

2018-11-04

Tanya Turner  
Director of Development Services  
City of Quesnel

## **Re: City of Quesnel - Safer Quesnel Report - Recommended Actions**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit the Recommended Actions (RA) in this Safer Quesnel Report. The City of Quesnel, like many other municipalities, is faced with challenges as it deals with crime and disorder matters occurring in the community.

Successful initiatives that make for safe and secure environs, for all people, requires many stakeholders working together. It is not just a police matter, it is a community matter.

To be successful it needs many stakeholders engaged - Mayor & Council, RCMP, City Departments, Provincial Ministries, Quesnel BIAs, Health and Social services, First Nation Communities, Neighbourhoods - all are vital to achieving the common goal of having a safer community.

Our ability to respectfully partner with those having differing security and social perspectives is key to successful development and implementation of an effective Safer Quesnel initiative. Not only are the police vital to lessening crime & disorder, successful delivery of Health & Social services are also vital to achieving this goal.

The goal is improved “coordination and communication” as it relates to lessening crime & disorder public safety in the community generally, and its downtown specifically. The focus and energy of many stakeholders will be needed to achieve the goals of a Safer Quesnel.

The City is the natural lead in this process as it represents all citizens and has the ability to directly influence positive change.

I wish to submit recommendations of actions that could be taken to lessen the impact of crime and disorder occurring in the community.

## **Executive Summary**

Overview of community concerns that need to be considered in addressing crime & disorder:

- A common concern for disorder and perception of being less safe with the majority of persons interviewed,
- There is widely held perception that crime has increased and public safety has decreased - most notably in the downtown area,
- There is concern across the community for an increase in visible signs of a growing street population and an increase in crime & disorder,
- Health & Social services and the RCMP are working to coordinate their efforts in the face of increasing challenges occurring on the street and in the community generally,
- Areas within the downtown are under stress from crime and disorder which are causing frustration for both merchants and citizens alike,
- Citizens are concerned for the increase in property crime occurring in their neighbourhoods,
- The Health & Social communities are also affected by crime when they are providing vital community health and social services,
- Resourcing of the RCMP Detachment is a key hurdle that needs to be addressing to assure the ability of the police to partner effectively and provide services needed by all stakeholders in the community.

## **Foreward**

It is difficult to make recommendations for all the factors that can influence a rise or fall in crime or disorder, therefore this report should be viewed as a submission that offers recommendations based on experience addressing similar factors as

are occurring in the community of Quesnel, but not giving a guarantee of outcomes.

The City of Quesnel will need to weigh the benefits of the proposed Safer Quesnel options as it considers costs, budgets, goals and future developments.

This report is not legal advice. That advice needs to be received from a lawyer when required.

### **Recommendation #1 - Safer Working Group (SWG)**

**That the City of Quesnel align City Staff & RCMP resources to create a Safer Working Group (SWG) to coordinate actions to address crime & disorder occurring in the community.**

The Safer Working Group (SWG) serves as a working & advisory body, responsible for providing advice and/or making recommendations to City Council on matters related to crime prevention, community disorder and safety within the City of Quesnel.

Crime & disorder are of rising community concern. The City of Quesnel and the Quesnel RCMP Detachment can work to collaborate more closely to address these incidents. Closer coordination and communication can be achieved through the creation of a SWG working group. This group will coordinate actions by internal city departments & the RCMP, which allows for their more effective joint engagement on matters of crime and disorder.

The Safer Working Group also provides; Mayor & Council, Public Safety & Policing Committee (PSPC), Senior City Staff & RCMP Detachment Commander with an operational arm to utilize when crime & disorder matters are of concern in the community.

This includes, but is not limited to developing operational responses to: community wide & downtown security issues, protection of parks & facilities,

improve coordination & community between City/RCMP enforcement personnel, integrate enforcement & health/social service responses on issues of community safety, gives operational focus to goal of reducing crime and disorder activities, finding effective community level responses, supports roll-out of Spirit Square Bylaw Enforcement Office (if approved, see Recommendation #2), supports roll-out of Crime Prevention Thru Environmental Design (CPTED) actions (if approved, see Recommendation #5) and Dealing With Problem Properties (Nuisance) (if approved, see Recommendation #6).

