

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL

ON

2023 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the 2023 Point in Time (PiT) Count.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

This report supports Council's strategic priorities and areas of focus regarding:

- **Governance and Accountability**
 - Community Engagement: We are committed to engaging and connecting with Kamloops residents and stakeholders.
 - External Relationships: We understand the importance of maintaining and improving key relationships.
- **Livability**
 - Healthy Community: We foster an environment that supports and promotes healthy living through recreation, community, and social connection.
 - Housing: We focus on improving diversity and access throughout the housing continuum.
 - Inclusivity: We are committed to supporting inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility in our community.

SUMMARY

The Point-in-Time (PiT) Count provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness within a community in a 24-hour period. PiT Counts are typically conducted every two to three years in communities across Canada.

The PiT Count serves two functions—to count the number of people experiencing homelessness in Kamloops over a specified period and to gather information on the demographics and service needs of the local population of unhoused individuals. With support from local non-profit organizations, the City coordinated the two most recent PiT Counts in Kamloops, which were conducted in 2018 and 2021.

The count is conducted over a 24-hour period beginning in the evening of day 1 with a survey of those staying in shelters, followed by a street count during the day on day 2. The 2023 PiT Count is scheduled to take place on April 12 and 13.

RECOMMENDATION:

For Council information only.

DISCUSSION

Most communities across the province are hosting PiT counts this spring. In alignment with provincial partners—the Homelessness Service Association of BC and BC Housing—and with support from local non-profit organizations, volunteers, and City staff, Kamloops will host a 2023 PiT Count.

While the City is project managing the PiT Count, staff are following guidance and expertise from a PiT Count Committee. This group meets biweekly and provides expertise and input to the event. The committee is made up of members from:

- A Way Home Kamloops
- ASK Wellness
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- City of Kamloops
- Interior Community Services
- Interior Health Authority
- Kamloops and District Elizabeth Fry Society
- Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Out of the Cold
- The Mustard Seed
- United Way BC

The committee's key roles include the following:

- providing the PiT Count Coordinator (City staff) with guidance and relevant information to promote a safe and successful count
- supporting the recruitment of volunteers and/or participants from their respective organizations
- promoting awareness about the PiT Count with the community and clients
- providing support in identifying key areas where volunteers should be assigned
- providing guidance on how to best support individuals during and after participating in the survey
- hosting magnet events, which are designed to encourage participation in the PiT Count
- providing input regarding survey questions

Furthermore, City staff will engage Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc regarding potentially sending volunteer teams to count and survey individuals on Tk'emlúps lands, specifically those lands immediately adjacent to the city, such as areas along the North and South Thompson rivers. If supported, this component of the PiT Count would help provide additional and more nuanced information regarding individuals experiencing homelessness and who may be accessing services within the community. City staff will invite Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc to participate on the PiT Count Committee and to provide input into the survey questions and mapping.

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Methodology

The PiT Count methodology provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness within a community on a specific date. PiT Counts provide a common language and comparable data sets for service providers, governments, and communities to use. The year-over-year comparisons identify trends or changes in the number and type of people experiencing homelessness. The information gathered will contribute to the local, provincial, and national understanding of homelessness.

The PiT Count has four components:

- sheltered count
- sheltered survey
- unsheltered count
- unsheltered survey

The sheltered count and survey will take place from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm at participating shelters on Wednesday, April 12. For sheltered counts, staff provide administrative data on the number of clients staying in the sheltered locations on the night of the count. The sheltered count takes place at night when clients have arrived at the sheltered locations for the evening. For the sheltered surveys, once clients have signed in, staff will ask them if they would like to participate in the anonymous survey. The sheltered and unsheltered surveys are the same except for the screening questions.

The unsheltered count and survey will take place from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm across Kamloops on Thursday, April 13. Examples of unsheltered locations include parks, beaches, encampments, and alleys. In groups of three, volunteers will be assigned areas based on a predetermined map developed by the PiT Count Committee that highlights areas to visit. The teams of three will walk together, connect with individuals where they are, and administer voluntary surveys. There will also be magnet events, which are designed to encourage unhoused individuals to visit and participate in the survey. These events include food, activities, cultural services, and resources.

