Minutes – Council – April 25, 2024

Minute No. 234
Report – Executive Policy Committee – April 16, 2024

Item No. 2 Garbage Clean Up at Encampments (Point Douglas Ward)

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and adopted the following:

1. That the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to enter into sole source agreements with Main Street Project, Siloam Mission and Downtown Community Safety Partnership to operate an encampment clean-up pilot project, through the end of October, using up to $170,000 within existing departmental resources and/or corporate efficiencies.

2. That the Public Service be directed to provide an interim verbal report on the progress of the pilot project at the May 22, 2024 and July 9, 2024 meetings of the Executive Policy Committee.

3. That the Public Service be directed to report back on the pilot project at the November 13, 2024 meeting of the Executive Policy Committee.

4. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Executive Policy Committee – April 16, 2024

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by His Worship Mayor Gillingham,
That the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee be adopted.

Carried

Jamil Mahmood, Executive Director, Main Street Project submitted a communication in support of the matter.

The following persons submitted communications in opposition to the matter:

- John Giavedoni, Executive Director, Residents Of The Exchange District
- Laurie Nealin

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 16, 2024, the Executive Policy Committee did not concur in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the following to Council:

1. That the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to enter into sole source agreements with Main Street Project, Siloam Mission and Downtown Community Safety Partnership to operate an encampment clean-up pilot project, through the end of October, using up to $170,000 within existing departmental resources and/or corporate efficiencies.

2. That the Public Service be directed to provide an interim verbal report on the progress of the pilot project at the May 22, 2024 and July 9, 2024 meetings of the Executive Policy Committee.

3. That the Public Service be directed to report back on the pilot project at the November 13, 2024 meeting of the Executive Policy Committee.

4. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

On December 5, 2023, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Lord Selkirk-West Kildonan Community Committee.

Report – Executive Policy Committee – April 16, 2024

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 15, 2023, the Lord Selkirk-West Kildonan Community Committee passed the following motion:

WHEREAS there are numerous encampments along the City of Winnipeg riverbanks and parks;

AND WHEREAS there are significant environmental, health, life safety and fire hazards issues at all the encampments;

AND WHEREAS there continues to be ongoing work, collaboration and conversations between all major stakeholders about the root causes to poverty, addictions and homelessness;

AND WHEREAS the City and outreach providers have been working closely with vulnerable residents living in encampments to rectify and deal with the health, life safety and fire hazard issues;

AND WHEREAS one of the long-term solutions to homelessness is providing more housing first models, together with culturally appropriate 24/7 wrap around supports;

AND WHEREAS in the interim there is a desire to have a human rights based approach to supporting the unsheltered residents with dignity, respect and compassion so that the City and outreach providers can assist in a mindful garbage removal at all of the encampment sites across the city;

AND WHEREAS there are still service gaps in removing the large amounts of bulky garbage in a timely fashion, after the encampment has been properly vacated, and the vulnerable person(s) have confirmed to been housed or provided with the appropriate wrap around supports;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Lord Selkirk-West Kildonan Community Committee recommend to the Executive Policy Committee that:

1. The Winnipeg Public Service conduct a cross-jurisdictional scan, included but not limited to, major capital cities in North America of sanctioned encampment sites and report back within 120 days to the appropriate standing policy committee;

Report – Executive Policy Committee – April 16, 2024

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

2. The Winnipeg Public service provide a report within 120 days on the resource requirements (including operational implications and funding requirements) to conduct mindful garbage cleanups at all of the encampments throughout the city for two different frequency service options: 1) weekly and 2) bi-weekly;

3. The Winnipeg Public Service provide a report within 120 days on the operational costs on the garbage cleanups of vacant encampments between the years of 2018 to date, together with identifying service gaps in removing large amounts of bulky garbage in a timely fashion (i.e. within 48 hours); and

4. The Winnipeg Public Service engage with existing Outreach Service Providers to determine what role(s) they would be prepared to fulfill in any of the foregoing.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Garbage Clean Up at Encampments

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
M. Jack	M. Jack	N/A	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Garbage accumulation at encampments has become increasingly difficult to manage. Citizens as well as residents of encampments regularly express concerns regarding how to manage and dispose of garbage in encampments. In 2023, the Public Service conducted 162 encampment clean-ups at a cost of $83,888.39. The City's 311 service recorded 637 service requests regarding encampments, representing approximately 150 individual sites. There is limited budget and available equipment to conduct regular clean-ups, and often there are material difficulties in engaging in mindful clean-ups of encampment sites, whether due to mistrust of staff by encampment residents, location limitations, or the transitory nature of encampments. Based on 2023 data, providing weekly clean-ups to all 150 encampments is estimated to cost approximately $4.06M annually.

Based on a jurisdictional scan, two Canadian cities—Halifax and Victoria—currently have specific, sanctioned geographic locations for outdoor sheltering. Both provide garbage clean-up services to these sites.

This report is focused on the possibility of enhancing processes within the Public Works Department, which currently manages encampment clean-ups. The Public Service is preparing a forthcoming report in response to an October 26, 2023, Council disposition on the consolidation of City garbage services, which will provide complementary discussion of enhancing processes in the Water and Waste Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On December 5, 2023, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Lord Selkirk-West Kildonan Community Committee and approved the following:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service conduct a cross-jurisdictional scan, included but not limited to, major capital cities in North America of sanctioned encampment sites and report back within 120 days to the appropriate standing policy committee.

2. The Winnipeg Public Service provide a report within 120 days on the resource requirements (including operational implications and funding requirements) to conduct mindful garbage cleanups at all of the encampments throughout the city for two different frequency service options: 1) weekly and 2) bi-weekly;

3. The Winnipeg Public Service provide a report within 120 days on the operational costs on the garbage cleanups of vacant encampments between the years of 2018 to date, together with identifying service gaps in removing large amounts of bulky garbage in a timely fashion (i.e. within 48 hours); and

4. The Winnipeg Public Service engage with existing Outreach Service Providers to determine what role(s) they would be prepared to fulfill in any of the foregoing.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no immediate implications to receiving this report as information.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

This report is focused on the possibility of enhancing processes in the Public Works Department, which currently manages encampment clean-ups. The Public Service is preparing a forthcoming report in response to an October 26, 2023, Council disposition on the consolidation of City garbage services, which will provide complementary discussion of enhancing processes in the Water and Waste Department.

Cross-Jurisdictional Scan

Following the Executive Policy Committee's direction, the Public Service identified that a jurisdictional scan regarding encampment sites had already been completed by the City of Hamilton, which has been facing similar concerns regarding encampments. This scan is linked within Appendix A.

The Hamilton scan is not limited specifically to cities with "sanctioned sites" (i.e. cities with specific geographical locations designated / authorized for outdoor sheltering). Instead, the scan provides a comparative analysis of encampment protocols across North America.

Hamilton's scan defines "sanctioned sites" and "sanctioned encampments" as municipality-based initiatives that may include:

- Encampment protocols
- Identification of municipal parties involved in encampment response
- Staffing requirements and/or teams responsible for coordination of encampments
- Reporting mechanisms for the public to report on encampments / individuals who are unsheltered in the community

The scan does not define sites by a requirement that encampments be established in specific, sanctioned geographic locations. As a result, the scan includes municipalities that have and do not have requirements that encampments be established in specific, sanctioned geographic locations. The majority of Canadian cities in the scan do not have sanctioned sites using the above 'geographical' definition.

In the course of its research, the Public Service found only two Canadian cities—Halifax and Victoria—that currently have specific, sanctioned geographic locations for outdoor sheltering.

The Public Service conducted a supplementary jurisdictional scan of the cities of Halifax and Victoria, by developing the following key questions:

- What is the municipal stated purpose regarding sanctioned encampments?
- What are the key municipal roles/responsibilities?
- What are the key encampment program rules?
- What are the locations and reasons for the locations?
- What is the municipal response to encampments outside of program locations?
- What is the municipal response to extreme weather conditions (heat, cold, storm, etc.)?
- What is the municipal budget allocated to the program?
- What is the provincial role with the encampment program?
- What is the municipality's current unsheltered population?

For each question, the Hamilton jurisdictional scan and both city websites were reviewed with full responses captured on the attached document titled "Sanctioned Encampment Scan – Feb 2024" (Appendix A).