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

Here are some general comments on how the SWG can function:

- Reduce conflicts in our community generally by developing a collaborative city staffed working group that can assist in achieving a Safer Quesnel,
- Realizes the ability of City departments and the RCMP to collaboratively impact crime & disorder occurring in the community,
- Provides a collective city led response to matters of security for all persons in the community generally & downtown specifically,
- Responds operationally to public safety problems and develops Action Plans towards achieving an effective city/police response with issues of managing public disorder in both an ethical and practical framework,
- Reduces criminal and disorderly behaviour on our streets while protecting the interests of the most vulnerable citizens in the city,
- Take actions that recognizes that Health, Social and Enforcement responses succeed if collaborative and coordinated.

Key city departments and police involved: RCMP, Fire, Bylaws, Parks, Public Works, Business Licencing, Building Inspections & Planning.

The Safer Working Group (SWG) serves as a City 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 Safer Working Group (SWG) will invite other group participation from Health Services, Social Services, Downtown Business Associations, Provincial Enforcement Authorities & others as issues arise that would benefit from engaging those agencies or organizations to facilitate joint problem-solving, and providing advice with regard to community public safety, crime and disorder issues.

### Safer Working Group (SWG)



The SWG purpose is to provide Mayor & Council with an ability to:

- Align city & policing resources to more effectively address crime and disorder matters,
- Proactive and integrated approach to issues of crime prevention, public disorder and safety,

- Provision of co-ordinated services to support public safety throughout the city,
- Ability to reduce the adverse effects arising from public disorder or criminal activities,
- Integration of enforcement and city departmental responses to issues of community safety,
- Partnering with social, health, neighbourhood and business groups as issues arise of a crime or disorder matter requiring city involvement,
- Responding to emerging issues related to public safety,
- Access services & joint strategies that lead to the protection of vulnerable persons,
- The Safer Working Group initiative needs to bring together those city resources capable of lessening impact or resolving matters of security, disorder and community, downtown and neighbourhood issues that have and will arise.

In conjunction with city Bylaw Enforcement Officers, RCMP Officers & private security Patrollers, bring a joint focus to lessening crime and disorder in your downtown, the Safer Working Group (SWG) becomes a valuable tool to address issues concerning crime and disorder occurring in the whole community.

The Safer Working Group will become an effective operational response for the City of Quesnel, focused on dealing with matters of community crime & disorder.

## **Recommendation #2 - Increasing Enforcement Presence**

**That the City of Quesnel utilize the new satellite Spirit Square Bylaw Enforcement “storefront” to coordinate and address crime and disorder occurring in the downtown. That this office will be the hub for enforcement activities in the downtown.**

**That the City of Quesnel contract a part-time private security Patroller to provide “eyes” on the street, and a presence to discourage crime & disorder activities occurring in the downtown.**

**That the City of Quesnel 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 & city maintenance issues to the right service provider for response.**

This recommendation identifies an action that can be taken to assist in reclaiming, maintaining and protecting the future of the downtown as a safe place to visit, work and live.

The Downtown of any community is the centre of the community for all persons. It needs to be supported and disorder addressed. The Spirit Square BEO will be a base for downtown Bylaw Enforcement Officers and a check-point for RCMP Officers & contracted a private security Patroller supporting the downtown.

Downtown is changing rapidly and public expectations for a safe downtown continue to increase and will do more so as the population grows. Provision of a secure downtown environment where the RCMP, Bylaws & private security Patrollers have a visible presence, will support that goal.

Downtown stress will continue to increase if enforcement and security responders are not a more visible presence in the daily life of the downtown.

Coordination and communication are the key tools to regain a sense of order in dealing with the stresses that can occur. To achieve that goal necessitates the daily presence of security resources centered at the Spirit Square “store front” location a currently underway by the City.

