

# Report

Date May 4, 2022  
Subject Safer Community Plan Review

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File:

## PURPOSE

To consider the recommendations from the City of Duncan and the next steps for the Safer Community Plan initiative.

## BACKGROUND

The Safer Community Plan Review and Next Steps meeting between the City of Duncan and North Cowichan staff and elected officials took place on March 7, 2022. RCMP Inspector Chris Bear was also in attendance. The agenda at that meeting included the following topics:

- (1) Security Ambassadors
- (2) Corridor Safety Office
- (3) Enhanced Sharps Clean-Up Crew
- (4) Safer Working Group
- (5) Pro-active Highway Bike Corridor Patrols
- (6) Evening Safety Ambassador Patrols
- (7) Night-time Security Patrols
- (8) Who to Call Brochure

On March 24, 2022, staff received a letter from the City of Duncan (Attachment 1) requesting North Cowichan Council's response to Duncan City Council's resolutions (from their March 21, 2022 regular meeting), which were as follows:

- (1) THAT Council direct staff to issue a request for proposals, in partnership with North Cowichan, to extend the Safety Ambassadors program for another 2-year period.
- (2) THAT Council support, subject to North Cowichan Council approval, North Cowichan terminating the lease on the Corridor Safety Office, with the funds to be reallocated to other initiatives to support the highway corridor.
- (3) THAT Council direct staff to send correspondence to North Cowichan requesting a contribution of \$15,000 to fund 50% of the additional costs for the enhanced Peer Sharps Clean-Up Crew Program with Canadian Mental Health Association.

The City of Duncan is waiting for Council's response to these recommendations.

## DISCUSSION

### (1) Security Ambassadors

Blackbird Security, the firm contracted in 2019 to serve as Safety Ambassadors during the day, provides assistance in preventing public disorder activities and acts as a point of contact for the public. The Security Ambassadors provide enforcement services that reduce the workload for Bylaw Services and the RCMP. The annual cost for this contract is \$74,200, which is shared 50% between

the City of Duncan and North Cowichan. The City of Duncan, which manages the contract, will be putting out a Request for Proposal (RFP) as the current contract has expired. Staff support proceeding with an RFP and the opportunity to enhance the ambassador function to the level anticipated by the Safer Corridor report,

Recommendation: Staff support the City of Duncan's recommendation to issue an RFP for the continued provision of the original security ambassador program as indicated in the 2019 Safer Community Plan and provide for individuals to better suit the requirements of the security ambassador position.

## **(2) Corridor Safety Office**

The intent of the Corridor Safety Office (CSO), located at 490 Trans-Canada Highway, was to be the base and visible presence for North Cowichan Bylaw Compliance Officers, City of Duncan Streets & Parks Patrollers, Security Ambassadors, Cowichan Tribes Bylaw Officers, and the RCMP. The goal was to centre security resources within the core area under duress. Due to COVID-19, and other operational issues, the space has not been utilized as initially contemplated. Staff will continue to engage the City of Duncan to co-lease and operate the existing corridor office; however, should the City of Duncan not confirm its desire to continue with the corridor office, staff will seek to lease an alternative smaller space within the corridor and continue to work towards a street presence for this operation.

Recommendation:

Staff support maintaining a Bylaw office presence in the corridor and evaluating its effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

## **(3) Enhanced Sharps Clean-Up Crew**

The City of Duncan is looking at North Cowichan to contribute \$15,000 annually for costs associated with the Enhanced Sharps Clean-up Crew. Since 2019, North Cowichan has spent approximately \$28,000 in clean-up charges in the corridor area. This amount would be much higher if not for the Sharps Clean-up Crew. The program provides daily clean-up of the corridor area and delivers an employment program for its workers. Currently, the coverage area includes Beverly Street to Boys Road and Government Street to Lakes Road. It is anticipated that the recent opening of the new supportive housing located at 6428 Paddle Road will increase street activity in this area. Therefore, it would benefit North Cowichan if this area was included as part of the Enhanced Sharps Clean-up Crew coverage area.

This is a service previously funded by the province and, therefore, would be a new service delivery if we take it on. North Cowichan spends considerably more each year on private contractor clean-up throughout the community, where encampments, etc. are removed. Funding for this would be included in the budget for Homeless Camp Clean-up, which varies from year to year depending on the number of occurrences.

