



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: November 30, 2015
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Meeting Date: December 9, 2015

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Acting General Manager of Community Services
SUBJECT: Funding Allocation Related to Expanding Access to Healthy Foods in Schools

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approves a 2015 grant of \$80,000 to the Strathcona Community Centre Association breakfast program. Source of funds is the 2015 Social Grants Operating Budget.
- B. THAT Council approves the one-time use of \$50,000 for a school meal program evaluation to be overseen by staff from the City of Vancouver in collaboration with Vancouver Board of Education. Source of funds is the 2015 Community Services Operating Budget.
- C. THAT Council approves the one-time use of \$75,000 towards planning and piloting an innovative school meal model that aims to simultaneously address student hunger, teach food literacy, and support sustainable food systems. Source of funds is the 2015 Community Services Operating Budget.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report outlines a grant recommendation and funding allocation to address Council's December 2014 motion to expand access to healthy foods in schools. In December 2014, Council approved a budget of \$400,000 towards this initiative, starting in 2015.

This motion aligns with the City's Healthy City Strategy, in particular in ensuring that Vancouver's children have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood and that Vancouver has a healthy, just and sustainable food system.

As per Council's motion, starting in December 2015, most of the funding (\$320,000 annually) is allocated to the Vancouver Board of Education (prorated to \$50,000 for 2015). These funds will support VBE's school meal programs, as VBE has a long history of providing meals for vulnerable students.

This report recommends providing \$80,000 of the \$400,000 budget for expanding access to healthy foods in schools to the Strathcona Community Centre Association (Recommendation A), which offers a best practices breakfast program in a highly vulnerable neighbourhood. Their breakfast program feeds up to 120 students and their families each morning. The program also builds relationships, teaches food skills, and ensures healthy food is provided in a dignified manner.

In addition, this report recommends using \$50,000 of the 2015 funding towards a meal program evaluation (Recommendation B) to evaluate the effectiveness of the school meal model, given that City funds are to be used to provide meals to an additional 258 students daily beginning in December 2015. The evaluation will assess outcomes such as participation, satisfaction, stigma, cost effectiveness, procurement, and environmental sustainability. The evaluation will provide recommendations for aligning the meal services with the City's Food Strategy, Healthy City Strategy, and Greenest City Action Plan.

Finally, this report recommends using \$75,000 of the 2015 funding towards the development and implementation of a school meal program pilot (Recommendation C) to build on strengths of local organizations and schools, incorporate lessons from other jurisdictions, and model a meal program that achieves many challenging school food goals simultaneously, ranging from hunger to education to food system sustainability.

These funding allocations will complement the funds already provided to the Vancouver Board of Education for meal provision for students and will ensure that ongoing funding is best aligned with the City's policy and goals.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Vancouver Food Strategy - In January 2013, Council adopted the Vancouver Food Strategy with goals to: Improve access to healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse food for all residents; Advocate for a just and sustainable food system with partners and at all levels of government; Support food-friendly neighbourhoods

Healthy City Strategy - In October 2014, Council adopted the Healthy City Strategy with goals of ensuring that Vancouver's children and youth, up to age 24, have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood; and that Vancouver has a healthy, just, and sustainable food system. In July 2015, Council approved the first four year action plan for the Healthy City Strategy. It includes an action to facilitate 1300 school breakfasts and food literacy development.

Expanding access to healthy foods for school-aged children - In December 2014, City Council unanimously adopted a motion approving \$400,000 in the operating budget to expand access to healthy foods for school-aged children, starting in 2015.

Financial support to Strathcona Community Centre Association - Council passed grants in 2014 and 2015 to support Strathcona Community Centre Association for food access, engagement, and food literacy learning and leadership programming.

Approval of grant recommendations requires eight affirmative votes.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

