

**Dawson Creek Social Plan:
Action Plan Recommendations**

Social Planning and Research Council of BC
August 25, 2008

Global Recommendations and Implementation

The priorities and actions for the City of Dawson Creek Social Plan have some significant common themes. Since the City often holds secondary or limited responsibility for social services, many of the options available to the City involve communications, advocacy and partnership building with and between community agencies, funders, business sector, and other levels of governments. While the City does not have the mandate or capacity to function as a front-line social service delivery agency, it does have an opportunity to engage with the community and community agencies to identify community needs and help ensure that the needs of community members are met.

In order for a social plan to be effective, it is essential to regularly assess the needs of the community, to identify emerging issues and to ensure that the City has the capacity to engage with community agencies over time and across a range of issues. The following global recommendations reflect the overarching goals of the Social Plan.

Facilitating Collaboration and Partnership

- Work to bring together social service agencies, taking a facilitating role to increase collaboration, cooperation and problem solving, as well as recognizing and building upon successes.
- Leverage partnership with the business community, government ministries and authorities, and City departments to support the capacity of social service agencies in service delivery and social planning.

Awareness Building and Advocacy

- Taking a leadership role in supporting community agencies in addressing social issues through public awareness building and information sharing.
- Continue to advocate other levels of governments and authorities to ensure adequate resources in addressing current and emerging social issues.
- Participate in programs that contribute to understanding what contributes to a good quality of life in similar sized municipalities.

City Role and Capacity

- Ensure that adequate staff capacity exists at the City to engage with community agencies and community issues on an ongoing basis. Staff should have a specialized skill set that will:
 - bring a “social” lens to a variety of municipal and community issues.
 - work collaboratively with stakeholders.
 - facilitate community discussions on key social issues.
 - advocate for social change and community development.
 - identify and monitor social trends (e.g. social indicators).

- Develop and establish processes for identifying and responding to emerging social issues.
- Ensure the City retains the capacity to have a role in developing social policy for Dawson Creek residents.

Long-term

- Apply a ‘social’ lens to development and policy planning, to ensure that the social priorities of the community are considered in municipal planning and processes.
- Continue to position the City of Dawson Creek as a leader in addressing the social issues in the community by serving a partnership building and information sharing role.

IMPLEMENTATION

This Social Plan for the City of Dawson Creek sets out an ambitious plan for coordinating social planning efforts in the City and building upon the good work that has already been done. Many of the recommendations involve working in collaboration with community social service agencies to address issues that have been identified during the planning process.

In order to move forward in a coordinated way in implementing the plan, it is recommended that City of Dawson Creek staff, in consultation with the Community Services Network and community agencies, develop an annual implementation plan for the Social Plan. It will be important for City staff to monitor progress, and report annually to Council on their achievements.

There are a number of recommendations in the plan which involve advocating to senior levels of government to ensure that adequate levels of social services are provided in the City of Dawson Creek. It is recommended that City staff work with community agencies to develop a coordinated advocacy effort. While advocacy is usually an ongoing process, Council endorsement of recommendations to senior levels of government will be crucial if advocacy efforts are to be effective. On many issues, the City of Dawson Creek may wish to encourage other municipalities to join their advocacy efforts, including bringing motions forward to the Union of BC Municipalities.

Recommendations

This section outlines the current capacity and recommended actions for the City of Dawson Creek in the twenty priority issue areas. The priority actions are grouped thematically but otherwise appear in the report in no particular order.

1. Child and Youth Issues

1.1 Education programs about a parent's role in Early Childhood Development

Early childhood development is a crucial aspect of long-term social well-being in a community. However, much work remains to be done to ensure that all children have access to the benefits of ECD, through families or programs. Many parents are unaware of existing programs, and many others do not have the time or resources to access information or services related to ECD. Consultation participants suggested that many of the programs may not be reaching the parents who need them the most.

Current Capacity

Currently there are several services in Dawson Creek providing information resources and referral support to parents ranging from pre-natal planning to Early Childhood Development. Consultation participants identified a need for increased targeted outreach to ensure that vulnerable families can benefit from these ECD programs and resources. Many parenting support programs are also constantly under threat without adequate sustainable funding.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek has limited responsibility in planning for the ECD programs. However, the City does have an important role in the planning and the creation of children friendly public spaces and infrastructures through its City planning and parks and recreations departments. In addition, the City also has an option to participate in the planning for effective outreach and awareness raising in ECD resources and programs.

Recommendations:

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Continue to explore opportunities within the City to raise public awareness of the parent's role in Early Childhood Development such as current city newsletter distribution.

City Policies

- Explore education initiatives specifically for the staff and councilors at the City to build awareness regarding the profile and needs of the marginalized communities.

- Enact a policy encouraging the creation of neighbourhood specific and affordable children friendly public spaces and recreational activities for marginalized neighbourhoods through City's community and service planning.

1.2 Affordable and Accessible quality licensed childcare and preschool programs

Participants in the gap analysis workshops identified a significant shortage of licensed childcare facilities and preschool programs in Dawson Creek. A key issue underlying this shortage is the limited funding available for child care providers, which significantly curtails their ability to hire and retain qualified staff. In addition the training and certification process limits a large number of people interested in receiving training.

Current Capacity

Current childcare capacity in Dawson Creek consists of some larger daycare facilities and a large number of in-home small scale daycare programs. Recently the City operated childcare program was closed down due to lack of staffing. This closure was identified as a huge loss to the community. Many of the community organizations operated daycare facilities are suffering from the same difficulties of recruitment. This is in part due to the restrictive licensing and certification process and the competitive economic boom in the oil and gas sector. Currently, the only certification program is offered by Northern Lights College through distance education.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek is not primarily responsible for funding or providing child care services. However, it does have a significant role in supporting existing services and advocating for any additional funding for childcare and certification and licensing policy modification.

