

Friday, August 4, 2023 | For Immediate Release

Victoria's Community Safety Plan to Prioritize the Well-Being of All Residents

VICTORIA, BC – Victoria City Council is delivering on its recently adopted Strategic Plan by moving ahead with the development of a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, which will identify opportunities for the City to take a leadership role in making the community safer and improving well-being for all.

"We know that cities across the country are struggling with a variety of challenges including the safety and well-being of all their residents. Victoria is going to lead with a solution-focused plan that will encompass an intentional, balanced, practical re-imagination of community safety and well-being," said Mayor Marianne Alto. "Each one of these panel members has one distinct thing in common – they care deeply about their community. I'm grateful they're willing to give their time and leadership to help build a path forward."

The Plan's development will be guided by a 10-member panel representing community leaders across diverse sectors, including business, public health, housing, law enforcement, fire response as well as downtown residents.

"Everyone deserves to feel safe, and we share people's frustration with the uptick in repeat violent offending," said Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. "All levels of government need to work together to address this complex issue, and we strongly support the City of Victoria's development of a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. Municipalities can continue to count on the Province doing our part with the Safer Communities Action Plan, which is strengthening enforcement and leveraging mental health and addictions services to connect people with the help they need."

Convened by the Mayor, the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan's Community Leaders Panel members include:

- Brianna Bear, Speaker and Artist, Songhees Nation
- Daniel Atkinson, Chief, Victoria Fire Department
- Del Manak, Chief, Victoria Police Department
- Jonny Morris, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
- Julian Daly, CEO, Our Place Society
- Marianne Alto, Mayor, City of Victoria
- Mike Benusic, Medical Health Officer, Island Health
- Robert Jawl, Managing Director, Jawl Properties Ltd.

- Sandra Severs, President, Victoria Downtown Residents Association and Chair, Victoria Community Association Network
- Suzanne Bradbury, Co-Owner/CEO, Fort Properties

Community safety and well-being require a collective approach to multiple complex issues, such as declining civility and social cohesion, increasing social disorder, inadequate housing supply and homelessness, poverty, inequality, addictions, mental and physical health challenges, criminal activity and other factors. The City's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan will include immediate interventions to reduce crime and public disorder, while creating longer-term solutions.

The Plan will be developed over 15 months, starting this summer, with the draft Plan delivered to Council by October 2024. Updates and progress reports, as well as potential interim actions arising from the work, will be delivered to Council regularly throughout the project.

The Plan's development will be supported by the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention, a membership-based, not-for-profit organization representing over 100 communities encompassing 50 per cent of Canada's population. Their mandate is to build capacity and mobilize Canadian communities, urban and rural, to use effective, evidence based and collaborative crime prevention and community safety and well-being strategies to reduce crime and foster community safety.

The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan is a deliverable of the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan priority of "Community Well-Being and Safety." The City's new Strategic Plan was developed by members of Council over a series of facilitated public discussions earlier this year and was informed by City staff. For more information, visit victoria.ca/strategicplan.

Quotes:

Daniel Atkinson, Chief, Victoria Fire Department

"I am very excited for the opportunity to participate on the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan's community leadership panel. Over the past 20 years, I have witnessed an increase in first responder call volume as well as a change in the diversity of call types we respond to. I am looking forward to this initiative and working with the committee as we reimagine ways for connecting with every member of our community and work to develop new and innovative approaches for enhancing public safety for everyone."

Del Manak, Chief, Victoria Police Department

"VicPD is on the front line of community safety in Victoria and it's clear that, despite everyone's best efforts, the current system is not providing the level of safety and quality of life we want for our citizens, especially those on our streets and in our parks. The best path forward involves greater collaboration, from all sectors, with a long-term focus on innovative problem-solving, and investment in programs with proven effectiveness in building safety and preventing crime. We are excited to work with everyone on this initiative to create a safer community together."

Jonny Morris, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division

"All of our lives were significantly impacted by the pandemic in ways we have not yet fully begun to understand. What is obvious is that some in our community have been impacted more than others," said Jonny Morris, CEO, Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division. "Health, including mental health, go hand-in-hand with community safety and

well-being. I'm grateful to be part of this work and I'm impressed by the community leaders who have come together to co-create a fulsome, comprehensive path forward."

Mike Benusic, Medical Health Officer, Island Health

"I am impressed with the systematic, evidence-informed and community-driven approach that has been proposed to create the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, and look forward to helping inform a plan that emphasizes upstream prevention."

Suzanne Bradbury, Co-Owner/CEO, Fort Properties

"I'm in frequent contact with the business community throughout the downtown and beyond and I'm consistently hearing that the impact of the pandemic is far from over. I believe that this is the right initiative at the right time and I'm honoured to bring a small business perspective."

Audrey Monette, Director of Projects and Research and Felix Munger, Executive Director, Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention

"The Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention is excited to partner with the Community Leaders Panel and the City of Victoria on this journey to make Victoria safer for everyone."

ATTACHMENT: Backgrounder – Community Leaders Panel Biographies

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For More Information:

Colleen Mycroft, Manager
Intergovernmental and Media Relations
250.896.5325 | cmycroft@victoria.ca

Friday, April 5, 2024 | For Immediate Release

Help Shape Victoria's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan

VICTORIA, BC — The City of Victoria is developing a Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and is seeking community input. Once complete, the Plan will identify opportunities and actions for the City and multi-sector partners to help make the community safer and to improve the wellbeing of all Victorians.

"This public engagement will help us understand people's thoughts, feelings, perceptions and opinions about wellbeing and safety, and encourage them to share their ideas on possible solutions," said Mayor Marianne Alto. "Our Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan will include strategies to enhance the quality of life for our community – residents housed and unhoused, businesses, non-profits, workers of all kinds – to create a community that is safe and inclusive for everyone. The Plan will tackle a range of social issues, embracing an array of solutions."

The public is invited to complete the Community Safety and Wellbeing Survey to share their concerns, experiences and suggestions. The online survey is available until May 12 and print copies can be picked up and dropped off at City Hall.

In addition, the City is working with six local facilitators who will reach out to more than 40 local organizations to create safe and supported dialogues about wellbeing and safety. Community conversations will also be held with members of the Songhees Nation, the Esquimalt Nation and local Indigenous organizations and the communities they serve.

In August 2023, an 11-member Community Leaders Panel was convened by Mayor Alto to guide the draft Plan's development, including Indigenous, business, public health, housing, law enforcement, fire prevention, local service provider and neighbourhood leaders.

Development of the Plan is being supported by the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities, a community of practice created to support municipalities to invest in effective, evidence-based and collaborative crime prevention strategies.

Input from the public survey and community dialogues will inform the draft Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan's recommended actions that will be presented to City Council for consideration in September.

For more information and to take the survey, visit engage.victoria.ca.

Contact:

Colleen Mycroft
Manager, Intergovernmental and Media Relations
250.896.5325 | cmycroft@victoria.ca