

ENHANCED ENCAMPMENT AND UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

Response Plan - Recommended Next Steps

Recommendation			
That the October 30, 2023, Community Services report CS01881, be received for information.			
Requested Action		Information only	
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle		ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals	
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.		Healthy City	
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community Safety and Wellbeing
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Safety and Wellbeing Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Update Updated Affordable Housing Strategy 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 16, 2022, OCM00991, Community and Safety Well-Being Strategy June 27, 2022, CS00939, Indigenous-led Shelters, Housing and Programming April 11, 2023, CS01637, Enhanced Encampment and Unsheltered Homelessness Response Plan October 30, 2023, CS01673, Updated Affordable Housing Strategy November 1, 2023, CS01798, Indigenous-led Supportive Housing Projects 		

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 17, 2023, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report following the close of the Expression of Interest process for the Indigenous-led shelter and transitional spaces to provide an update on submissions received

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and recommended next steps for further work to address unsheltered homelessness among Indigenous people and others in Edmonton.

Executive Summary

- The Indigenous-led Shelter and the Indigenous-led Transitional Space Expression of Interest process is being advanced through four projects to address unsheltered homelessness in Edmonton, these include: NiGiNan Housing Ventures Stabilization Space, Enoch Cree Nation project, a multi-agency collaborative Indigenous-led Permanent Shelter, and Indigenous-led Transitional Space.
- In addition, the City of Edmonton, the Government of Alberta and NiGiNan Housing Ventures are working on the Cold Weather Shelter Pilot to place additional temporary accommodations at Pimatisiwin (former Sands Inn hotel). This pilot project aims to use temporary modular accommodation for individuals ahead of Winter 2023/24.
- Administration will continue to prioritize resource allocation to support the Government of Alberta in the creation of emergency shelters within Edmonton, including temporary winter adult shelters, permanent 24/7 Indigenous-led emergency shelters and permanent 24/7 women-only shelters.
- Administration will continue to work with Indigenous-led organizations and First Nations to identify and facilitate interim and permanent housing solutions on an ongoing basis as part of the City's commitments made through the Indigenous-led Affordable Housing Strategy.
- All shelter-based solutions are intended to be interim solutions for individuals and do not take away from the need to ensure suitable affordable housing solutions are available for those exiting homelessness.

REPORT

Indigenous experiences of homelessness are linked to historical trauma, oppression, racism and discrimination. Despite making up only six per cent of Edmonton's overall population, 60 per cent of Edmontonians experiencing homelessness are Indigenous and the vast majority of emergency shelter spaces in Edmonton are provided by non-Indigenous organizations.¹ There is a growing understanding that culturally appropriate services can increase the success of services and supports, leading to better outcomes for service users, the health and justice systems and the broader community.

In recognition of this issue, on November 30 2021 (November 30 2021, FCS00817, Fall 2021 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment - 2019-2022 Operating Budget), City Council directed Administration to explore ways to increase the availability of Indigenous-led shelters, housing and programming moving forward. The prioritization of these supports aligns with the Community Safety and Well Being Strategy, which also identified an Indigenous-led shelter as a priority, resulting in City Council approving \$1 million in one-time funding for the project. Administration continues to work with Indigenous-led community partners to develop the project scope and

¹ "Data, Analytics & Reporting". homewardtrust.ca/data-analytics-reporting/regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/edmonton/percent-aboriginal-population/#/

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approach for an Indigenous-led shelter project (Office of the City Manager report OCM00991-Community and Safety Well-Being Strategy, May 16, 2022).

In response to Council's direction, Administration developed a three-phase approach for the Indigenous-led shelters project.

1. Phase One - Jurisdictional Scan
2. Phase Two - Stakeholder Engagement
3. Phase Three - Indigenous-led Shelter Expression of Interest

Phase one and two were undertaken in early 2022. Jurisdictional scan and engagement findings overviews were provided to City Council in a report in June 2022 (June 27, 2022, CS00939, Indigenous-led Shelters, Housing and Programming).

Phase three activities focused on continued engagement with Indigenous stakeholders and rightsholders and the development of an expression of interest during the remainder of 2022 and early 2023. This expression of interest (EOI) was launched on March 24, 2023, with a submission due date of April 19, 2023. During the April 17, 2023 City Council discussion (April 19, 2023, CS01637, Enhanced Encampment and Unsheltered Homelessness Response Plan), City Council provided additional direction to Administration:

1. Extend the Expression of Interest for an additional month; and
2. Accept submissions toward an Indigenous-led Transitional Space in addition to Indigenous-led Shelters. This included consideration of proposals with temporary structures geared to people currently sleeping rough.

