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April 20, 2020

Mayor & Council
c/o City of Victoria

Via E-mail

Dear Mayor and Council:

RE: Special Funding Request for Topaz Park Policing Costs

The Victoria Police Department is requesting that the City of Victoria specifically fund a five-week supplemental uniform deployment in and around the Topaz Park neighborhood based on the abrupt increase in crime and disorder in that area. These additional resources will enhance police presence and visibility and help prevent crime in the immediate vicinity. The cost of this deployment is approximately \$52,500 and retroactive to April 17, 2020.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant changes to occur worldwide. Locally, we have seen a reduction in shelter space and an implementation of a “no guest” policy at some locations to enhance physical distancing measures. This has caused an increase in the unsheltered population and resulted in the opening of Topaz Park as a shelter location. Anecdotally, the number of people coming to Topaz Park from areas outside Victoria have increased since the introduction of Topaz Park as a shelter location. Significant logistical hurdles inclusive of staffing the site 24/7, changes in management, and maintaining health care options have been also been observed.

Crime and Observations

When a shelter or site for the vulnerable sector establishes itself, so too does the criminal element that preys upon that sector and the surrounding community. The good work attempting to be done is overshadowed by those that are committing “survival crime” as well as by the criminals that target this vulnerable sector. Topaz Park is no exception; the Burnside Gorge and Hillside Quadra Communities and the vulnerable population are being targeted.

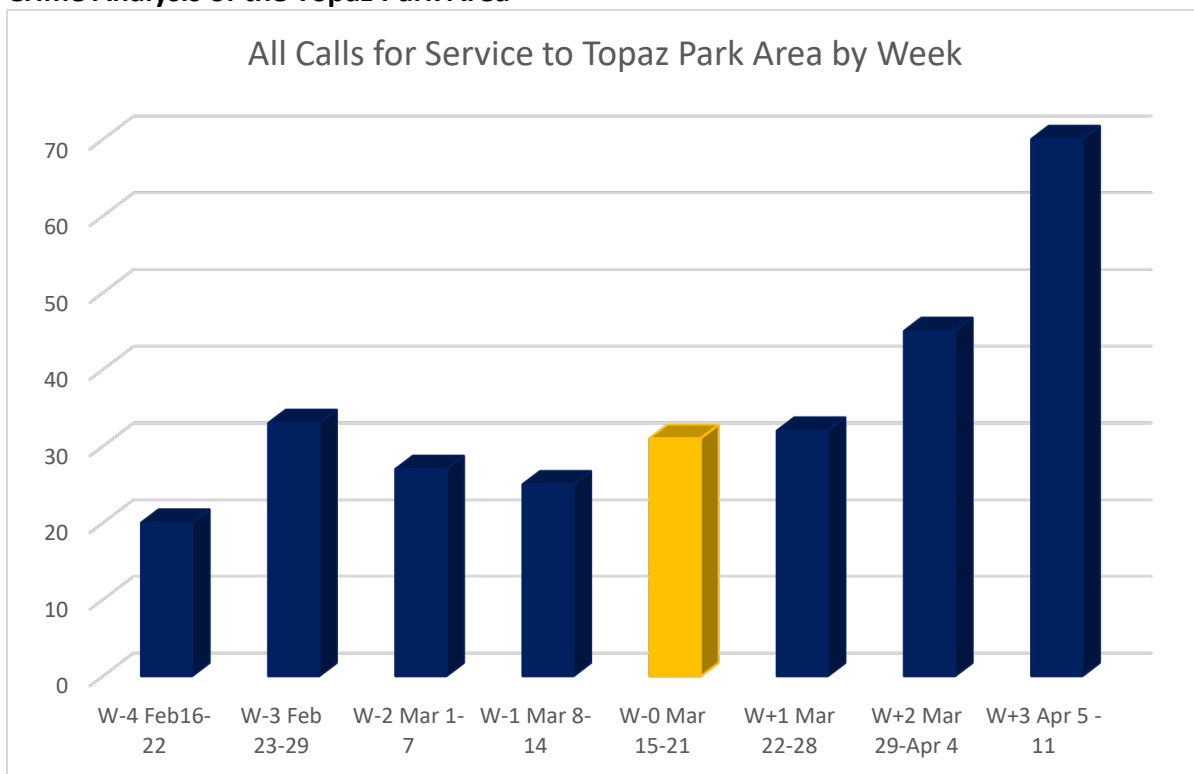
Observations and actions by members of Strike Force, Patrol, and the Community Services Division since the Topaz site was set up include:

- Multiple Bait Bike activations and arrests
- Stolen property recovery, including a bike worth over \$10,000
- Investigation that led to the seizure of over \$30,000 of stolen property
- Increases in the immediate area of Thefts, Break-ins, Stolen Property, Suspicious Activity
- On-site incidents of disturbances including one that involved a handgun

Observations and actions by officers specifically deployed to the Topaz Park area in just *two shifts* include;

- Multiple drug dealing vehicle checks adjacent to the main camp
- Arrests for Breach, Drug Possession for the Purpose of Trafficking, and Possession of Stolen Property
- Anecdotal reports of assaults on the vulnerable, specifically women, within the camp
- Multiple items that could be used as weapons including hammers, bats, and knives
- Bicycle “chop shop”

Crime Analysis of the Topaz Park Area



Funding Request

The Victoria Police Department has not seen a significant drop in calls for service during the pandemic. We are still maintaining our service levels to Victoria and Esquimalt and have not slowed or modified our deployment beyond the safety precautions implemented for our front-line officers. In fact, we have made efforts to increase our visibility and re-tasked Strike Force to be dedicated to fight the increase in property related crime. The public is already concerned enough with the safety and security of their families and neighbourhoods due to the pandemic; they should not have to be concerned with a rise in crime rate or nuisance calls in their neighborhood.

The five-week special deployment will allow me to assign two officers to the Topaz Park neighborhood seven days a week. The approximate cost of this deployment is \$10,500/week for a total of \$52,500. This request is effective retroactively to April 17, 2020 and will conclude on May 22, 2020, subject to an additional request to Council should there be a public safety need to continue with the deployment.

The Victoria Police Department is requesting that the City of Victoria provide additional funding for this deployment to help protect our residents, both on-site and in the community, and to assist the Victoria Police Department in preventing and deterring crime and maintaining social order in the Topaz Park neighborhood.

Yours Truly,



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c. Victoria & Esquimalt Police Board