A person wearing a face mask and a backpack is sitting on a bench in an urban setting at night. The background shows a building with windows and streetlights. The overall image has a sepia or brownish tint.

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# **GREATER SUDBURY ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE GUIDE**

**ORGCODE CONSULTING INC.**

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## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Guide was written on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties, and is within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon wampum agreement.

We acknowledge the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850, and recognize that the audience for this Guide and people impacted by the Guide, are located on the traditional lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and that the Greater City of Sudbury also includes the traditional lands of the Wahnapiatae First Nation.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

The Greater Sudbury Encampment Response Guide has been prepared by OrgCode Consulting Inc. Nothing in this document or contractual arrangement with the municipality should be considered a transfer of intellectual property rights.

The document reflects the inputs provided, a multi-day on-site visit with the different entities involved in the encampment response, main currents of thought and practice in responding to encampments, and expertise of the consultants.

Errors and omissions in the document are the responsibility of OrgCode Consulting Inc.

# PREAMBLE

The Greater Sudbury Encampment Response Guide is intended to help the municipality and its impacted departments, the Greater Sudbury Police Service, non-profit service providers that assist people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and the broader community respond effectively to encampments in the community.

What is meant by “*respond effectively to encampments*”?

It means the response is coordinated and comprehensive. It means there is a strong focus on resolution of homelessness through housing and services first, prior to enforcement. It means the autonomy and rights of people residing in encampments is respected. It means respecting and appreciating that it is human beings that live in encampments; human beings that are more likely to be impacted by trauma, longer histories of homelessness, living with a substance use disorder, living with mental illness, and historical institutional engagement such as the foster system, incarceration, and/or hospitalization. It means responding in ways that are culturally appropriate. It means respecting the diversity of people

residing in encampments and seeing the uniqueness of each person’s strengths and resiliency. It means person-centred, strengths-based engagement and service planning. It means respecting and navigating competing interests for the use of public space. It means situationally appropriate use of powers afforded the municipality and police when necessary. It means knowing each person in the encampment by name, and charting a pathway out of the encampment for each person.

The Guide walks through the effective response through three sections:

1. **Preparation:** this section examines what needs to be done to get ready for an encampment response;
2. **Mitigation:** this section examines all of the services and tasks to be completed when engaging with unsheltered persons living in an encampment; and,
3. **Closure:** this section examines enforcement and service offers to assist people when an encampment goes through voluntary or forced closure.

## PRINCIPLES

The Encampment Response Guide is grounded in three principles:

- A) Voluntary closure of an encampment is preferred to enforcement;
- B) People living in encampments have strengths and rights that should be leveraged and respected in the process of engagement, and when necessary, closure.
- C) All residents of Greater Sudbury should have access to public space, and no person, business or entity can or should claim public space as private space.

## UNDERSTANDING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

People experiencing homeless that are unsheltered are not a homogenous group. Each person has their own strengths and story, opportunities for support and practical needs. One size will not fit all when it comes to meeting service needs. Each person within an encampment benefits from an individualized, person-centred plan of supports dedicated to assisting them exit the encampment for safe and appropriate alternatives.

Generally speaking, people that are unsheltered fit into one of three categories of unsheltered living:

1. Those that remain at or near a fixed location of the encampment. These tend to be situations where there are structures and an encampment.
2. Those that move from location to location frequently while remaining unsheltered. People living in vehicles frequently fall into this category, as do some people that live in tents; however, many people in this category will assess different options for where to sleep rough nightly such as an ATM vestibule, alcove of a business, under awning, in laneways, and sometimes the likes of park benches.
3. Those that were unprepared for being unsheltered, and are more likely to be unsheltered for just a night or two until other services are accessed or other temporary solutions are found to accommodate the person.

While all three groups are deserving of street outreach services, for the purposes of responding to encampments, Group 2 to some degree and especially Group 1 tends to dominate the outreach worker's time, take the longest to resolve, and where there is more likely to be a

municipal response that spans different departments.

Amongst people living in more structured encampments, available data and research suggests the following characteristics are frequently encountered:

- Chronic homelessness
- Greater lengths of homelessness
- Substance use disorder
- Brain injury
- Mental illness
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Chronic disease such as liver disease, kidney disease and heart disease

These characteristics can be a challenge for engagement and rapport building to examine solutions to living outdoors. As such, timelines to take action to resolve an encampment either voluntarily or through forced closure need to account for the potential complexity of engaging with the population to be served.

Primary field research completed as part of the development of this Guide,

suggests that in Greater Sudbury the unsheltered population is primarily part of Group 1. Evidence of compromised cognitive functioning was observed and encountered, as was considerable injection opioid use. Access to food, water and clothing for those encountered was primarily through voluntary means. Several of the people encountered in encampments in Greater Sudbury are Indigenous. The population is primarily middle-aged males, with a small number of females, and a smaller number of people that were young adults or older adults. While some couples were encountered, unsheltered homelessness in Greater Sudbury is overwhelmingly unattached individuals. No minor age dependents were encountered with any adults in any of the encampments visited in Greater Sudbury.

## **IMPACTS OF COVID ON HOMELESSNESS & ENCAMPMENTS**

Throughout Canada, homelessness has changed as a result of COVID. In the first wave, community after community saw reductions in shelter space, temporary motel or shelter space added, decreased capacity in the sector due to physical distancing, and an increase in unsheltered homelessness. Throughout the second and third waves of COVID, community

responses changed. Even with more funding brought into the sector by different orders of government, much of the investment throughout the country was used to support interim, emergency, COVID-related measures. As those wound down, without shelter space being replaced, the overall system capacity shrunk. The result? Even more unsheltered homelessness by the second and third (and into the fourth wave) of the pandemic than there was at the start of the pandemic.

Communities large and small; urban, suburban and rural; east, west and north - have experienced new challenges related to responding to homelessness during the pandemic. In some instances, this has resulted in people from smaller communities seeking services and supports in medium to large urban centre at a different scale. In other instances, some small to medium sized communities experienced their first real experience of homelessness, especially unsheltered homelessness.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING ENCAMPMENTS IN GREATER SUDBURY

Encampments cannot be reduced to simply one reason. The growth and expansion of encampments are more

often a result of the confluence of several factors. Within Greater Sudbury, factors most likely impacting the presence and increase in encampments include:

**Scarcity of supportive housing:** there is an insufficient amount of site-based supportive housing with onsite 24/7 supports. Supportive housing is a necessary component of a community's response to reduce and end homelessness. People with complex and often co-occurring life issues benefit most from highly affordable, intensively supportive environments, especially if they have struggled in the past with scattered site housing with supports.

**A rental market out of reach for many:** the most recent Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation data from 2020 shows that Bachelor units have a 3.1% vacancy rate and One-Bedroom units have a 2.5% vacancy rate. On face value, this would seem to suggest a more balanced market for smaller sized units. However, one must consider:

**A)** Landlords and property management firms can implement application processes that end up excluding the population based upon rental history, poor credit and/or lack of recent rental references, and a small number of landlords may be engaged in other



discriminatory practices making access to the private rental market more difficult;

- B)** With an average market rate of \$676 for Bachelor units and \$904 for One-Bedroom units, housing costs are out of reach for people that rely on Ontario Works, and a stretch for people on the Ontario Disability Support Program where greater than 50% of gross monthly income would go to rent.

The inadequacy of income assistance rates relative to the costs of housing and living is not new, but has been exacerbated by the pandemic and has an impact on the increase of encampments.