Recommendation: Staff support contributing \$15,000 to the existing Enhanced Sharps Clean-up program and recommend the service area is expanded to include the Paddle Road area and any pedestrian routes realized as a result of the Paddle Road housing project.

#### (4) Safer Working Group

The Safer Working Group (the "Group") meets monthly, with North Cowichan facilitating the meetings. The relocation of the Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) to 5878 York Street has increased pedestrian traffic to the area, which has also added a number of Outreach staff that work with the Safer Working Group to deal with issues arising from the OPS and its operation.

Recommendation: (no change) Staff recommends that the Group continue to meet regularly.

#### (5) Pro-Active Highway Bike Corridor Patrols

The City of Duncan is supportive of joint patrolling of the corridor area; however, North Cowichan staff has concerns that the training and equipment used by the City's Bylaw Officers are not concurrent with the North Cowichan Officers or with best practices when patrolling in high-risk areas of the community. Staff safety is paramount to us, and we believe necessary changes must be made in the training and equipment used by the City of Duncan Bylaw Officers if we are to continue joint patrolling. Staff recommend we consider resuming joint patrols once the City of Duncan Bylaw Officers are provided with a level of satisfactory training and personal protection equipment.

In accordance with the Safer Community Plan and the *Community Charter*, all North Cowichan Bylaw Compliance Officers have been:

- certified with "Use of Force" training and re-certify every year, with refresher courses throughout the year;
- issued body armour, batons, pepper spray, handcuffs, and appropriate uniforms for the bylaw enforcement role they are assigned; and,
- sworn in as Bylaw Enforcement Officers so that they have the legal authority to enforce North Cowichan bylaws.

Recommendation: Staff support joint patrols with the City of Duncan once the necessary training and safety equipment is provided to its officers for high-risk patrols.

#### (6) Evening Security Ambassador Patrols

Currently, the Safety Ambassador Program patrols between 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm, and this schedule will be reviewed as part of the RFP process. There is value in extending the security ambassadors hours to cover in the evenings instead of the daytime when bylaw officers are on shift.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that North Cowichan reviews the RFP for the Security Ambassador Program and utilize the hours of operation to better suit the needs of the corridor safety and security issues

#### (7) Nighttime Security Patrols

North Cowichan has not been involved in any after-hours joint patrols, as Bylaw Compliance Officers work 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, rotating on a seven-day-per-week schedule. This is a service the City of Duncan uses for their Streets and Park Patrollers, and would be better served through altered hours of the Security Ambassador.

Recommendation: (no change)

#### **(8) Who to Call Brochure**

The "Who to Call Brochure," which provides contact information to service providers and the public, will be updated this year to ensure current information.

Recommendation: (no change)

### **OPTIONS**

#### **(1) Continue funding 50% of the cost for the new Security Ambassador contract.**

THAT Council, in partnership with the City of Duncan, authorizes the City of Duncan to issue a request for proposals to extend the Security Ambassadors program for another 2-year period.

#### **(2) Fund the enhanced sharps clean-up crew in the amount of \$15,000 per year.**

THAT Council authorize a contribution of up to \$15,000 to be paid to the City of Duncan to fund 50% of the additional costs for the enhanced Peer Sharps Clean-Up Crew Program in partnership with the City of Duncan and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

**Security Ambassador Program:** This funding allows for continued security ambassador services throughout the corridor, covers early morning and afternoon or evening shifts as scheduled, and assists in preventing public disorder. If Council does not support this option, the funding could be redirected to other Corridor initiatives. However, the reduced security presence may result in increased activity in the corridor area. The current cost for this program is \$37,100 per year. However, staff is unsure if this amount will increase or decrease at this time, as it will depend on the bids that the City of Duncan receives in response to the issuance of the RFP.

**Enhanced Sharps Clean-Up Crew:** This funding allows clean-up crews to continue operating in the corridor area and reduces the clean-up costs incurred by North Cowichan. If funding is not provided, it is anticipated that the clean-up costs directly incurred by North Cowichan will increase.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council:

- (1) In partnership with the City of Duncan, authorizes the City of Duncan to issue a request for proposals to extend the Security Ambassadors program for another 2-year period; and,
- (2) Authorize a contribution of up to \$15,000 to be paid to the City of Duncan to fund 50% of the additional costs for the enhanced Peer Sharps Clean-Up Crew Program in partnership with the City of Duncan and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

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Report reviewed by:

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**Approved to be forwarded to Council:**



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Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments: 2022-03-24 Letter from the City of Duncan