

Attachment #1

Covid-19 Task Forces Update

January 26 to March 1, 2022

COVID-19 Task Forces: Update – January 26 to March 1, 2022

Vulnerable and At Risk Populations

24/7 Emergency Shelter

The City is negotiating with BC Housing regarding a 24/7 emergency shelter on the lower floor of the former Army and Navy Department Store. BC Housing appears receptive, and the City would like to see this shelter in place for 12- to 18-months, or until new supportive housing is ready for occupancy at 60-68 Sixth Street.

Strengthening Communities Service Program

The City will submit an application under the Strengthening Communities Services Program, which is intended to address the needs of the unsheltered, and the impacts related to homelessness. Previously, the City accessed \$464,000 under this program, which was distributed to eight faith-based and non-profit organizations, and funded a variety of projects. Under the latest intake, the City is eligible for up to \$625,000, although it is a competitive bid process, and will engage local faith-based and non-profit organizations with regard to possible projects.

Homelessness Action Strategy

The City is preparing a Homelessness Action Strategy, which will provide a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness in New Westminster. City staff, with the assistance of Community Action Network leaders (i.e., people with lived and living experience of homelessness and poverty) and UBC students, are wrapping-up the engagement component. Of note, this has included key informant interviews and surveys of people with lived and living experience of homelessness, a community conversation related to homelessness which engaged about 50 community members, and a community survey which has received over 120 responses to date. City staff plan to bring the strategy for Council consideration and approval in May 2022.

Seniors and Persons Living with Disabilities

At the onset of COVID, the Task Force created the Friendly Caller Program for seniors forced to live in isolation the opportunity to socialize. Since that time, many of the programs and services that were initially cancelled in our community have resumed, which has once again opened the door for seniors to experience socialization in their daily lives. Demand for this program continues to decrease with less than 4 calls per week. With funding for the Seniors Services Society agreement now exhausted, the Century House Association Peer Support program (formerly Peer Counselling) will continue to support the remaining participants moving forward.

The number of people called during this time period are as follows:

Number Registered: 20

Volunteers: 9

Avg. Age: 78

Total calls: 15

Average length of call: 14 minutes

Food Securement

The Food Program continues at the Legion Manner allowing to better reach the vulnerable seniors population with 50 meals being distributed every Tuesday and Thursday. This includes those community members that were being served when the program took place at Century House.

Childcare

School District #40 was one of 25 schools in province that have been selected to offer the Seamless Day Kindergarten program. This pilot program employs certified early childhood educators to provide before - and after-school care in kindergarten classrooms and to support learning alongside the classroom teacher. The program located at Qayqayt Elementary School fosters a “love of learning” through emotional, physical, intellectual, creative and social activities.

As the Province advances its Childcare BC Plan, the Ministries of Children and Family Development and Education want to hear from a broad range of child care partners – from child care providers, community service partners, Indigenous governing bodies, parent organizations, school districts and child care advocates. With the collaborative efforts of the committee, one response will be submitted on behalf of the stakeholders, the Early Learning and Child Care survey will be completed by the March 17th deadline.

Updated information on Child Care Funding can be found on the City's Website. Provincial Key Funding Sources include Affordable Child Care Benefits; Child care Operation Funding; Child care Reduction Initiative; Early Childhood Education Wage Enhancement and Child Care Maintenance Fund. City of New Westminster funding source includes the Community Livability and Social Equity – Grants for Living.