This will be actioned with the creation of a Spirit Square Bylaw Enforcement Office (BEO), already having been relocated by the City of Quesnel into the downtown. The BEO can deliver a daily bylaw street level enforcement and a security response to meet the needs of City of Quesnel residents, business owners, property owners, social service providers and visitors to the downtown.

#### **Function of Spirit Square Bylaw Enforcement Office (BEO):**

- Central office downtown for communication and coordination of all security matters,

- The BEO functions as an office for Bylaw Enforcement Officers,
- Downtown contracted Patroller service will be co-ordinated and managed daily through this office,
- RCMP as a supportive “come and go” presence,
- Enforcement personnel working closely with Health & Social providers by referring those in need to these services or facilitated direct contact client to service,
- This important initiative already underway by the City and near ready for occupancy,
- Staff with come and go out of office - no clerical support - when not there the door is locked - so not considered a full-service office,
- Complaint by phone processes will occur as laid out in the recommended “Who Do You Call?” pamphlet,
- Enforcement can be an important assistance to “Street Outreach” if Health & Social services pursue this delivery model in the future,
- Engagement of RMCP crime prevention programs could be considered at this location depending on space availability,
- City Bylaws, RCMP and contracted Patroller will have a daily presence in the downtown depending on the most efficient scheduling of those resources,
- Point of contact for security problem-solving in the downtown,
- Being next door to Downtown Business Improvement Office (DBIA) office will promote effective communication,
- Promote research on Best Practices in public safety & security for our downtown,
- Used for distribution of written public safety & emergency planning information through this office,
- Single point of contact for downtown merchants, residents, and property owners on bylaw enforcement and security patrol matters,
- Works with DBIA for business fan-out of security advisory notifications,
- Explores use of volunteers for communication and on-going educational aspects of service delivery on public security matters.

### **Contracting of A Downtown Daytime Private Security Patroller:**

Business owners and citizens alike can experience crime & disorder matters occurring in the downtown. This has been an on-going concern and 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 Patroller working in the downtown during key hours. The actual hours can be assigned based on input from the business community & RCMP reporting of crime. One of the key times to have a street security presence is in the hour before the businesses open, so that potential disorder can be addressed in a timely manner.

This Patroller becomes the constant “eyes” on the street that enables RCMP & Bylaw staff to respond to their areas of concern based on immediate information when incidents are occurring. It also provides for focused patrols to problematic areas.

It is recommended that the patroller(s) considered for this contracted role have strong people skills and be able to operate in both a firm and friendly manner.

It is important that the same one or two Patrollers be utilized in order to promote developing good relationships with all stakeholders. This person will need to become familiar with health & social services that are in the community, so they are able to inform those in need where and when services are available.

Rational for hiring this contracted security patroller service:

- Service provides the enforcement services with “eyes” on the business core of the city during key downtown business hours,
- Patroller will be part of the coordination of all enforcement to increase a “visible” presence in the downtown that includes Bylaw Enforcement & RCMP Officers,
- Provides ambassadorial connection to the public in the downtown,
- Cost-effective way to address or prevent disorder activities,
- Patroller can commence an early morning patrol before the start of each business day opening, and resolve unwanted activity occurring,
- When on duty, provides the business and downtown community with a contact person who can attend and assess minor observed matters before they escalate to a criminal or disorder level,
- Enables Bylaw & RCMP staff to respond effectively to crime, bylaw & disorder matters when they are occurring,
- Provides appropriate recording and reporting of incidents,

- Communicates with and is connected to Bylaw Enforcement Officers located at the Spirit Square office,
- Patroller gets to know the street entrenched community and can refer those persons to health & social services in the community.

### **“Who Do You Call?”**

This simple recommendation will have a positive impact to help the public & merchants know “Who Do You Call? The brochure/card will lay out what services are available, and how to contact those services. It is a handy guide to keep available for merchants and citizens alike who are often confused with who you do call for a variety of disorder, security or bylaw matters.

Without this information available, citizens & businesses often call the RCMP for matters that could be handled more efficiently by a City department responsible for that area of city operations,

The creation of this simple brochure will provide with information in a timely and appropriate manner to address their security concerns.

