QUESNEL EXTREME COLD WEATHER PLAN

REVISED Phase 1 Report

Submitted to the City of Quesnel

by LevelUp Planning Collaborative Inc.

October 31, 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

Quesnel, BC, located in the Cariboo region of Northern BC on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lhtako Dene Nation, is no stranger to the challenges posed by extreme weather conditions. Located on the main route through BC to the Yukon, the region often experiences severe cold during the winter months.

Quesnel faces several interconnected challenges that significantly impact extreme cold weather planning. Although it remains a relatively affordable community by BC standards, many residents still struggle with housing affordability, and homelessness is a pressing issue. These vulnerabilities are compounded by a rapidly aging population, a growing number of individuals using illicit substances, and a shortage of primary health care providers.

The combination of long winters, heavy snowfall, and prolonged below-freezing temperatures heightens the risks for these vulnerable groups. Limited public transit options restrict mobility and access to essential services or warming centers during extreme weather events. While Quesnel's proximity to nature offers recreational opportunities, it may also lead some individuals to shelter outdoors, increasing their exposure to cold-related health risks. These conditions underscore the urgent need for a coordinated, accessible cold weather response plan that prioritizes shelter, health care, and transportation support.

This short report offers a high-level summary of some of the key considerations that will need to be part of the development of the Extreme Cold Weather Plan for the City of Quesnel. Those considerations have come from a review of the relevant literature and legislation and an environmental scan of similar work in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Context in Quesnel

With climate change, average winter temperatures in the region are projected to increase over time, and fewer frost days (days where the minimum temperature is below 0°C) are expected.[1],[2] This means that cold periods will not be as cold or prolonged as in the past. However, those warmer overall temperatures can provide more energy for winter storms, making them more powerful and unpredictable.[3] And all this climate data should be seen in the context of social factors that put more people at risk of vulnerability in the face of poor weather.

In 2020, the average poverty rate in Quesnel (based on the Market Basket Measure), was 9.3%, only 0.5% less than the provincial average. However, poverty rates among the 18-24 and 55-64 age categories were reported to be significantly higher than the provincial average.[4]

