

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Managed Encampment Pilot Site

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2025, Council directed the Public Service to report back on the idea of creating a managed encampment pilot site for the spring and summer of 2026. The motion asked the Public Service to explore possible locations and how the sites would operate. The motion also requested estimated costs. The Public Service was to meet with the Province of Manitoba to seek their participation in the pilot.

Divided into four sections, this report responds to the Council motion. The first section addresses specific questions about the managed encampment site. The second section provides cost estimates. The third section summarizes the outcomes of engagement with the Provincial Government on the pilot. The final section offers a discussion and three high-level options for consideration.

The Public Service is advising against the City establishing a managed encampment at this time. For the City to move forward with this project, further analysis would be needed, including community consultation and engagement on site selection, full legal review and a more detailed cost evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On December 18, 2025, Council directed the Public Service to report back in up to 120 days on the following:

- A. Feasibility of establishing a Managed Encampment Pilot Site for spring summer operations, including:

- i. Identification of potential locations.
 - ii. Recommended operational structure.
 - iii. Estimated population capacity.
 - iv. Site management requirements.
 - v. Safety considerations for both residents and the surrounding community.
- B. Estimated financial costs of providing the following:
- i. Two large metal garbage bins (with regular pickup).
 - ii. Three portable washrooms.
 - iii. Modest site maintenance and cleaning services needed to support the pilot.
- C. Engagement with the Province of Manitoba to explore provincial participation in the pilot, including but not limited to:
- i. Funding and delivering wrap-around supports.
 - ii. On-site outreach staff focused on connecting individuals to income supports, addictions treatment, mental health services, and housing.
 - iii. A coordinated triage system to transition individuals from the encampment into appropriate shelter or housing options.
- D. Recommendations, options, timelines, and funding considerations, related to a managed encampment pilot site.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications to receiving this report as information.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Similar to other jurisdictions across Canada, Winnipeg has seen an increase in the number of encampments in the City. In response to this issue, in early 2025 the City joined the Provincial Government as a partner in the Province's Your Way Home Strategy. The Your Way Home Strategy works to coordinate and streamline the efforts of community organizations as well as the provincial and municipal governments to support the transition of individuals living in encampments to appropriate housing using a Housing First approach.

A key aspect of the strategy is the development of hundreds of new accessible housing units with wraparound supports. Over the past year, the Province, in partnership with the City and community organizations, has worked to rapidly bring new housing online. Through the Your Way Home Strategy nearly 200 individuals who were previously unsheltered and living in encampments have been housed. The City remains a committed partner in this effort, providing support with enforcement, leading site remediation, and funding 24-hour mobile outreach services city-wide. The provision of housing, including alternative options such as managed encampment sites, transitional units, or additional shelter capacity, largely falls within the jurisdiction of other levels of government. This shared dynamic is the lens through which the following sections are presented.

1. Feasibility of a Managed Encampment Pilot Site

A. Identification of Potential Locations

As the Public Service is currently advising against establishing a managed encampment at this time, specific site locations have not been identified. To proceed with site selection additional work is required, including community consultation and engagement, a comprehensive legal review, and a more detailed cost assessment.

B. Recommended Operational Structure

The Public Service conducted an environmental scan of Canadian Municipalities that have developed a managed encampment. A high-level summary of this scan has been incorporated into a table and included as Attachment 1.

Overall, most municipalities chose low-barrier operating models. For example, the City of Hamilton established a fully managed, low-barrier operating model for its Barton-Tiffany site. This model includes case management, minimal intake requirements, a restorative approach, guest policy, a co-collaboration approach with residents, harm reduction, 24/7 services, and the provision of basic needs. The site accommodates people with pets, individuals actively using substances, and couples. The low-barrier operating model is similarly established in: Saint John, NB; London, ON; and Waterloo, ON.

Some municipalities emphasize the proximity of a managed encampment site to social services instead of 24/7 availability. The City of Kelowna partners with community organizations to ensure the availability of support for residents. Onsite services include breakfast, dinner, medical care, and case management. However, these services, apart from security, are not available 24/7. Best practices for managed encampment sites favour a low-threshold or low-barrier model that eliminates some of the obstacles preventing people experiencing homelessness from accessing necessary services.

All municipalities studied in the preparation of this report have funded an external service provider to operate and supervise managed encampment spaces. Most sites provide onsite 24/7 staff, mental health services, physical services, harm reduction, case management, and transportation to other social services and supports. In some cases, the service provider may establish rules around guests and visitors. For instance, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo has a “No Guest, No Visitor” policy within its managed encampment site, and the City of Saint John has rules around participation in available services at their location.

C. Estimated Population Capacity

Managed encampment capacity varies across Canadian municipalities but sites generally accommodate between 50–60 individuals. Examples include Saint John, NB (28 units housing roughly 54 individuals) and cities such as Kelowna, Peterborough, Waterloo, and London, which each accommodate approximately 50–60 people. Hamilton operates a slightly larger site serving about 80 individuals.

Smaller models also exist; for example, Halifax has operated multiple micro-sites housing 8–11 individuals each. Some jurisdictions have also adopted hybrid approaches. In Kelowna, hybrid refers to a mix of residents staying full-time and individuals using the site overnight only. In Waterloo, hybrid refers to allowing both tents and small structures such as tiny homes within the same designated site.

D. Site Management Requirements

When considering site management requirements, municipalities generally ensure that occupants have access to life-sustaining services. These typically include washrooms, showers, potable water, food, heating, cooling, garbage collection, and basic cleaning. The absence of services exposes encampment residents to health and safety risks. Many municipalities provide additional amenities, including internet access, Wi-Fi, laundry facilities, and transportation. Most Canadian municipalities reviewed for this report note the critical importance of 24/7 staffing, particularly on-site service providers with site managers. Site managers ensure provision of 24/7 support services, including harm reduction, mental health services, intensive case management, and service navigation. Outdoor sheltering sites usually have onsite offices for their service providers.

Storage of personal belongings is an important consideration in encampment management. Limited storage space in traditional shelters can discourage some individuals from accessing services due to concerns about losing identification, documents, or other essential items. Some municipalities, like Toronto and Victoria address this issue by providing temporary storage as part of their encampment response or enforcement activities.

Access to culturally appropriate services is another important consideration in the development of a managed encampment site. According to the 2024 Point in Time Count conducted by End Homelessness Winnipeg, 79.9 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg identify as Indigenous. Incorporating opportunities for cultural connection, including access to ceremony, traditional medicines, and community knowledge, may help support trust and engagement. Similar culturally responsive approaches have been incorporated into successful managed encampment models in other Canadian jurisdictions.

E. Safety Considerations for Both Residents and the Surrounding Community

Managed encampment sites in other jurisdictions have included safety features to minimize community impact both inside and outside the site. These include 24/7 security, fences, security cameras, lighting, and safe entry measures. However, consideration for who may access the site is important when planning safety options. For example, approximately 80 percent of women experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg identify as Indigenous. Indigenous women face higher risks of gender-based violence and any safety planning for a managed encampment site should include proactive measures that reduce opportunities for exploitation. With this example in mind, an appropriate balance between traditional security approaches and approaches that support the residents of the encampment should be considered. The following are culturally appropriate safety measures that may protect marginalized groups, particularly Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people:

- Indigenous-led peer support workers
- Outreach teams with lived experience
- Foot patrols connected to community organizations
- Trauma-informed crisis response services

While managed encampment sites provide critical services and infrastructure, the establishment of these sites can sometimes lead to the expansion of unsanctioned encampments in surrounding areas. As more individuals and families seek shelter near the formally managed site, informal tent clusters may emerge, often without access to essential services, sanitation, or safety oversight. This expansion can increase public health risks, fire hazards, and environmental impacts, while also straining the capacity of service providers at the managed site. Additionally, unsanctioned encampments may create challenges for emergency response, law enforcement, and municipal maintenance efforts.

3. Estimated Financial Costs

The following identifies cost estimates related specifically to requirements included in Council's 2025 Motion noted above. This includes garbage collection, washrooms, and maintenance. In total, the estimated cost for these services is approximately \$55,850 for the period from April 1 to August 31, 2026. It is important to note however these services represent the most basic amenities that should be considered to support a managed encampment site. In addition to these costs, it is recommended that any managed encampment site include 24/7 staffing. Outlined in greater detail in the Discussion section below are three high-level options for an encampment pilot that include cost estimates for staffing.

A. Cost estimate of two large metal garbage bins (with regular pickup): \$7,500

Based on current estimates, renting two bins would cost approximately \$250, with pickup and disposal fees of about \$105 per service, for a total of roughly \$355 per collection. If serviced weekly, this would total about \$1,500 per month, or approximately \$7,500 for a pilot running from April to August.

B. Cost estimate for three portable washrooms: \$13,000

The cost estimate provided assumes the placement, rental, and daily cleaning costs of three (3) portable washroom units for a five-month period from April to August. However, this value could change if the units are vandalized or destroyed resulting in the city needing to pay for a replacement unit.

C. Modest site maintenance and cleaning services needed to support the pilot: \$12,500

Historically the City has always contracted out the cleaning of encampment spaces. It is estimated that the total cost to engage an external contractor would be approximately \$12,500 for the duration of the Pilot based on previous contracts for similar work.

