

Green Shack Program

(A. Sohi/D. Loken)

Recommendation:

That the June 25, 2013, Community Services report CR_127, be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides information on the Green Shack program.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 3, 2013, Community Services Committee meeting Councillors A. Sohi and D. Loken made the following inquiry:

The Green Shack Program, through partnership with community leagues, provides invaluable recreation opportunities for youth in their neighborhoods during the summer months when school is not in session. Please provide a report to Community Services Committee with the following information:

1. What is the impact of the termination of the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) funding on the Green Shack Program?
2. How can Community Services continue to work with community leagues to sustain the Green Shack Program?
3. What other options such as partnering with service groups (e.g. the Rotary Club, Kiwanis) are available to continue these programs?

Report

1. Impact of the Termination of the STEP Program.

- In 2012, there were Green Shack programs in 180 communities across Edmonton. There were 275,000 daily visits by children ages six to 12. This drop-in program offers games, sports, crafts, music, drama and special events. One example of a program activity is the Flying Eagle program, which visits Green Shack locations and exposes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children to native culture through games, crafts and food. It is delivered by Aboriginal young people and supported by an Elder.
- The Green Shack program has been a partnership between community leagues and other community organizations (\$575,000), the City of Edmonton (\$800,000), the Province of Alberta (\$275,000), and the Federal Government (\$200,000).
- In March 2013, the Province of Alberta announced that, as part of its budget reduction exercise, STEP program funding was being eliminated. The resulting impact was a \$275,000 shortfall for the program.

2. How can Green Shack programs be maintained?

- Since the budget announcement, the Province has agreed to provide one-time funding for 2013 in the amount of \$150,000 to specifically support programs in

high needs communities. In addition, to help address the shortfall, community groups made additional financial contributions. In some cases, programs were reduced to run on a part time basis. The result for 2013 is the continued operation of the Green Shack program across Edmonton on either a full or part time basis.

- However, as the provincial one-time funding commitment is for 2013, the program will continue to face a \$275,000 shortfall in 2014 and beyond. Community groups have indicated that they do not expect to be able to fill this funding gap in the future. Without additional government funding, the Green Shack programs would need to be further modified.

3. What other funding options such as partnering with service groups (e.g. Rotary Clubs) are available to maintain these programs?

- Administration did pursue potential funding support from local service organizations. Feedback from these groups indicated that their funding is typically not provided for city-wide projects but for more area specific initiatives. They also viewed the Green Shack program as the responsibility of government.
- Administration continues to actively work to mitigate the impacts of the shortfall through continued consultation with community partners.

Corporate Outcomes

Improving Edmonton's Livability

Budget/Financial Implications

- Due to the elimination of the provincial STEP program the Green Shack Program will face a \$275,000 shortfall in 2014 and beyond.
- At the direction of Community Services Committee, Administration could submit a service package for \$275,000 for Council's consideration in the 2014 Operating Budget Process.

Others Reviewing this Report

- L.Rosen, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer