

# Medium Sized Communities transformative interventions in homelessness:

## Initiating A National Dialogue.

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Focused on Solving the Harbour City's  
Acute Housing Needs



## Our aim today...

- **Address the limited focus on ‘medium-sized’ communities/cities** in the homelessness sector policy and research
- **Start a focussed national dialogue about Medium-sized communities/cities** to assess how they have adapted to policy and practice designed primarily for Large Urban Cities/Centres
- Identify and further **the development of transformative interventions** and to also **initiate formalization of a community of interest.**

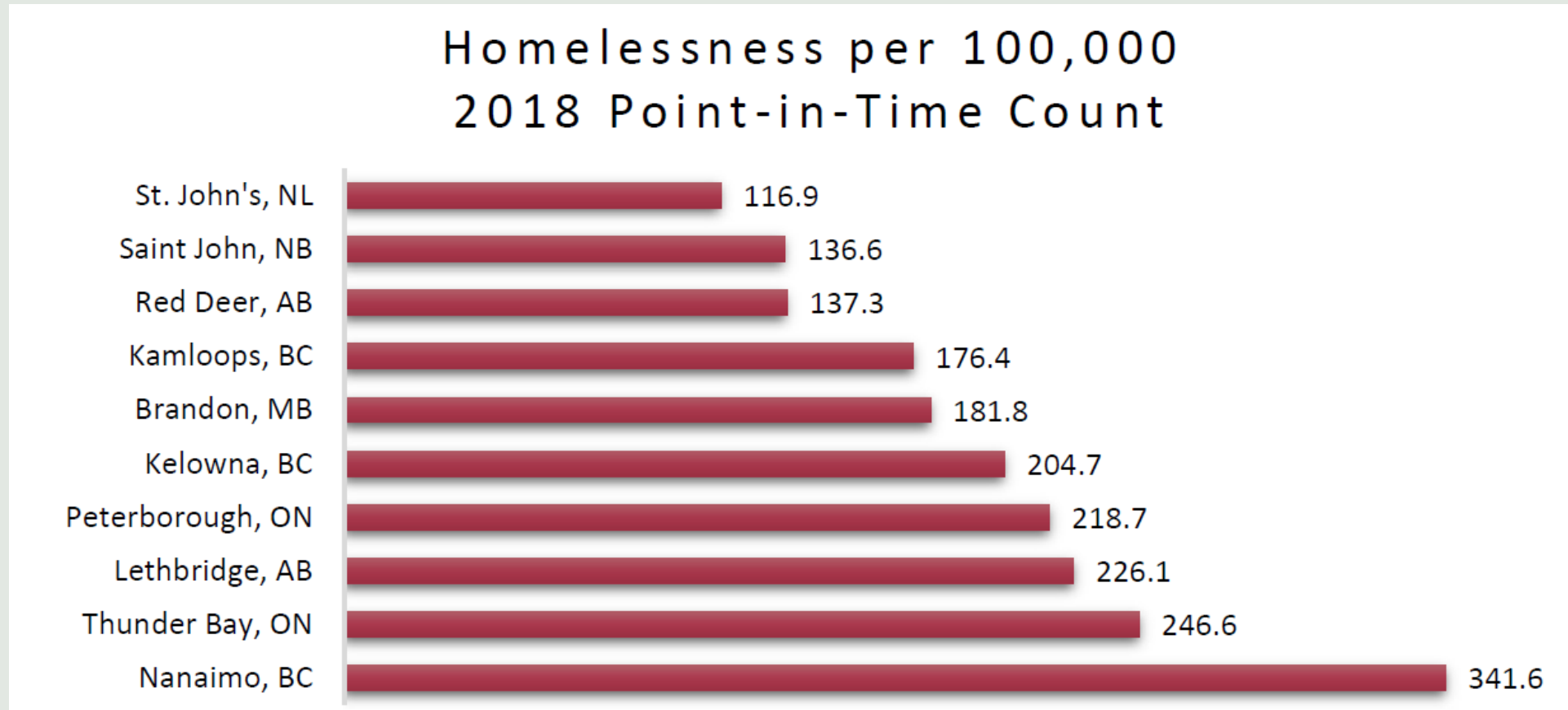
## For the Audience: How do *you* define 'medium sized' city?

- Coming to agreed upon (working) definition(s) of 'medium sized'?
- In what ways do current the definitions of 'medium sized' impact policy and practice?

