

Attachment 2
Policy and Advocacy Team Update

B. Policy and Advocacy Team – Q4 2024 Update

Team Purpose: focuses on longer-term and sustainable strategies to address the three crises, including permanent supportive housing; and ensures that facilities, services and supports are equitably distributed throughout the city and not focused on any one neighbourhood. It also works to ensure that facilities, services and supports are purpose-designed and self-contained, and that measures are in place to minimize externalities. This team collaborates with senior government for the required funding, resources and services, and communicates with and engages the community, including related to advocacy. This team also fosters strategic partnerships, and has developed staff liaisons to work closely with resident, business, faith-based, non-profit, and provincial interests.

Engagement with Senior Government, External and Internal Bodies Update

Staff have conducted a number of information and engagement events with internal and external bodies, including the senior levels of government. The purpose of these events is to raise awareness, build relations, facilitate collaboration and garner support for the Pilot Project. These events include:

- Fraser Health Mental Health and Substance Use Leadership Team (Sept. 2023)
- Medical Health Officer (Sept. 2023)
- Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions staff (Sept. 2023)
- Assertive Community Treatment Team (Nov. 2023)
- Economic Development Advisory Committee (Nov. 2023)
- Fraser Health Vulnerable Populations and Toxic Drug Response Team (Nov. 2023)
- RCH Medical Directors and Emergency Department Managers (Nov. 2023)
- Fraser Northwest Division of Family Practice (Dec. 2023)
- Joint Meeting: Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Housing (Jan. 2024)
- New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society Board (Feb. 2024)
- Fraser Health Authority Overdose Outreach Team (Mar. 2024)
- Downtown Residents' Association (Apr. 2024)
- New Westminster Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association (Apr. 2024)
- Residents' Association Forum (Apr. 2024)
- Housing Leadership Planning Group: BC Housing, Fraser Health Authority and Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (Apr. 2024)
- BC Housing and the Ministry of Housing at UBCM (Sept. 2024)
- Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association Board (Sept. 2024)
- Metro Vancouver TAC Social Issues Sub-Committee (Sept. 2024)
- New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society Board (Oct. 2024)

Advocacy and Collaboration Update

Staff are working with the senior levels of government, including BC Housing, the Fraser Health Authority, the First Nations Health Authority and the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions on a number of advocacy and collaboration actions. These include the following:

- an extreme weather response program shelter with up to 10 mats for women (funding confirmed);
- a 24/7 winter shelter with up to 25 beds for men and women (funding confirmed subject to approval of Temporary Use Permit, with staff bringing a Report to Council on October 21, 2024);
- a temporary 24/7 shelter with support services at 502 Columbia Street (with BC Housing preparing a Response Plan to address associated externalities and staff bringing a Report to Council for a new a Temporary Use Permit on October 21, 2024);
- a permanent 24/7 shelter with 30 beds and support services (site identification and a massing study are underway);
- an additional 60 supportive housing units (beyond the 52 units approved for 602 Agnes Street), inclusive of up to 10 complex care units (site identification and a massing study are underway);
- a health connect and resource centre, which would respond to the needs of the daytime unhoused population, which numbers about 120 people, and which would assist in addressing externalities (case study research is underway);
- an overdose inhalation site which would address the increasing numbers of inhalation-related overdoses and deaths, and reduce public illicit drug use (case study research completed and meetings held with the Fraser Health Authority and the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions);
- equitably distributing facilities, services and supports addressing the three crises, when feasible and practical;
- realizing senior government funding for the Pilot Project and its continuation should the evaluation determine it is effective, and the above cited initiatives.

Working Groups Update

Staff are currently actively recruiting members for both working groups; have retained the services of a facilitator for the Engagement and Collaboration Working Group; and will be holding the first meetings of both working groups in late September 2024. The following terms of reference have been developed for the working groups:

- i) **Implementation Working Group** – comprised of representatives from Indigenous, faith-based, non-profit and provincial bodies mandated to address the three crises, and people with lived and living experience. Its responsibilities will include: (1) ensuring the pilot project is culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed and responsive to a diverse range of needs; (2) facilitating connections, collaboration and referrals between the CRT

and Indigenous, faith-based, non-profit and provincial bodies; and (3) informing project refinements based on feedback from those interacting with the CRT and accessing related services and supports.

- ii) **Engagement and Collaboration Working Group** – comprised of representatives from the City and business and resident associations. Its responsibilities will include: (1) supporting advocacy/collaboration activities with senior government; (2) communicating the concerns of businesses and residents related to the three crises and informing how the pilot project and advocacy/collaboration activities can best respond; and (3) identifying a role for and gaining the support of businesses and residents in related advocacy/collaboration activities.

Independent Evaluation Update

Staff are entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a post-secondary academic institution to complete an independent evaluation for the Pilot Project. The institution will evaluate and make recommendations to the program's logic model, and independently evaluate the impact of the CRPP on people living with homelessness, mental health and substance use one year and two years after the initiation of the project. The institution will identify barriers and service delivery challenges, enhance program quality, inform decision-making, and guide continuous improvement of the project. Work will commence in the Fall, 2024. Baseline data in support of this work has been collected and is in the process of being collated.

Communications Update

- Since June 2024, staff have been working to connect with a variety of individuals and groups who have been impacted by the crises in question. Based on a variety of feedback, staff are engaging with two main audience categories in the context of this project.
 - **External communications.** This category refers to communication and outreach to businesses, residents and priority populations (vulnerable persons) within New Westminster. This category includes supporting engagement and advocacy efforts made by the CRPP team, as needed.
 - **Internal communications.** Aimed at staff, the goal is to provide ongoing updates regarding our learnings related to the Crises Response Pilot Project, and how all departments can support this work through sharing of information and the use of key messaging.
- Staff have also been working to implement feedback the City's indigenous consultants provided regarding resource guides and key messaging; updated on a regular basis. As part of this work, staff is aware of the need to provide relevant, culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed tools and education to support those with living experience, and those who are indirectly impacted by the three crises, such as local businesses and residents.
- Efforts to engage the various audiences include, but are not limited to:
 - Creating accessible, quick-and-easy-to-read information sheets for our

priority populations to refer to should they require specific resources, (e.g., food and shelter.) There are currently two versions of these sheets available: one general, and one specific to the summer months. Staff are in the process of developing a winter-focused one. The sheets are distributed by CRT outreach.

- The creation and launch of a “Did You Know?” social media campaign to help demystify the three crises in question, and to also make the community aware of the project.
- A revamped CRPP webpage highlighting the City’s focuses, goals, and hopes out of this project.
- Providing email updates to the community as appropriate. Anyone may sign up for these updates through the CRPP webpage.
- The creation of flyers to share information regarding the pilot, as well as information about CRT Outreach (e.g., when and how to contact them), as well as additional contact information helpful for the community to have on hand.
- Door-knocking by staff – in Downtown New West businesses to share specific project information and available resources to let them know the outreach team is prepared to take their calls.
- Door-knocking campaigns are also slated to take place in Sapperton, along 12th St., and in Uptown.
- Continued outreach to business-focused groups, including the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Improvement Association to determine how we can work together to best share information about the Pilot Project.