<b>Average Cost Bachelor Unit 2020</b>	\$676
<b>Average Cost One Bedroom Unit 2020</b>	\$904
<b>OW Shelter Allowance - Single w/out Dependents</b>	\$390
<b>% of Rent Shelter Allowance Covers - Bachelor</b>	58%
<b>% of Rent Shelter Allowance Covers - One Bedroom</b>	43%
<b>OW Total Monthly Benefit (incl. Shelter Allowance) - Single w/out dependents</b>	\$733
<b>% of Rent Total Monthly Benefit Covers - Bachelor</b>	108%
<b>% of Rent Total Monthly Benefit Covers - One Bedroom</b>	82%

<b>ODSP Shelter Allowance - Single w/out dependents</b>	\$497
<b>% of Rent Shelter Allowance Covers - Bachelor</b>	74%
<b>% of Rent Shelter Allowance Covers - One Bedroom</b>	55%
<b>ODSP Total Monthly Benefit (incl. Shelter Allowance) - Single w/out dependents</b>	\$1,169
<b>% of Rent Total Monthly Benefit Covers - Bachelor</b>	173%
<b>% of Rent Total Monthly Benefit Covers - One Bedroom</b>	78%

Because Greater Sudbury has a higher proportion of people on ODSP than many other Ontario communities, it would appear that there are more housing opportunities for people living in encampments living on ODSP than people living on OW. Without suitable housing options for people of very low income like OW, or the introduction of more very targeted rent supplements, some people living in encampments will be stuck.

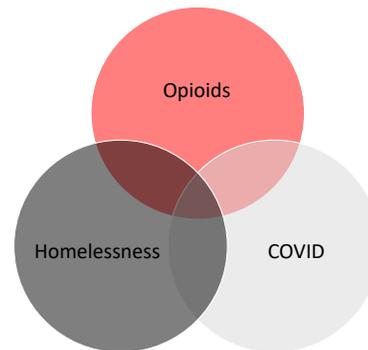
However, one should not think that people on ODSP even have enough suitable housing options that are affordable. The shelter allowance of ODSP is insufficient to cover the cost of housing in Greater Sudbury. Recipients of either ODSP or OW are in a position where a disproportionate amount of total monthly income goes to

housing. A person on OW in a bachelor would have a total of \$57 to get through the month for all other expenses after paying for rent. A person on OW cannot afford the average market rent for a one-bedroom unit without additional subsidy like a rent supplement. A person on ODSP in a bachelor is in a better position than those on OW, with \$493 per month for all other expenses after paying rent. A person on ODSP in a one-bedroom apartment has \$265 to meet all other monthly expenses after paying rent.

**Opioids:** Opioid related incidents, while not exclusive to people experiencing homelessness, provide insight on the state of opioid impacts in the community. From January 2021 to August 2021, Public Health data shows 566 opioid-related incidents responded to by Greater Sudbury paramedics. The same period the previous year, also during the pandemic, had 368 opioid-related incidents responded to by Greater Sudbury paramedics. Distribution of Naloxone is also up considerably year over year. 2021 data from January to July shows 16 307 doses of Naloxone administered compared to 10 472 in the same time period the previous year.

The opioid situation in Greater Sudbury is amongst the most impactful in the province for a municipality of its size.

Opioids become one of three intersecting crises that impact some people living in encampments. The other two intersecting crises are homelessness and COVID.



It is promising that there is already access to therapies such as methadone in Greater Sudbury. It is promising that a safer consumption site is in the planning stages and is not long from being a reality. It is promising that organizations involved in providing professional support and engagement services to people in encampments are equipped with Naloxone.

However, it is clear for many people residing in encampments at the present time that opioids are greatly impacting day to day life. There is open consumption. There are overdoses. There are conflicts related to drug use and drug transactions. A community cannot and should not try to arrest its way through a public health crisis. While some in the local community have expressed a desire

to see Greater Sudbury Police Service crackdown on opioid use, that is more likely to exacerbate issues related to opioid use than provide a viable pathway to harm reduction or even abstinence and ongoing cessation of use.

**COVID:** there were encampments prior to the pandemic. The encampments, however, were not as plentiful or as large. It would be insufficient to reduce the increased presence and growth of encampments solely on the pandemic, but it must be considered a large contributing factor. The pandemic has disrupted, and perhaps permanently altered, the homelessness response and housing support system. It has changed the way existing services operate and resulted in the introduction of new services. It has changed the ease with which some resources like income supports were accessed. It has changed service capacity. It has changed the processes by which people view and secure rental accommodation. It has changed where people experiencing homelessness access washrooms and hygiene facilities. It has changed access to substances like opioids. It has changed access to health care. It has changed the labour market and influences labour force participation, especially amongst people that relied upon casual or day labour opportunities.

**Trauma:** some in the community of Greater Sudbury that are involved in encampment response need to shift their thinking from *“What’s wrong with this person?”* to *“What happened to this person?”*

There is no doubt that trauma plays a role in the decision that some people make in deciding to reside in an encampment. Furthermore, there is no doubt that trauma plays a role in the decision that some people make to use opioids or other substances. For Indigenous people living in encampments, trauma is quite possibly intergenerational, and one must consider the potentially devastating impacts of colonization, systemic racism, discrimination, and historical injustices such as Residential Schools.

Rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are higher in populations of people experiencing homelessness than the general population. As noted in the upcoming section on Service Orientation, a trauma informed approach to engagement and resolution of encampments is critical.

**Lack of capacity in homelessness services in neighbouring smaller communities:** larger communities in Northern Ontario — Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Thunder Bay — have

always been service hubs for smaller communities dotted along and near the Hwy 17 corridor, for commerce, health care services beyond initial emergency medicine, education, and social services. Smaller communities tend not to have robust volumes of rental housing stock, nor do they tend to have an infrastructure to support people experiencing homelessness or in need of housing supports. As such, people with these needs gravitate towards the larger centres of the north, including Greater Sudbury. During COVID, as transportation was more difficult and some First Nations communities became more restrictive in access, along with increased housing instability caused by COVID, resulted in a reported increase in the number of people from smaller communities coming to Greater Sudbury. This does not mean that encampments are exclusively with people that are from other communities, but the entire service delivery system has felt capacity pressures beyond what had historically been planned for as a result of the increases from other communities.

The Canadian Charter allows for freedom of mobility throughout the country. Greater Sudbury cannot and should not deny services to someone just because they are from another community. But more planning, engagement and support may be possible to the smaller

communities to decrease the volume of service need that is ending up on Sudbury's doorstep.

**Demands on existing shelter services:** the current demands on the existing shelter system are also impacting the presence and growth of encampments in Greater Sudbury.

In a non-pandemic reality, the volume of shelter space for men is likely sufficient when there is an emphasis on housing and shorter stays in shelter. However, because of loss of housing, greater scarcity of affordable housing options, grossly inadequate volume of supportive housing, increased demand for services from outside of Greater Sudbury, and changes in how resources and supports are available during the pandemic, the volume of shelter space for men is, at least temporarily, inadequate.

There are less pressures on the shelter system for women. From purely a space consideration, the presence of women in encampments does not seem to be driven by lack of available shelter space.

There are some couples residing in encampments. There is the absence of suitable shelter space for couples without dependents with them. Separating in order to access shelter is not palatable to

most in this situation. As such, there will likely remain some couples without dependents in encampments until this is resolved or alternate accommodation is offered to the couples.

**Depletion of rooming house stock:** the community prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic has shed dozens upon dozens of units of rooming house stock. While it is almost certainly true that some of the rooming house stock was in unacceptable physical condition and in need of major repair, and that the rooming house units could frequently have two or more people residing within the unit, it remained an important part of the housing continuum for people of very low income, often living with a range of other life factors such as brain injury, addiction, fetal alcohol, or serious mental illness. To be clear, this housing stock had issues and frequent police calls, but very low income people displaced from rooming houses and the lack of availability of rooming house units now, limits options that can be considered in helping some people exit encampments.

**Current and historical approach to addressing encampments:** the current and historical approach to addressing encampments is likely increasing polarity in the community regarding encampments. Of particular concern has

been the closing of encampments without sufficient advanced and posted notice, and what amounts to shuffling people from one encampment location to another, sometimes with the assistance of a service provider or voluntary group. People may be moved on from an underpass or a park only to re-emerge in a different location and without getting any closer to resolving his/her/their homelessness. This increases frustration on the part of everyone involved – from the enforcement body to the people experiencing homelessness, from affected businesses and neighbourhoods to homelessness service providers. It is a no win situation as historically and currently operated.