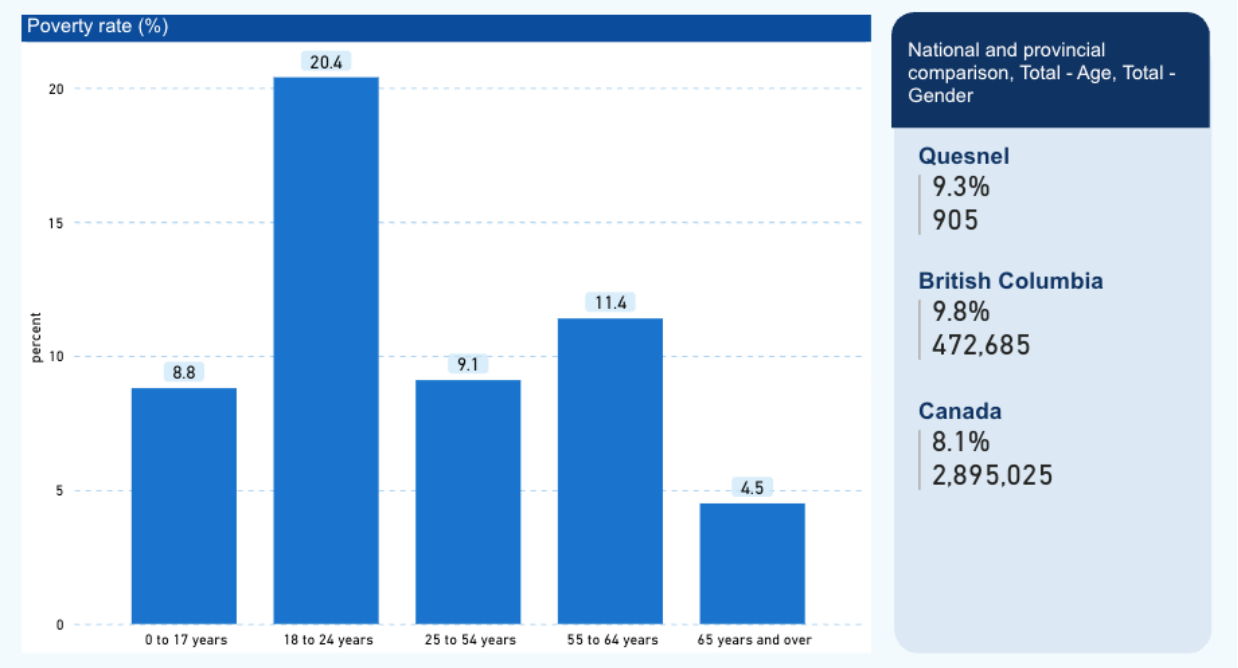

Figure 1: Quesnel Poverty Status by Age. Statistics Canada. Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status, 2020. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2023025-eng.htm

While we cannot present more up-to-date poverty data specific to Quesnel, we can assume that the poverty rate since 2020 has increased, as it has across Canada. Because of the income support programs put in place to help Canadians affected by workplace shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the poverty rate fell in 2020. It has since increased each year, as support programs have ended and inflation has increased.[5]

The current unemployment rate in Quesnel is at 10.9%[6], which is 4.6% higher than the provincial average.[7]

The 2025 Homeless Count for Quesnel provides an estimate Point-in-Time count of people experiencing homelessness. We know that there are many individuals' experiencing homelessness and this count represents the minimum number on a given day in the community. This most recent count has identified 131 individuals living in Quesnel that are experiencing homelessness. This number is most likely underestimated. The primary reasons for loss of housing were identified by survey respondents as: not enough income, substance use issues, and mental health issues. 41% of all respondents identified that eviction was the cause of their most recent experience of homelessness.[8] A 20-year projection identifies that there will be a need of 95.32 housing units required to support the proportional local people experiencing homelessness.[9]

The 2021 Census identified that in Quesnel there are 2.9% of households in unsuitable housing and 9.8% living in inadequate housing.[10] 2,800 owners and 1,705 renters in Quesnel were identified as being in Extreme Core Housing Need (ECHN), which corresponds to a situation where households are obliged to spend 50% or more of pre-tax income for shelter costs. A 20-year projection estimates that 152.36 households will be in ECHN, primarily composed of renters' households.[11]

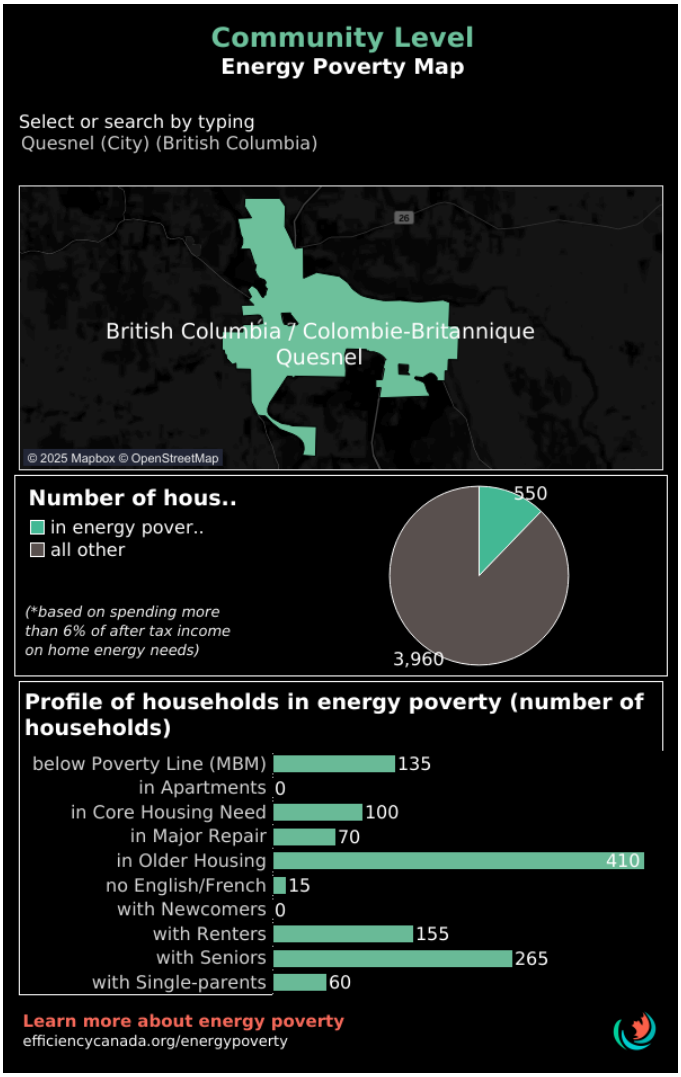

Figure 2: Energy Poverty levels for city of Quesnel. Source: 2021 Census by Statistics Canada. Efficiency Canada. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/efficiency.canada/viz/CommunityLevelEnergyPovertyMap/Dashboard

