

Leduc Homelessness Task Force Final Report

February 8, 2024

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Land Acknowledgement

The Leduc Homelessness Task Force acknowledges the City of Leduc and those we serve are situated within Treaty 6 Territory, comprised of the ancestral and modern-day territory of the Nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Anishinaabe, Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), as well as the Métis Peoples.

Letter from Task Force Facilitator

Dear Task Force Members:

I am privileged to provide this report and recommendations of the Leduc Homelessness Task Force. Our group is committed to addressing the pressing issue of homelessness, which has affected many individuals and families in the City of Leduc. Our work comes at a critical time: between 80 and 95 people in Leduc are currently homeless, and our local shelter is facing closure over barriers to relocation.

No single initiative will solve the challenge of homelessness. Long-term solutions lie in integrated social, health, and housing efforts. Our task force explored the complexity of factors contributing to homelessness in our community to develop near-term local solutions.

We heard social service support for people experiencing homelessness must be maintained in Leduc. We also heard that protecting the cherished sense of community, safety, and prosperity enjoyed by Leduc businesses, residents, and all those who enjoy Leduc's public spaces is essential.

We learned that the leadership and collaboration of all key stakeholders is critical for the future success of any organization that serves the homeless in our community. This will need to include proper oversight by community leaders, including Leduc City Council, and the development of clear accountability measures. We also learned that timely and informative communication needs to be provided to the community so that residents' concerns are properly addressed.

In summary, this report details the findings of the task force and recommends three key actions that will have the most immediate positive outcomes for the citizens of Leduc and those experiencing homelessness:

- 1. Increase winter shelter spaces from 10 beds to a minimum of 15 and maximum capacity of 20.**
- 2. Increase summer shelter spaces from 10 beds to a minimum of 15 and maximum capacity of 20.**
- 3. Ensure the homeless population in Leduc has access to two meals per day with snacks or drinks available on request.**

In addition, this report also proposes several solutions to address challenges associated with the availability of emergency shelter space and social services in Leduc, their location and their impact on stakeholder communities such as businesses, and the interplay between the provision of social services, access to housing, mental health and addictions support, and other orders of government.

In presenting these recommendations, we acknowledge them to be a beginning. We are hopeful they will spur the growth of a long-standing, collaborative commitment by the people of Leduc to create positive change and ensure everyone in our city has a place to call home.

I thank all task force members for their ardour, candour, and dedication to this effort. Let us stand united in compassion, understanding, and action and embody the spirit of Leduc we all hold dear.

Sandra Jory
Facilitator, Leduc Homelessness Task Force

Leduc Homelessness Task Force Members



Bob Young
Mayor, City of Leduc

Bill Hamilton
Councillor, City of Leduc

Michael Stadnyk
Peace Officer, City of Leduc

Laura Howarth
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Laurel Fitzsimonds
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Executive Director, Leduc HUB
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Susan Perry
Past Executive Director, Leduc
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Missy Chahaeyb
Lived experience



Amber Cook
Director, Leduc
Downtown Business
Association



Penny Penney
Leduc RCMP Crime
Reduction Unit



Carolyn Smith
Alberta Health Services
Adult Community
Services



Linda Bernicki
Project Consultant,
Rural Development

Background

On October 17, 2023, the HUB and representatives from the City of Leduc met to discuss the issues related to homelessness and poverty with the community of Leduc.

At this meeting, the HUB requested that a task force be formed to create a collective responsibility for identifying issues and possible solutions to address the issues related to homelessness and poverty occurring in our community.

Formation & Methodology

Task Force members with a vested interest in respect to homelessness were identified by both the City and the HUB. The task force first met on November 21, 2024, to draft terms of reference that would guide outcomes.

The task force met a total of five times, ending with the last meeting held on February 8, 2024, with the key purpose of presenting this report, as identified in its terms of reference, to the City of Leduc City Council, Leduc-Beaumont MLA Brandon Lundy, Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services Jason Nixon, and Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Dan Williams.

Context

While an official count of local homeless has not been performed, task force members identified a range of between 80 to 95 homeless within the community.

The overall consensus identified by the group is that the community of Leduc needs to continue to supply homelessness services within the community.

The current social service provider, the Leduc HUB Association (the “HUB”), urgently needs to identify a new location as its current permit and lease expire in June 2024. If a new location is not identified, the HUB will no longer provide services to the homeless community. If this happens, a new provider may need to be engaged to provide services, as the issue of homelessness and poverty will not disappear with the closure of the HUB.

Mandate

The mandate of the task force is to provide recommendations to stakeholders for a coordinated community response to address homelessness within the City of Leduc.

Core Beliefs & Values

1. All people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and should be helped from a strengths-based perspective
2. The issue of homelessness can only be addressed through collaboration between the community and all levels of government.

Goals & Objectives

1	Identify what key services need to be provided to the Leduc homeless, including the location of services, provider of services and proposed funding model.
2	Define the key requirements for a new shelter location within the City of Leduc.
3	Identify any other current issues related to homelessness and possible solutions.
4	Identify any other longer-term goals and possible solutions to address homelessness in the City of Leduc.

Goal 1: Identify what key services need to be provided to the Leduc homeless

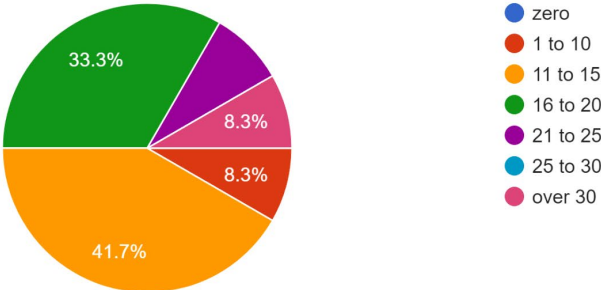
Objective 1.A: Identify the homeless services to be provided

There was considerable discussion by the task force on what level of services should be provided within the community of Leduc. A survey was sent to all participants with the following results and recommendations:

Emergency Shelter Beds - Winter - November 2024 to April 2025

A majority of the task force (92%) determined this service should be provided within the community of Leduc as follows:

Winter shelter (Nov to April) - if winter shelter is provided how many beds should be provided in 2024-25?
12 responses



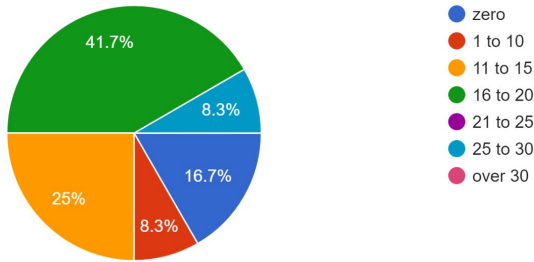
Recommendation 1:
Increase winter shelter spaces from 10 beds to a minimum of 15 and maximum capacity of 20.

Emergency Shelter Beds - Summer - May 2024 to October 2024

A majority of the task force (83%) determined this service should be provided within the community of Leduc as follows:

Summer shelter (May to October) - if summer shelter is provided how many beds should be provided in 2024?

12 responses



Recommendation 2:

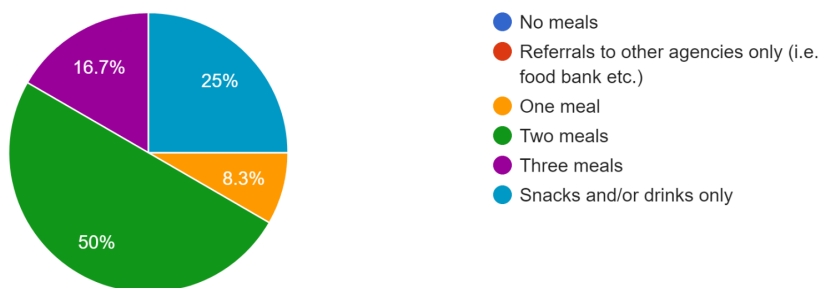
Increase summer shelter spaces from 10 beds to a minimum of 15 and maximum capacity of 20.

Daytime Food Services

A majority of the task force (83%) determined this service should be provided within the community of Leduc as follows:

Daytime Food Services - how many meals or snacks should be provided PER DAY?

12 responses



Recommendation 3:

Ensure the homeless population in Leduc has access to two meals per day with snacks or drinks available on request.

Daytime Personal Care Services

The majority of the task force (>50% of task force members) recommends that the following services be provided:

- Laundry
- Showers & Washrooms
- First Aid
- Community space with appropriately trained staff providing for socialization, safety, skills or work training

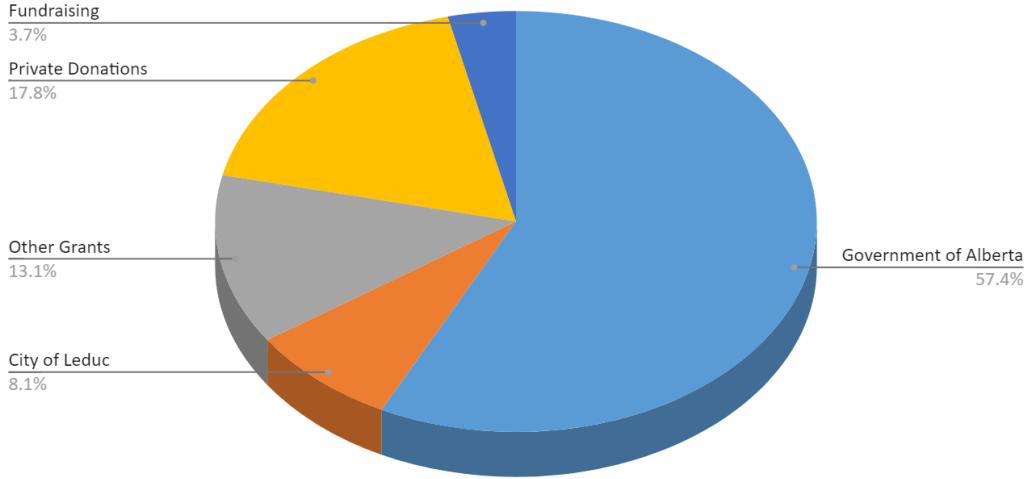
Navigation or Referral Services

In line with the 2022 provincial task force, the majority of the task force agree with a hub model where referrals to connect the homeless with services is done by the agency which provides emergency shelter services and recommends the following services also be provided:

- Counseling Referrals
- Rehabilitation Referrals
- ID Program
- Assistance with Financial Application Forms (AISH, income etc.)
- Coordinating and/or providing transportation
- Coordinating medical care (i.e medical appointments)

Objective 1.B: Identify a proposed funding model for key services

The funding to the Leduc HUB Association for the 2023 year, broken down by funding sources is as follows:



The task force discussed the need for collaboration with both the community (private donations and grants) and from all levels of government to address homelessness within the community of Leduc adequately.

Objective 1.C: Identify the provider of homelessness services

The Leduc HUB Association is the current provider of homelessness services for the community of Leduc. As discussed at the task force meeting, the Leduc HUB is in dire need of identifying a new location as its development permit expires at the current location in June 2024. If a new location is not identified by February 16, 2024, the Leduc HUB Association will be forced to cease operations in the community at the end of the Winter Shelter season (April 30, 2024).

The task force identified the following concerns and issues should the Leduc HUB cease operations, or if there were no homelessness services in the community of Leduc.

- Increase in sleeping in business doorways, multifamily entrances or dumpsters/alleyways
- Increase in loitering in public places such as the LRC, Library, and city parks
- Increase in theft/crime at nearby businesses to supply basic necessities as the Leduc HUB currently offers meals and snacks throughout the day
- Increase the difficulty with accessing services as the Leduc HUB provides referrals for counselling, housing and income supports
- Increase in the difficulty with getting identification as clients would have to travel outside the community for assistance, with limited service levels in other communities for this support (i.e. Edmonton)
- A new gap in services will be created on the continuum of housing that will not be solved as many homeless clients will not be able to transition immediately from homelessness to “sober” housing (i.e. there are many stages of change before moving from homelessness to housing).

Goal #2 - Identify the key criteria for locating a homelessness centre

As noted above, the HUB, which currently runs the homeless daytime program and overnight emergency shelter permit for operations and lease expires in June 2024. As such, the task force reviewed and recommends that the following criteria be considered when determining a new location for a homelessness centre:

A. Key amenities within walking distance (i.e. 3 km or less):

- Library & FCSS
- Hospital
- Bottle Depot
- Fast Food

Alternatively, the task force recommends that if a facility is not within walking distance that public transportation be available or offered.

B. Areas to avoid:

- Schools, Daycares or Youth Activity Programs/Centres
- High-density business areas with walk-in traffic
- Residential areas

C. Key safety considerations:

- Staff sightlines to the street.
- Outdoor seating area sheltered from the street (but that can still be supervised by appropriately trained staff for safety purposes)
- Adequate outdoor lighting
- Adequate storage

D. Possible location solutions proposed:

- Partner with another organization already established in the City of Leduc (churches, other NPOs)
- City of Leduc to provide land or another building
- Identify a partnership with another entity to retrofit a local hotel for emergency shelter, wrap-around services and supportive housing.

Goal #3 - Identify any other current issues related to homelessness and possible solutions

A. Community and Safety Concerns

The task force discussed the stigma surrounding homelessness and the perception issues that result when clients are seen lingering outside a homelessness centre. Clients lingering around the neighborhood could be perceived as safety concerns due to mental health or drug use issues. Some concerns were expressed as to whether a homeless centre was the right place for a homeless person to access services and concerns as to whether staff would be qualified to provide services. There were concerns that a homelessness centre could cause an increase in crime and vandalism, and altercations between neighbouring businesses. Because of this, there may also be an increase in attacks or abuse of homeless people, resulting in a threat to the safety of these individuals.

Proposed Solutions

- Increase police or peace officer patrols surrounding the homeless centre at high-risk times (i.e., evening hours).
- Report incidents of abuse towards the homeless on a no-names basis
- Addressing stigma through public information campaigns utilizing partnerships between the homelessness centre, City of Leduc, Leduc Chamber, etc.
- Ensuring that there is proper data tracking so that the problems can be accurately identified and assessed
- Ensure that the homelessness centre is appropriately located and staff are adequately trained
- Create an accountability model where clients are encouraged to break the cycle of homelessness

B. Community Response - Working Better Together

The task force discussed the need for collaboration between the homelessness centre, City of Leduc, Government of Alberta, Alberta Health Services and other agencies. The challenges currently faced are difficulties getting mental health support for clients, accessing Alberta Support resources, and long waits for access to detox and addiction treatment. The task force also identified the lack of local support and access to services outside of the community.

Proposed solutions:

- Need better, direct access to mental health, detox and addiction treatment with reduced wait times
- Opportunity to access services locally.
- Increase partnerships between the homelessness centre and the City of Leduc with organizations such as the Rural Development Network (federal).
- Strong partnership between the homelessness centre and the City of Leduc
- Share data on services being accessed across organizations so needs can be better identified and addressed (AHS, homelessness centre, other care organizations, City of Leduc).

Goal #4 - Identify any other longer-term goals and possible solutions to address homelessness in Leduc

A. Adequate and Appropriate Housing

The group discussed the limited amount of local housing available: there is no local low-cost, transitional or supportive housing available for those leaving homelessness. This makes it very difficult for someone utilizing shelter to move on to more affordable housing once they are ready to do so. There are also very limited rent subsidies available from the government of Alberta. When someone is housed, limited support is available to keep them housed.

Proposed solutions

- Request an increase in rent subsidies from the Government of Alberta
- Create a mentorship program (non-profit?) where a homeless person is matched with a housing mentor and support to assist with learning how to be housed and maintain housing.

Conclusion

Homelessness is one of the most challenging issues that the community of Leduc will face in 2024. It is clear from what is happening in Edmonton and Alberta that this is not an issue that will be easily solved or will be done by one organization on its own. Collaboration between all levels of government, non-profit organizations and community members will be critical. The City of Leduc's Vision Statement is: "A Great Life. A Caring Community. A Thriving Region". Fundamentally, each person who calls Leduc home is someone who deserves to be cared for, respected, and loved. Working together, let our actions prove that we are the caring community that we profess to be.

Appendix

[City of Leduc Homelessness Prevention and Poverty Framework \(2021\)](#)

[City of Leduc “Not the Plan” campaign \(2023\)](#)

Homelessness Task Force Terms of Reference

Approved January 4, 2024

Task Force Mandate:

To provide recommendations to stakeholders for a coordinated community response to address homelessness within the City of Leduc.

Task Force Outcome:

1. A written report presenting goals and key solutions no later than February 28, 2024
2. Presentation of report to Leduc City Council by two task force members (tbd) no later than March 31, 2024
3. Presentation of report by two task force members (tbd) to MLA Brandon Lundy, Minister Nixon and Minister Williams no later than March 31, 2024
4. Present report on websites and submit to media (with permission): City of Leduc, Leduc Hub Association, Leduc Representative, 93.1 The One

Meeting Cadence:

Bi-monthly or more frequently as determined by the task force

Meeting Facilitator:

Sandra Jory, Leduc Hub Association

Meeting Minutes & Reports:

Meeting Facilitator will document action items and write final report (approved by members)

Members:

The task force will be made up of local officials, community members including those with lived experience, business community members, and organizations provide services to the community and the homelessness population (i.e. Leduc Hub Association (“Leduc Hub”), RCMP, Leduc Peace Officers and Alberta Health Services (“AHS”))

City of Leduc

Mayor Bob Young; Councillor Bill Hamilton; Laura Howarth, Director Community and Social Development, other city staff as required

Leduc Hub Association

Laurel Fitzsimonds, Director; Susan Johnson, Executive Director

Community Members

Susan Perry, Past Executive Director Leduc Hub Association; Amber Cook, Downtown Business Association, Missy Chehaeyb, Lived Experience

RCMP & Peace Officers

Michael Stadnyk, City of Leduc; Penny Penney, RCMP

Alberta Health Services

Carolyn Smith, AHS, AMH Adult Community Services

Rural Development Network

Linda Bernicki

Goals Identify what key services need to be provided to the Leduc homeless including location of services, provider of services and proposed funding model.

1. Define the key requirements for a new shelter location within the City of Leduc
2. Identify any other current issues related to homelessness and possible solutions
3. Identify any other longer-term goals and possible solutions to address homelessness within the city of Leduc

Core Beliefs & Values

1. All people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and should be helped from a strengths-based perspective (Person Centered)
2. The issue of homelessness can only be addressed through collaboration between the community and all levels of government (Collaboration)
3. It is important that community members are engaged to help address homelessness and to address safety concerns within the community (Community Engagement)