

# Social Health - Issues Update

Report Dated: October 17, 2024

This report has been made available to help share information on the management of issues related to the social health of the community.

Heart & Hearth MOU Activities

Current: 11 October 2024.

Staff are informed:

- That Victoria Street Supportive Housing is fully tenanted for the currently available spaces.
- That 14 individuals are currently sheltering at the Lower Patricia Boulevard Encampment (LPBE). This is down from 44 in May of this year.
- That 151 Shelter beds are in operation. Of these, there are holds placed on 6 beds to support efforts at LPBE.
- That the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave Transitional Facility remains on schedule to open in the fall of 2024. The site will be staffed 24/7 by a qualified operator. Support services will help residents take the next steps towards success in their housing journeys. These can include:
  - Health care referrals and wellness checks
  - Outreach, life skills training, help with employment assistance
  - Connection and referral to community services or support groups

The City of Prince George has asked relevant partners to provide a public update on the status of this project due to public interest.

- Administrative work related to fencing repairs and installation at the LPBE has started. Staff are preparing to move forward with this work when appropriate. Tenanting efforts are helping to clear space on the eastern edge of the encampment to enable the work to be completed.

## **Entrenched Encampment Response**

**Current: 11 October 2024.**

The only large, entrenched encampment within the City known at this time is the LPBE. The following approach was originally shared in June of 2024. The City is approaching the end of Phase One and is preparing to return to the Supreme Court of British Columbia to address the status of the LPBE. Staff are cautious that this work hinges on external factors and that this may affect the timeline. Thus far progress has been positive in building capacity, evidenced by a reduction in encampment occupants, and addressing hazards, evidenced by a significant reduction in debris on site. More work remains to be done.

### **Phase One: Build Capacity.**

This is the current phase. In phase one, the City and partners work to build capacity in the community to help provide suitable day time facilities and low barrier housing for those community members in need of these services. Concurrently the City and partners work to manage health and safety issues at the LPBE and across downtown. These activities attempt to balance the diverse needs of the community while helping to establish the conditions outlined by the British Columbia Supreme Court (BCSC) in the *Prince Goerge v. Stewart* decision as necessary for the transition of the LPBE site from a fulltime, entrenched encampment to other forms of sheltering.

Key milestones targeted throughout this phase include the continuation of offers of suitable shelter via BC Housing for the Victoria Street Supportive Housing Facility (formerly the North Star Hotel). A further target is joint work between the Province and the City to complete construction of the Transitional Shelter Facility at 397 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, and staff and tenant that space.

*Staff are informed that both of these facilities are on track at this time.*

### **Phase Two: Demonstrate Capacity and Alternatives.**

In phase two having built capacity in the community. The City demonstrates to the BCSC that conditions are appropriate for the transition of the LPBE site to other forms of housing, including the possibility of temporary overnight sheltering being permitted in designated areas, new housing options such as the Transitional Shelter Facility, and the Victoria Street Supportive Housing Facility to name a few examples. Note, these new developments are anticipated to help relieve pressure on existing shelter spaces which can be used by those who do not accept other tenancing offers. This is an important consideration due to the realities of sheltering in northern climates.

It is possible that phase two could be entered as early as Q4 of 2024. Key milestones targeted in phase two include revisiting the legal status of the LPBE. As the LPBE is currently protected by an Order of the BCSC, the City's external legal counsel informs us that it will be necessary for the City to return to court and obtain a further order to decamp the site. Again, this would be done with the intent of transitioning the site from an entrenched encampment while helping (via partners and the designation of open spaces) to provide options for other forms of sheltering. The services of external legal counsel have been retained to help guide this process on behalf of the City.

The goal of this phase is the lifting of the order that has contributed to the LPBE site becoming entrenched with unregulated structures. This phase also helps to verify independently that suitable daytime facilities and low barrier housing are present within the community.

### **Phase Three: Transition to other forms of Housing.**

If successful in phase two, the City will work with partners to transition the LPBE to other forms of sheltering, supported by the facilities mentioned above, and using one or more designated outdoor sheltering locations. The site would undergo remediation and be secured to prevent future occupation in areas not expressly designated for the purpose of temporary overnight sheltering. For clarity, the current LPBE space will be included in the review of parks and open spaces where sheltering may be permitted. Further, this transition is not intended to take place until a court order has been obtained and efforts have been exhausted to offer housing to occupants.

It is possible that phase three could be entered as early as Q1 of 2025. Key milestones targeted throughout that time frame may include remediation of the LPBE site. Transition over the winter is being considered as historically it is the time of year where the lowest rate of occupancy is experienced within the encampment and as it is anticipated all individuals will have received one or more offers of shelter by this time.

It is our intent to encourage partners to have all individuals interested in receiving shelter tenanted by this time. Those who do not accept these offers are anticipated to have adequate options (warming shelters / daytime facilities / shelter beds / transitional shelter facility) separate from the entrenched encampment to utilize.

Municipally, the City will continue to support extreme weather responses via the City's emergency programs division, which distributes Ministry of Emergency Management & Climate Readiness (EMCR) funding to ensure service providers can operate with extended hours as warming or cooling centres and provide food, water, and other supplies when activation conditions are met.

### **Phase Four: Maintain Capacity and Prevent Entrenchment.**

In phase four the City works with partners to address new needs and is proactive in preventing any campsites from becoming entrenched. The City continues to work with partners to forecast needs and build capacity to address changes in the community. Phase four will begin when phase three is concluded.

#### **Fire & Rescue**

Current: 20 October 2024.

The Prince George Fire Rescue Service is an all-hazards response department. Examples of response types include fires (residential, commercial, wild land, vehicles, etc.), rescue (confined space, hazmat, auto extrication, high angle, water/ice, biking/hiking incidents, etc.) and medical calls, as common examples.

From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, to October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Incidents in the downtown core (1<sup>st</sup> Ave/Victoria St to Victoria/Patricia BLVD to Patricia and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave) included:

- Burning Complaints – 292
- Medical Aid – 398
- Item Fires – 70.

From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, to October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Incidents across the entire City of Prince George included:

- Burning Complaints – 828
- Medical Aid – 2325
- Item Fire - 116

### Bylaw Services

Current: 23 October 2024

- Bylaw Officers attend the LPBE regularly with workers from Civic Operations (Parks) to assist with cleanup of damaged shelters and abandoned materials. This assists with lowering the fire risk, smoke complaints, congestion and hazards on site and supports the delineation of the encampment boundary.

From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, to October 23<sup>rd</sup>:

- Most Bylaw calls for service in relation to open drug use are now categorized as “people using/smoking drugs” rather than reports for “discarded paraphernalia”. Bylaw Services has responded to 164 calls for service to open drug use in the downtown area and 15 calls elsewhere in Prince George. Requests for discarded paraphernalia pick up (typically needles as example) in the same time frame are 49 calls downtown and 15 throughout Prince George.
- Encampment responses – 351 downtown and 128 throughout Prince George

### Block Watch

Current: 13 September 2024

In Prince George, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) began to partner with the Block Watch Society of BC in the late 1980's/ early 90's. Over the duration, Prince George has hosted up to 88 local crime watch areas. Currently, Prince George has 44 active block watch neighbourhoods, that are divided into two veins: rural and urban regions; with 19 crime watch areas within Prince George's rural areas and 25 within the City's urban areas.

As a requirement of the Block Watch program, the Prince George Community Policing unit is required to report 'break and enter' statistics on a bimonthly or monthly basis. Below is the reported data for the year 2023 and the year-to-date for 2024. (\*Please note these statistics do not reflect unfounded reports or any other criminal activity other than break and entry.)

**Table 1.1 Active Prince George Block Watch Areas:**

<b>Rural Block Watch Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>Urban Block Watch Neighbourhoods</b>
Ferguson Lake	Carney Street 02
Chief Lake Area	Carr Road
Lower Mud River	Cranbook Hill Road
Johnson Road	Campbell Avenue
Upper Mud River	Edelweiss Avenue
McBride Timber Road S.	Fir Street/ Ash Street
McBride Timber Road N.	Foot Street
Sweden Creek Road	Freeman 122/ Harper Street
Pilot Mountain	Gillett Street
Salmon Valley	Imperial Place
Bear Lake	King Drive
Beaverly	Lilac Crescent
Beaverly West Watch	Laurier Cres.
Red Rock	Millar Addition
Shell Glen	McGregor Avenue
West Lake – Nadsilnich LK Rd.	Newlands
Black Water	Richet Street
Old Summit Lake Road	South Kelly Gardens
Sintich Trailer Park	St. John Crescent
	St. Lawrence Crescent
	Tamarack Street
	Toombs Drive
	Ogilvie Street South
	Tulip Road
	Valley View
<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>

In addition, Prince George Community Policing has been contacted by the Pine Street, Lombardy and Shell Glenn neighbourhoods to either start or enhance their existing neighbourhood watch.

**Table 2.1 Break and Entry Logs Over 2023**

January 2023	38	July 2023	44
February 2023	33	August 2023	46
March 2023	21	September 2023	45
April 2023	64	October 2023	72
May 2023	43	November 2023	53
June 2023	63	December 2023	43
		Total	<b>565</b>

**Table 2.2 Break and Entry Logs Over 2024**

January 2024	35	July 2024	31
February 2024	39	August 2024	47
March 2024	41	September	-
April 2024	50	October	-
May 2024	60	November	-
June 2024	70	December	-
		Total	<b>373</b>

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