**Demands on street outreach beyond direct engagement with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness:** the provision of street outreach services is a professional intervention that uses highly trained, skilled and experienced staff that can navigate solutions to homelessness based upon the unique needs and strengths of each person. Ideally, street outreach staff would have the majority of their time dedicated to planned engagements with predetermined objectives to advance alternatives to staying in an encampment.

As has been the case in many communities responding to homelessness during the pandemic, street outreach has been called upon to undertake other tasks as well. For example, engaging people in the isolation motel impacted by COVID is the responsibility of street outreach. In Greater Sudbury, there has also been pressure on the street outreach team to provide access to clothing, food, and beverage during the pandemic. On top of this, though not directly pandemic related, the street outreach team picks up and transports donations as well. Time taken away from direct service tasks related to engagement and supports to people residing in encampments dilutes the effectiveness of the street outreach service.

**Well-intentioned, voluntary engagement without professional training:** the final factor influencing the state of encampments in Greater Sudbury is the provision of food, clothing and engagement that is being performed by untrained, non-professional volunteers.

Imagine a situation where a new bridge was required in Greater Sudbury. Professionals would be hired to develop the overall design to meet the functional needs of the bridge. Those professionals would be trusted. If the bridge is designed or built wrong it is quite likely someone

will be hurt or perish. Greater Sudbury would not tolerate untrained people designing and building a bridge.

In homelessness engagement, why does the community believe that just because someone cares they are qualified? Have they received, practiced and been monitored in their application of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices? What about ethics and boundaries? What about ensuring food comes from an inspected food source where proper food handling and storage is expected?

Voluntary engagement without professional training interferes with the professional response to encampments. It detracts from the core mission. It interrupts engagement with people living in encampments. It mixes messages. It quite likely will result in someone being hurt physically, mentally or emotionally, and may even cause death in extreme cases.

## **SERVICE ORIENTATION**

Engagement and the provision of support services should incorporate and use a very specific service orientation, whether the professionals doing the engagement are social work professionals, by-law enforcement, police, etc.:

**Trauma Informed:** Accepting that trauma is widespread within the population being engaged and the adoption of a trauma-informed approach are both critical for success. Engagement should be conducted in such a way so as to promote feelings of safety. Transparency on what is going to occur and the available service options is necessary to develop and maintain trust. The process of service planning is a collaborative one. The exploration of service options happens with people, not to people or for people. Culture, gender and history of each individual will be considered in the process of providing support. People should be empowered to make decisions on alternatives to living in an encampment. Every engagement should be conducted using open body language, with hands and eyes visible. People engaging on site with people experiencing homelessness should avoid raising their voice and maximize engaged dialogue using open-ended, exploratory and non-judgmental questions.

**Harm Reducing:** People encountered in encampments often engage in higher risk behaviour that comes with serious risks up to and including death. Living outdoors in a structure not designed for permanent human habitation should be considered a high risk behaviour. This is in addition to harms that may be encountered related to

substance use and/or participation in sex work. Some people living in encampments may also be more prone to be victims of violence or sexual assault. The entire response should engage people in a non-judgmental way, meeting people where they are at both literally and circumstantially. As the encampment is receiving service, residents of the encampment should have harm reduction supplies such as safer use kits, testing strips, naloxone kits on site, and condoms. Offers of alternatives to the encampment should be presented and positioned as harm reduction interventions.

**Strengths Based:** Surviving in an environment and structure not intended for permanent occupation takes considerable strengths and resiliency. It is important to acknowledge the efforts and resiliencies, as well as problem-solving skills and the ability to take care of basic needs on an ongoing basis. The service options prepared and presented to encampment residents should be based upon their strengths rather than focusing on deficits.

**Motivational:** With rapport developed with encampment residents, the intention is to structure conversations to be motivational, evoking from within the encampment resident's own desire to change their living situation. Whenever

possible, ordering, commanding, lecturing, bargaining, bribing, coercing and/or forcing people to accept services should be avoided. If structured appropriately and practiced effectively, Motivational Interviewing should be effective in assisting encampment residents in considering change and taking appropriate action based upon those internal motivations to change.

**In Vivo:** When people are living in encampments, it is important and necessary to serve people in their most natural setting rather than expecting people from the encampment to go elsewhere in the community to explore service options or connect with service providers. As such, whenever possible, helping professionals will go to the site to provide services to people living in the encampment, rather than expecting the encampment resident to journey elsewhere to receive service.

**Culturally Appropriate:** Culture is understood as the customs of a particular social group or nation. To be culturally appropriate is to ensure that those people engaging with encampment residents are respectful and appropriate for Indigenous people, people of colour, LGBTQ2S+ people, youth and young adults, etc.

**Housing Focused:** Housing is the only known cure to homelessness. If the homelessness response system is not focused on ending homelessness (with supports when warranted), it is focused on the wrong things. A housing-focus to service delivery is necessary to ensure that outflow keeps pace or exceeds inflow into homelessness. It also helps restore dignity and stability. The difference between managing homelessness and ending homelessness is the unrelenting focus on housing solutions to help people exit homelessness.

To be housing-focused is to embrace the five core principles of Housing First in the encampment response:



<b>Core Principle</b>	<b>What It Means</b>
No housing readiness requirements	A belief that every person is ready for housing, without requiring them to prove their worthiness or readiness first, appreciating that housing and support take many forms and must be customized to their strengths and presenting supporting opportunities of each person. People do not have to be sober, prove compliance, engage in mandatory preparatory programming or be nice in order to be deserving and worthy of housing. Living this core principles means meeting people where they are at, and then journeying towards acquiring a suitable, safe place to live where intensive supports with matters ranging from emotional supports to basic needs customized in type, duration, frequency and intensity for each person can be supported.
Self-determination and participant choice	A belief in empowering people to make decisions on matters that impact their own life, because people are masters of their own life and have autonomy to decide what is in her/his/their best interest. It is our job to provide people unbiased information, when necessary, teach skills of deliberation in decision-making, and then work with the person to establish a pathway forward based upon their own desires. In line with the central tenets of Trauma Informed Care, this requires embracing and practicing an approach that values mutuality and collaboration. It is important to undertake work and support WITH program participants; not do things FOR them or TO them.

<b>Core Principle</b>	<b>What It Means</b>
Recovery orientation	A belief in offering supports to people in a manner that promotes mental health recovery. Furthermore, it is understood and appreciated that many people we support in housing will benefit from time and assistance recovering from the such matters as the impacts of their homelessness, trauma, stigma, racism, discrimination, and, extreme economic poverty, while also being more well associated with their substance use and physical health. Assistance with recovery is an intentional, customized, person-centred strategy.
Individualized and participant-driven supports	A belief that just as no two people are the same, no two support plans for people should be the same. As rapport is developed and better appreciated, individual and environmental strengths and resources are understood so that people can be assisted in such a way that leverages their existing knowledge and experience to progressively engage. To build people up, people must be empowered, respecting personal autonomy. As necessary, people are taught skills of deliberation of options, and trusted to acquire when necessary and use their voice to make decisions. Knowing that decisions for supports will not always work out as planned, as a community it is important to believe that part of the support process is a non-punitive review of what is working and not working, and customizing adjustments to support to better increase the long-term effectiveness of housing and supports.



Core Principle	What It Means
Social and community integration	Too often, Housing First is interpreted as “Housing Only” and that all of the follow-up supports necessary to help a person adjust to housing successfully are forgotten. As a community, housing has to be seen as a first step, but not the only step. Key to long-term housing success is feeling of connection to others and place. In addition, as a community we must believe that increasing social and support opportunities with others that are not exclusively formerly homeless persons can help diversify natural supports to help the program participants remain housed.

