



City Acts on Community Safety

July 2, 2025

The City of Victoria will spend \$10.35 million to address community safety as it implements the first actions of its Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan. Initial actions will focus on Pandora, Princess and downtown.

“Victorians are frustrated with the rising degree of street disorder and the consequences from it that affect the daily lives of residents seeking uninterrupted, calm use and enjoyment of public spaces and businesses”, said Mayor Marianne Alto. “While responsibility for the services that address poverty, homelessness, addictions and health lie primarily with the provincial government, Victorians expect their city government to respond to these crises. Today we begin that work with a new focus and a blueprint for action in the new Community safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) Plan.”

The CSWB plan describes a system-wide shift to address community safety with “upstream” interventions and “downstream” enforcement, allocating resources to change how the city provides its own services and how it collaborates with other governments, community service providers and residents. The first actions that align with the CSWB plan are set out below, including price expectations for the new resources needed to begin the work.

Bylaw

Almost 80 per cent of Bylaw staff time is now dedicated to managing sheltering in public spaces. Last year bylaw costs related to sheltering and public disorder cost the city over \$3.5 million. This strains resources for Bylaw Services and limits their capacity to reach all areas needing enforcement. Review of city streets and traffic bylaws will clarify and adapt bylaw authority, but meanwhile bylaw staff respond to diverse complaints about blocked sidewalks, individuals sheltering in parks or sleeping in public spaces and incidents of social disorder and anti-social behaviour.

This work will increase as bylaw staff enforce the City’s recently revised *Sheltering in Parks* policy and the *Parks Regulation Bylaw* which establish allowable sheltering locations, distances, times and activities, and prohibit any local governments or public authorities from sending homeless persons to shelter in a park, or transferring or transporting homeless persons to Victoria. Bylaw staff will be further taxed as the CSWB plan is implemented. The city will add additional bylaw staff.

Price tag: <\$1.9 million (ongoing)

Policing

Increasing social disorder is one symptom of the need for increased enforcement against criminality. Resources are needed to demonstrate that criminals can no longer thrive in Victoria. The CSWB plan will increase collaboration with the Victoria Police service, but there is an urgent need for additional police now.

The City does not have the authority to direct operational decisions for policing, but the city will ask our Chief to deploy more officers to support enforcement in designated areas, like Pandora, Princess and downtown. The City will allocate additional funds to support the hiring and/or re-deployment of nine officers, and detail this as a Victoria-only deployment directed only to the city, under the applicable sections of the joint Framework Agreement that currently guides policing in the combined service.

VicPD has recently been awarded \$220,00 from the province for implementation of CSTEP (Community Safety and Targeted Enforcement Program) to boost police efforts tackling public-safety challenges that are affecting businesses and communities, like street crimes such as robbery, shoplifting, theft and property damage. This work needs amplification. The city will match this award.

Price tags: <\$1.35 million (additional police ongoing), \$220,000 (CSTEP match one time).

Public Works

The City continues to bear significant financial burden in response to the sustained impact of sheltering in parks and public spaces, in damaged infrastructure, environmental degradation and ongoing maintenance costs. To simply keep up with repairs, maintenance and waste management related to public disorder, the city spends more than \$1.5 million per year on operating costs in parks, boulevards and streets. There is a need for increased public works attention on targeted blocks along Pandora and Princess, and throughout downtown, to shift use and enjoyment of public space and to sustain the changed environment. The city will add staff, tools and supplies.

Price tag: <\$390,000 (Future TBD)

Public Infrastructure Repair & Rehabilitation on Pandora & Princess

Pandora Avenue has undergone several “charrettes” to imagine designs for public spaces with attractive amenities that encourage and support sustained public use and enjoyment. Princess Street has not yet had such a public conversation.

The City will begin a first phase of a comprehensive rebuild of Pandora blocks as soon as enforcement resources are available, in consultation with private property owners in the 800/900/1000 blocks. As private development unfolds on Princess Street, the city will collaborate with existing and new businesses to determine how to eliminate sheltering, and sustain its absence. Based on early designs, Pandora rehabilitation is estimated to be more than \$7 million, but preliminary work will make tangible changes within a \$3.75 million budget. Equivalent work along Princess is yet to be determined, but preliminary estimates suggest \$1.1 million for initial rehabilitation and sustained upkeep.

Price tags: <\$3.75 million (Pandora 2025 & Future TBD), <\$1.1 million (Princess 2025 & Future TBD)

Non-Profit Community Service Providers

The city has financially supported many local community social service providers as they offer services to the most vulnerable Victorians. Millions of dollars in direct funding have been given to non-profits for operational support, with funds going to parks relocation coordinators, a new direct service hub, daytime warming shelters, and transitional services guiding street folk to housing, health and other “second stage” supports.

The city also paid for and operated extreme weather warming and cooling centres and, while it continues to negotiate with the province for financial support for this locally-delivered provincial responsibility, the city expects “EWR” services will need to expand as extreme climate incidents continue.

The city will provide more funds to non-profit service providers to expand existing relocation services, and offer a more comprehensive response to emergency climate and weather crises.

Price tags: <\$624,000 (enhanced non-profit relocation services 2025 & 2026), <\$308,000 (EWR).

