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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 8/1/2023 10:21:22 AM
Subject: Year-Round Shelter operation at the Gathering Place Community Centre
Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Gathering Place Year-Round Shelter Operations (2023-08-01).pdf

Dear Mayor And Council,

Attached please find a memo from Sandra Singh, GM, Arts Culture and Community Services on the extension of the BC Housing funded Temporary Winter Shelter at the Gathering Place to a Year-Round Shelter. A few key points:

- Each winter season since 2017, from November 1 to March 31, BC Housing has funded the operations of the shelter and the City provides the physical space and operates the shelter. The program provides essential services to meet shelter guests' immediate needs for overnight accommodation, basic nutrition and hygiene, plus a range of support services to help the clients break the cycle of homelessness.
- The Gathering Place closed the shelter every April 1st after the winter season and re-opened the shelter every November 1st. This posed challenges for both the shelter guests and the centre operations.
- Given the high need in the neighbourhood and the operational complexity and inefficiency of standing-up and down a shelter each year, staff requested BC Housing consider extending the shelter to year-round.
- BC Housing approved the 2023 year-round shelter budget of \$1,396,158 with 34 beds per night capacity until April 30, 2026. The funded shelter management team will expand from one Shelter Coordinator to a well supported team of a Shelter Coordinator, Shelter Supervisor, and Shelter Support Worker. Having a robust management team will further support the clients and the staff to build meaningful engagements.

Should Council have any further questions please contact Sandra directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and she will make sure to respond through the regular weekly Q&As.

Thanks,

Karen

Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager (she/her)
karen.levitt@vancouver.ca

The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθθl̓əm/Musqueam, Skwx̓w̓u817 wú7mesh/Squamish and səliwətaʔ/Tsleil-Waututh nations

MEMORANDUM

August 1, 2023

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Interim Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

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

SUBJECT: Year-Round Shelter operation at the Gathering Place Community Centre

RTS #: N/A

PURPOSE

This memo is to inform Mayor and Council on the expansion of the BC Housing funded Temporary Winter Shelter at the Gathering Place to a Year-Round Shelter.

BACKGROUND

The Temporary Shelter Program at The Gathering Place (TWS) has been a long-standing partnership between the City of Vancouver and BC Housing (BCH). Each winter season since 2017, from November 1 to March 31, BC Housing has funded the operations of the shelter and the City of Vancouver provides the physical space and operates the shelter. The program provides essential services to meet the Client's immediate needs for overnight accommodation, basic nutrition and hygiene, plus a range of support services to help the clients break the cycle of Homelessness. When in operation, The Gathering Place TWS operates from 8:30 pm to 7:45 am providing shelter space to a maximum of 34 people. During the first year of the pandemic and in 2022, BC Housing provided additional funding to extend the shelter's services past March 31.

The Gathering Place faced the yearly challenge of closing the shelter every April 1st after the winter season and re-opening the shelter every November 1st. This posed challenges for both the shelter guests and the centre operations:

- Shelter guests had to find a new shelter at a time when many other temporary winter shelters were closing and when warming centres are not being activated due to the change in weather.
- The Gathering Place operations faced challenges in retaining staff from season to season and the hiring and training time each year was significant and the investment in training and experience was lost each spring as the temporary staff left for other employment.

In April 2023, BC Housing asked Gathering Place to consider extending shelter operations to April 1, 2024. The request was a result of increased demand for shelter in the downtown south.

DISCUSSION

As noted above, the ongoing cycle of standing-up and standing-down a seasonal shelter operation is both time-consuming and inefficient. When approached with the request to extend to April 1, 2024, staff suggested to BC Housing that they consider converting The Gathering Place into an ongoing year round shelter. This conversion would enable improved service for people experiencing homelessness in the Downtown South, enabling people to be inside year round rather than exiting to the streets each spring, and enables continuity of operations and staff at The Gathering Place, avoiding the costly hiring and letting go of staff each season.

BC Housing approved the 2023 year-round shelter budget of \$1,396,158 with 34 beds per night capacity until April 30, 2026. Entering a three year agreement with BC Housing provides enhanced services for the Gathering Place shelter, which include the operations and the clients. The shelter leadership team will expand from one Shelter Coordinator to a well supported team of a Shelter Coordinator, Shelter Supervisor, and Shelter Support Worker. Having a robust leadership team will further support the clients and the staff to build meaningful engagements in a positive way.

The service expansion further supports the clients to break the cycle of homelessness by connecting them to support services and appropriate housing. The support services include the outcome of housing and retained housing at 100 days, 6 months and 12 months. The client will be supported as they make the transition to housing and receive supports from other community agencies. The shelter core services meet the needs of accommodations, nutritious meals and basic hygiene. Through this new expanded service, clients will be supported to break the cycle of homelessness.

NEXT STEPS

As the shelter changes to a year round operation, the Gathering Place leadership staff will be undertaking:

- Hiring additional staff, which include Shelter Supervisor, Outreach Worker and additional Shelter Attendants.
- Sending a communication out to the local service providers, BIA and neighbours of the year round shelter operations.
- Updating shelter policies to reflect a year round model rather than a short-term temporary shelter.

FINAL REMARKS

Given the scope of this important essential service to the downtown south community, The Gathering Place is well positioned to continue to offer this vital service to the community.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at sandra.singh@vancover.ca and we will provide response through the weekly Council Q&A.

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@vancover.ca