

Appendix G: Mobilization of Community Social Services for the Vulnerable Population

Since mid-March City staff have worked with community organizations to meet the needs of Regina's most vulnerable residents. Remote meetings are held with more than 30 nonprofit organizations every weekday to identify issues and provide updates on food security, shelter and other front-line services. New programs have been introduced to respond to gaps left by school closures, and safety protocols have been refined to ensure risk of COVID-19 transmission is minimized. In recent weeks additional work has begun to create a centralized website for information sharing and requests for services.

Food Security

The closure of schools left a gap in Regina's food security services, as many children and families relied on schools for meal programs and food hampers. The City, REACH, and REAL have worked together to distribute up to 150 food packages every weekday from neighbourhood centres. Each package contains seven meals. City staff are responsible for distributing the food packages, guided by strong safety protocols and social distancing measures. The City is paying the upfront costs of the program, and REACH continues to fundraise. So far \$50,000 has been committed by Mosaic. The Federal Government has announced over \$100 million nationally to improve access to food in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The partnership between the City, REACH and REAL is supplemented by increased food hamper delivery by both REACH and the Regina Food Bank to families, seniors and other vulnerable residents. Various other organizations including the Salvation Army continue to provide lunch delivery or other meal services to fill gaps. Residents can check Regina.ca or call 777-7000 for information on these programs and how to access them.

Shelters

Since mid-March local shelters and social housing providers have taken decisive action to protect guests and staff in response to COVID-19, by reducing capacity or expanding into additional facilities in order to maintain social distancing and areas for isolation. Hotels, motels, rental housing providers, and other businesses have offered their services to shelter organizations to move clients out of congregate shelter spaces so they can safely self-isolate. Sometimes these services are provided at a reduced rate. Shelters have worked with these organizations separately and any cost incurred has been borne by the shelter.

The Ministries of Social Services, Health and Justice are accessing hotel rooms and vacant rental units owned by the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation for people who can't be placed in existing shelters, including those who are symptomatic or have tested positive for COVID-19. Some eligibility requirements for shelter have been relaxed.

Shelters are reporting concerns about an inability to maintain quarantine or isolation measures for guests who do not wish to comply. For vulnerable individuals who are self-isolating in their own homes or in shelters or hotels, agencies are concerned about access to necessary services like food, healthcare, and support for mental health and addictions.

These concerns have been reported to the Minister of Social Services who has committed to providing a response back.

The Federal Government has announced new funding for COVID-10 housing and homelessness response in Regina totaling \$1,139,676. Funding will be distributed based on the advice of the Regina Homelessness Community Advisory Board, and information on how to apply has begun to be shared with shelter and housing organizations. On March 31, 2020 Saskatchewan's Minister of Social Services announced \$171,000 for shelters province wide, earmarked for supplies. It is not clear how this funding will be accessed at this time.

Essential Supplies

Organizations providing services to Regina's most vulnerable residents are facing a critical shortage of supplies, especially masks, gloves, gowns, sanitizer and disinfectant. Administration is working through its supply channels to purchase additional materials and has been successful in securing many critical items on behalf of frontline nonprofit organizations.