

BRIEFING

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Item # 11.2

Community Services Briefing to
Community Development Committee
2022 January 19

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
CD2022-0121

Update on Supporting Calgarians Experiencing Homelessness Through Cold Weather Events

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

This briefing updates the activities taken since Council's direction on 20 December 2021 to allocate \$750,000 to the Calgary Homeless Foundation to implement the Coordinated Community Winter Response (CD2021-1671).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Implementation

Substantial progress has been made with the implementation of the coordinated response. An additional \$100,000 has been leveraged through an investment by the United Way of Calgary and Area, resulting in a total of \$850,000 being made available to support the response. The Calgary Homeless Foundation has engaged stakeholders in all three focus areas, allocated over 70% of the total funds and advanced coordination of services.

The \$601,000 invested to date has been allocated as follows:

1. **Creating more warm spaces – \$242,000**
 - a. The Mustard Seed's warming centre at 102 11 Ave SE has added four hours to its daily operating schedule and is now open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (previously 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).
 - b. Wood's Homes Inglewood Opportunity Hub has expanded services to offer a warming centre, seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. to serve youth experiencing homelessness.
 - c. The Calgary Homeless Foundation is in discussions with multiple agencies, faith groups and public service providers to create additional warming spaces.
2. **Providing basic winter safety essentials – \$93,000**
 - a. A central basic needs distribution centre opened for outreach groups to access supplies, including food, sleeping bags, blankets and warm clothing.
 - b. Immediate distribution of emergency supplies to peer-based outreach teams, including Bear Clan, BetheChangeYYC, Harvest Hills Cares and Street Cats. The Calgary Homeless Foundation has created a range of options to access funding that ensures all groups can receive essential winter supplies for the unhoused Calgarians they support.
3. **Supporting community efforts to reduce barriers to shelter access – \$266,000**
 - a. Increased capacity for the Downtown Outreach Addictions Partnership (DOAP) Team to provide support and transfer individuals from unsafe conditions to safety and support services. This consists of three additional mobile teams and one team dedicated to Calgary Transit platforms.
 - b. Engaged 26 outreach teams interested in contributing to a coordinated response.

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Safety for All Plan

After observing an increase in the number of people congregating at LRT stations overnight during the recent extreme cold, the City enacted the Safety for All Plan as part of the coordinated response that saw select Calgary Transit LRT stations close to the public from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. This response was undertaken to ensure that those congregating at stations were connected to support services and to ensure that issues of extreme violence, drug use and property damage were addressed.

Assisting Calgarians experiencing homelessness to get to shelter services was a key element of the plan and a comprehensive emergency shuttle service was quickly developed. The Calgary Homeless Foundation coordinated the involvement of multiple outreach groups to engage Calgarians experiencing homelessness at LRT stations and then accompany them on the shuttle buses, along with a Calgary Transit peace officer. Over four nights, 303 transports were made to connect people to services – 111 through the emergency shelter shuttle service and 192 by our partnership program with Transit Peace Officers and the Downtown Outreach Addictions Partnership (DOAP) Team.

Encampments

Developing a coordinated approach to encampments is a key objective of the response. The Calgary Homeless Foundation is working closely with numerous outreach groups and the Calgary Community Standards Partner Agency Liaison (PAL) Team to develop a process to better understand the number of Calgarians sleeping rough and the encampments' locations. Engaging with the individuals in encampments will help understand the reasons they are not using shelter services or accessing housing supports so that these barriers can be addressed.

Communication

The Calgary Homeless Foundation provides weekly community updates on progress at www.calgaryhomeless.com. This includes metrics like the number of individuals using warming spaces, the type and amount of basic essentials provided, and the ongoing development of coordinated efforts among outreach teams.

Administration will provide Council with communication updates as additional supports and services become available and/or circumstances change.

Next Steps

The Coordinated Community Winter Response has two central elements: responding to immediate issues; and preparing a coordinated plan for the next period of extreme cold. This will include temperature thresholds that activate specific services as required. This work is underway and will build upon the learnings of the past two weeks and the experiences of other municipalities.

Administration will report back on results of the Coordinated Community Winter Response to the Community Development Committee by the end of Q3 2022. This report will include recommendations for ongoing extreme weather plans based on our collective learnings from this year along with the experiences of other municipalities.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None