



Council Member Motion
Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 27th, 2019

Date: Thursday June 20th, 2019

From: Councillor Alto, Councillor Potts, Councillor Loveday

Subject: Peer Informed Task Force and Mental Health and Addictions Strategy

Background

Cities across North America are on the forefront of the overdose epidemic. Our province has been in a state of public health emergency for over three years and our community has lost too many lives. The already devastating effects are made much worse by the concurrent global housing and affordability crisis. The city of Victoria has been deeply impacted by these overlapping realities. These challenges are often further compounded by a lack of understanding that can lead to stigmatization, marginalization, insufficient or misdirected resources, and ultimately strain our community fabric.

A Peer-Informed Mental Health and Addictions Task Force culminating in a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy was brought forward for consideration in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strike a peer informed task force to identify priority actions to inform a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy actionable at the municipal level i.e. prevention, advocacy, integration of services, and education.

Six related actions, identified through the strategic planning session, were to be incorporated into this work and are as follows:

1. Mental Health and Addictions Advocacy

- a. Advocate for better prevention and more support for those aging out of foster care – there were 156 unhoused youth in the 2018 Point in Time Count*
- b. Advocate for more funds for mental health and more publicly funded recovery options and destigmatization of mental health and addictions*
- c. Advocate for and facilitate planning and delivery of additional harm reduction services in the city and region, including a safe inhalation site*
- d. Advocate for the BC government to provide currently illicit drugs /safer substances to reduce harm from addictions*
- e. Advocate for / work with agencies and other governments and professional bodies to facilitate increased harm reduction training (more clarity, training for who?)*

f. Advocate to the Province and/or the CRD and Capital Regional Hospital District to measure homelessness, acute addiction, mental health and to identify service gaps and better coordinate between existing service providers and create better funding opportunities

These actions were ranked as some of the highest priorities by participants of the Strategic Plan Engagement Summit. To facilitate this task force, Council appointed Councillors Potts and Alto, who have, in consultation with community leaders and colleagues, been developing a Terms of Reference (see attachment A) for the proposed Peer-Informed Task Force and following Strategy.

Community Wellness

Since this item was adopted into the Strategic Plan community conversations have revealed the need for immediate action on the overdose epidemic and a reframing of the task force to best address the challenges our community is facing. Community Wellness was found to be a better heading for such an endeavour as we seek a collaborative, community response to largely systemic issues. Reframing this way begins the work of destigmatizing the individual who is impacted by conditions and challenges often out of their own control.

Scoping Review

To begin the work of the Community Wellness Task Force we propose to engage a scoping review which “aims to map rapidly key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available”, providing a “reconnaissance” of literature in a particular area of interest. Scoping reviews have been found to be relevant to policy makers to provide accurate information on what is known or what has been done in an area of interest.

A scoping review consists of a series of steps beginning with 1) identifying the research questions, 2) defining the parameters of the search, 3) selecting relevant documents, 4) charting the data and 5) interpreting the data for relevance to policy and practice. The advantage of this type of review is that a broad range of evidence can be considered, depending on the scope, resources and time available, it can be broad or narrow. The scoping review can be nested within a collaboration. Ideally, the scoping review would be conducted with the Community Wellness Task Force acting as an overarching advisory body involved in defining the question and important considerations for the search and interpretation of the findings. This is important to ensure that questions are framed appropriately and that the findings are interpreted accurately from the perspective of those with lived experience.

Peers

Research and experience have clearly identified that solutions that work best are ones that involve those who are directly affected. This is the foundation that this task force and the following strategy rests. We are committed to a peer-informed, inclusive process that will provide multiple opportunities for conversation, contribution, analysis, interaction, and relationship building. The work and experiences of peers will culminate in recommendations within a Community Wellness Strategy for Victoria Council to consider.

Engagement sessions for peers should include accommodations to honour their work and enable participation where multiple barriers to doing so often exist. These may include:

- living wage honoraria for peer participants;
- honoraria for Indigenous Elders;
- bus tickets for those who require assistance with transportation;
- food for evening sessions;
- professional counsellors on site for emotional support

Some of these costs may be available from the amount Council has already allocated for engagement activities related to strategic plan objectives. However, Council approval is required to pay honoraria for community members who participate in an engagement sessions.