## RIGHTS OF PEOPLE THAT ARE UNSHELTERED

People experiencing homelessness, including people that are unsheltered, do not surrender their rights because they are experiencing homelessness. The Canadian *Charter* applies. The same rights and freedoms that apply to housed Canadians apply to Canadians that are homeless. In practical terms, this means that all actions taken in regards to encampments must be guided by the commitment to maintain human rights and human dignity when working to resolve the housing needs of encampment residents. It is understood that housing is identified as a basic human right and the failure of governments to ensure adequate supply of safe, affordable housing stock has ensured that

homelessness has increased across the country.

Many communities examine their legal authority to remove encampments. What also must be considered is whether the actions by a municipality are infringing upon the rights of Canadians in encampments. As such, the examinations of explicit legal authority to address the encampment should be coupled with a legal examination of whether the local approach, as planned and implemented, would violate the rights of the people living in the encampment.

## UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS AMONGST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND SERVING IN A CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE MANNER

Jesse Thistle’s 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness should be considered to help frame the response and services to Indigenous people living in encampments to acknowledge the different facets of homelessness for Indigenous people that differ from non-Indigenous people.



people experiencing homelessness that they are qualified to assist people experiencing homelessness. The homelessness industry may be the only industry that repeatedly confuses a big heart with a big brain - that to care is to be qualified. Caring is insufficient. Effective responses to homelessness require carefully trained, highly professional staff who know both the technical aspects of the job, as well as the service orientation, and practice it seamlessly well as part of a system of supports.

In Greater Sudbury, greatly interfering with the ability to provide a comprehensive, professional response are charitable groups that have entered into the space of feeding people, providing tents and sleeping bags, and attempting to speak with authority on the issue with media. This is a travesty and perhaps unknowingly a tremendous tell of their lack of professional knowledge and understanding of the main currents of thought and practice in homelessness response that are grounded in evidence and demonstrate professional boundaries and appropriate ethics.

Training and coaching on implementing a culturally appropriate approach to engagement and service to Indigenous people living in encampments can be beneficial to all parties involved. Integrating Indigenous service providers, rather than operating in silos, is most advantageous to have a comprehensive, community response to homelessness amongst Indigenous people.

## A PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE TO ENCAMPMENTS

Unfortunately, too many well intentioned people think that because they care about

While not illegal for voluntary groups to engage with people experiencing homelessness, it is highly problematic. Without training on trauma informed care,

for example, the helper may inadvertently be inflicting more trauma upon people. Without being connected formally to the system of care, outsiders cannot make meaningful referrals, cannot navigate the processes necessary for Coordinated Access, and are not held accountable for their practices in the way a funded non-profit organization would be operating in the same space with the same population.

Furthermore, the intention of informal voluntary groups has to be carefully scrutinized. An examination of social media from community members would seem to suggest it is toxic charity driven by ego. Mainstream media commentary provided by entities that are voluntary in nature also demonstrates a lack of clear understanding of the complexity of systems, social services, and working with vulnerable populations.

## **AVOID THE ALLURE OF WHAT ARE SEEN AS QUICK FIXES**

Communities that have emerging or growing encampments can look for quick fixes. Some of the most commonly touted responses are highly problematic without more careful thought and planning, and may be rejected outright based upon their merits.

**Safe Camping Zone:** Some communities believe that if they provide a sanctioned location for urban camping for people experiencing homelessness, that it will resolve all matters related to encampments. First, even if there was a safe camping zone created that is sanctioned by City Council, there is no legal mechanism to force or require people to use it. Considerable money and social capital may be expended to find that there are still encampments throughout the community that are not in the safe camping zone. Second, related to money, safe camping zones are exceptionally more expensive to operate than most people think. Municipally funded portable rent supplements would help people exit homelessness and cost significantly less than operating the safe camping zone. Third, given the concentration of people that may have rather profound needs, and exhibit behaviours that may make communal living difficult, staffing and police costs tend to increase because of interpersonal conflicts. Finally, there is not a clear exit strategy for a community that goes down the road of a sanctioned encampment in a safe camping zone. In other words, they struggle to bring the safe camping zone to an end, even if determined it is no longer needed as part of the community emergency response.

**Tiny Homes:** While tiny homes may have a place in the broader continuum of housing options for a community (though this needs to be carefully scrutinized), tiny homes have not proven effective at ending encampments. First, like safe camping zones, there is no way to force people in encampments to accept an offer of a tiny home. Second, central to effective service delivery in ending homelessness is empowering people to make meaningful choices in housing. Trying to solve encampments through just one approach rather than maximizing options is problematic. Third, tiny homes can be difficult to size and service depending on location, and can be more expensive to build, site and service on a per square foot basis compared to other forms of multi-unit residential housing.

## **ADDITIONAL CONTEXT, PLANNING AND PROGRESS IN SUPPLEMENTING EXISTING RESOURCES THAT WILL ASSIST IN RESOLVING ENCAMPMENTS**

Greater Sudbury, in collaboration with a range of community non-profit organizations, have initiated actions recently to assist with encampment resolution and the overall demands on the

homelessness response system. Other action items are in the planning stages. Highlights of the service context, initiatives underway and initiatives in the planning stage are as follows:

- Expansion of the use of the Four Sisters Motel providing 7 extra spaces for temporary emergency shelter accommodation was implemented in late August
- Greater Sudbury is exploring options to secure a second motel that can be used to help build a bridge between unsheltered homelessness and permanent housing
- Greater Sudbury is negotiating with a service provider to operate a daytime and overnight warming centre for up to 30 people
- Greater Sudbury is adding \$150,000 in housing allowances annually to the Homelessness Network, which is targeted to assist up to 20 people with housing costs monthly
- The By Name List, with approximately 60 people on the list experiencing homelessness and waiting to be matched to housing, prioritizes unsheltered homelessness over people that use shelter. As new housing comes



online, the By Name List will be the primary means by which people are matched to housing units. The upcoming Point in Time Count on October 19 will likely result in additional people on the By Name List.

support reunification with family or friends and return to home community for people that find themselves homeless in Greater Sudbury and have a safe and appropriate location to return.

- The local CHPI homelessness prevention fund invests \$1.2M annually to help support people to get and stayed housed, and can be used to help
- Downtown By-law staffing levels are temporary unless provided Council approval to transition from a pilot project to permanent staffing

# PREPARATION

## COORDINATED RESPONSE TABLE, WITH CLEAR SENIOR LEADERSHIP

### INTRODUCTION

Greater Sudbury will benefit from creating an encampment coordinated response table with five core members, and a number of other entities that can be part of a broader response table. The five core members are: By-law Enforcement; Greater Sudbury Police Service; street outreach provider; Indigenous service provider; and, Social Services. It is recommended that Social Services convene and chair the encampment coordinated response table as the Local Response Leader. Each leadership role is outlined below:



**1. Local Response Leader:** the Local Response Leader is an experienced senior manager/executive who is provided the authority to convene other leaders and interests in the

encampment response. This authority can come through the likes of an elected body or a Chief Administrative Officer. The Local Response Leader needs to navigate inter-departmental engagement related to encampments, mobilize the social services sector, ensure authorities and legal

justification for engagement and resolution is clear and operationalized by the Operations Response Leader, and work to coordinate with Police and other relevant bodies to help support public safety. The Local Response Leader needs to have the authority to influence the

work of the street outreach provider through contractual engagements for funding. The Local Response Leader must also be able to activate participation in encampment resolution through access to income supports and non-market housing.

**2. Street Outreach Response Leader:** the Street Outreach Response Leader is an experienced non-profit

professional, most likely in a management or senior management position. This person can speak directly to the work that is done by the street outreach team and is capable of directing the street outreach team to respond to encampments and perform tasks related to encampment resolution.

**3. Indigenous Service Provider Leader:**

the Indigenous Service Provider Leader is an experienced non-profit professional, most likely in a leadership position within the organization. This person can provide a cultural perspective on engaging with Indigenous people, help connect Indigenous people in encampments to Indigenous-specific services, and facilitate homelessness resolution pathways for Indigenous people that want an Indigenous-specific response.

