

**CITY OF WINNIPEG POLICY NO. CO-024**

<b>POLICY TITLE</b> <i>Encampments Policy</i>	<b>ADOPTED BY</b> City Council	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> <i>November 27, 2025</i>
<b>ORIGIN / AUTHORITY</b> <i>Standing Policy Committee Community Services</i>	<b>CITY POLICY NO</b> CO-024	<b>MOST RECENT CONSOLIDATION</b>

**1. Purpose:**

The Encampments Policy (the “Policy”) outlines the City of Winnipeg’s (the “City”) approach to regulating Encampments on publicly owned land.

**2. Definitions:**

**2.1 “Garbage” includes:**

- A. animal, human, vegetable and agricultural wastes, including manure;
- B. ashes;
- C. large items of refuse, including appliances, indoor furniture, dilapidated outdoor furniture, mattresses, large auto parts and crates;
- D. construction and demolition wastes;
- E. dead animals;
- F. industrial refuse;
- G. rubbish;
- H. abandoned or unattended shopping carts;
- I. hazardous wastes;
- J. wrecked, dismantled, partially dismantled, inoperative, discarded, or abandoned trailers, machinery or vehicles or parts thereof; and
- K. any deserted or discarded article, product or goods of manufacture;

- 2.2** “**Health and Safety Risk**” means the conditions under which an Encampment presents a clear and imminent danger to the life, health, or safety of Encampment residents or the public. This includes Encampments located in flood zones or environmentally hazardous areas, or the presence of fire hazards, structural instability, unsanitary conditions posing disease risk, and Encampments located in flood zones or environmentally hazardous areas.
- 2.3** “**Encampments**” means temporary or informal Structures on Publicly Owned Land established by one or more persons who are Unsheltered.
- 2.4** “**Outreach**” means direct engagement by trained community-based service providers under contract with the City, working with individuals residing in Encampments to offer support, assess needs, provide information, connect them with housing, health, and social services, as well as acting as the first point of communication to warn those individuals of potential contraventions of City by-laws, relevant provincial legislation or regulation, or other legal issues that may relate to their use and occupation of Public Land;
- 2.5** “**Public Land**” includes any municipal or provincially-owned real property, including sidewalks, lanes, streets, boulevards, roads, or street allowances, rights-of-way, vacant public land, parking lots, or parks.
- 2.6** “**Structures**” means temporary or semi-permanent shelters, such as tents, tarps, shacks, vehicles, or other constructed or assembled enclosures, used by an individual or group for habitation in an outdoor setting. These structures are not designed for permanent human habitation and are typically situated on public or private land without formal authorization.
- 2.7** “**Unsheltered**” means the conditions wherein a person or group lives in spaces not designed for human habitation, such as streets, vehicles, parks, or abandoned buildings.

### 3. The Policy

**3.1 Scope:** This Policy applies to all City representatives who interact with Encampments. The Policy does not impact Winnipeg Police Service (“WPS”) or Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service (“WFPS”)’s, response to calls for service, though WPS and WFPS may rely upon the same City resources referenced throughout this Policy in performing their high-priority emergent work.

**3.2 Guiding Principles:** The following principles shall be adhered to in carrying out the Policy.

**3.2.1 Accountability and Transparency:** The City will implement consistent procedures for decision-making, documentation, and reporting related to Encampment response activities. Regular updates on the implementation of the Policy and associated outcomes will be shared with City Council and the public.

**3.2.2 Health and Well-being:** Recognizing that Encampments are not a safe or sustainable alternative to permanent housing—and that living in Encampments can pose serious risks to health, safety, and dignity—the City will balance Outreach, support, and enforcement measures to safeguard both individual and public well-being.

**3.2.3 Maintaining Public Wellbeing and Order:** Under *The City of Winnipeg Charter*, the purposes of the City include developing and maintaining safe, orderly, viable and sustainable communities, and promoting and maintaining the health, safety, and welfare of its inhabitants.

**3.3 Council direction on Encampment enforcement and remediation measures:** On September 25, 2025, City Council directed the Public Service to implement the following by November 17, 2025:

3.3.1. Prohibit Encampments and prioritize enforcement in the following areas:

- A. Within 50 metres of the perimeter of playgrounds, pools, spray pads, or outdoor recreational facilities designed for children, families, or seniors;
- B. Within 50 metres of the perimeter of schools, daycares, or adult daycare facilities;
- C. Where a hazard or obstruction to vehicular or pedestrian traffic exists;

- D. Within a median or traffic island;
- E. Within 30 metres of a transit shelter;
- F. Within 30 metres of bridges, docks, or piers;
- G. Within 50 metres of a rail line or crossing;
- H. And where life safety issues exist;

**3.3.2** 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

**3.3.3** 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.

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

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

**3.4 Encampment Response Protocol:** Under the authority of the Chief Administrative Officer, the Public Service will develop and implement an Encampment response protocol that is informed by this Policy and reflects the evolving nature of Canada's ongoing housing crisis. The Encampment Response Protocol will outline the following:

**3.4.1** How the City will prioritize Encampments for enforcement and Garbage remediation;

**3.4.2** How City departments and relevant external partners will operationalize the Policy, including how by-laws that relate to Encampments will be enforced;

**3.4.3** Procedures guiding the handling and storage or removal of personal property associated with Encampments;

**3.4.4** Inter-departmental Coordination: how departments will communicate with one another, who will lead decision-making respecting enforcement and remediation at Encampments, and how decisions will be actioned and documented.

## 3.5 Responsibilities

- 3.5.1 Chief Administrative Officer:** Responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Encampment Response Protocol, serving as the City of Winnipeg lead at related cross-government or interdepartmental tables, and ensuring that proper procedure is followed by the Public Service when responding to and regulating Encampments.
- 3.5.2 Community Development Division (CD):** On behalf of the Chief Administrative Officer, CD will coordinate all actions and strategies associated with the Encampment Protocol, including chairing an inter-departmental Encampment Coordination Table, evaluating, reporting on and updating the Encampment Response Protocol as directed.
- 3.5.3 Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Services (WFPS):** Responsible for providing life safety information, educating Encampment residents on fire hazards, mitigating fire and life safety hazards in Encampments, mitigating fire and life safety risks, and issuing orders or taking immediate actions for the remediation of urgent or emergent fire life safety issues.
- 3.5.4 Winnipeg Police Service (WPS):** WPS will assist in documenting by-law violations along with other available City departments, and support evictions and cleanup by providing a presence to keep the peace.
- 3.5.5 Legal Services:** Will provide comprehensive legal advice on request, including identifying applicable legislation, legal precedent, and municipal by-laws.
- 3.5.6 All Other Departments:** Responsible for adhering to the Policy and associated Protocol in all Encampment-related operations.
- 3.5.7 Outreach:** Outreach is responsible for adhering to the Policy and associated Protocol in all Encampment-related operations or as directed through relevant contracts and agreements.

## APPENDIX B – Encampment Response Protocol

### City of Winnipeg Encampment Response Protocol

Updated October 27, 2025

#### Summary

The Encampment Response Protocol (“Protocol”) is the City of Winnipeg’s (“City”) operational guide to addressing non-emergency issues pertaining to encampments on public properties. It outlines procedures for engagement, assessment, and coordinated response to encampments and is guided by the City’s Encampment Policy and relevant by-laws. The Protocol is an operational plan under the authority of the Chief Administrative Officer; it will be updated regularly as processes are evaluated and issues relating to encampments evolve.

The Protocol is not applicable to the regulation of encampments on private property or to situations that involve emergencies, life safety or criminal matters. Neither the Protocol nor the Encampment Policy impact the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) or Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service (WFPS)’s response to calls for service.

The Protocol is divided into four sections: 1) **Coordination**, 2) **Three-level Prioritization**, 3) **The Response Process**, and 4) **Internal and External Responsibilities**.

#### 1. **Coordination**

Management of the City’s operational response to issues relating to encampments will be the responsibility of an *Encampment Coordination Table* (ECT), reporting to the City’s Chief Administrative Officer.

ECT membership will include the following City departments and divisions: WFPS; Public Works (PW); Planning, Property, and Development (PPD); Community Development (CD); WPS; Winnipeg Transit; and any other departments as required from time to time (e.g. Legal Services, Corporate Communications, Licensing and By-law Enforcement, Community Safety Officers).

The general tasks of the ECT include:

- Meeting weekly or as necessary to consider encampment-related issues;
- Triaging and planning responses to encampment-related issues based on priority factors, as guided by a three-level prioritization approach (detailed below);
- Coordinating on-the-ground encampment activities among relevant departments;
- Establishing procedures for documentation, evaluation, and reporting related to encampment response activities.

#### **Three-Level Prioritization**

The City will employ 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.

### **Level 1 – Urgent Coordinated Response (High Risk / Sensitive Public Properties)**

**Description:** Encampments that pose an immediate risk to public safety, are located on or adjacent to sensitive public property, or obstruct essential services.

**Criteria include (and “Sensitive Public Property” defined as):**

- Located within 50 metres of:
- Playgrounds, pools, spray pads, or outdoor recreation facilities designed for children, families, or seniors; and
- Schools, daycares, or personal care home facilities;
- Where a hazard or obstruction exists for vehicular, cycling, or pedestrian traffic;
- Located within medians, traffic islands, underpasses, or within 30 metres of Transit shelters, bridges, docks, or piers;
- Within 50 metres of a rail line or crossing;
- Sites where life safety concerns are present, such as:
- Unsafe structures;
- Active fire, flood or electrical hazards;
- Floodplain, riverbank erosion, storm drain proximity); and
- Encampments causing service disruption to City operations or emergency access routes.

**Goals:** Protect public safety, prevent harm, and ensure rapid restoration of sensitive or high-risk areas.

### **Level 2 – Coordinated Response (Moderate Risk / Large Encampments on Non-Sensitive Properties)**

**Description:** Encampments on public property not classified as sensitive but that involve multiple occupants, significant debris, and other documented concerns.

**Criteria include:**

- Encampments with permanent unpermitted structures;
- Evidence of illegal dumping, debris accumulation, or environmental contamination (e.g., biohazards, fuel spills, waste buildup);
- Signs of fire risk that require urgent action to mitigate but WFPS does not have scene control;
- Encampments interfering with park maintenance, trail access, or public use of open spaces;
- Presence of non-structural hazards, such as rodents, unsanitary waste, or used needles;
- Vulnerable occupants requiring case coordination (e.g., youth, seniors, persons with mobility limitations); and
- Repeated failure to comply with posted notices or outreach offers.

**Goals:** Reduce health and safety risks, support relocation to safer alternatives, and restore public property.

### **Level 3 – Monitored Response (Low Risk / Small Encampments)**

**Description:** Small, low-impact encampments with minimal health, safety, or nuisance concerns located on non-sensitive public property.

**Criteria include:**

- Small-scale encampments;
- Located on non-sensitive public property (e.g., open areas, park peripheries, non-operational rights-of-way);
- Minimal community complaints or evidence of nuisance activity;
- No visible hazards (no open flames, structural instability, or environmental degradation);
- No interference with City services, operations, or public access; and
- Outreach engagement ongoing and occupants are connected or willing to connect with supports.

**Goals:** Ensuring ongoing safety and cleanliness of public property.

#### **The Response Process**

The following outlines the standard sequence of actions and coordination protocols for each level of encampment response. In certain instances the specific circumstances of an encampment will require that the following process is followed in different order. Note that immediate actions related to health, life safety, or criminal activity concerns are managed separately from this protocol. These situations often require urgent intervention and are addressed through existing practices. However, as the same resources may be involved, immediate life-safety responses can result in delays to other encampment response activities.

#### **Level One:**

##### **1. Identification**

- Encampment identified through 311, inspection, or City staff observation;
- ECT assesses for risk (size, safety hazards, environmental impact) and prioritization.
- ECT flags encampments as “Level 1” based on location and risk criteria.

##### **2. ECT Coordination**

- On-site inspection by City staff qualified to inspect and enforce relevant laws, WFPS, and Mobile Outreach Support (MOS);
- Assessment for:
  - Immediate hazards (fire, structural, environmental);
  - Proximity to sensitive spaces;
  - Number of occupants and structures; and
- Document with photos and incident report.

##### **3. Mitigation**

- Emergency services engaged if imminent danger exists (e.g., open flame, active fire, blocked emergency access).
- MOS establishes contact offering supports, referrals, and voluntary relocation options.
- ECT determines an appropriate notice period required before enforcement, taking into account:
  - Any appeal period that may apply (if a by-law is relied upon), and/or any amount of time necessary to allow the residents the opportunity to be heard by decision-makers
  - How entrenched the encampment is (more entrenched encampments may require more notice)
  - The weather (harsher conditions may require more notice)
  - Any disabilities or particular needs of the residents that would slow their ability to pack and move
  - Whether voluntary movement can be obtained in a reasonable time (voluntariness to be preferred over forceful eviction)
- Temporary barriers or signage installed if required.

#### **4. Notification**

- MOS attends to provide information on available shelters, transportation, and timelines.
- Provide encampment occupants warnings and notice of coming enforcement.
- Applicable documentation of engagement attempts maintained.

#### **5. Site Clearance and Remediation**

- Clear the encampment after the notice period, ensuring the proper authorities are present to enforce the relevant laws.
- Consider support of residents through safe rides and property storage.
- City crews conduct cleanup, waste removal, and site restoration.
- Site to be temporarily monitored if re-encampment risk is high (MOS, WFPS).
- Consider permanent signage to dissuade re-occupation.

#### **6. Post-Action Review**

- Interdepartmental debrief completed within 30 business days.
- Data recorded for tracking (location, response time, outcomes).

#### **Level Two:**

##### **1. Identification**

- Encampment identified through 311, inspection, or City staff observation.
- ECT assesses for risk (size, safety hazards, service complaints, environmental impact) and prioritization.