Current engagement and Costs

The City's Non-Emergent Encampment Support Process, attached as Appendix B, outlines the current approach of the Public Service to encampment clean-ups. Encampment sites reported to 311 are triaged out to our Outreach Service Providers ("OSPs") responsible for the area in which the encampment is located. The OSPs then attend the encampment as first contact to build relationships with the encampment residents, who may be previously known to the OSPs. The OSPs are responsible to ensure there are no immediate life safety risks; if not, the OSPs make every attempt to connect the encampment residents to shelter or housing options. If an encampment has been vacated or abandoned, the OSPs notify the City, who then schedules clean up, either via Public Works staff or via private contractor.

Recognizing that, from a human rights-based lens, forced eviction of encampments should be a last-resort option only where significant threats to life safety exist, the City does not engage in pre-emptive encampment clean-ups without: the permission of the encampment residents; notification from the OSPs that the site has been vacated/abandoned; or confirmation of the same via a number of site visits over the course of multiple days.

Since 2018, cleaning encampments have cost the City a total of $301,439.09. The Public Service has primarily utilized outside contractors for encampment cleanups. A breakdown of costs from contractors and internal City resources is included below in Table 1.

Table 1: Encampment Cleanup Costs 2018 - 2023

Encampment Cleanup Costs 2018 - 2023			
	Contractor	**City of Winnipeg**	**Total**
2018	$4,106.18		$4,106.18
2019	$10,171.86		$10,171.86
2020	$31,957.39	$21,468.00	$53,425.39
2021	$47,693.02	$24,822.00	$72,515.02
2022	$56,102.25	$21,230.00	$77,332.25
2023	$76,081.39	$7,807.00	$83,888.39
Total	$226,112.09	$75,327.00	$301,439.09

In order to determine costs of clean-up options, including mindful clean-ups of all encampments throughout the city on both a weekly and bi-weekly frequency, the Public Service reviewed the total amount of clean-ups conducted in 2023 for the $83,888.39 as listed above. The Public Works Department arranged for 162 encampment clean-ups in 2023. This would place the cost of an individual encampment clean-up at approximately $517.83 per clean-up ($83,888.39 spent in 2023 divided by 162 instances). Note that each encampment situation can vary greatly, with some requiring minor clean-up and others requiring the use of front-end loaders and multiple agencies. Further, these numbers and the table above only represent clean-ups conducted above and beyond staff's regular duties; in other words, they do not include smaller clean-ups conducted by Parks or Streets staff during their regular course of business.

In order to determine the total number of encampments within the city, the Public Service pulled the number of encampments reported to 311. In 2023, 311 received 637 service requests regarding encampments, which represented around 150 individual encampment sites. Note that 311 tracks the location of an encampment as reported by an individual caller, so locations aren't always tied to a specific property address or roll number; and that callers may sometimes call without details about location or address, or may call about encampments on private properties, which wouldn't fall under the purview of our OSPs.

Nonetheless, based on these numbers, if the Public Service were to continue encampment clean-ups in the same manner as in 2023, via a mix of City and contractor clean-ups, the approximate budgetary impact would be:

Weekly: $517.83 per clean-up x 150 encampments x once a week
= ~$78,000 a week / ~$4,056,000 a year

Bi-weekly: $517.83 per clean-up x 150 encampments x every other week
= ~$39,000 a week / ~$2,028,000 a year

Service Gaps and Resource Requirements for Mindful Cleanups

There are numerous limitations to these estimates. In theory, week-over-week costs would decrease significantly upon establishment of a regular clean-up schedule, as encampment sites would have less accumulated waste. Regular clean-ups also have the potential to reduce emergency calls for service, via reduction of overall fire and life safety risk. At the same time, increasing the amount of encampment clean-ups to this rate would put inflationary pressure on private contractors, the City's Public Works Department, and our Outreach Service Providers (OSPs). For example, the 162 encampment clean-ups in 2023 represent approximately three clean-ups a week, with the engagement of the OSPs. Attending 150 encampments a week would represent a 50-fold increase in staff, materials and equipment required, and wear-and-tear. Operationalization would require a heightened level of coordination between the Public Service, contractors, and OSPs.

