

THE CORPORATION OF THE  
**CITY OF WHITE ROCK**  
CORPORATE REPORT



**DATE:** May 12, 2025

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** John Woolgar, Director, Recreation and Culture

**SUBJECT:** 2024-2025 Warming Centre Operations Review

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**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council receive the May 12, 2025, corporate report from the Director of Recreation and Culture, titled “2024-2025 Warming Centre Operations Review” for information and consideration.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Lookout Housing and Health Society was contracted by the City to operate a daytime warming centre at Centennial Park seven (7) days a week, 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., from December 2, 2024, to March 15, 2025. The warming centre was open for 104 days and received a total of 3,304 visits. Individuals attending the centre were provided with daytime shelter, meals, clothing, emergency first aid and physician/nurse directed medical services, as well as connections to community health and social services.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

Motion # & Meeting Date	Motion Details
2024-369 October 21, 2024	THAT Council direct staff to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Award the contract for the 2024/2025 Emergency Daytime Warming Centre to Lookout Housing and Health Society &amp; Engaged Communities Canada Society for the cost of \$409,970.41 and authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to sign the contract for services;</li><li>2. Increase the budget to \$409,970.41 from operating contingency (for 2024 costs) and prior year surplus (for 2025 costs) to the daytime warming centre budget; and</li><li>3. Allocate an additional \$49,970.41 from operating contingency (for 2024 costs) and prior year surplus (for 2025 costs) to the daytime warming centre budget; and</li><li>4. Hire extra security to patrol the surrounding area outside hours of operation and allocate an additional \$30,000 from operating contingency and prior year surplus; and</li><li>5. Establish a Warming Centre Volunteer Group to help with area cleaning.</li></ol>

2024-534 October 7, 2024	THAT Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Receive the October 7, 2024, corporate report from the Chief Administrative Officer titled “Daytime Warming Centre Update” for consideration; and</li><li>2. Direct staff to explore and report back regarding the options provided by Sources at the meeting (utilizing the hours provided by Sources) and work with the City of Surrey and that this be utilized during the times of extreme cold weather (called by the province).</li></ol>
2024-316 September 23, 2024	THAT Council direct staff to reach out to community groups (including churches, Sources, Central Plaza owners) to bring forward potential options for consideration of location in order to run a Warming Centre.

## **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an operational review following the winter 2024-2025 operations of the City’s daytime warming centre (The Centre).

On October 21, 2024, Council authorized the award of a contract to Lookout Housing and Health Society for the operation of the Centre for the 2024-2025 winter season. The Centre was located on the Centennial Park parking lot next to the Community Gardens and across the street from the outdoor lacrosse box, and baseball diamond.

The Centre provided shelter, meals, personal hygiene supplies, clothing, emergency first aid and physician/nurse directed medical services, as well as connections to community health and social services.

The Centre was open for 104 consecutive days from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., beginning on December 2, 2024, and closing on March 15, 2025. The Centre received a total of 3,304 visits which was an average of 220 visits per week. 76% of Centre visitors were male and a total of 5,012 meals were served to visitors throughout the season. There were many referrals for social services including 981 referrals for housing.

The local community was very generous, providing the Centre with donations of clothing, food, blankets, and other personal items. Support and donations came from different organizations and individuals including sandwiches from a local hockey team, lasagna from a local service group and stocked backpacks and essential supply bags from faith-based organizations.

The City of Surrey also hosted an overnight Extreme Weather Response Shelter (EWR) at the South Surrey Recreation Centre at 14601 20 Avenue which is 1.3km from the Centre in Centennial Park. The hours of Surrey’s EWR were 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. Local social service agencies provided transportation for EWR shelter visitors to the Centre at 7:00 a.m., and then back to the EWR at 10:00 p.m. The EWR would only open when specific weather conditions deemed to pose a threat to the health and safety of individuals experiencing homelessness. This resulted in the Centre at Centennial Park being open on many days when the overnight EWR was closed.

## **Request for Proposal Process (RFP)**

The City posted a Daytime Warming Centre Operator Request for Proposal (RFP) on July 19, 2024. The RFP closed on August 19, 2024, with one submission which was a joint proposal from Lookout Housing and Health Society and Engaged Communities Canada. The proposal was awarded, and a contract was drawn up with Lookout Housing and Health Society as Engaged Communities only offered consulting services as part of the bid process. Lookout Housing and Health Society is a charitable organization that provides housing and a range of support services to adults with low or no income who have few, if any housing or support challenges. Lookout Society is an experienced minimal barrier service provider that operates numerous extreme weather response shelters around the Lower Mainland. A minimal barrier service provider is where a minimum number of expectations are required of the individuals who wish to attend the centre. Guests are allowed to attend while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. There is a focus on harm reduction which is intended to minimize the risks and consequences of certain behaviours, rather than prohibiting the behaviour itself, and focuses on building trust and rapport with guests to open dialogue to change. Please see Appendix #1 for a report from the Looking Housing and Health Society on the operation of the Centre for the 2024/2025 season.

