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**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

**CC:** "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"  
"Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>

**Date:** 6/1/2020 11:52:12 AM

**Subject:** Memo: Update on Private SRO Emergency Meal Program: Phase I and Looking Ahead to Phase II

**Attachments:** ACCS - GM - Memo (Mayor & Council) - Update on Private SRO Emergency Mea....pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached is a memo from the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services, Sandra Singh providing an update on Private SRO Emergency Meal Program: Phase I and Looking Ahead to Phase II. Highlights include:

- The majority of residents living in private SROs are on limited or fixed incomes and face multiple compounding health challenges, including mental health and substance use challenges, physical disabilities, and compromised immune systems, making them much more susceptible to illness. In the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic response households were recommended to stay home and stay put to protect themselves and others and to stem the transmission of COVID-19. In this context it was recognized by the City, VCH and BC Housing (The Partners) this would be a challenge for residents in congregate-style SRO Housing.
- Since mid-March, the City of Vancouver partnered with multiple food service providers, building managers, volunteers and donors to deliver 1-2.5 meals a day to over 2,000 private SRO tenants
- EOC Staff will be proposing imminently to Partners (VCH and BCH) SRO related food services approaches through the summer (Phase II) and into the fall, including in the event there is a resurgence (Phase III), that support both targeted approaches to self-isolation and broader food insecurity
- As partners transition into longer term support focused on meeting food insecurity, we need to ensure that efforts given residents more agency, variety and dignity of choice in meeting their food needs and funding supports community-based services to re-open and rebuild

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to email Sandra Singh at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca)

Best,  
Sadhu

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Pronouns: he, him, his



*The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.*

## MEMORANDUM

May 29, 2020

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Rena Kendall-Craden, Civic Engagement & Communications Director  
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk  
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Update on Private SRO Emergency Meal Program: Phase I and Looking Ahead to Phase II

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### PURPOSE

This memo is provided Council as an update on the EOC Community Resilience Program Emergency Meal Program for Private SRO Tenants.

### BACKGROUND

- SROs are residential hotels and rooming houses that contain small single rooms and often have shared bathroom and cooking facilities. The majority of Vancouver's SROs are located in the Downtown Core, and 94% are located in the Downtown Eastside.
- SROs currently house ~7,000 residents in the City. Approximately 45% of SROs are publicly-owned, and the remainder are privately-owned. SROs are often considered a last resort before homelessness for the City's most low-income residents.
- The majority of residents living in private SROs are on limited or fixed incomes and face multiple compounding health challenges, including mental health and substance use challenges, physical disabilities, and compromised immune systems, making them much more susceptible to illness.
- In the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic response households were recommended to stay home and stay put to protect themselves and others and to stem the transmission of COVID-19. In this context it was recognized by the City, VCH and BC Housing (The

Partners) this would be a challenge for residents in congregate-style SRO Housing. Low-income residents in SRO hotels with shared bathrooms and cooking facilities, and often struggle to safely and adequately store food supplies, would struggle to self-isolate without external supports.

- Additionally, Covid-19s disruption to existing income streams, free or low-cost meal services, local restaurants in the DTES added an additional layer of food insecurity and risk for this group of residents.

### ***Program Overview:***

- During phase 1 of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the rates of transmission and course of the response was yet unclear for VCH and partners, the provision of meal delivery services was critical in supporting social distancing, shelter-in-place, and providing access to healthy, nutrient dense meals for low income and at-risk SRO tenants.
- The EOC Community Resilience Team's goal was to rapidly deploy and sustain meal provision to private SRO tenants through to the end of May to support the projected Phase 1 sheltering period. This goal was achieved through a combination of public (BC Housing and City of Vancouver) and private funds (various donors) and the efforts of many community partners.
- Since mid-March, the City of Vancouver partnered with multiple food service providers, building managers, volunteers and donors to deliver 1-2.5 meals a day to over 2,000 private SRO tenants.
- The City of Vancouver worked very closely and rapidly with the managers of private SRO buildings and community groups (SRO-Collaborative, Hua Foundation) to quickly assess broad need and attempt to prioritize food distribution across the SRO stock.
- Given the nature of the emergency, partners agreed to focus on broad delivery to all residents in participant buildings where the owners and partners identified a need and desire for meal delivery.
- Funding increments from BC Housing were reviewed, approved and relayed every two weeks to the City of Vancouver. The program relied substantially on site manager cooperation to distribute meals to tenants, BC Housing funding, and private donor funding assistance.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Phase 1 Wind Down & Phase 2 Transition:**

- The relaxation of social isolation restrictions by the Provincial Health Officer had from the outset been targeted as the time to complete the initial Phase 1 response and pivot into more sustainable, efficient and responsive services.
- While tenants and building managers were very thankful for the program, as we entered later weeks of the services, it was not surprising to find evidence of overall fatigue with the program and the prepared, packaged meals.

