

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 2023 January 5

**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

**FILE:** 17000 01

**SUBJECT: POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR BURNABY**

**PURPOSE:** To seek Council authorization to submit a funding application to the Union of BC Municipalities' (UBCM) Poverty Reduction Planning & Action program to develop a community-based poverty reduction plan in Burnaby.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** the Committee recommend Council authorize staff to submit an application to the Union of BC Municipalities' Poverty Reduction Planning & Action program as detailed in *Section 6.0* of this report and, if awarded, provide overall grant management.
2. **THAT** This report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, Planning and Development Committee, Access Advisory Committee, Public Safety Committee and the Financial Management Committee for information.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

At its meeting on 2022 March 07, Council received a delegation from the Burnaby Primary Care Network to consider undertaking the development of a City-led poverty reduction strategy for Burnaby. Council referred the delegation to the Social Planning Committee and the Committee requested a report back for consideration. This report responds to that request with background information for the Committee and Council on poverty reduction strategies including jurisdictional roles, available 2023 funding from the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), existing initiatives that support poverty reduction in Burnaby and considerations for pursuing a community-based poverty reduction strategy.

**2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

Reducing poverty at a local level is aligned with and supported by the following Council-adopted policies and plans/strategies: *HOME: Housing and Homelessness Strategy* (2021), *Child Care Action Plan* (2021), *Burnaby Transportation Plan* (2021), *Equity Policy* (2020), *Official Community Plan* (1998), *Social Sustainability Strategy* (2011), *Economic Development Strategy* (2007); and the *Healthy Community Policy* (1991).

### 3.0 POVERTY REDUCTION AND GOVERNMENT ROLES

#### 3.1 Government of Canada

The Federal government plays a central role in poverty reduction through its responsibility for many broader macro-economic policies and social programs that affect the well-being of Canadians. This includes policies and programs that relate to children and families (e.g. Canada Child Benefit), income (e.g., employment insurance, guaranteed income support), housing (e.g. National Housing Strategy) and public transit (e.g. transit infrastructure funding). The Federal government also provides per capita funding to provincial governments in key areas such as health care and child care, and provides funding to municipalities and community service providers for projects and programs that align with federal priorities.

In 2018, the Government of Canada released *Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*<sup>1</sup> that sets out actions that span across areas of federal jurisdiction and establishes poverty reduction targets including a reduction in poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030, relative to 2015 levels. The Strategy sets Canada’s Official Poverty Line based on a measurement called ‘Market Basket Measure’<sup>2</sup> that identifies what individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living. The corresponding *Poverty Reduction Act* requires the Federal government to issue a progress report on the Strategy each fiscal year.

#### 3.2 Government of British Columbia

The Provincial government has jurisdiction over a broad range of social policy areas that include health care, education and social welfare. Additionally, it furthers its social development mandate through direct service provision (e.g. Ministry of Children and Family Development programs), services provided through health authorities and crown agencies (e.g. BC Housing), and contractual arrangements with non-profit service providers.

Following the Federal government, the Government of B.C. released the *TogetherBC: British Columbia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy*<sup>3</sup> in 2019. The purpose of the Strategy is to reduce the B.C. poverty rate by at least 25% and child poverty rate by at least 50% by 2024 using Canada’s Official Poverty Line. The Strategy aims to coordinate cross government actions as well as leverage Federal commitments and programs to reduce poverty. The Strategy’s principles of affordability, opportunity, reconciliation and social inclusion guide its six priority action areas:

- Making housing more affordable (e.g. support for renter households, increased supply of affordable housing, homelessness initiatives);
- Supporting families, children and youth (e.g. B.C. Child Opportunity Benefit, Childcare BC plan for new spaces and fee reductions);

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy

<sup>2</sup> Market Basket Measure is a calculation that reflects the combined costs of a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living. The basket includes items such as healthy food, appropriate shelter and home maintenance, and clothing and transportation among other goods and services.

<sup>3</sup> Government of British Columbia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy

- Expanding access to education and training (e.g. student loan reductions, skills training for older adults, investing in Trades training);
- More opportunities, more jobs (e.g. improvements to WorkBC and employment standards, increased opportunities for people with disabilities);
- Improving income supports (e.g. increased income assistance rates, increased minimum wage rates); and
- Investing in social inclusion (e.g. introduction of Accessibility legislation, restoration of the B.C. Human Rights Commission).

TogetherBC aims to make life more affordable for people struggling to get by through reducing costs and increasing incomes. It also aims to create opportunities for people by providing people the support they need to help break the cycle of poverty. To achieve its goals, the Province acknowledges it will need to work together with the Federal government, local governments, educational institutions, business, labour, the non-profit service provider and faith sectors and the broader community.

### **3.3 Municipal-based Poverty Reduction**

As referenced above, key policies, programs and funding to support poverty reduction lie within the mandates of the Federal and Provincial governments. However, as the government level closest to the people, local governments are at the front-line of seeing the impacts of poverty in their communities and can play an important role in developing local solutions in collaboration with community partners.

At a local level, poverty reduction strategies can complement Federal and Provincial initiatives by coordinating and directing resources to address gaps and barriers faced by people experiencing poverty. Examples of locally-based poverty reduction actions include:

- Coordinating resources at a local level to reduce barriers to health, education and employment opportunities;
- Reducing barriers to City-run programs (e.g. recreation credit programs);
- Increasing housing options for low income residents;
- Exploring social procurement models to support local business and create employment opportunities;
- Providing and planning for social infrastructure (e.g. community centres, health centres, schools, childcare, community resource centres, etc.);
- Collecting and disseminating demographic data to assist planning and programming in the community;
- Improving transportation infrastructure to allow people to move around the City by more cost effective modes; and
- Advocating to senior governments for transformational policy action and investment.

Municipalities approach poverty reduction based on the context and issues respective to their community needs, resulting in a wide range of poverty reduction initiatives.

#### **4.0 UBCM POVERTY REDUCTION FUNDING**

To support poverty reduction work, the Provincial government has provided \$5 million in planning and project funding to the UBCM to advance poverty reduction plans and actions at a municipal level. The first three intakes of the program (2020-2022) awarded over \$3 million to more than 100 local governments across the province.

In 2022 December, the UBCM announced a fourth intake for the remaining available funding. There are two streams to the UBCM's Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program: (1) develop or update a poverty reduction assessment or plan at a local level; and (2) for municipalities with poverty reduction plans, undertake a local project or action in order to reduce poverty at a local level. Municipalities can apply up to \$25,000 under Stream 1 and up to \$50,000 under Stream 2 funding. The deadline to apply Stream 1 and 2 grants is 2023 March 17.

Considerations for applying for a UBCM poverty reduction planning grant are discussed below in *Section 6.0*.

#### **5.0 EXISTING CITY-LED INITIATIVES THAT ADDRESS POVERTY IN BURNABY**

The City has many existing initiatives that generally address and support poverty reduction. A broad summary of key plans include the following:

- The *Economic Development Strategy* (2007) sets out an action plan for Burnaby's economic future through a coordinated approach, including workforce growth and job diversity in different sectors.
- The *Social Sustainability Strategy* (2011) has seven strategic priorities to meet its overall goals of community inclusion, livability and resilience. The first priority, Meeting Basic Needs, includes a number of actions for the City and partners to undertake to contribute towards poverty reduction.
- The *Child Care Action Plan* (2021) this 10-year plan aims to increase the number of quality, affordable child care spaces by 4,400 spaces by 2030 thereby supporting parents to work, go to school and manage family responsibilities.
- The *Burnaby Transportation Plan* (2021) is the City's guiding policy document for transportation planning and decision-making in Burnaby over the next 30 years. This plan includes advocacy actions for a more equitable transit fare structure, reduced fares for youth and continuation of free transit for children under 12 years old as well as other actions to reduce barriers to transit use.
- The *HOME: Housing and Homelessness Strategy* (2021) has goals to foster an inclusive, livable community with housing for a variety of incomes and needs. This strategy addresses existing and future housing needs in Burnaby for the next 10 years.
- The *Food Systems Strategy*, currently under development, will help address priorities and actions towards sustainable food systems and food security for all people in Burnaby.

In addition to key plans and strategies, the City also has a number of existing programs and services that support poverty reduction, including the following:

