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Date: 7/23/2018 5:58:32 PM

Subject: Final Report of the 2018 CoV Homeless Count

Attachments: Memo Mayor and Council Final Report 2018 CoV Homeless Count July 2018.pdf

Greetings Mayor and Council,

The attached memo gives information regarding the release of the final report of the 2018 City of Vancouver Homeless Count.

- Report will be released and made public on Thursday, July 26 on the City's homeless count webpage: <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/homeless-count.aspx>;
- Also included in the memo is staff's introduction to the report, including the following sections:
 - Context of Homelessness in Vancouver
 - Summary of 2018 Homeless Count results
 - CoV Responses to Homelessness
 - Final Remarks

The report is being prepared by the consulting firm, Urban Matters, in partnership with the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA)

Please contact Sandra Singh at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca if you have any questions.

Best,
Sadhu

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MEMORANDUM

July 20, 2018

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Rena Kendall-Craden, Communications Director
Kevin Quinlan, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Naveen Girn, Community Relations Director, Mayor's Office
Ethel Whitty, Director, Homelessness Services
Gil Kelley, General Manager Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager

SUBJECT: Final Report of the 2018 CoV Homeless Count

This memorandum serves to inform Mayor and Council that the final report of the 2018 City of Vancouver Homeless Count will be made available on the City's homeless count webpage (<http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/homeless-count.aspx>) on **July 26, 2018**. The report is being prepared by the consulting firm, Urban Matters, in partnership with the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA).

For your ease of reference, staff has prepared the attached Introduction to the report. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.



Sandra Singh
General Manager

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SS/th

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2018 CITY OF VANCOUVER HOMELESS COUNT

Context

Homelessness in Vancouver is a humanitarian crisis that reflects a trend seen across the region, province, country, and continent. Long thought to be an urban issue, homelessness is also increasing in sub-urban and rural communities. Poverty and a lack of housing that is affordable for those living on low incomes are two of the most significant contributors to homelessness. Traumatic personal events and serious health issues also contribute to homelessness, particularly when they intersect with individual poverty and a lack of supports. The persistence of deep poverty, without sufficient relief through government assistance, has meant some people remain homeless for years. The stark overrepresentation of Indigenous people in homelessness in Vancouver and across the country highlights the impacts of colonialism and intergenerational trauma experienced by many Indigenous peoples. Homelessness is made worse in Vancouver by the rising rents, low vacancy rates, and loss due to disrepair or displacement from renovation of affordable old single room occupancy (SRO) hotels and rooming houses. Until replacement affordable, dignified housing is found, the loss of this stock, the last resort before homelessness for many people, creates a hole at the bottom end of the affordable housing spectrum. Stigma and discrimination directed towards people who are homeless, such as assumptions that the poverty keeping people from securing a home is their own fault, compound the challenge of addressing the issue through systemic efforts.

2018 Homeless Count - Summary of Results

As the following report by Urban Matters documents, the City of Vancouver's 2018 point-in-time homeless count found 2,181 people homeless in Vancouver on March 14, 2018, with 1,522 people sheltered and 659 on the street. While the total number represents only a 2% increase from last year, it is nonetheless the highest number since the first regional homeless count in 2005, signaling a continuing and growing concern about the welfare of Vancouver residents who are marginalized and about how we respond to homelessness in our city.

People who identify as Indigenous continue to be vastly overrepresented in homelessness in Vancouver. This year's count showed that Indigenous people comprise 40% of the homeless population in Vancouver, while only 2.2% of the city's general population. In 2018, the City's collaboration with Lu'ma Native Housing and the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee on a coordinated count provided opportunities to explore new methods of engagement and to learn from our partners. For a comprehensive analysis of Aboriginal/Indigenous homelessness, please refer to the report on [Aboriginal Homelessness - 2018 Count in Metro Vancouver](#)¹.