In response to this direction, Administration extended the EOI submission deadline from April 19, 2023 to May 19, 2023 and published two separate Expression of Interests: one for Indigenous-led shelter spaces and a second for Indigenous-led transitional spaces, to clarify the distinct scope of each project. Additionally, communication outreach efforts through radio and social media advertisements to support both EOIs were extended until May 19, 2023.

Overview of Expression of Interest Submissions

Administration received 11 submissions from the two separate Expression of Interests:

- four submissions on the Indigenous-led Shelter project; and,
- seven submissions on the Indigenous-led Transitional Space project.

The submissions included proposals from individual Indigenous-led organizations as well as those involving partnership between two or more Indigenous entities and partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities.

The progression of each potential new project will continue to be grounded in the approach of Indigenous involvement that enables and empowers involvement of Indigenous peoples through meaningful, flexible and ongoing dialogue for solutions on Indigenous-led shelter and transitional spaces.

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Indigenous-led Shelter Overview

Four submissions were received on the Indigenous-led Shelter Expression of Interest. From these four submissions, three projects are being further explored with the following proponents:

NiGiNan Housing Ventures Stabilization Space

NiGiNan proposed an opportunity to develop a permanent 'stabilization space' within their existing building, Pimatisiwin, for those experiencing homelessness. The proposed stabilization space would allow for up to 50 additional people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in a semi-private space with cultural and healing support.

The creation of this space would align with the City of Edmonton Community-Led Process and address a need for additional bridge housing in our community; Administration is providing financial support to enable NiGiNan to obtain the services of a consultant for the building assessment and design of the stabilization space within the existing building footprint. Once NiGiNan Housing Ventures has completed this building condition assessment and design, they will be able to use this information to seek funding from all levels of government. This design is expected to be completed in January 2024. Funding for the program and design work is from the \$1 million allocated by Council on May 16, 2022 for the creation of an Indigenous-led Shelter (May 16, 2023, OCM00991, Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy).

Collaborative Indigenous-led Permanent Shelter

Native Counseling Services of Alberta (NCSA) in collaboration with End Poverty Edmonton and a number of Indigenous-led organizations and First Nations put forward a proposal to engage collectively on the design of a new purpose-built permanent shelter. This scope of work is in alignment with Pillar 2 of the Community Safety and Well Being Strategy, which identifies the need for Indigenous housing units and shelter spaces.² To further the design of a new purpose-built permanent shelter, the City of Edmonton will retain a consultant to enable the various groups to form a design committee that will guide the creation of the new facility.

Funding for the facilitation and design work is from the \$1 million allocated by Council on May 16, 2022 (May 16, 2023, OCM00991, Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy) for the creation of an Indigenous-led Shelter. If directed by Council, the results will be brought forward for consideration during budget adjustments in 2024.

Enoch Cree Nation Proposal

Enoch Cree Nation proposed a trailer solution with resources provided in the City of Edmonton and on the Nation. The City of Edmonton has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Enoch Cree Nation and one of the areas of focus for that collaboration is around housing.

Administration has reached out to the Enoch Cree Nation to gather more information on their proposal and to learn more about how the City can act as a partner to ensure the success of this project or any related projects led by the First Nation.

² "Community Safety and Well Being Strategy". City of Edmonton. pub-edmonton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=146064

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Indigenous-led Transitional Space

Seven submissions were received on the Indigenous-led Transitional Spaces expression of interest. These submissions covered a diverse set of proposals, with some clear overlaps in approach, process and goals among the submissions. The common themes across the applications include land-based healing and cultural supports, the provision of temporary and/or soft-sided shelters and a commitment to transitioning community members to permanent housing. Given there are limited funding and land opportunities available and the diverse strengths across the applications received, Administration sees value in convening all applicants to seek their participation in developing a unified concept or approach that can address the needs of the community.

To further this work, Administration will facilitate a collaborative process with the goal of producing a conceptual design and approach for the development of a transitional space concept within the City of Edmonton. This work is underway and will occur over the next six months to develop a collaborative concept and design. If directed, these options will then be brought forward for Council consideration during budget adjustments in 2024.

