

Terms of Reference – Council Subcommittee on Homelessness

ISSUE

Homelessness, and the resultant impacts on our community, requires urgent attention in Saskatoon, as it does in many other North American communities. Homelessness and the perception of crime and safety were the most prevalent issues identified by Saskatoon residents during the most recent civic services satisfaction survey.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That City Council approve the Terms of Reference for the Council Subcommittee on Homelessness; and
2. That Capital Project P.02609 Council Strategic Priority Areas be used to support the engagement activities required for the Subcommittee to carry out its mandate with total funding of \$80,000, of which \$29,000 is existing funding within that project, and an increase of \$51,000 is made to P.02609 funded by the Reserve for Capital Expenditures.

BACKGROUND

At its January 29, 2025 meeting, City Council unanimously resolved:

- “1. That the Administration be directed to report back no later than March 2025, with an evaluation of, and potential role for the City, with respect to the new plan to address homelessness in Saskatoon that is currently under development; and
2. That the Administration be directed to develop and bring forward a comprehensive process to ensure the community has the opportunity to have their voices heard by Council regarding the plan; and
3. That the Administration be directed to bring forward a proposed Terms Of Reference and governance model for a Council SubCommittee, whose mandate would be to activate partnerships to accelerate the plan.”

This report addresses recommendations 2 and 3 above.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

To achieve the objectives stated in Council’s resolutions 2 and 3 above, the Administration is proposing that a subcommittee of City Council be formed. Typically, the Administration, or a contracted engagement professional, would be responsible to lead an engagement process and report back to Council. However, due to the significance of this issue in our community, it is important that elected officials be at the forefront of the approach to hear community voices directly.

The proposed Terms of Reference is included as Appendix 1.

Chaired by the Mayor, the proposed Council Subcommittee on Homelessness (Subcommittee) will include the Mayor and three other Councillors. The Councillors will be selected by City Council through their typical appointment process.

Key governance aspects of the Terms of Reference are that the Subcommittee will:

1. Carry out a comprehensive strategy to hear community voices.
2. Develop a strategy to activate partnerships to achieve the Plan.
3. Provide a summary “what we heard” document to Council at the conclusion of the engagement process.
4. Provide recommendations to Council related to homelessness in Saskatoon, and specifically the City’s role with respect to activation of the Plan.

The Subcommittee will lead all aspects of the comprehensive engagement process, which is outlined in Appendix 2 “Homelessness Subcommittee of Council: 2025 Approach to Hear Community Voices”, with support from the Administration. Key Administrative members involved will be the City Manager, City Clerk, General Manager of Community Services, Director of Indigenous Initiatives, and a Project Manager.

The engagement plan will be refined by the Subcommittee once its membership has been finalized. It is understood that the Subcommittee has discretion to adjust the engagement plan as it sees fit, and if significant deviations are made, a report will be provided to Council.

CURRENT STATUS

The following are examples of work the City of Saskatoon (the City) has undertaken in response to the homelessness and housing crisis facing Saskatoon.

The City has been working in support of the Province to select an additional enhanced emergency shelter site. A temporary location has been approved and is expected to be operational in April of 2025. The City and Province are in the final stages of identifying a permanent site. A more detailed update report will be brought to the April meeting of the Governance and Priorities Committee.

The City has adopted a coordination role with multiple service providers and stakeholders. One of the most recent outcomes of this work was the opening of two overnight warming locations for the winter of 2024/2025, with capacity for up to 400 people. Funding for these warming locations was provided through private contributions and funding from all three orders of government, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the United Way and the Saskatoon Foundation. This funding was used to support community partners including The Salvation Army and St. Mary’s Parish (operating the overnight men’s warming location at St. Mary’s Church), The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre (operating the evening coed warming and overnight women’s warming location), and The Saskatoon Tribal Council Saweyihtotan Program (providing additional evening and overnight outreach to ensure transitioning between evening and overnight locations) in a whole community approach to the Saskatoon Winter Emergency Response Plan.

In the summer of 2024, the City operated what was initially termed a “washroom project” but is more accurately described as a pilot navigation program. Through collaboration between the City, the Saskatoon Tribal Council, and the Central Urban Métis Federation (CUMFI), a 24/7-access washroom, washing facility, and support service station was established at 315 Avenue M (CUMFI), which operated between August 27 and October 30. The navigation hub proved to be extremely successful, was viewed as a positive by many in the surrounding community and was accessed 14,300 times during its operational period. People had access, not just to bathrooms, but vital resources including hygiene products, emergency shelter referrals, mental health and addiction support, and access to transitional housing through the Saweyihtotan Outreach Workers and Peacekeepers on site.

Saskatoon Fire has been working to support residents and homeless individuals through its Fire Bylaws. The Fire Bylaw Inspectors enforce the Saskatoon Fire Department bylaws addressing unsafe and inadequate housing through the Property Maintenance and Nuisance Abatement Bylaw 8175. Following a people-first approach, this bylaw provides provisions to mitigate risks, shut down immediate concerns, offer supports to individuals in need, and remove junk/garbage.

The Community Support Program has been operational since 2012, and oversight responsibility was moved from DTNYXE to Saskatoon Fire in July of 2024. The twelve Fire Community Support Officers provide support to the Downtown, Riversdale, and Broadway Business Improvement Districts, and to Saskatoon Transit. Supports consist of foot and mobile patrol to bring a uniformed and supportive presence in the community focusing on safety and de-escalation.

In 2013, City Council approved the 2013-2022 Housing Business Plan which outlined a commitment to expanding and supporting housing options across the attainable housing continuum. This initiative led to the development of 3,310 new attainable housing units, encompassing purpose-built rental properties, affordable ownership and rental units, secondary suites, and entry-level homeownership. Building on this success, in 2024, the City of Saskatoon secured \$41.3 million in federal funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) to further enhance housing supply. Of this funding, City Council allocated \$26.08 million to support the creation of 757 new affordable housing units, including 256 units to be built on City-owned land, all scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

A number of community partners have been working collaboratively to develop Saskatoon’s Homelessness Action Plan (the Plan), which is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated cost to implement the work of the Subcommittee is estimated to be \$80,000, not including the Administrative time that will be dedicated by already-funded staff positions. The Administration recommends that the remaining balance of \$29,000 currently available within P.02609 City Council Strategic Priority Area be used for this

project, augmented with a contribution of \$51,000 from the Reserve for Capital Expenditures, which currently has a balance of \$657,700.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no communications, Triple Bottom Line, Policy, Privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations at this time. These will be considered in other future reports as required.

NEXT STEPS

Should City Council approve the recommendations of this report, the Administration will work with the Subcommittee to carry out its mandate.

APPENDICES

1. Proposed Terms of Reference – Council Subcommittee on Homelessness
2. Homelessness Subcommittee of Council: 2025 Approach to Hear Community Voices

Report Approval

Written by:	Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager Adam Tittlemore, City Clerk Carla Blumers, Director, Communications and Public Engagement
Reviewed by:	Celene Anger, General Manager, Community Services
Approved by:	Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager

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