Recommendations

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Advocate to the provincial government for revamping the certification system for early childhood development providers.
- Advocate to other levels of government for a provincial and national childcare plan that ensures the provision of affordable and quality childcare and early childhood development programs.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Explore community partnership to create child care spaces in unused school or City facilities.
- Engage with the Business community and Northern Light College to explore opportunities to address the current shortage of child care workers in the community.

1.3 Programs addressing drug & alcohol use by youths

Drug and alcohol use by youth has become a significant issue in BC communities. Participants at the consultation identify the need for more youth addictions counselor especially those with effective outreach support and services.

Current Capacity

Currently, only Northern Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development offer specialized addictions counseling. The services are limited to mandated clients and do not offer outreach services. Other community agencies such as Reconnect and Narwican Centre offer addictions counseling but they are also limited in their capacity to address the needs and the demands.

Municipal Responsibility

The City does not have primary responsibility in providing drug and alcohol prevention and services. However, the City does have a role in identifying current needs in the community and facilitate collaboration between community organizations to support the effective delivery of services. City also can support the delivery of services via offering collaboration with the parks and recreational services for targeted outreach and the use of city facilities.

Recommendations

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Advocate with other levels of government and private funders for additional addictions, mental health, and dual diagnosis youth counselors, specifically with an outreach focus.

City Policies

- Enact a policy which encourages City planning and consultation activities to include youth engagement strategies.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Partner with social service agencies when creating City run youth activities and events to allow social service agencies to outreach and build relationships with the youth.
- Explore and support initiatives that create positive images and attitudes towards youth and cross-generational relationship building.
- Identify and explore strategies for City activities and projects to capitalize on the assets and skills of youths in the community.

1.4 Mentoring & counseling services for youths at risk

Youth experience a wide range of challenges and pressures as they prepare for adulthood, and are often at risk of marginalization and unhealthy behaviours. In many cases, mentoring and counseling services can be of significant benefit to at-risk youths in

building resiliency skills in facing future challenges and ensuring a healthy integration into society. In Dawson Creek, many youth are engaged in lucrative energy industry work at a relatively early age, and can be at significant risk of developing addictive or risky behaviours.

Current Capacity

There are three organizations specifically offer counseling and mentoring services for youth at risk. Consultation participants identified a need for additional addictions and mental health counseling and support, especially those services that engage youth in their environment and working after school hours. In addition, counselors with skills to assist youth with dual diagnoses are especially needed. Although currently there is a youth drop-in centre in Dawson Creek, but the community has voiced that the current centre is not accessible. There is a need for a youth driven centre at the downtown core to allow youth to hang out in the evenings. Peer mentoring program is further identified as a way to engage both experiential youth and at-risk youths to mutually support each other in addressing the challenges they face.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek is not primarily responsible for youth mentoring and counseling services. The provincial government has the primary responsibility to deliver support services for youth. The City does have a role in advocating and facilitating collaboration to improve service delivery. In addition, the City has a vested interest in the location planning and zoning for the youth drop-in centre and can offer resources such as the use of City Parks and Recreation facilities.

Recommendations

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Encourage partnership between various levels of government agencies and community social services to create collaborative and alternative solutions (in prevention and counseling outreach) to address youth mental health and addiction issues, especially in the areas of dual diagnosis.
- Partnership with community service agencies in exploring the creation of accessible and centrally located youth-driven facilities and activities.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Engage in awareness building initiatives on youth health (mental health, physical health, addictions, etc.) using creative and youth friendly engagement tools such as recreational or arts and cultural activities.

City Policies

- Support to maximize the outreach capacity of community counseling and mentoring services to at-risk youth population. Support can include identifying outreach opportunities for outreach agencies to at-risk youth especially through parks and recreation programs and advocating with businesses and funders for resources support and continuing partnerships.

- Recognize the importance of unorganized play through the creation of open and safe Parks and Recreation drop-in facilities.
- Explore the opportunity to support a peer mentoring program through seed funding or training scholarships. A peer mentoring program allows youth to engage each other in counseling supports. This also provides a venue for youth to explore a career path in counseling support in the future.

2 Community Development

2.1 Initiative to develop a welcoming and socially inclusive community

With current energy industry boom, Dawson Creek is seeing a large influx of new arrivals. Furthermore, the labour market shortage also means that Dawson Creek also needs to attract more people to come the city and also tap into the non-traditional labour market population currently exist in the city. Consultation participants identified a need to help new arrivals to integrate into the community.

Current Capacity

Currently there are no agencies specifically provides settlement services in Dawson Creek. There is a Welcome Wagon program which is a voluntary based community and baby visits. The Community Services Network is a collaborative agency networking table first began to examine this particular emerging issue. The City of Dawson Creek also has begun some initiatives in creating a more inclusive work environment, and in the future, these initiatives will extend into the community and partners.

Municipal Responsibility

Municipalities have limited responsibility in creating providing settlement and social inclusion services in the community. However, the City of Dawson Creek does have a role in participating and supporting for planning, facilitation of social inclusion and community development. Furthermore, the City's Parks and Recreational and City Planning department has a responsibility in terms of creating services that are welcoming and socially inclusive to its clients.

Recommendations

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Facilitate cross-sector community collaboration (e.g. community agencies, schools and colleges, business, and Community Services Network) to create a comprehensive initiative in developing a welcoming and socially inclusive community.

City Policies

- Through Parks and Receptions and planning, create welcoming and inclusive facilities, parks and public spaces that allow the community to interact and build relationships.
- Continue to explore other alternative activities and opportunities to sports offered through City's Parks and Recreational facilities and programming.

Immigrant Population Inclusion

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Explore initiatives to recruit and attract immigrant population which includes ensuring community readiness in supporting new arrivals to the City.

- Work with the various sectors and community agencies to create settlement resources and support for new arrivals in Dawson Creek.

City Policies

- Develop a City policy that defines Dawson Creek as a welcoming community for new immigrants. Options include:
 - Continue to take a leadership role in educating City Council, staff, businesses, and community services agencies in creating awareness of cultural sensitivity and how to create a welcoming and inclusive community. When possible, include the immigrant population in these education initiatives including cross-cultural dialogues and presentations.
 - Expand services, programs, and courses offered through City's Parks and Recreation to include ESL programming or culturally appropriate activities and events.

Advocacy and Public Awareness

- Explore ways to engage and support the immigrant population through City's civic engagement processes and leverage support from the business sector.

Accessibility Planning

City Policies

- Develop a comprehensive Accessibility Strategy that positions Dawson Creek as a leader in community accessibility for people with disabilities.

Advocacy and Public Awareness

- Continue to advocate BC Transit for public transportation improvement including accessibility and flexibility.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Work with local businesses to improve the accessibilities of their premises and promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in their employment strategy.

2.2 Initiative to improve the walk-ability, bike-ability and the public transportation of Dawson Creek

Participants in the prioritization workshop identified improvements to the walkability, bike-ability and public transportation in Dawson Creek as a priority social service element. Non-automotive transportation options are frequently seen as important and low-cost alternatives that facilitate participation in community life. City transportation and land use planning is the primary decision making process relating to this element.

Current Capacity

Currently, it has been identified that there is a need to create bicycle lanes and increase bicycle infrastructures such as bicycle racks. In addition a comprehensive walkway plan was expressed at the consultation as a strong desire to ensure the safety of pedestrians

especially in the winter season and for people with disabilities. Community based and flexible transportation solutions are also needed. There are some initiatives currently exists in the City, where the City is providing local businesses with bicycle racks.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek has the primary responsibility in the roads and infrastructure of the City. The tools that the City can utilize include zoning bylaws, business licensing, long range community planning, and transportation planning.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Continue to engage the public in community planning processes (e.g. OCP Charette planning) to create a comprehensive plan in implementing accessible public space, biking and comprehensive walking infrastructures (e.g. expansion of bicycle lanes, bicycle racks and walkways)
- Continue to implement the identified goals stipulated in the community sustainability plan with emphasis on cross-departmental integration.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Partner with BC Transit to initiate public engagement in public transportation planning to identify better transit routes and strategies to increase ridership. In addition, explore other options to create a flexible, accessible and affordable public transit system.

2.3 Initiatives to develop social enterprises for social agencies

Social agency capacity has been a pressing issue across British Columbia for many years, and this challenge is reflected across many of the social service elements in the Dawson Creek Social Plan. When social agencies are struggling to survive, their ability to provide needed community services is significantly reduced. The development of social enterprises is one approach to enhancing the capacity of agencies in the community. Participants in the consultation indicated that there are several agencies in Dawson Creek interested in exploring social enterprise opportunities.

Current Capacity

Some social enterprises have been successful for years, including the Salvation Army thrift store and the Williams Lake Friendship Centre, which owns housing in the community. This provides a relatively stable funding source. Kiwanis Enterprising Centre provides resources for business development and expressed interests in supporting social enterprising development of local social agencies. Northern Light College also offers business and employment skills. However, there are several challenges to identify viable business options in smaller communities. Because of the potential financial risks, many social agencies need significant resources and support in order to begin developing their own business ideas.

Municipal Responsibility

The municipal government has limited responsibility in social enterprises development. The federal government holds the primary responsibility in community economic development. However, the City of Dawson Creek does hold an important role in facilitating and supporting local economic development. The City of Dawson Creek does provide support for social agencies in a wide variety of fashions, including the permissive property tax exemption for non-profit groups. The City can also choose to provide seed grants in order to leverage other potential funding.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Review and implement the City's purchasing policies to prioritize local social enterprises in future bid tendering process on purchasing product and service.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Support community organizations in the development and expansion of social enterprises. The support could include seed funding and letters of support and endorsement, leveraging partnership with the businesses community, and promotion of products and services offered by social enterprises.

Advocacy and Awareness Building

- Use City tools to educate the public and raise awareness on the concept of social enterprises to gain support from local business and funders.

2.4 Initiatives to support existing youth programs

Engagement of the youth population is an important priority, especially the importance to link at-risk youths and community health service providers. Consultation participant identified a need for increased outreach and for tiered care care (such as mental health, addictions, and disability supports). Participants also identified a need to increase the availability of youth specific tertiary, as youth workers often find themselves dealing with issues for which they are not trained.

Current Capacity

Five agencies currently offer youth specific programs including City's parks and recreation and the municipal library. Most of the agencies have limited and non-sustainable funding. Participants at consultation had revealed that a significant amount of time is devoted to funding development which over-stretches their already limited time and resources. In addition, agencies are increasingly finding it difficult to recruit for youth worker positions due to the oil and gas opportunities.

Municipal Responsibility

The municipality is not primarily responsible for social programs, including outreach. However, the City does have a role in supporting the partnership and creation of programs in the community. **Currently, the City of Dawson Creek provides seed funding**

for a number of community services, and a number of partnerships and collaboration through parks and recreation services are being formed. Additionally, the City provides a permissive property tax exemption to all community non-profit agencies.

Recommendations

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Articulate a role for the City in facilitating and encouraging partnerships and collaboration between service providers who operate youth programs.
- Partner with service providers and employers to explore strategies to support and maximize agency capacity through collaborative employment and recruitment strategies, eliminating doubling of administrative costs, and offering creative collaborative benefits packages.

2.5 Initiative to improve cooperation between agencies that deliver social services

In the consultation process, participants identified a need for increased co-operation and communication between agencies delivering local services. Participants suggested that agencies often lack the capacity to network with other services, which can result in missed partnership opportunities. Improved cooperation between agencies could help increase the overall capacity of the community to address social issues. In order to do so, participants identified a need for a collaboration function to be taken on in the community, to facilitate increased cooperation and communication across the service sector.

