Minutes – Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – May 4, 2026

REPORTS

Item No. 1 Encampment Protocol Implementation

STANDING COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Standing Policy Committee on Community Services concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and approved the following:

1. That this report be received as information.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Gilroy,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in.

Carried

Councillor Santos asked to be recorded as having voted against the above motion, in accordance with Rule 47(7) of The Procedure By-law No. 50/2007.

STANDING COMMITTEE DECISION:

On March 3, 2026, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services approved the following:

1. That the verbal report of the Winnipeg Public Service be received as information.

2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to provide a written report to the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services at its May 4, 2026, meeting with respect to the Encampment Response Plan, detailing resources and costs from the start of the policy, to date.

On December 2, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services approved the following:

1. That the verbal report of the Winnipeg Public Service be received as information.

2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services with a monthly verbal update on the Encampment Response Protocol.

G. MacPherson, Manager of Community Development, CAO's Office, provided a verbal report on the matter.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION:

On November 27, 2025, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services and adopted the following:

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 Committee in 30 days with a verbal update on options to monitor the Encampment Response Protocol.

4. That a By-law be enacted to amend the Parks By-law No. 85/2009, a draft of which is attached as Appendix C to this report.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Encampment Protocol Implementation

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Community Services

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
C. Brens	J. Dunford	T. Graham	J. Dunford

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 27, 2025, Council adopted Policy NO. CO-024 outlining the City's approach to regulating homeless encampments on publicly-owned land. This is an update on the Public Service's efforts implementing the Encampment Policy.

Specifically, this report offers details on:

- the number of encampments cleared from City-owned properties;
- "No Trespassing" and by-law violation signs erected;
- sites remediated for garbage and debris;
- site visits conducted by City officials; and
- financial resources used since the Policy's introduction.

Total estimated hours dedicated to the Encampment Policy are 3,176.18. Total estimated costs are $256,227.98.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On March 3, 2026, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services directed the Public Service to report back, in writing, on May 4, 2026, with respect to the City of Winnipeg's Encampment Policy and associated implementation protocol, detailing resources used and associated costs from the introduction of the policy to date. This report provides that update.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with receiving this report as information. The costs identified in this report are covered through existing Council-approved budgets.

HISTORY / DISCUSSION

In August of 2025, there were approximately 100 homeless encampments present in Winnipeg, with as many as 700 individuals residing in them. Encampments are outdoor areas where one or more people who experience unsheltered homelessness shelter or live together, often using tents or other temporary structures. These sites function as a last resort for almost all individuals living in encampments. Recent reports from the City's contracted mobile outreach service provider, Main Street Project, indicate that the vast majority of people staying in encampments would prefer permanent housing if available.

In many cases, encampments pose significant risks to inhabitants, nearby residents, infrastructure, and properties due to open fires, accumulation of flammable materials, human waste, noise, and unlawful behaviour. Between June 2024 and June 2025, the City of Winnipeg 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.

In early 2025, the City joined the Provincial Government as a partner in the Province's Your Way Home Strategy: 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.

Encampment Policy and Protocol

On November 27, 2025, Council adopted an Encampment Policy (the "Policy"), which outlines the City's approach to regulating homeless encampments on publicly-owned land. The Policy does not affect the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) or the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service's (WFPS) response to calls for service, and instead guides the City's day-to-day, non-emergency management of encampments.

The Policy prohibits encampments in designated public spaces, prioritizes enforcement in priority areas, and emphasizes coordinated outreach to ensure individuals are provided with reasonable notice of enforcement actions and information about available shelter options.

The Policy also directs the Public Service to develop an Encampment Response Protocol (the "Protocol") managed by an inter-departmental Encampment Coordination Table (ECT) under the authority of the Chief Administrative Officer. While the Policy sets Council's expectations, the Protocol serves as an operational guide for implementation, including how sites are prioritized and how roles and responsibilities are coordinated internally.

The Protocol calls for a tiered approach to resource allocation in managing encampments on Public property. This model prioritizes health and safety risks, proximity to sensitive public spaces, and the degree of community impact. Enforcement levels are guided by site characteristics, scale, and urgency of response.

