

From: "Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>

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

Date: 10/24/2025 4:57:46 PM

Subject: Memo: Accessible Daytime Drop-in Spaces: Places to Be and Places to Go Motion, Clause B (RTS 18029)

Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Places to Be Places Go Motion Respo nse - Clause B - RTS 18029 (2025-10-24).pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please find attached the Council memo "Accessible Daytime Drop-in Spaces: *Places to Be and Places to Go Motion Report Back*", responding to the motion to call on the Province to complete a needs assessment and identify location and funding necessary to support accessible daytime-drop-in spaces (DDS).

Key highlights include:

- DDS programs and spaces play a critical role in responding to the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Whilst primarily a Provincial mandate, CoV has a role through the provision of low-cost space for non-profits, program and capital grants, direct operation of DDS and regulatory supports.
- Staff completed a preliminary analysis which is the basis for ongoing discussions with the Province related to DDS.
- The analysis shows a total of 13 DDS with a total of 113,476 sf across Vancouver. The majority are located in the DTES close to many overnight shelters and low-income housing.
- The needs assessment showed an estimated gap of 43,364 sf to meet needs or roughly 8 daytime drop-in centres

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca and staff will address through the weekly Council Q&A.

Thank you,
Sandra

Sandra Singh | Deputy City Manager
City of Vancouver
E-mail: sandra.singh@vancouver.ca
Pronouns: she/her

Assistant: Laura Holvor
Phone: 604.829.9602
E-mail: laura.holvor@vancouver.ca
Pronouns: she/her

*The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the x m 0k y m (Musqueam),
S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selílwtulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.*

MEMORANDUM

October 24, 2025

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy & Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Accessible Daytime Drop-in Spaces: *Places to Be and Places to Go* Motion

RTS #: 18029

PURPOSE

This memo responds to the Council Motion *Places to Be and Places to Go* (May 21, 2025), which calls on the Province to complete a needs assessment for Accessible Daytime Drop-in Spaces (DDS). Staff have done a preliminary analysis which forms the basis of ongoing discussion with the Province related to the need for DDS.

Information on the washrooms-related direction of this motion will be provided to Council separately, in Q4 2025.

BACKGROUND

A DDS or daytime shelter space refers to a facility operated by a non-profit or municipal social service provider that offers a safe, drop-in indoor environment for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These spaces function like community living rooms, providing unstructured programming and access to essential services such as

food, washrooms and other health and hygiene programs. Hours of operation vary, with some centres open full days including evenings, while others operate part-time. Programs may be open to all or tailored to specific populations or areas of focus, including gender safety or Indigenous cultural safety.

DDS programs and spaces support those experiencing or at risk of homelessness which is under the mandate of the Provincial government. However, the City has a partnership role to support and advocate for the appropriate type and supply of affordable social facilities and services.

DISCUSSION

Current State of DDS in Vancouver

Staff undertook an inventory of existing spaces and identified 13 DDS with a total floor area of approximately 113,476 sf across Vancouver, all in or close to the downtown area. The majority (69%) are in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) close to many overnight shelters and low-income housing, including Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings.

Other social facilities and space without a mandate focused on serving individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness such as neighbourhood houses, community centres, and libraries were not included in the DDS analysis. Appendix A includes details of existing daytime drop-in spaces, including a map.

City's Role in supporting DDS

The City of Vancouver supports DDS through the following (more details in Appendix B):

- Provision of Low-Cost Space for Non-Profits: Of the 13 identified DDS, 7 sites (54%) are located in City-owned facilities offered at nominal rates
- Program and Capital Grants: Over the last two years (since November 2023), the City has provided \$1,267,132 in funding to six non-profit DDS, including \$1,089,832 in core operating grants and \$177,300 in capital grants
- Direct Operation of DDS: The City operates three community centres that offer essential drop-in services: Carnegie Community Centre¹, Evelyne Saller Centre, and Gathering Place
- Regulatory support: In its role as land use regulator, the City also supports DDS through the development and permitting process

¹ Carnegie provides social, educational, cultural, and recreational activities at satellite outdoor drop-in locations at Oppenheimer Park, and the former Balmoral hotel site. Constrained by weather and lighting, outdoor DDS are limited in their use during extreme or inclement weather, or after dark, making them less reliable as consistent, year-round spaces for those in need. Outdoor sites were not included in the analysis.

City staff also seek to activate vacant or underused spaces for community purposes by connecting social non-profits seeking space with available non-market spaces for potential sharing and co-location. A successful DDS match was made in the past year. See Appendix C for information about non-city-owned spaces and future potential spaces.

Needs Assessment

Staff undertook an analysis to estimate the total need for daytime drop-in space based on the current population of individuals experiencing homelessness and those living in SRO's (Appendix A). The analysis showed that:

- at least 156,840 sf of DDS is needed;
- approximately 113,476 sf of DDS currently exists in Vancouver, resulting in a gap of approximately 43,364 sf (28%); and
- this is equivalent to roughly 8 daytime drop-in centres (approx. 5,420.5 sf each)

Appendix C outlines two upcoming DDS that will help offset some of the estimated need.

Most areas of the city outside the downtown core do not have a daytime drop-in space within walking distance. These areas could likely benefit from increased investment or resourcing to meet community needs. The need is expected to grow over time with increases in people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Informal feedback supports this needs assessment, with drop-in service providers reporting that patrons have been turned away from food and hygiene programs due to insufficient capacity and service.

Financial Estimates

The financial impact to address the gap would depend on a number of factors, including whether the centres are new or existing spaces and the nature of the lease and programming. To assess the range of potential financial impact, staff have identified the costs associated with building new centres, paying market commercial retail unit rent in key underserved areas, and paying for operating costs as shown in Appendix D. In summary, it would cost:

- Up to \$52M in capital costs, if the 8 centres are new, instead of existing spaces
- Between \$6.23M and \$15.2M of annual operating costs including rent and programming

With precarious funding for existing programs and spaces, there is also a funding gap to sustain current DDS and risk some may be lost. Examples include 390 Main Street and 320 Alexander Street where the City currently provides access to low-cost space. Operating

funding is provided by the Province and is currently set to expire in March 2026. The annual program costs associated with these two services is approximately \$4.06 M/yr.

The expected cost to maintain current services and address the projected DDS need is significant and will require continued work to optimize the use of space and partnership with and investment by senior government.

NEXT STEPS

DDS programs and spaces play a critical role in responding to the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Further to the Mayor's correspondence to the Provincial government and Vancouver Coastal Health requesting capital and operating funds to support Places to Be and Places to Go (July 8, 2025), staff are in ongoing discussions with the Province related to service needs in the downtown and will continue to advocate for stable long-term funding from senior levels of government to support existing and new DDS.

FINAL REMARKS

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



Margaret Wittgens, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services

margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca

Appendix B: Current State of Accessible Daytime Drop-in Spaces

Accessible Daytime Drop-in Spaces Table and Maps

Table 3: Daytime Drop-in Spaces Analyzed

Daytime Spaces	Approximate Square Feet (sf)****	Daily Capacity Counts***	Address
The Dugout Society*	2,215	200	57 E Hastings St
Watari*	9,000	200	320 Alexander St
Carnegie Community Centre**	25,300	906	401 Main Street St
DTES Women's Centre (DEWC) - 25 E Hastings Drop-in Centre	4,500	600	25 E Hastings St
DEWC - 302 Columbia St Drop-in	6,956	200	302 Columbia St
Kettle Society	3,629.5	130	1725 Venables St
Evelyne Saller Centre**	11,598	703	404 Alexander St
Gathering Place**	26,300	804	609 Helmcken St
Aboriginal Front Door*	4,000	800	390 Main St
Powell Street Getaway	1,600	500	450 E Hasting St
Union Gospel Mission	2,000	1000	601 E Hastings St
Connective	5,500	40	3360 Fraser St
Coast Mental Health*	10,877	100	1225 Seymour St

Total	113,476 sf
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**In City-owned/leased facility*

***City-run and owned centre*

**** Due to variations in data collection methods across centres, the reported figures contain inconsistencies and may not be fully reliable.*

***** Staff estimated current DDS supply from building plans and information from service providers but could not always differentiate daytime drop-in space from administration and other secondary uses.*

Daily Capacity Rates

The daily capacity counts provided above show the upper end estimates provided by staff at each facility; they cannot be used in aggregate to measure demand or use of DDS. The average daily count of attendees across these facilities varies widely from 40-1000 people, illustrating current use, but each centre has a different method for collecting this data (e.g., counting persons in the centre hourly, estimates based on coffee served). In general, these numbers represent visits but cannot account for unique visitors, i.e., individuals may be counted multiple times over the course of a day if they stay at a centre for a longer time, and some may be visiting multiple drop-in centres on the same day.

