

Council Policy No.:	CP2025-00X
Council Policy Name:	Encampment Response Policy
Date Approved by Council:	April 22, 2025
Date revision approved by Council:	
Related SOP, Management Directive, Council Policy, Forms	Encampment Outreach and Response Protocol, SOP2024-0XX, Corporate Customer Service Standards

Policy Statement and Rationale:

The City's approach to encampment response strives to balance the need for safe, accessible public spaces with a compassionate and supportive approach to individuals experiencing homelessness. While balancing public space utilization, we recognize the complex challenges faced by our community's most vulnerable members and are committed to ensuring their dignity, health, and safety are prioritized. At the same time, we strive to maintain public spaces that are welcoming and safe for everyone. The City's encampment response focuses on providing outreach, resources, and appropriate alternatives to encampments, while working collaboratively with community agencies and individuals to support long-term solutions and respect the rights and needs of all community members.

Addressing homelessness requires a focus on providing safe, stable housing that meets the specific needs of individuals, from temporary shelters to permanent supportive housing. The City does not consider encampments as an acceptable solution of shelter and is committed to helping those living in encampments transition to safer and stable housing options. The City also recognizes that each person's journey from encampment to housing is unique, and the time spent in an encampment can vary significantly.

Guiding Principles

In responding to encampments, the City is committed to:

1. Using a human rights-based approach that centres on ongoing, meaningful engagement with, and participation of, people living in encampments to understand their needs, involving them wherever possible in decision-making processes that impact them.
2. Treating people living in encampments with the same dignity, respect, kindness, and compassion as it does with all residents, and applying a trauma-informed and culturally-safe approach.
3. A response to homelessness grounded in a Housing First approach that focuses on helping people find permanent housing with the supports they need to live independently.
4. Using available tools and options to help people living in encampments access to indoor spaces and support services that address their identified needs.
5. Offering a variety of service models to meet the diverse needs of people living in encampments, including people with complex needs.
6. Using a coordinated and integrated approach in responding to the needs of people living in encampments that is grounded in best practices.
7. Engaging in ongoing proactive and transparent communication with people living in encampments, service providers, community agencies, the public and other stakeholders.
8. Recognizing the knowledge and experience of, and working with, Indigenous communities to utilize culturally-based approaches to support Indigenous people living in encampments.
9. Ongoing maintenance, monitoring and review of a corporate Encampment Outreach and Response Protocol (Management Directive).

Scope:

This policy outlines how the City will respond to encampments on City-owned land and how it will support and engage with individuals living in those encampments.

Definitions:

“City” or “Municipality” means the Corporation of the City of Kawartha Lakes.

“Council” means the municipal council for the City.

“Encampment” is a site or structure is a place on public or private land used as shelter by one or more people experiencing homelessness, including any supporting structures.

“Encampment Outreach and Response Protocol” guides the City’s operational approach to responding to encampments, while ensuring that the response aligns with the guiding principles and policy direction outlined in this Policy.

“Encampment Leadership Team” is chaired by a management team member from the City’s Housing Services Division, and includes management representatives from Housing Services, Municipal Law Enforcement, Community Services, Fire Services and Paramedic Services, as well as Police (OPP and Kawartha Lakes Police Services), along with other City staff who can provide expertise to support the Team’s work. The Encampment Leadership Team supports interdepartmental collaboration and accountability, according to the guiding principles outlined in this Policy.

“Encampment Working Group” coordinates the City’s response to encampments, involving multiple City Departments. The City’s Program Supervisor for Homelessness supports the coordination of the group. Membership of the group includes members of the Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team, as well as front-line and supervisory staff from Municipal Law Enforcement, Community Services, Fire Services and Paramedic Services. Additionally, members of the Encampment Leadership Group may participate in Encampment Working Group activities as needed.

“Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team” is responsible for managing services related to shelter, housing, and outreach in the City of Kawartha Lakes and the County of Haliburton. Membership of the Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team includes the City’s Program Supervisor for Homelessness as well as Outreach and Housing Assistance Workers. Its goal is to help people experiencing homelessness by connecting them with housing and support. In partnership with local shelters and housing programs, the Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team provides initial engagement with those living in encampments.

Policy:

1.0 Governance

- 1.01 Council will require staff to develop and maintain a corporately-approved Encampment Outreach and Response Protocol, or Management Directive, along with any necessary Standard Operating Procedures. These will guide the City's approach to responding to encampments, ensuring the response aligns with the principles and policy direction outlined in this Policy. Additionally, the Protocol and any related policies, directives, or procedures must comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code, which mandates public bodies, including municipalities, to accommodate individuals in a way that ensures equal access to services, housing, and resources, without discrimination.
- 1.02 The Encampment Leadership Team will provide oversight and implement the Encampment Outreach and Response Protocol, ensuring that it aligns with the guiding principles and directions in this Policy, as well as evidence-informed best practices, relevant legal precedents and sector research and guiding documents.
- 1.03 The Encampment Working Group coordinates the City's response to encampments, involving multiple City Departments. If actions like clean-up orders or trespass orders are needed, the Group manages those decisions. It also plans and delivers coordinated services and support for people in encampments, ensuring public safety concerns are reasonably addressed. The Group makes operational decisions that align with the Encampment and Outreach Response Protocol and any other relevant corporate standard operating procedure, management directive or by-law.
- 1.04 The City acknowledges that application of the Encampment and Outreach Response Protocol, including the necessary time to engage and find appropriate alternative shelter and housing options, can vary significantly from individual to individual.
- 1.05 The City recognizes that the Encampment Outreach and Response Protocol will be implemented first, prior to escalation resulting in the enforcement of any applicable City By-law or regulation that restricts use of City-owned land. This aligns with the City's duty to accommodate under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

- 1.06 Any criminal activity identified by staff or the public will be reported to the relevant law enforcement authority for investigation and determination of any criminal charges.
- 1.07 Nothing in the protocol purports in any way to limit or fetter the responsibilities, discretion, duties or powers of the Fire Chief, Medical Officer of Health, Chief of Police, Detachment Commander or any other statutory or other office or power holder in relation to anything that may fall within their respective purview or jurisdiction, including the enforcement of any health or safety law or regulation.

2.0 Identification, Assessment and Coordination

- 2.01 The Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team, wherever possible, will be the first connection to an encampment or site. This Team will manage all initial reports of encampments for assessment and coordination.
- 2.02 Encampments can be identified and reported by staff or a member of the public.
- 2.03 Upon receiving notification of an encampment located on City-owned land, the Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team will attempt to make contact and initiate outreach efforts to people living in the encampment.
- 2.04 The Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team will also work closely with various City departments, through the coordinated work of the Encampment Working Group to address health and safety concerns in encampments.
- 2.05 Each time a City staff member acting under the capacity of the Housing and Homelessness Outreach Team or Encampment Working Group visits an encampment, a site assessment will be completed.
- 2.06 Coordination of ongoing encampment response efforts and actions will be reviewed and managed by the Encampment Working Group.

3.0 Communication

- 3.01 The City will communicate to the public and other community agencies on its general response to encampments through the Kawartha Lakes website, communication bulletins, training and webinars.

- 3.02 The City will strive to ensure public communication and education about homelessness response is clear, transparent and timely at the same time making a commitment to address stigma, discrimination and intolerance in the community.
- 3.03 The City will report statistical data relating to the number and location of encampments on the City's website, at minimum once a year.
- 3.04 In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, at no time should personal information about individuals living in encampments be shared with the public, council members, or other staff who are not part of the Encampment Working Group. Relevant personal information related to support plans for an individual may only be shared with external community agencies if the individual has provided informed consent.

4.0 Customer Service Standards

- 4.01 In accordance with the City's Customer Service Standards, staff will develop standards for customer response.
- 4.02 The service request escalation pathway related to encampment response activities will be guided by the City's Customer Service Standards.

5.0 Health and Safety

- 5.01 The City will conduct regular risk assessments to identify health and safety hazards in encampment areas.
- 5.02 The City will attempt to provide access to basic needs and health services, which may include referral information to available community services.
- 5.03 The City will review documented evidence of reported concerns to distinguish between safety issues arising from behavior and discomfort or fear related to homelessness.
- 5.04 The City will provide training for staff and law enforcement on trauma-informed approaches and health and safety protocols.

5.05 The City will regularly assess health and safety conditions through inspections and feedback from residents and outreach workers.

6.0 Monitoring and Review

6.01 The Encampment Leadership Team and Encampment Working Group will continuously assess how the response is impacting both vulnerable individuals and the broader community, while ensuring that the goals and objectives of the City are being achieved. This can involve feedback from the public, community agencies, stakeholders and people in encampments.

Revision History:

Proposed Date of Review:

Revision	Date	Description of Changes	Requested By
0.0	[Date]	Initial Release	