

REPORT TO COUNCIL OCTOBER 28, 2019

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION:
IMPACT ON BUSINESS AND RESIDENTS OF
HOMELESSNESS & SOCIAL DISORDER

Thank you Your Worship and Council for receiving this presentation from the Chamber of Commerce. We are here tonight as an organization dedicated to helping build a better community by confronting complex problems and contributing to finding solutions.

For years, homelessness in Nanaimo was an unsettling issue felt mainly in our city centre. Going back to 2008, the City was successful in receiving provincial funding to build up to 160 units of supportive housing to remedy our homelessness problem. Unfortunately, not all of the funds were used for those purposes and overall success of the project was not realized. The momentum of homelessness continued to accelerate as housing costs began rising and the opioid crisis emerged.

By 2017, it was becoming apparent that a lack of leadership was resulting in a growing population of street-entrenched people with accompanying significant mental health and substance abuse problems. Today, businesses and residents are facing critical issues with rising crime and a sense of social disruption that seems beyond control.

Nanaimo is a compassionate community as evidenced by our many volunteers and our hard-working not-for-profits dedicated to positive social action. Now, however, frustration is rising to record levels as the social disorder tied to homelessness seems to know no end. But it is vital to also point out that there is a less than direct correlation between the rising population of homeless and our crime stats.

The Chamber's research showed that increasing criminal activity is tied directly to increasing substance abuse and addiction. Although drug addiction and substance abuse is high among a portion of our homeless population, for many of those struggling with homelessness its origins are in poverty and housing affordability. This is especially true among our aging population who are forming a large part of the new homeless population. These are not the ones contributing to our spiraling crime rates.

Impact of Discontent City:

The Chamber was on record speaking to this protest that landed in our lap in May 2018. Prior to this, we had warned Council of the consequences of not paying attention to the growing homelessness problems. The Tent City protest saw up to 300 homeless people encamped downtown engaging in criminal escapades including shoplifting, theft, break and enters on businesses, cars and boats, assaults, trade in stolen property, open drug abuse, trafficking and prostitution.

Relocation to BC Housing's Emergency Shelters:

It was hoped that the environment of criminal 'mayhem' would be mitigated when BC housing took emergency action and established two shelters to temporarily house many from Discontent City. At face value rather than resolving problems, to some this action seemed to simply spread the problems further through the community. Residents and neighbouring businesses spoke out through the media, especially social media, and this emergency action was claimed as a failed experiment.

The Chamber responded to the impact on the business community by establishing a field survey program visiting businesses within a kilometer of 250 Terminal. We subsequently targeted the businesses around Labieux Road where we found even more discouraging results, possibly due to the fact there were far more businesses to be impacted – Country Club, Brooks Landing, Rock City and

Bowen Road. We submitted reports on our findings to Mayor, Council, senior government, RCMP, and other appropriate bodies. These are attached as appendices to this presentation.

Settlement of Shelter Residents:

There was the hope of 'calming' as shelter residents 'settled'. But it seemed the only point of optimism to be found was the increasing resiliency demonstrated by business operators through heightened tolerance levels and the slow resignation and acceptance of increased costs of loss protection through security measures, loss of business activity, challenges to personal safety and security for workers. This sense of helplessness was heightened by the fact there were limitations to what one could do to protect themselves, and those most likely to cause problems knew what they could get away with.

BC Housing Shelter Evictions:

During the settlement process, BC Housing's Shelter Project Managers (Pacifica & Island Crisis Care) were pleased to announce they were removing some of the worst predators and troublemakers from the shelters. With nowhere else to go, many of these people returned to downtown Nanaimo or into the bushes surrounding other business centres and shelter locations.

Old City Quarter:

It's no surprise that some of those removed from the shelters chose Wesley Street behind the City's SARC as their next destination. Area merchants proactively reached out to us to share their current experiences including losses to theft, property damages and customers frightened to continue patronizing them. Add the cost of barring their doors and windows while adding expensive video and remote security technology. Out of frustration, area business leaders hosted an information meeting at the Harbour City Theatre where many spoke out for the continuing viability of their businesses and the risk to their life's investments in a business.

Downtown and the Night Market:

The Chamber launched the Night Market in June of 2018 with Discontent City in full operation. One of the reasons for launching this event was to shine a positive light on our city centre and to outnumber the undesirable activity on our streets with highly positive activity. Businesses in the area also needed a positive boost in order to help them survive the impact of Discontent City. We became accustomed to dealing with this population in 2018. In 2019 however, the issues from street-entrenched folks seemed quite different. This year, a significant criminal element was at work and our security strength needed to increase to protect the vendors and our audience and, at least, help them feel more secure.

Meeting with Mall Managers:

This summer, a meeting of shopping centre and mall managers was held at Woodgrove with the Chamber and MLA Sheila Malcolmson in attendance. The problems and challenges they shared are sadly

similar to those we collected in our surveys. All of them note that, not only are security issues increasing in frequency, the level of seriousness of these security encounters is rising. Repetitive encounters with the same problem individuals are common. This is at a level not experienced before.

Rising Crime, Homelessness, Substance Abuse Crisis:

We have a multiplicity of problems on our hands and it's time to acknowledge and confront the beast on several levels. Many business operators, shopping centre and mall managers especially, argue that the rise in homelessness does not run directly parallel to rising crime rates. Our RCMP do an incredible job but we have a societal problem with addictive, destructive drugs and our systemic response to that. It's time to seriously consider attacking this as a public health problem more than a criminal problem.

BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions is about to embark on pilot projects that incorporate new approaches to these problems all communities are facing. The same ministry is also piloting reintroduction of 'institutionalized' approaches to housing and caring for those individuals with significant mental health challenges. We support any and all new approaches that may provide relief since the old way of dealing with this simply isn't working.

Impact on economic prosperity:

Every business district and every business in the city may have a sense they are under attack by some massive criminal conspiracy. People in neighborhoods outside of the 'inner city' are reporting significantly more losses from break-ins, theft from cars, theft from garages, yards and sheds. This property loss obviously impacts our productivity and GDP, negatively impacts our attractiveness as a business destination and damages our brand.

Recommendations for the City of Nanaimo:

We need to put all-out pressure on senior levels of government while we expedite opportunities for problem solving at the local level. Remain open to pilot projects and creative solutions. Treat substance abuse as a public health issue. Take steps to resolve Homelessness already described in the Homeless Action Plan. Recognize and respond appropriately to mental health challenges. Invest in crime prevention and enforcement. Seek strengthened prosecutorial and judicial action. Enlist the aid of the corrections system in rehabilitation. Work to prevent increases in the number of homeless by investing in social programs managed by local non-profits while we aggressively pursue strategies and tactics to provide affordable housing – especially for those that need it most – our aging population.

Next Steps for the Chamber:

- Continue working as a member of the Homeless Coalition and CAC's
- Continue serving on Mayor & Council's Health & Housing Task Force
- Partner with VIU on an applied research project to better understand the economic reality of homelessness.
- Continue reporting to Council about the impacts on the business community and our concerns.

APPENDICES

July 15, 2019

Mayor & Council, et al
City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo, BC

Dear Mayor Krog and Council Members:

Here is our report on the third Chamber of Commerce tour gathering feedback from businesses in the areas neighbouring Newcastle Place and Nikao. We were additionally requested to duplicate this research in the Old City Quarter by their business community. We include our observations from regular visits to downtown Nanaimo merchants in preparation for, and our experiences from, the Commercial Street Night Market.

There seems to be no noted reduction in perceived incidents of crime in the areas close-by the two emergency shelter locations. Mostly petty property crimes – theft, burglary, shoplifting, break and enter, property damage, etc., but there is a great deal of concern about public misbehavior – drunkenness, open drug use and trade, public urination and defecation, threatening behavior, etc. Although criminal and disturbing activity is on the increase, just how much is attributable to the homeless population is questionable, of course.