In Quesnel, there are an estimated 550 households experiencing energy poverty (13.9% of the total number of households in the community), defined as spending more than 6% of their after-tax income on energy needs. That proportion is higher than the provincial average, at 10%. See the Community Energy Poverty visual, left, from Efficiency Canada. Many of those households are living in older housing and/or are living with low incomes.

Determinants of energy poverty include:

- Affordability: low incomes, single-earner households, precarious employment, fixed incomes, unstable incomes, cash-flow problems, high household debt, low disposable incomes etc.
- Poor housing conditions: old leaky homes, inefficient heating, poor building envelope, housing needing repairs, lack of access to passive or active cooling, precarious housing, high shelter costs, inadequate housing, unsuitable housing, overcrowding, poor ventilation, dampness and mould issues, structural damages, etc.
- Systemic marginalization: exclusion from policies (e.g., renters or those who live in multi-unit buildings are not included in most Canadian energy-efficiency initiatives), or challenges navigating complex systems of support (e.g., newcomers who may face barriers learning about no-cost energy efficiency upgrades).[12]

2. METHODOLOGY

Our team at LevelUp Planning prepared this report using the following methodology:

Our team worked with the City's project team to identify relevant resources, policies, and background documents to review to gain context related to the current state of planning for vulnerable populations and emergency management in Quesnel. We also gathered toolkits and other resources that provide guidance to local governments when planning for extreme cold, especially for unhoused individuals and families.

We also searched the health, planning, and emergency management research literature for information about cold-related mental and physical health outcomes (especially for the most vulnerable in the community) and ways to proactively address extreme cold weather conditions. We combined this process with a review of the provincial legislation relevant to the preparation of extreme cold weather plans and their implementation.

Finally, we pulled together a set of extreme cold plans and protocols to learn from other municipalities across Canada. For that environmental scan, we have integrated our efforts with those of City of Quesnel staff, who began a scan before we had been hired to complete this work. We thank City staff for their partnership on this element of the project.

3. KEY FINDINGS

The following section describes the key learnings of the analysis from the literature review, legislative review and environmental scan.

Health Effects of Extreme Cold

The two major health risks of extreme cold are frost bite and hypothermia. Cold weather (both moderate and extreme) has also been linked to higher rates of premature death and hospitalization from several causes such as increased spread of infection, and mechanisms that lead to cardiovascular and respiratory events. These causes have been shown to have a delayed effect, occurring several days and up to several weeks after cold weather exposure. There are also indirect health impacts when individuals spend more time indoors that may thereby increase their exposure to indoor health hazards.

A normal body temperature is approximately 37°C (98.6°F). When core body temperature drops by 1 or 2°C (1.8 or 3.6°F), or the body is exposed to severe cold, there is increased risk of cold-related injury. The most common cold-related injuries are hypothermia and frostbite.

When the temperature falls below 10°C (50°F) and a person is exposed to cold air for long periods, their body temperature can drop and cause hypothermia. In some instances, hypothermia can even occur at temperatures warmer than 10°C (50°F) when combined with exposure to wet and windy weather.

Who is Most at Risk?

While anyone can be at risk, some people are more vulnerable than others, including those[13]:

- experiencing homelessness (people who are unsheltered, unhoused, or living in places not intended for permanent habitation)
- who use substances, including alcohol, that change their ability to feel the effects of cold exposure or to respond to cold conditions
- who spend long periods of time outdoors for work or recreation
- living in housing without adequate insulation or without the ability to generate enough heat (also known as fuel poverty)
- with disabilities, limited mobility, certain medical conditions such as diabetes, peripheral neuropathy (muscle weakness, tingling, numbness) and diseases affecting the blood vessels
- taking certain medications, including beta-blockers
- those over 60 years of age, infants and young children

Contextual risk factors can also contribute to a person's vulnerability to extreme cold; these include spending large portions of the day outdoors (i.e. outdoor workers and outdoor enthusiasts), experiencing homelessness or living in a home without adequate electricity or heat (also known as living in a state of energy or fuel poverty).

