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REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 02, 2021

SUBJECT **Union of BC Municipalities Strengthening Communities' Services Grant Application**

ISSUE SUMMARY

A Capital Regional District (CRD) Board resolution is required to support a CRD grant application to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) *Strengthening Communities' Services Program*.

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2021, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities introduced the Strengthening Communities' Services Program, a component of the Canada-BC Safe Restart Agreement. The program aims to address unsheltered homelessness that has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and related community impacts.

Eligible applicants include local governments (municipalities, regional districts and the Islands Trust) and Treaty First Nations in BC.

The intent of the Strengthening Communities' Services Program is to assist eligible applicants with:

- Improved health and safety of unsheltered homeless people living in public or private spaces, including reduced risk of COVID-19 or other disease transmission.
- Reduced community concerns about public health and safety in neighbourhoods where unsheltered homeless populations are seeking temporary shelter and services.
- Improved coordination among eligible applicants and health/social service providers, Indigenous organizations and others working on housing, homelessness and service provision.
- Increased capacity of eligible applicants to work with homeless persons and Indigenous organizations towards culturally safe and trauma-informed responses.

In March 2021, CRD staff responsible for Salt Spring Island (SSI) services identified the need for additional bylaw and public information services to help address ongoing issues related to unlawful activities in community parks in Ganges Village, specifically Centennial Park, most of which are related to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and the lack of options to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness on Salt Spring Island.

At the same time, staff at Salt Spring Island Community Services (SSICS) approached CRD Housing Division staff requesting the CRD consider applying for a grant from the UBCM program to help support additional services for people experiencing homelessness and contributing to some of the issues in the Ganges Village area and Centennial Park. CRD staff proposed and SSICS staff have agreed to enter into a contract to deliver services that align with the grant program requirements.

Consultations between Regional Housing and SSI Administration staff have identified the opportunity to apply to the UBCM grant program to potentially support both the CRD and SSICS proposed services and an application for funding, presented in Appendix A, was submitted to UBCM in April 2021. One of the requirements of UBCM is for regional councils to approve resolutions to receive funding from the grant program.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board: That the CRD Board authorize staff to prepare and submit an application, negotiate and accept the terms, and receive funds through the Union of BC Municipalities *Strengthening Communities’ Services Program* to support the activities outlined in the proposal presented in Appendix A.

Alternative 2

That the UBCM Strengthening Communities’ Services Grant Application report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Hospitals and Housing Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Social Implications

The social and employment development services proposed by SSICS will help address the need people experiencing homelessness have for shelter, material support and meaningful occupation in the community. The additional bylaw services and the public information campaign will target interventions that will create a more peaceful and orderly environment in public spaces, especially in the Ganges Village and Centennial Park areas of SSI. This will reduce conflict of use issues among different park users and contribute to increased use of these spaces by all people living on the island.

Financial Implications

CRD costs related to providing additional time-limited bylaw services, conducting a public information campaign and administering the contract with SSICS are eligible for funding under the UBCM Program, hence these costs will be covered on a cost recovery basis through the grant funding.

Service Delivery Implications

The Regional Housing Division has a mandate as well as the capacity to provide overall management of the grant.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The Regional Housing Affordability Strategy supports the CRD engaging with community partners in efforts to address issues related to the impacts of homelessness in the region.

CONCLUSION

There is a need to take action to address the social and economic needs of vulnerable populations who are unsheltered on SSI while also providing short-term increases in bylaw services in order to ensure public spaces, especially those in the Ganges Village area, remain safe and inclusive spaces for all those wishing to use these spaces during high-use months of the year. The introduction of the UBCM Strengthening Communities’ Services Grant Program provides a unique

opportunity for the CRD to access funding to support augmented service levels, but also social and employment support services to be provided by the SSICS. Applying for and receiving funding through this grant program to meet short-term needs associated with the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic will not create any expectation or requirement that the CRD sustain these services or its contract with SSICS beyond March 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board:

That the CRD Board authorize staff to prepare and submit an application, negotiate and accept the terms, and receive funds through the Union of BC Municipalities *Strengthening Communities’ Services Program* to support the activities outlined in the proposal presented in Appendix A.

Submitted by:	Don Elliott, MUP, Senior Manager, Regional Housing
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: UBCM Strengthening Communities Grant Application