**4. Operations Response Leader:**

the Operations Response Leader is an experienced manager or executive who is well versed on policy, legal authorities of the job, and has the ability to guide or direct operations staff (for example, By-law Officers) on where and when to respond to an encampment, and what to do when/if an encampment is encountered. The Operations Response Leader needs to

be able to assemble and instruct municipal staff if the encampments need to be physically disassembled and the site cleaned.

**5. Public Safety Response Leader:**

likely to sit within Police, the Public Safety Response Leader is responsible for assessing safety issues associated with the encampment, structures, and/or assembly of people on public space. To be clear, the position advances public safety for all people; they do not exist to be the enforcement body, nor do they exist to conduct surveillance on people living in encampments. Public safety personnel will be necessary to conduct a safety assessment on each encampment site, if necessary, as well as handle some logistics on the day of the closure such as traffic control. It is not recommended that warrant checks or that conditions of release from incarceration be the primary focus of the activities of public safety, though it is acknowledged some of these tasks can be part of any engagement between police and an individual. The Public Safety Response Leader should also plan an approach to engagement that focuses on keeping everyone safe in the event that there is a protest activity on the day of the planned closure of the encampment. In very

rare circumstances, and to be avoided if at all possible, the Public Safety Response Leader must be prepared to provide instruction and mobilization of escorting people out of the encampment.

## **AUTHORITY AND DECISION-MAKING OF THE CORE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

In the response to homelessness, the Service Manager — the municipality — is responsible for coordinating, planning and recommending funding in the homelessness and housing support response system. As appointed or approved by the CAO or City Council, it is recommended that Social Services, given the familiarity of responsibilities of the Service Manager, provide the leadership to the encampment response in the community.

The group of core leaders engage in the senior leadership coordination of encampment response. The group agrees to follow an Interdepartmental Municipal Protocol for Engaging and Resolving Encampments. An outline of the Protocol follows this section of the report.

The core leadership group aims to follow a consensus model in decision-making. When consensus cannot be reached, the Local Response Leader will request that

each of the other four leaders in the core leadership group vote. The Local Response Leader only votes to break ties if the other leaders are deadlocked in a two-two vote.

The leadership group informs operational decisions only. The group does not create policy. The group does not recommend funding. The group does not advocate.

Until such time as there are three or fewer encampments in Greater Sudbury, the Local Response Leader may expect weekly engagement with the core leadership group. When the volume of encampments decreases, the Local Response Leader may choose to engage with the core leadership group less frequently.

Decisions of the leadership group may be made public by the Local Response Leader, but deliberations, data and discussions used to reach decisions are held in confidence. To participate in the core leadership group, each entity must agree to keep deliberations, data and discussions confidential. Furthermore, the Local Response Leader or their appointed designate are the only person authorized to discuss matters with media related to the work of the core leadership group.

Empowered by City Council or the CAO, and given the group is focused on coordination and operations, specific decisions related to individual encampments are not brought to City Council for approval, though the Local Response Leader may choose to ensure briefing notes and background materials are available to City Councillors and the Mayor.

## **FINALIZE AND FOLLOW AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL MUNICIPAL PROTOCOL FOR ENGAGING AND RESOLVING ENCAMPMENTS**

The purpose of the Interdepartmental Protocol is to establish working parameters surrounding who does what, when they do it, how they do it, and who makes decisions. Think of it as the document that gets all parties on the same page. Without it, messaging, decision-making and activities that impact people living in an encampment are hampered, and can turn what seemed like a well-planned encampment response into an operational disaster.

### **OPERATIONAL FRAMING**

1. Greater Sudbury, and its funded agencies, are committed to working with homeless individuals living outside to respond to their individual needs by

assisting them access services and supports, including permanent housing.

2. Greater Sudbury will use a coordinated approach between City departments, including police and by-law in responding. Activities will also be coordinated with community agencies to access a mix of supports and resources, streamline access to services, and avoid duplication of effort.

3. Greater Sudbury and partners involved in engaging and resolving encampment will engage in ongoing proactive communication with homeless individuals, the public, service providers, community agencies and other groups as necessary.

4. The priority is to assist homeless people access safer, sustainable, and healthier alternatives than living outside, not enforcement. Enforcement will occur after all support efforts have been attempted without success, provided that the individual has been notified that they are required to vacate a public space. In the event of exceptional circumstances, however, intervention may be required to address immediate public safety concerns.

5. All parties acknowledge that homeless individuals cannot be forced to accept services and supports.



## **PROTOCOL**

1. The core leadership group will coordinate efforts to ensure that the timing of enforcement activities does not conflict with or impede outreach efforts.
2. Enforcement agencies are responsible for providing notice to individuals who camping is to be discontinued and that personal goods, debris and structures are to be cleared from the space.
3. Notices will be given to individuals in advance. The timing of issuing notices will be determined in consultation with outreach staff. Formal enforcement notices will provide relevant and clear communication to the individual. In addition, site specific information notices for each location will be attached to provide a list of resources to provide individuals with information regarding access to housing, support services and shelter in the area.

## **ADDITIONAL ENTITIES TO SUPPLEMENT THE WORK OF THE CORE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

While each leader may mobilize a small group to assist with their planning and operations, it is recommended that the Local Response Leader convene a larger response table.

Considerations may be given to inviting some or all of these types of people to engage in the response table:

**Police:** Likely already to have some representation through the Public Safety Response Leader, the police should function in a support role, not an enforcement role. As police engage with encampment residents prior to closure, it would be beneficial to have them reinforce the importance of accepting services. Police can also be very useful in providing a safety assessment of each encampment site from their perspective. If people at an encampment are arrested or incarcerated through direct police action for any reason other than being in an encampment, this needs to be communicated to the Local Response Leader, and may result in an accelerated clean-up of the site. On the day of the encampment closure, police may be needed to escort people off the encampment site, as well as support crowd safety if people assemble to be curious onlookers or protest what is occurring.

**Fire:** Efforts should be made to prevent loss of life or injury as a result of fires, combustibles, explosives or carbon monoxide at the encampment site. Representatives from Fire can be critical to the safety assessment of each

encampment site. In rare circumstances, safety hazards identified that cannot be remediated may result in a quicker required closure of the encampment site.

**Public Health:** Public Health departments often assess encampments for levels of hygiene and risks of disease transmission, including COVID. Recommendations from the assessment can result in things like altering the configuration of the encampment to improve physical distancing, providing portable toilets at the site, providing hand washing stations at the site, or providing instructions on safe food handling and storage. From time to time, rodent infestations at or near an encampment site, an accumulation of garbage, and/or biohazards on or near the site such as human faeces or urine can prompt Public Health officials to recommend or order that an encampment be closed sooner than expected.

**Indigenous Organizations:** Given there are Indigenous people experiencing homelessness at several of the encampment locations, it can be advantageous to invite Indigenous organizations to have input on the approach to services or which services are offered. The Indigenous organization may also partner with the municipally funded street outreach worker to attend

the encampment(s) where Indigenous people are located.

**Ontario Works:** Either through direct onsite service or through a dedicated contact via phone or video chat, Ontario Works caseworkers should be invited to provide resources and assistance either with applying for income assistance, reactivating benefits, and/or troubleshooting anything in the client's file.

**Street Outreach:** One street outreach provider will be selected to sit as part of the core leadership group. In addition, other street outreach providers, whether their focus is on homelessness and housing or harm reduction, should be invited to participate in the overall response to encampments.

**Shelter:** While people in the encampment have likely rejected shelter or been rejected by shelter, this does not negate the importance of shelter(s) being part of the response table. Sometimes shelters have existing knowledge of people in encampments that can be helpful in the service planning with the individual, when consent allows that information to be shared. Shelter space should also be dedicated to people from the encampment on the day of enforcement if at all possible.

**Youth Service Provider:** Given some people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are under the age of 25, it is important to have a youth service provider that knows how to navigate youth services and serve people through a positive youth development approach. Age appropriate responses can be very important in the service response.