Current Capacity

Community Services Network is currently the umbrella networking table for all social agencies in Dawson Creek. There are also sub-committees to the CSN as community issues emerge. All of these initiatives serve a vital role in linking services and providing a more effective and efficient service delivery structure. CSN being a voluntary network meeting, many agencies coordinate and participate at the network meeting without any additional resources or support. Participants at the consultations identified that coordination assistance would be a significant support to the collaboration.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek does not have primary responsibility for social services in the community. However, the City does have a critical role in linking services together, and supporting community based agencies as they serve the community. City participation and facilitation of agency collaboration and partnership lends authority and legitimacy to collaborative efforts and increases trusts amongst organizations through transparent facilitation of decision making processes. Further benefits also includes the facilitation cross-departmental integration within the City to particular social issues, and raises awareness of new approaches to social issues and opportunities in the community.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Explore the potential of designating a social planning position at the City to identify emerging issues, develop relevant knowledge and research on emerging issues, and build cooperation and collaboration between agencies

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Take a leadership role in education and public awareness about emerging social and health issues and available community resources.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Ensure that the City has the capacity to initiate, participate in and support community based roundtables, committees, and service groups.
- Continue to participate and support the Community Services Network. Support could include providing administrative coordination support.

3 Crime and Public Safety

3.1 Initiatives to deal with drugs and drug related crime

Drugs and drug related crime are a significant challenge facing many communities in British Columbia. Dawson Creek in particular has unique challenges, in that the highly lucrative energy sector in the area indirectly results in a high demand for drugs and alcohol in the community. The city has a large, transient single male population, which the RCMP identified as a major source of the drug and alcohol related crime in the community.

Current Capacity

In recent years the RCMP has worked closely with City Council to address some drug related crime issues, and has shut down 47 crack houses. In addition, through Drug-Free Dawson Creek initiative, the City and RCMP have designated areas in the community drug free zones with emphasized enforcements in these areas. Consultation participants identified a need for outreach education, prevention, and counseling support in school for at-risk youths. Many organizations provide in-house counseling programs, but no specific drug education and prevention programs currently exist within schools. In addition, more harm reduction programs such as an effective needle exchange is needed. More healthy activities are also needed to engage the transient adult population in Dawson Creek.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek is not primarily responsible for social services or drug crime related issues. However, as a municipal government it has a central role in linking community services and RCMP together in initiatives to address these issues as a whole community. Additionally, the City can support service agencies through the development and zoning process where appropriate. The development of healthy activities to engage at-risk populations through Parks and Recreation is also another tool the City can utilize to address this issue.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Continue to improve city infrastructure as a crime prevention measure, including lighting improvements, beautification and community cleanups.
- Collaborate with Northern Health to provide education training and workshops for the Council and City employees on health and addiction issues and the harm reduction approach and philosophy as an initial awareness building and public communication strategy.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Facilitate the collaboration of mental health and addictions organizations and RCMP to increase the capacity of the police in dealing with people with addictions and mental health issues, especially with an emphasis through harm reduction approach.

- Work to facilitate the collaboration of community agencies, Northern Health and the School Board to implement drug education and prevention programs for students and parents.
- Through Parks and Recreation, collaborate with community organizations and businesses to create healthy recreational activities and events throughout the year specifically targeting youth and the transient adult population (seasonal workers, and oil rig workers)

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Continue to support the Drug-Free Dawson Creek initiative. Re-establish drug free zones and work to ensure the enforcement of these drug free zones.
- Support Northern Health in its effort to relocate the needle exchange program to the downtown centre. Continue to work with Northern Health to identify the need for a mobile needle exchange program.
- Partner with Northern Health and community organizations in public education and awareness building initiatives on holistic community health practices. Holistic community health practices include harm reduction and community oriented approaches to address health and addictions issues.

3.2 Rehabilitation programs, training and counseling for offenders & re-offenders

Addressing the root causes of crime is an important measure in crime prevention. Many of the petty crimes in the community are often committed by people without means for basic necessity or are struggling with addictions and mental health issues. Therefore, to prevent future offenses or re-offenses, addressing these root causes of crime from rehabilitation programs, support, and counseling is a key strategy.

Current Capacity

There were previous attempts in implementing alternative justice programs in the community, but those programs have been disbanded since due to the lack of sustainable funding. The RCMP does offer some alternative rehabilitation program within its authority such as the diversion process for first time offenders. Consultation participants identified the need for culturally appropriate remedial and alternative justice programs in Dawson Creek especially for the Aboriginal population. In addition counseling support for offenders and re-offenders are important resources. Participants also voiced a need to support those returning from incarceration such as halfway houses and community aftercare to ensure successful re-integration.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek is not primarily responsible for the delivery of support services and does not have judicial authority in the Justice System. The City does have an interest in crime prevention measures to ensure a safe community, therefore, the City can take an important leadership role in advocating for the implementation of remedial and alternative justice programs. The City also has a key role in identifying appropriate

location for the implementation of halfway houses and ensuring community resources and support are connected to these halfway houses.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Develop a City policy recognizing the need for effective rehabilitation programs in the community. Possible City actions include
 - Identify planning and development policies to support community organizations in establishing halfway supportive houses for people returning from incarceration through permit and zoning approval processes.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Advocate to the provincial government and work with RCMP to reinstitute alternative justice programs which includes culturally appropriate justice process for Aboriginal population, alternative sentencing for first time offenders, restorative justice programs for low level, non-violent crimes, and diversion programs.
- Take a leadership role in educate and raise public awareness about rehabilitation and re-integration needs of people returning from incarceration. This could mean to work with community organization in
- Identify ways to broadcast successes of remedial alternative justice and transition programs more effectively, such as Council workshops and community forums.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Participate with community organizations and RCMP in the planning and development of remedial and alternative justice programs and transition programs.

3.3 Initiatives to improve relationships between police and the community

Relationships between the police and the community can often be fraught with challenges. While expectations of police efforts are usually very high, conflict can also arise in relation to police enforcement and interactions with the community.