Cold Weather Shelter Pilot

In addition to the NiGiNan Housing Ventures Stabilization Space, the City of Edmonton, the Government of Alberta and NiGiNan Housing Ventures are working to develop additional temporary accommodation trailers and housing “pods” at the Pimatisiwin site for November 2023. Administration and NiGiNan are currently determining the zoning, building code, servicing, and logistics required to place these pods on the site on a temporary basis. A cost benefit analysis will be conducted on this approach within Edmonton and communicated back to Council.

Government of Alberta Indigenous-led Shelter EOI

On July 14, 2023, the Province of Alberta put forward an EOI seeking operators to run additional emergency shelters within Edmonton; these shelters will include temporary winter adult shelters, permanent 24/7 Indigenous-led emergency shelters and permanent 24/7 women-only shelters.

Administration is supporting the provincial government and potential operators in the development of these spaces and where suitable, seeking alignment as several of the proponents who applied for the provincial EOI, also applied for the City's EOI. The potential for coordination on these projects will likely increase the likelihood of more projects advancing.

Next Steps

Administration will continue to pursue multiple opportunities to develop Indigenous-led shelter space within the City. There is a significant need for space and the expressions of interest showed a desire for smaller scale sites as opposed to a singular large shelter and that multiple solutions are in the best interest of people experiencing homelessness.

Lessons learned from the immediate Cold Weather Shelter Pilot and the Government of Alberta Indigenous-led Shelter EOI will be incorporated into the planning and design of these spaces.

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Budget/Financial Implications

This work aligns with the Community Safety and Well Being Strategy which prioritized an Indigenous-led shelter and resulted in Council approving \$1 million in one-time funding for Administration to work with Indigenous-led community partners to develop the project scope and approach for an Indigenous-led shelter project (OCM00991). Additional funds to support the work are allocated through the existing Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention budget.

Funding for the construction and ongoing operations of these projects remains outstanding and Administration will work with multiple partners to advocate for funds from other orders of government and return to Council during future budget adjustment processes regarding any potential City funding.

Community Insight

To ensure fairness and receive the broadest range of submissions, Administration used a variety of tactics to reach individuals and organizations with information about the call for proposals. In March 2023, a new City of Edmonton webpage focused on Indigenous-specific housing programs was created and two news releases were issued about the call for proposals. In addition to sharing information on the City's social media channels, a social media campaign targeted to First Nations communities and Metis settlements in northern Alberta ran from March 24 to May 17, 2023. The campaign reached more than 63,000 users and drove 4,177 visits to the webpage. Radio ads in English, Cree and Blackfoot were also broadcast provincewide on the Windspeaker radio network. Information about the call for proposals was also included in a newsletter distributed to stakeholders and rightsholders by the Indigenous Relations Office.

GBA+

There is a critical need for supportive and affordable housing to support marginalized and vulnerable individuals, as indicated by the City of Edmonton's Housing Need Assessment and Homeward Trust's By Name List (a real-time record of all known people currently experiencing homelessness in Edmonton). As of September 2023, there are 3,050 people on this list, of whom approximately 1,200 are either currently staying in a shelter or sleeping outdoors, with the remainder provisionally accommodated.³

Historically, 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, as well as other at-risk groups, including youth, seniors, Indigenous people, newcomers, and/or people with mental health or addiction issues have accounted for a large percentage of Canadians who are homeless, at risk of being homeless, or in core housing need.⁴ Indigenous women experiencing homelessness face significant risks of both physical violence and sexual assault⁵. Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people have

³ "Data, Analytics & Reporting". homewardtrust.ca/data-analytics-reporting/. Homeward Trust.

⁴ "2SLGBTQIA+ Housing Needs and Challenges." cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2022/2slgbtqia-housing-needs-challenges. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Cited March 7, 2023.

⁵ Heidinger, Loanna. *Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit women in Canada*. Statistics Canada. April 26, 2022.

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fewer housing options that are safe, appropriate to geographic and cultural needs, and available wherever they reside, including urban areas.

The final report on Missing Murdered and Indigenous Women and Girls⁶ has a call-to-action for all governments to develop and fund safe houses, shelters, transition houses, and second-stage housing for Inuit women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people fleeing violence.⁷

Administration is committed to increasing Indigenous representation in the services provided by the City.

Attachments

1. Transitional Space Expression of Interest
2. Permanent Shelter Expression of Interest

⁶ 2019, Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/.

⁷ "Executive Summary" (National Inquiry into Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019