



**City of Kingston  
Report to Council  
Report Number 21-048**

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**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Lanie Hurdle, Chief Administrative Officer  
**Resource Staff:** Corporate Management Team  
**Date of Meeting:** January 19, 2021  
**Subject:** City Support to Social Services Recovery Taskforce

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**Council Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Theme: Regulatory & compliance

Goal: See above

**Executive Summary:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for residents, organizations and businesses within the City of Kingston, like all other municipalities in Ontario, Canada and around the world. The City has taken a number of steps to alter services and establish new programs to support sectors and individuals that have been and continue to be most impacted by COVID-19 challenges.

The most vulnerable individuals, and the organizations that serve them directly, have unfortunately been amongst the most challenged by the pandemic. A Social Services Recovery Taskforce (SSRTF) was established in May of 2020 to assess areas in greatest need and to identify collective solutions to support vulnerable individuals. The City of Kingston has been a member of the SSRTF and in 2020, focused its efforts on supporting vulnerable populations with more shelter/housing options with integrated support services as well as food programs.

City staff have continued to work with the SSRTF and have identified additional supports in other areas that could be provided by the City with some changes to policies and operations. This report identifies operational changes that staff will be implementing as well as some recommended policy changes in order to support the social services sector and the most vulnerable individuals in the community.

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**Recommendation:**

**That** Council endorse the various policy and procedural amendments described in Report Number 21-048 to support the Social Services Recovery Task Force's ongoing work; and that

**That** Council direct staff to report back in Q3 2021 on the policy and procedural amendments approved in Report Number 21-048, to outline the changes implemented and the outcomes/results of these changes.

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**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**Lanie Hurdle,**  
**Chief Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:**

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services

Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects

Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Corporate Services

Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston

Not Required

Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer

Sheila Kidd, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works

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**Options/Discussion:**

The Social Services Recovery Task Force (SSRTF) was established by United Way KFL&A in May of 2020 to assess the impacts of the pandemic and coordinate community services to respond and address the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Although there have always been gaps in the system, the pandemic has served to enhance these gaps, and the most vulnerable members of the community are most impacted. As a sector, agencies are working closely together to ensure no one is left behind, addressing issues with compassion, caring and support.

The SSRTF initiated the following three objectives:

**Collaboration and Coordination:** explore how community agencies may be able to work together to achieve efficiencies and enhancements in program delivery, exploring ways to look at system-wide collaboration and coordination.

**Needs:** identify the critical needs in the social services sector – short, intermediate and long term - and look at ways to address potential gaps with potentially limited resources.

**Stabilization:** understand the impact the pandemic will have on the social services sector in the region, and what sources of funding can be invested in priority areas to replace funding shortfalls.

The SSRTF was initially established for six months until the end of 2020 and collectively identified three (3) priority areas: Coordination & Collaboration, Redesign of Services and Marketing & Advocacy.

Through the Coordination and Collaboration priority a centralized food hub project is underway, and further coordinated initiatives are taking place to build on work done to date with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) and Trauma-informed care approach building resiliency to help families and individuals thrive. The Redesign of Services priority resulted in some increased resource sharing between agencies such as COVID-19 manuals and staff mental health webinars. The Marketing and Advocacy priority resulted in the establishment of a strategy to promote the collective impact in the community of the social services sector; positioning and reminding stakeholders that agencies provide essential service to the community.

In the fall of 2020, the taskforce determined an interest to continue to meet on a quarterly basis in 2021 to continue to work on the priorities established.

City staff have continued to work with the SSRTF and focused most efforts on additional support services for the homeless population in 2020. City staff are now also focusing attention to other areas and sectors that have been impacted by the pandemic.

Below, staff have identified the sectors and actions to be taken by the City in order to support the social service organizations and the population that they serve. Some actions are

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operational and can and will be implemented by staff, but others require changes to policies which require Council's support. Some actions will require additional work and follow up with Council.

### **Transportation – volunteer drivers/vans for pick-up delivery of food programs**

Some agencies involved with food programs have identified challenges with deliveries of food donations to the most vulnerable in the community, such as senior citizens. As a result of the pandemic, many vulnerable individuals are not as comfortable or capable of accessing services and therefore the delivery of essential needs has become critical. Organizations have had challenges obtaining enough volunteers in the last months to provide this delivery service on an ongoing basis.

City staff have assessed that as a result of the pandemic, the City has potential to provide assistance whether through use of city vehicles that are not in full use, and/or by way of City employees volunteering or being reassigned due to changes in operations. As such, staff will work on the logistics required to support these initiatives including any temporary reassignments, invitations to staff to volunteer to support these agencies, and provisioning vehicles to staff or agency volunteers. The Corporate Management Team volunteered some time just before the holidays to support this service so are cognizant of the need to put the call out for support to all City staff. This will be implemented in the short-term.