Current Capacity

A significant barrier to improving relationships is a lack of funding for police, which means that they are less able to engage with youth and adults in the community. The relatively young new police members to the Dawson Creek RCMP also means additional efforts needs to be made to establish stronger community ties and relationships with these officers. Participants at the consultations identified that crime prevention efforts are given equal focus as enforcement measures. RCMP currently has a community policing initiative and is exploring an asset-based approach to youth relations for the RCMP. Examples of partnership with community organizations include recent RCMP sponsored youth events. Additionally, participants identified a need for social service agencies to

reach out to the police force, to encourage relationship building with the agencies and the community.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek does not have jurisdiction over law enforcement, but the City does have secondary responsibility in policing and community relationships through funding for RCMP operations including community relations and engagement. Therefore, the City plays an important role in facilitating asset-based approach to community relations. Currently, through Parks and Recreation, the City of Dawson Creek is exploring potential community relations strategies. The City can also be an important liaison between the RCMP and the Community Services Network and include RCMP representatives into relevant discussions.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Work with local RCMP to create a crime prevention plan. The crime prevention plan would include activities and initiatives to address root causes of crime and the crime prevention related issues.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Continue to work with RCMP on community policing initiatives and support the relationship building between RCMP and community services, including efforts such as foot patrols and community outreach events.
- Work with RCMP to participate at the Community Services Network meetings, especially when specific meeting agenda relates to crime, policing, and crime prevention. To support individual relationship building between the officers and community organizations, encourage a rotation of various officers to participate at the Community Services Network meetings.

4 Education and Skills Training

4.1 Initiative to address the high number of high school dropouts

Dawson Creek is perceived to have a slightly higher rate of high-school dropouts than other communities, although exact statistics are difficult to find. However, gap consultation participants identified a few specific issues that might contribute to the dropout rate, including drugs, social alienation, and highly lucrative opportunities in the energy industry which might be drawing some youths out of school.

Current Capacity

There are some agencies that support adult completion of high school diploma in Dawson Creek. The School District #59's Distributed Learning program which provides curriculum and support to parents and students who are looking for alternative ways to complete the BC Dogwood. Chiron Learning Centre and Dawson Creek Literacy Society offer programs that support adults to complete their high school education. Participants identify that specific strategies are needed to target students and parents in earlier learning stages to ensure early prevention in high school drop-out. In addition, more diverse opportunities in arts, music and vocational studies are also needed in school to engage students and increase their interests to participate.

Municipal Responsibility

The municipal government does not have primary responsibility in education provision. However, the City of Dawson Creek does have a role to participate and facilitate collaborative efforts in addressing the high school dropout rates.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Articulate a City policy supporting efforts to address drop-out rates

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Promote local arts and cultural opportunities through local artists and talents showcase at community events, public arts demonstration, and schools and Parks and Recreational programming.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Work to facilitate a strategic collaborative initiative between community organizations and school boards to address high-school drop out rate. The initiative should present a unified vision and strategy in order to be an effective collaborative partnership. The initiative could include strategies such as:
 - Partner with school board and community organizations to initiate public education and awareness campaigns educating the parents the importance of high school completion. Specifically targeting families with children who have dropped out of school and those at risk. The public awareness initiatives should also target students at a younger age to engrain the importance of high school completion.

- Partner with organizations to conduct a local study to document the reason for school drop-out to get a clear understanding of the issue. In addition, the study should also include success cases to help formulate successful strategies in addressing high school drop-out rates.
- Partner with businesses to support its employees in completing high school education.

4.2 Workplace education programs and education programs for people to gain the skills and knowledge they need to be an effective employee

Dawson Creek is currently experiencing an economic boom, and employers are unable to fill many positions. In such an environment, individuals who remain unemployed are often facing significant barriers to employment that cannot be addressed through simply increasing employment opportunities. In these cases workplace education programs can be highly beneficial in helping to integrate these individuals with the employment market, while also helping businesses to access needed labour. Consultation participants also noted that many people who are currently employed actually lack the necessary life skills to be successful employees, and there is a need to create a life skills component in workplace development efforts.

Current Capacity

There are several organizations in the community offers employment training, and new initiatives of combining employment training with life skills training are being implemented for youth and Aboriginal populations. Participants in the gap consultation identified a need for community agencies that provide employment and life skills programs to work together, build strategies explore collaborative ways to meet community needs, reflecting the social agency cooperation issue explored above. Additionally, a there is a need for increased awareness and recruitment efforts for existing programs. Furthermore, linking employment programs with businesses and employers are also an identified need in our consultation.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek has limited responsibility in the planning, zoning, and licensing of these employment programs, especially those run specific business oriented trainings. As one of the largest employer in the city, the City also has a strong interest in ensuring that its staff can be effective employees. The City also offers great job shadowing opportunities for those considering a career in civic affairs.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Formulate a City policy that recognizes the importance of workplace education programs and articulates City support for such programs

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Take a leadership role in implementing public education strategies in civic engagement and on civic issues.
- Help raise public awareness of available resources and existing employment and life skills programs through City information dissemination tools.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Support existing and new employment and life skills program in facilitating partnerships with businesses to identify workplace partners for job shadowing and internship placement opportunities. This also includes opportunities within the City.
- Partner with community organizations and employers to provide workplace education on life skills training and civic engagement awareness workshops. The City can demonstrate initial leadership by implement internal initiatives.

5 Food Security

5.1 Initiative to rethink provision of charitable food services/ Encourage local food production

While emergency food services are currently a crucial aspect of the community sector, and meet a pressing need, their existence is commonly recognized as an indication of failure to address poverty on the part of the community. Participants in the prioritization workshop identified this issue as a priority for the Dawson Creek Social Plan. Additionally, participants identified a need to encourage local food production

Current Capacity

Currently, there are three organizations offering emergency food services such as food bank, soup kitchen, and meals on wheels. There is also a Community Gardens Network and a Farmers Market to encourage urban agriculture and local food production. Gap consultation participants noted that an increase in affordable housing would reduce the number of people who need emergency food services. Participants also identified a need for a community food coordinator, who could link community garden, emergency food and other food security issues together.

