

Reaching Home:
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
Community Plan
2024–2028

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Introduction

In completing this Community Plan and looking ahead to reducing chronic homelessness by 50% in 2027, with the goal of reaching and sustaining Functional Zero, our collaborative teams including homeless serving organizations, municipal government, the Community Entity (CE), the Community Advisory Board (CAB), Indigenous organizations, First Nations, Métis Communities along with provincial and federal government representatives have worked diligently in the years leading up to 2024. Their efforts have consistently focused on maintaining and sustaining housing, as well as prevention, diversion and outreach programs to support residents experiencing homelessness in the region. Through efforts to building trust, improving transparency, and fostering partnerships and collaboration, we have strengthened our relationships, working together to reach and maintain Functional Zero in the region.

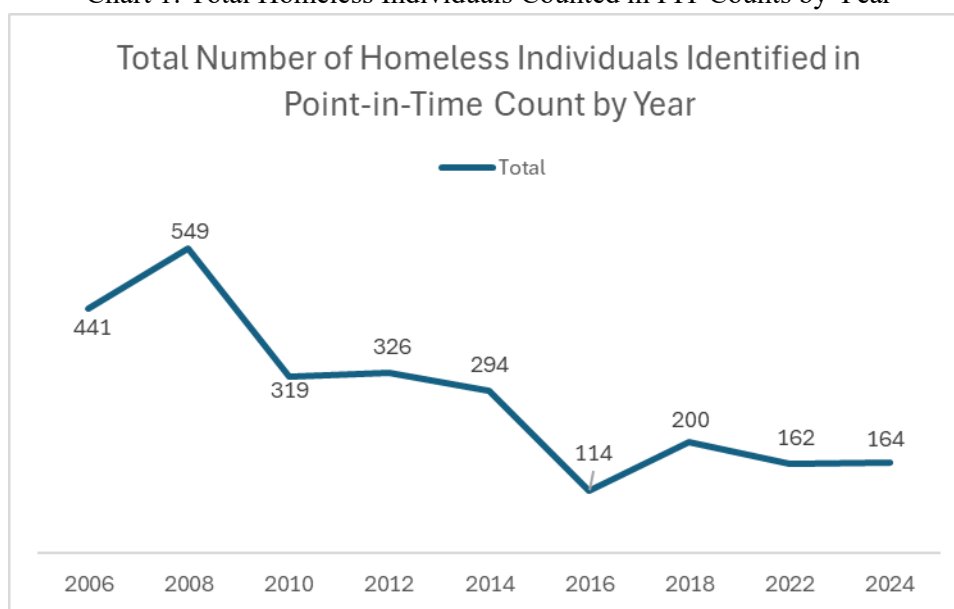
Moving forward to 2028 we recognize that collaboration is key to ending homelessness and achieving success. It is essential that we continue to share our story, speak our truths and share knowledge, as no one single organization or individual can manage this task alone. We are grateful to all those who are contributing to and supporting our mission to reaching and maintaining Functional Zero, ending chronic homelessness.

1. Snapshot on the Housing and Homeless Situation

a. Results of the Most Recent Homeless Count

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) has been conducting Point in Time (PiT) counts since 2003, initiating the bi-annual format in 2006 and becoming part of the province-wide initiative in 2014. The 2020 PiT Count was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the methodology was changed. PiT Counts were conducted in 2016, 2018, 2022, and 2024.

Chart 1: Total Homeless Individuals Counted in PIT Counts by Year



Information from Municipal biannual PIT counts

With funding from Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada (HICC) and in partnership with the 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness (Calgary, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Fort McMurray), the RMWB PiT Count in the urban service area of Fort McMurray.

The 2024 PiT Count was completed throughout the streets of Fort McMurray on the evening of October 9, 2024, from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. Surveys were also completed at the Homeless Connect magnet event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Enumeration and surveys were conducted at overnight facilities over a period of 24 hours. On October 10, 2024, an additional enumeration/survey of known encampments was conducted from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Daytime service providers also completed surveys from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on October 10, 2024.

The following statistics are a conclusion of the key findings from the most recent regularly scheduled and methodically consistent 2024 PiT Count:

- 164 people were identified as homeless.
- The highest self-identified gender demographic was male at 61%.
- 0% self-identified as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.
- 51% were aged 25 to 44 years.
- 44% self-identified as Indigenous or having Indigenous ancestry.
- 17% came to Canada as an immigrant or refugee.
- 39% had mental health challenges.

- 65% struggle with substance use.
- Average length of time in Fort McMurray was 6 years.
- 36% were found in an emergency shelter, and 30% in a domestic violence shelter or transitional housing unit.
- 42% had stayed in an emergency shelter in the past 12 months.
- 22% were experiencing homelessness for the first time within the past year.
- 28% identified finances as the cause for their most recent housing loss.
- 12% identified addiction as the cause for their most recent housing loss.
- 198 days was the average number of consecutive days individuals have experienced homelessness in the last 12 months.

b. The total number of the most recent “by name list” or person-specific datasets with the known number of individuals experiencing homelessness in the community

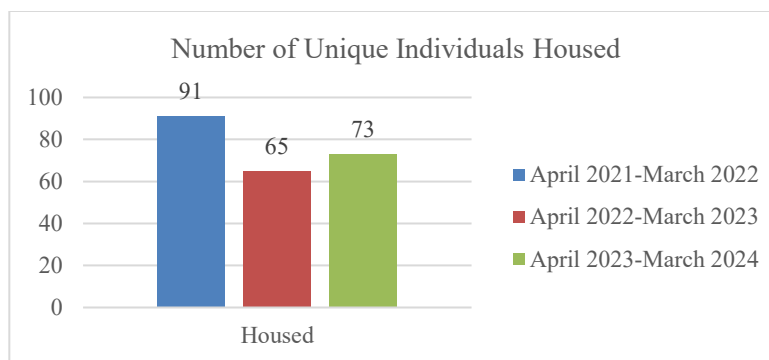
As of November 4, 2024, there were 107 active individuals on the By-Name List (BNL):

- 62 chronically homeless
- 14 families (adult)
- 2 youth (single)
- 62% self-identified as Indigenous
- 20% are staying in shelter
- 5% are staying in an encampment/outdoor
- 23 additional individuals are inactive due to loss of contact

c. Number of individuals housed during the previous three fiscal years

Since April 2021, there have been 450 enrollments in the Housing with Supports, Rapid Re-Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing programs. Over the last three years, 229 unique individuals have been housed, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 2: Number of Unique Individuals Housed through Housing with Support, Rapid Re-Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing Since April 2021



Data pulled from ETO Intake Report 2021 – 2024

During the fiscal year of April 1, 2023, to March 13, 2024:

- 73 individuals were housed in Rapid Re-Housing, Housing with Support or Permanent Supportive Housing, of which 51% self-identified as Indigenous.
- Of the 73 individuals housed, 70% came from emergency shelters or sleeping outside.
- A total of 75 warm transfers were completed to housing programs, where 69% were chronic individuals.

d. Number of successful graduates from Housing support programs during the previous three fiscal years

Over the past three fiscal years, there have been 53 successful graduates. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, graduation rates decreased by 52% from the previous fiscal year. The decrease was mainly attributed to staff turnover and unaffordable housing options. As a result, there is a greater emphasis on improving graduation rates for the upcoming 2024-2025 fiscal year. Chart #3 displays the number of successful graduates during the last three fiscal years.

Chart 3: Number of Successful Graduates from Housing with Supports, Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing



Data pulled from ETO Program Exit Interview Report 2021 – 2024

e. Emergency Services alerts and activations

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has experienced environmental and economic disaster from a major flood to oil industry layoffs and job loss. Syncrude Canada was officially taken over by Suncor Energy in the summer of 2023.

Prior to 2024 the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo had a tumultuous few years with events that we are still recovering from, including:

- The Horse River Fire in 2016 destroyed or permanently damaged approximately 2,579 dwellings, most of them residential – accounting for about 10% of all homes in Fort McMurray. Properties in Anzac and some oil sands project accommodations were also destroyed. As of January 2020, about 85% of wildfire rebuild dwellings were occupied as efforts to support residents in recovery continue at the Municipality and across the region. Some residents left the region and did not return.
- In 2020, the region experienced a 1-in-100-year flood, resulting in the evacuation of approximately 13,000 residents and damage to more than 1,200 structures. Many residents and businesses did not have adequate flood insurance and continue to struggle economically due to the flood. Housing agencies, the local shelter and daytime drop-in center were affected in the downtown core. People experiencing homelessness were moved to the Salvation Army church facility for shelter.
- In August 2023 the RMWB supported the evacuation response for the Northwest Territories by setting up a reception centre and taking evacuees into hotels along with offering community services to those in need.
- On April 21, 2024, an evacuation alert was issued for Sapræ Creek Estates. The evacuation alert was lifted on the evening of April 22, 2024.

- On May 14, 2024, an evacuation alert is in place for Fort McMurray, Sapræ Creek Estates, Gregoire Lake Estates, Fort McMurray First Nation #468, Anzac, and Rickards Landing Industrial Park. On May 14, 2024, an evacuation order was put in place for Abasand, Beacon Hill, Prairie Creek and Grayling Terrace, communities on the South side of Fort McMurray. RMWB staff went to Lac La Biche to support a reception site. On May 18, 2024, the evacuation order was lifted and residents returned home.
- On July 17, 2024, an Evacuation Alert was in place for the hamlet of Janvier. Residents did not need to leave but they had to remain to be prepared to leave on short notice in case an Evacuation Order is issued. The fires were contained, and the evacuation alert was lifted on July 25, 2024.

1. Community Engagement

Before the 2023-2024 year, the RMWB conducted in-depth community engagement activities to enrich this plan with information available from residents, including individuals with lived experience, and key collaborators. Engagement with Indigenous organizations is also a priority in the development of this community plan.

The RMWB CAB known as the Homelessness Initiatives Strategic Committee (HISC) met in June 2022 to review the priorities and trends in the urban center to inform the strategic direction for 2022-2024. Executive Directors from four funded agencies, including an Indigenous non-profit organization, were invited to speak to those working directly with the homeless population and share insight into the opportunities and solutions required to reach functional zero. Four hours of listening and reciprocal conversation highlighted over 96 notable recommendations and signposts for the path toward reaching and maintaining functional zero. The following trending topics, representing and informing aspects of the community plan, emerged from the discussion.

Indigeneity - The concept of Indigeneity was discussed throughout the plenary in various contexts. The relationships that organization staff have with the Indigenous population, particularly Indigenous patrons and members of Indigenous communities, was central to this topic. The organizations highlighted the relationships and knowledge that is essential to providing effective services to Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, practices rooted in Indigenous concepts of healing are a predominant need of the patrons being served, as 60% of the individuals on the caseload in 2021-2022 identified as Indigenous.

Currently, organizations are working with the Indigenous communities through informal methods of relationship building and leveraging, to provide advocacy and mentorship. There is an opportunity to decolonize funded programs, and intentionally invest in programs that are empowering traditional Indigenous practices, while honouring the history of Indigenous peoples in our community through authentic allyship. In partnership with the RCMP in the urban core, there is a specific need to increase Indigenous members and build capacity within the detachment to respond respectfully to circumstances involving Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness.

Service Delivery, Program Models, Staffing - A need for flexible program models was demonstrated in conversation with the agencies and is highlighted in the current data. Across organizations, there are differing approaches to issues of harm reduction, as well as differences in coordinated efforts to serve client needs. In part, this is due to the unique services each organization provides to ensure variety and adaptability in service delivery for patrons based on individual mission and mandate. There is a desire for further clarity in relation to mandates, specifically the mandates of the provincial government,

municipal government, and Indigenous councils such as Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC). Opportunities identified to assist in achieving functional zero included doubling caseworkers, creating a Systems Navigator position to work with Indigenous communities to reconnect patrons with resources in their communities and increase access to services throughout the region, and expansion models and programs was a central theme. 'Support' was highlighted as a necessary service to promote healing where mental health (including complex trauma) is a barrier. Support groups, companionship and teaching were identified as types of support that are currently effective. Indigenous support to heal intergenerational trauma has been successful as well, as reported by one agency, through partnerships including the Aunties Network. Other unique opportunities to support individual development and purpose include employment programs in the urban center, such as specific jobs in urban parks. Action items emerging from the plenary related to service delivery and program models included the recommendation for a Standard of Practice for organizations that support ongoing positive patron interaction and representation. Increased communication and information sharing across the sector to increase consistency and collaborative methods would be an advantage to all.

Advocacy and Education - Education aimed at raising awareness of the issues affecting those experiencing homelessness and the resources available in our community, as well as providing education around concepts of homelessness, would benefit the experiences of individuals as well as the capacity of partners, urban businesses, and authorities such as RCMP and Alberta Health Services (AHS) who are in frequent contact with this population. Education focused on school aged individuals that promotes positive social health, awareness of homelessness, and reconciliation has the potential to interfere with future biases and foster compassion.

Housing - Discussion around housing began with a depiction of the data for 2021-2022, as well as agency reported experiences and observations. Currently, the data tells us that within our community, we are unable to house those with the most complex, chronic experiences of homelessness. This stems from several factors, including lack of affordable housing, lack of alternative housing options, and the need for different housing models. These factors are compounded by global economic inflation, which is having an impact on affordability, occupancy, and increased barriers to graduate from Housing First. Possible solutions identified throughout the plenary included development of unique approaches to treatment, such as recovery housing and the expansion of services within the Housing First model, an increase in case management, increased access to affordable units, inclusion of other landlords in the education and management of housing those with mental health and recovery needs, as well as improving knowledge of the housing model in rural areas to support individuals who are accessing services in the urban area. To approach these opportunities and progress them forward, Wood Buffalo

Housing has committed to setting up regular meetings with the agency Executive Directors. In conclusion, there was a consensus that the goal of reaching and maintaining functional zero does not solve the ongoing needs of those who cycle in and out of homelessness over time. Ensuring that programs and support are maintained to improve the experience for those who may not recover from chronic experiences of homelessness is paramount.

Social Health - Data from 2021-2022 tells us that graduation barriers for the Housing First program are income (primarily financial stability), access to housing, addictions and substance use, and mental health. Addictions and mental health add complexity to the goal of functional zero, as support for complex mental health is limited both in availability and efficacy and increase social health issues simultaneously. Social determinants of health are another matter and are influenced by similar factors such as economic stability, health care access and quality, and community and social relationships. Reportedly, there has been an increase in the number of domestic violence survivors accessing shelters and other programs, resulting from a shift in education and culture of healthy relationships. Nonetheless, it is still common for individuals to remain in domestic violence situations until rental subsidy has been received. Building capacity with patrons holistically and through life skills training is expected to improve social health, though expansion of available services to include improved supports for complex mental health, addictions, and trauma was identified by organizations as a priority need. Among possible solutions to social health issues, addressing drug use and accessibility to drugs was identified as a concern that effects the efforts of reaching functional zero. Drugs enable cyclical experiences of homelessness that impact individuals, families, and the community. In 2021-2022, families and couples accounted for 22% of the caseload. Encampments in the urban center are reportedly resulting from the need for flexible housing options and recovery programs, as well as the need for social health programs both during experiences of homelessness and as individuals reintegrate.

Prevention - Statistically, there was an increase in episodic homelessness in 2021-2022 that is suspected to be resulting from inflationary pressures and other economic factors, including the influx of individuals to the region seeking employment but not finding financial stability. The RMWB will be monitoring data for trends including the inflationary effects on episodic homelessness throughout the remainder of the current reporting cycle. Opportunities for prevention include a reduction in episodic homelessness (increasing diversion), preventing where possible the influx of individuals or reuniting individuals with their home communities and support systems. Increasing life skills programs, the Recovery Oriented System of Care and development of flexibility within programs and housing models to decrease episodic homelessness are additional approaches to prevention that have been identified. The culminative

effect of addressing the emerging priorities highlighted during the plenary enables prevention and serves the goal of reaching functional zero.

HISC members identified the following themes.

Awareness - Educating the community on issues creating and sustaining homelessness, concepts of homelessness, and awareness of resources in the region. Elevating Indigenous history to promote reconciliation, disrupt racism and encourage empathy.

Adaptability - Flexibility of policies and practices to adapt programs that serve the needs of the community, and creative redevelopment of program/housing models to expand possibility in the range of services available. Increased capacity within community to strengthen prevention services.

Accountability - Increased collaboration across the community with partners serving or responding to the needs of those experiencing homelessness. Increased information sharing practices across organizations. Accessibility to affordable housing and increased housing options. Inclusion of other landlords.

Investment - Intentional direction of funding to support evidence-based impact initiatives and to support increasing capacity in organizations (staffing, expansion of programs).

Indigenous Relations - Mapping available resources, encouraging support for individuals within their home communities, and honouring Indigenous traditions of healing and reintegration.

In the fall and winter (October/November) of 2022/2023, the RMWB Community Plan on Homelessness (CPH) team conducted stakeholder engagements with the Coordinated Access Systems Team (CAST) and the homeless service sector. Feedback was collected on the following questions which is used to inform this community plan.

1. From your perspective, what are the current and emerging needs within the homeless sector in Fort McMurray? Is there evidence of trends that were not mentioned? Please briefly share any information you have.
2. How might we prioritize the key needs in Fort McMurray to lead to actionable and impactful recommendations for all service providers?
3. What do you view as the shared responsibility to end homelessness?
4. Speak to some of the opportunities within your programs in terms of meeting the current goals for reaching functional zero.
5. Looking ahead: our community has reached functional zero, how are we sustaining it?

In December 2022, the CPH team conducted a series of Lived Experience Engagements with support from the funded agencies, Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, Centre of Hope, Salvation Army and YMCA of Northern Alberta. The discussions of the engagements focused on the following community plan aspects:

1. Barriers within the system/Barriers to being lifted out of homelessness
2. Supports missing (gaps in services)
3. What services are working well
4. What do you want others to know about your experience
5. Opportunities/Solutions

Participation in the various methods of engagement included representatives from urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous not-for-profit organizations, as well as membership from the local CE and HISC, federal, provincial and municipal government and people with lived experience. Virtual as well as in-person options for sessions were given to reduce barriers to participation.

Through these various sessions, input was provided to inform priorities for the RMWB Community Plan for the next four years. Based on discussions with community partners, it was determined that Housing Services would continue to receive investments from Reaching Home. Coordinated Access (Centralized Intake) and Client Support Services through Outreach programming will continue to be funded. In addition, should more funding be available, we will expand our Shelter Diversion program to include two coordinators and will continue to fund the Eviction Prevention Program.

Fort McMurray has experienced an increase in the number of newcomers to Canada, including refugee claimants and international students, many of whom are facing challenges in securing housing and work. As such, through the shelter diversion program appropriate referrals were made for 14 individuals with our local college and refugee support services through the YMCA of Northern Alberta.

The Heading Home BBQ is an annual event held in collaboration and partnership between the funded sub-project organizations and the CE. Under the CPH this is a celebration of success for residents in the local housing programs; and the community support agencies that offer their services to the near homeless and residents experiencing homelessness. The BBQ provides an opportunity for agencies and residents to network, share resources and referrals, information and success stories.

Held in the summer over the past 12 years, the 2024 Heading Home BBQ was another successful event. With over 100 attendees, the BBQ is a great social event for residents to gather with friends to enjoy food, music and network with agencies. 61 grab bags and 8 door prizes were distributed. An Indigenous drummer sang songs

and radio music was played throughout the event by a volunteer experiencing homelessness. Certificates of appreciation were handed out to funded program staff for their contributions in working with residents. The BBQ was attended by Coordinated Access System Team (CAST) members as well as government agencies and homeless serving agencies.

On October 9, 2024, the Homeless Connect annual event was held. This event is aimed at supporting people experiencing homelessness and meeting participant needs in preparation for the winter months. In addition to housing support, some individuals benefit from more intensive or alternate support. This event connects households to the support necessary to keep them alive and achieve longer-term life and housing stability through housing support. It is estimated that approximately 150+ homeless individuals attended the event and received resources and referrals, a hot lunch, and comradeship.

A Point in Time (PiT) Count engagement was hosted at the Homeless Connect by way of conducting surveys at the event.

The RMWB Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Home and Belonging, passed on September 8, 2023. The municipality will prepare a new long-term comprehensive housing plan to address homelessness, building on the work done in the Municipality's 2010-2020 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. This work will be done by Community Services, Planning and Development and Indigenous Relations.

The CE is also seeking consultation on community safety and social wellbeing for Q1 of 2025. This project will include aspects of housing and homelessness launching us into the next four years.

Moving into 2024 and beyond, dialogue will continue for working with the Indigenous Rural Relations Division and representatives, Chiefs, advocates, allies, Indigenous agency staff from rural communities to secure a consultation firm to support and coordinate needs assessments in the rural communities in the region. The needs assessment would incorporate a combination of service mapping activities, community engagement sessions, and housing needs and demands assessments either in each rural community within the region or across the entire region. In March 2024 pre discussions took place with the Rural Development Network (RDN) to support the consultation.

RMWB Program Managers attended an RDN First Nations Data Collection Project information session where RDN shared their learnings and experiences when working with First Nations for data collection purposes.

Leading up to the continuation of the Community Plan for the new funding cycle of 2024-2028, the CE intends to move forward to having regularly scheduled engagement sessions in the urban service area and work more closely with our internal Indigenous Relations Division and Planning Division to support the

preparation of a new long-term comprehensive regional housing plan to address homelessness.

On October 10, 2023, the RMWB amended its Committee's Bylaw to add the Homelessness Initiatives Strategic Committee (HISC) which represents as the CAB, to the list of RMWB Council-appointed committees. This provides an opportunity to have a more abundant recruitment strategy, additional exposure and visibility, and a direct touch point to RMWB Council for advocacy and knowledge transfer. Although Council membership on HISC does not have voting capacity, they do have the ability to bring areas of concern and success to Council's attention.

HISC is an action-focused group that stewards and advocates for ending homelessness in the community. The committee is involved with strategic planning, funding, communication, research and best practice. It advocates for funding and policy change along with advising the RMWB Community Partnerships and Initiatives (CPI) department on strategic direction and program priorities. Additionally, HISC makes funding decisions for the RMWB related to federal and provincial funding, complies with provincial and federal agreements, identifies systems barriers and works collaboratively with community organizations to alleviate system barriers.

Homeless Initiatives Strategic Committee (HISC)

The HISC is an action-focused group which stewards and advocates for the community plan on homelessness.

Available Positions:

2-Indigenous representatives
 2-Public-At-Large representatives
 1-Downtown business community representative
 1-Addictions and Mental Health sector representative
 1-Public Housing representative
 1-Local Funder representative
 1-Non-Municipal Justice or Enforcement representative

On September 17, 2024, the Director and Manager of Community Services, spoke to the proposed amendment to Appendix N of the Committee's Bylaw No. 17/024 noting that the amendment to Appendix N Homelessness Initiative Strategic Committee, adds two non-voting representatives from the Provincial Government and the Federal Government, as required by the Federal and Provincial Funding Agreements.

HISC is responsible for the disbursement of Federal (Reaching Home) and Provincial (Outreach Support Services Initiatives) funding into the community. Moving forward with a vision of ending chronic homelessness by 50% by 2027 and reaching and maintaining Functional Zero ending chronic homelessness, HISC remains in support of the following core funded programs:

- Housing First

- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Tawâw Indigenous Housing
- Centralized Intake
- Prevention
- Diversion
- Outreach.

HISC will be working with Indigenous, Rural Relations to discuss the idea of reflecting homelessness as a standard in the RMWB protocol agreements with the First Nations and Métis communities.

The CE will continue to seek partnership and collaboration opportunities to endorse and support successful programming in our region.

The CE and HISC theory of change is a coordinated, and inclusive approach that is critical for ensuring the prevention of chronic homelessness in the community of Fort McMurray.

To accelerate collaboration of necessary supports and resources, the Community Plan on Homelessness (CPH) team of the RMWB promotes:

- Strengthened processes across the sector
- Improved partnership relations
- Adaptive program models

These principles create change through effective response, to reach and maintain Functional Zero ending chronic homelessness.

2024/2025 fiscal year had its challenges as we had one of our four long-term housing agencies opt out of the Housing First program expressing that they would be unable to deliver the program with the amount of rent supplement they were provided. The remaining three agencies divided up the 45-patron caseload and took the patrons into their care. With funding support from the RMWB, HISC eliminated the Rapid Re-housing program and expanded Permanent Supportive Housing options. Eviction prevention was upgraded to support a staff person and with the support of local data, another outreach service was added to the community funded programs.

Agency agreements were streamlined so that if an agency received both Federal and Provincial funding that only one agreement would be necessary instead of individual agreements for each stream of funding.

2025/2026 fiscal year the Homeless Connect and the Heading Home BBQ will be offered into the request for information for agencies to apply putting on the event with the RMWB CPH team collaborating and partnering in a supportive role.

This community plan will see the RMWB focus on encampments and the provision of Client Support Services through outreach programming to make sure that our

residents experiencing homelessness have housing options. This in turn will push us forward in reaching Functional zero ending chronic homelessness in our region.

The Encampment Working Group is a team of internal departments and divisions who come together every second week to discuss and respond to encampments. Community Services including Bylaw and Rural Relations, RCMP, Indigenous Rural Relations and guest Indigenous organizations such as Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC) meet to review the byname list for people living in encampments, mapping, support services, gap identification and problem solving.

The RMWB enacted the Encampment Response Strategy on two separate occasions:

On August 9, 2023, under the leadership, guidance and facilitation of the RMWB leadership team, Fort McMurray and partner agencies completed a successful decampment resulting in housing 29 individuals who were living rough.

On October 10, 2024, Fort McMurray engaged in a successful decampment. Partner agencies, Bylaw, RCMP, victims' services, CPH, Indigenous Rural Relations Division, Councillor Kendrick Cardinal, ATC, parks, roads, RCMP Indigenous Liaison Officer, Indigenous Elder, RCMP BEAT, Street Connect, Outreach programs came together in the early morning to provide housing options to people residing in the encampment. Support was provided to people with their moves. First Nations, Métis Nations and Locals were notified of the decampment.

A decampment debrief meeting was held on October 17, 2024, with all the collaborating agencies. One lesson learned, after the debrief meeting, was if trees are removed from a decampment, the land and trees must be blessed and thanked in ceremony.

Meetings continue with agencies regarding encampments and the ability to house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Sharing of encampment information with First Nations and Métis Nations and Locals. The CE in collaboration with First Nations, Métis Nations and Locals, funded homeless serving agencies and, the RMWB Indigenous Rural Relations Division are working on a system of identifying people living in encampments who could be members of any one of the six First Nations or six Métis communities in the region. Identifying band membership could lead to extra support for people experiencing homelessness. A draft consent of disclosure of information was sent to funded agencies for review and feedback. This consent allows outreach workers to gather consent from people living in encampments to share information with their respective First Nations and Métis Nations and Locals. This is an opportunity for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness to potentially garner supports from their bands.

CAST meetings are held monthly where the byname list is reviewed and people experiencing homelessness are tracked for progress into housing. The CE is conducting a review and update of the Encampment Response Strategy along with the Extreme Weather Procedure. There is a focus on supporting individuals experiencing homelessness who do not sleep in encampments but utilize bus shelters, cars and business egress for sleeping.

The funded agencies participate in the YMM Wellness Connect facilitated by Alberta Health Services through Mental Health and Addictions and the UofC LiveRX project. They have an event in the summer and the fall. The YMM Wellness Connect mirrors the Homeless Connect. The CE has asked them to partner with Homeless Connect for their fall event. YMM Wellness Connect offers health screening and other service delivery including Sexual Health, Immunizations, Addiction and Mental Health, Healthcare cards, income tax services, haircuts and a hot lunch with door prizes etc.

With a look to the future, and into 2027:

- The CE maintains enhanced relationships with service providers, remains a strong advocate for funding, and has increased and strengthened its ability to collect and use accurate data to make decisions. The community retains a strong support system of programming and staff and is culturally sensitive and appropriate when using a person-centered approach.
- The most significant housing gap continues to be funding ability. Restrictions have been somewhat relaxed and in 2023 HISC funded a diversion program and homelessness prevention program.
- Although the situation is improving, there remains a need for more knowledge-sharing, advocacy through consistent messaging, and a community understanding of the impact of housing issues and homelessness.
- The stock of affordable, safe, and habitable housing in the rural communities is limited and maintenance costs for existing housing can be high. Consequently, housing in those areas can be unstable and less attainable.

The goal is to raise awareness about available programs and support by increasing collaboration between organizations to better serve those in need and collect important information about community progress towards ending homelessness. To ensure the success of the CAS, it will be important to engage with the community and various groups, stakeholders, service providers, and individuals with lived experience. In August 2023, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness recognized Fort McMurray as the third community in Canada to reach Functional Zero Veteran Homelessness. This milestone would not have been possible without the work of 14 community organizations supporting the program and serving the homeless sector. The work of the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada was imperative to reaching this milestone.

Progress is being made in rural housing attainability with the move of mobile homes from Fort McMurray Ptarmigan Park to Fort McKay. Since 2022, RMWB Council, Indigenous and Rural Relations and Planning and Development have worked in

collaboration with Conklin, Janvier, Fort McKay and Fort Chipewyan for the placement of mobile home units from Fort McMurray, Ptarmigan Park that were purchased by the RMWB after the 1 in 100-year flood.

The Program Manager attended a webinar presented by the Alberta Government regarding the Affordable Housing Partnership Program grant. Application information was shared with rural and funded agencies for an opportunity to apply.

The CE is reviewing and updating the existing Encampment Response Strategy and Extreme Weather Procedure. These will be vetted by the Encampment Working Group and collaborating agencies.

In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, HISC determined that the discontinuation of the Rapid Re-housing program was necessary as it was performing as a Housing First program. Because of the inability of participants to sustain and maintain housing due to affordability the residents had to rely on the rent supplement. Unaffordability is also a barrier to graduation in some instances of participants in the Housing First program.

In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, the YMCA removed itself from the Housing First program. They had a caseload of 45 participants from the previous year. The caseload was divided up by the other agencies and budget and agreement amendments were made to accommodate the shift.

2. Investment Plan

2.1 In the table below, please identify your community's allocation of Reaching Home funding in the DC or TH and Community Capacity and Innovation (CCI) streams from 2024-25 to 2027-28¹.

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
Reaching Home Annual Allocation	\$1,025,008	\$1,025,008	\$1,051,923	\$1,051,923	\$4,153,862

2.2 In the table below, please outline your planned division of DC/TH and CCI Reaching Home funding from 2024-25 to 2027-28 by activity area. Please note that it is acceptable that your community's funding priorities change over time. This investment plan is to demonstrate that your community has a vision of moving forward for the allocation of Reaching Home funding.

¹ Communities on two-year agreement extensions should report on investment plans for 2024-25 and 2025-26 at this time.

Activities area	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Housing Services	60%	60%	67%	67%
Prevention and Shelter Diversion	14%	14%	13%	13%
Client Support Services	0%	%	%	%
Capital Investments	0%	0%	0%	0%
Coordination of Resources and Data Quality Improvement	11%	11%	5%	5%
Administration	15%	15%	15%	15%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

2.3 In the text box below, please describe how Community Capacity and Innovation (CCI) funding will be used to support coordinated and data-driven service delivery (e.g., supporting Coordinated Access, the Outcomes-Based Approach and use of HIFIS or existing, equivalent Homeless Management Information System).

The Community Capacity and Innovation funding will be used to support Coordinated Access by way of the Centralized Intake sub-project.

3. Cost-Matching Requirement

3.1 In the table below, please outline all funding for homelessness initiatives expected to be received from other funders from 2024-25 to 2027-28². This includes both financial and in-kind contributions.

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
Reaching Home Annual Allocation	\$1,025,008	\$1,025,008	\$1,051,923	\$1,051,923	\$6,070,029

² Communities on two-year agreement extensions should report on cost-matching for 2024-25 and 2025-26 at this time.

Projected Funding From Other Funders towards Homelessness Initiatives					
Program Name and Funder	2024-25 (\$)	2025-26 (\$)	2026-27 (\$)	2027-28 (\$)	Total (\$)
OSSI Provincial Funding	\$3,251,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	3,251,000
Provincial FCSS	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0
RMWB Funding	\$132,068	\$0	\$0	\$0	132,068
RMWB Transit (lift)	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$210,000	\$210,000	840,000
RMWB In-kind	\$130,362	\$841,923	\$841,923	\$841,923	2,656,131
TOTAL	\$3,723,430	\$1,051,923	\$1,051,923	\$1,051,923	\$6,879,199

3.2 If your anticipated community contributions are not projected to match funding from Reaching Home for each year, please explain the circumstances below and include a description of the steps you will take to meet the requirement.

The community contributions are projected to match funding from Reaching Home for each year.

4. Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

4.1 Using your 2023-24 CHR as a guide³, please check the box if you have met the following minimum requirements as of March 31, 2024⁴. Any status updates since March 31, 2024, must also be reflected:

Minimum Requirement	Has the MR been met?	Minimum Requirement	Has the MR been met?
HIFIS MR 1	N/A	HIFIS MR 3	☐
HIFIS MR 2	x	HIFIS MR 4	x

³ For more information on how the minimum requirements align with your Community Homelessness Report, please consult the Community Plan Guide.

⁴ Communities with two-year agreement extensions are not required to complete section 4 at this time.

4.2 For each minimum requirement that has not yet been met (as identified in 4.1), complete a table below to describe how you will meet it by March 31, 2026. Please note that confirmation that communities are on track to do this will be required by October 31, 2025.

Minimum Requirement not yet met: HIFIS MR3	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion
(HIFIS MR3) 2.4g- not started yet. We are working with CAB to integrate the Indigenous community. When someone new arrives, who identifies as homeless and is from that community, we connect them with the individuals for added support. We are also working on a dashboard that will give the Indigenous communities access to real-time data.	March 2025

5. Coordinated Access

5.1 Using your 2023-24 CHR as a guide⁵, please check the box if you have met the following minimum requirements as of March 31, 2024⁶. Any status updates since March 31, 2024, must also be reflected:

Minimum Requirement	Has the MR been met?	Minimum Requirement	Has the MR been met?
CA MR 1	N/A	CA MR 10	☒
CA MR 2	N/A	CA MR 11	☒
CA MR 3	☒	CA MR 12	☒
CA MR 4	☒	CA MR 13	☒
CA MR 5	☒	CA MR 14	☒
CA MR 6	☒	CA MR 15	☐
CA MR 7	☒	CA MR 16	☒
CA MR 8	☐	CA MR 17	☒
CA MR 9	☒	CA MR 18	☒

5.2 For each minimum requirement that has not yet been met (as identified in 5.1), complete a table below to describe how you will meet it by March 31, 2026. Note that confirmation that communities are on track to do this will be required by October 31, 2025.

Minimum requirement not yet met: CA MR 8	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion
(2.19b- not yet) We are currently undergoing system changes and reviewing them. Once they are finalized, we will update our System Map to include the funding source, eligibility of service, capacity of service, role in maintaining quality data used for a unique identifier list, and whether the service provider currently uses HIFIS.	October 2025
(2.19d-not yet) With the implementation of HIFIS, all Access Points will be on the system, which will improve data quality. Checks and balances will be put in place to ensure data accuracy.	April 2025

Minimum Requirement not yet met: CA MR 15	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion

⁵ For more information on how the minimum requirements align with your CHR, please consult the Community Plan Guide.

⁶ Communities with two-year agreement extensions are not required to complete section 5 at this time.

(2.11b- not yet) With HIFIS being implemented, new consent forms and triage process are being developed. Housing plans are included in this development.	March 2025

Minimum Requirement not yet met: [CE to add here]	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion

Minimum Requirement not yet met: [CE to add here]	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion

5.3 Describe how ongoing, meaningful collaboration on Coordinated Access between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners has or will take place as your community works to implement, maintain and improve a Coordinated Access system.

[The Municipality started developing a Coordinated Access System (CAS) and a By-Name List (BNL) in 2017, working with partners across the province and Canada to observe and follow best practices. The Coordinated Access System Team (CAST), which is made up of experts in the community who work directly and primarily with individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, was formed in June 2019. There are members from each Community Access Point (CAP) who were selected based on their knowledge, insight, and ideas about how to end chronic homelessness. At this point, CAST served as an advisory group for the initial development of the CAS. It is working with the CE to assume governance of the project and build the capacity of members to undertake this work. The CAS officially started on Sept. 9, 2019, as a partnership pilot with three community service providers as CAPs. It is a multi-phased approach, first targeting service providers that work directly with the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless and then community agencies at large. The Coordinated Access System has been fully functioning since January 2020 with 19 access points trained and provided the knowledge and resources to complete VI-SPDAT's and complete community referrals for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. The development of the CAS has bridged many community gaps for individuals experiencing homelessness to access housing support. Individuals are now offered housing referral services and the opportunity to be added to the BNL at 19
--

different access points in the community. Prior to the implementation of CAS, individuals and families could only access housing supports at one agency in the Urban Service Area, which created many barriers for individuals and families to accessing services.

The following Access Points have been implemented in the community since September 2019:

- Alberta Health Services - Street Connect
- Alberta Health Services - Inpatient Psychiatry
- Alberta Health Services - Assertive Outreach Services (AOS)
- Alberta Health Services – Emergency Room
- Centre of Hope - Drop in Centre
- Centre of Hope - Outreach Program
- Centre of Hope – Street Outreach
- Centre of Hope – NEAFAN
- Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre
- The Salvation Army - Mat Program
- The Salvation Army - Men's Program
- The Salvation Army - Community Response Unit
- The Salvation Army – Diversion Program
- Waypoints - Unity House
- Waypoints - Second Stage Housing
- Waypoints - Outreach Program
- Wood Buffalo Wellness Society - Centralized Intake
- Wood Buffalo Wellness Society - Outreach Program
- Wood Buffalo Wellness Society - Mark Amy Treatment Centre
- Wood Buffalo Wellness Society - Tawâw

During engagement sessions in the rural hamlets, relationships were developed with various community leaders and volunteer groups to highlight what CAS could potentially look like in their areas. As part of the community role of the CAS, the CE has identified groups in each hamlet that may be interested in being a CAP and initial conversations have begun.

Challenges are expected as the CAS expands into the rural communities due to limited resources within those communities and time needed to build strong relationships. However, the CE is committed to ensuring that CAS is successfully developed across the region - including the rural communities - to support all community members in need and make greater progress towards ending chronic homelessness. Thus far, the CE has taken initial steps to discuss CA in rural communities during the open house engagements and has received positive feedback and interest. There have been initial discussions with Indigenous organizations, Indigenous and rural representatives on HISC, and the municipal Indigenous and Rural Relations department to discuss CA and what this system could look like in rural and Indigenous communities. Over the next several months the CE, HISC, and service providers will continue working with

Indigenous communities to hold dialogues about CA and finding collaborative strategies to address housing and homelessness in rural communities.

The CAS is geared towards housing the most vulnerable and chronically homeless individuals and families. Those experiencing homelessness connect with a CAP, which then determines their housing needs using triage and assessment tools - i.e., the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) and the Program Eligibility form. The CAPs send completed assessments and the necessary paperwork to the Centralized Intake Team at the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society, which then prioritizes individuals and families through the BNL.

Those with the highest level of need and with the most chronic experiences of homelessness are placed at the top of the list and for Housing First. Individuals who have cyclically received housing supports with limited success and require a higher level of support and care that other programs cannot provide are prioritized for Permanent Supportive Housing Programs. When spots in the respective programs become available, participants are referred to each agency via supported transfer and the BNL is updated.

The CAS also serves to divert individuals and families who are not prioritized for supported housing programs to other avenues of outreach and external agencies to address their needs. As the CAPs increase, so will referral programs. Also, the CAS and BNL are valuable data collection tools. With the BNL, the community can see regularly updated data about the homeless population, which assists evidence-based decision-making. The RMWB has been a member of Built for Zero Canada (BFZ), a Canada-wide campaign to end chronic homelessness since 2019. The RMWB has been recognized nationally for achieving various milestones. The following milestones have been achieved by the community:

- On July 6, 2020, BFZ – C announced that the RMWB had reached its three-year-long goal of achieving a quality BNL and a quality Veteran BNL. This designation required extensive development of procedures and rigorous data collection and analysis. With that achievement comes Nationwide recognition and various changes to the work the community will do with the campaign in the future.
- The first milestone of 10% reduction in chronic homelessness for three consecutive months was achieved in August 2020.
- On August 20, 2020, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) released a newsletter outlining the successes of Fort McMurray and how the community remained housing focused in response to COVID-19 and a major flood.
- The RMWB has also achieved recognition for a basic Coordinated Access Scorecard and the Reaching Home Coordinated Access Scorecard.
- In May 2021 the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness confirmed the Basic level of Coordinated Access.
- On April 30, 2023, the RMWB achieved Functional Zero Veteran Homelessness.

We are looking forward to maintaining momentum and action improvements to reach Absolute Zero Veteran Homelessness.

]

6. Outcomes-Based Approach

6.1 Using your 2023-24 Community Homelessness Report as a guide⁷, please check the box if you have met the following minimum requirements as of March 31, 2024⁸. Any status updates since March 31, 2024, must also be reflected:

Minimum Requirement	Has the MR been met?	Minimum Requirement	Has the MR been met?
OBA MR 1	N/A	OBA MR 6	☐
OBA MR 2	N/A	OBA MR 7	☐
OBA MR 3	☐	OBA MR 8	☐
OBA MR 4	☐	OBA MR 9	☐
OBA MR 5	☐		

6.2 For each minimum requirement that has not yet been met (as identified in 6.1), including those modified and new as of 2024-25, complete a table below to describe how you will meet it by March 31, 2026. Please note that confirmation that communities are on track to do this will be required by October 31, 2025.

Minimum Requirement not yet met: [CE to add here]	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion

Minimum Requirement not yet met: [CE to add here]	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion

Minimum Requirement not yet met: [CE to add here]	
What are the next steps the community will take to meet this requirement?	Target date for completion

⁷ For more information on how the minimum requirements align with your Community Homelessness Report, please consult the Community Plan Guide.

⁸ Communities with two-year agreement extensions are not required to complete section 6 at this time.

6.3 Please describe how ongoing and meaningful collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners has or will take place as your community works to meet the OBA minimum requirements. In communities where the Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness streams co-exist, collaboration with the IH-CE and I-CAB (where applicable) is expected.

In addition, to the five core community level outcomes, the CE will track increased accessibility of housing and support services for homeless individuals. The indicators of success will be the number of Community Access Points (CAPs), new individuals referred to outreach services, and individuals accessing housing support services through the Coordinated Access System (CAS) and Centralized Intake (CI). By 2022, the CE aims to increase the number of referrals by 30 percent, increase the number of individuals accessing housing support by 33 percent, and have 80 percent of identified CAPs launched. These indicators will be tracked through CI quarterly and annual reporting, use of common assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) and database collection tools (Efforts to Outcomes).

From 2019 to 2022, all indicators identified during this period have been met and have exceeded expectation. There was a 94% increase in referrals made for participants, and a 63% increase in individuals accessing housing, despite only a 6% rise in those seeking housing support. Additionally, regarding CAP (Community Access Points), there was an 83% increase in access points since 2019.

Leading up to 2028 the CE will continue to track the increased accessibility of housing and support services for people experiencing homelessness. The indicators of success will be the number of CAPs, new individuals referred to outreach services, and individuals accessing housing support services through CAS and Centralized Intake (CI).

2022/2023

With the infusion of new funding from Reaching Home, the CE is on track to reaching and sustaining Functional Zero ending chronic homelessness for the community, with a focus on Indigenous housing and supports in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Housing First and Outreach programs have been funded through an Indigenous serving organization. A new Graduate Program has been developed and implemented during the 2021-2022 funding year, the Diversion Program had been established in the 2020-2021 funding year and was provided increased funding with the new Reaching Home funding in the 2021-2022 year. With these added programs and increased community supports, it is predicted that there will be more opportunities for housing supports in the community and more individuals will be quickly transferred off the BNL, which will support the goal of achieving Functional Zero in the community.

2024/2025

2024/2025 brought a new Street Reach Outreach Sub-Project to the fiscal. With the increase in encampments the street reach program has been an asset to providing services to those most in need and experiencing homelessness.

First funded in 2024/2025 the COH Outreach Program received funding for a staff person to reach out to and serve any person in the community experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

With the Federal Reaching Home stabilization funding of \$240,443 in 2024/2025 fiscal the CE was able to fund only partial programs for increases in rent supplement, rent and utility arrears, damages and client needs. This support will assist with the delay in housing individuals due to high rental rates and other costs in the Urban Services Area. We were disheartened to learn that the Northern communities were not considered for the Encampment Response funding and have asked the Federal government to provide an explanation for the decisions made regarding the funding.

In December of 2024 the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness B4Z-C earmarked our community for an application submission for an innovative project supported with Reaching Home Funds. We are focused on a private landlord incentive program so we can build our inventory of private landlords for our housing community. With more landlords we would have the potential to reach and maintain Functional Zero, ending chronic homelessness in our community.

We have met with the CAEH Training Advisor for a quote on their Encampment Response Service Training for our Encampment Working Group and collaborators. We are in the process of answering a host of questions supporting the preparation of a package of information.

The CAB has engaged with the National Indigenous Homelessness Council, attending their AGM and participating in a welcome and coffee chat with their community and data liaisons. The CAB is also preparing for a strategic planning session on Thursday January 30, 2025, continuing to move the community forward with actions and updates to the Moving Forward report.

To have a complete picture the CE is currently working on ways to conduct the PiT enumeration regionally so that all the communities are included. The CE is also working on methods to bring the Homeless Connect to various communities throughout the region with the support of interdivisional collaboration and partnerships.

By March of 2025 we anticipate the transfer from ETO to HIFIS to be complete and successful. The CE has hired a consultant to support the transfer of information. The province has a team of experts who offer support and in December the Federal HIFIS representative visited to train staff and share their knowledge. The CE has also designated a staff person to be the lead on the HIMD transfer.

7. Official Language Minority Communities

The Government of Canada has a responsibility under the [Official Languages Act](#) to ensure that programs and services meet the needs of Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs). Please describe the steps that you will take to ensure that the services funded under [Reaching Home](#) take the needs of the OLMCs into consideration, where applicable.

The Coordinator for the Permanent Supportive Housing program with the Center of Hope is fluent in both official languages (French and English) and can provide services in both languages for individuals receiving intensive case management.

During the assessment and triage process CI will directly refer individuals and families who require language and/or cultural services to service providers who offer those resources, whether they are prioritized into the housing support programs. Once participants are referred into the housing support programs, their caseworkers have tools and information to support their cultural and language needs either directly within their agency or refer any needs they are unable to meet to an external service provider.

Once the CAS is functioning at full capacity, there will be more diversity in languages being offered to support individuals in the region. The goal is to have the Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC) and Nistawayou Association Friendship Centre serve as CAPs. Currently, the Nistawayou Association Friendship Centre serves as a CAP in a part time capacity. These organizations provide essential services to Indigenous individuals in the Municipality and have staff and/or volunteers who speak Cree and Dene and can provide services in these languages to individuals accessing housing supports. This is a key objective as the CAS is rolled out.

To ensure inclusivity, there are various resources within the community to meet the needs of individuals who speak French, English, and other languages:

- Unity House provides translation services for individuals who are staying in the women's homeless shelter. This service provides everyone with the opportunity to receive all necessary supports during their stay at the shelter.
- The Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo provides cultural events in the community to be inclusive for all individuals in the region. The Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo also provides interpretation services with 24-hour availability along with cultural interpretation for individuals seeking assistance. As well, the agency provides certified translation services in more than 45 languages.
- YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services (ISS) offers support to those new to Canada and the Municipality. The organization provides various services, supportive counseling, translation and interpretation, employment insurance benefits, and child tax benefits.

- Employment Link provides support to French speaking Canadians and immigrant services to obtain employment. This program provides one on one help with creating resumes, cover letters, and job searches.
- ACFA (French Canadian Association of Alberta) has an office in Wood Buffalo and promotes the cultural and wellbeing of Francophones in the region. It organizes cultural events, classes, and French-speaking early childhood classes (0 months to five years). FRAP (Francophonie Albertaine Plurielle) being a subsidiary of ACFA offers services in French to welcome, establish, and re-establish newcomers to Alberta. Its main goal is to promote diversity, economic and cultural inclusion of Francophones.
- There is also support in the community for languages such as Cree and Dene, with the Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC). The ATC has developed a Cree and Dene app to download on cell phones. Their main goal in developing this app is to preserve the Indigenous languages, they had worked closely with elders to develop the app, and it contains more than 400 words.
- The CE through the Indigenous Relations Department has access to Cree and Dene translation.

8. Community Advisory Board—Designated Communities/Territorial Homelessness

Note: You may list more than one name/organization for each sector, and you may list a name/organization in more than one sector, as applicable.

(Lines below can be removed where not applicable)

Sector	CAB Members
Infrastructure Canada (Ex-Officio Member)	Cathy Chung
Community Entity (Ex-Officio Member)	Deanne Bergey, Janelle Fleury
Provincial/Territorial government (Ex-Officio Member)	Pamela McPhee
Local/Municipal government	Councillor Lance Bussieres, Councillor Loretta Waquan
Indigenous government	
Individuals with lived experience of homelessness	
Indigenous Peoples, nations and organizations, Friendship Centres	Kelly Meyers, Sheena Bradley, Dennis Fraser
Indigenous housing organizations	
Youth and/or child-serving organizations, including Child Welfare agencies	
Organizations serving survivors of domestic violence and their families	
Seniors and senior-serving organizations	
Newcomers and newcomer-serving organizations	
The private sector	Olive Wooden, Maike Schmieding, Celestine Ezeh
Police and correctional services	
Landlord associations and/or the housing sector	Chirstina MacKay
Health organizations, including hospitals and other public health institutions, and organizations focused on mental health and addictions	
Veterans Affairs Canada and/or Veterans-serving organizations	
Organizations serving individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness	
Other	

CAB Chairs or Co-Chairs (if applicable):

I affirm that the above members of the CAB have reviewed the attached Community Plan, and that a majority of CAB members approve of its content.

Olive Wooden

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

9. Community Advisory Board—Indigenous Homelessness

Note: You may list more than one name/organization for each sector, and you may list a name/organization in more than one sector, as applicable.

(Lines below can be removed where not applicable)

Sector	CAB Members
Infrastructure Canada (Ex-Officio Member)	Cathy Chung
Community Entity (Ex-Officio Member)	Deanne Bergey, Janelle Fleury
Provincial/Territorial government (Ex-Officio Member)	Pamela McPhee
Local/Municipal government	Councillor Lance Bussieres, Councillor Loretta Waquan
Indigenous government	
Individuals with lived experience of homelessness	
Indigenous Peoples, nations and organizations, Friendship Centres	Kelly Meyers, Sheena Bradley, Dennis Fraser
Indigenous housing organizations	
Youth and/or child-serving organizations, including Child Welfare agencies	
Organizations serving survivors of domestic violence and their families	
Seniors and senior-serving organizations	
Newcomers and newcomer-serving organizations	
The private sector	Olive Wooden, Maike Schmieding, Celestine Ezeh
Police and correctional services	
Landlord associations and/or the housing sector	Chirstina MacKay
Health organizations, including hospitals and other public health institutions, and organizations focused on mental health and addictions	
Veterans Affairs Canada and/or Veterans-serving organizations	
Organizations serving individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness	
Other	

Indigenous CAB Chairs or Co-Chairs (if applicable):

☐ (If Community Plan is not a joint plan): I affirm that the above members of the Community Advisory Board have been engaged on the Coordinated Access and Outcomes-Based Approach sections of the attached Community Plan.

OR

☒ (If Community Plan is a joint plan): I affirm that the above members of the CAB have reviewed the attached Community Plan, and that a majority of CAB members approve of its content.

Olive Wooden

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)

Appendices

i. Context of The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Housing Situation

The Municipality covers a geographic area of 66,361 square kilometers and is one of the largest municipalities in Canada. According to the 2018 Municipal Census, the population of the Municipality is 111,687. The region includes the Urban Service Area of Fort McMurray along with nine rural communities dispersed over 500 kilometers (some of which are accessible only by ice road in the winter or by plane).

The rural communities include: Fort Fitzgerald, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Draper, Saprae Creek, Anzac, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier, and Conklin. The region is home to six First Nations and six Métis Communities (Mikisew Cree First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort McKay First Nation, Fort McMurray No. 468 First Nation, and Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation, Métis Local 125/Fort Chipewyan, Métis Local 63/Fort McKay, Métis Local 1935/Fort McMurray, Métis Local 2020/Fort McMurray, Métis Local 780/Anzac, and Métis Local 193/Conklin). Each community, First Nation, and Métis Local has its own strengths, challenges, and needs. Further, each has a unique relationship with government, other First Nations and Métis Communities, industry, and other partners.

The Municipality is home to numerous oil sands projects that operate both north and south of the Urban Service Area. For many years, employment prospects have attracted people from across Alberta, Canada, and the world. However, an economic downturn in 2015 resulted in a drop in oil prices which continues to have a major impact on the region - even moving into 2024. Housing homeless individuals is not an easy task, especially when dealing with the chronically homeless. Non-profit agencies committed to Housing First are to be commended; however, there are many factors that affect success. In allocating resources to the region, it is important to consider multiple factors that create an environment that requires higher-than-average administrative costs.

The cost of living in the region is extremely high, which impacts our operating budget - including requiring a higher allocation of funds for salaries, food, clothing, rent, etc. This heightened cost of living creates problems for many residents when they are subject to the same income thresholds as other Albertan and Canadian residents. Since the Municipality has such a high cost of living, many are above the income thresholds and would not be approved for assistance.

Base year	2018 base				
Dollar concept	Current dollars				
Component	Total threshold				
Geography ⁸	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alberta, population 30,000 to 99,999	45,919	46,666	48,197	51,867	53,963
Alberta, population 100,000 to 499,999	46,530	47,280	48,831	52,555	54,657
Edmonton, Alberta (map)	48,967	49,723	51,351	55,225	57,341
Calgary, Alberta (map)	49,462	50,223	51,861	55,771	57,909

- At more than \$100,000, the Municipality has the highest average cost of living in the country - more than double the national average⁹

Region	Cost of Living
Wood Buffalo	100,535
Edmonton	50,634
Alberta	56,778
Canada	48,597

- The average cost of food for a family of four is more than \$77 higher per month than the provincial average.

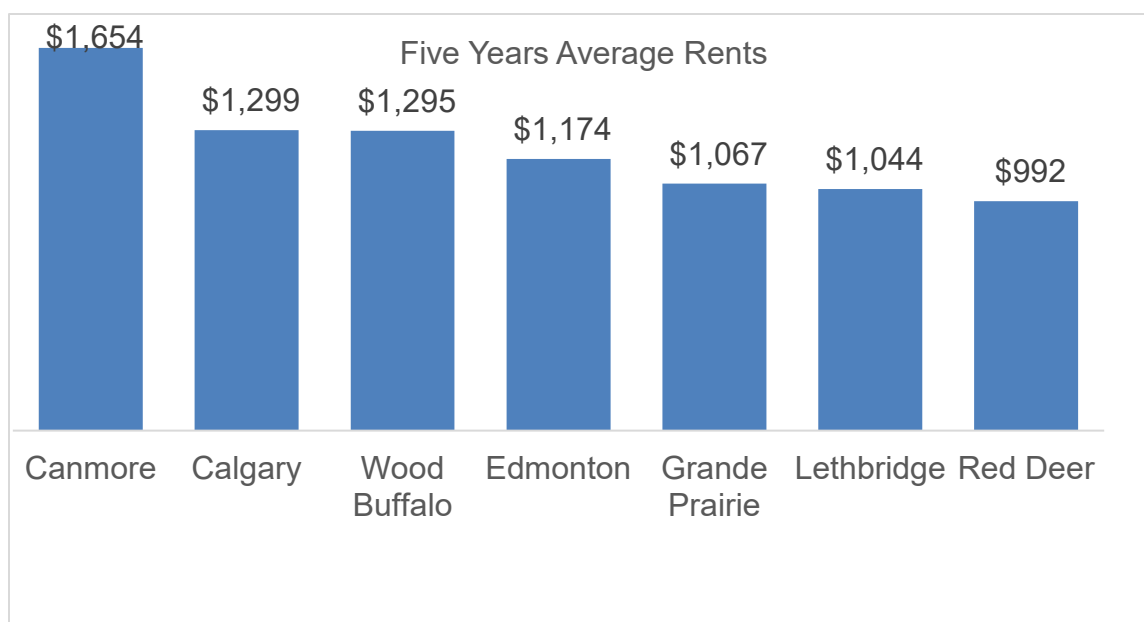
Social housing and shelter cost

The lack of social housing and high rental costs continue to affect the Housing First initiative. (Stats Canada, 2024), The municipality ranks third among Alberta communities with a five-year average rent of \$1295, following Calgary and Canmore, respectively. Also, according to the Alberta Living Wage (2024), the average monthly shelter cost for a household of four was \$2,482 or \$29,781 a year.

The high and unaffordable rental costs continue to make it often impossible to graduate Housing First participants as they are unable to cover the cost of rent. This includes affordable housing units. This barrier to graduation contributes to social housing waitlists continuing to be long as most of the graduates would require social housing in order to sustain housing.

Fort McMurray has the second highest living wage in Alberta creating more barriers for individuals and families to afford housing without a rental subsidy.

Five years average rental rates in Wood Buffalo (StatCan, 2024)

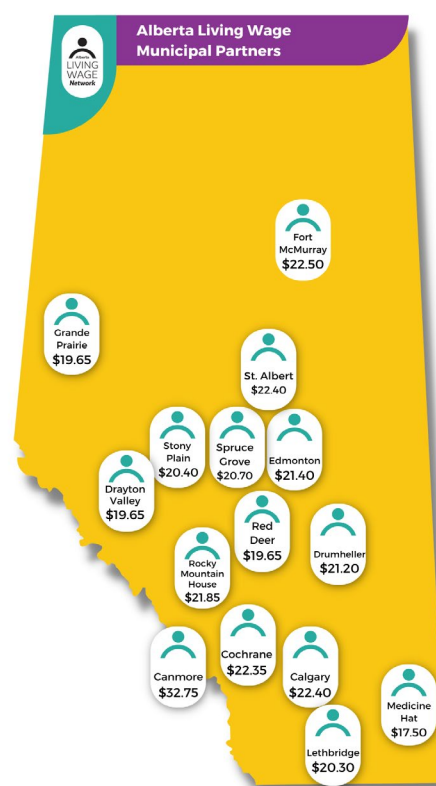


[What is a Living Wage? | Living Wage Alberta](#)

Availability of social housing stock in Fort McMurray participants from Housing First into social housing. First are in the program solely for the support graduate without the ability to pay rent or support through the programs, likely with greater challenges clients unable to sustain their own rent has resulted

During funding deliberations with HISC in early 2021 providers it was determined that the amount of funding to meet core needs in the region. Though proud of a 65-percent decrease in the homeless population and gaps that need to be addressed so we can address

Knowing the limitations with available funding current spending parameters with allocations to service a great deal of time reviewing how to best allocate to reduce chronic homelessness according to the has been strategically mapped out to ensure the best use of all funding to meet current needs



and advance the goal of reaching and sustaining Functional Zero, ending chronic homelessness.

This has meant pooling both designate and Indigenous funding streams along with some provincial and municipal funding to provide a strong CI allocated to an Indigenous organization in Fort McMurray that can best serve residents. The CAS program will bolster the reach of CI to ensure our rural communities can also easily access the programs. Despite these strategies, the geographical vastness of the region, continued high rental costs, limited supply of social housing, and high cost of living remain very real challenges.

While allocations are committed yearly and determined with HISC using evidence-based decision making, it is possible to assume that it would be necessary to make a drastic change in current programming without all streams of funding used as one collaborative budget. Having the ability to intertwine the funding streams allows for a greater coverage of resources and needs that are made available and service more individuals and families through housing support programs.

ii. Community Engagement Session Questions

1. What do you feel the Community Entity (CE) is doing well regarding housing the homeless population?
2. What do you feel is working well in the community regarding housing the homeless population?
3. With the gaps discussed, do you feel some gaps are larger than others in the community regarding housing the homeless population?
4. With the gaps discussed, do you see anything in the community regarding housing the homeless population that was missed?
5. With the gaps discussed, what do you see as priorities to focus on regarding housing the homeless population that was missed?
6. What do you see as your role in housing the homeless population?

Resources: utilized for this report:

<https://hart.ubc.ca/housing-needs-assessment-tool-3/>

Alberta Living Wage Network

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=1110006601>