### **Warming Centre Park Ambassador Volunteers**

A Warming Centre Park Ambassador volunteer program was established to assist in providing a safe environment for the public in visiting Centennial Park and to help keep the area clean during Centre operations. After completing training provided by city staff and the RCMP, 44 volunteers patrolled Centennial Park in small groups twice daily from December 2 to March 15. Park Ambassadors picked up litter, monitored and removed potential safety hazards, as well as identified individuals in distress and notified the appropriate authorities. The public mentioned to numerous staff that Centennial Park was very clean throughout the winter.

### **Warming Centre Impacts on Area**

The Centre was located within the well-used Centennial Park which contains an ice arena, curling rink, the Centennial Park Leisure Centre, the Centre for Active Living, baseball diamond, baseball batting cages, soccer field, tennis courts, lacrosse box, pickleball courts, community gardens, Generations Playground, Peninsula Productions, off-leash dog park, White Rock Tennis Club, and the Mann Park Lawn Bowling Club. There is also one childcare facility immediately adjacent to the park and one childcare facility located in the Bowling Club facility in the western part of the park boundary.

Staff heard feedback from park user groups that reported negative interactions with clients of the Centre including concerns regarding open drug use. There were also incidents of vandalism and break-ins to several facilities during the warming centre season which included the Curling Club washrooms, the Peninsula Productions facility, the baseball facilities and the Parks operations yard.

The security contractor retained by the Centre operator reported 223 incidents of drug use or drug paraphernalia, 15 reported police responses, and 9 emergency medical services calls. The Warming Centre Park Ambassadors reported 26 incidents of drug paraphernalia found, 48 incidents of excess garbage, and 13 incidents of biohazardous waste.

### **RCMP and Bylaws**

White Rock RCMP noted that there was an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness arriving from other areas of the Lower Mainland throughout the period that the Centre was operating. During field interviews with individuals, police learned that there were multiple individuals who were from other jurisdictions who reported that they were in White Rock because of the warming centre. Staff expect that this is likely due to this being the 4<sup>th</sup>

winter season the Centre has been operational, and word has spread through the Lower Mainland.

White Rock RCMP attended the facility and immediate surrounding area for 22 files directly related to the Centre. These files included assaults, reports of open drug use, causing a disturbance, suspicious persons/well-being checks, fraud, as well as break and enter. In addition, RCMP attended 143 files during the same time frame throughout the City where there was some association to guests of the Centre.

Police officers noted that when speaking to some local individuals experiencing homelessness that were known to them, these individuals stated they did not want to attend the Centre, either for fear of their personal safety or fear of their possessions being stolen.

The City's Bylaw Enforcement Division received seven (7) direct calls for enforcement, with most concerns related to tent camps that were set up in and around Centennial Park. RCMP and City operations were called in to support as required.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The total budget allocated for the winter 2024-2025 season was \$439,970.41. Since the Centre was open for fewer days than initially budgeted, there will be savings in the operating cost for the Centre which will be finalized when all invoices are received.

The City is anticipating being eligible for cost recovery through the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) for periods where Environment Canada issues extreme weather alerts. To date, \$23,135.70 in costs has been approved by EMCRC, and it is anticipated that up to an additional \$81,000 may be received.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The City is not mandated to provide a warming centre service; however, it has done so for four years.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL INVOLVEMENT/IMPLICATIONS**

Planning and Development Services, Operations and Engineering, RCMP, Fire & Rescue, and Communications and Marketing all supported the operation of the Centre this past winter.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

Extreme cold weather threatens the safety and health of people experiencing homelessness.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

The operation of the 2024-2025 Daytime Warming Centre is aligned with the following strategic goal of Council:

Plan for adverse weather impacts to protect community safety:

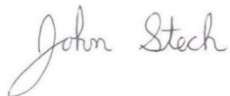
- Assess future location, annually seeking to secure grant funding, and continuing to seek partnerships with the City of Surrey to operate the Warming Centre each winter from November to March, which has not always been successful.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Centre received 3,304 visits, which was an average of 220 per week throughout the winter season and was very important in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the

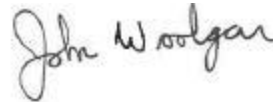
community during the colder months of the year. The operator of the Centre, Lookout Housing and Health Society, provided support to these individuals including meals and referrals to social service agencies that included 981 referrals for housing. The Warming Centre Park Ambassador program proved very successful in keeping the environment around the Centre safe and clean. However, there were many challenges to hosting the Centre in Centennial Park, which included impacts to residents, businesses and Centennial Park user groups. There were also reports that many of the individuals that utilized the services at the Centre relocated to the community for the winter season.

Respectfully submitted,



John Stech  
Manager of Community Recreation

Reviewed and approved by,



John Woolgar  
Director of Recreation and Culture

### **Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer**

This corporate report is provided for information purposes.



Guillermo Ferrero  
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: Report from the Looking Housing and Health Society on the Operation of the Centre for the 2024/2025 Season