Consistent with previous years, the count also found Indigenous people to be overrepresented on the street, with 51% of the Indigenous homeless population unsheltered, compared with 40% of the non-Indigenous homeless population. The count results suggest that women make up 24% of the total homeless population, and that 55% of all women on the street identified as Indigenous. When looking at subgroups, the proportion of women is higher in the Indigenous homeless population (32% women) and the youth homeless population (41% women). From years of experience, staff note that women tend to be undercounted in point-in-time counts. Those with expertise serving women in Vancouver report that women are often living in unsafe situations where they are not encountered by count volunteers. The reality for women who are homeless, therefore, is likely more complex and serious than what the count is able to show.

¹ <http://infocusconsulting.ca/aboriginal-homelessness-resources/aboriginal-homeless-counts/>

Over time, there has been a slight increase in the number of seniors who are homeless in both the 55-64 and 65+ age groups. Because almost half (48%) of people counted fall into the 35-54 year-old age group, future counts may see an increase in seniors who are homeless as the 35-54 year-old demographic ages. However, life expectancy tends to be shorter for those who chronically have no home.²

Consistent with last year, this count showed that a higher percentage of youth compared to adults and seniors report a mental health issue, LGBTQ2+ identity, and Indigenous identity. This suggests that mental health, homophobia, racism and colonialism may contribute to youth homelessness, and as such, are important factors to consider when developing policy and programming for youth. For a deeper and broader analysis of youth homelessness across Metro Vancouver, please refer to the [2018 Youth Homeless Count in Metro Vancouver](#)³. The final report is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2018.

While 35% of count respondents reported no addiction, addictions are a major health issue for people who are homeless, and contribute to the stigma they face. This can be a barrier to finding and maintaining housing. This year, in an attempt to obtain a better understanding of addictions among Vancouver's homeless population, people who self-reported an addiction issue were invited, if willing, to share the substances they used. The most common substance to which people self-reported being addicted was cigarettes (28%), followed by opioids (25%), methamphetamines (23%), alcohol (22%) and marijuana (20%). 25% of people reported being addicted to one substance and 38% to two or more. Addictions are a public health issue, and housing is an integral part of a public health response to addiction.

This year, 79% of count respondents most recently lived and paid rent in Vancouver before becoming homeless. Regardless of the reason for the housing loss - be it because of rising rents, insufficient income, housing disrepair, health issues, and/or discrimination - this statistic indicates that the majority of respondents became homeless in Vancouver and, contrary to popular belief, did not move here homeless from elsewhere.

This year's count showed that the two most commonly reported sources of income were government income assistance (39%) and disability benefits (30%). Almost one-fifth (19%) of count respondents reported having a full-time or part-time job and 29% reported multiple income sources. Even so, they could not afford rent. People who are homeless live in deep poverty.

The count also shows that 52% of respondents had been homeless for less than one year. This statistic points to the fluidity of homelessness. The fact that someone becomes homeless does not necessarily mean they will continue to be. The support people find to access social and supportive housing is vital to ensure that pathways out of homelessness are available to all.

² Research conducted for [Dying on the Streets](#) (2014) suggests that the average age at death of a homeless person is 40-49 years while the average age at death of a British Columbian is 84 years. Early mortality could be even more pronounced among Indigenous homeless people. A 2015 Statistics Canada study cites that members of First Nations communities are more than twice as likely to face an early and avoidable death than other Canadians: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/study-reveals-trend-of-early-and-preventable-death-among-first-nations/article26029534/>

³ <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/homelessness/homelessness-taskforce/youth-homeless-count/Pages/default.aspx>

Responses to Homelessness

As part of its ongoing efforts to provide housing, shelter and supports to residents who are homeless, the City has partnered with the Province and private and non-profit partners on a variety of responses⁴.

Homeless Outreach

Working through the provincial Homeless Outreach Program, the City's homeless outreach team assists individuals to secure income, health, housing and other support services. Over the 2017 year, the outreach team supported 4,000 individuals to access a range of services, including supporting 850 individuals to secure or find housing.