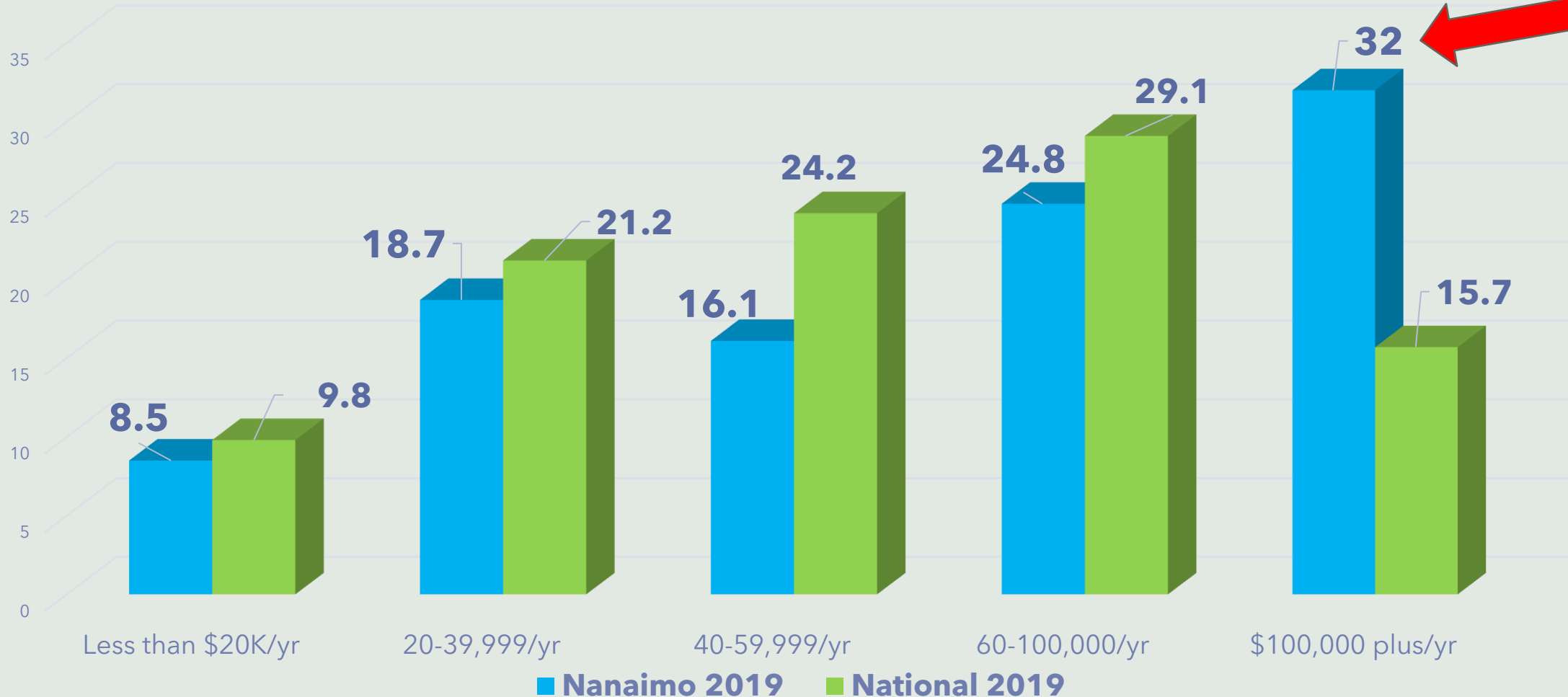
# Where does Nanaimo stand?

## A comparative study of homelessness in the era of COVID – 19

(Thornton and McCormick, p.4, 2021)



## % Population / Average Household Income: Nanaimo v National average



## COMPARING NANAIMO TO 10 CANADIAN CITIES OF SIMILAR POPULATION

### NANAIMO RANKS FIRST

- Per Capita Homelessness
- Per Capita Unsheltered Homelessness
- Lowest Rental Vacancy Rates (in 2020)
- Percentage of Increase in Average Rents 2015-2020
- Percentage of Lone Parent Renters in Core Housing Need
- Percentage of Female Lone Parent Renters in Core Housing

***Where does Nanaimo Stand?*** (p. 26, 2021)

The combination of high 'livability' factors, high property values, high rents, low vacancy rates, low availability of and expensive rental housing stock, high core housing need and large numbers of households with low and very low incomes has created a perfect storm of housing insecurity in Nanaimo, BC.

## *Where does Nanaimo stand?* (p.27, 2021)

### Conclusions

- ✓ Current research on homelessness in Canada tends to focus on large urban centres or rural and remote areas.
- ✓ **Generating solutions that are locally driven, innovative and evidence based**
- ✓ Collaboration with 'Nanaimo' sized communities from across Canada



## Looking for one thing and finding another:

Medium sized communities: Implications for policy and practice

- 'Coordinated Access' (CA) = 'enhancing agencies connections'
- **Nanaimo CA was enabled/built upon strong *pre-existing* relationships among agencies**
- Connections tend to develop 'organically' in well-functioning medium-sized urban centres
- **Thesis: Medium sized communities' policy and practice is driven more by a 'relational' approach, not bureaucratic/technocratic/instrumental**

## Medium sized communities: Implications for policy and practice

- Impacts of being largely or entirely Geographically discrete
  - *No access to nearby or same amount of resources due to physical separation of the community*
- **'Field test' of interventions that can be *scaled up from Medium Sized to Large Urban communities?***

## **Medium sized communities: Implications for policy and practice**

- **Medium sized communities tend to be geographically discrete?**

Example: Nanaimo “surrounded by a moat”

- **Introduces need to assess unique structural factors and needs for data**

## Medium sized communities: Implications for policy and practice

- Apples and Oranges? Nanaimo is not Vancouver.

The screenshot displays the Nanaimo News Bulletin website. The main headline is "Nanaimo will be asked to meet provincial housing targets". Below the headline, it states "B.C. minister of housing meets with mayor and MLAs to discuss housing needs". The author is Greg Sakaki, dated Jul 4, 2023 5:30 PM, with an update on Jul 4, 2023 7:48 PM. A photograph shows two men in suits, one of whom is likely the B.C. minister of housing. To the right, there is a real estate advertisement for "Yarrow East Village" featuring a modern multi-story building and the text "Unique, central & vibrant. New Studio, 1, & 2 Bedroom Rental Homes in Vancouver's East Village". A "RENT TODAY" button is visible on the ad.

## Medium sized communities: Implications for policy and practice

- **‘Scalability’**

In Nanaimo almost everyone who works with vulnerable populations can usually quickly and accurately identify a given individual based on a few features of their case history or identity

- **Question: Does this apply to Medium sized communities/cities in general?**

- **A national dialogue and community of practice?**

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