

Date: November 24, 2025

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Eric Depenau, Director, Administrative Services

Subject: Update to Extreme Weather Response Plan

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated November 24, 2025 from the Director, Administrative Services titled, "Update to Extreme Weather Response Plan".

Purpose:
For Council information.

Background:

The City of Prince George Extreme Weather Response Plan (EWRP) is intended to provide a framework for preparing for and responding to extreme weather events to ensure the health and safety of residents. Extreme weather can be understood as weather that poses a risk for temperature-related illnesses, as well as temperature-related fatalities.

In the *2023 Public Health Recommendations to Reduce the Impacts of Exposure to Winter Weather on People Experiencing Homelessness in British Columbia* report the BC HEAT Committee recommended that cold weather response plans should be enacted when daily low temperature is forecast to be 0°C or colder. The Committee further recommended that cold weather activations should be enacted at higher temperatures when forecasted cold weather includes wet, snowy, and/or windy conditions.

For the past several years the City of Prince George has used the cold weather criteria of -10°C during the day and -15°C overnight prior to enacting warming centres. Emergency management staff have assessed that this is a high threshold given conditions in the community. The City's Emergency Programs Division has worked to review the municipal EWRP and has lowered the cold weather criteria to be better aligned with the BC HEAT recommendations and the criteria used in municipalities such as Vancouver, Kelowna and Kamloops as examples.

- Vancouver: Activates warming centres when temperatures drop below -4C or it feels like -4C.
- Kelowna: Responses start when the temperature and/or wind chill falls between 0C to -9C or if there is any accumulation of snow, and conditions make it difficult to keep dry.

- Kamloops: Begins activation when temperatures are forecast to be -5°C or lower within a 24-hour period, or when, temperatures fall to 0°C or lower, coupled with a weather warning.

The updated City of Prince George EWRP includes adjustments to the Cold Weather Notification and Extreme Cold Activation Level 1 thresholds, the Level 2 activation criteria have not changed. Staff intend to monitor for any unintended consequences of this adjustment and will be prepared to revisit these criteria as may be appropriate.

The cold weather thresholds are now as follows:

Cold Weather Notification

- Mean temperatures of $\leq 0^{\circ}\text{C}$ persist for a period of 2 or more consecutive weeks (14 days).

This is changed from $\leq 10^{\circ}\text{C}$ for a period of 2 or more consecutive 24-hour periods. At this threshold, communication regarding staying safe in winter conditions and information on community services are shared.

Extreme Cold Activation (level 1)

- Forecasted temperatures $\leq -0^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 2 or more consecutive days AND overnight temperature $\leq -5^{\circ}\text{C}$

This is down from forecasted temperatures $\leq -10^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 2 or more consecutive days AND overnight temperature $\leq -15^{\circ}\text{C}$. At this threshold the Emergency Operations Center liaises with providers and works to open warming spaces as practicable based on operators' ability to provide service. This includes seeking expense authorization to allow for flow through funding from the Province to operators to support activation.

Extreme Cold Emergency (level 2)

- Temperatures or windchills $\leq -15^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 2 or more consecutive 24-hour periods AND forecast indicates that daily highs will substantially decrease day-over-day for 3 or more consecutive days
- Extreme Cold Warning issued by Environment Canada, and/or Emergency Management & Climate Readiness (EMCR)

No change is occurring to the level 2 criteria. At this threshold the EOC begins considering activation of warming spaces outside of the downtown core and spaces for the general public.

By establishing these lower thresholds service providers and administration may find efficiencies in administering the extreme weather response program reducing the number of activation and deactivation cycles typical in previous seasons. The change is also intended to reduce the number of vulnerable people presenting with cold-related injuries to primary emergency services such as BCEHS, Fire or RCMP as warming spaces may be more available at temperatures just below freezing.

Strategic Priorities:

The City's EWP directly relates to the third pillar of the Strategic Plan, Social Health and Well-Being Priorities. Specifically, ensuring safety, and the perception of safety in the community.

Summary and conclusion:

This report provides an overview of administrative updates to the City of Prince George Extreme Weather Response Plan for information.

Respectfully submitted:

Eric Depenau, Director, Administrative Services

Prepared by Tanya Spooner, Manager, Emergency Programs

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2025/12/01