Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – November 18, 2025

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – November 4, 2025

Item No. 1 Council Policy on Encampments

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 4, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, as amended, and submitted the following to Council:

1. That the Encampment Policy, attached as Appendix A, be adopted.

2. That the Encampment Response Protocol, attached as Appendix B, be received as information.

3. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Policy Committee in 30 days with a verbal update on options to monitor the Encampment Response Protocol.

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

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – November 4, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 4, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, with the following amendment:

- Add the following new Recommendation 3 and renumber the remaining accordingly:

  "3. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Policy Committee in 30 days with a verbal update on options to monitor the Encampment Response Protocol."

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On September 25, 2025, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services and adopted the following:

1. That the Public Service be directed to implement the following by November 17, 2025:

   A. Prohibit encampments and prioritize enforcement in the following areas:

      i. Within 50 metres of the perimeter of playgrounds, pools, spray pads or outdoor recreational facilities designed for children, families or seniors

      ii. Within 50 metres of the perimeter of schools, daycares, or adult care facilities

      iii. Where a hazard or obstruction to vehicular or pedestrian traffic exists

      iv. Within a median or traffic island

      v. Within 30 metres of a transit shelter

      vi. Within 30 metres of bridges, docks, or piers

      vii. Within 50 metres of a rail line or crossing

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – November 4, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

viii. Where life safety issues exist

2. That the Public Service be directed to prioritize enforcement on all other City properties and spaces between the following times:

   A. One hour after sunrise

   B. One hour before sunset

3. That the Public Service be directed to work with outreach service providers to give reasonable notice of the intended enforcement to encampment residents and notify them of shelter options.

4. That vacated encampments be remediated as soon as possible to clear them of debris and detritus.

5. That existing resources be allocated for enforcement and garbage remediation, through the Chief Administrative Office, as required.

6. That the Public Service be directed to report back to Council in 60 days with a policy that formalizes the above approach and outlines responsibilities.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Council Policy on Encampments

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
G. MacPherson	J. Dunford	J. Speidel, acting for T. Graham	J. Dunford

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council directed the Public Service to prohibit encampments and prioritize enforcement in designated public spaces, prioritize enforcement during daylight hours on other City lands, and coordinate outreach to ensure that encampment residents are given reasonable notice of intended enforcement and information about shelter alternatives. Council also directed the Public Service to provide a written report that includes a policy to formalize the above approach and outline responsibilities.

This report includes a draft Encampment Policy for Council consideration and an Encampment Response Protocol (the “Protocol”) outlining how the Public Service intends to address encampments on public property moving forward. The Protocol will be revised by the Public Service as lessons are learned during implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Encampment Policy, attached as Appendix A, be adopted.

2. That the Encampment Response Protocol, attached as Appendix B, be received as information.

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

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On September 25, 2025, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services and adopted the following:

1. That the Public Service be directed to implement the following by November 17, 2025:

A. Prohibit encampments and prioritize enforcement in the following areas:
   i. Within 50 metres of the perimeter of playgrounds, pools, spray pads or outdoor recreational facilities designed for children, families or seniors
   ii. Within 50 metres of the perimeter of schools, daycares, or adult care facilities
   iii. Where a hazard or obstruction to vehicular or pedestrian traffic exists
   iv. Within a median or traffic island
   v. Within 30 metres of a transit shelter
   vi. Within 30 metres of bridges, docks, or piers
   vii. Within 50 metres of a rail line or crossing
   viii. Where life safety issues exist

2. *That the Public Service be directed to prioritize enforcement on all other City properties and spaces between the following times:*

   A. One hour after sunrise
   B. One hour before sunset

3. *That the Public Service be directed to work with outreach service providers to give reasonable notice of the intended enforcement to encampment residents and notify them of shelter options.*

4. *That vacated encampments be remediated as soon as possible to clear them of debris and detritus.*

5. *That existing resources be allocated for enforcement and garbage remediation, through the Chief Administrative Office, as required.*

6. *That the Public Service be directed to report back to Council in 60 days with a policy that formalizes the above approach and outlines responsibilities.*

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The approval of an Encampment Policy will formalize the City's approach to managing issues associated with encampments on public property. The Policy can be implemented through existing resources and no new funding is required.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Current Context
In recent years, cities across Canada have seen a significant increase in the severity of the housing crisis. This trend reflects both local and national challenges, including systemic poverty, the impacts of mental illness, the prevalence of toxic drugs, rising housing costs, and a persistent shortage of housing units.

As of August 2025, an estimated 100 encampments were present across the city, with as many as 700 individuals residing in them. Encampments are outdoor areas where one or more people who are unhoused shelter or live together, often using tents or other temporary structures.