Emergency Shelters and Warming Centres

Since 2009, the City has opened temporary winter shelter during the coldest, wettest months of the year to provide emergency shelter and services, including housing, to people who would otherwise be on the street. Over the 2017/2018 winter, the City, in partnership with BC Housing and non-profit shelter operators, opened 300 temporary shelter beds. As an extra life-saving measure, additional warming centres opened in City-run facilities on the coldest nights.

Addressing Indigenous Homelessness

As a City of Reconciliation, it is crucial and urgent that a concerted effort be taken to address the disproportionate impact of homelessness on the urban Indigenous community. The City is working in collaboration with Indigenous partners such as the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) and other urban Indigenous agencies to identify and implement effective and culturally appropriate responses to Indigenous homelessness. The City will continue to engage with these partners in order to develop a 10-year strategy that identifies short and long-term goals, targets, and sites for Indigenous housing and wellness in the region, including identifying specific targets for Vancouver.

Protecting and Improving SRO Hotels

As the housing of last resort before homelessness, Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels play a critical role in Vancouver's low income housing stock, housing over 7,000 tenants. The City's Single Room Accommodation (SRA) By-Law and SRO replacement strategies have helped mitigate the impact of the loss of SROs. In 2017 the City approved the development of 342 homes renting at income assistance rates, and between 2015 and 2017 the City approved livability upgrades to 391 SRO homes. These actions demonstrate how the City is meeting the *Housing Vancouver* strategy 10-year goal of converting and replacing 2,000 SRO rooms with high quality self-contained affordable homes for low-income single renters.

Opening Temporary Modular Housing

In September 2017, the provincial government announced funding for 2,000 temporary modular homes across BC to be provided for people who are homeless, with 600 to be delivered in Vancouver. The City and Province are more than two-thirds towards the creation of the 600 temporary modular homes in Vancouver, with approximately 560 homes on nine different sites in various stages of the development process, with 155 homes already tenanted.

⁴ Please refer to the *Housing Vancouver* strategy documents for more detailed information on the City's responses to homelessness: <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/housing-vancouver-strategy.aspx>

Poverty Reduction

Poverty is one of the major underlying causes of homelessness. As a result, poverty reduction is a large part of homelessness prevention. The City is working with Vancity and community groups to co-develop the Vancouver Poverty Reduction Plan, a key action under the Healthy City Strategy. A Poverty Action Advisory Committee has been convened and community engagement sessions conducted to better understand the daily challenges faced by Vancouver residents and how the City can respond in ways that increase social equity and reduce poverty. Occurring at the same time as provincial and federal processes on poverty reduction, this process represents an opportunity for the City to influence and coordinate with other levels of government.

Supporting Non-Profits through Homelessness Services Grants

The City's Homelessness Services Grants support the important work of non-profit partners in delivering City priorities to address homelessness. Since 2011, the City has awarded an annual operating grant to Streethome Foundation, with a 2018 grant of \$150,000. Since 2009, the City's Homelessness Action Week Grant program has supported numerous non-profit societies to raise awareness about homelessness and provide direct support to people experiencing homelessness. In 2018, a total of \$46,000 was awarded to sixteen organizations. To date, an additional \$12,000 has been awarded to four organizations to welcome tenants of Temporary Modular Housing into their new neighbourhoods.

Addressing Stigma

Since 2013, the City has supported people with lived experience of homelessness to share their personal stories and educate the public, in particular students in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Between November 2017 and March 2018, people with lived experience presented in 12 secondary and university classrooms to nearly 300 students and teachers. These presentations provide opportunities to challenge myths and stereotypes about homelessness, raise awareness, and build empathy and understanding.

Final Remarks

The moral imperative to house Vancouver's most vulnerable citizens is reflected in the current conversations at the federal level of government regarding housing as a human right⁵. Solutions to homelessness can only be accomplished through a concerted effort and commitment by all levels of government. Both federal and provincial governments have offered more funding over the coming years. A sustained level of investment, including in operating subsidies, will make homes affordable for people living at the lowest income levels and help address the homelessness crisis.

⁵ "Discussion Paper: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing," National Housing Strategy, Government of Canada (2018) <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/pdfs/NHS-Human-Rights-Approach-to-Housing-en.pdf>