Relevant Legislation

The Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA) replaced the Emergency Program Act (EPA) on November 8, 2023. On July 8, 2024, new regulations were introduced that, in summary:

- require certain government ministries to prepare hazard-specific risk assessments and emergency management plans
- make rules to establish areas for the purpose of the term "treaty area", which sets out areas where Modern Treaty Nations need to be consulted and cooperated with and where certain agreements can be entered into with them
- bring into effect continuity planning obligations for other parts of government, including the Legislative Assembly, the Executive Council (i.e., Cabinet), and the office of the Lieutenant Governor

The implementation of the EDMA legislation is occurring in stages. In August 2024, the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) noted that the EDMA components related to the responsibilities of local governments to prepare and maintain risk assessments for hazards within their jurisdiction and prepare, maintain and implement emergency management plans will be "functional after further regulations are made." On September 22, 2025, EMCR announced that it would bring into effect requirements for risk assessments, emergency management plans and business continuity plans, as well as potentially provide further details on multijurisdictional emergency management organizations, anticipated in Spring 2026 and taking effect January 2027.

The current guidance from the EMCR recommends that local governments and First Nations create cold weather response plans that outline how they respond to cold weather conditions. They also say that communities should adhere to the recommendations of the BC Health Effects of Anomalous Temperatures Coordinating Committee (BC HEAT Committee), which suggests activating cold weather response plans when the daily low temperature is forecast to be 0°C or colder. Plans should also be activated at higher temperatures when the forecast includes wet, snowy, and/or windy conditions. Despite those temperature recommendations from the BC HEAT Committee, we expect that the recommended temperature criteria for Quesnel will involve much colder temperatures, given the climate in the region.

EMCR's Policy 5.14: Interim Extreme Weather Emergency Task Number Eligibility states the following [emphasis added]:

> *"When extreme weather is forecasted actions are taken as outlined in the BC Public Alerting System or BC Provincial Heat Alert and Response System (HARS) and the event is considered an "emergency" within the meaning of both the Public Health Act and the Emergency and Disaster Management Act.*
>
> *Incremental reimbursement may be requested when Environment and Climate Change Canada issues an Extreme Heat or Cold Emergency, Heat or Cold Warnings, in support of a community's response.* ***Or when triggers are met as outlined in an Indigenous governing bodies and local authorities extreme weather plan.*** *For the purposes of this policy, extreme weather is considered to be extreme heat or cold that is outside the region's normal range of weather.*

To us, this is the bottom line: the City of Quesnel, through this Extreme Cold Weather Plan, can define the temperatures and other conditions that constitute an 'cold emergency'. Once defined in the Plan, the City is eligible for reimbursement of some expenses incurred following extreme cold conditions.

Types of Centres to Support People during Extreme Cold

There are several types of centres that set up to protect and support people during emergencies, including extreme cold. It is important to note the distinctions among these types of services, in part because they are funded by different organizations.

Shelters Funded by BC Housing

BC Housing supports three types of emergency shelters serving people experiencing homelessness:

- Year-round shelters are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the year, regardless of the weather, and provide services and meals to guests.
- Temporary winter shelters are open every night from October/November to March/April, and many operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with meals provided.
- Extreme weather response (EWR) shelters open overnight in the winter when a community declares an extreme weather alert such as during cold temperatures,

snow, or heavy rain. Communities determine what temperature and weather conditions need an extreme weather alert in co-ordination with BC Housing. EWR season is from October 15 to April 15. These are community-led shelters that often consist of sleeping mats and/or cots. Staff or volunteers provide food and other emergency provisions.

BC Housing outlines how community partners work with them to establish and operate temporary winter shelters: community partners, including non-profit organizations, bring proposals to BC Housing with a plan for a site for the temporary winter shelter and a budget and providers or municipalities secure operational permits for the site. BC Housing then provides the funding for the operation of the temporary winter shelter, negotiating the budget and plan with the provider.