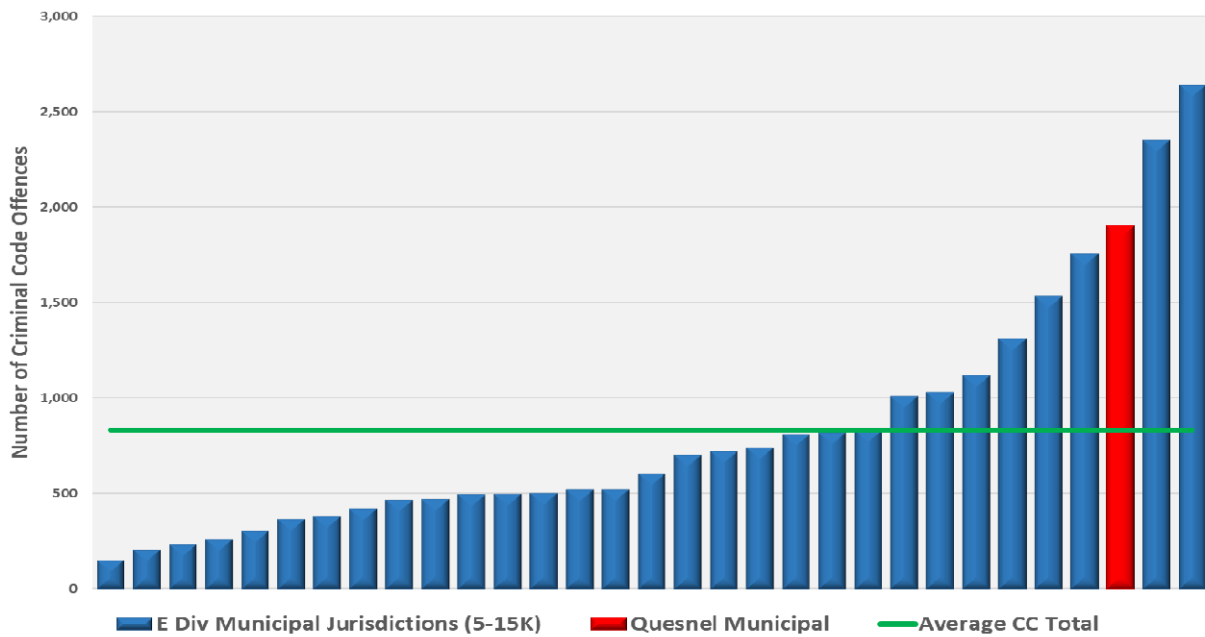
### **Recommendation #3 - Resourcing RCMP**

**That the City of Quesnel continue its efforts to address the shortage of police officers at Quesnel RCMP Detachment as being an important factor in both reducing crime and disorder occurring in the city, and in supporting a Safer Quesnel initiative.**