Many encampments are quiet, peaceful, and self-regulating, but some pose significant risks to inhabitants, neighbours, infrastructure, and properties due to open fires, accumulation of flammable materials and refuse, human waste, noise, and unlawful behaviour. Between June 2024 and June 2025, the City of Winnipeg (the "City") received 972 encampment-related 311 calls, reflecting growing public concern about both the well-being of those living in encampments and the impacts on public spaces and nearby communities.

The City is an active partner in the Province of Manitoba's *Your Way Home: Manitoba's Plan to End Chronic Homelessness*, which emphasizes a trauma-informed and housing first approach. Balancing the City's obligations under this strategy with community concerns about safety, health, and the condition of public spaces remains a complex and ongoing challenge.

While long-term housing solutions are the most effective and equitable means of reducing encampments, the City must also maintain public trust and community stability. Your Way Home, launched in early 2025, has progressed slowly due to a shortage of available housing units. As a result, public parks, riverbanks, and other shared spaces remain occupied and, in some cases, severely degraded.

Many Canadian cities, such as Hamilton, Halifax, and Kingston, have adopted approaches that balance supporting people who are unhoused with reducing the social and environmental impacts of encampments. Key elements of successful strategies elsewhere have included:

- Partnering with senior levels of government to rapidly increase housing supply;
- Adopting clear policies defining Council and citizen expectations;
- Developing encampment response protocols clarifying the roles and responsibilities of municipal departments and external partners; and
- Allocating resources to coordination, data collection, garbage removal, and enforcement.

Increasing Housing Supply

When *Your Way Home* was announced, the Province noted that Manitoba is experiencing a housing shortage due, in part, to a continual loss of affordable housing stock, with an estimated 24,000 rental units under $750 lost to fires, demolition, or redevelopment over the past 30 years.

Since November 1, 2022, the City has invested over $150 million through the Housing Accelerator Fund, Affordable Housing Now, and related programs, to stimulate housing development. The Public Service monthly report to Executive Policy Committee on Housing Statistics for September 2025 noted that 3,841 City-funded housing units had been approved for development during that time. As a partner in Your Way Home, the City has also dedicated several public properties for supportive housing. However, most of the new units expected through these initiatives will not be completed until 2027 or later, leaving a near-term housing gap that may continue to be filled by encampments.

The City provides several additional housing support services in the community and financial support to numerous community partners. Examples include providing annual support for End

Homelessness Winnipeg, funding 24 Hour Mobile Outreach, supporting 24/7 safe spaces and providing land or facilities at no cost to projects aimed at mitigating the housing crisis.

Senior levels of government have greater capacity to mitigate Winnipeg's ongoing shortage of affordable housing, but progress continues to be measured in years rather than months. It is expected that the prevalence of encampments as an alternative mode of shelter will persist through 2026.

Council Direction
On September 25, 2025, Council adopted a motion directing the Public Service to increase enforcement of existing by-laws as they relate to encampments. This decision seeks to balance care for vulnerable residents with the need to uphold community standards, protect public spaces, and maintain confidence in the City's ability to maintain its property responsibly.

Winnipeg's Parks By-law No. 85/2009, for example, regulates camping, fires, littering, and noise—activities often associated with encampments. Previously, enforcement in encampments was largely complaint-driven, with a focus on voluntary compliance, harm reduction, and fire safety.

Council's motion provides a path forward that places clear limits on acceptable sheltering on public lands. A draft Encampment Policy ("the Policy") is attached for review as Appendix A.

Encampment Policy

The Policy outlines the City's approach to regulating encampments on public land. The Policy does not impact the Winnipeg Police Service ("WPS") or the Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service ("WFPS")'s response to calls for service. The Policy is meant to inform the City's day-to-day, non-emergency regulation of encampments moving forward. However, WPS and WFPS operations can draw from the same resources as those referenced in the Policy, and emergency calls for service may, therefore, impact the City's ability to expeditiously complete non-emergent encampment work.

The Policy follows the lead of municipalities like Kingston, Ontario where the City permits unhoused residents to shelter overnight on public land and requires that they disassemble lodgings after dawn to return sites to their intended daily use. This approach recognizes the severe damage to public lands and rivers caused by residents erecting structures, cutting trees in parks, disposing of garbage in waterways, accumulating combustibles and other items resulting in public health and safety hazards. The intent of the Policy is to clarify limits for public behaviour and to provide the City with a remedy for encampments that pose the above challenges.

The Policy is grounded in several guiding principles, designed to ensure all City actions promote safety and order in public spaces. The following is a list of the guiding principles with an explanation for why they were included:

Accountability and Transparency: Establishing consistent, transparent procedures for decision-making will ensure City actions are fair, legally defensible, and publicly accountable. Transparency reinforces trust among residents, partners, and people living in encampments, while accountability ensures resources are used effectively and in line with Council direction.

Health and Well-being: Encampments can involve conditions that jeopardize health—such as fire risk, unsanitary environments, and exploitation—and the City has a duty to mitigate these risks. Embedding this principle reinforces that health and wellness considerations guide all actions, whether through outreach, housing support, or enforcement. It also demonstrates a balanced and coordinated approach—showing that enforcement is not punitive but part of a broader effort to protect life, restore public spaces, and connect people to stable housing and care.

Maintaining Public Wellbeing and Order: This principle reflects the City's statutory responsibility under *The City of Winnipeg Charter* to promote safety, health, and orderly community life. It underscores the City's duty to maintain safe and accessible public spaces for all residents.

The Policy also requires that the Public Service develop an Encampment Response Protocol (the "Protocol") under the authority of the Chief Administrative Officer to be shared with Council as information, with outcomes to be reported annually. Where the Policy clarifies Council expectations for the City's regulation of encampments in public spaces, the Protocol, attached as Appendix B, is an operational guide for the Public Service, defining how encampments will be prioritized and clarifying internal roles.

Encampment Response Protocol
In 2022, the Public Service adopted a Non-Emergent Encampment Support Process. This blueprint, though useful, was not strictly adhered to due to a lack of centralized coordination and a rapidly evolving encampment reality.

The Protocol will enhance the Non-Emergent Encampment Support Process by incorporating Council's direction, as articulated in the Policy. It will outline step-by-step procedures for identifying, prioritizing, and responding to encampments while maintaining alignment with the Policy's guiding principles.

Key features of the Protocol include:

- **Encampment Coordination Table**: It is essential that all relevant City departments have clear direction with respect to encampments. The Community Development Division will lead an Encampment Coordination Table responsible for triaging encampment-related requests, setting priorities, and coordinating appropriate responses across departments.

- **Standardized Procedures**: Defined processes and expectations for outreach, notification, enforcement, and remediation to ensure consistent practice and documentation.

- **Prioritization Criteria**: A transparent framework to assess encampments based on health, safety, environmental, and community impact factors.

- **Clean-up Capacity**: Dedicated sanitation and restoration resources are important to maintaining the safety and accessibility of public spaces once encampments are

vacated. City crews manage debris removal, waste disposal, hazardous materials, and site restoration under challenging conditions. Continued allocation and flexibility of resources is required for staffing, disposal, and remediation supplies to ensure sites can be restored quickly, safely, and sustainably.

- **Property and Site Management**: Procedures for the safe handling of personal property, waste removal, and site restoration will be developed within the Protocol.

Establishing the Protocol ensures that City actions are coordinated and consistent. This Protocol will provide clarity for the Public Service and the public, reduce duplication across departments, and build confidence in the City's efforts to address encampments and maintain safe and accessible public spaces.

Conclusion

If the recommendations of this report are approved, the Public Service will adopt the Policy as a guide and further develop the Protocol to meet Council expectations for managing encampments in public spaces. The Protocol will be regularly updated based on operational experience and other lessons learned. An annual progress report will be provided to Council, starting in January 2027.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: October 27, 2025

Project Name:
Council Policy on Encampments

First Year of Program **2025**

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Capital					
Capital Expenditures Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budgeted Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Funding Sources:					
Debt - Internal	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Debt - External	-	-	-	-	-
Grants (Enter Description Here)	-	-	-	-	-
Reserves, Equity, Surplus	-	-	-	-	-
Other - Enter Description Here	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -				
Total Additional Debt Required	$ -				
Current Expenditures/Revenues					
Direct Costs	$ 244,421	$ 382,113		$ -	$ -
Less: Incremental Revenue/Recovery	-	-	-	-	-
Net Cost/(Benefit)	$ 244,421	$ 382,113	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budget Amounts	244,421	382,113	-	-	-
Net Budget Adjustment Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

Additional Comments:

Direct costs include salaries and benefits for two Bylaw Enforcement Officers and one Senior Coordinator, starting November 17, 2025, funded through the CAO's Office's existing operating budget. An additional $200,000 annually for 2025 and 2026 has been allocated for garbage removal at vacated encampments, currently absorbed by the Public Works Department's operating budget.

Sheri Faderon for R. Bernard
Randy Bernard, CPA, CMA
Manager of Finance & Administration (Campus
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Legal Services
- Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service
- Winnipeg Police Service
- Public Works

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Good Health and Well-Being

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 Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined 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 CAO
Division: Community Development
Prepared by: Greg MacPherson
Date: October 20, 2025
File No: N/A

Attachments:

Appendix A - Encampment Policy
Appendix B – Encampment Response Protocol