Municipal Responsibility

Municipalities have limited responsibility for addressing food security and also have limited responsibility and opportunity to address the underlying issues that cause people to access food banks. While primary legislative responsibility rests with federal and provincial agencies, it is the local community service groups that take a primary financial responsibility for the delivery of most food security and emergency food services. The City of Dawson Creek can have a role in supporting local solutions and programs to address food security through the recognition of the value of food security. In supporting the local food production expansion, the City has tools such as zoning and permits to encourage urban gardening and urban agriculture.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Develop a policy framework that recognizes local food security initiatives.
- Support initiatives that contribute to the enhancement of conditions for urban agriculture.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Support efforts to raise community awareness of role of healthy food and healthy eating practices, including raising awareness of community food distribution networks (e.g. foodbanks and local farmers market).

6 Housing and Homelessness

6.1 Supportive Housing Options

The current economic boom has resulted in a reduction in the available rental units in the community, and resulted in ‘non-ideal’ tenants having more difficulty finding and keeping housing. Additionally, many individuals, particularly those with mental illness or dual diagnoses are in need of significant supports if they are to live in the community.

Current Capacity

Gap consultation participants identified a need for as many as 100 additional suites in Dawson Creek that have access to some forms of support, which can range from an occasional visit by a support worker to more involved support systems.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek does not have the mandate to build and operate supportive and transitional housing; however, the City does have a role in facilitating and promoting the creation of new housing.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Implement building bylaws to ensure affordable housing units are accessible for people with disabilities (possibly as a part of an overarching affordable housing strategy).
- Assist agencies applying for new supportive housing projects through the development approval process. This may involve referral to and discussion of Best Practices for integrating new social housing projects successfully into the community.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Advocate to other federal and provincial governments to maintain a strong role in supportive and transitional housing provision in the community.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Participate in the development and support of new and existing collaborative multi-agency partnerships to providing supportive services for homeless, seniors, and at-risk populations. The City may consider expanding staff participation into a broader role as meeting facilitator to ensure the funding partners and agencies continue to meet and collaborate.

6.2 Affordable Housing

A shortage of affordable housing has become a significant issue in communities across Canada in the fifteen years since the federal government stopped funding the creation of new units. Dawson Creek faces additional challenges in that it is experiencing an

economic boom, which results in a very tight housing market and a consequent reduction in the available low-end market housing.

Current Capacity

Gap consultation participants indicated that 500 affordable housing units will be a ‘good start’ towards addressing the community need, and that those units must include a variety of options to meet the different needs of households. Populations in need of affordable housing include single parents, the working poor, people on disability or social assistance, youths and seniors.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek does not have the mandate to build and operate affordable housing, but has an important role in promoting the creation of quality affordable housing in the community. In order to achieve this, a strong affordable housing policy framework can be very effective in consistently ensuring the effectiveness of the objective in promoting affordable housing.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Develop a City’s Affordable Housing Policy. The policy will include strategies to implement and maintain and advocate for affordable housing in Dawson Creek. This will include a stipulate of maintaining a percentage of housing stock as affordable housing based on needs.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Advocate to the federal and provincial government to increase funding in affordable housing development.

6.3 Emergency shelter beds

Emergency shelters are an important part of the housing continuum, particularly for youths in crisis who have not yet become street entrenched. When youths are able to access shelter and supports quickly, they are more likely to succeed in reintegration into stable, permanent housing and community life. However, youth shelters can be very expensive to operate, and consequently there exists a significant shortage of such facilities across British Columbia.

Current Capacity

At present there is no youth shelter in Dawson Creek, though there was one in existence until 2002 that had five beds. There is an adult shelter serving men in Dawson Creek. There are also two hotel beds that serve as emergency short-term shelter, however, the condition of these shelters are in poor quality. Participants in the gap consultation workshop identified a need for approximately ten beds serving different groups of youths in the community, including culturally appropriate supports for aboriginal youths, and separate shelters for young men and young women. Participants also identified a need for

a total of 15-20 beds serving men in the community, and a need for a new shelter with approximately ten beds that serve women. However, it is important to note that supports and options must be in place for individuals after they leave the shelter, or demands on existing shelters will continue to grow.

Municipal Responsibility

Municipalities have limited responsibilities for emergency shelters. Opportunities for involvement are focused on project facilitation and advocacy, planning approvals, licensing and other conditions associated with the municipalities' affordable housing strategy. In addition, through bylaw enforcement, the City can play a role in ensuring the health and safety standards of existing shelter units.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Develop a city policy to encourage and support the creation and operation of emergency shelter beds in the community. Action outcomes of the policy could include:
 - Assist agencies applying for new emergency shelter beds through the development approval process.
 - Assist education and awareness programs to address community concerns generated by new development proposals.
 - Provide seed funding for the implementation and operation of new emergency shelters.
 - Support the creation of a centralized information clearing house to the daily availability status of emergency shelter beds. This information could be web based for easy update and access.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Continue to advocate BC Housing for delivery the previously committed emergency shelter funding.
- Continue to advocate the provision of low barrier and/no barrier emergency shelter services for youth, adults and aboriginals.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Participate in developing a partnership between local organizations, RCMP, and funders to address youth and adult emergency shelter needs.
- Leverage partnership with businesses to solicit donation of equipments or facilities for implementing emergency shelters (e.g. trailers).
- Explore and support collaborative partnerships between community organizations in providing supervision of the emergency shelters, including ensuring trained staff to operate and supervise these facilities.

7 Health and Addictions

7.1 Community based addiction treatment facilities

Community based addiction treatment is an essential service for addressing addiction and supporting individuals in improving their lives. If people are forced to leave town in order to access services, often that can lead to further disconnection from their social support networks, or further barriers to accessing treatment.

