



Council Member Motion

For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of August 1, 2024.

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** July 26, 2024
From: Councillor Krista Loughton and Mayor Marianne Alto
Subject: Ongoing Support for the Mobile Youth Services Team (MYST)

FOREWORD

Council passed a motion to request this **exact** action on December 14, 2023. Since then, the funding for Ms. Golden's full-time position is set to end in October. As a result, her hours are being reduced to two days per week to extend her time until the end of the year, and her capacity to respond to the community's needs will be entirely unrealistic.

This is unacceptable when a call for this team to expand was expressed in December 2023. As noted below, Const. Magee and Ms. Golden stated that **four** MYST teams are required to fill the demand for this service in our region. The reality is that the current single team will be paired down to less than part-time over a funding deficit starting with the new school year, and immediate action on this file is required.

BACKGROUND

Every year, the Mobile Youth Services Team (MYST) falls short of funding for its Crime Reduction and Exploitation Diversion (CRED) component. Initially funded federally through the Youth Gang Initiative via the Department of Justice, last year, the province provided one-time funding. Still, the investment needs to be ongoing for this imperative service which supports vulnerable youth and their families.

Mia Golden is a family and youth counsellor and the CRED coordinator, which is run by the Pacific Centre Family Services Association. Ms. Golden coordinates MYST with Victoria Police Const. Gord Magee. Together they manage an ongoing load of more than two hundred case files involving young people in crisis through drug addiction, homelessness, sexual exploitation, and gang entanglements in Greater Victoria.

Many causes fuel the exploitation of children. The overdose crisis, sexual predators grooming youth online, and a spike in gang recruitment has led to a rise in the number of kids being impacted. Younger children are experimenting with drugs and coming into harm's way via social media, which makes it much easier for predators to lure and target youth.

Const. Magee and Ms. Golden have both stated that four MYST teams are required to fill the demand for this service in our region.

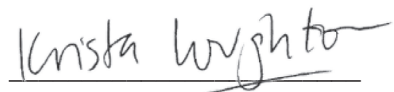
This matter falls under the "Safer Communities" component of mandate letters issued earlier this year by Premier David Eby, who notably requests that ministers "address concerns about public safety, both for people struggling with mental health and addiction on our streets, as well as the feeling that downtown centres are not as safe as they were before the pandemic."

The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee have urged for continued funding for the vital work of Ms. Golden and Const. Magee. The CRED component of MYST is what is at risk to support Greater Victoria's most vulnerable young people and their parents, and it is time for the City of Victoria to join the call for ongoing funding and expansion of this vital work.

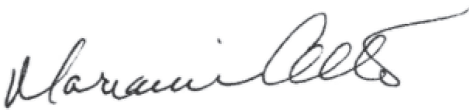
RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council request Mayor Alto write to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Premier David Eby, Grace Lore, Minister of Children and Family Development, Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Niki Sharma, Attorney General, and all federal MPs, provincial MLA's, and Police Chiefs in the Greater Victoria region to express support and ongoing funding, resources, and expansion for the Pacific Centre Family Services Association's Mobile Youth Services Team (MYST) and its Crime Reduction and Exploitation Diversion (CRED) program.
2. That this motion be forwarded to the daytime Council meeting on August 1, 2024, for Council consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Coun. Krista Loughton



Mayor Marianne Alto