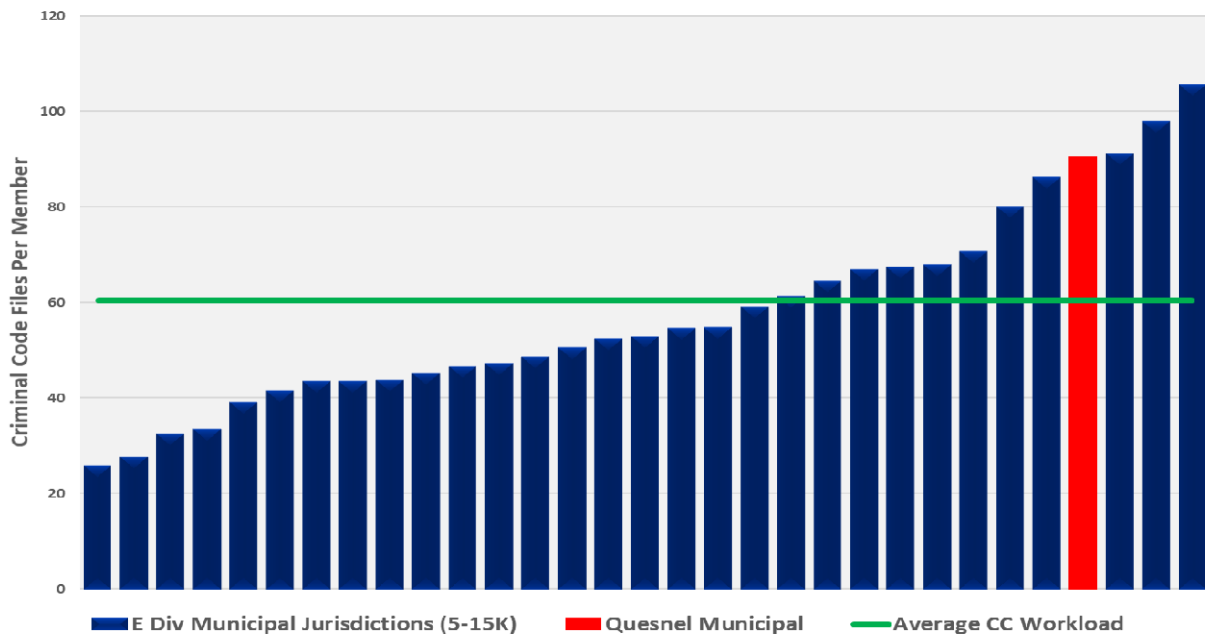
A key stakeholder in this process is the Quesnel Detachment RCMP. During my opportunities to meet and hear from the community through interviews, Quesnel RCMP are described as respected & willing partners who are fully engaged in the community and are bringing their operational experience to addressing crime & disorder.

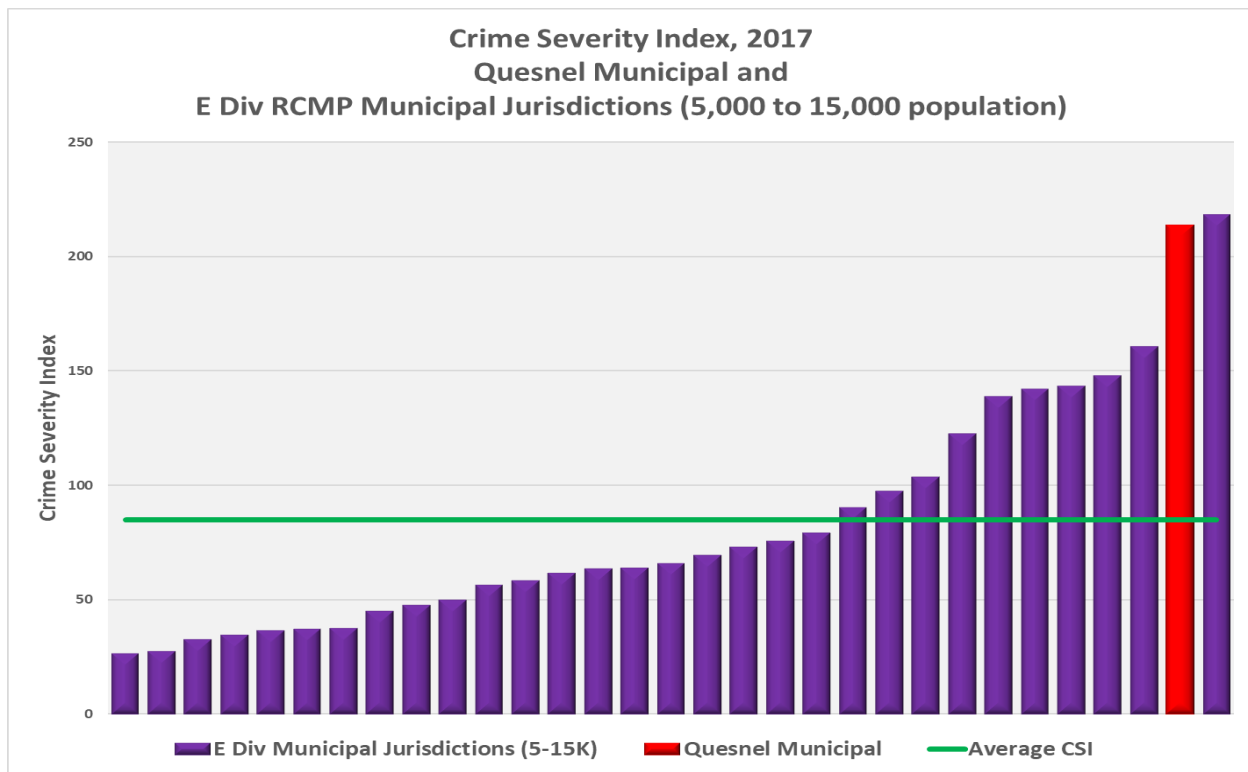
The goal of the City of Quesnel to address crime & disorder will be negatively impacted without an ability to focus policing, as well as City resources, on the problems being identified.