- Building managers had taken on a significant role in delivering food within the building, and tenants expressed increasing fatigue with delivered meals (requests for ending or decreasing services). Additionally, reports of challenges with food wastage and concerns about unattended meals leading to pests or food spoilage increased.
- In line with the timing of the BC Restart Plan, staff started to plan the wind down of Phase I of the SRO meal program two weeks ago in mid-May, with the intention to cease meal provision for all buildings and tenants by early, depending on funding streams (see table below). The end of Phase I had been conveyed to partners and building managers starting in mid-May. At the same time as the wind down of this Phase I, staff were also considering what a Phase II approach for the summer would be and, if public health order restrictions were increased in the fall, what a Phase III would entail.

Vendors	Funder	# Residents Served	# Daily Meals Served	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date
VCC	BC Housing	486	972	March 28th	May 24th
Potluck & Partners	BC Housing	1,186	1,186	April 3rd	May 28th
Savoury Chef/ Streettohome/Giustra	Private Donors	210	420	April 6th	May 20th
Hua Foundation /Floata/Chinatown Today	Private Donors/ BC Housing	257 (currently 188)	188	April 22nd	June 4th
Chambar Food Coalition	Private Donors	914	914	April 28th	May 19 <sup>th</sup>

- BC Housing has identified its wish to fund its component of the program for an additional 4 weeks of meals while partners work to plan and implement Phase II. Staff will re-engage with the building owners and to determine when buildings will support the 4 week extension.
  - With this extension, staff may seek to diversify food types (e.g., some groceries and some prepared meals) and also food providers in order to provide opportunity for diverse food options and to support diverse food providers.
  - It will take a few days to start-up any discontinued food delivery, so staff anticipate the four weeks will start once the meal delivery commences.
  - The four week extension of Phase I should take the program to the end of June where we anticipate transitioning to Phase II.

### Phase II and Beyond

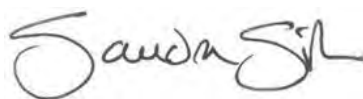
- EOC Staff will be proposing imminently to Partners (VCH and BCH) SRO related food services approaches through the summer (Phase II) and into the fall, including in the event there is a resurgence (Phase III), that support both targeted approaches to self-isolation and broader food insecurity.

- **COVID-19 Tactical Private SRO Meal Program:** a meal delivery service for any confirmed COVID-19 suspect or positive residents in private SROs in coordination with Public Health that can meet any future self-isolation requirements for these tenants.
  - **Community-Led Food Programs to Meet at Food Insecurity in SROs:** Staff are developing funding asks with community partners working in Private SROs and Society Buildings for support for more strategic food and meal delivery initiatives for high-risk sub-populations. We are prioritizing where there is a strong community-based partner who can ensure meal or food delivery is responsibly and effectively delivered and can leverage additional support for tenants beyond food (e.g. house cleaning, community/peer support, overdose response). Currently, the SRO-Collaborative and Chinatown community partners have been identified but there may be additional groups.
  - **General Food Insecurity in the DTES:** While the SRO meal program was well-supported in Phase I, the broader issue of food insecurity in the DTES remains significant and did not receive as much government support. In addition to engaging BC Housing on the Phase II approach for SRO food supports, staff will seek to engage in discussions around food security supports for people who are homeless or inadequately or precariously housed.
- As partners transition into longer term support focussed on meeting food insecurity, we need to ensure that efforts given residents more agency, variety and dignity of choice in meeting their food needs and funding supports community-based services to re-open and rebuild.

## FINAL REMARKS

The first 10 weeks of the COVID-19 (Phase I) required immediate intervention to support self-isolation for people living in congregate settings, which was the original focus of the Private SRO meal program. As we look to the summer and the relaxation of health restrictions and the restart of key parts of our economy, a reframed private SRO meal approach will enable more targeted supports. And, as across many areas of response, staff continue to consider how to take the lessons learned from Phase I response to plan for a potential resurgence in the fall.

If Council has any further questions or needs additional information, please feel free to contact Sandra Singh directly at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca).



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