

Drag show at Victoria long-term-care home a sign of how times have changed >A3

## Our Place worries about more deaths as paramedics wait for police on Pandora calls



Communications director Grant McKenzie stands near tents in front of Our Place in the 900-block of Pandora Avenue. “Anything that happens after 7:30 at night, if the paramedics aren’t coming on the block, there’s a good chance that there will be more deaths,” he said. ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

ROXANNE EGAN-ELLIOTT  
Times Colonist

More deaths are likely if fire-fighters and paramedics have to wait for a police escort before responding to medical calls in the 900-block of Pandora, says a spokesperson for Our Place Society. Grant McKenzie said Our Place, which provides services for the street community, responds to overdoses as quickly as possible, but it closes at 7:30 p.m.

“So anything that happens after 7:30 at night, if the paramedics aren’t coming on the block, there’s a good chance that

there will be more deaths.”

The change in protocol follows an incident July 11 where a paramedic was hurt while attending to a patient.

Paramedics had been flagged down to help a man in need of medical attention, who ended up kicking a paramedic in the face and pursuing them before police used a Taser on him. Residents of the block swarmed first responders during the incident.

The paramedic has been released from hospital and continues to be off work while recovering at home, said Brian Twaites, paramedic public information officer. The incident has

had an impact on all paramedics, who, like other first responders, have been experiencing an increase in violence while doing their jobs, Twaites said.

“Paramedics are there to help people and when something like this happens, it’s very frightening for the paramedics. It’s very concerning, and quite frankly, it’s unacceptable,” he said.

B.C. Emergency Health Services does not have data on incidents involving violence against paramedics, but it has “certainly escalated,” said Twaites, noting he was himself assaulted during his 38-year career as a paramedic.

Twaites said the decision to wait for police before responding to a call might result in delays, but it’s standard operating procedure for paramedics to wait until a scene is safe.

“How are we going to keep continuing to help people and provide care if our paramedics are injured from incidents like this?”

Firefighters will still respond to fires in the area without police escort, said Jeremy Wilson, president of the Victoria Firefighters’ Association, but new guidelines tell firefighters to wait for police when responding to medical calls.

It will be a similar situation in the 500-block of Ellice Street, where there is a concentration of people who are unhoused.

Firefighters will now send two trucks, meaning a minimum of six firefighters, and they’ll wait nearby for paramedics to arrive before attending medical calls together, Wilson said.

As for the July 11 incident, McKenzie said the person involved had experienced about 30 seizures over the past six months and his behaviour had changed dramatically as a result of multiple brain injuries.

>See FIRST RESPONDERS, A2

## Province returns key village site in downtown Nanaimo to First Nation

JEFF BELL  
Times Colonist

A dilapidated piece of land in downtown Nanaimo that is part of a historic Snuneymuxw First Nation village is being returned to the nation under the terms of an 1854 treaty.

The province and the Snuneymuxw have bought about 2.67 hectares at 1 Terminal Ave. and adjoining properties for \$28.5 million — close to \$26 million of which is from the government — for a portion of the Sxwayxum village site, also known as Millstone River Village.

The land next to Swy-A-Lana Lagoon and Maffeo Sutton Park, which had been the subject of a development proposal, was purchased so it could be returned to the Snuneymuxw.

At an announcement at the site on Monday, Snuneymuxw First Nation Chief Mike



Snuneymuxw First Nation Chief Mike Wyse speaks at an announcement in Nanaimo on Monday as 2.67 hectares of land was handed over to the First Nation under the terms of an 1854 treaty.

GOVERNMENT OF B.C.

Wyse called the land acquisition “a historic milestone” for the nation and the province “that reflects the solemn prom-

ises embedded in our treaty relationship.”

>See TREATY, A2

## Single-use plastic bags banned as B.C.’s next round of regulations kicks in

The Canadian Press

Plastic shopping bags and other single-use products can no longer be provided at British Columbia stores as the government implements the latest step in its plan to phase out certain plastic items and keep harmful chemicals out of landfills.

Businesses may no longer provide single-use plastic shopping bags, and they must charge a minimum of \$2 for new reusable bags or 25 cents for new paper bags.

A statement from the province says food-service businesses are also restricted from distributing single-use containers with certain plastics that are hard to recycle, including “biodegradable” and “compostable” plastics as well as polystyrene foam.

Food-service businesses have been barred from offering disposable plastic utensils since December 2023, with some exceptions, such as plas-

tic lids for drinks.

Oxo-degradable plastic packaging has also been banned.

The province says products made of oxo-degradable plastics are often marketed as biodegradable, green, or eco-friendly, but they contain chemicals that cause the material to break down into tiny microplastics that pollute the environment.

To support a smooth transition, the province says businesses can use PVC film wrap until 2028 and polystyrene meat trays can be used for raw meat until 2030.

The changes come after B.C. introduced its single-use and plastic waste prevention regulation in July 2023, with the first restrictions taking effect last December.

The Opposition BC United issued a statement Monday saying the fees for reusable or paper bags are “punitive” and hurt consumers in the middle of an affordability crisis.

Gaza protest encampment at VIU remains past deadline >A4

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