



**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUSINESS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET**

DATE: February 8, 2023
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
Pete Sabo, Executive Director Planning & Operations
Paul Kingsbury, Operations Manager
Phil Barkhouse, Maintenance Manager
SUBJECT: Vandalism Report

Background:

Vandalism or damage caused by unruly behaviour to Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) Facilities is currently guided by AP 527 – Anti-Vandalism (the AP). The AP indicates annual reporting to the Board or more often as circumstances require.

This report is intended to provide an update on Facilities' activities related to the AP. This report discusses vandalism from July 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022.

Currently, the reports are generated semi-annually. The Board was previously updated in October 2022.

Overview:

The 2022/2023 school year started (July 1, 2022) with multiple vandalism events during the summer break. The vandalism occurred at two schools in particular:

- Quarterway Elementary (15% of all costs on various categories of events, mainly graffiti and broken windows)
- John Barsby Secondary (18% of all costs essentially related to one break-in)

Initiatives to lessen vandalism at these schools included:

- Exterior camera installation at John Barsby (fully operational)
- Exterior camera installation at Quarterway (installation pending)
- Increased patrols at both schools

The summer increase in vandalism (\$8,727.40 or 52%) highlights the need to continue anti-vandalism programs and efforts as well as improve and modify prevention tactics during non-instructional times.

Interior vs Exterior Vandalism:

- This year, due to presentations to the Business Committee, Facilities has begun tracking interior vs exterior vandalism. During the first half of the 2022/2023 school year, 12% of reported vandalism costs were interior, and 88% were exterior. The 12% included interior damage made during a break-in. Further definitions of internal vandalism will be considered. Please note that, at this time, interior vandalism cleaned by the daily work of the custodians is not reported as a cost. Considerations for tracking time spent by custodians on vandalism clean-up are under review, specifically the clean-up of interior graffiti. Internal vandalism tracking is expected to improve for the following report, resulting in increased reporting of vandalism costs. Considerations for a new category of costs are being made.

Updates on Projects from Previous Report:

Security Cameras (exterior) were installed and are operating at the following locations:

- NDSS exterior high vandalism areas – February 2022
- Georgia Avenue Community School – Spring 2022
- Fairview Community School – June 2022
- Facilities Yard – July 2022
- NDSS Artificial Turf field – Jointly funded with the City of Nanaimo – July 2022
- John Barsby Secondary – December 2022

Security camera installations and pending at:

- Brechin (exterior)
- Quarterway (exterior)
- NDSS (interior)

The Local Capital Project to address Exterior Security Cameras in accordance with the RCMP recommendations is now fully allocated and pending final installations as indicated above. Staff continue to work to align video surveillance with both existing programs and Capital Projects.

The RCMP has reported success based on the camera systems. Images from the cameras have assisted investigations on nine specific cases and acted as a deterrent to further crime and vandalism. RCMP notes that cameras help identify suspects and debunk stories of others.

Community Safety Unit:

The Operations Manager met with the City of Nanaimo's Community Safety Unit to discuss sharing resources and working closely together on issues affecting the City and the District. The City has hired twelve Community Safety Officers (CSO) who have several essential tasks, including, according to the City of Nanaimo website, to "engage with vulnerable citizens including people experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health concerns to assist in the coordination of appropriate social, health and enforcement responses." It was a good initial conversation and introduction to coordination with this new unit. Subsequent reports will highlight progress in this area.

Fire at Wellington:

Transient activity in the Wellington band room's alcove resulted in a fire to the building, causing extensive damage. While out of the timeframe of this report, the event highlighted the importance of restricting access to sheltered areas in the District. Facilities are working with Learning Services to identify areas where transients tend to take shelter and to restrict access to those sites. An update on this work will be included in a future report.

Discussion:

Vandalism takes many forms, including, but not limited to, building damage, graffiti, window breakage, grounds destruction, theft, building systems damage, clean-up following overnight homeless occupation, and 'interior' vandalism.

Initiatives in place to limit vandalism:

- Graffiti removal program - graffiti is removed immediately, and a database of photos is maintained
- Anti-vandalism coatings – on signage, murals, etc.
- Anti-climber protection – reduce access to roofs where identified
- Seismic Film installed on inside of all windows – assists in vandalism clean-up and seismic response
- Participation/coordination with stakeholders (Schools, Parks and Recreation, Bylaw, etc.)
- Pictures and data available to the RCMP and key stakeholders (as identified periodically)
- Consideration of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles
- Engage residents surrounding schools as required or requested
- Restoration activity is tracked and costed

While not vandalism, other initiatives to reduce unwanted behaviours around schools include:

- Transients and after-hours groups asked to leave properties and confirmed to leave by Security/NLPS staff
- RCMP called as required to move individuals along
- NLPS Emergency Caretaker responds daily to sites of concern prior to school start-up
- Security patrols increased overnight at areas that vandals have targeted

New initiatives include:

- Coordination with the City of Nanaimo's Community Safety Unit
- Review of areas frequented by transients
- Tracking internal vandalism
- Increased reporting of internal vandalism
- Extensive use of video systems for both active and passive measures

Trespass Issues:

- NLPS has concerns with respect to drug use and transients on school property.
 - Generally, there is not a significant amount of drug use on school sites.
 - Most of the transient population respects school property.
 - Removal of drug paraphernalia (e.g., needles) and human by-products is a continuing problem.
- NLPS assigns 1 FTE position to support schools with clean-up.
 - Together with supplemental funding, the cost to NLPS is approx. \$100,000 per year.

It should be noted that there are no specific vandalism budgets, and the affected department covers all vandalism costs. Vandalism costs directly represent less funding spent in the classroom.

Conclusion:

Staff continue to be guided by the AP – “Develop, recommend and maintain anti-vandalism and communication strategies that are both preventative and reactive.” Reports will continue to be presented to the Board semi-annually.

References:

- Appendix A:** October 2022 report
- Appendix B:** Yearly vandalism costs
- Appendix C:** Detail by school
- Appendix D:** Summary reports (x2)
- Appendix E:** Interior vs exterior vandalism costs