Petty crime all over Nanaimo is on a significant up-swing, at least anecdotally. Even our office on Bowen Road has been subject to vandalism and late-night use for reasons I don't understand, unless the lighting enhances drug use as we've found syringes. We also had a window smashed recently.

What we are finding among business operators is a sense of frustration and resignation accompanied by an increased tolerance of social disorder. Businesses note they've increased their security measures (with attendant costs), added more staff to help prevent employees from feeling unsafe in the workplace, and reduced their expectations of minimizing loss of business. Most respond that they no longer call police to report minor crimes since few calls receive a timely response, the outcome doesn't change, and they don't feel heard.

The Old City Quarter and Downtown have seen the most significant negative change this spring. There are very few in the OCQ who don't feel directly affected by those they believe frequent, trade criminal proceeds, and camp out behind SARC. Many merchants have been broken into (some multiple times or having received multiple attempts), most have installed enhanced security protection (bars, alarm systems, video, etc). Many feel that this population began to increase as Newcastle and Nikao exerted pressure to remove the most significant criminal element, returning them to downtown.

We certainly understand this at the Night Market where our experience is very different from last year. Last year we mainly dealt with removing drunks, druggies, panhandlers and cheap thieves. Now, we are recognizing criminals acting in teams -- professional pickpockets, gran and run thieves, and aggressive panhandlers.

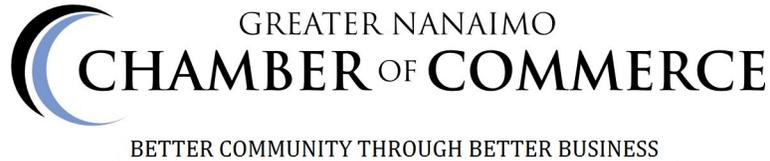
We maintain a team of eight Chamber staff (equipped with radio communications) identifiable by our hi-vis vests, plus support from RCMP, Bylaw Enforcement, and private security. We are kept busy surveilling, reporting to higher levels of security, and assisting in removing individuals from the site. We have consulted with the City's Community Safety Manager as well as RCMP and Bylaw Enforcement in a recent site sweep to identify vulnerabilities on-site following a group meeting after the minor incident of June 27.

This is, likely, our last report unless conditions change to the point where an update may be helpful. The Nanaimo Chamber, as the voice of business, is dedicated to providing impartial observational reports and assessments. We are dedicating to enhancing the experiences of businesses and their customers to improve the potential for success for local business operators. We hope this summary letter and report contributes to policy considerations that will help realize that.

Sincerely,



KIM SMYTHE, President & CEO



March 20, 2019

Mayor & Council
City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo, BC

Dear Mayor Krog and Council Members:

The Chamber has continued to work with Nanaimo's business community to hear their experiences and concerns surrounding the supportive housing projects at Terminal and Labieux. We have conducted two field surveys in response to Chamber members' inquiries and in a proactive response to a general increase in the level of stressors surrounding community safety and security.

I'm attaching the report resulting from our most recent door-to-door survey of Nanaimo businesses in commercial neighbourhoods close to the Labieux Road project. It would appear that the impact is much greater than the Terminal area, perhaps because the commercial population and density is that much greater. Other conditions always need to be considered but I hope our surveys and reports contribute constructively to the conversations that you and staff must be having.

The goal of the Chamber of Commerce is, of course, to be the voice of business. We work to enhance the experiences and improve community conditions for local business operators. We want to channel energy towards resolving challenges and breaking down barriers and feel that this information gathering and sharing is a vital component of that!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Smythe", written in a cursive style.

KIM SMYTHE, President & CEO

Report to City Council on the Perceived Impact on Local Business from 2060 Labieux Road Supportive Housing Project

Overview

This report is a follow-through exercise to the 250 Terminal Road, Supportive Housing Project Business Impact Report. The focus is to document, from a local business perspective, the impact from the “Supportive Housing project” located at 2060 Labieux Road. Our intention is to continue follow-up in both areas in the future.