Recommendations

1. That Council re-name the Task Force and following Strategy as a 'Community Wellness Peer-Informed Task Force and Strategy'; to reflect its evidenced-based emphasis on community wellness related to mental wellness and addictions.
2. That Council appoint Councillor Loveday as a third Councillor member of the Task Force.
3. That Council approve the draft Terms of Reference, attached (Attachment A).
4. That Council approve up to \$25,000 from Contingencies, and as allowed under the City's Purchasing Policy, direct the City Manager to partner with the University of Victoria to undertake a 'scoping rapid review' of comparable jurisdictions' efforts to take meaningful action on a municipal mental wellness and addictions strategy, and that such a review delivers a 'map of the field of program' on which the City can base a local strategy informed by those affected by mental wellness and addictions, their peers and allies.
5. That Council approve up to \$7,500 from Contingencies to accommodate honouraria for community participants in the Task Force.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Potts



Councillor Alto



Councillor Loveday

Peer-Informed Task Force on Community Wellness: Draft Terms of Reference

Prepared for: COTW July 27, 2019

1.0 Background

To best position our municipality to receive the supports it needs to alleviate the pressures being borne by the most vulnerable in our community, and to create conditions where we can thrive together as a community a Peer Informed Mental Health and Addictions Task Force culminating in a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy was brought forward for consideration in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. Since then community conversations have revealed the need for immediate action on the overdose epidemic (being addressed by separate motions) and a reframing of the task force to best address the challenges our community is facing. Community Wellness was found to be a better heading for such an endeavour as we seek a collaborative, community response to largely systemic issues.

2.0 Purpose and Mandate

The Peer-informed Task Force will help the City of Victoria identify high priority actions, feasible at the municipal level (i.e. Prevention, Education, Integration of Services, and Advocacy) that will address community wellness challenges such as, but not limited to, mental health and/or addiction challenges. The Peer-Informed Task Force will be informed by those with lived experiences who will review the current delivery of services as provided through the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. healthcare, social service providers, and housing providers) to identify and inform what actions need to be taken to deliver an effective, responsible, and community building response at the municipal level.

3.0 Guiding Principles

The Task Force will be peer informed. Engagement and recommendations will culminate in Community Wellness Strategy for the City of Victoria with deliverables that are consistent with the goals of the City of Victoria as outlined in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and are deliverable at the municipal level.

4.0 Objectives and Outcomes

4.1 Convene a peer-informed task force.

4.2 Scoping review to map rapidly key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available,

4.3 Council liaisons, with staff support, will engage stakeholders at two sessions per group. One lunchtime and one evening, both at city hall.

4.4 Stakeholders will respond to questions relating to service delivery and existing conditions in each of the four areas actionable at the municipal level:

- Education
- Prevention
- Integration of Services
- Advocacy

4.5 Council leads and staff support will compile results into a format for the Peer Task Force to review.

- 4.6 In three to four sessions the Peer Task Force will review the results of the stakeholder engagement and develop recommendations relating to the four actionable areas.
- 4.7 Council leads and staff support will compile peer-informed recommendations into a draft Community Wellness Strategy.
- 4.8 Community members will have the opportunity to provide feedback via an online survey.
- 4.9 All participants will meet for a final session to review draft.
- 4.10 Council Liaisons and staff will compile the Community Wellness Strategy and present to council for consideration.

5.0 Composition

- 5.1 Membership of Peer Task Force will be selected through an expression of interest and consist of 12-14 members.
- 5.2 Membership can bring experience from a variety of sectors; however, the primary experience most relevant to the Peer-Informed Community Wellness Task Force includes:
Personal lived experience with mental illness, problematic substance use, and/or addictions;
Family experience with mental illness, problematic substance use, and/or addictions;
Experience with the mental health and addiction health care system; and/or Experience with homelessness.
- 5.3 Membership should also carefully consider the inclusion of individuals with diverse experiences including, but not limited to, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual identity, and/or gender balance.
- 5.4 Peer members will receive honouraria for their participation.
- 5.4 Three members of Council shall be appointed as Council liaisons.
- 5.5 Staff support will be allocated at the direction of the City Manager.