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## MEDIA RELEASE

Social service agencies serving Winnipeg's unsheltered community are prepared for extreme cold weather.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Winnipeg, MB, January 30, 2023:** with frigid temperatures blanketing the city, the organizations serving Winnipeg's unsheltered community have been busy coordinating services and preparing to save lives.

People experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of cold weather-related illness such as frostbite and hypothermia due to increased exposure to the elements. Front-line service organizations like Main Street Project, Siloam Mission, N'Dinawamak, RaY, 1 Just City and others in the network met last week to plan their coordinated response.

"This is why we, as sector partners developed the Winter Weather Response Plan" said Jamil Mahmood, executive director of Main Street Project. "It's a homelessness-centered plan that includes information and resources for preventing and responding to cold weather illness and injury and the different responses and opportunities for Winnipeggers to support folks during the coldest days and nights".

The plan, launched in December was created by End Homelessness Winnipeg's Extreme Weather Response Committee, which includes representatives from emergency shelters, community organizations, City of Winnipeg departments, health care, government and philanthropic funders, and Environment and Climate Change Canada. Funding to resource the plan comes through End Homelessness Winnipeg.

This year's response includes:

- A winter response fund to allow community organizations that provide emergency weather services to support short-term responses on the coldest days of the winter.
- An additional outreach van on the road 24/7 through the winter months to respond to wellness checks on individuals in the community, provide cold weather transports, and more.
- Community Care Camps will be pop-up camps led by Sabe Peace walkers to support outdoor warming options during periods of extreme cold.

Sector organizations created the Winter Weather Response Plan as a coordinated partnership to facilitate sharing information, resources, and decreasing duplication of services during the frigid Winnipeg winters.



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"We have guests staying in our drop-in and warming shelter for 20 hrs a day" said Glynis Quinn, executive director of 1JustCity. "Our shelter is full every night and we depend on the collaboration of others in the shelter network to help us find beds for those when we are at capacity."

Mobile Outreach transport service operates in conjunction with the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) for calls in the community 24 hours a day. The Mobile Outreach service visits people in unsheltered or in encampments 24/7. These skilled outreach workers can deal with complex social situations that are not an emergency warranting police or ambulance. This includes but isn't limited to accessing shelter and connecting them appropriate resources for long-term solutions to those experiencing homelessness.

***What can you do?***

Front line service organization are always in need of financial donations to support ongoing services. Concerned citizens can reach out to individual organizations that may be in need of warm clothing such as mittens, winter jackets, snow pants, long underwear, sweatpants, warm socks, and hand-warmers/feet-warmers.

For wellness checks on individuals (non-emergency), call 211 for Mobile Outreach support. If you come across a person in cold-weather (or other) emergency distress, call 911.

-30-

**For more information, please contact:**

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**Additional Resources attached:**

2022-23 Fall-Winter Resource Guide.pdf