### **Technology (laptops, computers, tablets) provide ability/technology to work from home**

The pandemic has resulted in many people working from home. This has been implemented without significant challenges for many large organizations, businesses and governments but this has been difficult for some of the smaller not-for-profit organizations due to the lack of technology equipment.

Currently, the City has an agreement with *LifeSpan Technology*, an asset disposal organization, that picks up old equipment, completes a certified data wipe, and reimburses the City for a portion of the residual value of the equipment on the resale market. It is important to note that the revenue generated by the sale of this equipment is negligible and changes to this process would not impact City budgets and operations. City staff are recommending that Council direct staff to redistribute technology equipment at no cost to not-for-profit organizations on a quarterly basis. This will be implemented in the short-term. City staff will complete a data-wipe of the machine to ensure that no City related data remains and restore the machine to its factory state. Each computer donated will include the original operating system (e.g. Windows) license. Equipment will be donated in an "as-is" condition.

In the long-term, City staff will review the possibility of leveraging the benefit of group buying to provide discounts on new equipment purchases, such as we do for gas/fuel and cell phone program group plan, for not-for-profit organizations.

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**Access to Internet**

Partner agencies and boards have identified that there is a need for students and individuals to access better internet connectivity or space for virtual schoolwork. Once public health measures and provincial restrictions allow, City staff will explore a plan for safe access to City facilities to provide free access to internet for students using their own personal devices, either during class hours where possible, or after hours where the facility is staffed.

**Take-out containers**

Organizations distributing meals to the most vulnerable populations have identified a need to access more take-out containers as the number of meals being distributed has been higher than projected. City staff have connected with Sustainable Kingston who are working with downtown restaurants and local institutions to leverage the potential of group buying of compostable take-out containers in order to access reduced rates for not-for-profit organizations.

**Food programs**

COVID-19 has increased the need for food, local food and meals in the community. Use of food and meal programs has increased in 2020 and City staff continue to work with organizations to identify ways to support food producers, farmers and organizations that grow, collect and prepare food to support residents of the community.

As part of the updated Council priorities, in November 2020 through [Report Number 20-246](#), Council endorsed the following deliverables to help support food security within the community:

- Review Springer Market Square Public Market by-law to increase the availability and prioritize access to local food in Q2 2021.

Staff are currently reviewing and consulting key stakeholders on potential changes to the Springer Market Square Public Market by-law that would provide more flexibility to farmers, potential reduced rates and potential donations from farmers to not-for-profit food and meal programs. Proposed changes will be provided to Council in March, prior to the beginning of the Springer Market Square Public Market.

- Support the establishment of a Food Hub as initiated by the SSRTF for food program coordination and food distribution in collaboration with other community organizations by Q3 2021.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for a centralized warehouse/hub for food collection, distribution, storage. City is working with group of agencies and the United Way, to explore options to utilize, convert or create space(s). Currently Kingston Gospel Temple has been used courtesy of Lionhearts— once the pandemic is over, this will be a gap in the food provision space.

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In addition to the identified deliverables, staff has also created an opportunity to grow produce for local consumption. The City operates a greenhouse located in Rodden Park. In normal times staff hosts a series of weekend open-houses and usually grow specific flowers and plants for the open-houses. This year, since the open-houses will not occur, greenhouse staff have decided to use the available space to grow some produce (salad greens) that will be provided to Loving Spoonsful for local consumption.

### **Support to Recreation Programs and Organizations**

Recreation programs and organizations such as the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club have been impacted significantly by the pandemic as some of their services rely on fee for services to meet their revenue targets and balance their budgets. A number of these organizations also have limited reserve funds to draw from in order to sustain loss of revenues.

In the short-term, City staff have been working more closely with organizations and associations to provide access to city facilities and deliver programs, as permitted within the COVID-19 restrictions. There is no doubt that facilities and capital expenditures are significant for these not-for-profit organizations which can impact their sustainability. City staff believe that it is critical to support these organizations that have expertise in front line community services.

Therefore, City staff will continue to work on options to facilitate and implement partnerships that could include the use of private facilities and free or low-cost access to City facilities in order to deliver community programs. City staff will also explore options to expand memberships across organizations and explore ways to develop future recreation programs and facilities in partnership. Any change in specific policies and capital partnerships will be brought to Council for approval.

The initiatives above are in addition to Council's recent approval to adjust recreation fees in 2021 providing free access to gym memberships, open pool swims, and open public skating for those qualifying for the Municipal Fee Assistance Program.

#### **Existing Policy/By-Law:**

None

#### **Notice Provisions:**

None

#### **Accessibility Considerations:**

None

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**Financial Considerations:**

As described in this report.

**Contacts:**

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**Other Staff Consulted:**

Ruth Noordegraaf, Director, Housing & Social Services

Bhavana Varma, President & CEO, United Way KFL&A

**Exhibits Attached:**

None