

ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE STRATEGY



City of
Prince Albert

Overview

Since 2019, the City of Prince Albert has allocated resources to address encampments on public lands. Over time, the City's approach has evolved in response to changing community needs. However, beginning in 2022, Prince Albert experienced a significant increase in the number of individuals living in encampments across the community.

In 2024, the City's Community Safety and Well-Being Division established the **Encampments Response Team**, a collaborative group including Bylaw Enforcement, the Prince Albert Fire Department (PAFD), the Prince Albert Police Service (PAPS), and local housing providers. This team identified growing concerns related to entrenched encampments, including increased risks to individual and public health and safety, such as overdoses, illegal activity, aggressive behavior, territorial disputes, and the accumulation of waste and biohazards.

The team also recognized a critical service gap for individuals residing in encampments. In response, the City developed the Encampment Strategy—a partnership-based approach modeled after the City of Lethbridge's framework and informed by research and practices from other municipalities. The strategy is tailored to the unique context and needs of Prince Albert.

Acknowledging that homelessness is a complex social issue, the City remains committed to addressing its root causes through the broader Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy and related initiatives.

The Encampment Strategy aims to balance compassion and public responsibility—protecting the dignity of the most vulnerable while ensuring public safety, health, and access to clean, safe parks and green spaces for all residents.

PiT (Point-In-Time) Count

The 2024 Point-in-Time (PiT) Count in Prince Albert identified 230 individuals experiencing homelessness. Of those who participated, 106 individuals were unsheltered, meaning they were not couch-surfing, accessing a shelter, or residing in transitional housing, and 64 individuals reported staying in an encampment. In 2025, the PiT Count identified 279 individuals experiencing homelessness, of whom 167 were unsheltered, demonstrating a continued increase in unsheltered homelessness within the community.

Strategic Goals

The Encampment Strategy will ensure:

- Parks and public spaces within the community are enjoyable for everyone.
- Vulnerable people are connected to wellness, housing and social supports.
- Encampments do not become entrenched.
- Residents are informed on how to report encampments identified within the community.
- Community and City Council remain informed.

Homeless Encampment: refers to temporary outdoor accommodations consisting of tents, vehicles, or makeshift shelters for individuals and groups of unsheltered individuals that have been established, without permission, on public property.

Encampment Response Process

The City of Prince Albert, in partnership with the Prince Albert Police Service (PAPS) and the Prince Albert Fire Department (PAFD), manages the encampment response process. This effort is further coordinated with key community partners, including (but not limited to) Riverbank Development Corporation, the Prince Albert Métis Women's Association, the Prince Albert Grand Council, and the Prince Albert YWCA.

Core Elements of the Response

Year-Round Coordination

A consistently resourced, year-round response that is well coordinated across departments and partners.

Balanced Approach

A rapid and consistent response that respects the dignity of vulnerable individuals while ensuring public safety, health, and the enjoyment of public spaces.

Outreach Collaboration

Engagement with outreach services to prioritize wellness and appropriate shelter/housing before encampment clearance.

Risk Assessment Tool

A structured tool to triage encampments based on:

- Duration of encampment
- Proximity to sensitive areas or events
- Risks such as fire, extreme weather, violence, or criminal activity

Tiered Response System

Tier 1: Inactive sites with abandoned items; prioritized for immediate cleanup.

Tier 2: Active sites (1–2 structures) with no immediate risk; addressed through outreach-led, housing-focused response followed by closure.

Tier 3: Active sites (3+ structures) with high safety risks; prioritized for expedited outreach and enforcement-led closure.

Operational Plan

A shared, detailed plan outlining:

- Notification procedures
- Outreach protocols
- Property handling and disposal
- Hazardous materials management
- Data collection and reporting

Data-Driven Decision Making

Use of consistent data points to identify trends, allocate resources, and evaluate response effectiveness.

Communication Structure

A clear framework for internal coordination and external communication with Council and the community.

Long-Term Commitment

The Community Safety and Well-Being Division remains committed to systemic improvements in housing and shelter capacity, including:

- Reducing administrative barriers
- Strengthening partnerships
- Supporting homelessness prevention
- Expanding housing options across the continuum

ENCAMPMENT RESPONSE STRATEGY

STEP ONE

Calls regarding encampments are directed to the City of Prince Albert website – Report a concern.

Any calls with immediate risk to safety should be directed to 911.

STEP TWO

Encampment Response Team (ERT) is notified to investigate site and determine level of risk.

Tier 1: Sites are clearly vacated and abandoned items and debris to be cleaned.

Tier 2: Sites consist of <two structures where no immediate risk is posed to occupants or community and will be approached initially by an outreach-led-housing-focused response.

Tier 3: Sites that consist of 3 or more structures and/or pose high fire, injury, health and safety risk to occupants and community.



STEP 3

Encampment Response Team arranges a clean up of the area as soon as possible.

STEP 3

Outreach Services visit site to connect people with essential services, resources, and housing, where possible. This could be several visits with the occupants.

STEP 3

Outreach services visit site to connect people with services, resources, and housing, where possible. This could be several visits with the occupants.

STEP 4

Notice to Vacate is issued by Encampment Response Team and closure is coordinated.

STEP 4

Notice to Vacate is issued by Encampment Response Team and closure is coordinated.

STEP 5

ERT leads the closure. Site is cleaned once all hazards removed.

RESOLVED

RESOLVED

RESOLVED

LEGEND



BYLAW TEAM



SANITATION



OUTREACH SERVICES



PAPS

Interagency Encampment Response Team (IERT)

The Interagency Encampment Response Team (IERT) is the core group who have an active role in the operational side of the strategy and responses to encampments. The IERT will meet bi-weekly to identify encampment hot spots, collaborate on coordinated clean ups, coordinate on-site supports, and discuss outcomes.

City Council is not a part of the IERT; however has an important role in the encampment response by approving the Encampment Strategy, resources, etc.

Table 1 – Encampment Response Team Roles and Responsibilities:

Stakeholder	Roles & Responsibilities
City of Prince Albert Bylaw & the CSWB team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Role in Encampment Strategy oversight • Lead role in facilitation and coordination of strategy implementation with all relevant stakeholders • Collection, monitoring, and analysis of encampment related data to inform strategy outcomes and KPIs • Contract management and financial management of procured and/or contracted services.
Prince Albert Police Service (PAPS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key partner in coordinated Encampment Response Strategy oversight • Critical role in coordinated encampment closure operational response as needed Collection, monitoring, and analysis of encampment related data
Prince Albert Fire Department (PAFD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in coordinated response • Reporting of encampment-related fire and health risks Collection, monitoring, and analysis of encampment related data
City of Prince Albert Public Works - Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in coordinated encampment operational response; specifically, as lead agency in disposing of encampment related debris and waste • Collection, monitoring, and analysis of encampment related data

<p>Outreach Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in coordinated encampment operational response • Lead integrated outreach services - receive/conduct ‘warm hand-off’ referrals, information provision, meeting encampment occupants where they are at • Staff the Hygiene Hub April – December (dependent on weather) • Collection, monitoring, and analysis of encampment related data
<p>Community Partners</p>	<p>Non-contracted community partners who have an important role in the coordination of the response including but not limited to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riverbank Development • Prince Albert Metis Women’s Association • Prince Albert YWCA • Prince Albert Grand Council

Communication and Reporting

To ensure a coordinated and transparent approach to encampment response, a structured framework will guide operational efforts, foster inter-departmental collaboration, and maintain open communication with City Council and the community.

Bi-weekly Tactical Meetings

A dedicated team—including the City of Prince Albert, Prince Albert Police Service, contracted outreach providers, and other key partners—will meet bi-weekly to align immediate operational priorities. These meetings will shift to a monthly cadence during lower activity periods (typically November to April), allowing flexibility based on call volume.

Monthly Community Safety & Wellbeing (CSWB) Team Meetings

These sessions will bring together representatives from departments impacted by or involved in encampment response. The goal is to streamline resource coordination and share timely information. Participating departments include Communications, Facilities, Finance, Fire and EMS, Parks, Community Development, and Legal.