

TO: His Worship Mayor Dan Ruimy and
Members of Council

MEETING DATE: July 11, 2023
FILE NO:

FROM: Chief Administrative Officer

MEETING: Council Workshop

SUBJECT: Building Safer Communities Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Public Safety Canada selected Maple Ridge as 1 of 22 municipalities in British Columbia to develop and implement prevention and intervention initiatives addressing risk factors associated with gun and gang violence. The City of Maple Ridge (City) was allocated \$1.8 million dollars to build and deliver programming from late 2022 until early 2026 through the Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF) program. The scope of eligible initiatives included conducting research to identify factors that put young people in our community at risk of gang involvement and develop and implement a three-year workplan to improve key metrics.

The funding provided by the federal government will assist the City and its partners to take an empirical approach to promoting safety, community and individual wellness, and inclusion amongst our youth and their support systems. Additionally, the BSCF is well-aligned with the City's Community Safety services as it leverages existing networks and partnerships to amplify effective programs.

Best-practice research conducted during the first year of the program identifies that vulnerability to gang entanglement can be reduced through early prevention, education and the reinforcement of strong connections and relationships with trusted adults and peers. Therefore, community engagement and education, prevention and intervention are the three project pillars guiding the program.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2023-2027 Financial Plan be amended to include Building Safer Communities Fund contributions of \$662,384.06 in 2023; \$662,384.06 in 2024; and \$378,505.18 in 2025.

DISCUSSION:

a) Background Context:

In the 2020 Fall Economic Statement, the Government of Canada committed to establishing a dedicated funding stream for municipalities and Indigenous communities to support anti-gang programming. The BSCF is a time-limited program, ending on March 31, 2026, to support municipalities and Indigenous communities in the development of community-based prevention and intervention initiatives to address gun and gang activities. Recipients have been identified based on an evidence-based methodology, two major elements: Statistics Canada, Crime Severity Index, and census population data. Municipalities were specifically selected to enable local-level program development and distribution of funds to community groups and non-profit organizations.

In order to advance the development of a multi-year program in alignment with funding received in 2022, the City activated a working group consisting of internal stakeholders with an interest in community and public safety. Representatives included staff from Ridge Meadows RCMP, Police Services, Community Safety, and Youth Services.

In partnership with community stakeholders, the working group developed a suite of prevention and intervention initiatives addressing risk factors associated with gun and gang violence, including mentoring, counselling, skills development, and recreational opportunities.

Progress to Date

The City of Maple Ridge and the Ridge Meadows RCMP collaboratively focused on informing this project through community specific data. Research and analysis were conducted by two consultants with extensive experience in data analysis, Erin Marshall, and Kelsey Gushue. The consultants represent Indigenous and academic perspectives. Key deliverables that have been accomplished to date include: determining community-specific trends, identifying risk-factors, protective-factors and the prevalence of gun and gang related violence amongst youth in Maple Ridge in collaboration with Ridge Meadows RCMP, School District No. 42, Youth Services, amongst other stakeholders. This information will continue to inform and shape the development of programs and initiatives that will build the foundation for a gun and gang prevention and intervention strategy in Maple Ridge.

Building Safer Communities Project Action Plan - 2023-2026 (Action Plan)

Through the research conducted thus far, and in alignment with our evidence-based approach to address prevalent risk factors (substance use, housing instability, mental health concerns, lack of parental support and familial conflict) as determined through data analysis to inform the target population and priority populations of this project. As such, the development of this project and its programming will target at-risk youth of all genders and diverse groups in our community ages 10-24, with potential to expand beyond these criteria on a case-by-case basis.

We have engaged the Youth Planning Table to align the Building Safer Communities project with the Maple Ridge Youth Strategy and its implementation plan to ensure that we are working collaboratively to ensure the voices of youth in our community are valued, considered, and prioritized. We have specifically worked with the Youth Planning Table and its sub-committee; uPlan, to collaboratively develop and implement the Youth Strategy Survey, that will be used to help us understand the needs of youth in Maple Ridge. The survey will be accessible later this year.

The Building Safer Communities Project Action Plan is structured around three pillars of programming: Community Engagement and Education; Prevention; and Intervention. Each pillar requires the contribution of different sets of internal and external stakeholders.



Community Engagement and Education – Workshops, Stakeholder Sessions, Resources

The City of Maple Ridge and the Ridge Meadows RCMP will develop and deliver educational workshops and training opportunities for community stakeholders, service providers, parents, caregivers, and youth. This initiative, and its associated programs, is new and intended to fill a gap in services in Maple Ridge through the process of educating youth service providers, community partners, parents, and caregivers on risk-factor identification. Police will lead specific gun and gang related educational opportunities.

Furthermore, the Community Engagement and Education Initiative involves working with community partners to develop sustainable systems to identify and support high-risk vulnerable youth that are engaging in, or are susceptible to gang and gun violence and entanglement through innovative and dynamic learning opportunities. The project team will engage with public safety experts such as the Combined Special Forces Enforcement Unit and programming such as “End Gang Life” to deliver population specific training around gun and gang related behaviours amongst youth.

