

Reaching Home:

**Prince Albert's
Community Homelessness Plan**

2019 – 2024

Note: ESDC has removed the personal and identifying information for members of the Community Advisory Board(s) from this document. To validate or change this information, please contact your Service Canada representative.

Preface

Prince Albert is a unique community located in central Saskatchewan. The community of approximately 40,000+ includes a population of 42% self-identifying Indigenous persons and 8% who identify as a visible minority. Prince Albert's population is more accurately reflected using the 2016 Census Division population of 85,908, due to its role as a service centre.

The community's importance to northern Saskatchewan communities has led it to be known as the *Gateway to the North*. The community acts as a servicing hub to northern communities and is a primary stop for people travelling to larger centres in the south.

Addressing homelessness in the community is important to River Bank Development Corp. and the Community Advisory Board (CAB).

In order to develop an integrated five-year Community Plan, River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB contracted Prairie Wild Consulting Co. to assist the Community Entity to develop a Plan that is reflective of the community.

As part of the development of the Community Plan, an extensive community engagement process was undertaken with local agencies and organizations, the Indigenous Community Entity, people with lived experience, and community members.

Community Engagement Findings

A summary of findings from the community engagement process are included throughout the Plan in **blue textboxes**, such as this one.

These findings helped to inform the writing of the Community Plan and work to illustrate the perspectives of the community to address homelessness over the next 5 years.

A **full report** of community engagement findings is available in *Appendix A*.

Based on the requirements of Reaching Home and the Government of Canada, there was a condensed timeframe to complete the process and plan. This planning process began in August 2019 and was completed in September 2019.

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1. Community Engagement

The community engagement process for the development of the Community Plan was done in a way that would best guide priorities over the next 5 years. This was of importance to River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB.

In order to ensure that community engagement results were gathered effectively and in a non-biased fashion, a third-party entity leading this process was deemed best. Prairie Wild Consulting Co. was contracted by the CAB to engage with local service agencies and organizations, the Indigenous Community Entity, people with lived experience, and community members. A full listing of agencies and organizations engaged in this process is provided in *Appendix B*.

A summary of the engagement process is provided in the following table.

Type of Engagement	Number of People Engaged	Dates
One-on-One Interviews	41	September 4, 5, 6, 9, 18 & 19
Focus Groups and Intercept Surveys	22	September 13
Community-Wide Meeting	39	September 20
TOTAL	102	-

Below is an overview of the steps taken to engage the community.

Community Advisory Board Meeting

On August 21, 2019, CAB members were engaged in the process to review and provide input into the work plan and process overall.

During this meeting, CAB members identified important information for inquiry during the interview process and provided Prairie Wild with a list of priority agencies and organizations to engage as part of the process.

Based on the information collected to date, a questionnaire for one-on-one interviews with agencies and organizations was developed. Intercept survey questions for use when speaking with individuals experiencing homelessness were also created. Copies of the interview questionnaire and intercept survey are included in *Appendix C* and *Appendix D* respectively.

One-on-One Interviews

Local agencies and organizations who contribute to addressing homelessness were contacted at the end of August and beginning of September to book one-on-one interviews in-person and by phone. There were 28 interviews conducted with 41 interviewees who participated.

During the interviews, participants were provided with background and context about Reaching Home, River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB, and the community homelessness planning process.

Participants were asked to share their thoughts related to addressing homelessness in the community. This included:

- The organization's role;
- Community strengths and challenges;
- Trends and patterns;
- Suggestions moving forward;
- Thoughts regarding implementation of a Coordinated Access System;
- Local priorities as related to six areas of investment;
- Community-wide outcomes; and
- Anything else they would like to share.

Community Engagement Findings

Several trends emerged from discussions with community agencies and organizations. These include:

- **Mental health** and **addiction** are on the rise;
- Prominence of **food insecurity**;
- **Gang related activity** is increasing;
- Seeing more **hidden homeless**, many of whom are **youth**;
- **Transient nature** of homelessness in Prince Albert; and
- Lack of services for **single men** and **fathers**.

These trends were reflected in many of the investment area recommendations made for the community.

The Provincial Métis Housing Corporation, the Indigenous Community Entity, was engaged on September 9, 2019. In addition to reviewing contents of the questionnaire, meeting attendees also discussed gaps and trends being observed both locally and regionally. Future opportunities for coordination amongst the two Entities will continue to be explored in areas where overlaps occur.

Focus Groups and Intercept Surveys

A significant part of the engagement process was to gather input and share the voice of those with lived experience. Focus groups and intercept surveys were conducted on September 13, 2019, with approximately 22 individuals.

These surveys took place in downtown Prince Albert and outside of the YWCA, Indian and Metis Friendship Centre and Homeward Bound.

Participants were asked to share their stories and experiences. This included sharing:

- Where they are originally from;
- Where they have stayed in the past month;
- Daily routine;
- Places in the community where they can use the facilities;
- Organizations, services, and programs they access in the community;
- Types of services and programs that are missing/lacking in the community;
- Strengths and challenges;
- Recommendations for service providers to help meet their needs;
- Comfortability using a coordinated access program;
- Other things needed to address homelessness; and
- Anything else they would like to share.

The demographic of individuals interviewed included both men and women with approximate ages ranging from late teens to their 50s. Some participants also identified that they had children. Many individuals interviewed stated that they were originally from northern communities.

Capturing the stories of a diverse range of individuals with lived experience has helped to both inform and reinforce the findings of this Community Plan.

Community Engagement Findings

Individuals with lived experience felt that the biggest challenge to address in Prince Albert related to service provision in the homelessness sector was to **ensure there were enough places to stay**. Many participants noted that though there are places to sleep available, there aren't always enough.

In addition to places to rest, it was also identified that an important part to maintaining the well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness, the community needs a **safe space where they can go to socialize**. Being able to talk to people and have activities to keep them busy was identified as an important service lacking in the community.

Being given the opportunity to **share their perspectives** was greatly appreciated by the participants. Knowing that there are people, agencies and organizations gathering together to address these challenges gave participants a sense of **hope**.

Many participants recognized the hard work occurring in the community surrounding homelessness and hoped that this process could be used to **amplify their voices**.

Community-Wide Meeting

A final engagement session was held, in the form of a community-wide meeting, on September 20, 2019 at the John M. Cuelenaere Public Library in downtown Prince Albert. There were approximately 40 people in attendance, representing agencies, organizations and the community-at-large.

Participants were provided with an overview of the planning process, River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB. Preliminary results from the one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and intercept surveys were also shared with the group.

Participants then had an opportunity to build on the learnings and were provided one of six investment areas, with one group having an "other" category, to identify local priorities. After some time for discussion, groups were given another investment area and asked to identify priorities within that area. The groups shared back with each other and provided further reflections.

Community Engagement Findings

A common discussion brought up in interviews and again at the Community Meeting was related to the new provincial **Social Income Support program** being released to replace the Social Assistance Program by 2021.

Though most interviewees understood the well-intentions of the program to motivate clients to become financially independent, it was identified that there would be an **increase in homelessness** as a result.

Interviewees explained that many clients, particularly individuals with addictions and mental illness, are **not well equipped** to meet the expectations of the new program.

Without adequate **financial management supports**, a portion of clients will face challenges in following through on housing payments as a result of new rent and utility payment set up.

A copy of the invitation and media coverage for the community meeting is provided in *Appendix E*.

2. Investment Plan

Through the engagement process, members of the Prince Albert community provided input on local priorities for the allocation of Reaching Home funding.

An adapted example of previous allocations, shown below, was presented to participants for feedback:

- Housing Services 50%
- Prevention and Shelter Diversion 14%
- Support Services 16%
- Capital Investments 0%
- Coordination of Resources and Data Collection 5%
- Administration 15%

Many participants were generally supportive of the current allocation priorities the Community Entity and CAB had provided. The prioritization ordering, focusing primarily on Housing Services, Support Services and Prevention and Shelter Diversion, was supported the programs and services that were recommended by participants.

Community Engagement Findings

Through the analysis of identified servicing gaps indicated by participants, trends and gaps in **Housing Services** and **Support Services** were clearly identified.

It was recommended by most agencies, organizations and individuals with lived experience that funding focus on both **emergency housing support** and the provision of additional **transitional housing**. Housing First initiatives, such as Homeward Bound, were identified as being key assets in the community requiring additional supports to increase capacity. In addition to these services, **year-round mattress programs** were identified as a priority, especially for those with experiencing homelessness.

It was also strongly identified that Prince Albert is experiencing a **food crisis** that must be addressed. Participants indicated the importance of food security and recommended services such as **soup kitchens** and improved **food basket programs**. Lack of access to food was identified by individuals with lived experience as a primary cause for criminal activity, such as theft.

Important services and programs identified under each of the Investment Plan areas included:

Housing Services	Prevention and Shelter Diversion	Support Services	Capital Investments	Coordination of Resources and Data Collections
Second-Stage & Transitional Affordable Housing Housing for Single Men/Fathers Housing Set-Up	Crisis Intervention Program Tenancy Programs Financial Supports & Education	Addiction & Mental Health Supports Food Security Programs Year-Round Emergency Shelter Parental Supports & Education Youth Programming	Renovations to Existing Housing Stock Building New Affordable Housing Units	Service Coordination Among Agencies Data Collection to Leverage Funding Trends Tracking

It is recommended that through the Reaching Home funding, the Prince Albert community focus their efforts on **supporting programs related to those listed above**.

Community Engagement Findings

Through Investment Plan related engagement, it was noted that Reaching Home **eligible activities did not necessarily align with participants' programs and services recommendations** within each investment area.

Prevention and Shelter Diversion, for example, as an investment area was perceived as the **most important factor** in addressing homelessness and was **ranked highly**. Most recommended initiatives under Prevention and Shelter Diversion though, **fit within the eligible activities of Support Services**.

When writing the Community Plan, recommended programs and services were therefore **recategorized during analysis** and placed within investment areas that they would be considered eligible activities. This process ensured **consistency** between community perspectives and Reaching Home directives.

Funding allocation into Administration was set independently from the program funding by River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB.

Coordination of Resources and Data Collection funding allocation was determined based on exclusive funding dollars provided through the Community Capacity and Innovation (CCI) funding stream.

Due to the limited remaining funds available through Reaching Home, Capital Investments have been allocated no funding. The community recognizes that though Capital Investments are important, funding allocated into other areas, can achieve more meaningful results for a larger population.

The remaining programming funds were allocated based on an in-depth analysis of the community engagement findings and estimated program dollars required based on previous funding years. In order to meet the housing needs identified by the community, Housing Services, being more costly in general, has been allocated the largest percentage of programming funding.

Based on the servicing gaps related to Support Services identified by the community through the engagement process, this investment area was given the second highest funding allocation. The intention of allocation in this area was to achieve as high of funding possible without compromising Prevention and Shelter Diversion funding. Prevention and Shelter Diversion was allocated the remaining funding as a result.

Based on findings from the consultation process, final allocations for Reaching Home funding, are recommended as follows:

Investment Areas	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Housing Services	47%	47%	47%	47%	47%
Prevention and Shelter Diversion	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Support Services	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Capital Investments	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Coordination of Resources and Data Collection	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%
Administration	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Investment Dollars	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Reaching Home Annual Allocation	\$630,090	\$620,090	\$636,968	\$632,468	\$632,468

3. Cost-Matching Requirement

As a Designated Community, Prince Albert is required to match Reaching Home expenditures dollar-for-dollar. This requirement has been carried forward from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, which funded Designated Communities from 2012 to 2019. Prince Albert was successful in meeting the matching funding requirement during this period by accessing funding and in-kind contributions from several sources.

The table below shows past Cost-Matching contributions totals by fiscal year from 2014 to 2019.

Past Annual Community Contributions by Fiscal Year						
Funders	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2014-19
Community Contributions	\$475,000	\$392,865	\$579,150	\$706,482	\$547,000	\$2,700,497
Homeless Partnering Strategy Expenditures	\$365,476	\$394,190	\$547,937	\$548,321	\$547,604	\$2,403,528

The Community Entity assumes that the same level of support will continue from many of the sources which have provided support in the past. However, because many of the primary sources of funding have been linked to projects that have been funded in the past, such as the Housing First project, it is not possible at this time to fully determine funding sources.

The table below provides current estimates for Cost-Matching contributions in the future:

Expected Community Contributions by Fiscal Year						
Funders	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2019-24
Estimated Community Contributions*	\$630,000	\$630,000	\$630,000	\$630,000	\$630,000	\$3,150,000
Reaching Home Expenditures	\$630,090	\$620,090	\$636,968	\$632,468	\$632,468	\$3,152,084

*Subject to change following Call for Proposals

Examples of funders who have contributed both financially and in the form of in-kind contributions in the past have included:

- Saskatchewan Health Authority (both in-kind and direct financial contributions);
- Private Landlords (in-kind contribution of reduced rental rates for the Housing First project);
- Non-Profit Agencies (in-kind contribution of support workers, mental health workers, addictions workers);
- Local Businesses and Individuals (in-kind contributions of furniture, clothing, and household materials to the Housing First project);
- CAB Membership (in-kind contribution of wages and benefits from organizations with membership on the CAB);
- Community Entity (in-kind contributions); and
- Service Providers Funded Through Designated Community (in-kind contributions).

The Community Entity will continue engaging with community contributors to meet all Cost-Matching requirements over the next 5 years.

Following the development of the Community Plan, a Call for Proposals will be conducted at which time Reaching Home funded projects will be determined.

4. Coordinated Access

As a condition of Reaching Home, the City of Prince Albert is required to implement a system of Coordinated Access. Over the next 2 years, the Community Entity will work to implement a Coordinated Access system in several stages.

It is the intention of River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB to involve Indigenous organizations in the development of the Coordinated Access system. Already, there are many connections that exist within the community that will allow for this collaborative approach. These community connections are occurring through:

- CAB membership of Indigenous individuals and organizations, including Prince Albert Grand Council, Indian Metis Friendship Center, West Flat Citizen's Group, Northern Spruce Housing Corporation and Prince Albert City Police;
- The Community Entity's lengthy involvement with Indigenous housing organizations and non-profit service providers; and
- Involvement with the Prince Albert Urban Indigenous Coalition.

Many of these organizations share a common focus on homelessness in Prince Albert. They will be an important part of the planning process.

Indigenous Reaching Home funding in Prince Albert is delivered regional and is managed by the Provincial Metis Housing Corporation (PMHC) in Saskatoon. The Community Entity has worked with PMHC on joint funding initiatives in the past. Through the engagement process of the Community Plan, PMHC was also consulted. The Community Entity will continue to develop this relationship in the future.

Gathering input on Coordinated Access was a significant component of the discussion during the community engagement phase of the Community Plan process. The engagement process provided an opportunity to give agencies and organizations a better understanding of the Coordinated Access system and allow them to provide their input on local implementation.

Community Engagement Findings

Agencies in Prince Albert saw both **benefits** and **challenges** associated with Coordinate Access system implementation.

In theory, Coordinated Access was seen as a **great benefit** to the community. It would allow agencies to help clients more **effectively** and **reduce duplication** of services. These efficiencies would allow opportunity for **wrap-around services** that could help **connect clients to services** more easily.

Contrary to this, the largest concern of the community was to ensure the system worked in the **best interest of clients** and maintained their **confidentiality**. Ensuring clients are **comfortable** is necessary in order to continue building **trusting relationships**. It was recommended that a **data sharing protocol** be developed by the community to ensure data sharing occurs in a way that is **respectful of client privacy**. Offering **sensitivity training** would also be a requirement to ensure personnel accessing the system are **well-qualified**.

Individuals with lived experience were generally open to using a Coordinated Access system, but believed data sharing should be determined on a **case-by-case basis** with the **consent of the client**. Ensuring that this **system does not lead to clients facing arrest or denial of service** was an important factor to consider.

River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB have determined that implementation of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) will be best for a Coordinated Access system.

The first step in implementing a Coordinated Access system will be to review the Community Plan and complete a Call for Proposals. With the priorities identified in the Community Plan and the selected projects determined, the Community Entity will have a better sense of what the homelessness system in the community will need to look like.

The Community Entity will establish a local committee to guide the implementation of Coordinated Access and HIFIS. Representatives on the committee will include members from organizations involved in program delivery, the CAB and community members with a background in human services and computerized information management systems. The committee will be responsible for management of Coordinated Access and maintaining the HIFIS system. Members will establish terms of reference and policies to guide implementation and management of the system, as well as determine the system of access, assessment tools utilized and criteria for prioritization of clients.

Community Engagement Findings

The necessity of a working group or committee to guide Coordinated Access was discussed at the community-wide meeting. Membership on the committee was identified to require **representation**, not only from **agencies and organizations** involved in program delivery, but also of community members from various **backgrounds, life experiences and age groups**.

These considerations will be carried forward throughout the **recruitment process** in order to ensure **diverse representation** from the community.

A provincial coalition including the three Designated Communities of Saskatchewan, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina, has been developed. Through this coalition, some preliminary work on HIFIS implementation has been done through Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding. River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB are working with the Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP), the Community Entity for Saskatoon, to implement HIFIS on a provincial basis.

It is the intention of the Community Entity to proceed with this initiative, by participating in a pilot project that would include one Reaching Home funded project in each community. It is important to note that at this stage only one organization in the community will be using HIFIS and there will not be any information sharing occurring.

Future work on HIFIS will focus on implementing and maintaining the HIFIS system. Implementation in partnership with SHIP will save the community considerable time and resources. Saskatoon has already developed structures to deal with the legal and privacy challenges associated with Coordinated Access systems and will provide the training required to implement HIFIS at the organizational level.

The timeline for the implementation of Coordinated Access and HIFIS is as follows:

- 2019 Local committee to manage implementation is selected. Agreement is signed with SHIP to implement HIFIS. Pilot project with one organization is underway.
- 2020 Local committee begins work on HIFIS/Coordinated Access implementation as discussed above. All developmental work on both to be completed by the end of the year.
- 2021 Implementation begins. Training for front line providers in HIFIS is completed. Coordinated access systems are in place.
- 2022 Coordinated Access and HIFIS are established in the community.

In summary, the Community Entity expects to meet the March 31, 2022 deadline for implementation of Coordinated Access and HIFIS.

5. Community-Wide Outcomes

Under Reaching Home, all Designated Communities will transition to an outcomes-based approach and publicly report on community-wide outcomes related to homelessness through the annual Community Progress Report.

Community Engagement Findings

An important note that resulted from the community engagement process was that **measuring success is different for everyone**. Many agencies stressed the importance of **helping individuals achieve their personal level of success**, rather than prescribing success.

For example, some individuals experiencing homelessness will never wish to be housed conventionally. It is important to service providers that they **respect their clients for where they are in their life journey**, helping those who ask and respecting those who do not want help.

Focusing on the **success stories of individuals** should be the true measure of success in the community.

As part of the engagement undertaken to design the outcomes-based approach, Reaching Home has identified four core outcomes:

1. Chronic homelessness in the community is reduced (by 50% by 2027-28);
2. Homelessness in the community is reduced overall, and for priority populations (i.e. individuals who identify as Indigenous). When applicable, communities may report on other priority populations;
3. New inflows into homelessness are reduced; and,
4. Returns to homelessness from housing are reduced.

Through the community engagement process, the importance of tracking the four core outcomes were strongly reinforced by participants. It is the intention of the Community Entity to report its progress on the core outcomes in the annual Community Progress Reports as required.

Community Engagement Findings

A goal for interviewees was that, at a minimum, **all individuals experiencing homelessness would be able to find a safe place to sleep**. This goal is supported by those with lived experience, who hope for somewhere indoors to spend the night.

Though it will not be tracked formally, identifying **societal shifts related to the treatment, support and acceptance of homeless individuals** in the community was also suggested as progress markers. Informing citizens on the reality of homelessness was believed to lead to **less judgement and stigmatization** of individuals experiencing homelessness. Those experiencing homelessness identified that being seen as a **human being with dignity** would be a sign of success in community.

Reductions in activities related to trends in homelessness, such as **addictions, mental illness, and gang activity**, were also considered prominent indicators.

At this time, it is the decision of River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB that it will not formally report on any additional outcomes, though some key indicators have been flagged for potential investigation in the future.

6. Official Language Minority Communities

The City of Prince Albert is a community of many nations and backgrounds. River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB recognize the importance of having services available in both official languages.

To achieve this end, all Calls for Proposals will be issued in both official languages. All organizations applying for funding will be required to have access to a translator and be prepared to provide services to clients in the minority official language, should it be requested.

According to data obtained by the three Point-in-Time Counts conducted in Prince Albert, there have not been any individuals experiencing homelessness identified as members of the Official Language Minority Community. Local service providers have also indicated that they have not had requests for services in the minority official language, to date.

River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB recognize the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*, and will continue to monitor the demand for services in the official minority language to ensure service providers continue to be prepared for a request for service.

Community Engagement Findings

In addition to recognizing Official Language Minority Communities, Prince Albert also recognizes the many **Indigenous nations** who access services in the community.

With the **high influx of migrants from northern communities**, the presence of individuals with Indigenous first languages is prominent. River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB want to ensure all individuals experiencing homelessness can access services in their first language wherever possible.

It was recommended that, wherever possible, agencies and organizations should provide **training to service providers** or develop **community connections to Indigenous translators**. These efforts will help to ensure that clients are provided the opportunity to receive services in their Indigenous first languages.

Reaching Home:
Prince Albert's Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024
Community Engagement Findings Report

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Introduction

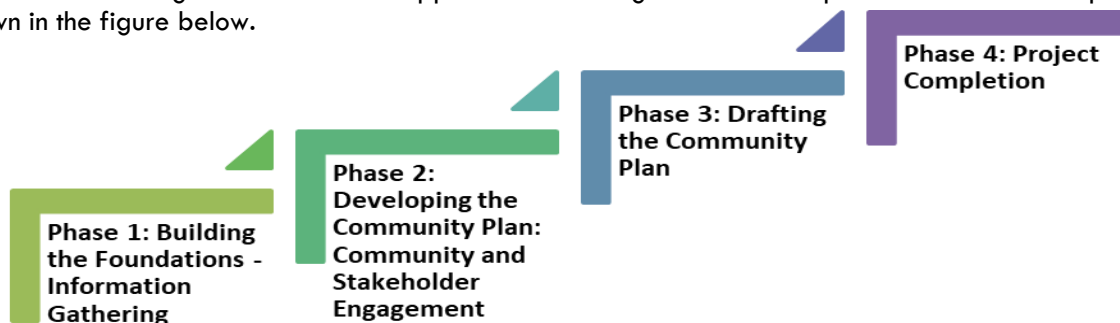
In order to ensure that community engagement results gathered were collected effectively and in a non-biased fashion, a third-party entity, Prairie Wild Consulting Co. was contracted in July of 2019 to assist with the development of Reaching Home: Prince Albert's Community Homelessness Plan

The following report provides an overview of the community homelessness planning process and summaries the engagement findings from interviews with agencies and organizations, focus groups and intercept surveys with people with lived experience, and the community-wide meeting.

This report is incorporated as part of the overall Community Plan. Recommendations for community-wide priorities are included at the end of this report.

Planning Approach Overview

The community homelessness planning process was integrated with many on-going efforts and initiatives in Prince Albert related to housing, cultural planning and implementation, social planning, strategic planning, and reconciliation and serving urban Indigenous peoples. Complimenting the initiatives mentioned above, the homelessness planning process was grounded in an Appreciative Inquiry framework. This framework builds on the strengths and identifies opportunities moving forward. The process included four phases as shown in the figure below.



The phases are described in further detail below.

Phase 1: Building the Foundations – Information Gathering

A shared Dropbox folder was set up between the Manager of River Bank Development Corp. and Prairie Wild Consulting Co. Various background materials were provided to inform the engagement process and the writing of the Community Plan.

After reviewing the documents, a detailed work plan was created and shared with the CAB.

Phase 2: Developing the Community Plan: Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Based on the background information collected and input from CAB members, a questionnaire for one-on-one interviews and intercept survey questions were developed.

Throughout the month of September local service agencies and organizations, the Indigenous Community Entity, people with lived experience, and community members were interviewed.

Phase 3: Drafting the Community Plan

Information collected to date has informed this Community Plan. The draft was provided to the CAB for review and final feedback. The Plan was approved by the CAB and sent to the Government of Canada for final approval.

Phase 4: Project Completion

River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB will implement the Plan over the next four years.

Throughout the months of August and September, 47 agencies and organizations in Prince Albert were contacted to arrange one-on-one interviews as part of the engagement process for the Community Plan. A total of 28 interviews were conducted with agencies and organizations, with a total of 41 interviewees participating.

During the interview process, representatives were asked a number of questions related to their agency or organization's role in addressing homelessness in Prince Albert and any trends or patterns occurring in the community. Respondents were asked to recommend local funding priorities that would help fill servicing gaps in the community and provide input on a Coordinated Access system implementation strategy.

Strengths

A significant strength recognized by the majority of agencies and organizations was that local service providers work together very well. Terms such as collaboration, partnership and co-operation were frequently mentioned by interviewees when asked about community strengths in addressing homelessness. The smaller size of the community was noted as a contributing factor to these close relationship among the various service providers in the community.



One program in Prince Albert in particular that received high regard in the community was Homeward Bound. Many organizations credited Homeward Bound with the significant decrease of individuals living on the streets. Their positive reputation among agencies and organizations in the community, was reflected in the supportive commentary and recommendations for increased capacity of services with similar housing models.

Reaching Home: Prince Albert's Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024

There were a number of challenges identified by agencies and organizations related to addressing homelessness in the community. The word cloud below provides a visual representation of key challenges as emphasized by interviewees and those with lived experience, as will be discussed later in this report.

ADDICTIONS

MENTAL HEALTH

TRANSPORTATION

NAVIGATION

DIGNITY

CAPACITY

STIGMA

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

FEAR OF INSTITUTIONS

PUBLIC ATTITUDE

FUNDING

REGIONAL

MARGINALIZED POPULATION

SERVICES

ASSOCIATIONS

CANCY

SOCIETY

PEOPLE

LIFE

DEVELOPMENT

LACK OF INFORMATION

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

TRANSPORTATION

NAVIGATION

DIGNITY

CAPACITY

STIGMA

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

FEAR OF INSTITUTIONS

PUBLIC ATTITUDE

FUNDING

REGIONAL

MARGINALIZED POPULATION

SERVICES

ASSOCIATIONS

CANCY

SOCIETY

PEOPLE

LIFE

DEVELOPMENT

Interviewees also identified that some individuals experiencing homelessness are fearful of the institutions, agencies and organizations in place to assist them. Resulting hesitancy from clients can pose challenges for service providers when trying to determine appropriate support systems to be referred to clients. System navigation can then become increasingly complex, leading to missed opportunities for clients.

Under capacity challenges were partially attributed to lack of funding. Many agencies and organizations that exist in the community are unable to execute programs to their fullest potential. It was identified by interviewees that funding requirements that put programs, services or individuals into niche boxes are part of the problem. Without the flexibility to apply funding in areas where it is needed, programs can experience shortfalls in implementation.

Reaching Home: Prince Albert's Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024

Finally, transportation was noted as a significant challenge in the community, especially for those travelling in the evenings. With current limits on local public transit, interviewees found that clients often struggled to find transportation. Alternatives to public transit are available in the community, but these services are expensive, making them inaccessible to many individuals experiencing homelessness. These transportation challenges often result in individuals struggling to access employment or medical services. The closure of STC was also noted as a challenge, leaving many individuals unable to travel to their home communities.

Trends and Patterns

Many of the trends and patterns observed by agencies and organizations were reflective of the identified challenges being faced in community.

Agencies and organizations explained that many individuals experiencing homelessness have been exhibiting increasing need for food services. Individuals coming to service providers have been asking more and more for food upon arrival. For many interviewees, food insecurity had not been a significant challenge in the past, but has become more prominent over the last few years. Provision of hot meals as well as take home food programs was documented as a gap in the community from many sources.

Mental health and addictions were again identified as being on the rise in the community. Crystal meth was often identified explicitly as the new drug of choice among users. Additionally, gang activity in the community was also identified, with youth becoming increasingly involved. Many interviewees attributed these increases to mental illness and addiction related challenges. It was noted that many youth are becoming involved in these activities through generational cycles.

Youth were also identified as a prominent demographic in the case of the hidden homeless population in the community. Interviewees identified that many young people are migrating to Prince Albert from northern communities. While some travel to the city because they have burned bridges at home, others come with the intention to get an education, find employment and start a better life. Often though, when these individuals arrive they are unable to access appropriate housing and they end up staying with friends or family and eventually end up on the streets.

It was also noted by interviewees that these hidden homeless populations aren't always captured in research, even though they are a prominent population in the community. These individuals also tend to contribute to the seasonal nature of homelessness in the community. Agencies and organizations continue to find an increase in clients in the fall and winter looking for permanent places to stay when it gets cold.

Young people and seniors have been documented to be accessing services more frequently. Single men and fathers were also consistently identified as a demographic with very few services available to them. Other marginalized populations such as the LGBTQ2S+ community are also shown to have fewer programs and services. Reasons for these gaps include that these individuals are having difficulty finding suitable care homes, affordable housing units or programming that are accessible to their demographic. Much of the funding available for these services are geared towards other populations, such as single mothers.

Overall, indigenous populations also continued to arise as a prominent demographic experiencing homelessness. This disproportionate representation of Indigenous individuals requires unique services that accommodate the needs of this population.

Another trend that was documented through this process was related to increased awareness of domestic abuse, especially in the case of women and children coming forward to exit these situations. Though it is a positive that awareness campaigns are resulting in women getting out of toxic relationships, there also needs to be a reciprocal increase in services available for these individuals seeking assistance.

Increasing taxes and rents were also identified in the community, leading to increasingly unaffordable housing and restricting individuals from accessing permanent housing.

Coordinated Access

The CAB identified that engagement related to Coordinated Access would be a requirement of the process in order to gather input from service providers regarding implementation and support. During the interviews with agencies and organizations, representatives were provided a brief overview of the Coordinated Access requirement, the proposed HIFIS system and were asked their overall thoughts on implementation within the community of Prince Albert.

A common response from agencies and organizations was that Coordinated Access “in theory” would be beneficial to the community. When asked to share the benefits of Coordinated Access, interviewees believed that if executed properly the system would allow for wrap-around services tailored uniquely to the needs of each client. Overall, the potential for more effective and quicker service provision to clients was appreciated.

By coordinating better with other service providers, it was also noted that there would be a reduction in duplication of services in the community. One benefit of this increased coordination included that organizations would be able to prioritize funding applications and provide supports to one another’s programs.

Additionally, interviewees saw that a Coordinated Access system could serve as an important source to leverage funding through the collection of progress indicators. This system would provide agencies and organizations with a key resource to provide findings in support of identified servicing gaps in the community.

Finally, representatives noted that a coordinated system could also lead to increased accountability of clients. Through sharing of client data, service providers could ensure clients were not doubling up on services and taking advantages of additional services.

There were many challenges identified by agencies and organizations related to Coordinated Access. In practice, interviewees had little faith that the execution of the system would be effective, especially through the use of HIFIS. Though the HIFIS system was deemed by many as an unreliable service, interviewees understood that with proper data sharing protocols in place this system could have potential success.

The most prominent concerns of interviewees was related to the confidentiality and privacy of clients. Agencies and organizations indicated that in order to support a system such as Coordinated Access, definite permission from clients should be required. Above all, interviewees were adamant that maintaining trusting relationships with their clients should come before information gathering.

Another challenge related to Coordinated Access was capacity. Agencies and organizations already have other reports that they are required to complete and report on. Several interviewees were concerned that by using a Coordinated Access system, it would result in additional time consumed to input data. This time commitment was noted to cause a strain on staff who are already at maximum capacity. Alternatively, agencies and organizations would be required to hire new personnel to manage the system full-time. These realities, in addition to the costs associated with set-up and training were identified as a barrier for agency buy-in.

Interviewees also expressed concerns about the sharing of data about clients that could result in pre-conceived biases against individuals accessing services. For this reason, individuals flagged the importance of sensitivity training for those inputting data to ensure they would be well qualified. Necessary precautions recommended to be put in place to avoid these situations included development of a local data sharing protocol and exclusion of police access. Police access to the system was identified as a significant deterrent to participation. Ensuring the safety of client privacy would be the utmost importance and for this reason police involvement would need to be restricted to ensure individuals did not experience negative repercussions as a result of accessing services.

Investment Plan Priorities

There were a number of services recommended by agencies and organizations through the interview process.

Below is a complete list of services that were recommended by interviewees to address homelessness in the community. Recommendations are ordered according to prominence and frequency referenced in discussions:

- Mental Health and Addiction Supports – including education programs with the goal of prevention and increased capacity at treatment centres such as detox facilities for clients to quickly gain access
- Emergency Shelter Services – provision of year-round cot/mattress programs with increased capacity
- Affordable Housing – including permanent, second stage and transitional housing units
- Drop-in Centre – providing a space where individuals could go during the day to socialize and access activities, recreational services, and programming at a low fee or for free
- Food Security Programs – includes soup kitchen and take-home food basket programs
- Family Supports – including accessible 24hour child-care services, low-cost youth programming, parenting education and planned parenting programs
- Crisis Intervention Program - to support individuals before they become homeless, could include assisting youth exiting the foster system or individuals exiting correctional facilities
- Agency Coordination – supports for agencies and organizations to get to know what each other is doing and assist one another to improve services
- Tenancy Programs – providing individuals with education of their rights and responsibilities and providing advice to landlords and tenants
- Health Services Support – including medication assistance, appointment transportation, on-site appointment spaces, and advocates who can attend appointments with clients
- Support Workers – including outreach workers, after-care workers, and councillor availability who can also assist with system navigation and check in with clients to ensure they are staying on track with their goals
- Data Collection and Tracking – to help leverage funding for programs and services
- Financial Supports – providing education for individuals related to budgeting, managing funds and knowledge on navigating financial support programs
- Peer Support Groups – including mentorship programs between individuals with lived experience to assist with challenges such as system navigation
- Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns – to educate the public on the reality of homelessness in the community and provide information on how to help
- Life Skills Training – including teaching individuals how to cook on a budget
- Hygiene Facilities – including spaces where individuals can go take a shower, brush their teeth, do laundry, or access women's hygiene products
- Renovations – improve current housing conditions and contribute to unit repairs and upgrades
- Start-up Program – includes contributing to purchasing furniture, clothing, and other items for new homeowners
- Employment Opportunities – includes partnerships with local business to provide employment and build resumes and provision of employee training
- Transportation – providing options for transportation that is affordable including a night-time service and subsidized public transit passes
- Indigenous Services – includes spaces to perform or access ceremonies
- Language Training – provide service providers connections or training to ensure clients can receive services in their first languages
- Marginalized Population Housing – including single men, students, LGBTQ2S+
- ID Clinic+ - provide assistance to clients to get a bank account, access mail, prescriptions, etc.
- Accessibility Supports – providing additions to accommodate physical disabilities such as including ramps to access facilities or specially designed housing units
- Gang Exit Strategies
- Tiny House Community
- Co-housing Options

Community Outcomes

Agencies and organizations were also asked how they would measure success as it related to homelessness in Prince Albert. Responses provided by interviewees reinforced the importance of the four core outcomes identified through the Reaching Home program.

Identifying fewer individuals on the street was the primary success indicator identified. It was noted by several interviewees that if all individuals experiencing homelessness could, at a minimum find a place to rest for the night, that would be a success. In order to measure this outcome, the Point-in-Time (PIT) counts could be used to determine the number of individuals sleeping outdoors, though some interviewees identified that this method of measurement does not capture a large number of those experiencing homelessness. Developing a more comprehensive baseline measurement was strongly recommended.

Overall, the community preferred the use of “success stories” to measure success. Individuals believed that focusing on people exiting programs and becoming self-sufficient and stable would be the best way to observe success in the community. In addition to this, celebrating the personal milestones of people experiencing homelessness was also identified. Prescribing an ideal for success can lead to repetitive failings that can lead to a sense of hopelessness. When measuring success, interviewees explained that working with people where they are in their journey is very important. Respecting those who refuse assistance was also identified as an important factor in success measurement. Some interviewees noted that there are some individuals who always will prefer to be homeless. Recognizing this reality and helping those individuals live the highest quality of life is very important.

The importance of status-blind systems was also noted as an important factor in ensuring the community as a whole experiences improved servicing. Status-blind systems refers to programs that serve individuals regardless of their official Indigenous status according to higher orders of government. These systems do not negate the necessity of having services available for Indigenous populations, it merely stresses the importance of being inclusionary with these services.

Identifying societal shifts related to the treatment, support and acceptance of homeless individuals was also identified as a key progress marker. With increases in awareness programs and education for the general public, interviewees believed that a decrease in judgement, prejudice and stigmatization of individuals experiencing homelessness would be seen. Overall, these changes would lead to a more compassionate community and increased acceptance of the homeless population in society.

Seeing a reduction in the “root causes” of homelessness, such as addictions, mental health, and gang related activity were also seen by many as key outcomes. Ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness are able to maintain their dignity was a related outcome explored by individuals as well. It was believed by many that the implementation of preventative programming and services could be used as an indicator to determine progress in these areas.

Other Comments

Interviewees, in addition to answering pointed questions related to the Community Plan, were also provided the opportunity to share any other related comments that they would like documented as part of this process.

Firstly, related to the Reaching Home process, some agencies and organizations believed that the investment priorities should be done over a 5-year period, rather than broken down year by year. It was believed that by broadening the funding period, the Community Entity would have much more flexibility in project selection and roll-out. This process would allow for larger investments to be planned for and implemented over a longer period.

Vacant buildings in the community were also identified as an asset to consider for use to implement certain projects. By acquiring vacant buildings for retrofitting, agencies and organizations could avoid expensive new builds requiring additional capital funding. Site selection in the downtown core was also recommended to allow for broader accessibility to services.

Many interviewees also noted that there is a need for agencies and organizations to acquire more sustainable funding sources. Reliance on federal funding was expressed by some to be unproductive for program start-ups. Developing strategies that allow organizations to become self-sufficient was indicated as a priority to ensure that programs are able to continue, even in the case of funding cuts.

Development of a directory of services was also identified as an important initiative that should occur in the community. With access to a full-service directory, agencies, organizations and individuals would be able to determine what services are available in the community. This could result in better coordination of services and help to match clients with services that address their unique needs. By learning about the services provided through other organizations, there would be fewer duplications and service providers could work to support one another's initiatives.

Service provision in northern communities was documented as an important factor in an alleviating service provider and reducing homelessness in Prince Albert. Ensuring northern communities have services available to their residents would divert a significant proportion of the population from migrating to the city. Services required in these communities range from educational and job opportunities to access to affordable housing or treatment centres. Keeping people in their home communities can also be beneficial to the client, as it allows them to maintain connection to their homelands and continue to participate in community activities, creating a better sense of belonging in many cases.

Interviewees identified a number of marginalized populations, such as the LGBTQ2S+ community and students, experiencing a gap in services available to meet their unique needs. In many cases, it was noted that these clients also tend to experience higher levels of addiction and mental health issues requiring treatment. Ensuring that diverse groups are being accommodated in all servicing areas was stressed by service providers. A non-gender biased approach to help provide supports is key to equality of services.

Accessing services through entities such as Social Services, has also been documented as an increasingly difficult task. For many of their clients, interviewees noted that individuals are left on hold for hours waiting to speak with representatives, just to find out that the person they have called cannot help them to address their inquiry. Additional assistance in this system navigation would be beneficial.

Related to this issue is the need for alternative requirements of individuals applying for assistance programs. One trend noted by several agencies and organizations was that their clients have difficulty accessing services because they do not have a permanent address, social insurance number or permanent employment. Requirements such as these make it challenging for those experiencing homelessness to access supports that could help them to attain housing.

Finally, it was noted that an upcoming challenge that will lead to an increase in homelessness within the community is the shift to the new provincial Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) program. The SIS program provides recipients with money for housing and utilities, rather than sending it directly to landlords and service providers. The intention of the program to motivate individuals to become more financially self-sufficient, is well intentioned, but has been identified as a challenge for certain demographics. Clients who have managed finances in the past may be successful, but those with difficulty maintaining their finances, the program would pose a challenge. In particular, vulnerable populations such as addicts and those with mental disabilities were identified as those who would most likely miss payments. These changes could also lead private landlords to refuse rental to individuals for fear of default on payments. A review of this program and its requirements was strongly recommended, and other agencies and organizations were advised to be aware of the coming affects resulting from these changes.

Lived Experience

On September 13, 2019, approximately 22 individuals with lived experience were surveyed through focus groups and one-on-one discussions to explore the realities of homelessness in the City of Prince Albert. Gathering the perspective of individuals with lived experience was seen as one of the most important factors to inform the Community Plan.

A wide demographic of individuals with lived experience were intercepted as part of this process. Participants included men and women with approximate ages ranging from late teens to mid-50s. Some participants also identified that they had children. Many individuals interviewed stated that they were originally from northern communities, and some had experiences related to addictions.

During the interview process, individuals were asked a number of questions related to their personal circumstance and the services available in Prince Albert. Respondents provided their perspectives on strengths and challenges facing homeless individuals, and explored recommendations for improved servicing.

Strengths

When asked what the biggest strengths of the Prince Albert community were in addressing homelessness, respondents shared that the staff and agencies that are working to help them were the biggest help. Supports provided by these individuals helped to “save lives” and help those experiencing homelessness improve their situation. It was also identified that the support of peers experiencing similar circumstances was important.

Challenges

Many of the challenges that individuals experiencing homelessness faced were related to the negative stigma among the general public about people experiencing homelessness. In particular, respondents shared that they are judged, even by some local agencies, and seen as nothing more than addicts or criminals. For some individuals, being given second chances was also identified as a problem. It was stressed that though individuals may have criminal records, addictions, or mental health issues, they still deserved to be treated like a human being with dignity and respect.

Another challenge identified by individuals with lived experience was that there were not enough places in the community where they could sleep and feel safe. Though many individuals recognized the work being done in Prince Albert to provide these spaces, they stressed that there still aren’t enough spaces for them to go at night. When respondents are unable to find a place to sleep, many identified that they would stay with friends, while others end up staying outside by the river’s edge or at the mall downtown.

Frequented Services and Programs

Individuals with lived experience were also asked what agencies, organizations, services, and programs in the community they accessed and felt they could trust. The organizations most frequented by individuals included YWCA locations (ie. Homeward Bound, Central Ave., Our House), Metis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (MACSI) and the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre. Other organizations visited included, Prince Albert Grand Council for vouchers, and the Food Bank.

Recommended Services

Individuals with lived experience provided several recommendations for improved services that would best benefit their needs. Many recommendations reflected needs identified by agencies and organizations.

Increased access and supports related to the provision of basic necessities, including food, clothing and shelter, were the number one recommendation among individuals with lived experience. Access to food was emphasized in most conversations. Lack of access to food was also identified by participants as a primary cause for criminal activity, such as theft. Individuals experiencing homelessness shared that in addition to increases food services currently being provided by food banks, additional opportunities in the community for services exist. Implementation of soup kitchens where hot food is served daily was documented as a potential initiative.

Sources for purchasing low-cost clothing available in community, such as the Salvation Army, were identified as increasingly too expensive. Participants recommended that more opportunities for access to good clothing were needed, especially during the colder month. In addition to this, access to laundry services to clean and maintain clothing were also identified as a necessity.

An increase in short-term overnight accommodations was, above all, identified as a gap to be filled. Many individuals stressed the importance of year-round matt/cot programs to provide places for individuals to sleep. Ensuring these programs are non-judgemental and open to all individuals was also flagged.

With the increasing crisis surrounding addictions in Prince Albert, many individuals with lived experience also stressed the importance of addiction support and treatment services. It was noted that detoxification centres are often at maximum capacity and do not have enough beds for individuals. Addressing addiction can be a time sensitive issue and when individuals in crisis who are seeking treatment are unable to access services in an efficient and timely manner they often return to harmful cycles. The difficulty to resist the temptation as a result of addiction can be difficult and the wait times prevent individuals from making positive steps towards improving their health.

Another common theme revealed in discussions with participants was that there is a need in the community for a safe space for people to gather and socialize. A daily drop-in centre was recommended by several individuals as a means of providing place to talk, eat, get warm and just be able to feel safe indoors. Such a centre would also provide opportunity to offer programming in a central location. Mothers also identified that these spaces were needed so that they could have a place where they could bring their children.

Providing additional programming or activities for youth was also recommended. Providing youth with alternative activities to be involved with would help to deter them from other things such as drugs or gangs. One respondent recommended explicitly that youth drug awareness programs were needed to deter young people from these activities.

Finding public facilities, such as restrooms and showers were also particularly difficult to access for individuals. Many respondents relied on friends due to the shortage of public spaces available. It was noted that finding businesses, such as a restaurant, that allow individuals to use the restroom has become increasingly difficult. It was recommended that a public facility, similar to those available in larger centres such as Edmonton, should be established in Prince Albert.

Local transportation, especially in the evenings, was indicated as a barrier to individuals experiencing homelessness. This reality posed problems especially for individuals with jobs beginning in the evenings at locations outside the downtown core.

Having a location where individuals could perform traditional ceremonies such as smudges and sweats were also identified. Individuals shared that being able to participate in ceremonies helped to improve their wellbeing and healing processes.

Many individuals surveyed shared that they were originally from northern reserve communities. Providing services in these communities was also identified as an initiative that would help individuals be able to stay in their home communities. Having services in both locations would allow individuals to have the choice to be in whatever community they choose.

Increasing the number of case workers available at organizations throughout the city were also mentioned.

Coordinated Access

When asked whether or not individuals with lived experience would feel comfortable accessing services using a coordinated access program, many responded that they were unsure. Some were open to sharing their information if it led to better servicing. Hesitation of individuals about the system was they were concerned that it would result in punishment of clients, arrest or denial of service due to their history.

Community-Wide Meeting

On September 20, 2019, approximately 39 community members, and agency and organization representatives attended a Community-Wide Meeting to discuss homelessness in the City of Prince Albert.

Meeting attendees were provided background information on the planning process, River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB, as well as an overview of findings to-date in the community engagement process. During the meeting, attendees were given the opportunity to further the findings by sharing local funding priorities within the 6 investment areas of: Housing Services, Prevention, Support Services, Capital Investment, Coordination, and Other.

Recommendations that emerged from the meeting were similar to those made in interviews with agencies and organizations and discussed with individuals with lived experience.

Below is a list of additional priorities that were recommended in the community meeting that have not been mentioned explicitly elsewhere in the report:

- Subsidized Housing – specifically for students and families
- First-time Renter Program – help people learn about tenancy rights and acquire references
- Rental Property Regulation – includes improving regulations for social housing programs and rent control programs
- Housing Education – teach individuals about the continuum of housing
- Emergency Funding – includes assistance for individuals experiencing loss of employment, loss of partner, or extended hospital stays
- Extended Hours for Mental Health Services – ensuring that individuals can access services outside of a typical 9am-5pm system
- Adoption of a 2nd Change Program – allows individuals who have previously been banned from accessing certain services to do so again
- Integration of Government Representation – advocating the need for a model that is unique to community by inviting government organizations to the table as part of the process

Conclusion

Based on the engagement process that occurred in Prince Albert, it is noted that local agencies and organizations are very in tune with the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Service providers interviewed recognized that a lot of progress is being made in the community, though more needs to be done. Interviewees stressed the importance of developing services that meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness and advocating for their needs through this process.

Through conversations with individuals with lived experience across the City of Prince Albert one message that was strongly emphasized was that individuals just wanted to have people treat them with dignity and respect. Being seen as a human being was the most important factor in their lives. Many respondents appreciated that this work was being done and stated that just having the opportunity to share their experience helped a lot. Continued engagement with those experiencing homelessness is recommended in the future to ensure their voice is heard.

Meeting with the community further validated findings of the community engagement process. The importance of gaining perspectives from those with lived experience was again shared, and the importance of providing a voice to those who are often silenced was emphasized. Bringing together service providers and community members was identified as the best way to move forward as a united force.

Though some initiatives recommended by agencies and organizations, people with lived experience, and community members are not considered eligible activities under Reaching Home's funding directives, documentation of all identified gaps, priorities and commentary is important to help leverage changes in other areas.

Recommendations

As a result of the community engagement process several community-wide priorities have been clearly identified to address homelessness in Prince Albert.

Three primary areas of focus that the community as a whole should work to improve services related to:

- Food Security;
- Addiction and Mental Health; and
- Year-Round Emergency Shelter.

Above all, these three areas were indicated as presenting increasing challenges to individuals experiencing homelessness in the community. Let this report act as a guide and reference for program and service delivery initiatives in the future.

It is also recommended that River Bank Development Corp. and the CAB utilize the input gathered from the community engagement process to inform their project selection process whenever possible.

In relation to the new Coordinated Access system implementation, important considerations to address moving forward include:

- Developing a committee with membership including individuals representing all ages, backgrounds and areas of expertise; and
- Creating data sharing protocols unique to the community of Prince Albert to ensure client confidentiality is maintained.

Using input gathered through this engagement process will ensure that services provided in Prince Albert are reflective of the needs identified by those best suited to identify priorities, the community.

Appendix B – Agencies and Organizations Engaged

- Correction Service Canada
- West Flat Citizen's Group
- Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women
- Indian Métis Friendship Centre of PA
- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation
- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Prince Albert City Police Department
- Prince Albert Grand Council (Urban Services)
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- YWCA
 - o Homeward Bound
 - o CEO
 - o Central Avenue
 - o Our House
 - o Community Connection Centre
 - o Youth Home
- PA Community Housing Society
- PA Housing Authority
- Prince Albert Outreach
- Share a Meal Food Bank
- S.H.A.R.E. Prince Albert
- Mobile Crisis
- Cooperative Health Center - Client Services
- U of S – Prince Albert Homelessness Researcher
- Family Treatment Centre
- Prince Albert RCMP
- Acquired Brain Injury Team
- City of PA
 - o City Manager
 - o Deputy Mayor
 - o Planning Director
- Metis Addiction Council
- PA Métis Women
- Access Place
- Addiction Services
- Métis Central Western Region II
- Senior Advocacy Centre
- Provincial Metis Housing Corporation
- Gabriel Dumont Institute
- Ministry of Social Services – Income Assistance
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies
- Prince Albert Northcote MLA
- PANow
- Prince Albert Daily Herald
- Waterford Condo
- PA Mobile Crisis Unit
- Prince Albert NDP Candidate
- Service Canada
- Canadian Federation of University Women
- Prince Albert Literacy Network
- Eagles Nest Youth Ranch
- PA Tourism

Appendix C – One-on-One Interview Questionnaire

Reaching Home: Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024 Interview Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Introduction

- We are working with River Bank Development Corp. and Prince Albert's Community Advisory Board conducting interviews as part of the community engagement process for their Reaching Home: Community Homelessness Plan for 2019-2024.
- We have been asked to engage key community organizations and stakeholders through in-person interviews.
- Through the course of the interview we will look at current and future servicing needs related to homelessness in Prince Albert which will help to identify gaps and develop local funding priorities for the next four years.
- Please note all of your responses will be confidential and only used in aggregate form.

Background and Context

- Prince Albert's Community Advisory Board along side River Bank Development (Community Entity) have been working to help guide homelessness funding activities in Prince Albert for several years.
- Over the last 5-years, funding for these activities has come from the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS).
- Examples of programs that have received funding through the strategy in that time have included:
 - PA Community Housing Society – provided funding to hire a Housing Support Worker to help homeless and at risk of homelessness individuals in a rapid re-housing type of role. This program helped to place over 100 clients in homes.
 - Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women – also received funding to hire a Housing Support Worker for similar work at the shelter. This program helped house 59 families.
 - YWCA Prince Albert – as part of the Housing First mandate, Homeward Bound was opened with help from HPS. They use a supportive housing model and they receive around 80 clients per year.
 - YWCA Prince Albert – also received funding to open a Cold Weather Shelter over the winter months out of the basement in Our House. The program can hold up to 15 clients per night and provides them with food, a place to sleep, laundry and shower facilities.
 - PIT Counts – occur to help better understand homelessness in Prince Albert and track homelessness in the community
- Homelessness Partnering Strategy is now being dissolved and funding for these programs will be received from Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.
- Reaching Home is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness.
- It provides direct funding to communities across Canada, including Prince Albert, to support efforts in addressing local needs and specific homelessness priorities.
- The program works to mobilize partners at the federal, provincial/territorial and community levels, as well as the private and voluntary sectors, and other stakeholders, to address barriers to well-being faced by those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Homelessness Sector Servicing

- 1. What role do you/does your organization play in the lives of people experiencing homelessness in Prince Albert?**
 - Why do you consider this to be important?
 - What other services/programs do your clients use?
 - What is your process when a person experiencing homelessness comes to your organization (referrals, intoxication, etc.)?
- 2. What do you consider the biggest strengths of the Prince Albert community in addressing homelessness?**
 - What is working well – where are successes happening?
 - Do you have any lessons to carry forward?
- 3. What do you consider the biggest challenges facing the Prince Albert community in addressing homelessness?**
 - What programs and services are lacking?
 - Are they: non-existent? Under funded? Lacking capacity?
- 4. What trends/patterns have you noticed regarding homelessness in the community?**
 - What types of homelessness are most prominent in the community?
 - Absolute Homeless - Individual has absolutely no place to stay—is on street, roaming around the community.
 - Sheltered Homeless - Individual has no home of their own but is staying in some sort of shelter or facility at night.
 - Hidden Homeless - Individual has no home of their own but is staying with friends, relatives or strangers (does NOT include lengthy seasonal visits).
 - Who do you find are accessing services most often – families, individuals (male, female), etc.?
 - What do you find your clients struggle most with alongside homelessness – domestic violence, sickness, addictions, mental health?
 - Where are people experiencing homelessness congregating (where is the points of entry)?
- 5. Moving forward, what are your suggestions on the types of programs and services that need to be provided in the community to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness?**
 - Where are the servicing gaps?
 - How can we fill them?

Coordinated Access

- Part of the requirements for the Community Plan is to outline a plan to implement a Coordinated Access system for the community by April 2022.
- A Coordinated Access system is the process by which individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness are directed to community-level access points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the individual or family needs, prioritize them for housing support services, and then help to match them to available housing-focused interventions
- Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is currently being looked at for integration in Prince Albert.

6. What are your overall thoughts about implementing a Coordinated Access system in Prince Albert?

- Are they supportive overall of a Coordinated Access system? HIFIS?
- Are there any alternatives?

7. What benefits do you hope to see from a Coordinated Access system in Prince Albert?

- How would sharing information help to create a wrap-around system?

8. What challenges do you anticipate from a Coordinated Access system in Prince Albert?

- What would need to happen in order to maintain confidentiality?
- What type of protocol for data input would you like to see associated with this?

Investment Plan

- There are 6 areas of investment in which the Reaching Home funding can be allocated.
- Part of the mandate for the Community Plan is to develop an investment plan based on these priorities.
- Current allocation is as follows:
 - Housing Services 50%
 - Prevention and Shelter Diversion 14%
 - Support Services 16%
 - Capital investments 0%
 - Coordination of Resources and Data Collection 5%
 - Administration 15%

Housing Services

Services that lead to an individual or family transitioning into more stable housing that has been deemed appropriate and safe. Funding can go to housing placement, emergency housing services and housing set up. Includes transitional, permanent-supportive, permanent, or indigenous housing options.

Prevention and Shelter Diversion

Prevention references activities that are aimed at preventing homelessness by supporting people before crisis occurs. Includes initiatives such as helping families at risk of losing their home or preventing people who are being discharged from public systems from becoming homeless.

Shelter diversion works to prevent the use of emergency shelters by providing individualized support systems that allow individuals to explore safe and appropriate alternate housing arrangements.

Support Services

Individualized supports to help improve integration and connectedness to support structures, such as the provision of basic needs and treatment services. Includes services to support economic, social and cultural integration of individuals.

Capital Investments

Includes new construction or repair and maintenance of existing units or facilities used to support homeless populations.

Coordination of Resources and Data Collection

Includes implementation of HIFIS, community mapping activities, implementation of coordinated access, and PIT counts, etc.

Administration

9. What are some local priorities related to the following investment areas?

- What services in particular are important for the community and why?
Not based on specific **programs that individuals would like to see funded

Housing Services	Prevention and Shelter Diversion
Support Services	Capital Investments
Coordination of Resources and Data Collection	Administration

10. What kind of Community-Wide Outcomes would you like to see in relation to the people experiencing homelessness in Prince Albert?

- How can we measure success in these areas – program completion, low PIT counts, etc.?
- Truth and Reconciliation considerations?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Conclusion

- Thank you for your time.
- Please remember that all information that is shared is valuable. All individual responses will be held in confidence and protected when used in an aggregated form.
- Invitation for Community Wide Meeting: **September 20th from 1-2:30pm** at the library.
- We appreciate your time and thank you for contribution.

Appendix D – Focus Group and Intercept Survey Questions

Reaching Home: Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024

Intercept Survey Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Introduction

- We are working with River Bank Development and Prince Albert's Community Advisory Board on their Reaching Home: Community Homelessness Plan.
- The Community Plan will help to guide funding efforts related homelessness
- We are looking to get input from people with lived experience to determine what community priorities should be considered.
- All of your responses will be confidential and only used in aggregate form.

1. Where are you from originally?

- If they are not from PA, follow-up with what brought them here and when.

2. Where have you been staying in the past month?

- Shelters? With friends?

3. Walk me through your day-to-day routine.

4. Are there places in the community where you can: OR

In the past month, how often have you:

- Bathed/showered
- Brushed your teeth
- Put on clean clothes
- Eaten a good quality, balanced meal
- Accessed clean drinking water
- Had a bed to sleep on

**5. What organizations/services/programs do you access in the community? OR
Which organizations do you feel that you can count on for help?**

6. What types of services/programs are missing/lacking in the community?

7. What do you consider the biggest strength of the Prince Albert community in addressing homelessness?

8. What are your biggest challenges?

9. What recommendations do you have for service providers in the community to better meet your needs?

Coordinated Access

Part of the Community Plan is to include a coordinated access system in the community: this system is a way for organizations to share information and would include a similar intake form used by all service providers to help connect and match clients to available services as required.

10. Would you feel comfortable accessing services using this type of system?

11. What would success look like in relation to addressing homelessness in Prince Albert?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Conclusion

- Thank you for your time.
- Please remember that all information that is shared is valuable. All individual responses will be held in confidence and protected when used in an aggregated form.
- Invitation for Community Wide Meeting: **September 20th from 1-2:30pm** at the library.
- We appreciate your time and thank you for contribution.

Appendix E – Community-Wide Meeting Invitation and Media Coverage

PRINCE ALBERT COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD ON HOMELESSNESS

Reaching Home: Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024

Prince Albert's Community Advisory Board on Homelessness is undertaking a community engagement session to understand the needs of the community's homeless sector and

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Participants will provide their insights on current and future services related to homelessness to help identify gaps where additional services are needed.

Feedback gathered from the public will inform local priorities for the Community Homelessness Plan 2019-2024 and direct the allocation of Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy funding in Prince Albert for the next four years.

Community members, organizations, service providers, business owners and stakeholders are invited to share their input into this process.

COMMUNITY-WIDE MEETING

WHEN

Friday, September 20, 2019
1:00 - 2:30pm

WHERE

John M. Cuelenaere Public Library
125 12th Street East

If you would like more information or to **RSVP**, please contact:

Brian Howell, River Bank Development
306.763.7457
rbii@sasktel.net

Casey Shields, Prairie Wild Consulting Co.
306.621.4202
casey.shields@prairiewildconsulting.ca

Funding for Reaching Home is provided by Employment and Social Development Canada.



Activities associated with the development of the Community Plan are supported by
River Bank Development and Prairie Wild Consulting



[Prince Albert Daily Herald Article](#)

9/25/2019

'Look at me as a human being, not as a piece of garbage' | Prince Albert Daily Herald

'Look at me as a human being, not as a piece of garbage'

BY JAYDA NOYES • September 20, 2019



Prairie Wild Consulting founder Lenore Swystun speaks at a community meeting for the Reaching Hope project at the John M. Cuelenaere Public Library on Sept. 20, 2019. (Jayda Noyes/Daily Herald)

Community meeting sheds light on getting first-hand perspectives from homeless people for action plan

"YOU STILL HEAR AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HOPE, SO IF WE LOSE THAT, WE'RE DONE FOR."

