
MEMORANDUM

February 15, 2019

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Irina Dragnea, Meeting Coordinator

SUBJECT: Interim Funding for School Meal Program

On February 13, 2019, Vancouver City Council, at its meeting immediately following the Standing Committee on City Finance and Services, referred debate and decision on the following motion to the Regular Council meeting to be held on February 26, 2019, as Unfinished Business.

WHEREAS

1. Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy is comprised of thirteen long-term goals and an integrated plan for healthier people, healthier places, and a healthier planet;
2. The Healthy City Strategy includes goals both that Vancouver's children have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood, and a healthy, just, and sustainable food system;
3. Nutritionally-balanced school meal programs are widely considered to have a positive effect on school performance, as well as cognitive and social-emotional skill development;
4. Since 2014, the City of Vancouver through Arts Culture and Community Services has been providing \$320,000 per year to the Vancouver School Board and \$80,000 per year to the Strathcona Community Centre Association for school food programs;
5. Over the past three years, costs of the Vancouver School Board meal provision supported by the City of Vancouver have increased which has led to a reduction in students served from 258 per day to 200 per day;
6. Other nutritious meal programs are delivered more cost-effectively (e.g. Strathcona Community Centre \$3.54, Carnegie Community Centre \$4.36 to \$6.20);

7. City staff have encouraged the Vancouver School Board to deliver nutritious meals at a lower cost per meal, enabling more students to be fed;
8. In 2017, the Vancouver School Board commissioned a food services review to inform a three-year Food Services Plan which is expected to be shared with the City in April 2019;
9. As part of the 2019 budget process, staff put forward a reduction of \$160,000 to the grant to balance the operating budget and because of the increasing costs of the Vancouver School Board meal program where increasing cost per meal was impacting the reach of the program. Staff also identified that while City resources make a contribution, school meal provision is a Provincial mandate;
10. The City maintained \$80,000 in the 2019 Operating Budget for the Strathcona Community Centre Association meal program because nutritious meals are delivered at a reasonable cost, enabling the City to support more children with its grant;
11. That Vancouver School Board (VSB) staff are intending to review the imminent VSB 3-year Food Services Plan and advise City staff as to whether concerns about cost per meal can be addressed to ensure maximum reach for the City's investment;
12. Without immediate alternate funding, efficiencies in food services provision, or internal reprioritization of Vancouver School Board (VSB) resources by the VSB, there are concerns that the currently served vulnerable children may experience school-day hunger that reinforces stigma and impacts children's ability to learn, and general health outcomes;
13. That under the existing operating model, the funding gap to maintain the existing meal program until the end of the 2018/2019 school year is \$32,000 should the Vancouver School Board choose to apply the current \$160,000 grant to the remainder of the 2018/2019 school year.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council approve a one-time \$32,000 grant to the Vancouver School Board Meal Program to enable them to complete the 2018/2019 school year with the current model, source of funds to be reprioritization within the 2019 Operating Budget.
- B. THAT City staff be directed to report back no later than mid-July 2019 with recommendation for City support of the Vancouver School Board (VSB) meal program for the 2019/2020 school year, provided the VSB presents a meal program with a cost per meal that is in-line with the range of costs of other nutritious meal programs.
- C. THAT if the Vancouver School Board is unable to present a meal program with a cost per meal that is more in-line with other nutritious meal programs, City staff

be directed to engage in discussions with other community partners to explore other models for more affordable delivery of nutritious meals to students.

- D. THAT Council direct the Mayor to liaise with the Vancouver School Board (VSB) Chair, encouraging them to consider internal reprioritization within the VSB budget to increase support this program.
- E. THAT Council direct the Mayor to write a letter to the Province requesting increased Provincial investment in school meal programs in BC, working toward a universal meal program in all schools, in alignment with their commitment to health promotion and poverty reduction.

* * * * *