

REPORT

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council in Regular Council **Date:** March 10, 2025

From: Lisa Spitale
Chief Administrative Officer **File:**

Item #: 2025-86

Subject: **New Westminster Awarded \$1.466 Million from Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund for the Crises Response Pilot Project**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this Federal Government funding announcement for information.

PURPOSE

To inform the community that the City of New Westminster has been awarded \$1,466,230 from Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund for the two-year Crises Response Pilot Project.

BACKGROUND

As part of the 2024 Budget, Council approved a two-year pilot project to help address the three concurrent and inter-related crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use. The Crises Response Pilot Project is comprised of three inter-Departmental staff teams: the Operations Support Team, the Crises Response Team, and the Policy and Advocacy Team.

The Operations Support Team is an interdepartmental team made up of several city departments – Community Services, Engineering, Fire, HR, Library, Parks and Recreation and Police. This team focuses on cleanliness, fire prevention, bylaw compliance, staff training and staff safety. This group includes the Community Liaison Officers who support impacted businesses and residents.

The Crises Response Team is made up of non-clinical outreach workers who provide supports to those experiencing homelessness, mental health, and substance use. Members of the CRT Outreach provide referrals to provincial teams, as well as to faith-based and not-for-profit partners in the community.

The Policy and Advocacy Team is an interdepartmental staff team made up of several city departments – Community Services, Finance, Intergovernmental Relations, Office of the CAO, and Planning and Development. This team is lobbying senior levels of government for funding to provide sustainable, long-term solutions such as supportive housing and shelter beds with wrap-around support services.

On January 13, 2025, City Council endorsed two plans to deal with the three crises: the Five-Year Prevention, Support and Transition Services Plan and the Ten-Year Supportive Housing and Wrap-Around Services Plan.

ANALYSIS

The intent of the Emergency Treatment Fund is to provide urgent, targeted funding to municipalities and Indigenous communities to support rapid responses to the overdose crisis.

At the November 4, 2024 Council meeting, City Council approved the following motions:

1. THAT Council authorize the submission of a funding application under Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund 2024 for the Crises Response Pilot Project. The funding submission is for \$885,000 per year for two years.
2. THAT Council endorse the advocacy plan for immediate implementation.
3. THAT Council approve the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Finance/CFO to enter into an agreement with the Government of Canada should the application be successful.

City Staff has been informed that New Westminster's submission has been approved by Health Canada. The City has been awarded \$1,466,230 from the Emergency Treatment Fund for components of the Crises Response Pilot Project plus contracting to a non-profit organization to provide enhanced outreach services during evenings, statutory holidays and weekends. Health Canada and the City of New Westminster have signed the Contribution Agreement.

The City of New Westminster's submission has the following five components.

1. Crises Response Pilot Project Outreach Component (\$500,000 per year)

- To fund the Crises Response Pilot Project (CRPP) outreach component. This component connects with and builds relations and trust with people who are unhoused, as well as those who are living with substance use and mental health issues.

- To build relations and trust through daily positive and respectful interactions, as well as through the provision of items like food and clothing. To address barriers to access—e.g., assisting with obtaining identification, making phone calls and providing taxi vouchers.
- To make referrals to the Health Contact Centre, the Assertive Community Treatment Team, the Integrated Homelessness Action Response Team, the Peer Assisted Care Team, and the Substance Use Services Access Team.
- To carry and administer Naloxone. To assist those directly impacted by the three crises by stabilizing their living situation through access shelter and supportive housing, as well as addressing their immediate needs.
- To participate of the New Westminster Overdose Community Action Team.
- To identify needs and gaps related to substance use services and supports and communicate them to the Policy and Advocacy Team, which collaborates with senior government to realize additional funding, resources and services.

2. Expansion of the Outreach Component - to be provided by a non-profit service provider (\$200,000 per year)

- To fund a non-profit organization to provide expanded outreach services from 5:30 to 10:30 pm on weekdays, and 3:30 to 10:30 pm on statutory holidays and weekends.
- To carry and administer Naloxone, conduct drug checking if capacity exists, distribute harm reduction supplies, and make referrals, including to counselling, education, detox, drug treatment and supportive recovery.
- To make referrals to the Health Contact Centre which provides drug checking, harm reduction supplies and witnessed consumption, the Assertive Community Treatment Team, the Integrated Homelessness Action Response Team, the Peer Assisted Care Team, and the Substance Use Services Access Team.
- To coordinate activities with the Crises Response Team outreach component, including related to policies, practices and training.

3. Protective Public Measures (\$120,000 per year)

- To fund contracted biohazardous waste and collection services to reduce public health risks associated with discarded needles, sharps and other drug paraphernalia.

4. Equipment, Supplies and Training (\$40,000 per year)

- To purchase equipment such as needle-resistant clothing and puncture-resistant shoes to ensure the safety of the Crises Response Team.
- To purchase and distribute clothing, food, hand warmers and taxi vouchers to address immediate needs and to facilitate relationship building and trust, which is essential to making referrals.
- To facilitate participation in educational and training opportunities to ensure that interactions are culturally-safe and trauma-informed.

5. Collaborative Activities (\$25,000 per year)

- To hold up to four meetings per year with faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams to discuss opportunities, needs and gaps related to the three crises.
- To initiate discussions on a situation table or similar approach to facilitate enhanced case management and information sharing, including confidential information. To engage participating organizations and teams in joint advocacy actions related to addressing needs and gaps and anti-stigma activities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Health Canada's \$1.466 Million funding over two years will offset a portion of the City's Crises Response Pilot Project budget. Health Canada has approved \$0.58 Million for the period August 2024 to March 2025, and \$0.89 Million for the period April 2025 to March 2026.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Crises Response Pilot Project is a high priority corporate-wide initiative. One of the principles of the Pilot Project is to seek senior government funding to offset the City's funding investment when addressing the three concurrent crises of homelessness, mental health and substance abuse.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer

This report was reviewed by:
Shehzad Somji, CFO/Director of Finance

This report was approved by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer