

Attachment 3

Policy and Advocacy Team Update

Policy and Advocacy Team— Q2 2025 Update

Team Purpose: this team focuses on longer term, sustainable strategies to address the three crises, including preventative, support and transition strategies, and permanent supportive housing and complex care units. The team also works to ensure that facilities, services and supports are equitably distributed throughout the city. Additionally, the team works to ensure that facilities, services and supports are purpose-designed and self-contained, and that measures are in place to minimize externalities on both businesses and residents. This team collaborates with senior government for required funding, resources and services, and communicates with and engages with the community, including related to advocacy. This team fosters strategic partnerships, and has developed staff liaisons to work closely with business, faith-based and non-profit, provincial, and resident interests. As part of its work, the team developed two strategic planning documents, including the Five-Year Prevention, Support and Transition Services Plan and the Ten-Year Supportive Housing with Wraparound Services Plan, a 2025 Crises Response Pilot Project Roadmap, the latter which guides the work staff are doing in 2025. The plans and the roadmap were endorsed by council in February 2025.

Engagement with Senior Government, External and Internal Bodies Update

The team have identified a number of key partners to support the advocacy objectives identified in the 2025 Crises Response Pilot Project Roadmap, endorsed by Council in February 2025. To this end, the team has designated specific liaisons that are dedicated to building relationships and information-sharing with specific bodies, including BC Housing, Health Authorities and Provincial Ministries.

- BC Housing: City and BC Housing staff have regular standing meetings to help ensure that all initiatives are moving forward collaboratively and effectively.
- Ministry of Housing: City staff are working on having the City designated as a Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and a Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) priority community under the Ministry of Housing's recognition framework.
- Fraser Health: City staff have coordinated several meetings with key departmental leaders within Fraser Health, including from Mental Health and Substance Use, Primary Health, Public Health, and Toxic Drug Response and Priority Populations.
- First Nations Health Authority: City staff have met with several departmental leads at the First Nations Health Authority to share

information about the pilot project, identify areas of alignment, and determine opportunities for collaboration on common objectives.

Advocacy and Collaboration Update

The team has significantly advanced work on five out of the eight priority actions from the 2025 Roadmap:

- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #1: Advocate to BC Housing on the need for additional seasonal and temporary emergency shelter capacity, including 24/7, citywide: The team secured 25 24/7 winter shelter beds, which were operational between November 2024 and April 2025, at the Cliff Block, and 10 extreme weather response mats, which were activated during periods of extreme weather between November 2024 and April 2025, at Elizabeth Fry Society in Sapperton. Staff held debriefs with the operators of both shelters and have begun contacting faith-based and non-profit organizations as to their interest in accommodating seasonal and temporary shelter capacity from October 2025 to April 2026. To respond to extreme heat and adverse air quality events, which disproportionately impact people who are unhoused, staff are developing a comprehensive extreme weather response plan for the unhoused, which will address and activate resources during extreme cold and heat events, and during period of adverse air quality. Finally, staff exercised a temporary use permit to enable the continued operation of the 50 bed shelter at 502 Columbia Street, and increased operating hours from 12 to 21 on a daily basis. These extended hours of operation allow shelter guests to more effectively meet their needs by reducing the requirement to leave the shelter for 12 hours per day. It also reduces externalities for neighbouring businesses and residents, including related to discarded belongings, human waste, open burning, and sheltering.
- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #2: Facilitate strategic partnerships with faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams to address needs and gaps: The team engages on a regular basis with local organizations regarding activities and objectives related to the pilot project, both formally through the Implementation Working Group, and on an informal and as-needed basis related to specific objectives. Additionally, the team hosted a Facilitated Collaboration Forum in June 2025. Staff from faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams, including from the First Nations Health Authority, Fraser Health and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, attended. This event is a continuation of the November 2023 Mental Health Roundtable and presents an opportunity to enhance collaboration, coordination and information sharing, including through the exploration of an Adult Situation Table.

- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #3: Advocate to BC Housing, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and other applicable Provincial bodies for the need to fund a Health Connect and Resource Centre (HCRC): The team has completed a preliminary research scan, interviews and site visits to various health and social service hubs to gain a deeper understanding of the different operational and funding models that could be transferable to New Westminster. Preliminary conversations with BC Housing and Fraser Health have revealed strong interest from both parties in collaborating on an integrated health and social service hub. Additional engagement with faith-based and non-profit organizations, provincial organizations and people with lived and living experience is being planned for late summer/early fall 2025 to receive input and feedback on design considerations and priority programs and services that should be incorporated in the proposed hub model.
- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #4: Advocate to the Ministry of Health and the Fraser Health for the incorporation of indoor inhalation services at the Overdose Prevention Site in the Downtown:
- At the June 23, 2025 Regular Council meeting, City Council approved an extension to the temporary use permit to allow the Overdose Prevention Site to continue to operate in the Downtown. Fraser Health has informed the City that there are no existing funding sources to facilitate indoor inhalation overdose prevention services at the Health Contact Centre. Fraser Health is working on an alternate overdose prevention service delivery model, both in the short- and longer-term, that addresses the needs of people who inject or inhale unregulated substances. As a condition of the Temporary Use Permit, Fraser Health and Purpose Society are signatories of a Good Neighbour Agreement which has measures to reduce congregating, disorderly conduct and public drug use outside the Centre, while also addressing discarded belongings, drug paraphernalia and sheltering.
- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #5: Support expedited construction of 602 Agnes Street (formerly 68 Sixth Street): The 52-unit permanent, supportive housing building at 602 Agnes is currently under construction, with tenanting anticipated by spring 2026. The team continued to meet with BC Housing staff to advance this project, including related to prioritizing the city's locally unhoused population regarding placements.

The team has continued its advocating to BC Housing, Fraser Health and the Ministry of Health to advance the remaining 2025 Roadmap Priority Actions, including:

- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #6: Advocating to BC Housing to prioritize funding to construct trauma-informed and culturally-safe Indigenous housing.
- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #7: Advocating to BC Housing to prioritize funding for a permanent 24/7 shelter with support services – on a site outside the Downtown and accessible by public transit.
- 2025 Roadmap Priority Action #8: Advocating to BC Housing, Fraser Health and the Ministry of Health to prioritize the funding for 20 complex care units within the construction of new purpose-designed supportive housing developments.

Additional Actions in the Five-Year Prevention, Support and Transition Services Plan

- Create an inventory of prevention services to identify assets, needs and gaps to inform referral and advocacy activities: The team has created an engagement tool to solicit information from faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams about existing prevention services and about needed prevention services. This information will inform an inventory and listing of prevention services, which will be used by outreach teams, including the Crises Response Team. It will also be used to inform programs and services at the Health Connect and Resource Centre. This work will be completed in fall/winter 2025.
- Collaborate with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society related to Homelessness Action Week in October 2025, including on an advocacy and anti-stigma campaign. The team is collaborating with Coalition in planning an expanded program of activities and events for Homelessness Action Week in October 2025. The program will try to reach the broader community; will be more hands-on and interactive, including activities such as a human library; will address misinformation and stigma; and will provide opportunities for attendees to make a difference, including through advocacy. Key themes will be belonging and connecting, with particular attention to people who are at-risk or vulnerable such as those experiencing the three crises of homelessness, mental health and substance use.

- Complete work on the Citywide Toilet Strategy, with one of the four main user groups being the unhoused: The team continues to advance work on the Citywide Toilet Strategy. Throughout spring 2025, the team conducted extensive community engagement, inclusive of focus groups, interviews, a survey and workshops, including with people who are unhoused. Several faith-based and non-profit organizations that support people who are unhoused are also part of the external project working group, which guides the strategy development process. In the final phases of the project, the team will explore solutions to needs and gaps in accessing dignified and safe toilets for people who are unhoused. This includes exploring partnerships with faith-based and non-profit organizations; enhanced safety measures to reduce overdose risk and respond to a crisis within a toilet; and anti-stigma initiatives. The team will work to ensure alignment between recommendations made in the final Citywide Toilet Strategy and the broader objectives of the Crises Response Pilot Project.

Emergency Treatment Fund

In late 2024, the team submitted an application on behalf of the City to Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund. In early 2025, the City's application was confirmed successful. New Westminster was the only municipality in British Columbia to receive funding through the Fund. The \$1.47M contribution from the federal government covers approximately 70% of the City's initial \$2.2M investment in the Crises Response Pilot Project.

The grant cover the following components:

- the Crises Response Outreach Team, including funding for equipment, supplies and training;
- the retention of a faith-based or non-profit organization to provide expanded outreach services, including during evenings, statutory holidays and weekends;
- the continued engagement of faith-based, non-profit and provincial organizations and teams for the purpose of enhancing collaboration, coordination and relationship building, including through the establishment of a Collaboration Table and the possible development of a Situation Table;
- the retention of a contractor to collect and safely dispose of bio-hazardous waste, including drug paraphernalia.

Working Groups Update

Implementation Working Group:

The Implementation Working Group is comprised of representatives from faith-based and non-profit organizations, as well as with people with lived and living experience of the three crises. The working group has continued to meet on a regular basis to share insights from a frontline perspective; identify current needs and gaps in programs and services for people experiencing the three crises; and inform how programs and services are implemented through the Crises Response Pilot Project. Notably, the working group has provided feedback on the priority actions that the pilot project should address. This feedback informed the development of the Five-Year Prevention, Support and Transition Services Plan, as well as the 2025 Roadmap. Recently, the working group discussed the Health Connect and Resource Centre, which is a priority action from the 2025 Roadmap, and shared insights on successful integrated health and social service hubs. Working group members will be involved in future engagement activities related to this objective, as well as other priority actions.

Collaboration and Engagement Working Group

The Collaboration and Engagement Working Group is comprised of representatives from various local businesses and resident groups, including, the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, the New Westminster Tenants Union, residents' associations, Business Improvement Areas and the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce. The working group has continued to meet on a regular basis to share insights from a business and resident perspective on various aspects of the pilot project, with a focus on how to better engage, inform and support businesses and residents experiencing the impacts of the three crises. The working group has also provided feedback on the Five-Year Prevention, Support and Transition Services Plan and the Ten-Year Supportive Housing with Wraparound Services Plan, as well as the 2025 Roadmap Priority Actions, and on pilot project related communications and media. Notably, the working group has informed, and participated in, engagement activities related to the pilot project, including information sessions for resident groups at the Queensborough Community Centre and Century House, developing additional education and awareness media/materials for the Crises Response Pilot Project, and principles around Good Neighbour Agreements. Recently, the working group discussed creating an advocacy toolkit to support joint advocacy to the senior levels government on the 2025 Roadmap Priority Actions.

Independent Evaluation Update

A component of the Crises Response Pilot Project includes retaining an independent evaluator. The purpose of the independent evaluation is to:

- to assess the design of the pilot project to effectively meet its intended outcomes;
- to measure the progress in meeting outcomes over time;
- to identify unmet needs, gaps and constraints limiting the ability of the pilot project to address the three inter-related crises;
- to assess to what extent the pilot project is reaching and positively impacting its intended populations;
- to examine the pilot project as a means for effective policy development and advocacy, and its transferability to other municipalities.

Douglas College is responsible for the independent evaluation of the pilot project, and will report on the findings. In April 2025, Dr. Anne Tseng presented the methodology to Council.

To support the independent evaluation, staff have formed a small working group to ensure that all data is collected, complete and submitted to Dr. Tseng in a streamlined and consistent manner. Evaluations are expected to be produced for August 2025, and at the end of the project at August 2026. Relevant information from the evaluations will be shared as they are made available to promptly inform refinements to the pilot project as needed.

Communications Update

Staff continue to work to connect with a variety of individuals and groups who have been impacted by the three crises in question. Since the last update, the following communications highlights have been completed or are in progress:

- The continuation of regular pilot project social media posts – i.e., approximately one every two to four weeks. Examples of these posts include high-level information posts, as well as ones which are specific to the Crises Response Outreach Team, the Community Liaison Officer Program, and the One Number to Call: Community Support Line.
- The full overhaul of the pilot project webpage, along with the expansion of the Frequently Asked Questions section as required.
- The inclusion of pilot project updates, where appropriate, in the Citypage and Invest New West e-newsletters.
- The continued responsiveness to business and resident e-mails, including directing inquirers to information and resources related to the Crises Response Pilot Project.
- The continued information sharing with local partners, including the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Association and the

New West Chamber of Commerce, with republishing in their e-newsletters as appropriate.

- The launch of a high-level pilot project video to walk various audiences through the project and its teams.
- The launch of a compact physical resource card for people to keep. This card includes phone numbers and e-mail addresses relevant to the pilot project such as the One Number to Call: Community Support Line. It also includes information on Crisis Response, Community- Led (formerly the Peer Assisted Care Team), SeeClickFix and who to call in the event of open burning, as well as the police non-emergency phone number. Physical cards are available for pick-up at City Hall, and have been shared with community centres. The card can also be downloaded from the City's website.
- Two extensive door-knocking campaigns have taken place:
 - The fall 2024 door-knocking campaign resulted in visits to more than 60 businesses in the Downtown.
 - The spring 2025 door-knocking campaign resulted in visits to more than 90 businesses in the Downtown, Uptown and Sapperton neighbourhoods of New Westminster.