

B11: Provincial Emergency Shelter Strategy

Moved by: City of Red Deer
 Seconded by: Town of Hinton
 Category: B – Issues related to Alberta Municipalities' strategic initiatives
 Subject: Social
 Status: **Adopted - Active**

WHEREAS the provision of emergency shelters and addressing homelessness falls within provincial jurisdiction, that adequate housing is a fundamental human right, and that housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of a person and to building sustainable and vibrant communities;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta needs to create a comprehensive emergency shelter strategy to fully address the project management lifecycle processes of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling, and closing;

WHEREAS the homeless population continues to grow, so too are the challenges that municipalities face with this segment of our communities; and

WHEREAS there is heightened community sensitivity regarding emergency shelters and their placement, so it is vital the Government of Alberta present a clear vision and strategy regarding the development process for emergency shelters across the province.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Alberta Municipalities advocate to the Government of Alberta and the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services to create a comprehensive emergency shelter strategy for the entire province. This detailed strategy will provide a vision, guiding principles, objectives, definitions, project management governance, and role clarity for provincial and municipal governments and applicable community stakeholders.

BACKGROUND:

Right across Alberta, there has been a significant increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in our communities. From the large urban cities to small villages, there is a major crisis in the number of unhoused individuals in our province.

According to Red Deer's Point in Time (PIT) Count, held in the fall of 2022, the number of persons experiencing homelessness in the city increased to 334 in 2022 from 144 in 2018, confirming local outreach staff expectations that the number of people experiencing homelessness is increasing. Red Deer is not alone, results from the City of Grande Prairie's 2022 PIT Count on homelessness observed at least 328 individuals experiencing homelessness in their community. This number is up from the 2018 count which saw 228 unhoused individuals. Smaller communities experience the problem at the same proportion but often with fewer resources and partners. For example, the local Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) office of the town of Fort Macleod, population 3,300, helped 82 people in 2023 who were homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

In the absence of a clear Government of Alberta emergency shelter strategy, both the provincial government and municipal governments right across the province have struggled greatly in trying to construct new shelters. For example, in Red Deer, it has been four years now since the Government of Alberta announced a capital project of \$7 million for a new emergency shelter. During this time, there has been very little progress in moving this project forward. From not knowing the provincial government's vision, to confusion over role clarity, to not having proper project management structure in place, Red Deer is no further ahead in building this much needed piece of social infrastructure.

Shelters are a much-needed piece of social infrastructure and homelessness continues to grow in Alberta. To protect people's fundamental right of adequate housing, the Government of Alberta must improve in clearly articulating a vision and plan for emergency shelters right across this province.

ALBERTA MUNICIPALITIES' COMMENTS:

ABmunis does not currently have a position on emergency shelters, but the topic generally aligns with ABmunis advocacy on the need for provincial action to address homelessness. If this resolution is passed, it would be forwarded to the Government of Alberta for response and further advocacy would be recommended to the ABmunis Board by the Safe and Healthy Communities Committee within the context of related priorities and positions.