**Coordinated Access:** Some of the people living in encampments may already be on the local By Name List for Coordinated Access, and in the queue for housing. For others, this may be the opportunity where they engage to get on the By Name List. Coordinated Access representatives should be invited to participate to provide existing information, with consent, or to assist the individuals in encampments in getting on the By Name List. It is important that people living in encampments are not seen as jumping the queue in accessing housing, otherwise a dangerous precedent is set that may result in more people that are homeless choosing to live outside if it is seen as accelerating access to housing. Nonetheless, unsheltered homelessness, especially of longer duration, should be considered as a prioritization variable for Greater Sudbury.

**Legal:** Municipal legal staff or outside counsel are necessary to examine the

legal justification being used to close the encampments. In addition, the response table may consider involving community legal aid resources in the event any individual at an encampment is in need of legal assistance.

**Corporate Communications:** Corporate Communications play a key role in the planning, mitigation and closure phases, helping to prepare, manage and disseminate internal and external communication documents. The preparation of key messaging and briefing notes are also necessary. On top of this, Corporate Communications may be the municipal spokesperson on the encampment response, or may prepare the Local Response Leader to be the spokesperson.

**By-law:** As the enforcement body, by-law must have a seat at the response table and coordinate their response with other operating units and the social service response. By-law is often the entity that best knows what the legal justification is for the removal of encampments, in order to comply with local by-laws. By-law may be the Operations Response Leader, or may accompany the Operations Response Leader on the notification to vacate the site on the day of enforcement.



**Other Operating Units within Municipal Government:** All relevant operating units within municipal government (for example, Parks, Sanitation, Public Works, Transportation, etc.) should have a seat at the response table. The operating units will be responsible for the implementation of the clean-up of the site after it is voluntarily vacated or there is enforcement.

**Mental Health Organization:** It is anticipated that one or more people living in an encampment has a mental illness, and it is possible that one or more person lives with a serious and persistent mental illness. By bringing a mental health organization to the response table it is possible to get additional mental health expertise, possible access to mental health first aid, possible streamlined access to mental health supports, and/or, additional guidance and resources for the municipally funded street outreach worker.

**Addiction Support Organization:** Some people living in the encampments are known to be living with addiction. An addiction support organization should be provided a seat at the response table. They can assist with harm reduction expertise and/or addiction recovery access and supports.

**Brain Injury Organization:** Given that a disproportionate number of people experiencing homelessness have a brain injury, it may be of benefit to have a brain injury organization around the table to help navigate access to resources specifically designed to assist people living with a brain injury.

Consideration may also be given to inviting other entities to the response table, if locally appropriate:

**Faith-based Organizations:** Many faiths engage in practices to assist people experiencing economic poverty, community disconnection, and/or homelessness. Faith-based organizations already involved in this type of work may be considered another service provider if the members of the congregation are appropriately trained and have experience working with the population. Otherwise, faith-based organizations may be able to provide additional resources (e.g., non-government funded rental assistance; access to a hall or facility to provide a debrief location for people living in encampments in the event of enforcement).

**Business Improvement Areas:** Representing various business interests, Business Improvement Areas have also demonstrated their ability in Ontario

communities to invest in street outreach and other services. Furthermore, with a representative from the Business Improvement Area, it is possible to better educate its members on homelessness and the encampment response. Business Improvement Areas can help address service gaps and improve communications.

### **Neighbourhood Associations:**

Representing the needs of specific neighbourhoods, a neighbourhood impacted by encampments may benefit from having participation in the Response Table. The Neighbourhood Association may also be of benefit in assisting with education of residents on homelessness and the encampment response.

The Local Response Leader may choose to invite other organizations or entities not listed above if it is operationally relevant to serving people in encampments and working to resolve encampments through a service-focused response.

## **EXPLICIT LEGAL AUTHORITY**

Explicit legal authority should be explained and understood by the people living in the encampments, social service agencies involved in the response, and, at a higher level, the general public.

Focus exclusively on the activities or behaviours that violate existing by-laws, provincial law, or federal law. Focus on the explicit legal authority to address the tent structures and activities on public space.

The Local Response Leader should confirm with municipal legal, or an outside lawyer, the authorities that the municipality has to remove encampments if necessary.

## **INVENTORY OF AVAILABLE SERVICES**

Up to date, relevant information on which social service and housing options are available must be compiled. This inventory of available services should be curated to be relevant to the specific needs of people living in the encampment, not a general community resource guide for people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the inventory of available services should reflect how services are currently operating during COVID. The resources that are available should be understood by all parties directly engaging with people in encampments.

The Local Response Leader may request that an existing funded organization, such as a street outreach provider, prepare the

inventory of available services. This should be completed as soon as possible.

## **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Additional training on trauma informed care, progressive engagement, assertive engagement and impactful street outreach may be of benefit to each of the relevant stakeholders involved directly in encampment response: street outreach, Indigenous-specific service provider, by-law and police specifically. The necessity of this training and education will be subject to better understanding the training already provided to these entities on these matters as it relates specifically to engaging people experiencing homelessness.

The Local Response Leader should assess training needs of all relevant parties involved in the encampment response in Greater Sudbury, and work to ensure the training is secured and provided either in-house or through external trainers.

## **REVIEW PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA FOR COORDINATED ACCESS**

Coordinated Access is a requirement of Ontario communities. It is understood that

Greater Sudbury has only recently entered into the operation of Coordinated Access and the collection of data to create and use a By Name List for housing with supports.

In the case where there are numerous encampments in a community, unsheltered homelessness should be considered one of the prioritization variables for matching people to housing. To prevent an onslaught of people vacating shelter or low income housing and moving to the streets to get housed faster, the prioritization variable should stipulate that only people who have experienced unsheltered homelessness for a minimum period of time do not qualify. This is usually measured in months, not days or weeks.

# MITIGATION

## GET CONSENT TO SHARE INFORMATION

While service providers going to the encampments may have already received consent from the individual(s) to provide services, in the mitigation phase it is necessary to secure consent to allow for sharing of relevant information across all entities involved in the encampment. The intention is to ensure that people do not need to share their stories repeatedly, which is potentially re-traumatizing, and to ensure that any entity going to the site, whether it be a municipal department involved with enforcing standards or an outreach worker, can share information on what is happening by way of social services to the individual. This consent is critical. Without it, there is no legal mechanism for sharing any information about encampment occupants.

## GATHER INFORMATION ON ALL CURRENT ENCAMPMENTS AND CONSOLIDATE IN ONE PLACE

Across Greater Sudbury, the Local Response Leader should work with all partners to gain information on:

- The location of each encampment
- The structures at each encampment
- The volume of people residing at each encampment
- Any known risks or hazards associated with the encampment, including potential risks pertaining to individuals within the encampment

Through engagement, information needs to be collected on the following from individuals within encampments:

- Name
- Aliases/nicknames
- Date of birth



- Individual, couple or family
- Length of homelessness
- Homeless services still currently used (e.g., warming centre)
- Homeless services previously used (e.g., which shelter they used to stay at most frequently)
- Income source(s)
- Total income amount
- Identification by type of identification
- Whether or not they are interested in working with a service agency of their choosing to explore housing options
- Whether or not they will accept offers of available shelter options
- Immediate barriers to housing (such as documentation needs) to be resolved
- Pet(s)/service animals
- Description of structure (e.g., colour and location of structure or tent)

This information should be organized by encampment.

All information (encampment locations and individuals within encampments) is shared only with the core leadership group. It is used for planning and response purposes. Individual service providers may keep the same or additional information separately from what is reported to the core leadership group. Case notes of transactions with people living in encampments is an example of information that need not be shared (exceptional circumstances notwithstanding) with the core leadership group.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY ASSESSMENT**

If at all possible, each encampment location should be subject to a health and safety assessment by the fire department, police and public health officials. It is important for any operations or social service staff going to the site to be aware of any potential hazards. It is also important for residents of the encampment to have documented, transparent information on the health and safety risks as determined by fire, police and/or public health. Such risks can potentially be addressed while the encampment remains to ensure residents are as safe as possible. If there are immediate health and safety issues raised that cannot be resolved through any



activity other than closure, these need to be articulated as well.