The areas that were surveyed were Brooks Landing, Rock City Plaza, Country Club Mall, Northfield Road industrial, and Quality Foods on Bowen Road in response to Chamber member inquiries and increasing concerns of the business community.

Methodology

Our Chamber representative, Rick Kitsul, visited numerous businesses in the areas self-identified as ‘major victims’ of the changing conditions in the area. Businesses were interviewed over several days the week of March 8-12. Telephone follow-ups were also conducted.

General Consensus

Crime problems in the area have increased dramatically since the facility opened. Most businesses find that their garbage cans are being rummaged through and dumped on a regular basis, locks on anything are being cut and everything not worth stealing is tossed around back alleys and parking lots. Garbage and recycling bins are also being damaged.

Panhandling in the area has increased, customer confrontations have increased, discarded needles and drug paraphernalia are increasingly evident in public areas. There is a general unease from customers and staff for many businesses of the area.

Many of the businesses know who the “locals” from Labieux are and they share information with each other when the trouble-makers are on site through a local Face book group site.

Most businesses have increased security measures either by way of video surveillance, watching people super closely, not allowing many on the premises and generally being super vigilant. This doesn't create a more comfortable shopping experience for other customers.

Most feel that crime has increased and are worried about what is going to happen when the weather gets better. Optimists' thoughts are that at least there will be less drug use inside of public washrooms and the private mall and restaurant washrooms.

There are mixed reviews about the local RCMP response to situations. Some have great reports on RCMP dealing with problem people quickly while others report that RCMP have their hands tied and cannot do much about the problem. One report from 7-11 said it took 20 minutes for RCMP to respond when they were being threatened by a person with a needle.

Review and Feedback

Co-op Gas Station at Brooks Landing

- Drug use outside and inside the washrooms. Blood spatter, needles left out in the open.
- Have not been able to calculate if loss has increased.

Tim Horton's – Brooks Landing

- Situation is a “disaster”
- Needles out in the open
- Supervisor said “Police don't care”, unless it is major crime they do not want to respond. “traffic police” would not deal with a situation (not sure how to validate this statement)

The Landing Liquor Store

- Increased security
- Worse before Labieux opened, they have changed layout of store to “hinder” any potential shoplifters.

True Blue

- Not a lot of theft as they are a small store and are able to control shoppers when they are inside.
- Generally more uncomfortable since they were robbed.
- Worse the four days before and after welfare cheques are received

Nellie's Dutch Deli

- Green recycling bin stolen and garbage strewn about. They took the bin because it has a latch and keeps their stuff dry.
- Local they call "Red Beard" is a regular and has taken residence in the parking lot. He is threatening and generally disruptive to customers.
- Needles and some sleeping in the back of complex.

Modern Beauty Supplies

- Crack heads smoking in their doorway.
- No theft as they have no need to be in their store.
- Generally more a nuisance to customers as they come and go.

Gone Fishing

- Steal disposable knives, lighters, was never an issue till Labieux opened. In the past there was minimal theft but there has been a considerable increase since December.

Save On Foods – Brooks Landing

- Tokens now for washroom. Black lights installed.
- Theft has increased dramatically since Labieux has opened. There are daily confrontations with “locals”. The store manager and assistant manager feel that B&E’s are less as shoplifting is a slap on the wrist while B&E’s you will get jail time. Feel the crime is “organized” and the shoplifters come in knowing what to steal.
- They are losing \$10-12,000 per month just from the meat department.
- One employee gathered more than \$15,000 worth of products over a month from unsuccessful shoplifters before they were able to exit the store.

Save On Foods – Country Club

- \$1,000 per day in theft -- \$400 from one shoplifter caught recently
- 26 lost carts in last two weeks
- Installing tokens and black lights to washrooms

Moores

- Manager is sympathetic to the cause as her “partner” was one of the “organizers” of “Tent City” – see separate Addendum.
- She did not want to discuss the situation with the store.