**Total Criminal Code Offences, 2017**  
**Quesnel Municipal and**  
**E Div RCMP Municipal Jurisdictions (5,000 to 15,000 population)**



**Criminal Code Workload, 2017**  
**Quesnel Municipal and**  
**E Div RCMP Municipal Jurisdictions (5,000 to 15,000 population)**





The above charts were supplied by RCMP “E” Division Data Analysis Unit for the year 2017. They clearly show the high National Crime Severity Index (CSI), high Criminal Code Workload per Officer and high # Criminal Code Offences occurring as compared to their British Columbia peers with a population of between 5,000 - 15,000 persons. This is indicative of a Detachment that is both busy and stretched to meet the demands it handles. The City of Quesnel needs to continue to be cognizant of these pressures on the police as they consider actions to move a Safer Quesnel initiative forward.

#### **Recommendation #4 - Importance of Health & Social Service Role**

**That the City of Quesnel continue to on the Community Caring for Persons with Addictions roundtable with Northern Health and BC Housing that is working on the implementation of the actions prescribed in Quesnel Health Services Review.**

**That the City of Quesnel continue to utilize the Good Neighbour Agreement (GNA) process as a tool to address neighbourhood issues in a timely way and one that builds respectful relationships between the city, neighbours and service providers.**

During my time spent in the City of Quesnel interviewing stakeholders and the opportunity to attend a group meeting of hosted by the Ministry of Mental Health & Substance Use (MHSU), I believe that your community is well underway to creating the communication, collaboration and focus required to deal with this important area of health & social service delivery. And that, in conjunction with helping those with mental health & addiction issues, these programs will also positively impact the degree of crime and disorder occurring in the community.

Public safety goals are not in conflict with health or social goals. They are compatible and mutually supportive processes. Community health is affected by crime & disorder. It also affects health & social staff delivering services, just like the broader community as was brought up during interviews. I can say that the most significant long-term action to lessen crime & disorder is found in the support of health & social services dealing with mental health, addictions and creating housing for those in need.

All communities need to build good inter-agency relationships to be able to effectively deliver the enforcement, health & social services mandates. Finding that balance is key to the successful achievement of “community health” achieved through lessening crime & disorder.

Areas where Health & Social services and the City of Quesnel may lessen impacts on the broader community that can occur on occasion when services operate in close proximity to neighbours (residents & businesses), and often relate to the actions of clients outside the immediate service site. These can usually be reduced positively through the use of Good Neighbour Agreements (GNA).

I’ve been involved with process working with drafting and monitoring GNA Agreements. Having the Providers, Neighbours, City Staff & Police involved in this process, and signing off to an Agreement, is a collaborative and positive tool for addressing community disorder while respecting the need for Health & Social services to advance their vital work. GNAs can be used when there is known or

predicable concern from neighbourhoods about disorder resulting from the function of a service.

I'd like to acknowledge the good work being done by a small group of individuals, your city supported "Clean Team", who pick up needles in the community. They were identified for recognition by many of the persons I interviewed. They are having a very positive impact on the community and reduced disorder in their own way. Congrats to them!

