

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** March 28, 2022

From: Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development **File:** 05.1035.10

Item #: 2022-188

Subject: Sex Worker Safety Proposed Work Plan

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse the sex worker safety proposed work plan.

PURPOSE

This report requests Council endorsement of a proposed work plan and provides information on an upcoming workshop with Council and senior staff related to sex worker safety.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 21, 2021, Council supported a motion that directed staff to coordinate a workshop for Council and senior staff on sex worker safety and to report back to Council with related safety policies. While many aspects of and issues related to sex work fall under senior government jurisdiction, local governments have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of their community members. The proposed work plan would develop a framework for sex worker safety in New Westminster.

BACKGROUND

At the Council Meeting of June 21, 2021, Council adopted the following motion:

MOVED and SECONDED

WHEREAS the City of New Westminster's vision is "A vibrant, compassionate, sustainable city that includes everyone; and

WHEREAS sex workers are pushed to the margins of society where they are put in harm's way for their occupation which has led to sex workers being murdered in the city; and

WHEREAS the City does not have any current policies that address sex worker safety;

WHEREAS there are other municipalities have developed sex work policies (indoor, outdoor, business) that New Westminster could learn from and model after;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of New Westminster holds a workshop for City Council and senior staff to learn about sex work and safety. The workshop should be provided by a peer-driven organization that works directly with sex workers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff are directed to report back to Council with sex worker safety policies, including staff training, from other municipalities including policies relating to bylaws and policing.

EXISTING POLICY/PRACTICE

Existing policy is summarized within Attachment 1.

ANALYSIS

Sex workers are valuable members of our community and are entitled to the same rights and protections as anyone else. Sex work includes escorting, street-based sex work, cyber-sex, exotic dancing, pornography and more. It takes place on the street, through escort and call-out services, in massage parlours, private apartments, strip clubs, hotels, online and more. Because sex work is stigmatized, sex workers are de-valued and dehumanized, they are targeted for violence, and face barriers to supports. Racialized and marginalized individuals who sell/trade sex (such as BIPOC, transgender or non-binary individuals, those in extreme poverty, or those struggling with physical and mental health issues or addictions) experience greater vulnerability. Indigenous women and girls are overrepresented in sex work.

While many aspects of, and issues related to, sex work fall under senior government jurisdiction, local governments have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of their community members. The proposed work plan would develop a framework for sex worker safety in New Westminster.

NEXT STEPS

The work plan to develop a framework for sex worker safety in the city would include the following steps:

Step 1: Sex Worker Safety Workshop (spring 2022)

Staff would contract a peer-driven organization to deliver training to Council and senior staff on sex worker safety.

Step 2: Case Study Research (spring 2022)

Staff would undertake a comparative analysis of Metro Vancouver and Canadian municipalities that have sex worker safety policies and/or guidelines. The learnings from this review would inform a proposed framework to address sex worker safety in New Westminster.

Step 3: Development of a Framework to Address Sex Worker Safety with Input from Individuals with Lived/Living Experience (spring/summer 2022)

Staff would liaise with individuals with lived/living experience and/or peer-driven organizations to review the learnings from the case study research and to include their input in the development of the framework.

Step 4: Internal Stakeholder Consultation (summer 2022)

Staff would consult internally with City departments, including Human Resources, Police, Fire, and Licensing and Integrated Services on the draft framework, including a focus on implementation and potential resourcing and work program implications for various departments.

Step 5: Council Consideration (summer/fall 2022)

The draft framework, including policies, bylaws, and/or guidelines, would be presented to Council for review and consideration of endorsement.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff have shared this report with the Human Resources and Police Departments for information.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City's Human Resources Department will cover the cost of the workshop for Council and senior staff as part of its 2022 training budget.

An amount of \$5,000 has been identified in the Climate Action, Planning and Development operating budget for 2022 for engaging individuals with lived/living experience and/or peer-driven organizations to include their input in the development of the framework.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented to Council for consideration:

1. That Council endorse the sex worker safety proposed work plan.
2. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Existing Policy/Practice

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner

This report was reviewed by:
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This report was approved by:
Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer