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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 11/19/2021 1:27:08 PM

Subject: [2021/2022 Winter Response Strategy for People Experiencing Homelessness](#)

Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - 2021-2022 Winter Response Strategy for People Experiencing Homelessness (2021-11-19).pdf

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

Please find attached a brief memo from Sandra Singh, General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services outlining the current 2021/2022 winter response strategy (WRS) for people experiencing homelessness. Key points include:

- The WRS is activated each winter to provide indoor spaces beyond those provided through the existing emergency shelter system.
- For 2021/2022, an additional 178 indoor spaces will be provided through a mix of Temporary Winter Shelter beds, Extreme Weather Response shelters, Warming Centres, and City social service centres.
- This mixed service response is enabled through partnership with BC Housing, Homelessness Services Association of B.C., and non-profit partners.
- Staff continue to look for additional activations as feasible.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Sandra directly and she will ensure responses through the weekly Council Q&As.

Best,

Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱u817_wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

November 19, 2021

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications
Katrina Leckovic, 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
Celine Mauboules, Managing Director of Homelessness Services & Affordable Housing Programs, Arts, Culture and Community Services

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

SUBJECT: 2021/2022 Winter Response Strategy for People Experiencing Homelessness

RTS #: N/A

PURPOSE

This memo provides an update on the 2021/2022 winter response strategy for people experiencing homelessness.

BACKGROUND

The City of Vancouver's emergency shelter system is comprised of year round shelters open 365 days a year and a winter response strategy that includes additional sites that only open during the winter months.

Year Round Shelter Spaces Currently in Operation

There are two components to shelters in Vancouver that operate year round: (1) permanent year round shelters and (2) temporary year round shelters both operate 365 days a year. Temporary shelters are temporary in nature, either due to a lease agreement or MOU. These temporary shelters typically operate for a few years. All shelters are operated by an experienced non-profit operator who work to help address the needs of people who are experiencing homelessness.

Collectively there are 1,350+ shelter beds available 365 days a year in Vancouver. It is important to note that on any given night, shelters may have to stop intake due to an active COVID-19 outbreak, meaning that total shelter capacity may be less than 100%.

- **Permanent year round shelter beds: 900 beds**
These shelters serve a range of community members (men, women, seniors, youth), and offer a range of services. Depending on the operator, shelters may provide space for couples, pets, carts, and follow a harm reduction model.
- **Temporary year round shelters beds: 450+ beds**
Temporary shelters are opened through a partnership between BC Housing and the City of Vancouver. Beginning in March 2019, BC Housing and the City of Vancouver granted most “Temporary Winter Shelters” the ability to operate all year. Temporary shelter beds are in addition to the permanent shelter beds. There are ten temporary shelter sites that will remain open year round and the majority operate on a 24/7 basis.¹

DISCUSSION

2021/2022 Winter Response Strategy

The City of Vancouver is committed to ensuring all residents have a safe, warm, place to come inside during the cold and wet winter months (please see Appendix A for a list of all sites). Through a long-standing partnership with the Province, additional shelter space is available from November to March, and further additional supports are activated during periods of extreme weather.

In addition to the permanent and temporary shelters that operate year round described above, there are four main components to the City’s winter response. This includes:

1. Temporary winter response shelters,
2. Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters,
3. Warming Centres, and
4. Extended hours at City-owned community centres.

1. Temporary Winter Response Shelters

Temporary winter response shelters are in addition to the permanent and temporary shelter beds that operate 365 days a year. They are opened annually through a partnership between the City of Vancouver and BC Housing to provide additional shelter capacity to keep those experiencing homelessness safe and warm during the winter months.

For the 2021/2022 winter season, there are two temporary winter shelters that will be open every night between November 2021 and March 2022, providing 44 additional shelter spaces. In previous years the number of winter specific shelter beds was higher, however the majority of those temporary winter shelters, through partnership with BC Housing, are now open 365 days a year and are no longer a winter specific response. This change has added much needed capacity year round.

¹ This number does not include the winter only temporary shelter spaces. These spaces are included in the Winter Response Strategy below.

2. Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters

EWR shelters are Provincially funded (through BC Housing) and delivered through partnerships with community-based service providers and faith-based organizations to provide additional temporary emergency shelter spaces during periods of extreme winter weather which threaten the health and safety of individuals experiencing homelessness. They provide time-limited, weather responsive temporary shelter spaces in communities where there is not sufficient emergency shelter bed capacity during extreme weather conditions. The City works with the Homelessness Services Association of BC (HSABC) to confirm locations. City staff are working with BC Housing and HSABC to identify additional spaces that can be activated. These spaces are activated based on criteria including:

- Temperatures near zero with rainfall that makes it difficult or impossible for those experiencing homelessness to remain dry
- Sleet or freezing rain or Snow accumulation
- Sustained high winds
- Temperatures at or below 0°C, or "feels like" 0°C with wind chill
- Rainfall of at least 50mm in a 24-hour period

EWR Sites 2017-2021

| EWR Sites | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Sites | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| Number of Nights open | 69 | 86 | 90 | 107 | TBD |
| Total Spaces | 100 | 120 | 145 | 75 | 89* |
| Total Sites | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 |

*89 EWR spaces at 5 sites are confirmed as of November 16, with a few pending sites still to be confirmed.

Similar to last season, there were EWR activations that occurred during the month of October due to inclement weather (heavy rain and high winds).

3. Warming Centres

Funded by the City of Vancouver, Warming Centres are activated when the temp reaches -5 degrees Celsius (or feels like -5). By providing additional capacity for people to come inside, Warming Centres address the serious health and life safety risks associated with extreme winter weather. Warming centres may be in community spaces, drop in centres, or other available locations. These are not shelters (there are no beds, cots or mats) but are activated by the City - run by non-profit organizations and the City. Warming Centres provide a place for individuals who may not traditionally access shelter space to go inside and warm up when weather outside is extreme.

Warming Centre Sites 2017-2021

| Warming Centre Sites | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Sites | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | 2021-2022 |
| Number of Nights open | 32 | 43 | 17 | 13 | TBD |
| Total Spaces | 130 | 194 | 149 | 93 | 45* |
| Total Sites | 5 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 2* |

*45 Warming Centre spaces at 2 sites are confirmed as of November 16, with a few pending sites to be confirmed.

4. Extended hours at City-owned social service centres

Often times during periods of extreme cold weather, two city-owned social service centres (Gathering Place and Evelyne Saller) extend their operating hours to provide vital services such as hot meals and showers, to ensure there is somewhere warm to be inside when nightly shelters, EWR sites, and warming centres close during the daytime.

Communication Efforts to Bring People Inside

EWR and Warming Centre activations are broadcast to community service providers, government stakeholders, BC211, Translink, VPD and others. Staff also post activations via social media channels. Further, every day, the City's outreach team and multiple service provider organizations are visiting people who are sleeping outside to encourage them to come indoors. Those looking for shelter space can call BC211 at 2-1-1 to check availability.

Summary

The overall shelter capacity in the city of Vancouver, when all shelters, EWR shelters and warming centres are activated is over 1,758 spaces.

| Winter Response Additional Capacity 2021-2022 | Capacity (approx.) |
|---|--------------------|
| Temporary Winter Shelters (open every night) | 44 |
| EWR (upon activation) | 89 |
| Warming Centre (upon activation) | 45 |
| Total (to date) | 178 |
| Shelter Capacity | |
| Year Round Shelters | 1,350+ |
| COVID Response Shelters | 230 |
| TOTAL Capacity (approx.) | 1,758+ |

FINAL REMARKS

This year's Winter Response Strategy will provide **178 spaces** in addition to the year round shelters for residents to have a safe, warm, place to come inside during the cold and wet winter months.

Staff will also continue working with senior government and non-profit partners to identify and activate additional spaces to meet the needs of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness during our coldest and wettest months. Staff will also continue to explore further partnerships

with the provincial and federal governments to increase the supply and services for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra Singh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

sandra.singh@vancouver.ca

Appendix A - List of Available Temporary Shelter, Extreme Weather Shelter and Warming Centre Spaces available this Winter

The City of Vancouver is committed to ensuring all residents have a safe, warm, place to come inside during the cold and wet winter months. Through a long-standing partnership with the Province, additional shelter space is available from November to March, and further additional supports are activated during periods of extreme weather.

In addition to the permanent and temporary shelters that operate year round, there are also sites that operate only during the winter season only. The following tables provide our current list of temporary winter response shelters, Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelters and Warming Centres.

Total winter response spaces are 178 confirmed spaces with a few pending sites to be confirmed.

Temporary Winter Response Shelters

Temporary Winter Response shelters are typically open on a nightly basis from November to March.

| Address | Operator | Details | Hours | Number of beds |
|---|-------------------|--|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| The Walton Shelter 261B E Hastings St | Lookout Society | All genders. 19+ years. Not accessible. Mats and blankets. Pets OK. No carts. | Nov to Mar 8:30pm – 7:30am | 10 |
| Gathering Place 609 Helmcken St | City of Vancouver | All genders. 19+ years. Fully accessible. Mats only. Pets OK. No carts. | Nov to Mar 11:00pm- 7:00am | 34 |
| Total beds | | | | 44 |

Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Shelters

EWR shelters are typically activated as a time-limited, weather responsive temporary shelter from October to March.

| Address | Operator | Details | Hours | Number of mats |
|--|---------------------------|--|------------------------------|----------------|
| Directions Youth Services Centre 1138 Burrard St | Directions Youth Services | All genders. Youth only, 19-24 years. Not fully accessible. Pets allowed (max 4). | 10:00pm- 7:00am | 7 youth |
| Evelyne Saller Centre 320 Alexander St until Dec. 1; | City of Vancouver | All genders. 19+ years. Accessible. Variety of food options offered before going to sleep and in the morning. No pets. No carts. | 11:00pm- 8:00am Weekdays; | 42 |

| Address | Operator | Details | Hours | Number of mats |
|---|-----------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 124 Dunlevy after Dec. 1 | | | 10:00pm- 8:00am Weekends | |
| Tenth Church 11 West 10 th Ave (at Ontario) | Lookout Society | Light refreshments and showers available. Pet friendly. Some carts can be stored onsite. Pets OK with restrictions. | 9:00pm- 7:30am | 10 |
| Langara YMCA 282 W 49th Ave | Lookout Society | All genders. 19+ years. Accessible. Food offered on entering and in the morning. Enter using Gym doors at the rear parking lot. No pets. | 8:00pm- 7:00am | 20 |
| Cascades Church 3833 Boundary Road | Lookout Society | All genders. 19+ years. Not accessible. Food offered on entering and in the morning. Enter through left side door in rear parking lot. No pets. No carts. | 8:00pm- 8:00am | 10 |
| Total mats | | | | 89 |

Warming Centres

Warming Centres are activated when the temp reaches -5 degrees Celsius (or feels like -5) between November and March.

| Address | Operator | Details | Hours | Number of spaces |
|--|--|--|---------------------|------------------|
| Powell St Getaway 528 Powell St | Lookout Society | All genders, accessible, pets allowed. | 9:00pm – 8:00am | 25 |
| Odd Fellows Lodge 1443 W 8 th Ave | City of Vancouver (with Odd Fellows) | All genders, not fully accessible. Pets allowed. No carts. | 10:00pm – 8:00am | 20 |
| Totalspaces | | | | 45 |