Home Hardware

- Can clearly identify people from Labieux
- Take backpacks into store, very confrontational and violent, worse than in the past.
- They follow people around the store.

Mack Truck

- Stealing truck batteries \$120.00 each, 3-5 times per month; connectors from tractors to trailers, aluminum, radiators, anything they think they can sell
- Tired of calling RCMP, feel their hands are tied
- Cannot leave anything outside, people are going through trucks to see what they can steal
- Installed additional cameras

Berk Trucks

- Ongoing fence repairs \$500 each time
- Batteries and gas stolen
- Not much support from RCMP
- Says the area has been and still is prone to vandalism
- Shop open till midnight; when doors are open people will wander in and steal tools.
- They have increased security costs

Allen Marine

- Increased security, put steel bars in all the chain link fencing

Dollar Tree

- Assistant Store manager attacked with scissors
- Caught 8 people stealing in 2 1/2 hours
- Same group of people
- Try to “bust” at the door
- Getting worse
- Customers will not bring kids to store
- Drop needles in the store

Best Buy

- High volume of theft, grab and go, Blue Tooth speakers (\$5,000 per month)
- Increased fraud
- Stores at Country Club are sharing information
- Every person is frustrated
- Needles outside of building, sharps containers inside of bathrooms

Sport Clips

- Defecating outside, spreading onto the building, doing drugs, frighten staff (they feel they are targeted; since they are 20-26 years old females)
- Loiter and harass customers and people in the parking lot. They feel they are losing customers as they do not want to bring young kids for haircuts. This decline is noticeable since Labieux opened up.
- They do not walk home from work – 10 minutes from store.

Liard Wheaton Motors

- Damage to shed, charges ripped off walls, live wires exposed. (Concerned someone will get seriously hurt because of this)
- Stolen truck, returned without much damage.
- Damage to cars, stolen catalytic converters, stolen gas,
- Additional costs around \$2,000 per month

Mac's and Petro Can – open 24 hours

- The problem is worse from midnight to 5-6 am, after 12 they come in groups. One person is the distraction while the others steal. They generally are not violent and will not leave the property.
- RCMP are very slow to react
- \$50-100 per day in theft.

Brooks Landing Shopping Centre

- Increased security by Footprints, better LED lighting, better on site cameras. Security company providing split shift security. Run regulars off the property as best they can.
- A lot of needles left on site, security responsible for collecting.
- Try to provide good communication to merchants.
- Wide scope of people doing theft, some of it clearly organized
- RCMP – good response, try to call only when it is important
- High end expensive video system in place
- Feel and see traffic flow from 250 Terminal to Labieux via E&N trail

Country Club Mall

- Stores share security information. Mall administration is aware but tries to keep an arm's length for privacy concerns.
- Two security guards per day increase to 3 Friday and Saturday
- Cannot tell if increase in crime is a natural progression with Nanaimo being busier or if there is a direct correlation to Labieux Road. Is this global or just a local phenomena.
- More chronic people hanging around the mall property. Country Club is trying to move them along and "pushing to Rock City".
- Daily, detailed incident reports from Footprints security. Events are documented and many are from the same individuals.
- Finding 2-3 needles per week.
- Daily incidents with the same individual with no repercussions.
- Doubled security costs increased to \$70,000 per year.
- Feel that public safety improves during better weather
- Two distinct types of crime going on in Nanaimo as identified by businesses:
 - 1) Tenant crime, visible to people, petty crime done by individuals.
 - 2) Organized crime; people being dropped off and picked up later in the day. Major concern and feel that goods are being transported off Vancouver Island.

