



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of July 26, 2018

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** July 13, 2018
From: Thomas Soulliere, Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Overnight Sheltering and Supports Program

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve \$100,000 in additional funding for the Overnight Sheltering and Supports program, to be funded from 2018 Financial Plan Contingencies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the cost projections for the Overnight Sheltering and Supports program. As a part of the 2018 Financial Plan, Council approved \$200,000 for the support and clean-up associated with overnight sheltering activity in City parks, and directed staff to report back at the end of the summer on the costs expended to-date.

This City program has been introduced in recent years to respond to the impacts associated with outdoor sheltering in parks. Since 2016, staff have observed an increased level of sheltering activity and related impacts in City parks. The costs associated with this service are based on staffing and external resourcing requirements identified in 2016. Over the past two years, the demand for this service has remained, and in 2018 staff expect that the costs will exceed the available funds, by September 2018.

In order to maintain the current level of service, staff recommend an increase of \$100,000 funded from Contingencies.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, in *Victoria (City) v. Adams* (the Adams decision) the Court of Appeal confirmed that homeless persons have a constitutional right to erect temporary shelters in parks if there are no available shelter beds. In response to this decision, the City amended the Parks Regulation Bylaw to provide an exception to the general prohibition on the erection of shelters or other structures in parks. Under section 16A of the Bylaw, homeless persons may erect, use or maintain a structure or other overhead shelter in a park between 7 pm (8 pm when daylight savings time is in effect) and 7 am the next day.

For the past three years, Council has approved an annual supplemental allocation to deliver this service. The cost to deliver this service was \$341,000 in 2016, and \$300,000 in 2017. In January 2018, Council approved \$200,000 of the requested \$300,000 for the service and directed staff to report back at the end of summer 2018 on the expenditure to-date and projection for the remainder of the year.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

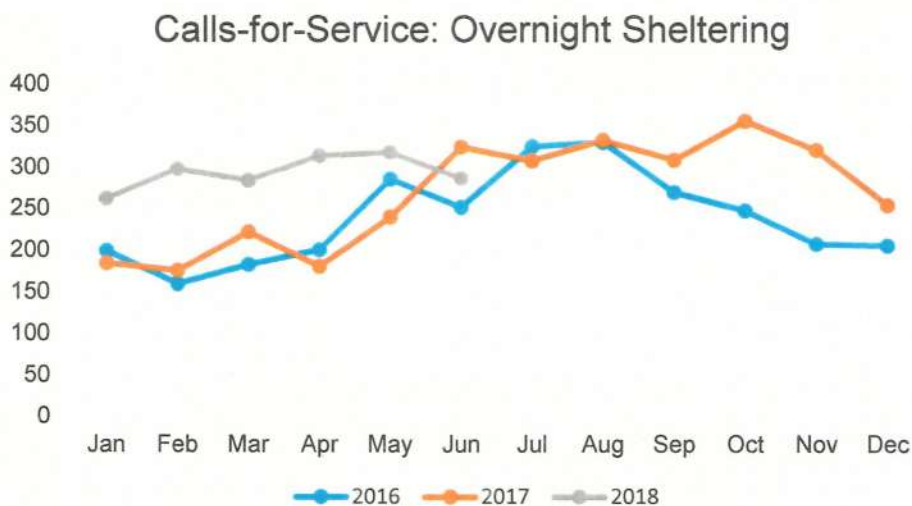
Program Operations

The Overnight Sheltering and Supports program provides sheltering clean-up services in parks seven days per week. The funding supports staff wages, training needs, supplies and specialized equipment to safely remove abandoned material. In addition, the funding supports extended washroom hours at Topaz Park (two portables) and Stadacona Park (one portable), as well as security patrols at Beacon Hill Park main washroom building between the hours of 9:30 pm and 2:30 am.

Staff attend to higher-use parks on a set route each day, proactively removing garbage and any hazardous items. Staff also respond to calls-for-service initiated by the public, Bylaw Officers and the police to attend and clean-up abandoned shelter sites. The time required at a shelter site can range in duration from a few minutes to several hours, depending on the extent of clean-up services required, equipment availability and the cooperation of the individuals at the site. The clean-up of abandoned material occasionally requires specialized equipment and supplies for safe removal.

2018 Overnight Sheltering Activity

City staff and police have observed an increased level of sheltering activity in City parks over the past year. On average this year, the City is receiving 294 calls-for-service per month, representing an increase over the same period in 2016 and 2017.



*Data is current as of June 2018

Without additional funding, the service associated with the clean-up of abandoned sites would drop significantly, and impacts may include:

- risks to the health and safety of those sheltering, other park users and City staff;
- damage to vegetation and ecosystems;
- impacts on the use and enjoyment of parks by other users; and
- impacts on neighbouring residents.

Budget Status

The current level of service for clean-up and sheltering supports costs approximately \$25,000/month; \$20,000 for staff wages (two full-time positions, seven days per week) and \$5,000 for resources including security, portable washrooms and supplies. The fleet vehicle associated with this work is provided in the Park Operations budget.

As of June 30th, the total cost incurred was \$146,757. At this spend rate, the total funds allocated are projected to be exhausted by the first week of September.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Staff recommend that Council authorize an additional \$100,000 in funding to maintain the overnight sheltering clean-up service at the current service level, for the remainder of 2018. The demand for this service is not decreasing. Given the potential health and safety risks associated with this issue, staff do not recommend reducing the level of service.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

The Overnight Sheltering and Supports Programs aligns with Objective 8: *Enhance and steward public spaces, green spaces and food systems*, in the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan

Impact to Financial Plan

If approved, the requested \$100,000 is recommended to be funded from 2018 Financial Plan Contingencies, which has a current balance of \$950,000.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The Overnight Sheltering and Supports Program aligns with objective 15.22 in the Official Community Plan: *Collaborate with community organizations, neighbours and other stakeholders to address issues related to personal safety and security in parks and outdoor recreation facilities.*

CONCLUSION

City parks offer opportunities for recreation, socializing, relaxation, play, and connecting with nature. Despite proactive efforts, the demand for this service remains high.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Stark
Manager
Park Operations



Thomas Soulliere
Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

