

Funding for Saskatoon Tribal Council Sawēyihotān Program

ISSUE

The City of Saskatoon's short-term partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) in the Sawēyihotān pilot project has been instrumental in ensuring the delivery of an effective, efficient comprehensive and coordinated response to downtown housing and safety. The Sawēyihotān project provides street outreach services, culturally sensitive case management and wraparound support to many of Saskatoon's most vulnerable residents.

The Government of Saskatchewan and STC have agreed to extend the Sawēyihotān pilot until March 2022 and have requested funding support from the City.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development, and Community Services recommend to City Council that Administration be directed to bring forward to the 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget deliberations an option for a \$100,000 capital contribution to the Saskatoon Tribal Council's Sawēyihotān project for 2022.

BACKGROUND

In the Fall of 2020, a proposed pilot project led by the STC, in conjunction with the Saskatoon Interagency Response, the Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Justice, Saskatchewan Health Authority, City of Saskatoon, Saskatoon Police Services, Saskatoon Fire Department, and a number of community-based organizations along with support of Downtown Saskatoon and the Combined Business Group, was brought forward to respond to the closure of the City Centre Inn and Suites. The intent of the pilot was to undertake a more coordinated approach to housing for those most vulnerable in the community.

The Provincial Government agreed to provide an allocation of \$100,000 for this pilot project. Given the priority of addressing downtown safety, combined with the fact the City had received funding from the Federal and Provincial Governments to help deal with the impacts of COVID-19 and that a number of issues arose in the Downtown tied to impacts of COVID-19, an allocation from the MEEP Reallocation contingency of \$100,000 was provided by the City in 2020.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Sawēyihotān pilot began in late 2020, and to date has been successful in addressing a community need not otherwise being met. An initial evaluation in March 2021, (see Appendix 1), indicated the following:

- Between November 2020 and early February 2021, Sawēyihotān Mobile Services (SMS) reported 477 interactions with relatives;

- There were 69 interactions resulting in housing; five of which was categorized as long-term; and
- Specific benefits included improved coordination and collaboration, addressing service gaps, increased engagement, greater understanding of an Indigenous-led and culturally relevant approach.

This pilot project has worked within the system gaps and coordinated with broader systems of services, resources, organizations, policies, relationships, structures, in order to provide support to Saskatoon's most vulnerable. In only six months, the project outcomes have strengthened relationships, enhanced understanding of Indigenous case management and demonstrated culturally relevant approaches.

The STC is one of few Indigenous organizations which has the capacity to understand and deliver the services needed by Indigenous people. The approach of "For Indigenous by Indigenous" has been mentioned throughout the project in which it has been meaningful to have Indigenous staff connect directly with their relatives. The STC has been committed to evidence-informed proactive and systemic solutions which will improve health, safety and well-being of all people in Saskatoon. Creating system-level change, coupled with Indigenous led solutions will create positive outcomes and results required to achieve a model that will work for the most vulnerable residents of Saskatoon. Funding this initiative respects the City's commitments to Truth and Reconciliation in recognizing the role, leadership and stewardship of STC in addressing issues of homelessness and safety.

The program has been successful as a pilot and its continuation will further an understanding of the complexities of Indigenous homelessness.

In a letter from STC (see Appendix 2), they are requesting a extension of the City of Saskatoon partnership to further support the jointly resourced Sawēyihotān project's delivery of an effective, efficient, comprehensive and coordinated response to the housing and downtown safety issues identified in initial stages of the project. There is an immediate need to secure funding for the project to operate between April 2021 to March 31, 2022. The Provincial Government has committed an additional \$350,000 towards an overall \$700,000 annual budget. STC and partners are requesting a continued contribution from the City for \$100 000 prior to September 2021. These dollars will be crucial in determining the next steps of the Sawēyihotān project's impact in Saskatoon. The City dollars will support:

- the extension of Sawēyihotān staff contracts;
- collaboration of the multi sector steering to reduce system barriers and address gaps;
- increase the data set to make informed decisions;
- continue capacity building to address issues related to Downtown Safety;
- the relationships with community partners and businesses; and
- inform a collaborative long-term proposal related to Housing and Downtown Safety.

Administration has completed a review of internal resources and has not been able to identify a funding source including any funding inside existing grant programs, nor is there any funding left in the RCE Contingency, which was available to provide the additional funding in 2020.

Subject to City Council direction, Administration will bring forward to the 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget deliberations an option for a \$100,000 capital contribution to the Saskatoon Tribal Council's Sawēyihtotān project for 2022 that if approved, would provide funding prior to March 31, 2022 as outline in the letter from STC.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Administration will include a one-time capital contribution of \$100,000 in the 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget Options report which will go to the August Governance and Priorities Committee for prioritization and eventual consideration at the 2022-2023 Budget Deliberations.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The recommendation in this report support the City of Saskatoon's Strategic Priorities of Community Safety and Wellbeing and Reconciliation, Inclusion and Diversity.

NEXT STEPS

If approved as part of the 2022-2023 Budget Deliberations, the Recreation and Community Development Department would maintain communication with STC to report on deliverables of the Sawēyihtotān Project and evaluate the City's investment. In addition, Administration will report back on the future of the project beyond 2022 and any potential funding commitments from the Provincial Government to extend the program.

APPENDICES

1. Mid-Term Evaluation Report: Sawēyihtotān Phase 1 Pilot Project.
2. Letter from Saskatoon Tribal Chief Mark Arcand to Mayor and Council.

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Tenille Thomson, Social Development Manager
Reviewed by: Andrew Roberts, Director of Recreation and Community Development
Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager Community Services

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