The EWR program is enabled under the Assistance to Shelter Act, established in 2009. This legislation provides for the creation of Extreme Weather Response Plans and the framework for the plans. EWR shelters open when an EWR Alert is issued by the community lead. EWR Alerts occur when weather conditions align with the alert criteria approved in the EWR Plan, determined by community partners.

BC Housing has not funded EWRs in Northern BC, preferring to support temporary winter shelters instead.

At this point, the only shelter in Quesnel is Seasons House Emergency Shelter, operated by the Quesnel Shelter & Support Society. The Society offers emergency shelter beds, transitional housing units, referrals to support and recovery, and a homelessness prevention program. Seasons House is a year-round shelter with 25 beds.

Emergency Warming Centres

Outside the purview of BC Housing, emergency warming centres are emergency response locations set up by local governments or First Nations to temporarily support people during a cold weather event. These centres are typically operated only during the day and there is potential for incremental cost recovery through EMCR (see Financial Assistance section below). Emergency warming centres are not Group Lodging Facilities or shelters.

The table below offers a quick summary of the differences between EWR Shelters, temporary winter shelters and emergency warming centres.

Characteristic	Emergency Weather Response (EWR) Shelters*	Temporary Winter Shelters	Emergency Warming Centres
Lead organization	Non-profit organizations in the community	Non-profit organizations in the community	Local government or First Nation
Operating hours	Overnight Only open when an extreme weather alert has been issued	Open every night; many operate 24/7 October 1 - April 30	Daytime Open when an extreme weather alert has been issued
Funding	BC Housing	BC Housing	EMCR (through cost recovery)
Relevant Legislation	Assistance to Shelter Act	?	EDMA

One of the goals of the Extreme Cold Weather Plan for the City of Quesnel is developing guidelines for the establishment of an emergency warming centre in the community. Those guidelines will include information about where the warming centre(s) will be located, parameters related to when the warming centre will be open, how it will be funded, and the partners who will help to operate it.

Financial Assistance to Operate Emergency Warming Centres during Extreme Weather

Communities can request reimbursement from the EMCR for some expenses related to emergency warming centres. Reimbursement is available when:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada issues an extreme weather alert (such as Warnings, Watches, Advisories, and Special Weather Statements), or
- The thresholds for action outlined in the community's cold weather response plan are met.

Reimbursement is only approved when the upcoming weather event is outside the region's normal range of weather. See the explanation above about EMCR Policy 5.14 and the Eligibility Assessment for Extreme Weather Emergencies document. The table below offers a high-level overview of eligible expenses; please confirm all information with the more detailed documents from EMCR.

Note: Costs cannot be reimbursed by EMCR if they are covered under a BC Housing-funded program, like the temporary winter shelter program or the EWR program.

EMCR suggests that local governments submit an Expense Authorization Form (EAF) to them for approval. The EAF provides the details of the expenditure, its rationale, and an estimate of the total expense for the response activity.

Expense Item	What is Eligible
Day and night facility for use as Emergency Warming Centre	Rental of non-local authority facility for the provision of an emergency warming centre Incremental janitorial and utilities costs Incremental janitorial costs
Heating device rental for warming centres	Cost of heating device rentals Incremental utility expenses
Provisions for community members who visit the warming centre	Warmed liquids (tea/coffee), blankets and warm clothing made available at community warming centre facilities
Staff overtime	Wages for staff overtime to keep warming centres operational
Transportation to and from warming centres	Transportation for community members to and from warming centres, under certain conditions
Staff time for community partner organizations	Overtime and other expenses incurred by partner organizations that have been hired by the local government to operate warming centres
Cultural supports	Costs for activities to provide cultural supports at warming centres
Communications	Costs related to print, radio, and social media messages to the local population amplifying ECCC and/or HEMBC messaging.
Wellness Checks	Materials, wages, or overtime to check on the welfare of community members during an extreme cold emergency

Environmental Scan – Lessons from Elsewhere

How Should Municipalities React to Extreme Cold Events?: Learning from other Municipalities

The guidance from provincial governments about planning for extreme weather depends on defining temperatures and other weather elements that could cause hardship for community members, especially those most vulnerable. However, defining extreme cold is difficult in a place like Canada, which, due to its vast landscape, experiences a wide variety of local climates. In some regions, extreme cold alerts are issued for temperatures below -40°C, whereas in other regions, alerts are issued for -2°C or lower. This discrepancy is ultimately a reflection of a region's overall preparedness for cold, acclimatization of its residents, and wind chill effects. Although Environment Canada has a set of criteria for issuing extreme cold alerts based on region, temperature and wind

chill, municipalities may choose to weigh other factors in their decision-making, thus creating a wide variability in the determination of when alerts are issued.