In terms of locations, smaller encampments often move around freely throughout the year, without notice, which would complicate regular clean-up scheduling. Sites tend to be more diverse in the summer, when the weather makes it easier for people to live rough, and more concentrated in the winter, when encampments combine to pool resources, which may lead to more visits at a lower cost per clean-up in summer, and less frequent visits at a higher cost per clean-up in winter. The natural environment is also a significant challenge: for example, heavily-treed riverbanks can be difficult to reach via traditional waste clean-up machinery, and weather can make sites muddy or freeze items into the ground for the season.

Further, when encampment residents move throughout the day, they may or may not bring their belongings with them. In other words, an encampment being empty does not necessarily mean it has been vacated and/or abandoned. The Public Service is mindful that much of the bulky waste present in an encampment has, or serves a purpose, and that tents and belongings may be vacated for a period of time to be returned to at a later point. Sites can also be used by various people at different times. This is why the City's Non-Emergent Encampment Support Process relies upon multiple points of contact (OSPs, City staff) and multiple site visits to determine if an encampment and/or its items can be cleaned up. For these reasons, and to respect the encampment residents, it is often not practicable to schedule waste pick-ups within 48 hours of a site being identified.

These challenges are also a factor when attempting to schedule regular clean-ups at encampment sites. Clean-ups of occupied encampments require a certain level of trust between the encampment residents and clean-up crews, without which it is impossible to engage mindfully. In the past, staff, contractors, and OSPs attending to some sites have reported threats and aggressive behaviour. In some cases, OSPs have advised that they will not return to certain sites unless accompanied by WPS officers. The City has adapted its approach accordingly, with WFPS now attending encampments in teams of two instead of sending a single staff member. Nonetheless, it will likely remain difficult or unsafe to schedule regular site clean-ups of encampments where site residents are not supportive of the same.

Partner Engagement

The Public Service has had ongoing discussions with Siloam Mission, Main Street Project (MSP), and the Downtown Community Safety Partnership (DSCP) in regard to encampment garbage pick-up.

Siloam Mission currently runs a supported employment program, where program peers are provided employment opportunities with staff support. Previous employment opportunities have included garbage pick-up. This is a paid service that Siloam is able to provide, with a crew of six workers costing **$385 for the first hour, and an additional $322 for each additional hour at the same location.**

The DCSP currently conducts clean-ups of the downtown area through its Clean Slate program. Supported by funding from the Province of Manitoba, the Clean Slate Program provides employment training for at-risk community members, including those reintegrating into the community from custody and others experiencing significant barriers to employment, via focused clean-ups and maintenance of downtown Winnipeg. With the support of the Clean Slate program, MSP has proposed a pilot process that includes **regular weekly garbage pick-up at encampments in its downtown catchment area, at a cost of $810 per week**. Larger projects would continue to be organized through Siloam Mission. This proposal is attached as Appendix C.

Participation in this pilot would align with Council's Strategic Priorities Action Plan Action 1.5: *Increase the frequency of garbage collection for litterbins, bulky waste dumping on private property, and attend to mindful cleanup of litter in encampments, especially in the inner city.*

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** March 15, 2024

Project Name:
Garbage Clean Up at Encampments

COMMENTS:
There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Randy Bernard
Randy Bernard, CPA, CMA
Manager of Finance & Administration (Campus)
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Community Services Department
- Public Works Department
- Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Good Health and Well-Being

4.3 Proactive Health Intervention
Utilize social determinants of health to understand and achieve poverty reduction, crime prevention and harm reduction. Practice early intervention and engage in community partnerships that fully leverage wrap-around supports, recreation and resources, and enable opportunities for all, and especially for those who are systemically disadvantaged.

4.9 Inclusive Public Places
Provide and promote the amenities, and the design and maintenance standards, necessary to ensure accessible, safe and sanitary conditions in gathering spaces frequented by the public.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined that the CAP is not applicable to this specific report.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

GOAL 4 | Community Well-Being Supports for those in Greatest Need are Increased

10-YEAR OBJECTIVES

A. The immediate needs of residents experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are met through collaboration with community partners and other levels of government.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Division: N/A
Prepared by: M. Jack
Date: March 15, 2024
File No: N/A

Attachments:

Appendix A – Jurisdictional Analysis: Sanctioned Encampment Programs (Canada)

Appendix B – Non-Emergent Encampment Support Process

Appendix C – MSP Clean Slate pilot proposal