



Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Homelessness Count Underway Across District

The Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board (RRDSSAB), in partnership with over 30 service agencies across the District, is conducting a count of homelessness over two weeks starting October 5th. The issue of homelessness in the Rainy River District has been the topic of discussion around kitchen tables, in conference rooms and online for several years.

Sandra Weir, Integrated Services Manager and Housing/Homelessness Lead at the RRDSSAB believes that the work done to conduct and promote the same count that took place in 2018 may be partially responsible for bringing the issue to light. "We have done a lot of public education over the past few years and we think it's having an impact. People are more aware, asking questions and discussing solutions," said Weir.

Beyond just identifying numbers, the surveys seek more comprehensive information such as personal experiences, current barriers, and how individuals experiencing homelessness prefer to access different services. The intent of the survey is to be able to learn more to respond better to homelessness in the Rainy River District. "At the end of the day, our survey, and the projects that result from it are all part of our big goal: to help people experiencing homelessness get into housing and keep their housing," added Weir.

Communities across Ontario will be conducting a point-in-time count of homelessness this fall. "The groundwork has been laid to continue moving forward and it will allow us to assess our progress on initiatives that have been started since 2018, including projects such as the Out of the Cold warming center," explained Weir.

The count relies on involvement from all service providers who serve the homeless population in the Rainy River District. Surveys will be available at agencies across the district where respondents will be offered a pre-survey asking "Where did you sleep the night of October 5th?"

Anyone not sleeping in their own house or apartment will have the opportunity to complete the survey, in addition to those whose current housing feels unsafe or are one unexpected bill away from homelessness. The survey is voluntary, confidential and respondents will receive a gift card to local grocery stores.

Results from the study will be made publicly available in the months following the count. Individuals or families who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness are encouraged to visit the RRDSAB at 450 Scott Street in Fort Frances, 25 Rawn Road Centre in Atikokan, visit www.rrdsab.ca or call 807-274-5349 to learn what supports may be available.

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For more information, please contact Sandra Weir, Integrated Services Manager at sandraw@rrdsab.on.ca or 807-274-5349 ext. 230.