The frequency with which the health and safety assessments occur should be determined by the Local Response Leader in consultation with executive management from fire, police and public health. It is possible that an initial health and safety assessment needs to occur in order to determine the future frequency with which they should happen.

## **PRIORITIZE WHICH PEOPLE IN ENCAMPMENTS WILL BE ADDRESSED IN WHICH ORDER**

Using data from existing engagements and knowledge, coupled with new information gathered in this process, the core leadership team prepares guidance on which people or encampments to serve most intensely in which order. Examples of considerations include:

- Length of homelessness
- Length of time unsheltered
- Age
- Health (including Mental Health, and, pregnancy)

- Coordinated Access priorities
- Lack of preparedness for dwelling in a tent or other structure not meant for permanent human occupation
- Frequent service calls or frequent service users

Once the prioritization criteria are established and implemented to identify which people will be worked with most intensely, street outreach workers, along with community partners as appropriate, intensify their time commitment with which each person that is interested in housing or alternatives to encampments. For those that will be housed through Coordinated Access, it is essential to get all documentation and paperwork in order to allow for a seamless transition to housing and supports. For those that will be housed independently (not through Coordinated Access) intensive supports may still be required to secure unit viewings, lease the apartment, notify income supports, etc.

## **FINALIZE CRITERIA FOR MOVING FORWARD WITH PLANNED CLOSURE**

So long as the planned closure is done in accordance with the legal authority of the

municipality, the core leadership group can finalize criteria for moving forward with planned closure of any specific encampment. To be considered in that process are such variables as:

- Risks and potential risks of the site and/or people residing at the site (e.g., increasing issues with trash, but not deemed so severe as to warrant immediate closure)
- Size of the encampment (e.g., the City of Edmonton accelerates its closure process when the encampment surpasses 8 structures)
- The overwhelming majority of encampment residents (greater than 70%) have refused three or more offers of services
- Increasing damage to or impact on a municipal public space (e.g., an increase in syringes on the ground) or capital asset, that remains operational (e.g., graffiti on a piece of municipal equipment or building)
- Length of time the site has been occupied (e.g., 70 or more consecutive nights)

It is important that planned closures are operational decisions rather than political

decisions. It is also important that criteria such as the number of complaints by businesses or neighbours do not unduly influence the response.

## **FINALIZE CRITERIA FOR MOVING FORWARD WITH EMERGENCY CLOSURE**

Emergency closures occur when there is risk to life or excessive damage to property, or the encampment or activities within the encampment are of serious concern (e.g., human trafficking). Examples of considerations in emergency closures could include things like:

- Exceptional damage to or impact on a municipal public space (e.g., destruction of trees) or capital asset that is no longer safe (e.g., fire damage caused by an encampment resident)
- Violence, including sexual violence
- Human trafficking
- Drug manufacturing
- Clear and present danger identified as serious or severe in the health and safety assessment
- Death

- Vacated for three or more nights without any occupant
- Serious dangers posed by area wildlife (e.g., a mother bear with cubs)
- Impending severely inclement weather (e.g., prolonged blizzard or ice storm)
- When explicitly directed to do so at a specific encampment by City Council
- Proximity (e.g., set up within 2 metres of a roadway; set up within 50 metres of a school or daycare centre)

## **INTENSIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH OCCUPANTS AT THE SITES IF THERE IS PLANNED ENFORCEMENT**

As the enforcement bodies move to take action to close the encampment, engagement with encampments residents should increase in intensity. In the two weeks leading up to possible enforcements, engagement should occur daily. This must be seen as an essential service, even with COVID, and precautions should be taken through Personal Protective Equipment to allow this engagement to continue.

## **CONVENE CASE CONFERENCES**

The Street Outreach Response Leader, or their designate, may benefit from organizing case conferences related to each person in an encampment. Assembling other professionals from the social service sector, health sector and/or public safety sector can result in improved brainstorming on potential solutions or engagement strategies. If consent is in place, it is also possible to discuss what the various parties already know about the individuals when it would help advance service acceptance. The person experiencing homelessness in the encampment should have the opportunity to have input into the case conference, and even attend virtually if technology allows.

## **SECURING ALTERNATE LOCATIONS FOR PEOPLE**

A range of viable alternatives to remaining in an encampment need to be offered, explained, and if there is interest, implemented. Some of the alternate locations to living in an encampment are temporary in nature, while others may permanently resolve the homelessness experienced by the encampment residents. In addition to the people living in encampments, it can be helpful to

ensure that media, local elected officials, service providers, the general public and all staff that may have direct contact with people in the encampments (regardless of the staff role) are familiar, and can be positively reinforced.

The following are examples of alternate locations that may be considered or enhanced in Greater Sudbury:

- Reunification with home community so long as there is a family member or friend within the home community that can assist with accommodation and natural supports upon return. Resources already exist to make this possible and should be leveraged in the solution process.
- Re-examination of urgent homelessness category for modified chronological access to social housing.
- Motel contract to use motel units strictly as bridge housing between the encampment stay and securing permanent housing. Efforts have begun to make this a reality.
- Target the use of the additional \$150,000 in housing allowances being made available to the Homelessness Network based upon the needs of people in encampments and the

financial situation of the person in the encampment.

- Mainstream housing with supports if so prioritized within Coordinated Access.
- Master leasing private market units with subletting to encampment residents.
- Expanding shelter options through motels. Recent efforts by Greater Sudbury have secured 7 additional shelter spaces through this approach. This should be monitored to see if further expansion of shelter through motels is warranted.
- Securing access within the existing shelter system specifically for one or more people currently residing in encampments.

These, and other possible alternate locations, are not one size fits all. The community will likely need several of these options happening concurrently. It is important, whenever possible, to provide meaningful choice in decision-making to encampment residents.



## **SECURING SAFE STORAGE FOR BELONGINGS**

One of the challenges that can prevent people from accepting offers of service, and/or which complicates the relationship with people in encampments during a clean-up effort is that people in encampments can require a safe location to store their belongings. It is common for people residing in encampments to accumulate more belongings than individuals experiencing homelessness that use the shelter system.

The Operations Response Leader should be empowered to develop one or more temporary storage solutions in the event of an encampment closure and the protocol for how long items will be stored for, how people go about getting their items returned, and where people need to go to get their items returned.

## **ENGAGING THE SHELTER SYSTEM**

The shelter system needs to be engaged. With consent, shelter providers may be able to provide additional background information on encampment residents that previously stayed in shelter. Such information would be helpful in developing temporary or alternative

options to living in an encampment. In addition, dedicated shelter access may be necessary to provide as an option in the encampment wind-down, and previous issues with shelter stays may need to be resolved to allow the person re-entry.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

In the Mitigation phase, the communication strategy should shift to the frequency and type of social services being made available to people in the encampment locations, as well as why enforcement may need to be considered. It should be clearly messaged to all relevant stakeholders that the intention is to resolve the encampments voluntarily through offers of service, and that only if service offers are repeatedly rejected or a serious health and safety concern will enforcement occur.