Current Capacity

Currently many individuals are referred out of town for addictions treatment services. At present, there are no detox beds in the community aside from the hospital, if they have room. The closest services are in Grande Prairie. It was identified that this region needs different types of detox facilities in the community, including both voluntary and involuntary detox. Participants at the consultation estimated a total of fifteen voluntary detox beds would be a good start for the Peace region, with an additional five beds for court mandated (involuntary) detox facilities. The Northwinds Healing Centre offers a six-week treatment program, and a new treatment facility is being planned for Pouce Coup. Transportation support will be needed once the Pouce Coup facility is in operation.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek is not primarily responsible for addictions treatment or supportive services. However, in the case of new facilities the City has an important role in the development approval process. Additionally, the City has an important role in building community support for programs and facilities, helping to address and prevent community concerns about new programs, and advocating with other governments and private funders for programs and facilities to meet the needs of Dawson Creek residents.

Recommendations

City Policies

- Develop a city-wide policy supporting the creation of treatment facilities in the region. Actions could include
 - Assist agencies applying for new treatment facilities through the development approval process.
 - Work with community groups and government agencies who have primary responsibility in creating a treatment centre in Dawson Creek, including a treatment centre specifically for youth.

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Take a leadership role in education and public awareness about health and addictions. This could include endorsing a commitment to a holistic approach which endorses a community supported approach to treatment and aftercare.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Partner with community organizations to improve the transportation accessibility to the Pouce Coupe treatment facility.

- Endorse and support interagency partnerships, and a client centred approach to addictions treatment. This may include an integrated case management system.
- Support community partnerships in exploring a regional based drug and alcohol treatment strategy including transportation accessibility and community based aftercare.

7.2 Support services for those transitioning out of treatment

Once individuals access addictions treatment, they are often in need of ongoing supports as they reintegrate into community life to help prevent relapse and ensure success. Unfortunately, ongoing supports are rare in most communities, and many individuals do not receive the supports they need post-treatment.

Current Capacity

Gap consultation participants identified a need for support workers to be available around the clock for individuals in the community. Current support workers operate during regular business hours from 9am to 5pm, and their caseloads are all in full capacity. The transition support needed includes adequate supportive housing, job skills training, social support network and other supports. Supports are especially needed for women existing sex trade and those who needs legal assistance. Underlying these gaps are the significant shortfalls of staffing and funding that continue to be a major issue for social service organizations in the community.

Municipal Responsibility

The City of Dawson Creek does not have primary responsibility for the delivery of transition support services for those leaving treatment. However, the City has an important role to facilitate agencies collaboration in building community support to ensure successful transition and re-integration of those leaving treatment. In addition, the City can also advocate with other governments and private funders for supports that meets the current need of its residents.

Recommendations

Advocacy & Public Awareness

- Continue to educate and raise public awareness of available community resources, including the 24/7 crisis line operated out of Prince George. Take a leadership role in education and public awareness to employers about the aftercare needs of those transitioning out of treatment.

Partnerships & Collaboration

- Work with community groups and government agencies who have primary responsibility tin addressing the need for the provision of after hour support services.
- Work with community group to create a temporary safe drop-in space as a community aftercare resource for those transitioning out of treatment.

Appendix

Action Consultation Specific Recommendation Examples

Specific Recommendation Examples

1.2 Affordable and Accessible quality licensed childcare and preschool programs

Specific City Policies Examples:

- Support TILMA to include ECD workers to encourage cross-border workers to work in Dawson Creek.

1.4 Mentoring & counseling services for youths at risk

Specific Partnerships and Collaboration Examples:

- Coordinate and explore partnerships between community social service agencies, the health authority, and MCFD on building integrated case management system.
- Partnership with community service agencies in exploring the creation of a youth driven drop-in centre centrally located with accessible transportation. Community service agencies can provide staff to create programs and maintain supervision of the drop-in centre.
- Partner with BC Transit to improve transportation access to current community youth services, drop-ins, and resources.
- Connect social service agencies with school board to provide in-school outreach education initiatives to raise awareness on youth, mental health and addiction issues.

Specific Advocacy & Public Awareness Examples

- Engage in creating awareness building initiatives such as information brochures, public forums, or events on youth health (mental health, physical health, addictions, etc.) through creative and exciting youth events for the community including youth, parents, community service providers. (using creative and youth friendly engagement tools or events such as recreational or arts and cultural activities).

Specific City Policies Examples

- Explore ways to link parks and recreation programs to services that work with youths and to identify outreach opportunities for youths at-risk or otherwise in need.
- Create open and safe facilities for youth to allow unorganized play and drop-in activities in Parks and Recreation activities.
- Explore the opportunity to support a peer mentoring program which allows youth to engage each other in counseling supports. This also provides a venue for youth to explore a career path in counseling support in the future. The support from the City could take the form of seed funding or scholarship for youth to participate in necessary training.

- Continue to support community organizations' youth initiatives such as YO!360, Narwican Friendship Centre, and ARC. Assistance includes advocating with businesses and funders for more resources and continuing partnerships.

2.1 Initiative to develop a welcoming and socially inclusive community

Specific Partnerships and Collaboration Examples

- Collaborate with multi-sectors of the community (e.g. community agencies, schools and colleges, and businesses) Community Services Network to identify specific gaps and needs, create public awareness, ensure culturally sensitive public events, and implement strategies and measurable outcomes on creating a welcoming and socially inclusive community.
- Collaborate with Community Services Network to identify specific gaps and needs on creating a welcoming and socially inclusive community.
- Continue to share information regarding available resources and opportunities through City's communication tools to create public awareness
- Explore initiatives to collaborate with community organizations, schools and colleges, and businesses to identify community needs and implement strategies on creating a welcoming and socially inclusive community.
- Continue to explore opportunities for partnerships with community organizations through City services and facilities to create a welcoming and socially inclusive programming based on community needs – including offering culturally appropriate events and activities for the Aboriginal populations.
- Explore partnerships with the business community by proposing measurable improvements and outcomes that will improve the social inclusion of the city.
- Through Parks and Receptions and planning, partner with community organizations to plan for and create welcoming and inclusive facilities, parks and public spaces that allows the community to interact and build relationships.

