



Council Member Motion For Committee of the Whole Meeting of November 12 2020

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 10 2020
From: Mayor Helps and Councillors Alto and Potts
Subject: Grant Program for Emergency Social Services

Late Motion Rationale

This motion addresses an emerging issue about which more information was gained after the Monday motion deadline. It is recommended to be addressed at the November 12 Committee of the Whole meeting to minimize the impacts on people who are sheltering outdoors.

Background

Since the beginning of the pandemic the City has worked hard with those sheltering outside as well as with social service agencies to follow public health advice and to meet the needs of people sheltering. The City recognizes the continued needs of persons sheltering outdoors in a pandemic and the community efforts to support them.

The City typically provides support to unhoused persons through collaboration with social service agencies. In addition to working with partners towards housing those left unsheltered, amending bylaw enforcement to allow 24/7 sheltering during the State of Emergency, providing direct grants to social service organizations supporting those who are sheltering outdoors, Council has allocated funding to extend existing shower facilities to 13 hours a day 7 days a week at Our Place Society and is currently reviewing a grant to increase shower access at the Sanctuary Youth Centre. Council has also approved access to free transit fare to help people access these facilities.

At the November 12 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council will be considering a series of recommendations aimed at getting everyone who is currently living outside in city parks into housing or indoor sheltering opportunities that will lead to permanent housing, by March 31st 2021. The City will continue its work in partnership with BC Housing and Island Health to realize these goals. The City as part of the Community Wellness Alliance is working hard to help 200 people move inside by the end of 2020.

Council recognizes that between now and March 31st people living outside need access to services and that these services can't be adequately provided in an ad hoc way.

Organizations that provide direct service provision to unhoused people have been awarded \$464,952 in federal funding through the Reaching Home program administered by the CRD, between July 1st 2020 and March 31st 2021 “for people who are unsheltered, to coordinate and facilitate ongoing access to drinking water, food, hygiene and health supplies, sheltering supplies, clothing, bathrooms, showers, handwashing, laundry, health and harm reduction services, fire safety supplies and plans, or waste management.” (See attachment A).

Notwithstanding this federal funding, there is still a gap in services. The City does not have the capacity to offer these services. Though exhausting several avenues, the City has not been able to secure an operator to offer services, particularly mobile shower facilities, in all the ways that have been requested by unhoused people and their advocates.

Through the Coalition to End Homelessness the City is working directly with unhoused people to further identify needs and how to achieve them. The concept of community care tents and co-managed or peer led shower facilities have been discussed. In advance of this work being completed the community has responded with the provision of a community care tent and showers within Beacon Hill Park.

The City supports mutual aid efforts but the location of the existing community care tent and related amenities within Beacon Hill Park are in violation of a number of City bylaws and the Beacon Hill Trust and must be removed.

In order to facilitate the expedited delivery of emergency social and hygiene services in a coordinated rather than ad hoc and unpermitted way, we recommend the creation of a one-time grant program for Emergency Social Services be created, that the attached grant application form be used, and that grant applications are due by Monday November 23rd.

Grants will be adjudicated by Council on November 26th and the funds dispersed to successful applicants very soon after. Grant recipients must comply with applicable municipal policies, bylaws and requirements of the City of Victoria respecting the safe use of City property.

Recommendations

1. That Council allocate up to \$100,000 from the federal-provincial restart funding to initiate a one-time grant program to deliver mobile hygiene and other social services as described in the report above.

Respectfully submitted,


Mayor Helps
Councillor Potts
Councillor Alto