The survey is voluntary, and respondents may choose to end the survey at any point. If an individual fulfills the criteria of experiencing homelessness but does not want to take the survey, they will still be counted without any identifiers. There are standardized questions across British Columbia, which are added based on advocacy and engagement. The 2023 survey includes 27 questions, with 4 screening questions followed by an additional 23 questions that include more specific demographic and service-related questions.

Many of the questions are asked based on advocacy for a particular topic to be explored. For example, a new question related to residential schools has been added in 2023 at the request of the Indigenous Homelessness Steering Committee for BC and Lu'ma Native Housing Society. This new question went through extensive engagement with research ethics at the University of Victoria. There is also an opportunity to ask community-specific questions, which Kamloops has done in previous PiT Counts. The PiT Count Committee will determine if there is a need for additional questions and what these questions will be.

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Limitations of PiT Counts

A PiT Count is a snapshot. The success and accuracy of the numbers and information gathered depend on the thoroughness of the methods and participation by stakeholders. A PiT Count is just one data collection strategy among many. Shelter bed counts and other research methods provide complementary, not competing, information.

It is recognized that PiT counts are undercounts and represent only those individuals identified during the 24-hour period. The number of people who are experiencing homelessness is greater than what will be represented in the report. Despite this, the PiT Count is considered an accepted methodological tool for collecting data on homelessness at a single point in time across Canada. When communities conduct counts at the same time of year using a common language, the results help to build a better understanding of homelessness in Canada.

Although this is a data-focused project, the PiT Count relies on human beings—often shelter workers or outreach workers—to connect with other human beings who may be vulnerable. It is worth noting that the survey questions are deeply personal asking individuals why they lost their housing, if they have been in the foster care system, what their gender identities are, and more. The accuracy of the results would not exist without the trust among agencies and individuals in Kamloops.

PiT Count Volunteers

PiT Count volunteers will first be identified via social agencies, including outreach workers and shelter staff. Since these front-line workers already have existing relationships with people experiencing homelessness, they can provide a greater level of trust. Understanding the capacity constraints that the sector faces, City staff will recruit additional volunteers with a focus on individuals who have some working experience or understanding of the city's vulnerable population, such as nursing and social work students. In addition, City staff will work closely with social agencies that have peer programs to gauge interest and suitability for peers to be a part of the count.

All PiT Count volunteers (e.g., shelter staff, outreach workers, students, etc.) are required to sign an oath of confidentiality. The City will keep these records on file. Participants who review and sign the oath of confidentiality agree to:

- keep any information (written, verbal or other form) obtained during the PiT Count confidential
- not to disclose any confidential information acquired during the event to any third party, including the media (in recognition of the difficult situations unhoused individuals face and to demonstrate respect for those who support them on a day-to-day basis)
- refrain from posting photos of survey participants, other volunteers, survey materials, and all survey locations
- uphold participant confidentiality in all use of social media during and after the count

Further to this, all volunteers will be required to participate in a mandatory training session.

Results

City staff will complete a 2023 Kamloops PiT Count report, which will be shared with Council, stakeholders, and the public in fall 2023. Staff have had initial conversations with the TRU Researcher-in-Residence to discuss opportunities to share the results in a meaningful and destigmatizing way.

The data collected will also be shared with BC Housing to form part of the provincial report. The data will be aggregated with available data from other homeless counts to provide a provincial overview, including cross-tabulations between common indicators collected across the communities. Analysis based on the data received may be shared publicly at the aggregate level.

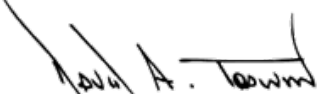
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2023 PiT Count is supported by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy grant funds.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Social and Community Section staff will work with the Communications and Community Engagement Division to share the results of the PiT Count with the community.


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