



## BRIEFING NOTE FOR INFORMATION

**Date:** April 5, 2019, 2018

**Prepared For:** Kaye Krishna, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

**Title:** Encampment Response Guideline for Ministries

**Issue:** Ministries which occasionally or regularly respond to homeless encampments requested through a December working session resources to assist staff and executive

### SUMMARY:

- **Public homelessness and encampments are growing in number and complexity each year, leading to entrenched camps and legal cases in some instances.**
- **MAH leads the cross-ministry coordination in responding to encampments and provides a liaison role to BC Housing, which leads the operational and housing responses.**
- **Partner ministries, namely those with land to manage, have requested through the cross-ministry group a succinct and easy-to-use resource for best practices in responding to encampments and in helping people experiencing homelessness.**

- s.12; s.13

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### BACKGROUND:

- In 2018, the Ministry responded to requests regarding more than 15 encampments with up to 900 people experiencing homelessness. The majority of these encampments occurred or grew in the summer months when winter shelters close and the weather is more amenable to staying outdoors. So far in 2019, there have been responses to 10 encampments – with several still active.
- In 2018, an encampment response strategy was endorsed by cabinet as part of the Homelessness Action Plan. The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction is leading implementation of the plan in collaboration with MAH – which leads the cross-ministry coordination and response to encampments and housing responses through its crown agency, BC Housing.

### DISCUSSION:

- s.12; s.13

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:



Ministry of  
Municipal Affairs  
and Housing

- None

**Attachments:**

1. s.12; s.13
- 2.
- 3.

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**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION  
SERVICE DELIVERY DIVISION  
PROGRAM NOTES 2019/2020**

**TOPIC: Homelessness Action Plan**

**KEY INFORMATION:**

- Addressing homelessness is a top priority for our government.
- The Homelessness Action Plan is based on four pillars:
  - Prevention – Make homelessness a rare occurrence
  - Immediate response – Make homeless experiences brief
  - Stability – Make homelessness a one-time occurrence
  - Working better together – Coordinate among ministries and externally with our partners and ensure accountability
- Implementation of the Plan is being led by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction with the active involvement of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and BC Housing.
- The Homelessness Action Plan marks a shift from a reactive program-by-program response to a comprehensive whole systems approach.
- A high level summary of the plan was released in March 2019 as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy announcement. It builds on the work our government has already undertaken to support vulnerable British Columbians to find and maintain stable housing. For example:
  - New funding for 200 modular housing units;
  - A newly established Homelessness Coordination Office to align government's response and work better with our partners;
  - A number of IA/DA policy changes to help keep people from homelessness; and

- A \$10M investment to support existing rent banks and expand the service to the rest of the province. Rent banks are an effective method of preventing homelessness and encouraging housing stability for low income people who are experiencing a temporary financial crisis.
- The Plan, together with the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the 30-Point Plan on Housing Affordability and the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, supports our efforts to make life better for the most vulnerable people in our province.
- To inform the Plan, a province-wide homeless count was completed in 2018, which identified a total of 7,655 individuals who were experiencing homelessness. Data from this count also is also helping us understand the service needs of people who are homeless across BC, and will help us monitor our progress going forward.
- To support both the Plan and the ministry's goal of poverty reduction, the following changes to the BCEA program were announced in Budget 2019/20:
  - **Eliminating the limit on the number of rental security deposits** that clients can have at any given time. This will assist with the prevention of homelessness as well as removing barriers to people who are homeless and trying to access housing.
  - **Increasing the maximum amount of the crisis shelter supplement** from the maximum shelter allowance for the family unit to the maximum shelter and support allowance. Combined with Rent Bank funding, this will assist people who are tenuously housed and experiencing a temporary crisis that threatens their tenancy. This will prevent homelessness and improve stability for low income people.
  - **Increasing the maximum value of assets** clients can have prior to receiving assistance . This allows people to access assistance before they have become completely destitute and a better chance to pull themselves out of financial crisis quickly.
  - **Expediting and simplifying the application process** for clients who leave assistance for short durations including temporary work opportunities.

- **Removing restrictions on vehicles** a client can own to use for day-to-day transportation. This can be critical to being able to find employment, manage pressures such as child care, and support rural clients who have no access to public transportation.

## BACKGROUND:

- The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction is the designated lead ministry for the implementation and coordination of the homelessness action plan. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and BC Housing play a significant role in supporting the work, along with other ministries.
- There are three phases of the Homelessness Action Plan that build upon one another:
  - Phase 1 includes actions announced in Budget Update 2017 and Budget 2018 to immediately prevent and reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable rental housing, including 4,500 new supportive housing units.
  - Phase 2 involves setting the framework for the Plan and implementing new actions immediately. These actions include an Encampment Prevention and Response strategy and the new work unit responsible for homelessness and leading the cross-government implementation of the Plan.
  - s.12; s.13
- s.12; s.13
- Budget 2019 includes the following initiatives as part of the Homelessness Action Plan:
  - Rent Bank – \$10 million (from 2018/19 funding) to last several years
  - Provincial Homelessness Coordination Unit in SDPR – \$0.982 million/yr.
  - Encampment Prevention and Response Strategy – \$0.23 million/yr (plus potential Contingencies access for further funding pending report back to Treasury Board – not to be disclosed)
  - Temporary Modular Supportive Housing for the Homeless - \$23 million in 2019/20 for 100 units targeted to respond to emerging encampments
  - Long-term Permanent Supportive Housing for the Homeless – \$30 million in 2019/20 for 100 units
  - BC Employment Assistance Policy Enhancements to Prevent Homelessness – \$3.0-\$3.5 million/yr - for elimination of transient category, changes to vehicle

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exemption limit, increase to asset limits, streamline re-application process, moving supplement enhancements, and expansion of hardship assistance (SDPR budget).

- Initiatives to address homelessness were also taken in the two previous budgets.
  - Budget 2017 Update
    - The Rapid Response to Homelessness initiative to immediately build 2,000 units of modular supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness. These units are to be completed in Summer 2019.
  - Budget 2018
    - The 30-Point Plan for Housing Affordability (30-Point Plan) includes funding for 2,500 new units of supportive housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

#### Province-wide Homeless Count

- Highlights from the province-wide homeless count include:
  - The majority were sheltered (63 per cent) and 37 per cent were unsheltered.
  - 68 per cent identified as male and 30 per cent as female.
  - 38 per cent of survey respondents identified as Indigenous, while Indigenous people account for only 6 per cent of the provincial population.
  - 51 per cent reported experiencing homelessness for the first time when they were a youth.