

MANAGING THE SOCIAL STREET SCENE

The desirability of the City of Kamloops is impacted by the degree to which its residents feel safe. Crime and public safety is a priority for those who live here and for those interested in relocating. For people moving from Vancouver, a survey conducted last Spring by the Vancouver Sun indicates the top item they are seeking is "Security." The recent Maclean's article rating Kamloops as the 13th most dangerous City in Canada does little to bolster the confidence of Kamloops residents, businesses and families looking to relocate. Social issues, crime and public safety erode confidence in community safety.

Businesses are being negatively affected by the increasing number of "street" or marginalized people and the errant behaviour they exhibit in public.

Commercial areas lose viability when panhandling, drug dealing, loitering, low level crime and graffiti become so visible that the perception of a deterioration in public safety impacts customer comfort and investor confidence.

As a society, we tend to focus on symptoms but are reluctant to invest in the causes of these problems. We fail to understand, for example, how strategic investments in enforcement, capacity building and supported housing can reduce the costs for police, courts, corrections, insurance, health care and perceptions of public safety.

The Kamloops Chamber of Commerce actively supports the Coordinated Enforcement Task Force in recognizing that public safety is a top priority for residents, and will represent the business community by lobbying through the task force for specific goals to improve the Kamloops public safety image and reality for the benefit of all citizens.

The main causes of this growing societal tax load can be identified as:

1. Senior governments cut social programs in order to curb budget deficits.
2. There is no demonstrated return on investment for building affordable housing.
3. There is a lack of facilitated opportunities for marginalized people to get involved or to feel significant and accepted in our society. Current government programs penalize any recipients who may become motivated to earn extra income.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- 1) provincial and federal governments change government policy to create more non-market housing with accompanying support services.
- 2) provincial government restructure social assistance payments to build in incentives to work based on a formula allowing recipients to retain some extra income and diminish reliance on social assistance over time.
- 3) provincial and federal governments prepare and promote a business case that

supports a cost-benefit approach for social housing and support investment to prevent and minimize the causes of social issues versus the current approach of spending to deal with symptoms.

4) senior governments provide funding support of municipal initiatives to manage the social street scene.

Submitted by the North Shore and Kamloops Central Business Improvement Associations