Transportation

As the downtown core of a metropolitan region, the city hosts the bulk of social and health services that support the most vulnerable residents from across the Capital region (89% of shelter beds and 83% of supportive beds). Contributing to demand is the custom of transporting vulnerable residents from other municipalities to Victoria, and the transport of recently released hospital patients to parks and shelters in the city.

While continuing to urge neighbour local governments to create their own social and health services, the city will begin to relocate vulnerable residents to needed services at suitable service delivery locations throughout the region, such as hospitals, clinics, and social services. The city will support an experienced non-profit service provider to operate a vehicle outfitted with basic health services to determine the immediate needs of a vulnerable person and then provide immediate transport to the location where those needs can be met.

Price tags: <\$180,000 (vehicle one time), <\$440,000 (staff 2025 & 2026).

Destinations & Placement

It is the responsibility of the provincial government to build supportive and social housing, and to create and operate an assessment system to match vulnerable residents with appropriate housing. Developing such housing and health supports takes time, and meanwhile vulnerable Victorians are without adequate housing and health care, the outcomes of which are felt by the city. The city has, on a temporary basis, contributed to shelter and supportive housing projects and programs operated by experienced organizations, some of which have underutilized spaces, some of which need additional spaces, some of which have tested and demonstrated innovative ways to move unhoused persons out of homelessness.

More temporary solutions are needed. The city will work with experienced service providers to establish managed, secure, short term, emergency shelter spaces outside the downtown core. This may require use of existing city property, or rental of private property, plus costs for infrastructure, upkeep and operation. Additional funding can also fill unused capacity at existing shelters. Temporary housing options must be linked to a provincial housing stream so persons can be relocated to permanent supportive and/or affordable provincial housing when available.

Price tags: <\$1.95 million (new infrastructure one time), <\$850,000 (operations 2025 & 2026), <\$300,000 (property rental 2025 & 2026), <\$250,000 (boost existing shelter capacity 2025 & 2026 TBD).

Funding Sources

To implement all these actions, approximately \$13.612 million are needed. Some expenditures are one-time. Without additional tax increases, and respecting the commitment to undertake CSWB actions in 2025 within the current 2025 city budget, such funding must be taken from existing projects, programs and/or services.

\$1.5 million will be re-allocated from upgrades currently set to augment facilities at Royal Athletic Park, scaling back some improvements but allowing critical repairs and accessibility upgrades to continue as scheduled.

\$1.65 million will be re-allocated from the city's housing reserve, and another \$700,000 re-allocated from the future contributions to the city's housing reserve for the rest of 2025 and 2026.

\$2.5 million will be redirected from the renewal of Centennial Square, so the project will be phased, delaying work in the eastern half of the Square (the Sequoia and upper sections) to a future date.

\$4 million will come from the city's Financial Stability Reserve, which is set aside for emergency and public safety related demands, expenditures for which will contribute to the rehabilitation and sustained management of Pandora Avenue, Princess Street and downtown.

These funds (\$10.35 million) do not total to the amount needed overall but they are enough to get started on immediate actions that will change the realities of Pandora Avenue, Princess Street and our downtown, and make a tangible difference to community safety and wellbeing in Victoria.

“These are hard choices,” noted Mayor Marianne Alto. “All the programs from which these funds will be taken are important, but the urgency of responding to the city’s social disorder crisis is paramount. Municipalities are on the frontlines of this crisis, and our businesses and residents (housed and unhoused) expect – and have told – us to better manage its effects on them all. Our CSWB plan now accelerates and intensifies the city’s actions with balance, breadth and intentionality.”

In Summary

Council has directed the City Manager to:

1. Hire 12 additional Bylaw staff, with a focus on deployment to Pandora, Princess and downtown (<\$1.9million)
2. Request deployment of 9 additional police officers to Pandora, Princess and downtown in general, with at least 2 of those officers dedicated to working full time in partnership with bylaw (<\$1.35million)
3. Match CSTEP funding to VicPD (\$220,000)
4. Increase public works attention to Pandora, Princess and the downtown (<\$390,000)
5. Start to rehabilitate and rebuild the public infrastructure on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue and Princess Avenue (<\$3.75million + <\$1.1million)
6. Increase funding for more relocation services provided by non-profit service providers (<\$624,000)
7. Enhance city emergency weather crisis response (<\$308,000)
8. Investigate purchase and staffing of a vehicle to assess and transport unhoused persons from Pandora, Princess and the downtown (<\$180,000 + \$440,000)
9. Investigate and establish new short term shelter options including up to two managed, secure, short term emergency shelter spaces (<\$1.95million + <\$850,000 + <\$300,000)
10. Resource community service providers to fill unused spaces at existing shelters (<\$250,000)
11. Collaborate with Princess Street establishments to eliminate sheltering, and sustain its absence
12. Confirm that \$10.35 million will be allocated for these purposes from reallocations of funds diverted thus:
 - a. \$700,000 from planned contributions to the housing reserve for 2025 and 2026,
 - b. \$1.5million from funds allocated for Royal Athletic Park,
 - c. \$1.65million from the city’s current housing reserve,
 - d. \$2.5million from funds allocated for Centennial Square, and
 - e. \$4million from the Financial Stability Reserve.

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