

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Sanctuary City?

Sanctuary cities are places where all residents, regardless of their immigration status, can feel safe and secure accessing city services; from taking out a library book, to participating in a city program or engagement opportunity, to calling the police for help or to report a crime. The term “sanctuary city” is a broad term applied to municipalities that have policies in place designed to limit the cooperation with or involvement in federal immigration enforcement actions.

Sanctuary city policies are sometimes referred to as “don’t ask/don’t tell” policies. The premise of “don’t ask” being that residents will not be asked about immigration status when accessing city services, including emergency services. The premise of “don’t tell” being that if immigration information is disclosed, that the information will not be shared, including with other levels of government, unless required by the law.

What is the need for a Sanctuary City Policy in New Westminster?

Like many other municipalities in the region, New Westminster is home to many immigrants and refugees. Immigration is a significant driver of our population growth. While most people enter and remain in Canada through government processes, there are those who are here with no, with uncertain or with precarious immigration status; these individuals are often referred to as non-status or undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants may include, but are not limited to, temporary foreign workers whose work permits have expired, individuals with a sponsorship breakdown resulting from a marital separation, students who overstay their study or work permits, individuals who have had their status revoked, been coerced by human traffickers, or had their refugee claim denied. Some have experienced conflict, violence, persecution, and human rights violations in their home countries.

Because of fear of being detected, detained, and deported by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), individuals with uncertain, precarious, undocumented or no immigration status may not access services out of fear that they will have to disclose their immigration status. This can lead to social isolation and vulnerability. This policy would let residents of New Westminster who may be in this situation know that they are encouraged to participate in all the City has to offer, and that the City is committed to ensuring that they feel safe and welcome when they do so.

How will the Sanctuary City Policy impact residents with immigration status/citizenship?

There would be no impact to New Westminster residents with immigration/citizenship status. The objectives of the policy are to make sure that residents with no, with uncertain or with precarious status know they are welcome, and encouraged, to access City facilities, programs and services and that they will not be asked about their immigration status.

Will the City be providing financial support to residents with uncertain, precarious, undocumented or no immigration status if this Policy is approved?

There are no financial supports associated with this policy.

As is the current practice, all residents of New Westminster can apply for the City's Parks and Recreation Financial Assistance Program. This program is designed to support eligible residents to participate in year-round active living through a 50% fee discount on eligible registered programs. This program is separate from the Sanctuary City Policy.

Will the Policy apply to the New Westminster Police?

New Westminster Police Department (NWPD) policies are approved by their governance body, the New Westminster Police Board. The NWPD developed its own guidelines that are in support of the City of New Westminster's Sanctuary City Policy, which were endorsed by their Police Board on January 18, 2022.