

Overview of Options

Administration has identified a base set of activities for summer 2023 and winter 2023/24, along with some optional supplemental activities. While reviewing these options, it is important to consider:

- The increase in homelessness and encampments is largely the result of a shortage of safe, adequate and affordable housing and barriers to timely access to health care services, mental health and addiction support and income support.
- Edmonton's current shelter system is not meeting the needs of many individuals experiencing homelessness, with people sleeping outside or in places unsuitable for habitation, such as transit facilities. Edmonton has approximately 629 permanent emergency shelter spaces and approximately 1,360 individuals who identify as most frequently sleeping in shelter or outdoors on Homeward Trust's By Name List¹. This past winter, temporary measures increased the number of shelter spaces available by 575 for a total of 1,202 beds. However, Edmonton still experienced a large number of people sleeping outdoors this winter or seeking shelter from the elements in transit facilities.
- There is insufficient data available to fully understand all the reasons why some individuals are not willing to use available shelter spaces. However, Administration has previously presented evidence highlighting some of the challenges with Edmonton's shelter system (CS00796 June 27, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee report CS00796). Engagement with people with lived and living experience indicate that there are a number of barriers to accessing existing shelters. These concerns include fear of violence and for personal safety, concerns about cleanliness, theft and lack of storage for personal belongings, poor sleep hygiene in crowded shelter environments, lack of Indigenous cultural awareness and programming and lack of spaces for couples and pets. These barriers may be more acutely felt in large-scale shelters.
- The need for shelter spaces to better meet the needs of those using them were recognized when City Council endorsed the City of Edmonton Minimum Emergency Shelter Standards (CS00796, June 27, 2022, CPSC).
- The only permanent solution to homelessness is to ensure people have access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing combined with the health supports they need. While more permanent shelter beds are

¹ <https://homewardtrust.ca/data-analytics-reporting/>

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needed, Edmonton will continue to experience unsheltered homelessness so long as there is a gap in housing and health support services.

- Staff shortages among agency partners, ETS and TPOs to support the transportation of people from transit facilities to shelters was a significant operational concern during the past winter which requires reevaluating the operating model. Consistency in evening shifts may create a more sustainable and desirable shift structure for agency staff and increase the uptake. Continuing the same level of transportation support is also operationally challenging for the City, given the staffing requirement to provide continuous transit vehicles and operators and transit peace officer support. An evaluation of who is best suited to run the transportation service will be undertaken, considering social sector partnerships, city run service and contracted models. More transportation service consistently throughout the winter likely requires significant peace officer support. Opportunities for enhanced support by TPOs to support lock-up activities will be considered.

Administration will continue to work closely with the Government of Alberta to determine any additional funding opportunities that may exist for winter 2023/2024 that could be applied towards day services or bridge housing spaces, beyond the 24/7 spaces funding that has been included in current shelters and any funding that may have been provided to Homeward Trust for bridge housing. Council direction and funding is required for any options over Base Support levels.

Option: Base Support	
Short Description	Funding Available
Continuation of core winter 2022/23 support activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme and cold weather activations • Support for Government of Alberta (GoA) funded shelters • An evaluation of who is best suited to run the transportation service will be undertaken, considering social sector partnerships, City run service and contracted models 	Within current budget (\$1.25M): \$1.0 million ongoing CSWB \$0.25 million one-time carryforward from 2022 Additional funding requirements will be identified at a future date
<i>Base Supports - Options Analysis</i>	

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Detailed Description	Considerations
<p>Activities would focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extreme and cold weather activations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transportation during Extreme Weather and cold weather activations ○ Warming Bus ○ Funding shelter spaces at Al Rashid Mosque including support for: support staff, essential supplies (e.g. food, bus tickets), private bus transportation each morning, security, janitorial staff and supplies, and shelter volunteer/staff training ○ Encampment response teams to conduct wellness checks and only address high-risk encampments ○ City recreation facilities and Edmonton Public Library locations open for warming purposes ● Support for GoA funded shelters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Logistical support around permitting, etc. ● Other supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ongoing shigella response ● An evaluation of the transportation support services including TPO/ETS resourcing. <p>These activities are in addition to the Government of Alberta commitments around 627 permanent and 575 temporary emergency shelter spaces, for a total of 1,202 spaces, similar to the winter 2022/23 response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A summer 2023 and winter 2023/24 response would be less comprehensive than winter 2022/23. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2022/23, Administration had access to surplus funds and other reserves, which are unavailable for winter 2023/24. ● A lack of day shelter funding will result in a reduction in access to services and lessen available spaces for individuals to go during the day, which could result in those individuals using public spaces. ● TPOs will be required to rely on overtime costs to operationally staff winter services and lock ups. This has a high risk of employee fatigue, burn out and injuries, with TPO sick time increasing by 72 per cent between 2021 and 2022. ● In 2022/23, the TPO night shift has been augmented nightly, even when there is no weather response, due to the demand on TPOs with people seeking shelter at the time of station lock up. TPO shift schedules for winter 2023/24 will be adapted to mitigate some of the need for nightly overtime shifts, but this may cause some impacts to daytime service levels. ● A review of the operational model of the transportation provided during extreme weather and cold weather activation is required.

Option: Day Shelter Supports (Unfunded)	
Short Description	Estimated Cost
Augmenting day shelter spaces, assisting the sector to maintain the extended hours and days of operation.	<p>\$3.79 million Bissell Centre: June 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024</p>

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Boyle Street: November 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024	
<i>Day Shelter Supports - Options Analysis</i>	
Detailed Description	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to Bissell Centre (June 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024) would augment their operational hours • Funding Boyle Street Community Services (The Boyle Street Service Society) (November 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024) to augment operational hours • Over winter 2022/23, Edmonton had 280 day shelter spaces, 627 24/7 shelter spaces, and 90 temporarily funded 24/7 shelter spaces, for a total of 997 spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of funding will result in service access reductions and lessen available spaces for individuals to go during the day. • Bissell Centre’s day shelter serves on average 1,760 unique individuals per month. Housing navigators engage at least 65 people monthly in the housing process. • Funding Bissell Centre (June 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024) would require \$2.29 million. • Funding Boyle Street Community Services (The Boyle Street Service Society) (November 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024) would require \$1.5 million.

Option: Additional Bridge Housing Spaces (Unfunded)	
Short Description	Estimated Cost
Administration will work with Homeward Trust to add 200 bridge housing spaces.	\$11 to \$13 million per year
<i>Additional Bridge Housing Spaces - Options Analysis</i>	
Detailed Description	Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration will work with Homeward Trust to identify additional 200 shelter and housing spaces, such as continuous stay shelter or bridge housing • City would solicit proposals from agency partners, which could result in one or more sites being identified for the 200 spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge housing typically requires between \$150 and \$165 per night, per space in funding • For 200 spaces, this would require between \$11 and \$13 million per year

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A continuous stay shelter would offer private or semi-private sleeping facilities and allow individuals to stay at the facility for as long as they need while an individual plan for housing is created.• Bridge Housing is short-term, continuous stay private accommodation that helps people 'bridge' the gap from homelessness to permanent housing	
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