Through the proposed programming the Maple Ridge community will be better equipped to understand current gang trends, be aware of evidence and data informed prevention strategies, identify if an individual is on the pathway to engage in gang, gun violence, and understand the strategic community response plan to gang associated behavior. These are pro-active, educational elements that contribute to community safety.

Prevention – Recreation-Based Prevention Programming Initiative

The Recreation-Based Prevention initiative will work with community partners to provide a variety of safe spaces for youth to engage in barrier-free social and physical recreation programs. We will provide at-risk youth in Maple Ridge with the opportunity to participate in the Night Hoops Basketball, Sound Engineering, and Jiu Jitsu Martial Arts programs.

This initiative will utilize recreation as a foundation for positive connection, relationship building, life skills development, and strengthening participants protective factors. These after school recreation programs will be accessible and meet the needs and interests of at-risk youth in Maple Ridge. The benefits of recreation programming for youth include positive socialization with peers, improved communication skills, the development of positive peer and adult relationships, appropriate behavior development, enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, increased autonomy, and a sense of belonging, community, and acceptance.

Intervention – Youth Outreach and Counselling Initiative

The City of Maple Ridge and the Ridge Meadows RCMP will collaboratively develop a Youth Outreach and Counselling Initiative. This initiative will provide support for at-risk youth exhibiting empirically identified risk-factors associated with gun and gang violence for early intervention. Through the process of conducting a community level gap analysis, it was identified that there is a need for services that engage and address high-risk youth through early identification of risk-factors.

While youth will be the primary target population for this initiative, we recognize the importance of providing wraparound supports to the family system of youth participating in the Outreach and Counselling Initiative. This approach will provide youth participants with the best opportunity for successful outcomes.

The Youth Outreach and Counselling Initiative will be a referral-based program that provides its services to high-risk and vulnerable youth. Initiative participants will be referred through project partners and initiatives.

The goal of this initiative is to strengthen protective factors amongst youth participants through the process of building positive and meaningful relationships with community, school, and one another. It will identify individual and family strengths and develop supportive systems to enhance knowledge and capacity. An integrated approach will allow family members and community service agencies to support in case management and appropriate referrals ensuring a continuum of wraparound supports.

b) Desired Outcomes:

- Develop community-based prevention and intervention strategies and initiatives to address gun and gang activities.
- Increase knowledge of the nature, scope, and challenges of at-risk youth in Maple Ridge to address gun and gang activities.
- Develop a plan to sustain successful prevention and intervention activities upon completion of the BSCF.

c) Strategic Alignment:

This project and its associated initiatives and programs will align with that of an engaged, healthy community by ensuring the safety and well-being of residents. Additional strategic goals advanced through the Action Plan include; strengthening community connections and fostering a sense of belonging, improving community engagement with the City of Maple Ridge; and providing diverse, inclusive, and accessible recreation opportunities for youth.

d) Citizen/Customer Implications:

- Identify and engage at-risk youth in our community to prevent and divert them from gun and gang related behaviours.
- Develop sustainable resources and services for at-risk youth, parents, caregivers, and service providers.

e) Interdepartmental Implications:

The Action Plan includes collaborative involvement and partnership between the Ridge Meadows RCMP, Police Services, Corporate Communications, and Youth Services. The collaborative nature of this project and its initiatives will allow us to offer a more integrated service for at-risk youth in our community, strengthen our internal departments through project alignment and improve community engagement through providing diverse, inclusive, and accessible opportunities. Our multi-faceted approach enables a sustainable infrastructure and strategy for these project initiatives to span beyond the period of the Building Safer Communities funding.

f) Business Plan/Financial Implications:

The 2023-2027 Financial Plan will be required to be amended to reflect the allocation of funds from the Building Safer Communities Fund.

Year	Fully Burdened Annual Cost
2023	\$ 662,384.06
2024	\$ 662,384.06
2025	\$ \$378,505.18

CONCLUSION:

The City of Maple Ridge and the Ridge Meadows RCMP will work collaboratively to ensure the commitment from Public Safety Canada in the amount of 1.8 million dollars be allocated to address the risk-factors identified through community engagement and consultation of our stakeholders.


These initiatives include data analysis to educate, prevent and provide interventions to at-risk youth in Maple Ridge and to identify supports for education and prevention. The ultimate goal is to divert at-risk youth from engaging in gun and gang related behaviours that can later lead to entanglement.


