

Coordinated Community Winter Response Outcomes

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Community Development Committee recommends that Council direct Administration to include joint funding for extreme weather response for Calgarians experiencing homelessness in provincial advocacy plans.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Last winter the community responded to Calgarians experiencing homelessness with unprecedented coordination. Outreach groups worked together to schedule their efforts and distribute essential items. Agencies collaborated to provide warm spaces and coordinate transportation and hours of operation.
- The Calgary Homeless Foundation is approved for multi-year funding through the Community Safety Investment Framework to coordinate year-round responses to extreme weather. Administration and the Calgary Homeless Foundation are actively pursuing collaborative funding with the Province and other funders.
- The development of year-round extreme weather responses will help advance the outcomes of *A Community of Connections: Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy*.
- *What does this mean for Calgarians?* Greater coordination between community organizations and orders of government and improved service access to help keep Calgarians experiencing homelessness healthier and safer during extreme weather events.
- *Why does this matter?* The 2022 investment created momentum to improve coordination among community organizations and partners, not just in winter but during other extreme weather events, improving access to services, increasing safety and resilience for individuals and the community.
- The Calgary Homeless Foundation's *Coordinated Community Winter Response Impact Report* (Attachment 2), outlines outcomes along with next steps.
- In 2021 December, Council directed "Administration to allocate up to \$750,000 to the Calgary Homeless Foundation to coordinate a community cold weather response for 2021/22 that enhances existing services and invests in removing barriers from the current system to support Calgarians experiencing homelessness and report back on outcomes of the investment to the Community Development Committee by the end of Q3 2022."
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

In December 2021, Council directed a one-time \$750,000 investment to coordinate removal of system barriers to support Calgarians experiencing homelessness during cold weather events, which was supplemented with a \$100,000 contribution from United Way of Calgary and Area and \$100,000 from the Calgary Homeless Foundation. The Government of Alberta contributed to the collective response through additional

Coordinated Community Winter Response Outcomes

emergency shelter beds, on-site health, employment and housing services and daytime resource centre space hours (warming spaces) at existing emergency shelters.

Administration convened community organizations and partners to discuss the most pressing needs for the upcoming winter. These discussions resulted in three project goals: provide basic winter essentials, increase available warm spaces and reduce barriers to emergency shelters. As work continued, an additional goal was added to improve capacity and coordination among outreach groups, shelters, and City services. The funds were coordinated and distributed by the Calgary Homeless Foundation. Attachment 2 outlines the outcomes of this work and next steps to build on learnings from winter 2022.

As a result of Council's 2022 investment, relationships generated through convening and coordinating community organizations and partners enabled new initiatives outside of cold weather response. Partners came together to coordinate services for Calgarians experiencing homelessness (e.g., medical care, referrals to social services, connections to outreach services) while responding to emerging needs. Three examples of addressing emerging need from 2022 include:

- Multiple City services, the Calgary Police Service and community partners worked together to address criminal activity and safety issues occurring in an encampment on Dermot Baldwin Way. People staying in the encampment were supported to access shelters, housing, and medical services. They were also assisted to collect or safely store their belongings before hazardous material, abandoned structures and items were removed.
- In alignment with Calgary Transit's *Safety for All* initiative, the Calgary Homeless Foundation coordinated enhanced outreach events at LRT stations with more planned.
- The City and partners coordinated a response to notify and support people living in encampments at risk of flooding during the June 2022 heavy rain event.

The 2022 Coordinated Community Winter Response demonstrated what can be achieved through coordination and collaboration between community organizations, partners and orders of government. Of specific note is the importance of early preparation, trigger points for specific extreme weather responses, and trust among agencies, groups and individuals.

The Calgary Homeless Foundation is approved for multi-year funding through the Community Safety Investment Framework. This funding will embed the extreme weather response in the Staying Safe pillar of *A Community of Connections: Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy*. Anchoring year-round planning with the broad strategy directly strengthens existing crisis supports and helps to transform Calgary's approach to persons in crisis.

Additional municipal strategic initiatives will inform planning for extreme weather response in the future. Most immediately, The City's recently established Housing and

Coordinated Community Winter Response Outcomes

Affordability Task Force will address gaps in the housing continuum and inform a refreshed Corporate Affordable Housing Strategy to be brought to Council in Q3 2023.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

Ongoing dialogue with the Leadership Group and implementation teams of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy will continue to inform this work. In addition, discussions were undertaken by the Calgary Homeless Foundation through their coordinating role within the homeless serving sector; this included ongoing engagement with Calgarians experiencing homelessness who accessed the services and supports provided through the Coordinated Community Winter Response.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Work to improve extreme weather response for Calgarians experiencing homelessness prevents harmful health and safety risks. This work facilitates equitable social outcomes for Calgarians experiencing homelessness in alignment with the Social Wellbeing Policy and advances outcomes of *Calgary's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy*

Environmental

Climate change will disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, especially Calgarians experiencing homelessness. Calgary Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Risk Report 2022 states unhoused Calgarians are vulnerable to increasing risk of serious health issues during blizzard, winter storm, and extreme cold events: all three are rated as likely to occur. Ongoing involvement in cold or other forms of extreme weather events helps The City, its partners, and Calgarians experiencing homelessness to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Economic

Removing barriers for Calgarians experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events can reduce costs to government services such as health care, emergency services and transit. This in turn allows for more effective use of public dollars. In addition, due to stigma and bias around homelessness, there can be economic consequences when Calgarians experiencing homelessness are outside of local business as their presence can deter some customers. Removing barriers for Calgarians experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events can have a positive impact on local economy.

Coordinated Community Winter Response Outcomes

Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact

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RISK

Without a coordinated response Calgarians experiencing homelessness will continue to experience harm as a result of extreme weather. In addition to negative impacts for individuals, municipal and community services are frequently impacted by the increased needs of Calgarians experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events. Without a coordinated effort, this can increase service costs or result in improper or ineffective use of City services or facilities (for example, using C-Train stations to shelter from the cold that do not have proper heating, safety and security, or bathroom facilities). Continuing to work together, including advocacy to the Government of Alberta, helps mitigate the risk of an uncoordinated and ineffective response.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Calgary Homeless Foundation: Coordinated Community Winter Response Impact Report
3. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
n/a	n/a	n/a