Saint John's Ambulance

- Very bad in and around their building. Lock doors during the day to keep people out. Litter, checking cars in parking lot, nuisance, etc. They used to walk in the park but are now afraid because of needles, people “cracked up” swinging sticks, etc.
- They are willing to offer FREE OPIOID courses to the Chamber of Commerce; either at the Chamber office or at Saint John's Ambulance. They also provide free Naloxone Kits (Narcan)

Summary

We did not include every business that visited over the last few days. Many of these merchants cited frustration with the lack of communication from the City. They are extremely grateful that the Nanaimo Chamber is conducting this survey on behalf of the business community.

The cost of extra security to most businesses is significant, either in extra staffing, technology or otherwise hyper-protecting their business. Not to mention the loss of customer visits due to the objectionable experiences some are having. The cost of lost goods is in the HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. Insurance claims will also be very high due to increasing burglaries, b & e's, property damage and theft of goods and materials. This is not a good situation for Nanaimo businesses.

Many are extremely frustrated with no communication and are very worried about what will happen this summer. Another tent city? Can this get worse?

Addendum A

Kevin Donaghy (partner of Moore`s Store manager) was initially involved with starting “Tent City”. He is trying to start a non-profit society (New Reach Outreach) to provide services to residents of Labieux, 250 Terminal, and homeless drug addicts. He has some government funding \$20,000 but is looking to increase this amount.

He hopes to set up a “peer run” harm reduction site on the premises of 2060 Labieux Road. He hopes to provide harm reduction services and have an overdose prevention site. I have a meeting tentatively set up with Kevin to gather more information and will report back after we meet.

Addendum B -- Follow up to 250 Terminal Report:

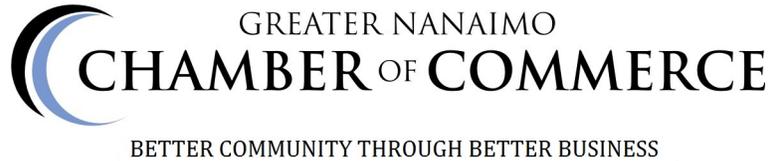
Situation has not improved much, most of the same problems still exist. A couple of new twists are at the Husky Station where Terminal locals who have money will come in and show it and buy something but have stuffed their pockets with stolen goods. They feel it is two for one day.

Midland Tools – worse around Mardi gras (Welfare Wednesday), stealing magnets, sleeping in the back stairs, travel in packs.

7-11 – Life is much better since they increased Paladin Security to hourly sweeps of the store. There is not as much loitering; but still a lot of credit card fraud. RCMP response time was very slow when they were being threatened with a dirty needle. It took 20 minutes for RCMP to get into the area. 7-11 has lost around \$40,000 since December.

Sandy Bartlett – It is better since the fence has been completed and there has been less damage to their property. They have also made a community Face book page for residents in the area.

Additionally, the community has organized around their neighbourhood association to form a ‘Community Safety Advisory Network’ to educate and inform themselves.



February 26, 2019

Mayor & Council
City of Nanaimo
455 Wallace Street
Nanaimo, BC

Dear Mayor Krog and Council Members:

On the last week of January and first week of February the Chamber assigned one of our contractors to visit businesses within a kilometer of the temporary modular housing site at 250 Terminal Avenue. Having heard reports in the media and having contact with a neighbourhood group in the area, we felt it appropriate to do our own research into the impact on area businesses.

I'm attaching the report resulting from that. Although anecdotal, it indicates the general impression of business operators in the area. Since this is a fluid issue, we will be returning within the next two weeks to survey the same businesses and get an updated view. I'm sure you'll receive similar updates from the RCMP and other first responders on call out counts.

We were prepared to send this to you with some general recommendations from our perspective but, after attending the February 11 COW meeting on Homelessness and Affordable Housing, feel strongly that expediting the staff recommendations on pages 123-126 of the report will go a long way toward problem-solving at this time. Kudos to staff for their comprehensive approach and kudos to you once executed! We'll report back to you with results from our next one-to-one business survey in early March.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Smythe", written in a cursive style.

