

## 2022 DAY-SERVICE OPERATOR AGREEMENT

### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Social Development branch 2022 operating expenditure budget be increased by \$1,800,000, on a one-time basis, with funding from the COVID-19 specific funds set aside in the appropriated Financial Stabilization Reserve for costs related to funding day services at the Bissell Centre Community Space.
2. That a subsidy agreement between the City of Edmonton and Bissell Centre to provide day services at Bissell Centre Community Space, for an amount not exceeding \$1,800,000 as outlined in Attachment 1 of the April 4, 2022, Community Services report CS01182, be approved, and that the agreement be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

### Report Purpose

#### Council decision required

Council is being asked to approve funding and a subsidy agreement to continue the day services currently being provided at the Bissell Centre's Community Space to best serve those who are unhoused or currently experiencing homelessness.

### Executive Summary

- Sufficient day services for people who are experiencing homelessness has been identified as a gap in the homeless serving system of care and has been significantly exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Edmonton saw an increase in those experiencing homelessness, with the population more than doubling since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020.
- The City of Edmonton has been providing funding to day service providers, with those agreements expiring April 30, 2022.
- Administration is seeking approval of funding and a subsidy agreement, between the City of Edmonton and Bissell Centre, for the continued provision of day services at Bissell Centre Community Space, for an amount not exceeding \$1,800,000.

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## REPORT

Over the last 24 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of people falling into homelessness and widened gaps in services required to support them. The number of people experiencing homelessness in Edmonton has more than doubled since December 2019.

The City's role in the pre pandemic homelessness response was limited to a few key areas:

- Providing minor operating funding to Homeward Trust to support its efforts in implementing the Plan to End Homelessness;
- Responding to encampments, which included identifying encampments, funding outreach workers to provide supports and connections to housing for residents, closing encampments, and encampment clean-up; and
- Activating the City's extreme weather policy, which primarily focused on providing overflow shelter space and transportation to shelters during periods of extreme weather where emergency shelter services are at or above 90 percent capacity.

### Day Services

Prior to the pandemic, day drop-ins/service providers operated without direct government funding and organizations relied on fundraising and grants to sustain their operations. They also operated with higher capacities but for fewer hours and with less support services available.

As a result of changing conditions brought on by the pandemic, day service providers increased their operating hours and enhanced their service delivery models to meet the demand for services. These service enhancements were facilitated primarily by funding from the City of Edmonton and COVID-19 support funding from other levels of government, beginning first with Expo Centre day services and continuing through a number of additional day service and shelter funding agreements over the past two years. Over the past year, the City of Edmonton has provided funding to a number of day service providers, including Hope Mission, The Boyle Street Service Society, The Mustard Seed Society and the Bissell Centre with the most recent contracts set to expire on April 30, 2022.

Day services continue to be heavily utilized and Administration expects demand for these services will continue, and potentially grow, beyond the agreement expiration date. If these services are not partially continued this could result in a number of general negative impacts on the City of Edmonton and the broader community.

### Agreement Overview

Bissell Centre and the City of Edmonton's current subsidy agreement for day services at 10530 96 Street, is set to expire on April 30, 2022. Additional funding is necessary for the continued operation of the level of current services past April 30. If additional funding is not allocated, the service levels will be reduced as outlined below.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is transitioning to the endemic stage, the stresses caused by the pandemic continue to persist, especially for Edmontonians experiencing homelessness. The number of facilities providing day services for people experiencing homelessness has

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stayed the same despite a doubling of the overall number of people requiring these services. In order to ensure a larger number of people can be served within existing facilities, funding is required to continue day service supports.

The Bissell Centre is well positioned to continue to provide these services. They operate a purpose built drop-in that was designed to optimize service delivery for people experiencing homelessness. The Bissell Centre has approached the City of Edmonton to request additional funding to enable them to operate six days per week, eight hours per day from May until October. Without this funding, Bissell Centre has advised that their drop in would only be able to operate five days per week, four hours per day.

Administration now seeks City Council's approval of budget and agreement approval motions to enable the City to enter into a subsidy agreement with the Bissell Centre for day services delivered during the approximate time period of May to October 2022, in accordance with terms and conditions outlined in Attachment 1.

### **Next Steps**

If City Council provides its approval, Administration will execute a day services subsidy agreement with the Bissell Centre. This investment is a temporary measure necessary to safeguard the health and wellbeing of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness by ensuring access to meals, health services, basic hygiene and housing services through the summer months. This is a stop-gap to help reduce the negative individual and community impacts associated with elevated levels of unsheltered homelessness this summer.

Administration continues to work with the Government of Alberta and all other partners to identify additional strategies for sustainably addressing the significant service gaps created by the COVID-19 pandemic for people experiencing homelessness. The Government of Alberta has also created a Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force, which is expected to make a number of recommendations related to overall crisis response to homelessness in our city. The final report from this Task Force is expected to be publicly released in June 2022.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

The maximum amount payable by the City to Bissell Centre is up to \$1,800,000. Council approval is required as the funding request is over the delegated authority of the City Manager.

The agreement will be funded from City Council-approved funding from COVID-19 specific funds set aside in the Appropriated Financial Stabilization Reserve.

### **Legal Implications**

Bylaw 16620 - City Administration Bylaw enables the City Manager to approve subsidy agreements that do not exceed \$1,000,000. Committee or City Council approval is required for subsidy agreements that exceed these delegated authority limits.

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## COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration worked with community stakeholders to identify possible service gaps for individuals experiencing homelessness in light of the rescinding of public health orders and the ending of temporary COVID-19 funding that provided additional day and overnight shelter services. Stakeholders include Homeward Trust and homeless serving organizations, including shelters, day shelter providers, and those who deliver outreach services. These groups informed the actions and decisions made by Administration.

## GBA+

More than 3,050 individuals in Edmonton are currently experiencing homelessness. Despite making up only 5 per cent of Edmonton's overall population, over 60 per cent of these individuals are Indigenous. Of the more than 3,050 individuals experiencing homelessness, approximately 45 per cent identify as female.

In addition to the ongoing barriers individuals experiencing homelessness face in accessing public services like transportation, regular and appropriate health care, food, and shelter, the identities of those individuals intersect with other equity-seeking groups. The experience of racialized and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and plus (2SLGBTQ+) community members experiencing homelessness is uniquely challenging in that they face additional discrimination and lack of appropriate support when trying to access existing shelter, housing, and social service systems. People with disabilities and significant health challenges are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness – being homeless also worsens health issues and itself is a cause of poor health and an elevated risk of death. Many services available to people experiencing homelessness are not designed to meet the needs of people with significant and complex physical and mental health challenges, including substance use disorders.

As a funder of the homeless-serving sector, the City endeavours to include contractual provisions in its agreements with agencies to best ensure the removal of barriers to access for vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Subsidy Agreement - General Terms and Conditions