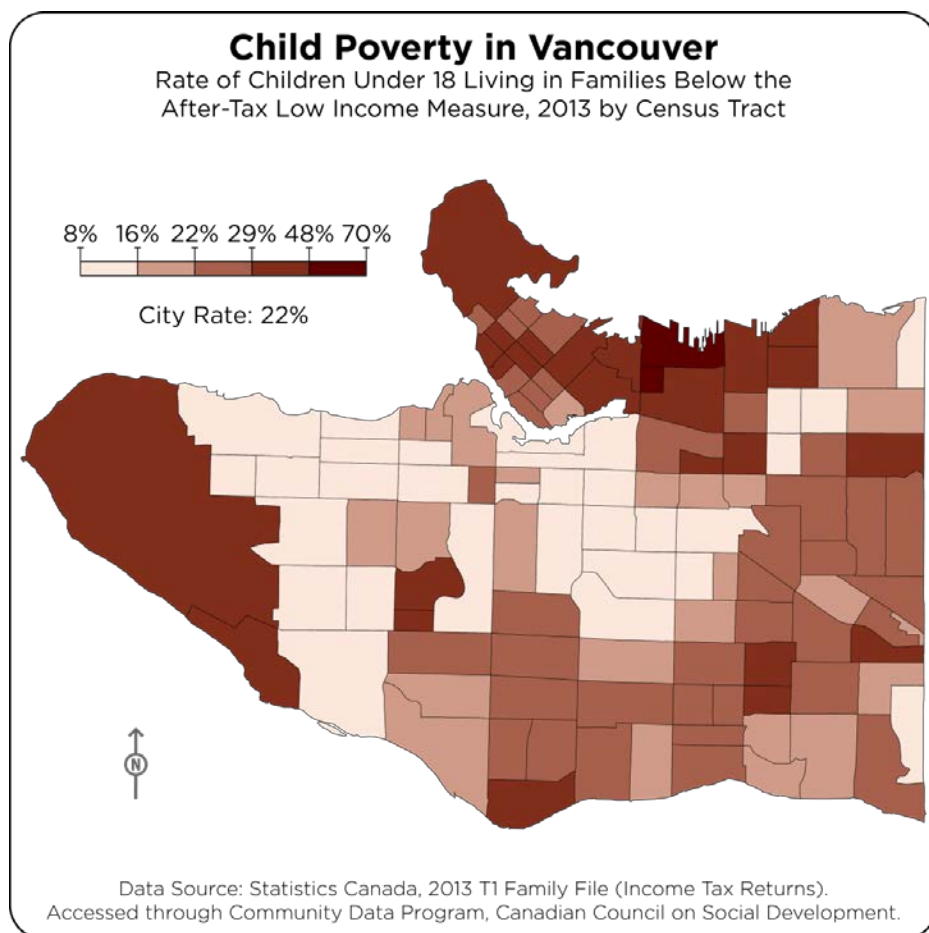
The Acting City Manager and Acting General Manager of Community Services RECOMMEND approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

In 2011, 32% of food bank users in BC were children and youth. Twenty two percent of children live in low income families in Vancouver. As evident on Chart 1, Strathcona is the neighbourhood with the highest poverty rate, with 70% of children living in poverty. However, children are living in poverty across all neighbourhoods in the city.

Chart 1: Child Poverty in Vancouver



Income level is a significant barrier for accessing food, and consequently children and families living in poverty often go hungry and/or worry about having enough to eat. Lone-parent families and the Aboriginal population are two groups who are at higher risk of food insecurity and Strathcona and Grandview Woodland neighbourhoods are home to higher numbers of both. The Strathcona Community Centre Association (CCA) is well respected for its work to address food insecurity in the neighbourhood. Their long-standing breakfast program is a best practices model for food provision that builds relationships, meets food needs, and teaches food skills. The Vancouver Board of Education recognizes that the Strathcona CCA is meeting the community needs and they support the City Staff recommendation to provide funding to Strathcona CCA to continue their good work, rather than duplicating or recreating a separate meal initiative.

The Vancouver Board of Education (VBE) operates a variety of school breakfast and lunch models to help feed vulnerable children and youth, as outlined in Table 1. Most of the subsidized meal programs are on the east side of the city, in schools that have the highest numbers of vulnerable students. The VBE uses the Social Services Index (SSI) to determine the number of vulnerable students in each school based on the number of children who live on Income Assistance and the number of children who are in care.

Table 1: Breakfast and Lunch provision by Vancouver Board of Education Meal Services

Schools	Breakfast <i>Approximate numbers as of December 2015</i>	Lunch <i>Approximate numbers as of December 2015</i>
Elementary schools (Total = 92 schools)	Breakfast for ~820 students in ~14 schools.	Subsidized (or free) lunch available for ~1,800 students in ~17 schools. Free bagged lunch delivered to an additional ~430 vulnerable students in ~18 schools.
High Schools (Total = 18 schools)	Not available.	Free lunch provided via cafeteria meal vouchers to ~900 students across the City.
Alternate Schools (Total = 22 schools)	Not available.	Free lunch is provided to all ~300 students.