### **Recommendation #5 - Crime Prevention Thru Environmental Design (CPTED)**

**That the City of Quesnel engage the services of a professional in the field of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to focus on areas under current stress from disorder,**

**That the City of Quesnel & RCMP Detachment jointly offer CPTED training to city and police staff.**

A successful action that a city can take to assist a downtown under stress from crime & disorder is to provide a professional CPTED assessment of a specific areas under the most stress, and actions both the City & property owners can take to reduce those stresses.

During my time spent in your city, I can see areas where there would be benefit from using a CPTED assessment. My intention while doing this review was not to identify all areas, as that is the role of a CPTED consultant working with the City/RCMP/BIAs/Agencies, but I did note the Reid Street Revitalization will offer positive opportunities for CPTED friendly sidewalk features. Ceal Tingley Park has highest park vandalism. Last block of Elliott St. near Highway 97 & Riverfront Trail Walk near the Footbridge could be considered.

I've been involved in using a CPTED as we tackled areas that experienced similar problems to those in Quesnel. CPTED was used extensively. We used the services of a CPTED professional for many city owned projects both in the planning stage,

and sometimes looking for expensive remedial security solutions where a CPTED assessment was not part of the process.

CPTED training should also be considered as valuable training for bylaw enforcement officers, police, planners & parks personnel. I recommend that either the City, or RCMP, consider hosting such training for staff as it is an integral tool to use to have safe public spaces and around the community and downtown. This training can often be cost-shared with other communities.

If you engage a CPTED professional areas in your downtown & parks, also consider offering the business community a presentation on the topic of how businesses can lessen crime & disorder that allow or encourage unwanted behaviour on their properties.

## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design



## **Recommendation #6 - Dealing With Problem Properties**

**That the City and RCMP take early intervention on nuisance properties as they arise and consider implementing a Nuisance Property Bylaw to deal with such properties.**

Nuisance properties in city neighbourhoods can be identified as contributors to the distress being experienced. They are identified by multiple attendances from the police for noise & disturbances experienced by neighbours. Usually associated to fights, yelling, shouting coming from properties acting as drug or party houses.

These properties are often associated to be “drug houses” or chronic “noisy party” houses operating in neighbourhoods. They can also be businesses not managing issues arising through their operations. Noise and neighbourhood disturbances as a “nuisance” are usually the common feature in why complaints come in to the police and often result in frustrated neighbours bringing their concerns to the attention of Mayor & Council.

The goal of this recommendation is to provide the Police with a City led response to a problem that causes frustration in a neighbourhood but cannot be remedied by laying criminal charges or awaiting lengthy delays for court action.

The most successful resolution occurs when action is taken when the number of police attendances shows a pattern of nuisance activity occurring, a significant neighbourhood concern is being reported, and police attendances have not been able to resolve the situation. When Police attendance cannot end the nuisance, the City becomes involved in taking Bylaw Enforcement action under a Nuisance Property Bylaw.

The City of Quesnel needs to have an ability to be able claim all costs for Police, Fire & Bylaw attendance addressing nuisance activity at these properties. These properties, when acting as “nuisances” can waste a large amount of policing resources on a problem that diverts those scarce resources from other more pressing police response to the community. Owners need to be held accountable for this misuse of policing resources and the unnecessary incurring of resulting costs to the public.



The process of dealing with Nuisance Properties can require coordination and planning with Health & Social services if a displacement of persons is expected to occur. The goal is to deal with neighbourhood concern and fear created by activities that are on-going, and the resulting noise disturbance associated to the property.

Engagement of these properties should be co-ordinated and resolution sought through a City hosted person-to-person meeting involving the owner, Police and Bylaw Enforcement staff in order to gain early resolution.

Early intervention of this type, in most cases, brings positive action from the owner and the concern is usually addressed without a need for continual attendance. City staff and RCMP would explain the Nuisance Property process to the owner and provide information on the expectations to meet the requirements of the bylaw.

