

Comfort Centre Activation Policy (Non-State of Emergency)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear, transparent, and legally sound framework for the activation, operation, and deactivation of municipal Comfort Centres in circumstances that do not constitute a declared State of Emergency. This policy ensures appropriate Council oversight while enabling timely action to protect public health and safety during extreme cold weather or extended utility disruptions.

2. Policy Statement

The Municipality recognizes that extreme cold events, prolonged power outages, or heating system failures may pose significant risks to residents, particularly vulnerable populations. In such circumstances, the Municipality may activate Comfort Centres through a Council Directive, without declaring a State of Emergency, where conditions warrant precautionary and supportive measures.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Municipal Council
- Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
- Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) Coordinator (if applicable)
- Municipal staff and volunteers
- Any municipal facility designated as a Comfort Centre

This policy applies only when a State of Emergency has not been declared under applicable legislation.

4. Definitions

Council Directive: A formal decision of Council, passed by resolution or recorded direction, authorizing the activation of one or more Comfort Centres.

Comfort Centre: A municipally operated or municipally authorized facility opened to provide temporary warmth, shelter, basic seating, washroom access, and limited supports to the public during extreme cold or heating disruptions.

Extreme Cold Event: Weather conditions, as forecast or observed, pose a heightened risk to human health, including but not limited to extreme cold warnings, wind chill advisories, or sustained sub-zero temperatures.

Vulnerable Populations: Individuals are at increased risk due to age, disability, health conditions, housing insecurity, or lack of access to reliable heat.

5. Authority

5.1 Municipal Council retains authority to direct the activation of Comfort Centres in non-emergency circumstances.

5.2 The CAO is authorized to implement Council's directive, coordinate municipal resources, and manage operational execution.

5.3 This policy does not limit Council's authority to subsequently declare a State of Emergency if conditions escalate.

6. Activation Criteria

Council may issue a directive to activate Comfort Centres when one or more of the following conditions are present:

- Extended power outages affecting residential heating
- Extreme cold weather forecasts or warnings
- Heating fuel shortages or supply disruptions
- Infrastructure failures impacting heat availability
- Requests or advisories from provincial agencies or utilities
- Assessment by the CAO that public health and safety risks are elevated

7. Activation Process

7.1 Council Direction - Activation shall occur following a Council directive, which may be issued during a scheduled meeting, special meeting, or through an urgent electronic or telephonic resolution where permitted. The directive shall specify:

- Facilities to be opened
- Anticipated duration
- Any operational limitations or conditions

7.2 CAO Implementation Upon receiving Council direction, the CAO shall:

- Confirm facility readiness
- Assign staffing and supervisory responsibilities
- Coordinate with EMO, public works, recreation, or fire services as required
- Ensure appropriate risk mitigation measures are in place

8. Facility Selection and Standards

8.1 Facilities designated as Comfort Centres should, where feasible:

- Be municipally owned or formally approved
- Have reliable heat and electricity
- Be accessible, including barrier-free access where possible
- Contain washroom facilities

- Meet basic safety and insurance requirements

8.2 The CAO may limit services based on staffing, resources, and facility capacity.

9. Operations

9.1 Comfort Centres are intended as short-term relief locations and do not constitute overnight shelters unless explicitly authorized by Council.

9.2 Services may include:

- Warm indoor space
- Seating and rest areas
- Washroom access
- Basic refreshments, where feasible

9.3 The Municipality does not guarantee medical care, meals, or sleeping accommodations unless specifically approved.

10. Staffing and Volunteers

10.1 Municipal staff may be reassigned to support Comfort Centre operations.

10.2 Volunteers may be utilized where appropriate, subject to:

- Supervisor oversight
- Insurance coverage
- Health and safety orientation

11. Risk Management and Liability

11.1 The Municipality shall take reasonable steps to mitigate risk, including:

- Facility inspections prior to opening
- Clear rules of conduct
- Adequate supervision

11.2 Individuals remain responsible for their own personal belongings.

11.3 This policy does not create an obligation to provide continuous or indefinite services.

12. Communications

12.1 Public communications shall be coordinated through the CAO or designate.

12.2 Notices may include:

- Location(s) and hours of operation
- Available services

- Transportation considerations, if applicable

12.3 Communications shall clearly state that:

- A State of Emergency has not been declared
- Services are temporary and conditional

13. Coordination with External Agencies

Where appropriate, the Municipality may coordinate with:

- Provincial departments
- Utility providers
- Social service agencies
- Community organizations

Such coordination does not transfer responsibility or authority unless formally agreed.

14. Deactivation

14.1 Comfort Centres shall be deactivated when:

- Conditions improve
- Utilities are restored
- Council rescinds the directive

14.2 The CAO shall ensure:

- Facilities are secured
- Staff are released from assignments
- Any issues or incidents are documented

15. Post-Event Review

Following deactivation, the CAO may prepare a brief report for Council outlining:

- Duration of activation
- Usage levels
- Operational challenges
- Recommendations for improvement

16. Review and Amendments

This policy shall be reviewed by Council at least once every four (4) years, or sooner if operational experience or legislative changes warrant.

17. Effective Date

This policy shall take effect upon adoption by Council.



Approval and Signatures

Mayor: _____

Clerk: _____

Date: February 3, 2026