Needs Assessment Methodology

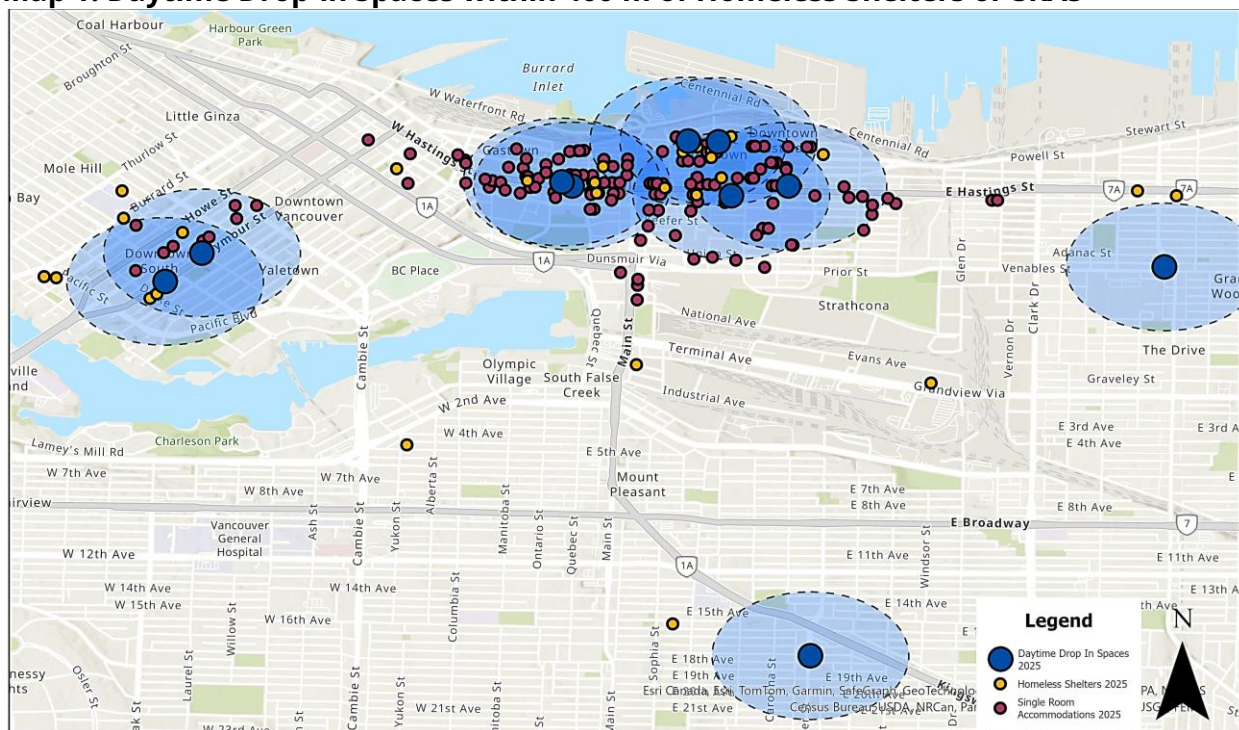
Staff used the population of individuals experiencing homelessness including those staying at overnight shelters from the 2025 Point in Time Homeless Count (2,715) and those living in SROs (10,456) to determine the total daytime drop-in space needed.

As the Homelessness Count is an undercount, a 20% increase was added as per the research study *Quantifying Uncertainty in HUD Estimates of Homelessness* ([Quantifying Uncertainty HUD-dc4d7c.pdf](#)). A 16% increase was also added to SRA population to account for the proportion of couples living together in these unit types. Staff then applied the City of Vancouver's *Housing Design Technical Guidelines* recommendations for providing 15 sf of residential amenity space per housing unit to these adjusted numbers to determine the total square footage need for this population.

