

**Draft Resolution**  
**Provincial COVID-19 Supplement Funding**

THAT Council supports the current temporary COVID-19 supplemental increase to individuals receiving Provincial income or disability assistance be made permanent;

AND THAT Council authorizes the Mayor to write a letter supporting an increase to current social assistance amounts to the Ministers of Finance, Social Development & Poverty Reduction, Housing, and Children & Family Development.

Background

Councillor Wooldridge made a Notice of Motion during the Monday, February 8, 2021 Council meeting regarding extending and making permanent the COVID-19 related temporary increase to social assistance monthly amounts. The background information, below, was supplied by Councillor Wooldridge who will speak to the Draft Resolution at the Monday, February 22, 2021 Council meeting.

Stephen Fleming  
City Clerk

**BACKGROUND:**

People in BC receiving income or disability assistance have stated that the \$300 COVID 'top-up' made a very noticeable difference in their lives. For more than a decade, thousands of British Columbians have lived in dire poverty. In B.C., income assistance is currently \$760 a month, and disability assistance is \$1,183 a month, to cover everything: food, rent, medical supplies, clothes, heat, transportation, and more. After COVID-19 hit in 2020, people on income and disability assistance in B.C. received a temporary \$300-per-month increase, for a total of \$1,060 a month for a single person and \$1,483 a month for someone with a disability — still below the poverty line.

Kelowna's Journey Home Strategy identifies data that gives an understanding of the number of people in Extreme Core Housing Need (highest risk of homelessness) due to low incomes (under \$20,000 per year) and paying 50% or more on rental costs. The strategy estimates that approximately 2800-3000 people are at risk of homelessness, we know that mindful intervention with targeted measures, like supplemented social assistance rates (or 'safety net' funding), prevent this whenever possible.

Municipalities across the country are faced with a worsening homelessness crisis especially true for those with disabilities. Those at risk of homelessness have both a high housing cost and a poverty challenge. If we compare the average incomes of those at risk to the average Kelowna household, the picture is startling: high-risk renter households earn a fraction of the income of average Kelowna households, yet they face similar housing costs in a tightening marketplace.

The **2018 Report on Homeless Counts in BC**, compiled by Homelessness Services Association of BC, Urban Matters, and the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, reports that 69% of people experiencing

homelessness are dependent on government income, while 51% say their income is too low to be able to pay rent.

The 2020 BC Child Poverty Report, First Call says one in five BC children live in poverty. In 2018, there were 159,570 children and youth living in poor households with many living in deep poverty, including *5,970 children (or 16.7% of all children) in the Kelowna Census Metropolitan Area.*

Journey Home's #1 Pillar: Inclusion & Prevention identifies the need to work upstream, to be proactive instead of reactive. To stop the flow of homelessness through targeted prevention, and early identification to support individuals before they reach a stage of crisis. Targeted approaches like increased monthly supplements aide in addressing housing and poverty needs in the community.

**Supporting Policies:**

- Council Priorities 2019-2022 'Social& Inclusive'
- Council adopted 'Journey Home Strategy' June 2018
- BC Urban Mayor's Caucus 4 Pillars (related to poverty reduction) Affordable Housing, MHSU services & public transit

**Related Ministries:**

- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction
- Ministry of Housing
- Ministry of Children & Family Development