



Memorandum

TO: Krista Power, Director – Legislative Services & City Clerk **FILE:**

FROM: Kerri Marshall, Commissioner - Growth

DATE: 10/15/2025

SUBJECT: Information – Notice of Motion to Amend - A Human Rights-Based Community Action Plan for Thunder Bay (Delete Item 4 – Temporary Village)

MEETING & DATE: City Council – 10/21/2025

This memorandum provides City Council with information in advance of its discussion on the Notice of Motion to Amend the Human Rights-Based Community Action Plan for Thunder Bay (Report 384-2024) by deleting Item 4, the Temporary Village, from the approved ten-part plan.

Background

City Council approved Report 384-2024 on October 28, 2024, adopting the Human Rights-Based Community Action Plan for Thunder Bay (the Plan). The Plan outlines ten coordinated actions to reduce encampments and homelessness through both immediate and long-term measures, in partnership with community agencies and the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB).

Item 4 of the Plan, the Temporary Village (the Village), is a short-term, low-barrier, housing-focused shelter option for up to 100 individuals with a 24/7 staffing model. The Village will bridge people from homelessness into housing by providing secure, private, and temperature-controlled units, and access to shared hygiene and laundry facilities, food, navigation supports, life skills development programs, and both on- and off-site healthcare and social services.

Project Status

The Village is progressing within its approved budget and municipal contribution caps of \$5.0 million for capital costs and \$1.5 million annually for operating costs.

The provincial government awarded the City \$2.8 million in capital funding from its Encampment Response Initiative program that supports the creation of temporary modular structures and the expansion of shelter capacity. This funding remains in place, conditional on the project proceeding substantially as approved.

United Way Thunder Bay, through its Pathways to Home initiative, is committed to supporting the Village project by leveraging community donations to address the root causes of homelessness and strengthen the continuum of shelter and housing options. Additionally, to offset operating costs, social assistance shelter rents will be collected from eligible residents, though occupancy is not conditional on receipt of social assistance.

The Requests for Proposals for design/build and third-party operations have been awarded to the successful proponents within budget. Site preparation is anticipated to commence late October 2025.

The Village has been developed in collaboration with local service providers. In a TBDSSAB Board Report dated September 18, 2025, it was reported that since 2014, the TBDSSAB has funded the development of 239 transitional and long-term supportive housing units, including 74 currently under construction with completion dates through 2026, and has funded the creation of 237 affordable housing units in partnership with housing providers. Further, TBDSSAB's 2025/2026 Housing Programs Plan includes funding for about 70 new transitional housing units, pending Ministry approval. Along with the 59-unit Junot Avenue project by Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services and the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, these initiatives will add roughly 129 transitional or supportive units.

Despite these efforts, TBDSSAB has advised that 1195 individuals are on the By-Name List – a real-time list of people experiencing homelessness, and those precariously housed, across the service manager area and in need of housing or sheltering. Their community housing waitlist is just under 1,400 households as of June 2025. During the winter months, TBDSSAB advised that available shelter spaces are typically at or near full capacity, requiring additional funding for overflow accommodations in certain situations.

The Village will function as an interim measure until additional housing supply is achieved.

Federal Funding Context

The Notice of Motion refers to funding announced through the new Build Canada Homes federal agency. Administration notes the following:

- On October 1, 2025, Administration wrote to Ana Bailão, CEO of Build Canada Homes, highlighting the Village as a shovel-ready project that directly aligns with Federal priorities to build at speed, at scale, and with innovation. The letter requested Federal participation in the project.
- Build Canada Homes will invest \$1 billion to create transitional and supportive housing for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Typically, federal funding programs involve multi-month application, review, and negotiation processes, followed by design, procurement, and construction phases. As a result, new transitional or supportive housing will likely take years to complete.
- At this time, program criteria, including project eligibility and the ability for municipalities to apply with multiple projects, have not been released.

Ongoing Housing and Growth Initiatives

At the same time, work continues on increasing the supply and affordability of permanent housing through programs such as the Housing Accelerator Fund and Building Faster Fund. These initiatives aim to increase the supply and affordability of housing by making it easier to build, offering financial incentives like the Housing CIP, and unlocking new lands for infill housing.

Further, the draft Smart Growth Action Plan includes an action to leverage the federal Build Canada Homes initiative to accelerate housing development through all available programs, partnerships, and investment tools.

Implications of Removing Item 4 – Temporary Village

Encampments are expected to continue and may increase while awaiting construction of new non-market housing. If the Village is removed from the Plan, overall shelter system capacity would remain insufficient to address the scale of the issue.

Further, several other parts of the Plan rely on the Village to be effective including:

- **Item 2 – Community Partner Commitment:** In the absence of the Village, encampments will likely continue expanding across the city, limiting the effectiveness of supports community partners are able to provide.

- **Item 3 – Enhanced Cleanup and Sanitation:** Reduced encampment sprawl depends on the availability of fully accessible indoor shelter options. Costs for cleanup and sanitation supports may escalate as the number of locations grows.
- **Item 5 – Designated Encampment Locations within Urban Cores:** Without the Village, the number of people living in encampments will remain too high for only three designated locations. Additional locations would likely be required. Court rulings on Charter rights require that sufficient accessible indoor shelter space be available before a by-law can be enforced to relocate individuals from encampments. As a result, any movement from unauthorized to allowable sites would need to be voluntary and may be difficult to achieve in established encampment areas.
- **Item 6 – By-laws:** By-laws regulating outdoor sheltering in public spaces by individuals experiencing homelessness cannot be enforced without offering a truly accessible indoor shelter or housing alternative.
- **Item 7 – Encampment Response Team:** The team will be less effective in the absence of the Village, as encampments would remain more dispersed throughout the city.
- **Item 8 – Lived Experience Advisory:** Removing the Village from the plan may impact trust among this population and decrease the overall effectiveness of the City's encampment response.

This information is provided to assist Council in its consideration of the Notice of Motion.

C.C. John Collin, City Manager

Cynthia Olsen, Director – Strategy & Engagement