



Council Report

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Date: March 3, 2026 **File No:**
To: Anthony Haddad, City Manager
From: Julie Czeck, General Manager of Public Safety and Partnerships
Subject: **Community Safety and Well-being Plan - Phase 1 Update**

Staff Recommendation

THAT Council receive into the record the report dated March 3, 2026 titled "Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan - Phase 1 Update".

Strategic priority objective

Vision: Penticton is a connected, resilient and healthy waterfront city focused on safety, livability and vibrancy.

Mission: Penticton will serve its residents, businesses and visitors through organizational excellence, partnership and the provision of effective and community focused services.

Culture: We are committed to open communication, integrity, and professionalism to build public trust through excellence in all that we do. We embrace modernization, innovation and adaptability to meet the evolving needs of our community, fostering a culture of engagement and purpose.

Safe & Resilient: The City of Penticton will enhance and protect the safety of all residents and visitors to Penticton.

Livable & Accessible: The City of Penticton will proactively plan for deliberate growth, focusing on creating an inclusive, healthy, and vibrant community.

Background

A Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) Plan is a coordinated, multi-sector approach that brings together local government, social services, health care, housing, Indigenous partners, law enforcement, and community organizations to address complex social challenges that no single agency can resolve alone.

The 2022 Community Safety Resource Review recommended developing a CSWB Plan to guide how public safety agencies and the City work together with partners on shared priorities. With a strengthened internal structure and strong collaboration already underway, Penticton is well-positioned to advance this work.

Many B.C. communities, including Kelowna, Nanaimo, Chilliwack, Burnaby, and Victoria, now have CSWB plans that align partners around shared priorities; these models offer useful reference points as Penticton shapes its own.

The CSWB Plan will establish a multi-year strategy to strengthen safety, connection, and wellbeing; align City departments and community partners around shared priorities; build on existing work by identifying priority areas through data and engagement; and create one integrated plan that connects public safety and social development strategies to support a safer, healthier, and more inclusive community.

Timelines & Project Approach

The work is organized into four phases, with community engagement at the centre of identifying future priorities. Urban Matters has been contracted to support this work and have completed Phase 1 between Spring 2025 and early 2026.

Phase 1 included a current-state assessment of risks and vulnerabilities, a jurisdictional scan, and analysis of the large-scale resident safety survey. Work paused in Fall 2025 due to operational pressures and has now resumed.



Where We Are Now: Completion of Phase 1

Phase 1 produced a comprehensive picture of Penticton’s safety and wellbeing landscape, drawing on City, RCMP, Bylaw and Fire data; Statistics Canada and Census information, provincial dashboards, and over 1,800 responses to the public safety questionnaire (Attachment A, B, C).

The findings point to a consistent story: Penticton is experiencing the combined impacts of an aging population, increasing social complexity, strained public spaces, and declining perceptions of safety, even as several crime and health indicators remain stable or improve.

Residents’ top concerns and areas of priority action included:

- Property crime and theft
- Illicit drug use
- Homelessness and encampments
- Traffic safety
- Visibility of police and bylaw services

When asked where they want to see further investment, they prioritized increased police presence, more treatment and recovery services, enhanced bylaw services, and expanded affordable housing and shelter options.

Additional learnings from Phase 1:

- Visible social disorder, such as open drug use, mental health crises, homelessness, and encampments, remains the most significant driver of community safety concerns.
- Rising social complexity is outpacing current service capacity, resulting in RCMP, Fire Services, and Bylaw teams increasingly responding to homelessness, mental health, and substance-use-related issues that extend beyond their traditional roles. More provincial and federal investment is needed to address root causes of crime and wellbeing.
- Housing instability and homelessness continues to be a major contributor to social disorder and increased service demands, reinforcing the importance of coordinated housing, health, community supports and upstream prevention.
- Residents want a balanced approach that combines visible enforcement with health, housing, and recovery supports.
- Safety experiences vary across the community. Seniors, youth, Indigenous peoples, racialized and equity-seeking groups, people with lived or living experience of homelessness, and residents of different neighbourhoods face distinct safety challenges and experiences. Effective responses must be inclusive and informed by these lived realities.
- Perceptions of safety are declining more rapidly than crime trends, underscoring the need for clearer public communication, encouragement of reporting crime, greater visibility of services, and improvements to the design, maintenance, and conditions of public spaces.
- Traffic safety and emergency preparedness are emerging areas of concern. Traffic-related complaints to the City have increased steadily since 2020, and only 20% of residents report feeling very prepared for an emergency.

From this collective work, a draft CSWB Framework are emerging (see below). Attachment B shows the first iteration of this work. This Framework will be further refined in Phase 2 to identify concrete priority areas and corresponding action items. This Framework will evolve as engagements unfold over the coming months.

Penticton is a safe, vibrant, resilient and healthy waterfront city



Phase 2

These insights provide a strong foundation for the next stages of the CSWB process. Phase 2 will engage partners across sectors to validate the findings from Phase 1, confirm shared priorities, and collaboratively shape strategies to address root causes.

This phase includes engagement with:

- Social and community serving agencies
- Penticton Indian Band & Indigenous organizations (Friendship Centre, Metis Association)
- Business community (Chamber of Commerce, Penticton Industrial Development Association, Downtown Penticton Business Improvement Association)
- Regional partners (RDOS)
- Provincial agencies (Interior Health, BC Housing, Ministry of Children and Family Development etc.)

- Safety agencies (Bylaw, RCMP, Fire)

Engagement will also focus on targeted conversations with:

- Youth
- Seniors
- Equity seeking groups
- Individuals with lived/living experience of homelessness

A dedicated City webpage and short public survey will support broader community input to validate learnings. This engagement will refine the priority areas, clarify partner roles, and build the foundation for coordinated actions that strengthen both safety and wellbeing.

Phase 3 & 4

Phases 3 will consolidate the findings from Phases 1 and 2 into the *What We Learned* Report and validate draft focus areas and actions through two public sessions, a Council open house, and targeted contributor discussions. Pop-ups at the Farmer’s market and other public spaces like the community centre (May- June) will also be considered as a creative way to reach the voices who may not always participate in formal settings or surveys.

In Phase 4 Urban Matters will compile the full plan over the summer, with final review by key partners before Council endorsement, anticipated in September.

PSAC Involvement

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) will be engaged throughout all phases of the project. At its February 18, 2026 meeting, the committee received an update on progress to date and was asked to provide feedback on both completed Phase 1 work and the activities planned for the next phase. Members were also encouraged to help promote public participation in the validation survey and upcoming engagement events. The Committee were asked to consider the following questions, which will also be asked of partners in Phase 2:

1. What does safety and wellbeing mean to you?
2. Do the priorities identified by the community in Phase 1 align with your experience?
3. What areas of focus would you like to see prioritized in a CSWB?
4. What is working well today that we should build on?
5. What feels unsafe, uncertain, or challenging?
6. What role should the community play in a CSWB Plan?
7. If you represent an organization, what role can your organization take in supporting this work?
8. How should we measure progress in a way that feels meaningful and shows real impact?
9. Any other feedback?

Financial Implication

Council allocated \$75,000 in the 2025 Budget to support the independent analysis, engagement, and plan development. Funding for implementing the priority actions identified through this process will be brought forward separately, pending Council's adoption of the CSWB Plan.

Analysis

Penticton is at a pivotal moment. Rising social complexity, visible disorder, housing instability, and declining perceptions of safety are converging in ways that exceed the capacity of current systems. Phase 1 shows residents' concerns stem less from crime rates and more from unmet social needs, strained public spaces, and limited access to provincial mental-health, housing, and substance-use supports. At the same time, older adults, youth, racialized community members and several neighbourhoods are experiencing disproportionate impacts, highlighting the need for coordinated, culturally safe, community-wide solutions.

The City now has the internal structure, partner momentum, and data about where support is most needed. The Plan will serve as a multi-year, data-driven roadmap that aligns partners around shared priorities, guides future funding decisions, and will direct resources toward actions that will have the greatest impact on safety, wellbeing, and system pressures. Ultimately, it will help Penticton to move toward proactive, coordinated strategies that strengthen safety today and build long-term community resilience.

Attachments

Attachment A – Penticton Today Statistics

Attachment B – Emerging CSWB Framework

Attachment C – Penticton Public Safety Questionnaire

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Czeck

Concurrence

City Manager
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