DDS Locations

Generally, DDS are located within walking distance to serve those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Sixty-five percent of overnight shelters and 86% of SRO buildings are in proximity (400 meters or 5-minute walk) to a DDS, especially in the DTES. However, there are still areas in the City that are underserved including Downtown South, Grandview Woodlands, Kitsilano, and Mount Pleasant (see Appendix D for estimated costs to meet current needs). Note that Extreme Weather Response shelters over the winter months, and the location of people experiencing homelessness who take shelter in other places, are not included.

Map 1: Daytime Drop-in Spaces within 400 m of Homeless Shelters or SRAs



Appendix B: City owned and Supported Accessible Daytime Drop-In Shelter Spaces

To meet the growing needs of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, the City has been supporting DDS through regulatory tools, as well as the provision of low-cost space for non-profits, program and capital grants, and operation of three community centres that serve this population: Carnegie Community Centre, Evelyne Saller Centre and Gathering Place. Below is more information about the City-owned and supported DDS.

320 Alexander and 390 Main

In 2022, a significant homeless encampment emerged along Hastings Street, highlighting the urgent need for additional support services and storage for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The City collaborated with BC Housing to address the lack of services in the area: BC Housing provided funding and the City provided two vacant City-owned locations that were activated as drop-in centres: 390 Main Street (operated by Aboriginal Front Door Society (AFDS) and 320 Alexander Street (operated by Watari).

The non-profits operate the buildings as gender-inclusive drop-in centres which provide safe refuge, food, healing, wellness support, and shelter during periods of extreme weather for vulnerable individuals. The 390 Main Street location also provides storage, a service critical to collective efforts to supporting ongoing public realm management and bylaw compliance in the neighbourhood. These two facilities also provide overnight services, an emergency weather response shelter at AFDS and a temporary winter shelter at Watari. Provincial operating funding for these services, expires on March 31st, 2026.

CoV Core Grants – for operations and programs

The City of Vancouver supports non-profit daytime drop-in spaces through operating and programming grants. Since November 2023, the City has provided a total of \$1,089,832 towards the operations of daytime drop-in spaces.

(See summary table on following page).

Table 1: Summary of COV Core Grants for DDS (2024 and 2025)

Year	Organization	Description	Outcomes	Amount
2025	Aboriginal Front Door Society (384 Main)	Core Operating Grant	Culturally safe, peer-designed non-judgemental place for Indigenous people and community in DTES. Core to AFDS's operations are their program, outreach and street level services.	\$85,000
2025	Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association	Program Grant: Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Drop-In Programming	Low barrier community space for women providing safety and basic needs, access to intensive support services such as emergency shelters, housing outreach, advocacy, victim services, skills development, cultural programs	\$218,064
2025	Watari Research Association	Eastside Youth Outreach Team	Connect with high risk and street involved marginalized youth in DTES, offering primary needs support, individualized service referrals, case management, facilitating youth to attain skills, safety and support necessary to maintain a stable and healthy lifestyle	\$110,000
2025	Kettle Friendship Society	Kettle Venables Drop-In Centre	The Drop-In Centre provides a safe, barrier free for multi disadvantaged individuals to build human connection and find support, assistance and encouragement.	\$86,252

2025	Dugout Drop-In Centre Society	Core Operating Grant	Operation of drop-in centre, and enable continued growth of volunteer program, which provides volunteer positions to DTES community.	\$45,600
2024	Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Association	DEWC Drop-In Programs 2024/25	Low barrier, essential services to more than 700 women (and their children) daily in the Downtown Eastside. Operation of 2 drop-ins centres & associated programs (Peers, Cultural & Recreational Programs, Chinese Seniors)	\$218,064
2024	Watari Research Association	Eastside Youth Outreach and Passages Program	Outreach to over 160 marginalized youth per month in DTES, maximizing safety, community inclusion, and access to housing.	\$110,000
2024	Kettle Friendship Society	Drop-In Centre	Provides a safe, barrier free environment for multi disadvantaged individuals	\$86,252
2024	Aboriginal Front Door Society (384 Main)	Core Operating Grant	Drop-in offers respite to Indigenous people homeless and/or below the poverty line, support circles, cultural programs, youth services.	\$85,000
2024	Dugout Drop-In Centre Society	Core Operating Grant	Operation of drop-in centre	\$45,600
			TOTAL	\$1,089,832

CoV Capital Grants: for space improvement

The City of Vancouver also supports non-profit daytime drop-in spaces through capital grants to improve and increase accessibility and capacity to these facilities. Since November 2023, the City has provided \$177,300 towards capital grants to improve and increase accessibility to daytime drop-in spaces.