##### **2. Internal Coordination**

- ECT develops a response plan.

### **3. Mitigation**

- MOS establishes contact with residents, offering supports, referrals, and voluntary relocation options.
- City staff qualified to enforce relevant laws to provide notice of mandatory site clearance between one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset.
- Engagement documented and reviewed weekly (ECT).

### **4. Notification**

- ECT determines an appropriate notice period required before enforcement, taking into account:
  - Any appeal period that may apply (if a by-law is relied upon), and/or any amount of time necessary to allow the residents the opportunity to be heard by decision-makers
  - How entrenched the encampment is (more entrenched encampments may require more notice)
  - Any disabilities or particular needs of the residents that would slow their ability to pack and move
  - Whether voluntary movement can be obtained in a reasonable time (voluntariness to be preferred over forceful eviction)
  - Temporary barriers or signage installed if required.
  - Outreach continues during notice period to support voluntary departure.
  - Health and safety risks monitored for escalation (WFPS).

### **5. Site Clearance and Remediation**

- Joint operation scheduled following notice period.
- City staff qualified to enforce relevant laws and WPS attend with outreach support present.
- Removal of structures and waste; consideration of storage of personal belongings.
- Area cleaned, hazards removed (PW).
- Follow-up inspections conducted to deter re-establishment during the daytime (MOS, City staff qualified to enforce relevant laws).

### **7. Post-Action Review**

- Interdepartmental debrief completed.
- Data recorded for tracking (location, response time, outcomes).

#### **Level Three:**

##### **1. Identification**

- Encampment identified by City staff, outreach, or 311.
- ECT to assess and categorize as Level 3 if low risk and no significant complaints or hazards.

##### **2. Mitigation**

- Outreach to be dispatched for assessment and to provide verbal notice of mandatory site clearance between one hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset.
- Regular site visits (weekly to biweekly) by Outreach.
- Risks reassessed each visit to determine if escalation is required.
- Occupants offered shelter or housing placement by Outreach as availability allows.
- Transportation assistance considered for voluntary moves.
- Enforcement resources prioritized to higher levels unless risk level increases or daytime presence continues.

### **3. Site Clearance and Remediation**

- If site vacated, clean-up need will be assessed (Outreach) and coordinated (PW).
- Site deemed inactive after 30 days of no occupancy and will be removed from ECT list.

### **Internal and External Responsibilities**

Specific tasks of relevant City departments may include the following:

#### **Community Development (CD):**

- Chair and provide administrative support to the Encampment Coordination Table.
- Receives requests and complaints (through 311 and other sources) related to encampments.
- Informs the Chief Administrative Officer of progress and new developments related to encampments.
- Manages the City's 24-Hour Mobile Outreach Service (MOS) contract.

#### **By-law Enforcement:**

- City staff qualified to enforce relevant laws to lead data collection, communication of infractions, ensuring signage is posted when appropriate, and participating in enforcement.

#### **Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Service (WFPS):**

- The WFPS is often the first to identify encampment issues around the City due to fire and medical calls. WFPS will share this information with internal departments and the MOS, without disclosing residents' personal health information.
- The WFPS Fire Prevention Officers work with MOS to educate encampment residents of fire hazards, providing life safety information to mitigate risks. In addition, the Assistant Chief – Community Risk Reduction holds the encampment portfolio on behalf of the WFPS, and handles complex encampment issues, including the decision to resort to enforcement and vacate encampments.
- When enforcement action is required due to the existence of significant fire and life safety issues, WFPS will work with other departments including PW and the CAO's Office to ensure all appropriate policies and procedures are followed.
- WFPS will only vacate an encampment for issues regarding fire and life safety, and this will occur after less disruptive measures have been attempted. This may include (but not

be limited to) issues related to the placement of shelters, the materials used in shelter construction, the location and volume of combustible materials, compressed gases such as propane, fires, and behaviors that contribute to the occurrence of accidental fires

**Public Works (PW):**

- PW staff investigates areas of concern for garbage removal or remediation as reported through 311, CD, ECT, and the MOS.
- Where an encampment has been vacated, PW will coordinate clean up and removal of debris.

**Winnipeg Police Service (WPS):**

- Attends calls for service.
- Investigates criminal activity.
- May identify and document circumstances of individuals who are in violation of any City Bylaws in the absence of Bylaw Officials.
- May enforce the Trespass Act.
- Supports eviction or cleanup of a bylaw violation by providing a presence to ensure the safety of all involved.

***External***

The City partners with different levels of government, service providers, and community-based organizations on issues related to housing and encampments. The City currently funds 24-Hour Mobile Outreach Support (MOS) services for individuals who are living in encampments.