KIM SMYTHE, President & CEO

Report on Impact to Businesses in the Area Surrounding 250 Terminal Ave. Supportive Housing Project

Overview

The following is the outcome of two days our staff spent visiting local business owners, managers, employees and local residents in the vicinity of 250 Terminal Ave to personally gauge the “Supportive Housing Project” community’s impact on the surrounding neighborhood and the perception around the Project and its residents.

Initial contacts were with local businesses that are near the “Project” to see how, if, and the frequency of problems related to the new residents. The response from everyone was that they were extremely grateful that the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce was taking this survey and would like to see the results when completed.

Observations & experiences since December 1

There has been an exponential increase in theft from companies like 7-11, Husky Gas, MidLand Tools. There is increased street activity during the day around these stores, at night there is an increase in vandalism, violence, threats to employees, and staff members.

Is the situation getting worse?

There was no general consensus as to whether it is getting worse. Most contacts are thinking it is too early to tell. Many have been warned that it will get worse as the weather gets better. They feel that increased police patrols, increased security, and better more vigilant security measures are important.

What would you like to see happen?

The feelings here are mostly like it is too late to do anything. The residents had no say in the location and that the city “had” to take the funds from the Provincial Government.

Have you interacted with police or others because of this?

Most of the local merchants, managers and employees have had increased police contact since December 1. The feeling from them is that the RCMP have a hands-off policy and do very little to enforce the law. Businesses mostly claim the RCMP knows who is dealing drugs and committing crimes; they do not seem to “take action”.

Has it changed how you conduct business?

For the most part, most of the companies have increased security measures through camera surveillance, increased eyes, taking back packs off when coming into their stores. Police have advised them not to touch back as they could be charged with assault. There is a sense of nervousness and caution that was not warranted previously.

Individual Review and Feedback

Mid-Land Tools

Contact: Tony Wright

Long Time Nanaimo Business; 7 days per week, normal business hours

They have not seen an increase in theft but have been able to mitigate because staff has an acute awareness of what is going on in the store. They know who/what to watch out for. There are 31 cameras that surround the facility. His staff reports that these people are confrontational and threatening.

Items that are targets for theft are: magnets, counter punches, flashlights, torches etc. They come in with shopping lists of what they need to steal. (A list was found in a confiscated

backpack) Most of the problems seem to be after dark with people sleeping under stairs and damaging property.

Tony felt that it was probably harder on the local residents as they did not have the ability to “watch” all of the time. He also said it was a great deal of wasted time watching them.

7-11

Long Time Nanaimo Business; 7 days per week, 24 hours per day

7-11 has had a lot of increased RCMP calls; there has been an increase in physical harm to staff, spitting, urinating inside the store, defecating and spreading on an employee’s car after she asked someone to leave the property. They cannot leave orders on the floor as they will have complete cases of product stolen. They feel there is an increase in theft and they are losing at least \$150.00 extra per day since December. They also have seen an increase in the use of stolen card and debit cards.

They are getting to know the “regulars” and watch them very carefully. Police have advised them not to lay hands of these people as they could themselves then be charged.

For the last 13 years they have been able to operate without problems.

Pioneer Fireplace

Long Time Nanaimo Business

Had a break-in two weeks ago the RCMP’s answer was for them to “beef up” security. They have noticed an increase in drug use, used needles around their dumpster. His feeling was that the RCMP had a “hands off” approach to these people. Unless they have video evidence they will not look into the matter and it will be dropped. Other than the most recent break-in they have not had increased police contact.

White Spot

Would not make any comment and said we would have to contact their Corporate Office for the company position.

Cheeky Monkey Stained Glass

Have not seen an increase in theft, mostly due to the nature of the products they sell. It is business as usual inside the shop. Brenda felt it was much worse in Nanaimo a few years ago. Angela said she was more afraid taking public transit and waiting at bus stops for the bus to come. She did say that they have to chase people out from the back of their property.