In partnership with School District No. 42, Police Services, and Youth Services, staff will provide the community with a variety of initiatives and associated programming that will act as a wraparound service for at-risk youth. A three-pillar approach will allow us to provide this wraparound service to the community:

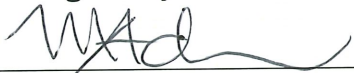
1. Community Engagement and Education – Workshops, Stakeholder Sessions, Resources
2. Prevention – Recreation-Based Prevention Programming Initiative
3. Intervention – Youth Outreach and Counselling Program

The risk factors identified will be supported by a series of programs developed in relationship with this three-pillar, wraparound service approach to preventing youth from engaging in gun and gang violence. The existence of gun and gang violence is a prevalent and critical concern for community safety and wellbeing for communities nation-wide and this program and its initiatives are pivotal to ensure we are preventing violence and crime in our community.

A focus on at-risk youth will require a sustainable commitment, while taking immediate action. This program will rely heavily on the capacity to engage community stakeholders, including youth and their families to ensure a continuum of support. This approach will strengthen safety, wellbeing, resiliency, and engagement with the Maple Ridge community.


Prepared by: **Melissa Malo**
Prevention & Intervention Coordinator


Reviewed by: **Chad Cowles**
Manager of Bylaw & Community Safety


Approved by: **Michelle Adams**
Director of Bylaw, Licensing & Community Safety


Concurrence: **Scott Hartman**
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

- A) Building Safer Communities Project Stakeholders–Year 1 (OCT 2022-MAR 2023)
- B) Building Safer Communities Project Deliverables–Year 1 (OCT 2022-MAR 2023)

Building Safer Communities Project Stakeholders–Year 1 (OCT 2022-MAR 2023)

Community Stakeholders
Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Community Services
Coast Mental Health
Katzie First Nation
Kwantlen First Nation
Youth Planning Table

Building Safer Communities Project Activities--Year 1 (OCT 2022-MAR 2023)

Project Activity	Actions
Recruit Prevention & Intervention Coordinator	The City of Maple Ridge successfully hired a project coordinator "Prevention and Intervention Coordinator" (Melissa Malo). The role of the Coordinator in FY 1 2022-2023 was centered around conducting research and community consultation to identify and address knowledge and service gaps at in Maple Ridge related to at-risk youth, in relationship with gun and gang violence. Throughout FY1 the Coordinator worked in collaboration with youth serving agencies, RCMP, School District 42 and land-based nations: Katzie & Kwantlen, conducted a gap analysis of services and service provider knowledge in Maple Ridge, and coordinated with the projects data analysts.
Determine community-specific trends	We have determined community-specific trends in Maple Ridge related to gun and gang violence and identified the risk-factors that are most prevalent amongst youth. Through the process of working with data analysts to gather and analyze localized data from the RCMP, Youth Services and discussions with youth serving organizations/community stakeholders. For example, the predominant risk factors identified amongst youth who attended the GMYC were involvement with alcohol and/or drug use, mental health, and housing instability.
Collect available data related to gun and gang violence	Data pretraining to the priority populations of this project has been gathered and analyzed to empirically identify community-specific trends and youth risk-factors in Maple Ridge. Specifically, we obtained data sets in collaboration with the Ridge Meadows RCMP and the Greg Moore Youth Centre. Data was gathered in partnership with municipal crime analysts within the Police Services department to determine community-specific trends and risk-factors directly correlated with youth offences (gang membership, gang entanglement, weapons offences, violent threats/assaults).
Engage service providers to identify risk-targeting services	We have successfully engaged community-based services providers and current Community Safety partners during the gap analysis phase of the research process of FY1 2022-2023. This provided us with a better understanding of services and processes related to at-risk populations in Maple Ridge. This will be used to inform the sustainability of initiatives and programming developed and implemented in future years and provides a continuum of services for at-risk youth into adulthood.
Identify best-practices for risk factor mitigation by referring to established programs provincially and nationally	We have successfully identified best-practices for risk factor mitigation through the process of conducting research in relationship with provincial and national programs/initiatives addressing at-risk youth and their relationship to gun and gang violence. Specifically, research was conducted in building relationships, and reviewing a variety of related service agencies philosophies, strategies and programs related to youth gun and gang violence. We identified communities and agencies that have comparable risk-factors and engaged with project leads/program managers to better understand effective strategies.

Building Safer Communities Project Activities–Year 1 (OCT 2022-MAR 2023)

Develop a three-year work plan for gun ang gang prevention and intervention initiatives targeting identified risk factors	We are currently developing a three-year workplan for this project and its identified initiative with our community partners and stakeholders. A workplan framework has been developed and we are working with our community partners to develop specific deliverables, measurements, and outcomes.
Develop a sustainability plan	We are currently developing a plan to formalize a sustainability strategy to sustain successful initiatives beyond the duration of the Building Safer Communities Fund.
Develop a comprehensive communications plan	In alignment with the federal announcement of the BSCF in Maple Ridge, we successfully developed a public awareness, engagement and marketing plan/framework with our Corporate Communications department that will continue to evolve over the duration of this project and in alignment with the project's initiatives. A Building Safer Communities webpage has been developed for public awareness and information about the program.