

November 25, 2021

Good Afternoon Mayor Masters and City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Judith Veresuk and I am the Executive Director of the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District and Project Manager for the Community Support Program. With me today is Alyssa Marinos, Team Supervisor with the Community Support Program. Alyssa will be available for questions at the end of the presentation.

We are here today in support of the recommended allocation of \$200,000 as a one-time grant for the continuation of the Community Support Program in 2022.

As you know, the safety and security of everyone in Downtown has always been a priority for Regina Downtown. Over the years, we have tried to address safety concerns through a piecemeal approach – whether it was providing input to the RPS on the Unwanted Guests bylaw, hosting safety forums for our members, providing training and educational opportunities for our staff and member businesses, or advocating for better lighting in Victoria Park. Each effort we made was important, however, each effort seemed disconnected from the next.

2020 brought us COVID which really shone a light on the challenges being faced by the most vulnerable in our community. The lack of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, combined with the closure of many social service and community organizations, created the perfect environment for safety and security issues in downtown and throughout the City.

After much research, we decided to model our Community Support Program on the program operating in Saskatoon for the past nine years. Over the past year, we worked with the RPS, the City of Regina and many community based organizations to develop a Community Support Program

that works for Downtown Regina. With your generous support, we were able to convene our Community Well-Being Steering Committee, made up of community members with lived experience, an Indigenous Elder, a community based organization stakeholder, the City of Regina, RPS and the RDBID. Our Steering Committee mobilized this in April of this year and worked hard to launch our own Community Support Team. Our team members include Alyssa Marinos, Alejandra Cabrera, Alex Lien and Del Majore.

Since the Community Support Program was launched on June 21:

- Our team has had walkabouts with: Mayor Masters, Chief Evan Bray, Councilor Andrew Stevens, Meara Conway, the Saskatoon CSP team, members from the Regina Public Library and several other media related requests.
- Presented at the Anti-Poverty Ministry Board Meeting
- CSP has been invited to the bi-weekly CHIP intake meetings hosted by Phoenix residential Society, recognizing the CSP team's unique ability to create relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness in the downtown and surrounding area we have been a great asset to knowing where some of these folks are who agencies cannot locate.
- CSP has picked up over 200 needles since the inception of our program.
- Distributed water, coffee and healthy snacks to individuals in need
- Participated in the Cold Weather Strategy meeting hosted by the City of Regina to discuss extreme weather and warming spaces throughout the City. We are still on the look out for an emergency warming shelter in Downtown for the winter months.
- Provided support at the RSBID Cinema Under the Stars event, where they were able to intervene with intoxicated individuals in the park, diverting them from RPS

- Provided support to a community member in making and attending a language assessment appointment in order to register and access support services
- Deescalated multiple altercations in Victoria Park, reducing the need for RPS attendance
- Housed three individuals who have collectively experienced years of homelessness. They will continue to need long term support, however, obtaining housing before winter is a huge win

We have had over 800 hours of on-street presence. During this time:

- 51% of the CSP Team Interactions were outreach based (mental health, wellness checks, food/water, shelter, first aid) – 349 of 681
- 16% of the CSP Team interactions were education based (tourism information , directions, transit)
- 85% of the CSP team interactions were low in severity

As we move through the rest of our pilot year, we will continue to track our activities and report on our successes and challenges.

We are pleased with the progress the team has made over the past summer. Heading into a very cold winter, our team will continue to be present and available for our most vulnerable populations.

The Community Support Program is identified in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan as a recommended action under the Safety priority. In particular, the action on page 85 – Expand and support business improvement district community support and ambassador programs. Approving funding for year two of the community support program is a tremendous step in the implementation of the Community Safety and Well Being Plan.

Thank you for this opportunity. Alyssa and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.