Husky Gas Station

He laughed when asked about increased problems in the area. This is an ongoing daily problem with petty theft, vandalism, and threatening people. He tries to kick them out of the store when he can. He does not call the police unless something major is happening. He finds lots of needles on the property.

He said they have broken into the propane storage locker and will walk in and take what they want and just walk right out.

Xpose, Kidz Kompany, Joel Lee Tattoo

These companies are further up the road and have not had any issues other than some petty theft around the building. All three of the people I talked to had the same response.

Port-o-Call Hotel

There has been an increase in people wandering around the halls, looking for opportunities. No damage to cars or theft; has been more of a nuisance. They have cameras and have not had to contact RCMP since December.

Terminal Convenience – Esso

They have only owned this location for a month and a half so they have no real history on what has happened in the past. They have noticed an increase in theft over the last 15 days. They try to get to know the people and regulars. They have had to call RCMP twice since they took over. They do have issues with people staying in the washrooms for long periods of time.

Bartlett & Company Law Corporation

Contact: Sandy Bartlett

Long Time Nanaimo Business – 28 years; 250.741.0007

Their office backs onto 250 Terminal; Sandy has had real problems with this facility. He has had damage to property (destroyed fence), has 4 police cases with file number with RCMP. He is on the record with News media, the City of Nanaimo, local Politicians, and RCMP on his position in regards to this facility.

His staff fear coming to and leaving the office and he is worried about losing long term employees to new jobs. He does have video of people jumping the fence, tagging his fence, and threatening his staff.

Some of his comments:

- 1) Need programs to help the people inside;
- 2) need real protection in the area;
- 3) going to get worse before it gets better;
- 4) need search warrants to enter the housing units;
- 5) need to accept what is going on;
- 6) worried about when the warm weather hits and what impact that will have on the area.

He also talked about the Historical Value of the Newcastle Area and how they are part of the Nanaimo Historical Walk. His building is declared as a historical building he cannot change the looks or cut down his historical tree. He thought the Chamber might be interested in the impact of how 250 Terminal will impact the Historical value to the neighborhood.

He feels, if he could sell his property, it would be devalued by at least \$200,000.00. Sandy also feels that he has had a real financial loss by bordering this facility.

Security

The contract for Security at 250 Terminal is held by:

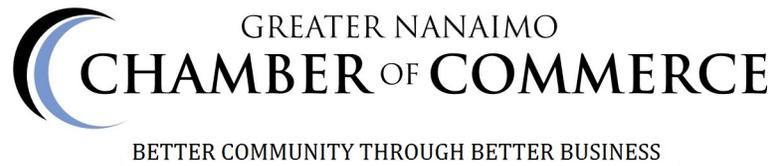
Paladin Security 420 William St.; Victoria B.C.; V9A 3Y9. 250.380.1965. Paladin has been on the site for only the last week and has a 24 hour, one person, and foot patrol. They can only report and observe and suspicious activities. The area that is covered is Island Highway from Husky Gas to Townsite Road down as far as Stewart Ave.

Local Security Company Footprints is subcontracted to provide security at the gate. They monitor who enters and exits by the gate.

Summary

Many of the people we talked with would like to see a final report back to them. We think we only scratched the surface and are considering seeking additional time and resources to work on this.

We did speak with one apartment manager – Gail; her apartment backs onto 250 Terminal and she is worried about increased violence (she has been threatened), theft, property damage etc. She said people urinate and defecate on her property.



Her renters are now actively looking for new apartments to rent in other parts of Nanaimo. She also spoke about the Green door apartments across the road. She said that they used to be 100 per cent full and now have only 60 per cent occupancy.

The Chamber's objective was to collect impressions directly from businesses most likely to be affected by the establishment of this Project. There has been a lot of negative reaction posted in local news media, and we felt it more fair to try and capture impressions directly from the businesses likely to be impacted. Depending on the next steps by BC Housing with the property, the Chamber will possibly return and measure changes over time. We will keep the City informed of our actions and feedback from the community.