

Date: May 8, 2025
To: Anthony Haddad, City Manager
From: Julie Czeck, General Manager, Public Safety and Partnerships
Subject: 2024/2025 Temporary Winter Shelter Update

Staff Recommendation

THAT the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen receive into the record the report dated May 8, 2025 titled "2024/2025 Temporary Winter Shelter Update".

Executive Summary

This report provides updated data on the outcomes of the Safety and Security Plan at the Temporary Winter Shelter (TWS) in Penticton from November 2024 to March 31, 2025. Key findings include:

- Since opening, 91 unique individuals have stayed at the TWS, with 12 permanently housed in supportive, market, or assisted living. Of the 91 individuals who used the shelter, 54 reported being from Penticton; 17 were from another province (~19%); 8 were from the Okanagan region (~8%); 7 were from another region in BC (~7%); 3 lived away from Penticton, and returned within the last 3-5 years (~3%); 3 were unknown (~3%).
- Of the 91 unique individuals, 28% reported being Indigenous (versus 57% non-Indigenous), 60% were male, and the average age was 42. Approximately a third (32) had foster care experience, and 3 were between the ages of 19-27. Experience with the foster care system is one of the most significant predictors of adult homelessness.
- Interior Health dedicated staff to provide services at the shelter and reported positive outcomes for TWS stayers, with over 60 primary care physician contacts, 30 mental health and substance use connections, and 267 wound care services provided between December 2024 – end of February 2025.
- All public safety agencies reported a decrease in calls for service:
 - **Bylaw:** Calls for service to the Bylaw Department have decreased by 61% in the broader industrial area. This drop is likely due to the department's proactive patrols (1,844 over 6 months), as well as the TWS operating model which does not discharge individuals into the community every morning.

- **Fire:** Fire department calls in the industrial area have decreased by 12% compared to the same period last year (from 148 last season, to 131 this season), and by 29% to the TWS, compared to the EWR last year (the EWR operated 30% less days). The nature of calls have shifted, with this year's model seeing fewer medical calls to the industrial area (from 133 to 92), but an increase in fire related calls (from 15 to 29).
 - **RCMP:** From November 2024 to the end of March 2025, the RCMP received 749 calls for service in the industrial area in contrast to 771, in 2023/2024 – representing a 2% decrease overall. Shelter stayers at the TWS represented 6% of police calls for service in the industrial area.
- The top 5 calls for service in the industrial area by the RCMP were: suspicious behaviour/people/vehicle, check wellbeing, calls that should have been a bylaw call, mischief or loss of enjoyment of property, and cause disturbance.
 - When RCMP calls involved the unhoused or individuals with “no fixed address” (approximately 45% of calls), factors such as seeking warmth by setting fires or sleeping in alcoves, using drugs in public spaces, and carrying weapons for personal safety and outdoor living all played a role in street survival.
 - Extension of the shelter will prevent 40 individuals from being discharged into the community, where they might camp in public spaces, business alcoves, or encampments. Keeping the shelter open supports continued progress towards better health and housing.
 - Several projects are in planning stages to improve the local situation, including the Provincial Skaha Assembly site (over 500 units), three City-owned sites for social housing, and a new downtown Indigenous housing building. Until adequate housing is available, shelters remain necessary for the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals and the community.

Background

On October 1, 2024, Council issued Temporary Use Permit PL2024-9888, a permit that allowed for the use 'emergency shelter and associated homelessness services' on a M1 (General Industrial) zoned property at 402 Warren Ave (441 Dawson Avenue) until March 31, 2025. On March 18, 2025 Council unanimously endorsed the extension of the Temporary Use Permit until March 31, 2026 with the same conditions, allowing the shelter to remain open, providing shelter beds through the next Spring, Summer and Fall seasons. This full extension is subject to Provincial funding. The Province has provided bridge funding for 2 months, and conversations continue to advocate for funding to maintain operations to March 31, 2026.

The previous model (Emergency Winter Response) was temperature activated, meaning it was only open on the nights that the temperature reached a certain threshold, and individuals were sent back into the community in the morning. In contrast, the Temporary Winter Shelter (TWS) was open 24/7.

While all operational aspects of the shelter are the responsibility of the operator, the City in partnership with 100 More Homes has been leading the implementation of a Safety and Security plan which includes responsibilities for the 24/7 oversight of the shelter operations, with the goal of the successful integration of this land use into the surrounding industrial neighborhood.

The Safety and Security Plan (the “Plan”) is an integrated framework designed to ensure the safety and well-being of shelter stayers, staff and neighbors at/near the temporary winter shelter. The plan represents a collaborative commitment from all relevant organizations involved, including the RCMP, POPS, City of Penticton Bylaw and the Clean Team, Penticton Fire Department, 100 More Homes, BC Housing, Interior Health (IH), the Chamber of Commerce and the Penticton Industrial Development Association (PIDA).

This Plan takes a coordinated approach to managing risks, ensuring compliance with regulations, and maintaining a secure and clean environment in and around the shelter. Key elements of the Safety Plan include:

- A Safety Supervisor at the shelter who manages safety-related issues, liaises with law enforcement and neighbors during the day, and private security providing overnight patrols for 24/7 coverage.
- Proactive patrols by City Bylaw, and RCMP for continuous visibility.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and de-escalation training for businesses by the RCMP Community Policing Team.
- Weekly meetings with key partners (RCMP, Bylaw, Fire, 100 More Homes, business representatives, and Clean Team) to address emerging issues and trends. Meetings are co-chaired by 100MH and the City.
- Regular community forums (hosted by 100MH) that invite dialogue between residents, the operator and other partners involved in implementation of the Safety Plan.
- The shelter operator and City’s Clean Team maintain neighborhood cleanliness initiatives through daily clean ups with the shelter operator and the City’s Clean Team
- Interior Health provides complex care services, including overdose prevention, mental health support, wound care and primary health care.
- Regular data reporting on all components of the Plan, and the effectiveness of safety measures and community engagement.

The Plan aims to improve community safety, health outcomes, business relations, and cleanliness, ensuring the shelter integrates smoothly into the industrial neighborhood while addressing the complex needs of shelter stayers.

Analysis

This report covers data from November 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, as provided by all participating agencies. Firm conclusions should still not be drawn from this data due to the short reporting period. However, it still offers valuable insights into the progress of the new 24/7 shelter model, which has been implemented in collaboration with multiple agencies.

Shelter Operations & Outcomes

The TWS is approved to operate 40 beds, but demand exceeds capacity. Since opening, 91 unique individuals have stayed at the shelter, and the operator has had to turn people away on 256 occasions due to being full. Over the last 6 months, approximately 74 beds have turned over (i.e. vacated by one person and filled by another) since opening– reasons for turnovers include:

- 12 individuals transitioned to permanent housing, either in market, assisted living or supportive housing;

- 5 individuals left to seek further treatment;
- 5 individuals self exited, meaning they chose to leave;
- 15 individuals experienced a temporary loss of service, meaning they were banned for a short period of time;
- 1 individual experienced a seasonal loss of service, meaning they were banned for the rest of the winter season;
- 34 individuals missed their beds, meaning they did not return by curfew (11pm) two consecutive nights;
- 1 individual died at the hospital;
- 1 individual was incarcerated.

Under the TWS model, the province has funded case managers at the shelter. Case managers differ from standard shelter workers. A case manager focuses on coordinating services and creating long-term plans to help individuals access necessary support, while a shelter worker primarily provides immediate, on-site assistance like food, shelter, and necessities to shelter guests.

This has resulted in deeper service connection for individuals wanting to pursue life skills, housing, or rehabilitative services. As noted above, since the shelter has opened 12 individuals have transitioned to permanent housing, either in market, assisted living or supportive housing. For clarity, these transitions into housing are not due to additional net new supportive/non-market housing units, but rather because of new connections for unhoused people to housing services who may not have supported while sleeping rough outside.

Interior Health has also provided significant services, including:

- 1 wound care nurse and 1 Overdose Prevention Nurse (daily in-reach and as needed);
- 1 nurse from Substance Use Connections Team and 1 nurse-prescriber for Opioid Antagonist Treatment (i.e. treatment for addiction to opioid drugs);
- 2 Counsellors from Substance Use Connections Team;
- 2 Peers with Lived experience of homelessness (accompany/ assist clinicians);
- Dedicated physician time on Friday mornings at Martin St Clinic.

Interior Health is reporting positive outcomes for TWS shelter guests, with over 60 primary care physician contacts from December 2024 to February 2025 (the last month of data from IH was not provided in time for this report). The focus of connections with physicians continues with the theme of initiating or restarting Opioid Agonist Treatment, ensuring follow-up and case management. This includes escalation and attachment to primary care for interventions and wound care treatments, as well as connection to social work for the completion of forms and applications. Additionally, there were 30 mental health and substance use connections, and over 267 wound care services provided, preventing hospitalizations that would have been necessary if they were sheltering on the street (up until February 2025).

An important statistic captured this season highlights the shelter guests' experiences with the foster care system. Of the 91 unique individuals who utilized the shelter, 32 had foster care experience, and 3 were between the ages of 19-27. Research confirms that foster care experience is one of the strongest predictors of homelessness, with youth in/from from care being 200 times more likely to become homeless than their non-care experienced peers.

Home Communities

There have been a total of 91 unique individuals who used the Temporary Winter Shelter from November 16, 2025 to end of March 2025. Of these individuals: Approximately 60% (54 individuals) reported from Penticton. Approximately 40% of TWS residents reported living in Penticton for less than 5 years and coming from different BC communities and provinces, including:

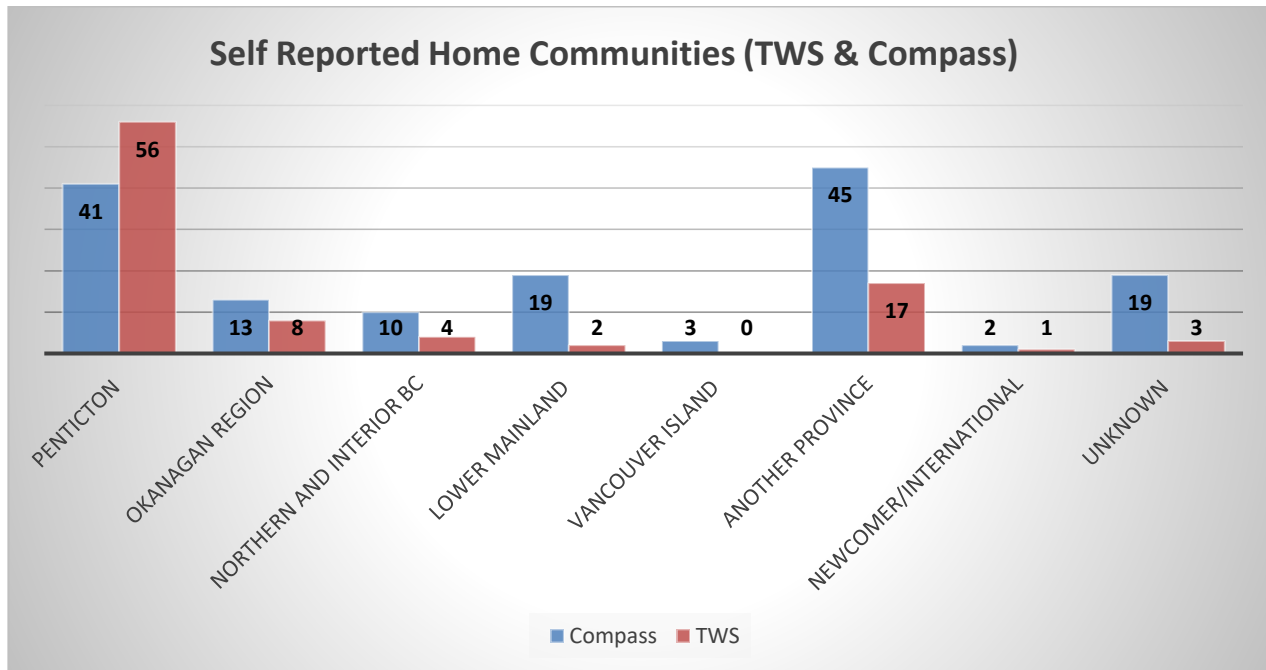
- 17 were from another province (~19%);
- 8 were from the Okanagan region (~8%);
- 7 were from another region in BC (~7%);
- 3 lived away from Penticton, and returned within the last 3-5 years (~3%);
- 3 were unknown (~3%).

Length of Time in Penticton	# of individuals who have lived in Penticton 1 year or less	# of individuals who have lived in 1-3 year	# of individuals who have lived in Penticton 3-5 years	# of individuals who have lived in Penticton 5+ years	# of individuals who were born and raised in Penticton
(# of people)	2 people	5 people	17 people	13 people	54 people

Data was also gathered from the permanent shelter in Penticton – Compass House. This shelter has a capacity of 72 beds, and between the period of January 2025 to the end of April 2025, there were 152 unique individuals who used this shelter. The breakdown of home communities at this location included: 41 from Penticton, 13 from the Okanagan region, 10 from a Northern/Interior BC region, 19 from the Lower Mainland, 45 from another province, 2 international, and 19 unknowns. The tables below outline the cumulative percentage of shelter users by home community in both shelters.

Home Community	Compass	TWS	Totals	%
Penticton	41	56	97	40%
Okanagan Region	13	8	21	9%
Northern and Interior BC	10	4	14	6%
Lower Mainland	19	2	21	9%
Vancouver Island	3	0	3	1%
Another Province	45	17	62	26%
Newcomer/International	2	1	3	1%
Unknown	19	3	22	9%
Total	152	91	243	

Self Reported Home Communities (TWS & Compass)



Law Enforcement Updates

Bylaw: All law enforcement agencies tracked data within the same 4 zones of the Industrial area. At the end of October 2024 the Bylaw Services Department began counting the number of individuals sheltering outdoors. The chart below outlines the approximate trend of individuals sheltering outdoors within City limits, versus the structures (not people) counted at Fairview. This encampment is situated on provincially administered land; therefore, bylaw services do not have authority to enforce municipal bylaws. It is expected with warmer weather that the number of individuals sheltering outdoors will increase.

Bylaw Point-In-Time Outdoor Sheltering Count

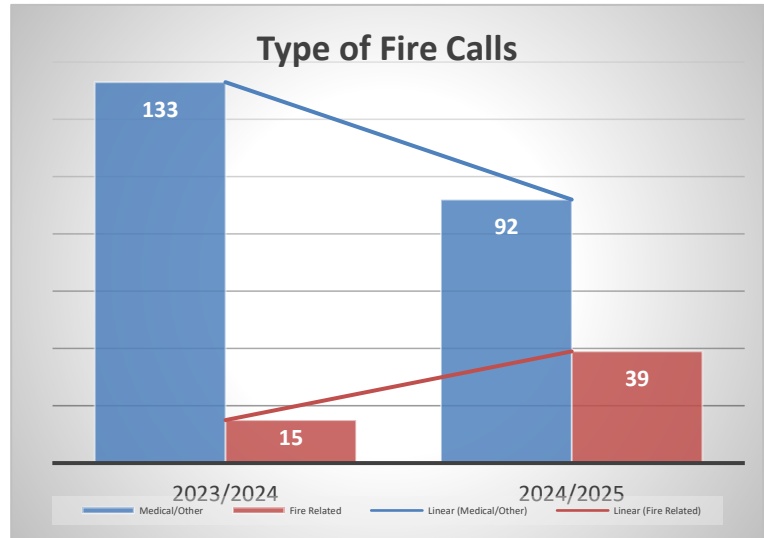


From November 16, 2024, when the TWS opened, to the end of March 2025, bylaw services responded to 96 calls for service within the industrial area, compared to 369 calls during the same period in 2023/24. The bylaw department also conducted 1,844 proactive patrols within the industrial area, which resulted in 45 actions taken by a bylaw officer. This represents an approximate **61% reduction** in calls for service. This drop is likely due to the department's proactive patrols, which address issues before they escalate to calls for service. Additionally, the TWS model's approach of not discharging individuals into the community every morning has resulted in reduced interactions requiring enforcement.

Penticton Fire Department: Since the inception of the TWS, there have been 12 calls for service at the TWS. In contrast, the previous model, which operated last year, recorded 17 calls. This represents a 29% reduction in calls for service to the Fire Department under the current model. It is important to note that the EWR model operated 30% fewer days. Therefore, when making a direct comparison, the reduction in calls is even more pronounced.

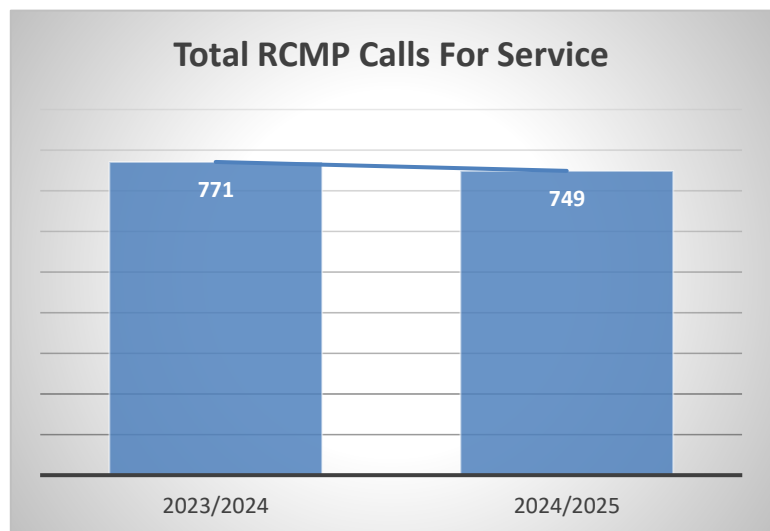
Within the broader industrial area the total calls for service decreased by approximately 12% (from 148 last season, to 131 this season).

Additionally, the nature of calls also shifted. In the previous year, there were 133 medical calls made to the fire department, and 15 fire related calls. On the other hand, this year there was an increase in the fire calls in the industrial area (from 15 to 39) and a decrease in medical calls (from 133 to 92).



RCMP: From November 2024 to the end of March 2025, the RCMP received 749 calls for service in the industrial area in contrast to 771, in 2023/2024 – representing a 2% decrease overall. The call volume fluctuated between areas of the industrial area, increasing some months and decreasing others. More data collection is needed to understand patterns.

The top 5 calls for service were regarding suspicious behaviours/people/vehicles (119), check wellbeing (48), calls that were responded to that should have been a bylaw call (45), mischief or loss of enjoyment of property (45), cause disturbance (62). The remainder of the calls included shoplifting (only in one zone), trespassing, traffic, and mental health calls. There were 3 break and enter calls, and no calls were violent in nature.



Six months of data was analyzed to better understand who is generating the calls for service in the industrial area, with key findings showing:

- 334 of the 771 calls (~45%) were generated by someone with no fixed address (unhoused);
- 46 of the 771 (~6%) calls were generated by someone living at the Temporary Winter Shelter;
- 108 of the 771 (~14%) calls were generated by someone living at the Compass Shelter;

The data suggests that homelessness (not shelter) is a primary driver of calls for service, with only a small percentage originating from individuals residing in shelters. Factors contributing to street survival, such as seeking warmth by setting fires or sleeping in alcoves, using drugs in public spaces, and carrying weapons for personal safety, all influence the nature of calls to the police over the past six months.

The 2024/25 TWS model recorded 46 calls for service, which is comparable to the previous model. However, it is important to note that the previous model operated 30% fewer days. Therefore, a direct comparison would likely reveal a reduction in calls if adjusted for the difference in operating days. Additionally, the shelter last year had a later start, resulting in data collection beginning only in December. Additionally, in the TWS model, the Integrated Crisis Response Team (ICRT) – which pairs a police officer with a nurse – is also proactively engaging and building relationship with the operator and encouraging calls for service to ensure individuals are getting the support they need, whether or not there is a criminal element involved.

Community Collaboration & Engagement

Maintaining cleanliness and a sense of pride in the TWS has been a key focus for shelter staff and peers to foster positive relationships with neighbors. Close to 200 clean ups were initiated in and around the TWS this season, and positive feedback has consistently been given by neighbours about the cleaning efforts of the peers at the shelter.

Additionally, the safety liaison and private security have performed perimeter patrols, supplementing the proactive patrols by Bylaw and Police, and acting as the first point of contact for businesses with concerns or questions. This cleaning effort is further supplemented by the City's Clean team, who spent close to 60 hours supplementing. The City's Clean team has noted that the intensity of cleaning required in the industrial area has decreased since POPs and peers have supplemented cleaning with their own activities.

Additionally, 100MH's Lived/Living Experience Table (i.e. people with past or current experience of homelessness) has continued spearheading their community-wide cleanup efforts, including at the Fairview encampment. Since November approximately 177 individuals, including those with lived and living experience of homelessness, participated in 4 large scale clean ups throughout the industrial area as well as at the Fairview encampment.

Alongside weekly calls that bring together all partners for updates and triage, 100MH has hosted neighbourhood forums. These forums are open for any neighbors and community members with an opportunity to ask questions of the shelter operator and other key agencies involved in the Safety Plan. Four community forums have been hosted since the beginning of the TWS season, with close to 90 community members joining throughout the season.

Integration of the Business Community in the Model

Overall, from all parties involved in the safety plan there is shared consensus that this model of shelter is bearing positive outcomes due to each organization involved "bringing their best to the table". This is not to say there are not challenges – but challenges are met with a quick response. Since the shelter's opening,

PIDA has addressed two formal complaints from businesses, and the operator has responded to five neighboring businesses. Some businesses have even shown their gratitude by bringing food to the shelter in appreciation of the operator's support.

New to this year's operations was weekly involvement from the Chamber of Commerce and Penticton Industrial Development Association representatives, who served as liaisons for businesses that may be impacted by the shelter operations near their businesses. The specific outcomes being observed include improved safety, quicker response times to challenges, improved connection to housing and health services, and a deeper understanding of the shelter model's impact through data analysis. These positive results are largely attributed to the collaborative efforts of all organizations involved.

Current Situation & Advocacy

Several housing initiatives are in the planning and development stages, including the Provincial Skaha Assembly site (~500 units), three City-owned sites for social housing, and a downtown Indigenous focused affordable housing project.

Regional and provincial collaboration is needed for equitable service availability across communities so people may remain in their home communities for support. Council has provided SILGA with a motion for stronger regional responses to homelessness which will be debated at the Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA) AGM this spring.

The City and snpink'tn Indian Band are actively working with the Province for HEART and HEARTH (HH) resources in Penticton. HH is a provincial initiative to support communities with encampments that includes coordinated outreach services and new shelter/transitional housing spaces. Staff anticipate positive developments on this file, this spring.

In past years, the City has also advocated for complex care housing and secure care for individuals with brain injuries, mental illnesses, and severe addictions. The City continues discussions with regional partners and will monitor Provincial action in this field.

Staff are also working on a Social Housing and Infrastructure Plan to link social housing needs with operators, funders, and locations. This Plan, alongside 100 More Homes, is critical for managing immediate impacts.

Financial Implications

The City is supporting the operation of the shelter by leasing the space from the private property owner and then allowing BC Housing to operate the shelter within the space. The City's contribution to this lease is estimated at \$120,000/year, with the RDOS contributing 20% of the costs of the lease from November 2024 to March 31, 2025. The province has committed bridge funding for April and May 2025 while ongoing discussions about the extension to March 31, 2026 continue. The Province has provided bridge funding for 2 months, and conversations continue to advocate for funding to maintain operations to March 31, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Czeck, General Manager of Public Safety and Partnerships