Decision/Direction Note
Department of Justice and Public Safety

Title: Bell On-Demand Contact Centre at Fines Administration

Decision/Direction Required:

- Whether to provide one-time funding of $15,000 ($7,000 installation and training and $8,000 implementation of service) and subsequently $8,000 annually to install a Bell On-Demand Contact Centre.

Background and Current Status:

- Fines Administration currently has an "auto-attendant" phone system. It has been in place over several decades, and is faced with functional and technical issues. Currently there is no queue system in place and clients calling to inquire or pay for a fine are often disconnected. Staff receive many calls from frustrated clients unable to make contact with the division.

- Bell is the communications provider for Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and has recommended the ODCC option for Fines Administration.

- [redacted]

s. 29(1)(a)

Analysis:

- [redacted]

s. 29(1)(a)

s. 29(1)(a)

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

s. 29(1)(a)

[redacted]

Prepared/Approved by: M. Walsh/K. Martin/S. Barron
Ministerial Approval:

June 19, 2024

Memo

Date: August 12, 2024

Overview

General complaints from the public regarding drug-related activity within properties such as rental properties, as well as safety concerns in encampments, have prompted a review of options available for enhancing public safety. [redacted]

s. 29(1)(a) [redacted]

Current Status

When reviewing either drug-related activity or homelessness, ensuring that there is appropriate support available has been part of discussions throughout the country. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has recently announced a task force to address homelessness, and has also taken steps to transform the Comfort Inn hotel into a transitional housing facility. Across the country, people living in encampments cite unsafe shelter conditions as one of the reasons for choosing an encampment over a shelter, and providing adequate supportive or transitional housing results in greater long-term success in assisting individuals.

Additionally, with respect to encampments, municipalities, not provincial governments, often authorize their removal, enforcing city by-laws, which govern the use of city land. Typically, police officers are the ones who remove individuals and property from these sites, and city workers are sometimes involved in destroying or removing tents or other structures. When a city removes an encampment, it typically cites safety concerns (e.g. presence of drugs or drug-related activity, or fire hazards) or trespassing as the cause of their removal. Halifax, for example, posted notices at five of their eleven designated encampment sites on February 7th, 2024, warning residents to vacate by February 26th, 2024. The notice states that failure to vacate the properties "is an offence under the **Protection of Property Act** for which any person can be arrested by a peace officer and removed from the property." Concerns regarding safety and drug-related activities are not confined to encampments, however, as drug-related activity within rental and other residential properties is also an issue.

As these concerns are not confined to Newfoundland and Labrador, other entities have been weighing in on the issue as well. For instance, the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate released its final report on homelessness in Canada on February 13th, 2024, which includes a call to action to the federal government, requesting that it establish a National Encampments Response Plan by August 31, 2024. The report cites drug-related activity and lack of housing options as pieces of the overall issue, and that the issues surrounding encampments depict "a clear picture of a two-fold human rights crisis." The first issue is that encampment residents are "at dire risk of harm due to the failure to uphold their basic rights," and secondly that these encampments exist "only because of a larger, systemic failure to uphold the right of all people to adequate housing without discrimination."

As outlined in section 17.1 of the **National Housing Strategy Act**, the federal Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities must respond to the Federal Housing Advocate's report within 120 days.

A response from the federal Minister may influence the direction of provincial governments with respect to how they manage encampments and interact with their residents.

s. 29(1)(a)

[redacted]

Direction

State the direction being sought and list all requested changes in the table below for approval:

Requested Change	Approved? (Y/N)

Comments:_____

_____

_____

Minister's Signature (or designate)

Date