D. Cost Estimate for Fresh Drinking Water: \$5,300 - \$22,850

To align with best practices in other municipalities, potable drinking water, at a minimum, should be provided at any managed encampment site. Water can be provided in two ways. These are noted below:

- A water truck or water tank can be stationed at the site. Based on usage for roughly 50 individuals the total cost for this service for the duration of the pilot from April to August would be between \$13,650 and \$22,850. This amount could be decreased to a range of \$7,900 to \$12,800 if Council waives water rates and tank rental rates.

- Bottle fill stations connected to City hydrants is a secondary option that could be used. The total cost for a bottle fill station would be between \$10,950 and \$11,150 for a 5-month period based on water usage for 50 people. This amount could be reduced to roughly \$5,300 if Council waives water rates as well as meter, hydrant, and backflow preventer rental rates. While cheaper overall, hydrant water fountains would also require the purchase two new fountains at a cost of \$3,500 per unit, and pre-existing municipally owned hydrants located on-site.

4. Engagement with the Province of Manitoba

Through engagement with the Provincial Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness it was identified that while the province is actively funding new wrap-around supports, transitional housing, support services and programs and developing a coordinated triage system for individuals entering housing from homelessness, these efforts are currently a component part of the Provincial Your Way Home Strategy and are still in the earlier stages of implementation. As such, the province is unable to commit new resources or divert existing services to support a managed encampment pilot in the spring or summer of 2026.

As part of this discussion several important considerations were identified. The Province is moving quickly to operationalize transitional and supportive housing units across Winnipeg, and each unit requires wraparound supports. In addition to the challenge of bringing new units online to meet existing demand, there are significant pressures associated with agencies identifying, hiring, and training the staff needed to support these spaces. Supporting this pilot would likely require reducing capacity within the larger Your Way Home Strategy currently underway.

Second, a major provincial priority is the development and opening of a Navigation Centre, which is a critical component of the Your Way Home Strategy and is expected to open in November 2026. The Navigation Centre will provide a wide range of on-site supports and services, including those noted above.

Provincial staff noted a practical timing issue: the request is coming while the Province is finalizing its forthcoming budget, which is expected to be released on or around March 24, 2026, and any new spending requests would have needed to be submitted in advance. As a result, the Province is not able to commit to supporting these functions for spring and summer of 2026, however, some of these same services are expected to be operational in November 2026 through the opening of the Navigation Centre.

5. Discussion

Outlined in Table 1 below are three high-level options that incorporate the costs outlined in section three as well as 24/7 staffing. The cost estimates for staffing were extrapolated from existing City contracts where peer support staff and services are provided. The three options include: Option 1, a single medium sized managed encampment site for 25-30 individuals, Option 2, a single large sized managed encampment pilot site for 50-60 people, and Option 3, two smaller sized encampment sites for 12-15 people at each location.

While the costs estimated in Section 3 represent the basic amenities that would be considered to support a managed encampment site, this does not include funding for security, wrap-around supports, or on-site staff. It is recommended that at a minimum a managed encampment would have a 24/7 onsite staff presence by an appropriate external provider.

Table 1: Options for a Managed Encampment Pilot Site (April 1 - August 31, 2026)					
Options	Number of Residents	Number of 24/7 Staffing	Staffing Cost	Combined Costs*	Total Cost
Option 1: Single Site Medium Size	25-30	4	\$666,493.15	\$40,675.00	\$707,168.15
Option 2: Single Site Large Size	50-60	8	\$1,332,986.30	\$55,850.00	\$1,388,836.30
Option 3: Two Sites Small Size	12-15 (per site)	4 (2 per site)	\$666,493.15	\$44,425.00	\$710,918.15

*Combined costs include garbage removal, washrooms, basic site maintenance, and potable water. Option 1 includes a 50 percent cost reduction for both garbage and water use due to the number of individuals supported at the site. Option 3 includes a 50 percent reduction in cost associated with water usage due to the total number of encampment residents supported at both sites. Costs associated with washroom use and maintenance are conservatively held constant for all three options.

Lessons from other jurisdictions suggest that more successful models involve significant investment, and leverage managed encampments as one contributing part of a broader, integrated strategy. A good example of this is the approach taken by Halifax and the Province of Nova Scotia, which expanded indoor and temporary shelter options prior to introducing designated outdoor managed locations. The Government of Nova Scotia also introduced “tiny home” communities in smaller managed sites, with rent-geared-to-income units and on-site support. The Halifax model included the introduction of a coordinated access system to prioritize placements and create a clear pathway from encampments to interim housing, and ultimately permanent housing.

Given the time constraints to operationalize a managed encampment site before spring, the significant operational costs, the current work of the Province which limits its ability to support this pilot, and the need to engage community related to site selection, design and operations, the Public Service is not recommending that the pilot move forward at this time.

To proceed, further analysis is needed, including community engagement related to site selection, a comprehensive legal review on the project, and a more detailed cost evaluation.