- The **Recreation Credit Program** is a credit program that helps Burnaby residents in financial need receive subsidy towards eligible parks, recreation and cultural services program fees and admissions.
- The **Community Grant Program** supports non-profit service providers and cultural, athletic and volunteer groups that provide services or programs beneficial to Burnaby residents.
- **Citizen Support Services** is a volunteer-based program that provides a number of services for isolated seniors aged 65 and over.
- The **Community Resource Centres** are City-owned office and program spaces that provide reduced rents to local non-profit service providers to assist in their delivery of critical social services in Burnaby.
- The City's **Extreme Weather Response** includes activating warming and cooling centres during extreme temperatures for Burnaby's vulnerable residents.
- The **Library** provides free programs that support the social development of Burnaby residents, such as early childhood, education program, courses for newcomers and programs for those looking for work, etc.
- **Food Programs** – Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services has historically offered free or subsidized food as part of many programs. Examples include subsidized seniors luncheons, youth cooking programs and children's gardening programs.
- The City is a **Living Wage Employer**, where employees and contracted services employees receive a living wage, at a minimum, to meet the basic needs of a family of four.
- Since 2014, through the **City-School District Child Care Facilities Memorandum of Agreement** – the City in partnership with the School District has developed seven child care facilities for children five years old and younger. Two more centres are under development through the partnership.
- The City's **housing program** provides below-market, affordable, and subsidized rental housing for varying household income levels as well as a robust tenant assistance policy to protect tenants from displacement due to rezoning.
- The City contributes additional funding to the **Burnaby Rent Bank** to offer low-fee, no-interest, short term loans to low to moderate-income individuals and families that live in Burnaby.
- City staff provides **in-kind support** (through staff time) on various community-based planning tables, committees and working groups to support community poverty reduction related initiatives.

## 6.0 A POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR BURNABY

### 6.1 Why Develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Burnaby

The examples in *Section 5.0* above illustrate a range of City-led initiatives that contribute towards poverty reduction in our community. The development of a Burnaby-specific poverty reduction strategy, in collaboration with key community stakeholders, would serve to guide the City's and

community's work to help reduce and prevent poverty. A community-based poverty reduction strategy would lead to a deeper and shared understanding of the experiences and circumstances of individuals and families at risk of or living in poverty and identify targeted actions to help reduce poverty. Experiences of poverty are complex and varied, can be affected by individual circumstances as well as broader systemic barriers, and are disproportionately impacted by equity-based factors such as gender, ethnicity, disability and age. In consideration of these factors, and also the impact of poverty on our community's overall resiliency, economy, social connectedness and well-being, the development of a community-based poverty reduction strategy for Burnaby has merit.

## **6.2 Considerations for Developing a Burnaby Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Staff have consulted with neighbouring municipalities who have or are undertaking poverty reduction strategies. Key learnings from these municipalities include the following:

- To be effective, the development and implementation of a poverty reduction strategy should be community driven and include key stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit sectors.
- Existing community-based planning tables, committees and working groups should be used to help identify gaps and barriers faced by people experiencing poverty.
- People at risk of or living in poverty should be included in the process and guide the development of the strategy.
- To varying degrees, poverty reduction strategies require ongoing municipal support, either through staff time or a funding contribution to a lead community-based partner. To be effective, a poverty reduction strategy requires a viable implementation plan.

## **6.3 Application for a UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning Grant**

As noted above, the UBCM has announced a fourth intake for its Poverty Reduction Planning and Action program. It is further noted that to be eligible for Stream 2 (funding to undertake specific poverty reduction actions or projects), a municipality is required to have a poverty reduction strategy. Therefore, in consideration of the benefits of a locally-based poverty reduction strategy, it is recommended that Council authorize staff to apply for a UBCM Stream 1 poverty reduction planning grant of \$25,000. The development of a Burnaby-specific poverty reduction strategy would position the community to receive future project-based poverty reduction funding.

Should Council approve the recommendation and the grant application is successful, a portion of the grant funding would be used towards consulting services to assist staff in developing the strategy. In consideration of the learnings from other municipalities, a key component of the strategy would be the development of a viable implementation (resourcing) plan.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report responds to the Social Planning Committee's request, and considers there is merit in undertaking the development of a community-based poverty reduction strategy for Burnaby.

To: Social Planning Committee  
From: General Manager Planning and Development  
Re: Poverty Reduction Strategy for Burnaby  
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The UBCM has announced a fourth intake for its Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program. Grants of up to \$25,000 are available to assist municipalities in developing poverty reduction strategies. As discussed in *Section 6.0* above, the development of a locally-based poverty reduction strategy would lead to a deeper and shared understanding of the impacts of poverty in our community and identify targeted actions to help reduce or prevent it.

It is therefore recommended that Committee request Council to authorize staff to apply for a UBCM Stream 1 poverty reduction planning grant of \$25,000 to fund the development of a community-based poverty reduction strategy for Burnaby.

It is further recommended that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, Planning and Development Committee, Access Advisory Committee, Public Safety Committee and the Financial Management Committee for information.



E.W. Kozak, General Manager  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Copied to: Chief Administrative Officer  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer  
General Manager Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services  
General Manager Corporate Services  
General Manager Lands and Facilities  
Chief Librarian  
City Solicitor  
Sr. Director Legislative Services