Our environmental scan aimed to focus on smaller municipalities with comparable population size and climate as Quesnel. It is important to note that many Northern BC communities like Quesnel either do not currently have a detailed cold weather response report or it is not made publicly available. Many available sources are limited to a brief informational page on the municipality's website. Due to this, we have included information from some larger municipalities and cities, to understand important findings on cold weather decision-making, procedures, and health promotion.

Below we provide a summary of key learnings from other jurisdictions across Canada. This summary comes from a combination of the work of the LevelUp team, together with the results of a similar scan done by City of Quesnel staff. In some cases below, we offer examples from other municipalities. Please see the Appendix for more detailed information, provided in table form.

Setting Priorities

Few other jurisdictions were explicit about their priorities during the preparation of their extreme cold weather plans and their implementation. The exception was the 2024 Joint District of Kitimat & Haisla Nation Extreme Temperatures Emergency Response Plan identifies the following priorities during extreme temperature events:

- Protect the health and safety of responders, staff and volunteers
- Protect the health and safety of the public
- Protect critical infrastructure
- Support vulnerable populations
- Increase community wellness
- Reduce economic, social, and property losses
- Protect and limit damage to the environment

Administration and Coordination

Effective and collaborative coordination is key to the success of a Cold Weather Plan.

- **Cold Weather Response Committee:** Form a team of representatives from key municipal departments, health agencies, and community organizations to lead and oversee response efforts
- **Collaboration with Community Organizations and Partners:** Work closely with local organizations to ensure resources, outreach, and communication efforts are aligned. Collaborate with trusted community networks to provide accurate information and connect vulnerable individuals with the services they need.
    - Create a living document of shared contact information of all stakeholders and partners, share it and make it accessible to all those participating
- **Roles and Responsibilities**: Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, community partners, city staff and city departments involved

    - Designate Alert Authority: Assign a specific individual or team responsible for issuing cold weather alerts based on Environment Canada's forecasts
- **Annual Preparedness Review:** Continuously adapt the plan as necessary by meeting with partners before and after each cold season to review roles, responsibilities, response strategies, and available resources

Identifying Vulnerable Populations

Specific attention is needed for those most at risk during extreme cold events. Identifying key vulnerable populations will help guide the development of key goals, responsibilities, and actions of the cold weather plan. High-risk groups include seniors, individuals with mobility issues, people with chronic health conditions, low-income residents, those experiencing homelessness, those living in energy poverty etc. See the Health Effects section on page 5 for more information.

Communication and Public Awareness

Clear and timely communication of key messages and cold weather preparedness information ensures public safety.

- Public Awareness and Education: Use multiple available information channels (municipality's Website, social media, local events, pamphlets/infographics) to effectively communicate and disseminate education materials on cold weather preparedness and how to stay safe during extreme cold temperatures.
    - Provide materials concerning personal cold weather safety and potential health risks from exposure. (e.g. increased risk of hypothermia, frostbite, and other cold-related illnesses)
    - Educational materials on how to help neighbours and others (including offering rides to warming centres or providing extra winter clothing), who to contact and what to do if you see someone experiencing difficulty due to extreme cold weather
    - Home preparation for staying warm in an event of loss of heating (ex: frozen pipes) and emergency cold weather kit tips.

Example: Port Moody's Public Awareness and Education

Port Moody provides information on:
• Frostbite and tips on how to prevent it
• Hypothermia and tips on how to prevent it
• Links on where to learn more about personal cold weather safety
• Tips and information on preparing your home for cold weather
• Who to contact in the event of an emergency
  ○ List of local supports
  ○ Confidential help lines to connect individuals with vital resources in their community (Ex: 211 British Columbia)

- Provide information on where and how to monitor and sign up for extreme cold weather alerts and forecasts. Include links to Environment Canada for monitoring and where to access local alerts

Availability of Centres to Support People during Extreme Cold

Provide a comprehensive list of available locations for warming centres and the resources provided at each location. Provide information regarding if there is a sign-up required, how many spaces are available, if spaces are wheelchair/mobility difficulty accessible, and restrictions (if any).

Examples of Warming Centre Locations in Nearby Jurisdictions
Prince Rupert: Salvation Army location and churches are open during extreme weather. **Mackenzie:** Recreation centre used as a warming centre during regular hours. Hours can be extended overtime if cold weather warrants it. **Fort St John:** During regular operating hours, community facilities are open for warming. From November to March Salvation Army location has cold weather beds **100 Mile House:** Arena and municipal office are open as warming centres as well as the CRD library. **Dawson Creek:** Nawican Friendship Centre has a facility with capacity to host up to 30 individuals during the day.

Clearly define the specific conditions for when warming centres will be open. For example, define at what temperature (in combination with snow accumulation, sustained high winds, sleet/freezing rain, windchill), during what months of the year, and for how many days/weeks during a particular cold weather event will locations and services be offered?

Example: Prince George's Cold Weather Notification Qualifications
The cold weather threshold for opening a warming centre in Prince George is set for when the temperature is -10°C or colder for two or more consecutive 24-hour periods. **Extreme Cold Warning (level 1)** • Temperature is -10°C or colder for two or more consecutive days AND overnight temperature -15°C or colder. • Extreme Cold Warning issued by Environment Canada, and/or EMCR. **Extreme Cold Emergency (level 2)** • Temperature is -15°C or colder for two or more consecutive 24-hour periods AND forecast indicates that daily highs will decrease day-over-day for three or more consecutive days.

Example: Dawson Creek Cold Weather Qualifications
The weather threshold for opening a warming centre in Dawson Creek is set for when the temperature reaches -10°C that is sustained over 24 hours. The municipality uses both the Weather Network and Weather Canada forecasts to confirm cold weather temperatures.

Example: Whistler's Extreme Weather Shelter
Public Information about the extreme weather shelter for Whistler is provided on the municipality's website alongside links for self-monitoring Environment Canada weather reports and sign-up information for extreme cold weather alerts. **Who it is for** All those living in precarious housing situations (vehicle, tent, outdoors, unheated dwelling, unsafe shared living space, etc.) are welcome! No personal identification required. **Date & Times** Shelter will be open from 6pm-8am NIGHTLY if the following conditions are met: • Temperatures are -10 degrees Celsius or below, OR • Temperatures are 0 degrees Celsius WITH adverse weather conditions (snowfall, heavy rainfall, blizzard, etc.)

- Capacity alerts**:** Provide timely alerts and updates when a shelter or warming space has reached full capacity and provide information on alternative locations that are still available
- Operational Duration: Specify how long warming centres will remain open, depending on the duration of the cold weather event.

Additional Support

- Provide a clear plan for transportation services to and from warming centres for those without access to private vehicles.
- Establish a point of contact for individuals in need of urgent help due to extreme cold conditions.
- Ensure that people who remain outside or do not wish to use warming centres have access to essential winter supplies like blankets, warm clothing, and food.

For instance, the City of Prince George oversees the operation of water and resource stations and the City of Williams Lake hands out tarps and heaters in the park.

Alert Activation Protocol

A clear and structure alert system is essential for timely response during extreme cold events.

- Criteria for Activation: Alerts will be activated by a designated alert authority when the temperature reaches a pre-determined threshold (e.g. below -20°C, or wind chill below -30°C), combined with other factors like snow accumulation or wind speed. Cold weather alerts will be based on Environment Canada's forecasts. Please see the table in the Appendix for comparable threshold temperatures of other BC communities.
- Shelter Readiness: Designated alert authority will contact shelters and warming spaces to ensure that all warming shelters are prepared to open with sufficient staffing and resources
- Notification Process
    - Notify relevant authorities: Police, Fire Department, local health agencies, community organizations, and BC Housing that a cold weather alert has been issued
    - Update the municipal website and social media channels with detailed cold weather alerts
    - Send direct emails to service providers, shelter operators, and community partners/groups that a cold weather alert was been issued.
- Daily Review: Monitor conditions every 24 hours to assess whether the cold weather alert should continue, be adjusted, or deactivated

