



## Heart and Hearth – Community Q&A

### **What is the Heart and Hearth program?**

Heart and Hearth is a provincial initiative led by the Ministry of Housing and BC Housing to help communities respond to homelessness and encampments. The program focuses on coordinated outreach for people living outdoors and creating new shelter and housing options so people can move indoors and connect with services.

### **Why was Smithers selected?**

Communities are selected based on need, existing resources, service gaps, and the presence of encampments. Smithers has been advocating for more coordinated support for years, and the Province recognized the importance of investing in a small northern community like ours.

### **What does HEART mean?**

HEART (Homeless Encampment Action Response Team) focuses on outreach and coordination. Teams work with people living outside to address mental health, addiction, physical, cultural, and social needs, and connect them with shelter, health care, and community supports.

### **What does HEARTH mean?**

HEARTH (Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing) provides funding for new or expanded shelter and housing options. This supports encampment response plans by helping create safe indoor spaces for people to move into.

### **Is there a shelter location or housing options already selected?**

No. BC Housing will work with the Town and local partners to select a suitable location based on community feedback.

**Who will be involved locally?**

BC Housing will establish a working group that includes municipal staff, First Nations and Indigenous partners, the Health Authority, non-profit service providers, and the Province. Plans will be community-specific and shaped by local partners.

**How does this improve community safety?**

By increasing outreach, coordination, and shelter options, Heart and Hearth helps reduce the impacts of encampments in public spaces, supports people in crisis, and improves safety and well-being for everyone in the community.

**Will the public be consulted?**

Yes. Council has directed that there be clear public engagement as the program develops. The goal is to seek solutions that are compassionate, practical, and supported by the community.

**What is the Town's role?**

The Town will work with BC Housing and partners to explore shelter and outreach options, participate in planning, and help guide solutions that fit Smithers' needs while balancing compassion, safety, and community expectations.

**What happens next?**

BC Housing will begin setting up the local working group and developing a community-specific plan. The Town will share updates as details become available.

For more information on the Heart and Hearth program, visit [www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/housing-provider-info/HEART-HEARTH](http://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/housing-provider-info/HEART-HEARTH).