If early resolution, from the intervention meeting is not the case, the City of Quesnel needs to be able to address such properties by way of fining or charging for costs. The City should look into the creation of a Nuisance Property Bylaw focussed on addressing problematic properties causing excessive calls for the Police, Fire and Bylaw attendance as result of disturbances and nuisance behaviour usually caused by absence action to resolve by 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 reason manner and timeframe, it goes without the necessity of being brought before Council as a Nuisance Property. If not, Council hears the matter and can elect to “deem” the property as a Nuisance.

Cost recovery for the services rendered attending “nuisance properties”, once deemed to be in contravention of the Nuisance Property Bylaw, can be sought through either fine or cost-recovery through taxes. Note: Legal opinion required to update on options available.

## **Recommendation #7 - Courts/Crown - Prolific & Chronic Offenders**

**That the City of Quesnel continue to lobby the Crown Counsel to secure the staff resources necessary to prosecute offences in relation to chronic & prolific offenders,**

**That the City of Quesnel apply for Provincial Court consideration of granting injunctive relief in cases of chronic municipal law offenders.**

Enforcement personnel have to deal daily with arresting individuals committing acts of crime that may not be addressed through the Criminal Justice System even in the case of repeat offences by prolific or chronic offenders.

Provincial Courts are tasked with dealing with offences involving a street population that are not always stable in their housing, in their addiction or mental health state. Predation occurs where in most cases the victim is a vulnerable person entrenched on the street and with their own addictions and mental health issues.

Mental illness and addiction are health matters best addressed through supporting the work of our Health & Social provider communities rather than relying on an over-burdened Criminal Justice System.

There is a role that only the Provincial Court can provide to protect the public when dealing with crime & disorder. That is, the role of protecting the community from predation by prolific & chronic offenders who can be a threat to the public, health and social service providers, police and the street entrenched alike.

Without that support, the role of the police, health & social providers, and attempts at returning “community health” through initiatives like the Safer Quesnel initiative, will be impaired.

The City of Quesnel is taking a proactive role at raising this concern and I support that effort. It is important that communities have the tools necessary to manage crime & disorder issues, one of those tools is being able to rely on the Criminal Justice System to deal with prolific & chronic offenders so that the community can

deal with finding ways of supporting provincial delivery of matters such as health, social services and housing.

I'll provide the City of Quesnel with information for their consideration on their ability to apply for Provincial Court injunctive relief in cases of chronic municipal law offenders. Note: Legal opinion required to update on current options available.

### **Concluding Comments:**

Recommendation for a Safer Quesnel process is not a process to “start and stop” - this will only make future efforts more difficult to launch. This is especially true in the downtown where shop owners have a high level of frustration with the lack of resolution to their victimization by crime & disorder. This has resulted in their not reporting all crime when it occurs.

It requires a commitment by City & RCMP to moving forward, and this commitment needs to be maintained to be successful.

Reported crime and reported disorder may actually increase in the early stages of Safer Quesnel, as more citizens and businesses learn of the City's Spirit Square Bylaw Enforcement Office, RCMP support and decide that they now have somewhere to call and receive assistance based on the “Who Do You Call?” pamphlet.

The City is the lead for Safer Quesnel initiative and that assists the RCMP in maximizing their ability to use their resources to best advantage dealing with crime, while the city finds ways to assist through the Safer Working Group (SWG).

A supported Safer Quesnel process will focus on reducing crime and disorder occurring in the community. It works to address these community concerns by coordinating enforcement, improving community communication and collaboration, supporting the health & social service community, supporting neighbourhoods and all citizens in achieving their goals to have a safe and healthy community.

The City of Quesnel is an engaged community, as I learned from interviews with members of your community. It cares about the increase in crime & disorder. It also cares about the availability of health & social services to those in need. This city has demonstrated strength achieved through a history of working together and I'm sure it will also achieve the goal of lessening the impact of crime & disorder.

Thank you for welcoming me to your community and having the opportunity to submit this report.

**Randy Churchill**  
**Consulting For Municipalities**