

Council's Response Committee on Housing and Emergency Shelter (CRCHES) Update Report

Committee Activities | February 2025 - October 2025







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On the Cover

*Pictured from left to right:
Councillor Trevor Bolin, Amanda
Cox, Councillor Sarah MacDougall,
and Councillor Gord Klassen.*

*The photo captures Amanda Cox
of No Frills meeting with members
of the Council's Committee
on Housing and Emergency
Shelter during a business walk
engagement.*

Since the last report to Council, CRCHES has continued to advance its work and has made meaningful gains toward the objectives outlined in its mandate. The committee remains committed to fostering practical, compassionate, and community-based solutions to address the complex and evolving challenges of homelessness in Fort St. John.



OBJECTIVE 1: Assess the Impact of Homelessness

CRCHES has continued to focus on monitoring observable trends in the community and remains attentive to both emerging issues and potential solutions. This has further developed an understanding of the impacts of homelessness and allowed for informed responses.

OBJECTIVE 2: Engage Stakeholders

The committee has solicited input from both housed and unhoused community members on the impacts of homelessness, capturing a wide range of perspectives on the social and safety impacts of homelessness.

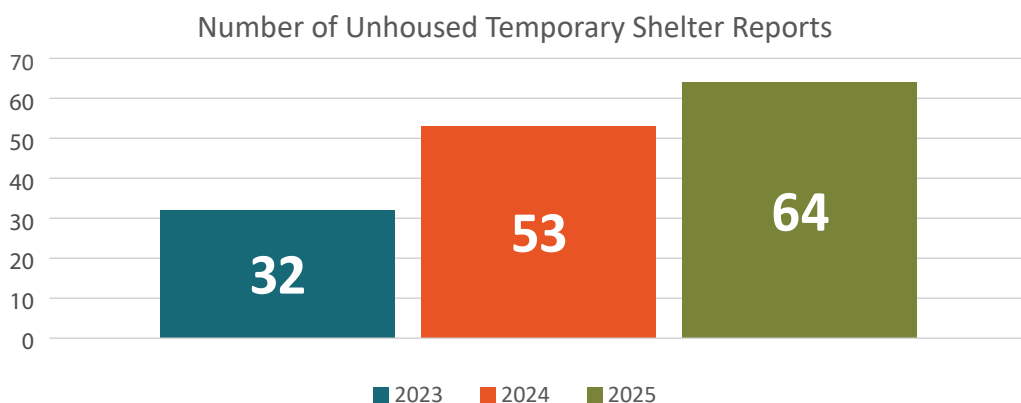
In December 2024, CRCHES carried out focused engagement with local business owners and employees who provided valuable insights into the economic impacts of homelessness on local businesses. In October 2025, many of the business managers and owners who participated in the 2024 session contributed to a second engagement opportunity. The insights were overwhelmingly positive. Feedback indicated that issues such as theft and loitering had decreased, and that the ongoing support from the RCMP and bylaw enforcement improved in both response time and efficiency.

OBJECTIVE 3: Develop Comprehensive Solutions

To support the safe and respectful use of public spaces, Council adopted Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw No. 2615, 2025 in May 2025. This bylaw outlines acceptable use practices for parks and open spaces, including provisions related to temporary sheltering.

The Bylaw Department collects data on reports of temporary sheltering within the municipality. An increase in reports was observed and could be directly linked to broader social challenges such as housing insecurity, substance use, mental health challenges, and poverty. The ability to regulate parks and open space usage led to temporary sheltering in alternative areas within the community, primarily on private property.

The Bylaw Department has consistently responded to all reports of temporary shelters, often assisting individuals in finding alternative accommodation. These efforts reflect a coordinated departmental approach to balancing community safety with compassion and support for vulnerable residents.



Turning conversations into concrete action

The Fort St. John Housing Solutions Project is a locally tailored “Housing First” initiative that prioritizes immediate access to permanent, stable housing without preconditions, supplemented with individualized support. An award of just under \$300,000 was granted by the Northern Development Initiative Trust for the project. This initiative envisions a permanent supportive housing model that responds to the needs of vulnerable populations experiencing housing insecurity in our community.

Mobilizing resources and cultivating partnerships drives meaningful change

With strategic and project management support from Urban Matters, the City is committed to aligning decisions, actions, and relationships to move this work forward while keeping it rooted in community ownership and leadership.

The project was initiated in July 2025 and is expected to launch its pilot phase in winter 2026, marking a significant step toward providing stable housing solutions for vulnerable residents in Fort St. John.

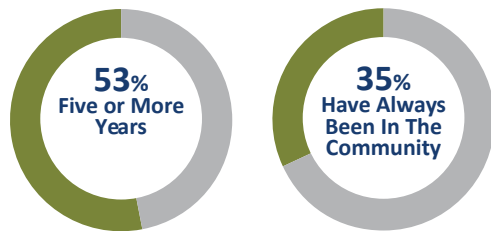
Changes made by service providers have also had positive impacts. For example, the Salvation Army Northern Centre of Hope reallocated male and female bed numbers to better meet sheltering needs for the people presenting at the Centre.

OBJECTIVE 4: Raise Public Awareness

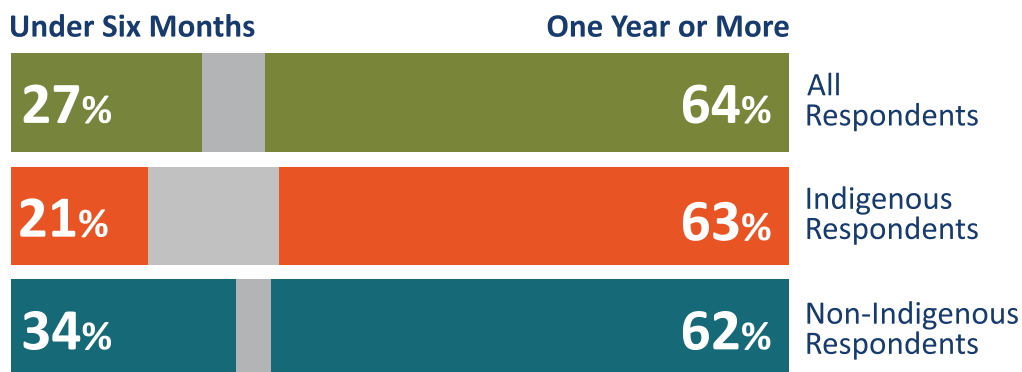
CRCHES has taken steps to increase awareness and understanding of homelessness in the community. This includes ongoing conversations with residents and targeted outreach efforts. These activities aim to promote dialogue and ensure that Fort St. John is a community where all residents feel supported and included.

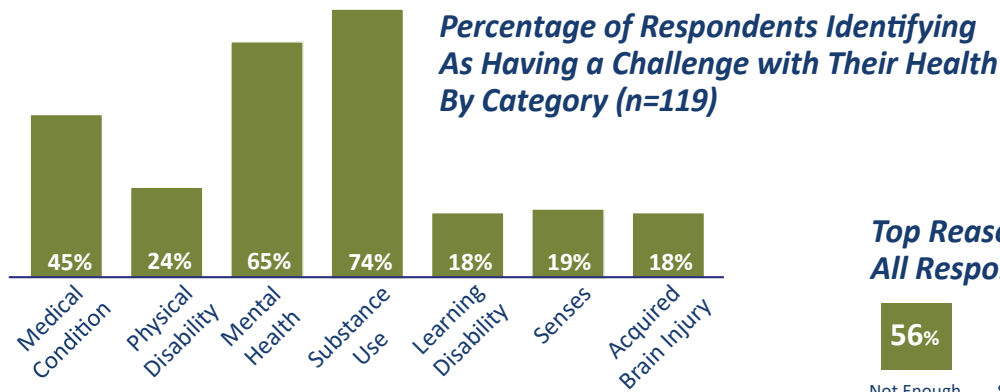
Understanding the human side of homelessness

Length of Time in Community - All Respondents (n=107)



Length of Time Experiencing Homelessness (n=110)





Statistic Source: BC Housing

Top Reasons for Housing Loss All Respondents (n=113)



OBJECTIVE 5: Foster Community Partnerships

Collaboration remains central to the committee’s work. CRCHES has made it a priority to engage with local service providers that are doing invaluable work in the community. To better understand the issues surrounding homelessness, there have been informative meetings with members of the following agencies:

- » BC Housing
- » Fort St. John RCMP
- » Fort St. John Association for Community Living
- » Northern Health
- » Car 60
- » RCMP
- » Employment Connections, Work BC

These meetings revealed common challenges including the limited government services available in the region and the lack of access to appropriate housing. A common issue noted was the harm caused by the stigma, public perceptions, and lack of understanding of the compounding factors that can affect a person’s housing situation.

A key takeaway from these meetings was the need to focus on reducing stigma and transforming public perception.

Partnerships multiply impact: Lasting solutions require everyone at the table

Engagement with local service providers also highlighted a strong need for relationship building within the community.

The Situation Table, an initiative set in motion by the City, is an action-oriented team that identifies, assesses, and coordinates responses to urgent situations affecting individuals at risk. The goal of the Situation Table is to prevent harm, coordinate services, and move people toward housing solutions.

CRCHES and City staff met with representatives from BC Housing and learned that there is funding available for supportive housing development in Fort St. John. It was discovered that BC Housing could make changes to improve operational insufficiencies. CRCHES issued formal calls for action to address those shortcomings. Importantly, BC Housing affirmed its intention to address the identified areas and strengthen communication by providing quarterly reports to the City.

Collaboration is our community's greatest tool

Interaction with stakeholders and local service providers fueled networking efforts with provincial ministries and crown corporations. This included an exploration of ways to bridge service gaps and better align local initiatives with provincial programs to ensure resources are used effectively.

CRCHES commenced an advocacy campaign to elevate community concerns to the provincial level. The following table summarizes the outcomes to date.

Subject	Entity	Results
Request for action on vacant BC Housing stock in the city.	BC Housing	BC Housing shared that, in August, offers to rent were made on 9 of the 24 vacant units in Fort St. John. BC Housing agreed to quarterly reporting on their housing stock in the city and pledged to prioritize repairs on the remaining 15 vacant units to have them tenanted as soon as possible.
	Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs	Reaffirmed BC Housing's commitment to addressing the atypical vacancies of public housing stock in the city.

Subject	Entity	Results
Request for meeting to advocate for sustainable funding for Co-op Housing programs and additional funding streams that could be used to address housing insecurity.	Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities	The Minister met with committee members at the Pacific Northwest Economic Region Summit and expressed enthusiasm for supporting the committee's efforts and acting as a conduit between the City and provincial ministries.
	Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs	The Minister sent their regrets but provided valuable information on partnering with BC Housing and funding streams that could be used to address the need for affordable housing in BC. Committee Members had the opportunity to engage with the Minister at UBCM and discuss the committee's purpose, objectives, and activities.
	Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation	Acknowledgment outstanding.

Deliverables

- » Assessment report: Completed and presented in the first report to Council. Future updates may be considered to reflect new data.
- » Stakeholder engagement summary: Completed in the first report; additional summaries can be prepared as new engagement activities are undertaken.
- » Action Plan: Ongoing developments have been made since the first report, reflecting the committee’s evolving strategies.
- » Progress Reports: Updates continue to be provided to Council at regular intervals.

CRCHES has continued to make significant strides in assessing impacts, engaging stakeholders, developing solutions, raising awareness, and fostering partnerships. While much work remains, the committee has established a strong foundation and momentum for future progress. CRCHES looks forward to continuing to work alongside Council, community partners, and provincial agencies to implement meaningful solutions that address homelessness in Fort St. John.





City of Fort St. John
10631 100 Street
Fort St. John, BC V1J 3Z5