

# Proposed Roles and Next Steps for the City of Saskatoon Regarding Shelters for People Experiencing Homelessness

## ISSUE

On October 6, 2023, the Province of Saskatchewan (the Province) announced a comprehensive strategy to combat homelessness. The Province will be adding 120 new permanent emergency shelter spaces.

Additionally, the Province will create two complex needs emergency shelters (one in Regina and one in Saskatoon) that will provide a secure and medically supervised place to go for up to 24 hours. Further, the Province committed to work with municipalities to mitigate community safety issues around emergency shelters and will continue to expand delivery of homelessness outreach services.

This report provides an update on the City of Saskatoon's (the City's) role in supporting the Province in this regard. The Administration is seeking City Council's input and direction on its proposed path forward.

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Administration proceed as outlined in this report.

## BACKGROUND

The Province has requested that the City take the lead role in identifying sites for emergency shelters. It advised the likely scenario was that the City would need to identify two new emergency shelter locations, each with room for approximately 30 individuals. Although permanent locations would be ideal, temporary locations would also be considered until permanent locations could be found. The Province will be responsible to find a suitable location for the secure and medically supervised emergency shelter for those with complex needs.

Since being advised of the Province's intentions, the Administration has been working to identify possible sites. The Administration continues to compile a list of possible sites and at this time, no sites have been selected or even short-listed. The criteria considered will be as follows:

- Room for approximately 30 beds each
- Beds in an open shelter-type hall (with movable wall systems or partitions)
- Some private rooms (accessed internally)
- An area suitable for office space for site staff
- Showers, bathrooms, kitchen
- Internal and external gathering spaces (amenity spaces) available on site be considered
- Proximity to other services should be considered
- Zoned appropriately if possible, or applicable for consideration under the City's Emergency Residential Shelter zoning provisions

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

Now that the Province has finalized and announced their next steps, the Administration intends to continue working with the Province to short-list sites with the ultimate goal of selecting two sites in the coming weeks, which is an extremely short turn-around time. It is important to note that any sites selected would be subject to review, and in consideration of appropriate approvals and permits prior to occupancy.

### Zoning Considerations

Supportive housing, including shelters, is defined under Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, 2009 (Zoning Bylaw), depending on what services and operations are provided in the facility. There are four definitions typically assigned to this use: Special Care Home, Special Needs Housing, Boarding Apartment, or Hostel – Type II. These uses are considered either as permitted or discretionary use in various residential, institutional, commercial, mixed-use and corridor zoning districts throughout the city. The definitions for these uses consider such items as services provided and number of occupants, and do not regulate who uses the facility.

In addition to the allowable zoning for various forms of supportive housing, including shelters, in 2022, City Council approved a temporary Emergency Residential Shelter zoning provision which is a permitted use in all zoning districts, other than the following:

- IL2 – Limited Intensity Light Industrial Districts
- IL3 – Limited Light Industrial Districts
- IH – Heavy Industrial Districts
- IH2 – Limited Intensity Heavy Industrial Districts
- In all Direct Control Districts

Emergency Residential Shelters are also not permitted within low-density residential land uses, including one and two-unit dwellings, semi-detached dwellings and street townhouses, and on any site deemed unsuitable due to the adjacent land uses, which may create life safety issues. The maximum length of time a shelter can be located under this emergency provision is 18 months, subject to City Council approval.

The Administration will continue to seek site options, using the above criteria to short-list sites, and work with the Province to finalize site selection. Although the final decision to proceed with a specific site ultimately rests with the Province, the City will be the lead agency for the site selection process.

If a site is selected which requires re-zoning, public information sessions will be conducted in accordance with normal re-zoning process and policies, as required under the Public Notice Policy, followed by a public hearing at City Council.

If a site is selected which is already zoned appropriately, the Administration will conduct a public information session to provide information and answer questions, even though one would not be formally required.

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Representatives from the Province will be asked to attend all information sessions to address any questions pertaining to the operation of the site. The City will respond to all questions pertaining to site selection.

### **Facility Size and Potential Impact**

There are successful examples of emergency shelters in Saskatoon that are similar in size to the two sites being sought for the new shelters. The Administration will host public information sessions in conjunction with the Province to explain the program, the role of the City, the role of the Province, and the role of the service provider. If the Province has selected the service provider by the time the information session is held, they will be asked to attend as well.

The discussions at the information sessions will help the Administration, the Province, and the service provider understand the expectations of any businesses or residents living near the facility and will help residents and businesses understand how the site will be operated.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Administration is currently finalizing a communication plan that will consider a phased approach to keeping the public informed throughout the next steps. If approved, Administration will proceed with creating a dedicated webpage on [saskatoon.ca](http://saskatoon.ca) aimed to keep residents informed on the current status and next steps. The webpage will be updated on a regular basis to provide accurate and timely information. Social media posts on City channels will be used primarily to generate awareness on where to find information on the City website. Regular updates will be shared through news releases and Public Service Announcements, particularly as milestones are achieved, such as final site selection and future information sessions.

Written and  
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