Neither the Policy nor the Protocol applies to encampments on private property or to situations involving emergencies, life safety concerns, or criminal matters.

Activities to Date

On December 2, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services directed the Public Service to report back monthly with a verbal update on efforts associated with implementation of the Encampment Policy.

On March 3, 2026, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services directed the Public Service to provide a written report highlighting Protocol implementation efforts to date and detailing resources used and associated costs incurred since the adoption of the Policy in November of 2025.

During this four-month period, a total of 20 public properties were actioned. “Actioned” means that each site was identified as a priority by the ECT and that one or more response steps were taken. These steps may have included dispatching an outreach provider to make contact with occupants and report back; sending City staff to install signage indicating a by-law violation; and providing offers of housing through the outreach provider. During periods of cold weather, Protocol implementation has been adjusted to account for safety considerations.

Once a site was confirmed vacant, the City removed all garbage and debris, returning the site to its intended use. Remediation was completed on 58 sites during the reporting period. In some cases, remediation is relatively straightforward, a crew attends a vacated site and removes a few garbage bags worth of debris. In other cases, clean-up efforts can take several days and require heavy equipment due to volume of debris, proximity to waterways, the presence of hazardous materials, and climate factors such as debris being frozen to the ground or site access being limited by mud, ice, deep snow, etc.

Operational activity also included 199 on-site inspections by City By-law Enforcement Officers and numerous site visits by WFPS inspectors and the WPS responding to calls for service. During these inspections, 182 signs were posted warning that camping is prohibited on these sites or that camping on site would violate specific by-laws.

Resources Used and Associated Costs

During the reporting period several City departments and divisions were involved in operationalizing the Protocol. These activities ranged from coordination of multiple departments and external partners by ETC members to front line service delivery by members of the WPS and WFPS. Legal Services is engaged regularly to ensure appropriate action is taken in response to specific by-laws, and the Office of the Chief Administrative Office is engaged directly through ECT coordination and oversight. Corporate Communications, Planning Property and Development, and other departments are consulted frequently on relevant matters.

Table 1, below, outlines the staffing and equipment costs that were a direct result of Protocol implementation. It should be noted that some departments had already been engaged in encampment management efforts in the weeks leading up to Council’s adoption of the Policy, so the reporting period is 18 weeks for some and 16 weeks for others.

Table 1 – Operational Costs

Encampment Planning and Enforcement: Operational Costs November to March 2026		
Department	**Time Dedicated in Hours**	**Total Cost**
CAO's Office	1282.5	$ 87,395.30
Community Services	110.93	$ 6,995.07
Corporate Communications	66	$ 4720.00
Legal Services	186	$ 16,930.55
Public Works	1260	$ 59,056.74
Water and Waste	41	$ 1,467.37
WFPS	229.75	$ 30,729.50
Total	**3176.48**	**$ 207,294.53**
Additional Expenses		
Signage (Public Works)		$ 2,342.36
3rd Party clean-up services (Public Works)		$ 44,291.09
Caution tape and tape for signage (WFPS)		$ 250.00
Training (Public Works)		$ 2,100
Total		**$ 48,933.45**
Total of all costs		**$ 256,227.98**

Next Steps and Planning for the Spring and Summer

As work related to encampments enters into the spring and summer months the City will continue to work with internal departments, mobile outreach service providers including Main Street Project, and the Provincial Government to support individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, while also working to ensure access to public spaces for all Winnipeggers.

The City's approach outlined in this report focuses on introducing signage in public spaces to identify areas where camping is not permitted, prioritizing areas of concern for consideration and action through the ECT, and the continued removal garbage and debris in, and near, encampments.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: April 23, 2026

Project Name:
Encampment Protocol Implementation

COMMENTS:
There are no financial implications associated with receiving this report as information

Randy Bernard

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

CONSULTATION

The following departments were consulted for the development of Appendix A:

- Community Services (CmS)
- Public Works (PW)
- Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Services
- Legal Services
- Water and Waste

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

- N/A

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: Community Development
Prepared by: Greg MacPherson, Chris Brens
Date: March 27, 2026

ATTACHMENTS:

- N/A