



## ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: March 12, 2013  
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Meeting Date: May 28, 2013

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Community Services in consultation with the Director of Real Estate Services

SUBJECT: Grant to the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS) to Facilitate the Provision of Residential Tenancy Branch Services at 390 Main St.

### *RECOMMENDATION*

- A. THAT Council support a continued partnership with the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) by providing the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS) with an \$8,000 grant to offset half of the operating costs of the RTB at 390 Main Street until March 31 2016. Source of funds is the Community Services 2013 operating budget - Street Homelessness budget.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to amend the current lease with ACCESS for 390 Main Street to allow the RTB, Open Door Group, and the Salvation Army to sublease space in the building.

### *REPORT SUMMARY*

The report recommends Council approve a grant to extend a partnership with ACCESS and the RTB for the continued provision of RTB services at 390 Main Street. The partnership was established in the lead up to the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games to help prevent potential evictions related to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. ACCESS leases 390 Main Street from the City and the initial three year grant supported the opening of an RTB office to serve inner-city tenants and landlords. If approved, the recommended grant will offset half of the RTB's operating expenses born by ACCESS, with the other half being covered by the RTB. The RTB's presence at 390 Main Street complements a variety of on-site services and programs that support community and economic development goals, as well as improving housing stability for inner city residents.

### *COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS*

Relevant Council Policies include:

- On December 11, 2007, Council approved the creation of a \$20 million Olympic Legacy Reserve fund including a \$1 million Social Sustainability Initiative targeted to address Inner-City Inclusivity Commitments (funded the initial partnership).
- On March 13, 2008, Council approved a head lease with the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Society (ACCESS) for 390 Main Street for four years (with an option to renew for a further four years) commencing April 1, 2008 for a nominal rent of \$1.00 per year.
- On June 28, 2011, Council adopted the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021 with the goal to increase the supply of affordable housing; encourage a housing mix across all neighbourhoods that enhance quality of life; and provide strong leadership and support partners to enhance housing stability.
- On June 28, 2011, Council also adopted the Housing and Homelessness 3-year Action Plan 2012-2014 that further identifies priority actions to achieve some of the Strategy's goals. The priority action that relates to this initiative is to work with partners to improve information and services to support renters/tenants.

Approval of grant recommendations requires eight affirmative votes.

### *CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS*

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the recommendations.

### *REPORT*

#### *Background/Context*

In 2002, the Provincial government closed RTB offices in Vancouver and centralized services at its Burnaby location, while also promoting access to services via the web and telephone. In the lead up to the 2010 Games, there were concerns about the lack of access to the RTB for inner-city, low-income residents facing potential Games-related evictions.

To address these concerns and to help fulfil its commitment to implementing the "2010 Inclusive Inner City Commitment Statement," to "maximize the opportunities and mitigate potential impacts in Vancouver's inner-city neighbourhoods from hosting the 2010 Winter Games" the City and the RTB partnered with ACCESS to provide RTB services to inner-city residents by opening an office at 390 Main Street.

Council approved an \$18,000 grant to ACCESS to fully offset the RTB's share of operating costs at 390 Main Street for three years (\$6,000/year) from 2009-2012, as well as provide a venue for tenant/landlord education and information workshops. The RTB contributed staffing and administration costs for the office which was open from Monday to Friday, 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm.

They subsequently also began providing Residential Tenancy Office (RTO) services weekday mornings at the Marble Arch Hotel which BC Housing had recently purchased.

The building at 390 Main Street is located on the northeast corner of Main and Hastings in what the community considers to be the heart of the Downtown Eastside. The City purchased the building in 2003 and with assistance of Provincial and Federal funding renovated the building to support economic revitalization and employment objectives of the Vancouver Agreement.

In 2008, Council approved a head lease of the capital asset with ACCESS and sub-leases with Pathways to Employment and Fast Track to Employment to provide training and employment programs to Aboriginal and other inner-city residents (the lease between the City and ACCESS was renewed in 2012 for a further four year term). In 2011, the Provincial government centralized employment training programs and funding for Pathways to Employment and Fast Track to Employment were terminated so they subsequently terminated their sublease with ACCESS. As a result, ACCESS has been working to find other non-profits to help off-set their operating costs at 390 Main Street and has successfully secured sub-leases with complementary non-profits, Open Door Group and the Salvation Army.

