



REPORT

Report Date: May 3, 2022
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Meeting Date: May 17, 2022
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Finance, Risk and Supply Chain Management

SUBJECT: Funding Application to the UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Program to Support Safe Access to Washrooms

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse an application to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities' Services Program for \$2.5 Million to provide safe access to washrooms in locations serving specific homeless/at risk populations.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks Council's approval of a funding application to the UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Program (the "Program") for \$2.5 million to provide safe access to washrooms in locations serving specific homeless/at risk populations.

The Program is part of the federally and provincially funded Safe Restart Program and is meant to address costs related to supporting unsheltered homeless populations and addressing the related community impacts. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been magnified for and disproportionately impacted vulnerable people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Within the Safe Restart funding, \$100 million was allocated for the Strengthening Communities' Services Program. The initial intake of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program saw approximately \$80 million delivered to local governments, with \$19.4 million being awarded to the City of Vancouver for COVID-19 related support. The remaining funds are now available through the 2022 intake.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On May 18, 2021, Council endorsed an application to the UBCM Strengthening Communities' Services Program for \$20 Million to help offset costs incurred by the City to support vulnerable populations in its pandemic response.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Background/Context

Within the Safe Restart funding, \$100 million was allocated for the Strengthening Communities' Services Program. The initial intake of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program saw approximately \$80 million delivered to local governments. The remaining funds are now available through the 2022 intake.

The intent of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program is to support unsheltered homeless populations and address related community impacts through an application-based program. The goal is to support local governments and Treaty First Nations that wish to take action, understanding that this will complement parallel provincial efforts. This program is meant to bridge the period between the COVID-19 outbreak and the post-COVID recovery period. The funding is being administered by UBCM on behalf of the Province and the Government of Canada.

In July 2021 the City's application to the initial intake of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program for \$19.4 million to help offset costs incurred by the City to support vulnerable populations in its pandemic response was approved.

The City is applying for the maximum allowable amount of \$2.5 million in the 2022 intake to provide safe access to washrooms through the Washroom Trailers program and through extended hours at washrooms at Gathering Place, Trillium Park, Crab Park and Andy Livingstone Park.

Strategic Analysis

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, many day respite spaces such as community centres, libraries and outreach centres were either closed or operating at limited occupancy, as were many private businesses that previously allowed the public to use their facilities, and this impacted access to hygiene and washrooms.

In response to this, the City of Vancouver has coordinated the operation of a washroom trailer program in high-need and high-risk areas in the City. The washrooms are fully staffed programs and monitored by peers with lived experience of intersecting identities and marginalization and are managed under contract by Non-Profit partners.

Multiplier benefits of the washroom trailers include low barrier employment, overdose and gendered violence prevention, supplies (menstrual, safe sex, harm reduction, safety related information); and, connection to housing and health outreach and referral programs.

The City also extended hours at Gathering Place, Crab Park, Trillium Park and Andy Livingstone Park.

These initiatives have received positive feedback and results and staff are looking for opportunities to provide them on an ongoing basis.

Financial Implications

The washroom trailer program and the extended washroom hours were initially funded through Reaching Home (a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support and funding to Designated Communities, Indigenous communities, territorial communities and rural and remote communities across Canada). That funding ended March 31, 2022. One million dollars has been allocated from the 2022 Operating Budget to fund both initiatives until August 31, 2022. If the funding application is successful, the \$1 million will be reallocated to other priorities.

The City is applying to the Strengthening Communities' Services fund for 12 months funding from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023. In the meantime, the staff is exploring ongoing solutions and related funding.

The breakdown of the funding request is shown in the table below.

	Monthly Cost	# Months	Total Request
Washroom Trailers	\$186,087	12	\$2,233,040
Extended Hours at Park Washrooms	\$15,446	12	\$186,547
Sub Total	\$201,632		\$2,419,587
Maintenance, Decommissioning and Contingency	N/A	N/A	\$80,412
Total			\$2,500,000

CONCLUSION

In response to the decreased access to washrooms and hygiene as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has coordinated the operation of a washroom trailer program and extended operating hours for washrooms at Gathering Place and selected parks. This report seeks Council support for an application for funding to continue these initiatives until March 31, 2023.

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