Following Council's motion in December 2014 to expand access to healthy foods in schools, the City is supporting the VBE with \$50,000 in 2015, \$320,000 in 2016 and 2017, and \$192,000 from January to June 2018. This funding will provide lunches on school days for an additional 258 vulnerable children in ~11 elementary schools (these meal totals are included in Table 1. City and School Board staff are committed to working together to review the meal program model and adjust the model as needed in subsequent years to ensure alignment with City and

School Board priorities. The review will evaluate the effectiveness of the school meal model, and will assess outcomes such as participation, satisfaction, stigma, cost effectiveness, procurement, and environmental sustainability.

The City and VBE have a long history of working together on issues ranging from the provision of childcare and pre-school spaces, youth engagement, and optimization of the use of public lands, such as Britannia Community Services Centre. The VBE is also a member of the Healthy City for All Leadership Table.

The annual commitment towards feeding students (split between VBE and Strathcona) marks a new direction for the City in supporting school food. The City and VBE are both working to support food-related sustainability actions that relate to the Healthy City Strategy, Greenest City Action Plan and Economic Action Plan including urban agriculture, local procurement, food literacy, and waste reduction. As a result of this new financial agreement, there is a commitment from VBE and the City to meet quarterly, conduct a program evaluation of the expanded meal program, and to collaborate on future iterations of meal provision in schools.

Throughout Vancouver, there are many other individuals, school staff, community organizations, and funders who work to ensure food access and food literacy including Vancity Credit Union, Vancouver Foundation and the Real Estate Foundation. These funders have provided financial support over the past several years for food literacy programming and for work towards more sustainable school and regional food systems.

Additionally, a group of organizations meets regularly through the Vancouver School Food Network with the intention of complementing each other's work and using systems-wide approaches to address school food issues. Some of these organizations include the Neighbourhood Food Networks, Farm to School, Project CHEF, Environmental Youth Alliance, and Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society. The work of these organizations further expands and leverages additional food-based education and food system opportunities.

Strategic Analysis

The Vancouver Board of Education and the City recognize the strength of the Strathcona Community Centre Association (CCA) breakfast model in not only feeding hungry students, but in building relationships, teaching food skills, and providing healthy food in a dignified manner. The breakfast program has been running since the 1990s and is a unique model that includes healthy meals for students and siblings, and builds connections with parents and caregivers, volunteers and older students who assist and act as role models to younger ones. The "Breakfast Buddies" are volunteer grade 5 and 6 students who prepare and serve food for classmates within the breakfast program, while building food preparation skills and self-esteem.

The program costs \$2.65 per meal by relying on paid and volunteer staff and using food purchases and donations. City funds will stabilize the program, remove the need to fundraise for this essential program, and ensure that up to 120 students and their families are fed each day. Funds would be used for food and staff costs, volunteer coordination, and equipment and equipment repairs. Given the high markers of vulnerability in this neighbourhood, this breakfast program provides a critical service to the community.

Additionally, stabilized breakfast program funding of \$80,000 would allow the Strathcona CCA to redirect some of the existing donations towards other areas of programming in need of funding, specifically: the backpack food program; childcare spaces for families with low incomes who do not qualify for the provincial subsidy; and subsidies for vulnerable children to attend Summer day camp and Holiday safe place day camp. These reallocations will support the City's *Good Start* goal of the Healthy City Strategy.

The intention is to continue to provide annual financial support to Strathcona CCA's Community Breakfast program. In future years, it may be possible to provide the \$80,000 to Strathcona CCA through the Vancouver Board of Education. If that is not possible, staff will return to council with a grant recommendation in 2016 and annually.

The City funds that provide meals to 258 students daily beginning in December 2015 is a program model that is new to the school district as of this year. As with any new initiative, this model will benefit from an evaluation that will assess outcomes such as participation, satisfaction, stigma, cost effectiveness, procurement, and environmental sustainability and align with the City's Food Strategy, Healthy City Strategy, and the Greenest City Action Plan (GCAP). The VBE's meal program objectives currently focus on meeting the needs of students considered vulnerable. The evaluation will identify opportunities to work towards the following additional actions:

- Explore opportunities to increase the percentage of local and sustainable food purchased by City and school facilities (Food Strategy)
- Facilitate the transition from a charitable food model to one based on principles of a just and sustainable food system (Food Strategy)
- Improve coordination among funders, stakeholders and levels of government to ensure reliable and on-going financial support of neighbourhood-based food initiatives (Food Strategy)
- Facilitate 1,300 daily school breakfasts and food literacy development (Healthy City Strategy)
- Reduce total solid waste going to the landfill or incinerator by 50% from 2008 levels (Greenest City Action Plan)
- Other actions may also be achieved related to community food markets, small-scale food aggregation, urban farms, and/or education and awareness (Food Strategy)

The VBE has committed to participating in the program evaluation with City staff to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for students in Vancouver.