Table 2: Summary of COV Capital Grants for DDS (2024 and 2025)

Year	Organization	Project Description	Grant Stream	Amount
2025	Wish Drop-In Centre Society	Safety and accessibility upgrades to the Centre	DTES Capital Grants	\$15,000
2024	DTES Women's Centre Association	Commercial kitchen upgrades at 303 Columbia St.	DTES Capital Grants	\$37,300
2024	WISH Drop-In Centre Society	Critical upgrades to security, hygiene and community space at the facility	DTES Capital Grants	\$50,000
2024	Watari Counselling & Support Services	Upgrades to the Food Hub & Wellness Centre and the DTES Urban Farm	DTES Capital Grants	\$50,000
2024	Kettle Friendship Society	Critical Washroom and Shower Upgrades at Mental Health Drop-In Centre	Small Capital	\$25,000
			TOTAL	\$177,300

Appendix C: Non-City-Owned, Future and Potential Drop-in Spaces

Non-City-Owned Spaces and Other Options

Many non-City supported DDS also provide essential services and spaces:

- The Kettle Society, Coast Mental Health Society, Union Gospel Mission, and First United are long time service providers addressing the need for daytime spaces; Powell Street Getaway, operated by the Lookout Housing Society, has recently expanded their facility.

Future and Potential Drop-in Spaces

Upcoming facilities will enable more 'places to be' and 'places to go:'

- Kettle Society has recently submitted a joint rezoning application to redevelop their property at 485 Commercial Dr. and 1683 E Pender St. to include a two-storey 13,860 sf social service drop-in centre and 41 supportive housing units.
- The construction of the new First United development is underway with four floors of amenities including drop-in spaces, warming and cooling centre, public showers, administration and commercial kitchen and dining room, with seven floors of below-market housing above. The first two floors that contain program spaces for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness are approximately 19,173 sf.

Appendix D: Financial Implications Costs

The exact financial impact to address the gap would depend on a number of factors, including whether the centres are new or existing spaces and the nature of the lease. To assess the range of potential financial impact associated with the DDS needs assessment (43,364 sf or roughly 8 centres at 5,420.5 sf each), staff have identified the approximate costs of building new centres, paying market commercial retail unit rent in key underserved areas, and paying for programming costs as shown in the table below. Based on this evaluation, it is expected that the cost to implement 8 drop-in centres would be approximately:

- Up to \$52M in capital costs, if the 8 centres are new, rather than existing spaces.
- Between \$6.23M and \$15.2M of annual operating costs including rent and programming.

Actual costs will vary depending on the location of the centres, and nature of the programming.

Table 4: Financial Implications Cost Table

If DDS constructed as New Centres		Cost total	
Cost to build 1 daytime drop-in centre (approx. 5,420.5 sf, not including land costs)		\$5.06 M - \$6.5 M	
Cost to build 8 daytime drop-in centres to need meet (approx. 43,364 sf, not including land costs)		\$40.5 M - \$52 M	
Gross Market Rental Costs			
Neighbourhood:		1 Centre	8 Centres
DTES (\$26/sf)		\$140,933 /yr	\$1.13 M /yr
Downtown South (\$70/sf)		\$379,435 /yr	\$3.04 M /y
Grandview Woodlands (\$57/sf)		\$308,968 /yr	\$2.47 M /yr
Mount Pleasant (\$48.50/sf)		\$262,894 /yr	\$2.1M/yr
Kitsilano (\$68/sf)		\$368,594 /yr	\$2.95 M/yr
Operating Costs			
		1 Centre	8 Centres
DDS Program Operations (estimated range / year)		\$631,922 - \$1.52 M/yr	\$5.1 M - \$12.16 M/yr