

Best Practices on Ending Unsheltered Homelessness

In March 2022, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness commissioned OrgCode Consulting Inc. to create a resource on ending homelessness for people living in encampments in Canada, with input from a large cross-section of stakeholders. Below are recommendations for a municipalities encampment response and how Edmonton’s response aligns to them.

Appropriate and adequate housing		
Recommendation	City’s Aligment to Strategy	Explanation
Increase interim accommodation options such as bridge housing	Partially Implemented ▾	The City of Edmonton has provided funding for bridge housing transition plans to Homeward Trust Foundation (\$4.8 million - Sandy's Place, Sands Inn, Coliseum Inn, Travelodge West), Jasper Place Wellness (\$7.5 million bridge housing and shelter project at 15540 Stony Plain Road NW) and to The Royal Alexandra Hospitals Foundation (\$290,000 - bridge housing centre at 160 and 100 Avenue).
Increase portable rental supplements (Rent supplements that are attached to the individual, couple or family - not a unit - to allow more access to private market housing where affordability is the barrier)	Not Started ▾	Typically addressed at provincial level. Environmental scanning has found examples of municipal rental supplement programs in Canada and the United States.
Increase supply of affordable and supportive housing	In Progress ▾	Under the Rapid Housing Initiative 1.0: Five new Supportive Housing sites opening in 2023 (210 units); Rapid Housing Initiative 2.0: Three supportive housing sites funded, with one site opened in 2022 and the two remaining scheduled for opening in 2023 (236 units); Rapid Housing Initiative 3.0 in progress (proposed 351 units).

Supporting immediate needs for people living in encampments		
Recommendation	City's Aligment to Strategy	Explanation
Access to well-being service professionals	Partially Implemented ▾	Street Outreach builds rapport and makes service referrals but more robust supports related to grief, trauma, loss and health supports will be prototyped in 2023.
Access to clean drinking water, washrooms, clothing, harm reduction supplies and hygiene supplies	Partially Implemented ▾	Water and clothing delivered via Street Outreach and mutual aid groups; portable and permanent washroom access has been increased through the implementation of the city-wide public washroom strategy. The strategy work includes: summer mobile washroom program and washroom attendant program. The public washroom strategy also responds to the Shigella outbreak by providing laundry and shower services, drinking water and free menstrual products at portable washroom locations and permanent locations.
Establishing a system of care for people living in encampment		
Recommendation	City's Aligment to Strategy	Explanation
Access to Indigenous-specific services	In Progress ▾	Exploring partnerships to operationalize Indigenous-led outreach team; initial work underway on Indigenous-led shelter.
Expand street outreach capacity	Partially Implemented ▾	Three Street Outreach Full Time Equivalents (FTE's) are temporarily funded from July 2022 to July 2023. One FTE in Administration is dedicated to outreach coordination.

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Amend Coordinated Access to improve housing access and prioritization	In Progress ▾	Homeward Trust is developing an Active Priority List to triage unsheltered people to housing options.
Access to harm reduction supplies and education	Implemented ▾	Street Outreach works from a harm reduction approach; mutual aid groups and other externally funded outreach teams distribute supplies and education.
Access to physical health, mental health and substance use supports	In Progress ▾	One of four prototypes currently being developed for 2023. Administration also works to highlight gaps in these areas to the Government of Alberta who is responsible for the management, organization, and delivery of health care services.
Access to storage	Not Started ▾	Administration is exploring how other jurisdictions are providing storage support.
Optimize diversion efforts to family and friends	Partially Implemented ▾	Offered on an ad hoc basis by Street Outreach and some mutual aid groups.

Leadership & Governance		
Recommendation	City's Alignment to Strategy	Explanation
Develop a governance model according to Appendix B - Entities Providing Input and Guidance found in "Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments ¹ "	In Progress ▾	Administration is renewing the Memorandum of Understanding and governance models for the encampment response.

¹ *Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments in Canada*. Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. March 2022.

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Continued input from lived experience	In Progress ▾	The engagement with people living in encampments was completed by two Indigenous researchers with lived experience and strong community relationships. The continuation of this work is being explored.
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Continuity of Efforts		
Recommendation	City's Alignment to Strategy	Explanation
Convene a collaborative service response table	Implemented ▾	Current encampment response is a collaboration with EPS, Homeward Trust, Boyle Street Community Services and Bissell Centre.
Complete encampment assessments and personal assessments for each resident	Encampment: Implemented ▾ Personal: Not Started ▾	Encampments are currently assessed for risk to public safety and the environment. A personal assessment is being developed to pilot in 2023.
Map encampment locations	Implemented ▾	All encampments complaints through 311 and encampment clean ups are mapped.
Dashboard with at-a-glance understanding of all encampments in a community	Not Started ▾	Preliminary internal discussion within Administration.

Encampment Closures		
Recommendation	City's Alignment to Strategy	Explanation
Prepare and post/deliver notice of	In Progress ▾	Verbal notice is currently provided but not in

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closure to encampment resident(s)		standardized written form; piloting providing written notice in 2023.
Implement a communication strategy	Partially Implemented ▾	City Communications Advisors attend Encampment Response Team meetings and are kept abreast of trends and incidents; further work to coordinate communications approach amongst stakeholders is needed.
Provide means for encampment residents to pack their belongings; transportation assistance; and/or animal assistance for pets	Partially Implemented ▾	Street Outreach provides these services when possible but more work is needed to standardize it as part of site closures.
Store items of obvious value	Not Started ▾	Currently the City does not store any belongings collected during the clean-up of an encampment. Identification, medication, or any other item of value that is found during vacant encampment removal is brought to Boyle Street by Administration staff.
Identify day and overnight shelter options for people living in encampments	Implemented ▾	Residents are advised of options and provided information pamphlets.

Resource List

- *Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments in Canada*, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, March 2022
- Mackie, P., Johnsen, S., and Wood, J., *Ending rough sleeping: what works? An international evidence review. Crisis: London*, 2017
- J. Thistle and J. Smiley, *Pekiwewin (coming home): advancing good relations with Indigenous people experiencing homelessness*, Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2020
- *End Homelessness Winnipeg, Kíkininaw Óma This is Our Home Here: A Strategy to Support Unsheltered Winnipeggers*, (End Homelessness Winnipeg) 2020

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- The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, *Housing is a Human Right, 2021-2022 Annual Report to the Minister* (Canadian Human Rights Commission), 2022
- Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2021, *Homeless Hub, Rental Supplements*,
<<https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/housing/rent-supplements>>
- The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness 2023, *CAEH calls for federal investment in a new housing benefit to stop the destructive wave of new homelessness sweeping across Canada*,
<<https://caeh.ca/caeh-calls-for-federal-investment-in-a-new-housing-benefit-to-stop-the-destructive-wave-of-new-homelessness-sweeping-across-canada/>>