### *Strategic Analysis*

#### **Supporting Renters**

Ending street homelessness by 2015 is a key Council goal. The continued partnership with the RTB, ACCESS and other non-profit service providers at 390 Main Street supports this goal and it builds on the strategic direction in the City's Housing & Homelessness Strategy to provide strong leadership and support partners to enhance housing stability. In addition enhancing support to renters is a priority action identified in this strategy.

The continued location of the RTB at 390 Main Street not only enhances accessibility due to its central location, but it is also critical to supporting the low-income residents served at the building and benefiting from the variety of employment and training programs and services offered. 390 Main Street is a hub for a unique and diverse assortment of education, training, counselling, support and financial services designed to help individuals overcome barriers that may stand in the way of success and self-sufficiency. Maintaining stable housing is a key element of this success. Summary statistics provided by the RTB show that since 2008, the RTB office at 390 Main Street has served more than 6,000 individual tenants and landlords requiring information and accepted almost 1,000 applications for arbitration under the Residential Tenancy Act. In addition to offsetting half of their operating costs, the RTB has also expanded service to allow tenants to submit evidence for arbitration. This can now be done directly at the office whereas previously, evidence had to be submitted through the Burnaby office.

The partnership with the RTB has also supported other City-lead initiatives to support renters such as the Rent Bank and SRO Task Force. The RTB is a member of the SRO Task Force and their staff have worked with staff in the development and implementation of a series of SRO tenant workshops that have been organized directly in SRO's, as well as other community venues. The purpose of the workshops is to obtain feedback from tenants on ways to improve SROs, as well as provide information to tenants on their rights and responsibilities in relation to the Residential Tenancy Act. The input from tenants will be used to develop broad

recommendations for improving conditions for SRO tenants. This supports the implementation of the DTES Housing Plan as part of the DTES Local Area Planning Program.

### Lease Agreements

Following the Provincial centralization of the delivery of training and employment services, ACCESS lost two non-profit tenants that were subleasing space in the building. In order to off-set operating costs for the building, ACCESS has identified two other non-profits with supporting mandates for the community and economic development in the Downtown Eastside. The report recommends amending the lease to allow ACCESS to sublease to the RTB, as well as two new non-profit tenants:

- Open Door Group (ODG) - This organization provides a wide range of integrated employment services and supports to assist people in achieving employment or community attachment. The ODG holds the contract for the Provincial Employment Program for the DTES.
- Salvation Army - This faith-based organization has been providing services in the DTES community for a number of years. Services provided include training for their outreach staff, as well as some administrative functions for the organization.

The co-location of ACCESS, Salvation Army, ODG and the RTB at 390 Main St is an opportunity for the location to act as a hub for employment and community & economic development programs and services. The services offered are complimentary to each other and important to Downtown Eastside residents, including those on low income.

### Financial

The proportion of ACCESS' operating costs allocated to the RTB is estimated at \$4,000 per year (based on percentage of floor space). The initial three year agreement expired in 2012 and therefore this report recommends a \$2,000 contribution for 2012/2013 and half of the RTB's operating costs going forward until March 31, 2016:

Year	City contribution
2012/2013	\$2,000
2013/2014	\$2,000
2014/2015	\$2,000
2015/2016	\$2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>

This amounts to a total contribution of \$8,000 until March 31, 2016 with the source of funds being the Street Homelessness budget within the Community Services 2013 operating budget.

### CONCLUSION

The continued provision of RTB services at 390 Main Streets supports Council's strategic priority of working with partners to enhance housing stability and provide supports to renters. This report seeks Council approval to provide ACCESS with an \$8,000 grant to offset half of the RTB's operating costs at 390 Main Street and provide approval of the new sub-leases in the building that will offer complimentary services.

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