Immigrant Inclusion:

Specific Partnerships and Collaboration Examples

- Maintain awareness of federal and provincial funding opportunities to support the inclusion of and attract immigrant population.
- Explore initiatives to recruit and attract immigrant population to the City taking advantage of higher earning power and lower living cost in Dawson Creek.
- Explore ways to provide a centralized information centre to provide settlement information and resource support for newcomers.

Specific City Policies Examples

- Develop a City policy that defines Dawson Creek as a welcoming community for new immigrants. Options include:
 - Continue to take a leadership role in educating City Council, staff, businesses, and community services agencies in creating awareness of cultural sensitivity and how to create a welcoming and inclusive community. When possible, include the immigrant population in these education initiatives including cross-cultural dialogues and presentations.

- Expand services, programs, and courses offered through City's Parks and Recreation to include ESL programming or culturally appropriate activities and events.

Specific Advocacy and Public Awareness Examples

- Assist local agencies to collaborate and implement strategies or initiatives to create a welcoming and inclusive community.
- Explore ways to engage and support the immigrant population through City's civic engagement processes and leverage support from the business sector.

Accessibility:

Specific City Policies Examples

- Develop a comprehensive Accessibility Strategy that positions Dawson Creek as a leader in community accessibility for people with disabilities. The strategy should include:
 - Continue to ensure building and information accessibility through City bylaws implementation.
 - Continue to improve the safety and accessibility of public transportation, roadway, parking space and sidewalk infrastructures.
 - Continue to participate in initiatives that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities such as the 10 by 10 challenge and the Measuring Up North.
 - Explore ways to meaningfully engage and include the voice of people with disabilities in civic engagement, consultation, and community planning processes.
 - Continue to review and improve the City internal accessibility and inclusion strategies in areas of employment and external communication beginning with staff and Council workshops and information sharing and formalizing these strategies through City policies.
 - Continue to engage in long term accessibility planning.
 - Continue to review and revise housing, zoning and building permit bylaws to plan for and include physical accessibility requirements.
 - Continue to provide community based transportation options such as Step Up and Ride for people with disabilities and vulnerable populations.

Specific Partnerships & Collaboration Examples

- Continuing to work with our partners; building partnerships, particularly around youth; Nawican and Yo!360.
- Continue to provide community based transportation options such as Step Up and Ride for people with disabilities and vulnerable populations.

2.2 Initiative to improve the walk-ability, bike-ability and the public transportation of Dawson Creek

Specific City Policies Examples

- Continue to engage the public in community planning processes (e.g. OCP Charette planning) to create a comprehensive plan in implementing accessible public space, biking and walking infrastructures (e.g. bicycle lanes, bicycle racks and walkways)
 - Continue to implementation of the Localmotion funding and extending walking path towards multiplex developments.
 - Continue to ensure the walkway and green space connections, especially in new development projects.
- Continue to implement the identified goals stipulated in the community sustainability plan. Address the need for integration of all departments on issues.
- Continue to engage businesses and community organizations in implementing biking infrastructures such as bicycle racks.

Initiatives to support existing youth programs

Specific Partnerships and Collaboration Examples:

- Partner with social service providers to provide alternative staff benefits package through access to City facilities.
- Support the collaboration of social service providers in maximizing joint resources and alleviate doubling of administrative costs.
- Create regular recognition events or initiatives to recognize social service providers and workers' contributions and services to the community.
- Engage with social service providers, the Northern Light College, and other resources to provide professional development training opportunities for social service providers.

4.1 Initiative to address the high number of high school dropouts

Specific Partnership and Collaboration Examples

- Facilitate the partnership between Parks and Recreation, community organizations and school to increase the opportunities for arts, music, and vocational studies to better engage students in school.
- Explore initiatives that connect local artists to students to provide in-depth study opportunities such as Artist-In-Residence in school.
- Showcase local talents and artists in the City's public events to support and celebrate local arts and culture scene.
- Continue to engage local arts, music, sports, and vocational studies instructors to provide workshops and classes through the Parks and Recreation programming. Especially increase the effort in raising awareness of the available support for those who are interested in providing training and instructions.

5.1 Initiative to rethink provision of charitable food services/ Encourage local food production

Specific Action Examples

- Work with the local Farmer's Market to foster the market's growth and continued success.
- Encourage and support demonstration community gardens.
- Recognize gardens as a universally accepted land use in the municipality.
- Amend multifamily regulations to include landscaping for food production (e.g. fruit trees, berries, garden plots)
- Consider urban gardens as a condition for density bonusing in multifamily projects and other higher density mixed use areas.
- Prepare an inventory of community garden and community kitchen resources in the City and support opportunities to work with the community to maintain a community garden inventory.

6.2 Affordable Housing

Specific City Policies Examples:

- Review tax exemption opportunities and consider strategies to support property owner initiatives to upgrade and maintain rental housing stock as affordable housing.
- A no-net-loss policy that restricts the loss of affordable housing (e.g. restricts and conversion of rental units to condominiums).
- Encourage broad application of residential designations that support secondary suites in all existing and new housing units, particularly in single family development areas.
- Review housing density designations throughout the municipality, to ensure that densities are relevant.
- Review rezoning policies to establish specific affordable housing creation measures.
- Create fast-tracking processes for affordable housing development permits.
- Provide staff support for local groups working to address affordable housing needs.
- Explore the opportunity of withholding parcels of designated land for affordable housing development. This may include also in any new sales of City properties.
- Establish guidelines for the Housing Reserve Fund to target specific community opportunities: