

Prince Albert

Homelessness Action Initiative

SUMMARY

November 2022

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 2021, the City of Prince Albert, supported by the Living Skies Centre for Social Inquiry, in partnership with the Prince Albert Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, launched the *Homelessness Action Initiative*. The purpose of the initiative is to gather diverse understandings of homelessness, including its impact on people and the community, that are required to implement promising solutions for preventing, intervening and mitigating the impacts of homelessness on individuals, families, businesses, services and the broader community. The anticipated result of this initiative is actionable opportunities for sector-specific solutions to homelessness and the impacts of homelessness.

DIALOGUE

To implement this initiative, the City of Prince Albert called for the collection of community dialogue on homelessness, including its causes, consequences and solutions. In December of 2021, representatives from the human services, homelessness, and business sectors gathered to advise development of a methodology for engaging the community in such dialogue. This resulted in interviews and group discussions with 182 different individuals—each with their own unique perspective on homelessness and the impacts of homelessness on individuals and the community. The results of this dialogue present a non-representative sample of different observations, opinions, and understandings of homelessness in the community. Included in the respondent cohort, were 44 individuals directly impacted by homelessness.

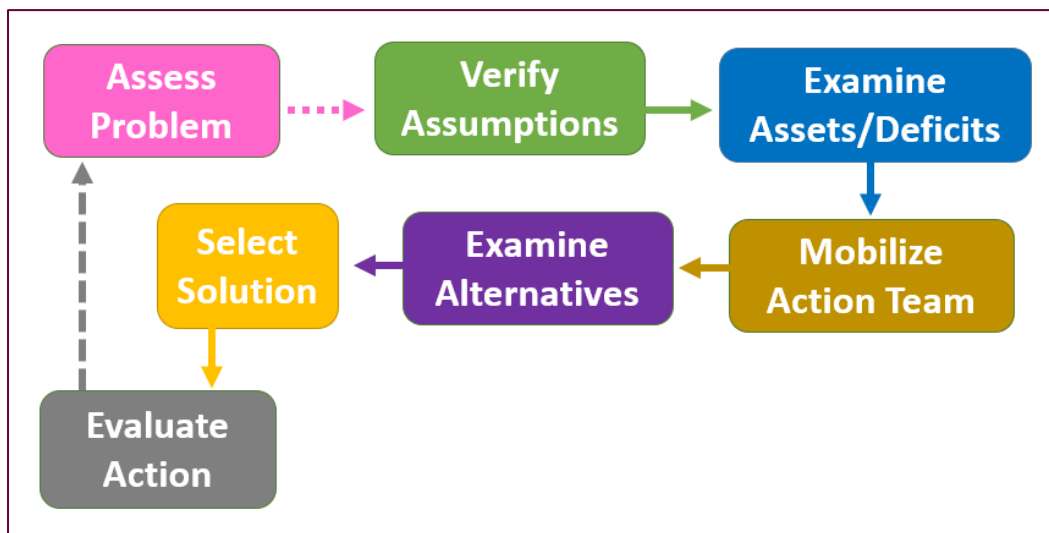
According to engagement participants, homelessness is certainly a problem that requires immediate attention in Prince Albert. However, many contributing factors, consequences and impacts of what we perceive to be homelessness, are actually more attributable to unabated chronic risk. Some of the most pressing problems impacting individuals and the community include conditions of mental illness, addiction, negative behaviour, and trauma. The complexities of these conditions, mixed with poverty, unaffordable housing, barriers to support, a lack of transportation, abandonment, and social stigma, make for a very dynamic array of problems to understand and address.

Based on the key problem areas identified in the engagement process, the most pressing issue in Prince Albert currently surrounds the absolute homeless (i.e., those living on the street). While more solutions for sheltered homeless are required (e.g., transitional homes, supportive housing), the immediate focus for many engagement participants was chronic high-risk individuals who currently have no housing solutions, and who are generally unfit for existing housing/homelessness support solutions. Conditions of absolute homelessness threaten the safety and well-being of individuals, negatively impact business and civic pursuits, and place considerable pressure on our health, social and emergency systems. Due to the severe complexity of these conditions, a low-threshold, systematic solution process is required.

SOLUTION PROCESS

A major intended outcome of this initiative is to initiate actions that reduce homelessness, as well as offset the impacts of homelessness on individuals, businesses, services and the community. To pursue this, initiative partners have examined options for stimulating shared problem ownership and collaborative solution-building. During the initial outreach process, several problems/challenges have been identified. Some examples include, low shelter capacity, inappropriate use of services, public defecation, loitering, discarded needles, and service fragmentation, to name a few. Using this information, willing partners have already begun further exploring the development of a collaborative approach to find solutions to some of these problems. The resulting *Actionable Solutions Protocol* will help stakeholders across and within different jurisdictions to understand problems and sector-specific solutions to homelessness that are both tangible and actionable.

Figure 1. **Actionable Solutions Protocol**



ACTION

Moving towards solutions requires action by multiple stakeholders in the community. The Actionable Solutions Protocol can provide a process for planning and implementing actions required of effective solution-building. To engage a network of solution-builders, this initiative recommends the City of Prince Albert mobilize a *Chronic Risk Solutions Forum*. Here, problems related to chronic risk can be presented. Stakeholders with a pre-existing role in the problem, who may be heavily impacted by the problem, or who can provide opportunities in solution-building will come together and form an Action Team. Members of the Action Teams will collaborate to implement the Actionable Solutions Protocol, driving towards solutions in our community.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

Winter Shelter • Networking Mechanism • Discarded Needles • Chronic Risk Emergency Facility

