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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## City of Nanaimo Harm Reduction and Housing First Action Plan

An Open House is to be held on May 28th at the Bowen Park Activity Room from 4:00pm to 8:00pm to introduce a proposed Harm Reduction and Housing First Action Plan for the City of Nanaimo. The Action Plan has been commissioned by the City of Nanaimo.

In announcing the Open House Mayor Korpan stated, "This is an opportunity for the community to view and provide input into a proposed plan for tackling homelessness in Nanaimo. Homelessness has become a very visible issue for the City over the last several years."

The Action Plan is the culmination of a series of City initiatives to address homelessness, including cooperation with the Downtown business community and neighbourhood groups and the formation of the Safer Nanaimo Working Group.

Research indicates that there are 150 to 300 homeless persons in Nanaimo although the numbers vary because of seasonality and transience relating to Nanaimo's role as a Hub City. The majority of homeless people have addiction issues with a smaller proportion experiencing mental illness.

Eight areas of action, to be undertaken over a five-year period, are proposed. The Action Plan proposes a Housing First approach designed to get homeless people into housing and then to assist them, where possible, to move towards self-reliance and independence.

Harm reduction measures are proposed to be integrated with housing initiatives to reduce the impacts of high risk behaviour, such as drug abuse, on the homeless and on the wider community.

The Action Plan proposes that 305 housing units to accommodate homeless people be funded over five years. This additional housing will be a mix of rent supplements in existing housing, acquisitions of rental housing and new construction. The Plan recommends that new housing developments be small in size and distributed across the City. The Action Plan will enable the City to seek funding from both the federal and provincial governments for the required housing.

Mayor Korpan said, "Other communities like Portland have been able to reduce homelessness through concerted action. We can do the same by partnering with senior governments, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, non-profit service providers and the wider community. I encourage the public to come to the Open House and provide input into these proposals."

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