# CLOSURE

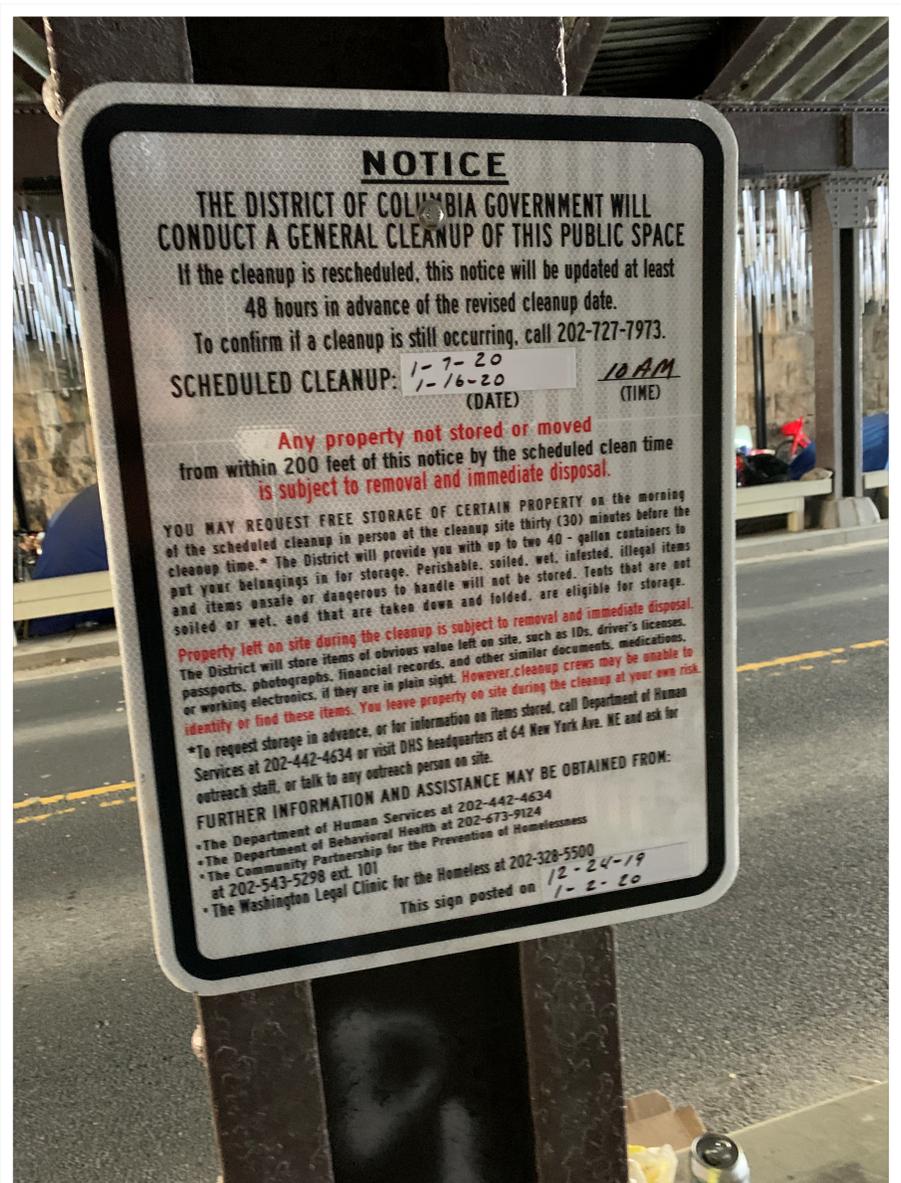
## POSTING NOTICE

The official posting of notice is the initiation of the closure period. It is important for communicating with service providers, encampment residents, volunteers that engage with encampment occupants, and the general public. The notice should:

- Be official (from the municipality)
- Be easily visible
- Be easily understood (Grade 5 reading level)
- Be posted by the enforcing body (likely the Operations Response Leader or their designate)
- Indicate the geographic area where removal of encampments may occur and/or the

proximity from the sign where removal of encampments may occur

- Explicitly name the legal authority being used to remove the structures



- Outline the services available to people at the encampment
- Reiterate that it is hoped all people will accept services that can provide an alternative to living in an encampment
- Identify who to contact for more information (Operations Response Leader or designate), and how and when to contact that person
- Provide a date and time on or after enforcement may occur
- Whenever possible, be posted a minimum of 14 days before any enforcement will occur

## **ASSISTING PEOPLE MOVE OFF THE SITE TO SHELTER OR OTHER SAFE, APPROPRIATE ALTERNATIVES**

Services to assist people experiencing homelessness, unsheltered or otherwise, are voluntary. There is no legal mechanism to force people to accept services or shelter. Being homeless in Canada is not illegal. Assisting people move off the site to shelter or other safe, appropriate alternatives requires the person(s) experiencing homelessness to voluntarily accept the services offered.

Assuming all social service agencies and staff engaging with people at the encampments are on the same page, they should present themselves as a unified front that wants to provide assistance so as to avoid forced closure of the encampment. Throughout this process, it is important that social service staff not be seen as an arm of enforcement. In fact, the social service engagement is intended to ward off the need for any enforcement.

For each person in an encampment willing to accept shelter or other safe, appropriate alternatives to residing in an encampment, an individualized support plan should be created and shared across all social services staff attending to the encampments, when consent is in place. For the other entities involved in the encampment, the Social Service Response Leader should provide a summary of names and aliases, who is accepting services and who is not, and a projected timeline for having the alternative or shelter in place.

Service intensity should ramp up in the two weeks prior to the stated closure date and time. At least once per day, street outreach personnel need to be onsite to not only move along service planning with people that have voluntarily engaged, but to also check in again with encampment residents that previously declined service

offers. All services provided on the site by professionals (for example, street outreach provider, Indigenous service provider) should ensure progress on services is updated in a timely fashion and that the service orientation is followed.

## **MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO CLOSE THE ENCAMPMENTS**

Once service options have been exhausted, and/or there is an immediate safety concern that cannot be resolved through other means, and/or the enforcement body otherwise feels it is necessary to take action, the Local Response Leader should meet with the Public Safety Response Leader, the Social Service Response Leader, the Indigenous Service Response Leader and the Operations Response Leader to confirm that the time has come to schedule enforcement. From that point onwards, each Leader mobilizes resources within their purview to prepare for taking action, and to show up on site, as necessary, on the day of enforcement.

Whenever possible, at least two weeks notice should be provided in a planned closure of an encampment. It is the responsibility of the Operations Response Leader or their designate, with the knowledge of the core leadership group,

to prepare and post notice of future enforcement activity and answering any questions regarding enforcement that encampment residents may have at the time.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

In the closure phase, Communications has very important roles. Key stakeholders need to be briefed on what has occurred and what will occur, and the rationale for doing so. Media requests are likely to intensify, and key messages need to be crafted and spokespersons prepped for interviews. Public relations are always a component of responding to encampments through enforcement. Do not blame people from encampments for not accepting services, and instead focus on the voluntary nature of services that are available to people to choose to participate in or not.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

Greater Sudbury's experience with an increase in the number of encampments and number of people residing encampments is likely a result of a confluence of factors including COVID, loss of deeply affordable rooming housing stock, insufficient income, capacity within the homelessness emergency response system, and a range of personal factors of encampment residents. The experience of the community is increasingly common in urban, suburban and rural communities throughout the country. While difficult to manage all of the stakeholder relations and focus on social service solutions, a focus on ending homelessness rather than shuffling people from location to location through enforcement is going to be more prudent financially for the municipality and more prudent from a service response perspective for people living in encampments.

Missing currently in the local response is a person that is empowered to coordinate and plan the response to encampments across municipal departments and community partners. This Guide lays out a leadership structure for knowledge

acquisition, planning, services, and if necessary, enforcement.

Encampments will not effectively disappear overnight and not reappear. The community needs to be warned that this is a gradual process of planning, engagement, service and resolution. There will be some quick wins. There will be situations with specific people, partners or locations that are trying and difficult.

Leveraging and consolidating knowledge and resources across all entities with an interest in encampment resolution is important. The purpose of the leadership structure and approach proposed in the Guide are intended to take a planned approach that better coordinates information and actions across encampment stakeholders. This should result in more solutions to encampment living on the individual level, and it should cease the practice of shuffling people from one encampment location to the next without solutions to living outdoors.



Not to be lost in this entire process is that human beings live in encampments. Each person that resides in an encampment in Greater Sudbury is someone's child, sibling or parent. To help frame the thinking and response, probably best that people in encampments stop being viewed as a problem and start being viewed within the context of opportunity and potential for service and supports.