reduce those criminal activities.

During my time spent interviewing many persons in the Highway Corridor and surrounding area, I could see areas where previous CPTED actions have been taken. These actions have made a difference towards lessening crime and public disorder in those areas.

I've been involved in using CPTED as we tackled areas that experienced similar problems to those in the Communities. CPTED was used extensively and all staff dealing with public-disorder issues were CPTED trained. We also used the services of a CPTED professional for many LG-owned larger projects both in the planning stage and sometimes to address remedial security solutions where a CPTED assessment was not part of the initial building process.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design



CPTED training should also be considered as a necessary and valuable skill for bylaw enforcement officers, police officers, planners and park planning personnel. I recommend this training to communities as a valuable tool for addressing crime and public disorder. It is an integral part of developing safe public spaces in the community

and in areas under stress from crime or public disorder. This training can often be cost-shared with other communities.

I also recommend sponsoring a CPTED information session for businesses on how to take actions regarding their properties that lessen crime and discourage unwanted behaviour. It may also be possible to consider using real Highway Corridor areas as work examples for the training sessions. LGs may want to check with Cowichan Community Policing about this possibility.

Recommended Action #7: Dealing with Problem Properties

That the Communities and RCMP intervene early on nuisance properties occurring in neighbourhoods and consider implementing a nuisance property bylaw as an effective tool to deal with such properties.

Nuisance properties in community neighbourhoods can be identified as contributors to the distress being experienced. They are identified by the multiple visits from the police they receive because of noise and disturbance complaints from the neighbourhood. Nuisance properties are often associated with fights, yelling, shouting and disturbing the surrounding neighbourhood.

These properties can be drug houses or chronic “noisy party” houses operating in the neighbourhood. They can also be businesses that are not properly managing issues that arise as a result of their operations. Noise and neighbourhood disturbances are usually the common features regarding why complaints come into the police and often result in frustrated neighbours bringing their concerns to the attention of the mayor and council.

The goal of this recommendation is to provide the police with an LG-led response to a problem that causes frustration in a neighbourhood but cannot be remedied by laying criminal charges or by waiting through lengthy delays for court action.

The most successful resolution occurs when action is taken once the number of police visits shows a pattern of nuisance activity occurring or a significant neighbourhood concern has been reported and police visits have not been able to resolve the situation. When police cannot end the nuisance, the LG becomes involved by taking bylaw enforcement action under a nuisance-property bylaw.

The Communities need to have the ability to claim the costs for the visits by the police, the fire department and bylaw officers that are required to address nuisance activity at these properties. These properties, when acting as nuisances, can waste a large amount

of resources. By having to respond to a nuisance-property complaint, the police may be unable to respond to a more pressing issue in the community. Owners need to be held accountable for this misuse of police resources and for the unnecessary costs to the public.

The process of dealing with nuisance properties can require coordination and planning with health and social services if a displacement of persons is expected to occur. If needed, these services can work with youth and adult outreach services and help people find appropriate shelter, such as CMHA Warmland House and the CWAV Women's Shelter. These services are valued partners when dealing with people who need a place to go when a nuisance-property issue is being resolved. The process involves outreach to these services and they become part of the process when handling a nuisance property. The goal is to deal with neighbourhood concerns and fears created by nuisance activities that are on-going as a result of the resulting nuisance activity associated with the property. Another goal is to find assistance for those being displaced in the process.

Engagement of these properties should be coordinated and resolution should be sought through an LG-hosted person-to-person meeting involving the owner, the police and bylaw enforcement staff in order to gain early resolution.

In most cases, early intervention of this type brings positive action from the owner and the concern is usually addressed without a need for continual attendance. LG staff and RCMP officers would explain the nuisance-property process to the owner and provide information on the issues the owner needs to address in order to meet the requirements of the bylaw.

If the intervention meeting does not result in a resolution, the LG needs to be able to address such properties by way of fining or charging for costs. Each LG should look into the creation of a nuisance-property bylaw focussed on addressing problematic properties causing excessive calls for police, fire and bylaw services as a result of disturbances and nuisance behaviour caused by lack of action by the property owners.

As stated, this process starts with the goal of having the owner address the issues arising from their property. It is a positive interaction as long as the problem is addressed in a reasonable manner and timeframe and does not require the issue to be brought before council. If the issue is not addressed, council hears the matter and can elect to deem the property a nuisance.

Once deemed to be in contravention of the nuisance-property bylaw, cost recovery for services rendered attending nuisance properties can be sought through either fines or through taxes.

Note: LG will need to obtain an updated legal opinion when writing the bylaw.

Resourcing Considerations: Staffing Impact – Corridor Safety Office

That additional bylaw enforcement staffing and the contracting of a private security ambassador be considered as necessary to the resourcing of recommended actions in this SCP report.

