

## Interagency Response to Downtown Safety and Well-Being – Sawēyihotān Pilot Project

### ISSUE

This report provides an overview of the intended scope of the Sawēyihotān pilot project being proposed by the Interagency Response to Downtown Safety and Well-Being group.

### RECOMMENDATION

That City Council approve \$100,000 allocation from the MEEP Reallocation contingency to the Interagency Response to Downtown Safety and Well-Being Sawēyihotān Pilot Project, subject to the Provincial Government providing a matching allocation.

### BACKGROUND

At its meeting on June 29, 2020, City Council made the following motion:

“That the City, in conjunction with the Chamber and the other parties’ signatory to their letter and the Safe Community Action Alliance, write to the province to invite the relevant provincial Ministries, including but not limited to, Health and Social Services, to work together on a solutions based pilot project / task force to address issues of mental health, addictions, and housing in Downtown Saskatoon;”

Over the past few weeks there has been significant effort underway on the development of a proposed pilot project led by the Saskatoon Tribal Council, in conjunction with the Saskatoon Interagency Response, the Ministry of Social Services, Saskatchewan Health, Police, Fire, and with support of Downtown Saskatoon and the Combined Business Group. Much of the progress on the development of the pilot project proposal has come from lessons learned from the experience of closing the City Center Inn and Suites and the success of a much more coordinated approach to housing those most vulnerable in our community.

The Provincial Government has agreed to a matching allocation of \$100,000 for this pilot project. Given the priority of addressing downtown safety, combined with the fact the City has received funding from the Federal and Provincial Governments to help deal with the impacts of COVID-19, and that a number of issues arising in the Downtown can be tied to the challenges of COVID-19, an allocation from the MEEP Reallocation contingency would be a strategic allocation of resources to alleviate one of the bigger challenges facing our City at this time.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The Interagency Response to Downtown Safety committee has recently laid out an overall plan for a formal approach to addressing some of the current concerns with safety and well-being in the Downtown. The high level objectives for this project work are as follows:

1. A vibrant, safe and healthy Downtown Saskatoon for everyone;
2. Opportunities exist for many of the most vulnerable people to access services and housing services (decreasing inequities faced by the most vulnerable people);
3. Implementation of a Comprehensive Community-Based Case Management Model that includes coordinated street outreach with an emphasis on supporting housing; and
4. Human service systems that are coordinated with community needs.

### Community Context

Since COVID-19 began, and during the recent closure of the City Center Inn and Suites, there has been a new level of collaboration and coordination emerge between the Ministries of Social Services, Saskatchewan Health Authority, Saskatoon Tribal Council, and the many agencies and partners that make up the Saskatoon Interagency Response to COVID-19. These efforts have made a real difference in getting people housed and off the streets safely, and in keeping COVID-19 from spreading amongst the most vulnerable in the community. Relationships built during the interagency response to City Center Inn and Suites, as well as the COVID-19 interagency collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services (MoSS) (particularly Income Assistance and Emergency Social Services teams) highlighted how critical it is to work consistently and collaboratively across sectors and jurisdictions.

There is an urgency in the community regarding the safety and well-being of people in and around the Downtown, and specifically near the Lighthouse. Saskatoon Tribal Council, community agencies, Saskatoon Police Services, the Lighthouse and surrounding businesses are all extending efforts and supports to the de-escalation of risk and unsafe conditions for many people who are spending time in this area.

There is also an unprecedented opportunity to provide both better outcomes for those on the streets, and for the safety of all people in Saskatoon, particularly in the Downtown. The Interagency Response committee believes there is a real opportunity to make very meaningful progress in addressing homelessness in Saskatoon, which would have tremendous benefits for all aspects of the community.

Understanding that it is not the sole responsibility of any one of the partners in this process to resource the work, the group is proposing a jointly resourced project to support the delivery of an effective, efficient comprehensive and coordinated response. Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), as a community entity, is uniquely situated to act as a backbone agency for this pilot project. Utilizing a culturally relevant response, STC and community partners are committed to achieving outcomes that improve the health and well-being of people and improve safety for all in the Downtown.

### The Pilot Project Proposal

This proposal is designed to be a “For Indigenous, By Indigenous” model that encompasses holistic ways to meet the needs of the population. STC is uniquely situated as a lead partner because of its capacity to understand and deliver the services needed by Indigenous people.

In further understanding the complexities of the housing continuum in Saskatoon, particularly with the heightened safety concerns in the Downtown, Saskatoon Tribal Council and the Interagency Response to Downtown Safety and Well-Being (a subcommittee to the Safe Community Action Alliance – SCAA) is committed to evidence-informed proactive and systemic solutions that will improve the health, safety and well-being of all people in Saskatoon. Creating system-level change, coupled with Indigenous led solutions will create the positive outcomes and results required to achieve a model that will work for the most vulnerable residents of Saskatoon.

In order to accomplish this, there are two core phases of responses being proposed; the first Phase is the Sawēyihotān pilot project and intended to provide proof of concept for future funding and the future implementation of a Phase 2 of this work. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the process map for the Sawēyihotān Pilot Project. The process map shows the overall pilot project will required additional in-kind and support resources from agencies and partner organizations to ensure successful implementation of the pilot project, well beyond the funding being received for the pilot.

### Phase 1 - Comprehensive Community Based Case Management Strategy

This phase is to address the immediate and urgent response to those in need in the Downtown.

#### **Activities**

- PART (A) Coordinate a consistent street outreach team that is connected to the White Buffalo Youth Lodge HUB of services, and
  - Create a consistent and collaborative approach to connecting with MoSS Case Management Team, income assistance workers and other internal programs (with core MoSS staff being assigned to this HUB as their portfolio).
- PART (B) Coordinate a consistent HUB – using an Indigenous led system of case management and wrap around services delivery. The WBYL HUB model was established during the response to COVID-19 and will continue to be the connection point in the core neighbourhoods with many of the community members already seeking supports there.
  - Work in partnership with the established STC youth shelter.
  - Work in collaboration with other community partners at this location (including but not limited to: Saskatoon Housing Authority, SHA, SHIP, Prairie Harm Reduction, Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, Friendship Inn, Camponi, Cress Housing).
- PART (C) Participate in Safe Community Action Alliance (through the Interagency Response to Downtown Safety and Well-being) and Community

Safety and Well-being Partner Groups to work together to ensure that this response is also strategically aligned and contributing to other plans including the Crystal Meth Recommendations in a simultaneous manner to have the maximum effect of change to the root causes related to the hard to house population

- PART (D) Participate in and support development of the Wahkohtowin Task Force to plan and create meaningful system changes and plan for agency coordination of Phase 2.

### **Deliverables:**

Focused on addressing the urgency with a collaborative and coordinated approach.

- A Multi-agency street outreach system that addresses immediate needs of those who are unsheltered in that area including;
  - Culturally competent HUB services and one access point to multiple services under one roof;
  - Culturally relevant holistic case management services;
  - Find short term shelter options, identifying housing needs and securing housing;
  - Connected to social services including income assistance, and/or harm reduction-based service needs (like Managed Alcohol Program);
  - Client engagement and access to spiritual guidance and cultural supports; and
  - Coordination of Interagency team to support the reduction of system barriers, develop interagency solutions and sustainability to support population for the long term

### Phase 2 – Long-Term Transitional Supportive Housing Model

Details of Phase 2 will be informed by the work in the Phase 1 pilot project. Work is underway regarding the best mechanism to make this phase of the project operationalized. Collaborative models of ownership, options to decentralize a single agency owning the space, options to create a holistic model of housing supports with spiritual, emotional and cultural supports as the foundation for the model of service.

### Outcomes and Impacts of Implementation of Both Phase 1 and Phase 2

#### **Emergency Outcomes:**

- Increase engagement with high risk and difficult to house individuals;
- Reduce immediate social system barriers that prevent people from receiving support services;
- Decrease number of people on the sidewalks outside the Lighthouse;
- De-escalate safety concerns on streets surrounding the Lighthouse; and
- Real time access to culturally relevant supports and services from practitioners who know the systems and know the clients.

#### **Secondary and Longer-Term Outcomes:**

- Reduce burden on current social services and siloed system of care;
- Increased community safety in Downtown Saskatoon;

- To ensure that our urban vulnerable population have access to tiered sheltering and medical care options, and case management supports;
- Wrap around services to increase access to many other housing, employment, health and counseling services;
- A mechanism is created that moves vulnerable and homeless people into long-term, stable housing with increased access to required supports;
- Increased capacity of interagency team to address social issues in community; and
- Increase cultural competencies of the outreach partner agencies, increased effectiveness to respond to future social issues.

**System Outcomes:**

- Decrease the potential risks to the community at large;
- Decrease level of burden of Ministry of Social Services case managers;
- Opportunities to create community on the sidewalks in the city block where the Lighthouse sits;
- Increase cultural competencies of the outreach partner agencies;
- Improved business relationships;
- Increased trust and stronger relationships with community and systems (police, social services, health); and
- Increased perception of safety and well-being in the Downtown.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications are for the approval to allocate \$100,000 to the pilot project as outlined in this report. This funding allocation would match the anticipated contribution from the Province and would come from the MEEP Reallocation contingency in which City Council had set aside \$330,000 during its July 27, 2020 meeting. As a result, this project approval will not have any direct mill rate implications to the City.

**OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no other privacy, legal, social or environmental implications of the recommendation of this report.

**NEXT STEPS**

Pending City Council’s decision, the applicable Administration will then work with the identified community and government partners to implement the planned Sawēyihotān pilot project.

**APPENDICES**

1. Sawēyihotān Pilot Project – Process Map

**REPORT APPROVAL**

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