— Lenore Swystun

Henry Morin seemed slightly hesitant when he first stood up with something to say at a community meeting on reducing homelessness on Friday.

He had just listened to other people's opinions on what more needs to be done to slow the rising issue in Prince Albert.

"Can anybody tell me what this whole place is missing right now?" he asked.

After several seconds of silence, Morin answered his own question: "We're missing the homeless people."

"I know there's a lot of organizations here right now," he said, but "if we get the answers directly, right from the homeless, right from a struggling mother on welfare, not able to afford housing,

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9/25/2019

'Look at me as a human being, not as a piece of garbage' | Prince Albert Daily Herald

that's the core place where you can get your answers from."

"Take that time, that effort, to talk to a homeless person on the sidewalk and really ask them 'What led you here? How did you end up here? What could I do to help?'" he asked. Half way through saying this, Morin paused with tears slowly forming in his eyes. He had to take a breather.



Henry Morin (left) listens to Deputy Mayor Don Cody (right) speak about what more needs to be done in Prince Albert to reduce homelessness at the John M. Cuelenaere Public Library on Sept. 20, 2019. (Jayda Noyes/Daily Herald)

This sparked Lenore Swystun, founding director of Saskatoon-based Prairie Wild Consulting, to give an honest summary of what people struggling on the streets have to say.

Members from Prairie Wild Consulting led the meeting, along with Brian Howell from the River Bank Development Corporation, which spearheaded the project called Reaching Home.

Swystun's role in the researching process was to talk to homeless people themselves. They also conducted dozens of one-on-one interviews with people from relevant organizations.

She explained that she sat with two women, one who had a child, and asked why they were on the streets.

"What do they tell me?" Asked Swystun. "It's hard to get out of this because drugs are an issue. There's gang activity everywhere. If it wasn't for the YWCA, I'd be dead right now." Both of them said that."

She then asked what they needed and how she could help.

"Give me some place where I can put my head to rest all year round. Not just a winter shelter." Some of them didn't know on the streets that the winter shelter was even there," she explained.

"Second: 'Give me food, give me clothes because we have a food crisis in this city. I can't find a place for food, so if you're wondering why we're stealing, it's because I can't find a place to get food.' That was a huge one."

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'Look at me as a human being, not as a piece of garbage' | Prince Albert Daily Herald

Swystun went on to say that homeless people in the city told her there's not enough support services for homeless youth and seniors, some were kicked out of their First Nations communities because of bad behaviour and are trying to improve and that there's not enough beds in detox centres. She said homeless people are well aware of the correlation between poverty and mental health and addictions.

"But I'll tell you, the most crucial thing that they said is they want to feel like human beings. Even if they're on the god damn street, (they say) 'Look at me as a human being, not as a piece of garbage,'" she said.

"If I'm asking for food and I'm asking for clothes, it's because I need them," said Swystun. "Let me have that dignity."

She said no homeless people want to be in their situations—sleeping in a different nook every night, or with family or friends who only take them in once and then send them off to find a different place to keep warm.

"It's heartbreaking on the one hand, but I have to say something else to leave this on an 'up' note. They were so grateful that they knew there were folks coming together in (this) room, because I told them, that had their best interests at heart," said Swystun.

"You still hear an opportunity for hope, so if we lose that, we're done for."

Swystun said what people were proposing in the meeting does echo what people on the streets are saying. A few things people in the meeting said Prince Albert needs to have are 24/7 transit, more education on where to find help, better management for affordable housing and better access to necessities such as food and clothing.

A few of the roughly 50 people in attendance were Doug Kinar from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Jason Stonechild from the police service, Edna Bruce from Our House, Janet Carriere from the Indian Métis Friendship Centre and Deputy Mayor Don Cody.

Swystun concluded by addressing Morin for bringing up the importance of talking to homeless people first-hand.

"Thank you, because that's exactly it. Just go out on the street. Listen, look, help, spread the word."

JAYDA NOYES

Jayda Noyes is a reporter with the Prince Albert Daily Herald. You can reach her at (306) 764-4276 ext. 257, by email at jayda.noyes@paherald.sk.ca, or on Twitter @jaynoyesSK.



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SECTIONS

[Better coordination prioritized by homelessness strategy](#)



P.A. groups working on homelessness brainstorm ways to provide better supports during a meeting at the John M. Cuelenaere Public Library (Alison Sandstrom/paNOW)

WORKING TOGETHER

By Alison Sandstrom

Better coordination prioritized by homelessness strategy

Sep 21, 2019

Groups working to combat homelessness in Prince Albert gathered on Friday to plan the allocation of \$500,000 of federal money.

The funding, part of the national homelessness strategy, is administered in five-year cycles.

Last time around the focus was on Housing First, a strategy that prioritizes getting people into permanent housing before providing other support services. The idea, which has been proven effective, is that people need access to necessities like food and a roof over their head, before issues like getting a job or dealing with addictions and trauma can be properly addressed.

In Prince Albert funding for Housing First saw the establishment of the YWCA's Homeward Bound program. The initiative houses around 80-90 people in an apartment complex on Branion Drive

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This time around, in addition to continuing with Housing First, the government wants organizations dealing with homelessness to focus on "coordinated access."

CHANGING SEASONS

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1h ago

RIISING TO THE OCCASION

Home opener tests Raiders and Hauser staff

19h ago

"What the government is saying is you have really good programs but they're silos," said Brian Howell of River Bank Development, the group in charge of distributing the federal money. "The homelessness system in our community should be connected so that the various organizations are combining their efforts and working together for the best interest of the clients."

Coordinated access will see information about clients shared between organizations in real time. While there are concerns about confidentiality and the time-consuming nature of the data imputing, it's thought that the system will lead to faster help for clients, less duplication of services and easier referrals.

"We don't want Homeward Bound to be working over here in isolation, but rather collaborating with our other support programs, maybe taking people from the Cold Weather Shelter, or maybe sending people that they can't work with to our housing support workers," Howell told *paNOW*.

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Input from community groups at Friday's meeting will be used to create a local homelessness plan for 2019-2024.

Starting in November those same groups will have a chance to apply for some of that federal funding.

Organizers of the meeting also used it as an opportunity to share information gathered during research for the plan.

Lenore Swystun of Prairie Wild Consulting outlined how interviews with people with lived experience with homeless shaped the document. She explained that requests for more housing, detox beds, and connections to culture were heard repeatedly, but one message was heard above all others.

"The crucial thing that they said was they want to feel like human beings even when they're on the street. 'Look at me as a human being not as a piece of garbage.' That was the most emphatic thing that came through," she told the meeting.

"There's a hell of a lot of work to do in Prince Albert, but one of the things that was inspiring on the street is that there is still hope there. Even at the most downtrodden you still hear an opportunity for hope."

Alison.sandstrom@jpbj.ca

PANow Article No.2

9/25/2019

Prince Albert NDP candidate talks homelessness | panow | Prince Albert, Saskatchewan | News, Sports, Weather, Opinions, Classifieds



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SECTIONS

Prince Albert NDP candidate talks homelessness



Prince Albert NDP candidate Harmony Johnson-Harder, attended a meeting Friday focused on dealing with homelessness in RA. (Submitted Photography/Kyle Anderson)

SOLUTIONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

By Michael Joel Hansen

Prince Albert NDP candidate talks homelessness

Sep 21, 2019

The NDP candidate for Prince Albert is weighing in on the issue of housing and homelessness.

On Friday Harmony Johnson-Harder attended [a meeting of the Prince Albert Community Advisory Board on Homelessness](#). The gathering, which was organized by Riverbank Development Corporation, brought out people from a variety of organizations and included frontline service workers.

Johnson-Harder said she was motivated to attend in part because she wanted to hear from frontline workers about what was going on.

"Just really to listen," she said.

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According to Johnson-Harder the social services agencies and frontline workers agreed there are gaps when it comes to addressing homelessness. Specifically, Johnson-Harder said the cost of housing and lack of affordable accommodation were top concerns along with navigating the overall system.

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The Prince Albert NDP candidate thinks her party's platform, which calls for a national housing strategy, would be helpful in solving some of the issues P.A. is currently facing. The strategy calls for federal support for cooperative housing, affordable housing and working to further support first-time home buyers along with bringing back 30-year mortgages.

"The Housing Strategy address complex needs and has a lot of solutions to the complex needs of P.A. residents," she said.

Along with the housing strategy Johnson-Harder said it is necessary to deal with other issues like mental health and addictions. Johnson-Harder said implementing policies the NDP is advocating like expanding pharmaceutical coverage, are also part of dealing with the issue of homelessness.

SHOP NOW

"[It's about] getting people the help that they need and providing the funding to community, through expanding health care," she said.

MichaelJoel.Hansen@pbg.ca

On Twitter: @mjhsksdn

by Michael Joel Hansen

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