Given that the City is now supporting the provision of meals for vulnerable students in an ongoing manner, there is an opportunity to build on existing partnerships to pilot test a meal model that meets broad health, sustainability and food access goals. This model would be grounded in goals related not only to reducing hunger and being cost effective, but also improving food skills, supporting sustainable food producers, and addressing food justice. A new meal model would be piloted in one or two elementary schools for the 2016-17 school year. The specific details of the meal service, student engagement, and food procurement will be developed between January and June 2016 through a process of engagement with schools, VBE and City staff, students, key stakeholders involved in the food systems, and other potential funders.

Financial Implications

The source of funds for Recommendation A (\$80K) is the 2015 Social Grants Operating Budget. The source of funds for Recommendations B (\$50K) and C (\$75K) is the 2015 Community Services Operating Budget.

	2015	2016
Rec A: Breakfast Program of the Strathcona Community Centre Association	\$80,000	\$80,000***
Rec B: Program evaluation of meal models *	\$50,000	
Rec C: Meal Program Pilot *	\$75,000	
Vancouver Board of Education meal program	\$50,000**	\$320,000
TOTAL COST EACH YEAR	\$255,000	\$400,000

* Any unused 2015 funding for these two programs will be carried forward to the 2016 operating budget, given the late 2015 approval and commencement of this work.

** Given the December start date, only \$50,000 of the \$400,000 was provided to VBE in 2015, leaving unused funds for this calendar year.

*** Ongoing annual support is recommended to stabilize Strathcona Community Centre Association's breakfast program. In future years, it may be possible to provide the \$80,000 to Strathcona CCA through the Vancouver Board of Education. If that is not possible, staff will return to council with a grant recommendation in 2016 and annually.

Human Resources/Labour Relations Implications

Social policy staff will work with Vancouver Board of Education staff to hire contractors to conduct the program evaluation and to develop and implement the school meal pilot. City staff will participate in the planning processes, will play a convening role to strengthen partnerships, and will help leverage existing food assets and funding.

Environmental Implications

The program evaluation will examine environmental implications of the meal program that the City's funding supports and will make recommendations for improving environmental practices.

Social Grants enable the provision of priority services for vulnerable populations. These three grant and funding recommendations aim to address the impacts of poverty on childhood health through not only the provision of healthy food, but also through ensuring meals are provided in an inclusive, respectful, socially just, and environmentally sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

These funding allocations have emerged from Council's motion to Expand Access to Healthy Foods for Children. City funds are already ensuring 258 students will receive a daily lunch during the school year. The recommendations to feed up to 120 people daily through Strathcona Community Centre Association's breakfast program, to do a meal program evaluation, and to do a meal program pilot will complement the funds provided to the Vancouver Board of Education and will ensure best alignment with the City's goals related to health, food systems, and environmental sustainability.

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Recommendations and Outcomes

Grant / Initiative	Outcomes
<p>Breakfast program of the Strathcona Community Centre Association</p>	<p>Stable community breakfast program leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily breakfast on all 180 school days for up to 120 students and other family members such as younger siblings, parents, care-givers - Improved food skills, confidence, and self-esteem through Breakfast Buddies training and volunteer program (grade 6 and 7 students) - Increased access to healthy food for community members, and role modeling of healthy breakfasts and meal time - Increased community connectedness and relationships between community members and community centre staff - Increased awareness of other community centre programming - Reallocation of resources to other critical programs, such as the backpack food program, licensed childcare, and Summer and Holiday safe daycamps.
<p>Program Evaluation of meal programs</p>	<p>Improved understanding of the new meal model at the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE), in particular: participation, meal program satisfaction, costs, and any unintended stigma.</p> <p>Increased collaboration between VBE staff and City staff.</p> <p>Specific recommendations for best meeting the food and food education needs of students and schools.</p> <p>Specific recommendations for better aligning the meal program with the City's Food Strategy , Healthy City Strategy, and the Greenest City Action Plan, including recommendations related to food skills / literacy / education, meal service, and procurement.</p>
<p>Meal Program Pilot</p>	<p>Development and evaluation of a replicable model.</p> <p>Healthy, local sustainable foods available for all students in one to two schools, serving 200-400 students.</p> <p>Improved student food literacy.</p> <p>Improved partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders and funders.</p> <p>Using a systems approach to address school food-related challenges.</p>