That bylaw enforcement officers be in uniform due to the nature of enforcement duties.

That Occupational Health & Safety perform a workplace risk assessment to determine the need for bylaw enforcement officers to have personal protective equipment to perform their duties.

Municipality of North Cowichan – Staffing/Uniforms

The following recommendations are for the Municipality of North Cowichan.

The municipality should hire one (1) additional bylaw enforcement officer (BEO) to add to the two (2) current positions already in place and equally divide additional CSO duties between them. The current workload of your BEOs is approximately 330 files per year for each BEO. This is already higher than expected compared to other municipalities and I would consider your staffing level to be short by .75 of a position even without taking on the new CSO role. The municipality need to add an additional BEO and monitor the new CSO workload.

There will also be an increase in responsibility for the position of the senior bylaw compliance officer. This is a result of the increase in work out of the CSO and because bylaw enforcement officers will be responsible for a higher proportion of the action out of the SWG.

This new CSO duties for bylaw enforcement officers can only be performed by uniformed LG personnel due to the nature of enforcement duties in a challenging street

environment. I recommend that all three (2 existing and 1 additional BEOs) wear uniforms during the delivery of all bylaw services.

If not already completed, I recommend that an Occupational Health and Safety OHS Risk Assessment be done on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for officers performing a bylaw enforcement role.

City of Duncan – Staffing/Uniforms

The following recommendations are for the City of Duncan.

The city should consider reconfiguring its current staffing levels by adding hours to existing personnel in order to meet a .5 of a position, which will focus on the Highway Corridor area. Alternatively, reduced parking enforcement could lead to an increased ability to focus resources in Highway Corridor duties.

This new CSO role for bylaw enforcement officers can only be performed by uniformed LG personnel due to the nature of enforcement duties in a challenging street environment.

If not already completed, I recommend that an OHS Risk Assessment be done on the use of PPE for officers performing a bylaw enforcement role.

Shared Cost of Renting Office Space

I do not see the increase in crime and public disorder as being seasonal in nature. It appears to have been a rising concern through the winter and issues were actively rising months ahead of any expected springtime increase with the warmer weather.

To be successful in addressing crime and public disorder, strategies will need to be operational in the areas under stress. The opening of a CSO in the stressed Highway Corridor area will be an important step.

I recommend that the LGs rent suitable storefront space to house a CSO in the Highway Corridor. This office will be the central work office for bylaw officers, security ambassadors and RCMP crime reduction members. It could be considered for a one-year initial rental contract and assessed yearly thereafter.

Cost of Private Security Ambassador Staff

This private security role is important to the success of a safer Highway Corridor project as discussed. It requires the contracting of dedicated private security staff who are trained and comfortable in dealing with a challenging street environment. The role is outlined in Recommended Action #2.

Concluding Comments

A supported SCP process will focus on reducing crime and disorder occurring in the Communities and specifically in the Highway Corridor. The development of an SCP works to address community concerns by coordinating enforcement, improving community communication and collaboration, supporting the health and social service community, supporting the business community and supporting neighbourhoods so all citizens achieve the goals of having a safe and healthy community.

Recommended Roll-Out

The following process is recommended for the rollout of the report's recommendations:

- The report goes to joint councils as a draft
- If the joint councils approve the report in principle, the report goes forward as a draft for input by stakeholder groups
- The report will consider all input prior to being finalized
- The report goes back to the joint councils for final approval
- If approved, implementation of phase two of the Safer Community Plan commences

The recommendation for an SCP that is initially focussed on the Highway Corridor is not a process to start and stop. This will only make future efforts more difficult to launch. This is especially true in the Highway Corridor where shop owners have a high level of frustration with the lack of resolution regarding current crime and public disorder. They have a sense of being isolated and rely on themselves for solutions without broader local government involvement. They have stopped reporting crime through frustration over a perceived lack of disinterest by the court system regarding their victimization.

It requires a commitment by all stakeholders to understand and to be willing to look for ways to lessen public-disorder impacts while carrying on their many important roles in the community.

If the recommendations in this report are supported, reported crime and public disorder may actually increase in the early stages of the SCP Implementation Phase as more

citizens and businesses learn of the role of the CSO and decide that they now have somewhere to call and receive assistance based on the “Who Do You Call?” pamphlet.

Your community cares about the availability of health and social services to those in need. It also cares about the quality of life for neighbourhoods, businesses and all its citizens. The Communities have demonstrated the ability to achieve their goals through a history of working together, and I’m sure it will also achieve the goal of lessening the impact of crime and public disorder occurring in the community.

It is a pleasure to meet with individuals in the community while working on this SCP. I thank everyone that I have interviewed for sharing their words, wisdom and knowledge.

Thank you for inviting me to your community and receiving this report.

Randy Churchill
Consulting For Municipalities