Alert Deactivation Protocol

When conditions improve, it is critical to deactivate the alert system efficiently. The elements of that process include:

- Criteria for Deactivation: Designated alert authority will deactivate a cold weather alert when the temperature and weather conditions improve so as they no longer reach pre-determined threshold temperatures
- Confirm shelter status: Contact locations to confirm deactivation readiness based on improved weather condition information from Environment Canada
- Notify the public: Update the website, social media channels, and email service providers, shelter operators, and community partners/groups to notify the public that cold weather alert/emergency is no longer in effect
- Ongoing services: remind residents of ongoing community support services (e.g. meal programs and shelters) that remain available even after the extreme cold event ends
- Post event evaluation: Convene a debrief with all partners to review the cold weather event, evaluate response effectiveness and discuss resource needs for future events

District of Kitimat and Haisla Nation Deactivation Protocol
Deactivation phase focuses on transitions from emergency response to recovery, restoring a sense of "normal" risk and safety levels within the community, and de-mobilizing response locations and resoucres. It should also include the debriefing and sharing of lessons identified during the response.

District of Kitimat and Haisla Nation Deactivation Protocol
This phase is intended to be implemented after an extreme temperature event has concluded **for at least three days.** **Mandatory Coordinating Entities involved in de-activation process** • District of Kitimat • Haisla Nation • Any other partner with operations/response actions that need to be transitioned or demobilized

Long-Term Considerations

The Cold Weather Plan should also consider potential long-term challenges and identifying areas of future work such as:

- Prepare for scenarios where extreme cold might lead to power outages or water disruptions. Ensure backup systems are emergency supplies are available
- Community Resilience: Focus on community support networks to reduce vulnerability during future cold weather events, streamline preparedness and awareness of community.
- Prepare and secure permanent warming centre space for future cold weather events

4. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The next steps for this project involve using and applying the insights gained from the literature review, legislative review and environmental scan throughout the next phases of the Extreme Cold Weather Plan. This includes incorporating identified best practices from this report to inform and guide our community engagement plans and efforts. The development of the Extreme Cold Weather Plan requires a robust engagement process with key identified interested organizations and community partners in Quesnel and the surrounding area, to determine the most appropriate way forward.

Examination of the definitions associated with extreme cold, the recommended intervention parameters for notification and activation of community resources, and the key components of an effective Cold Weather Plan is essential to take the plan from paper to implementation and support municipal policy creation. Finally, in the following phases of Quesnel's Cold Weather Plan, we will continue to keep an eye on updates from the Province on emergency management legislation relevant to extreme weather.

5. APPENDIX: SUMMARY TABLES FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The extreme weather plans reviewed by the LevelUp team included:

Community	Name of Plan or Overall Approach to Extreme Cold
Kitimat & Haisla Nation	Extreme Temperatures Emergency Response Plan
Whistler	Extreme Weather Shelter
County of Simcoe	Winter Warming Supports 2024-25
Port Moody	Extreme Weather
Greater Victoria	Extreme Weather Response Plan
Regional Municipality of York	Cold Weather Response Plan for People Experiencing Homelessness
City of Saskatoon	Saskatoon Winter Emergency Response Plan Activation Levels
City of Brantford	Extreme Cold
City of Sudbury	Extreme Cold Weather alert
City of Timmins	Timmins' Cold Weather Response Plan
Town of Gibsons	Cold Weather Shelters
City of Toronto	Toronto Cold Weather Response Plan

Below is a summary of key cold weather plan details from surrounding communities obtained by City of Quesnel staff. This inquiry was conducted to gather information on municipalities that experience similar winter climate as Quesnel respond to extreme cold events.

The following table displays municipalities' responses to the following questions:

- Do you have a policy or protocol in place for responding to extreme cold weather events, including the provision of warming centres?
- Do you access funding from the Emergency Management BC's (EMBC) Extreme Weather Response program to support your cold weather response efforts?

Community	Do they access EMBC funding?	Do they have a Cold Weather Plan or Policy?
Prince George	Yes	Yes
Williams Lake	Yes	No

Community	Do they access EMBC funding?	Do they have a Cold Weather Plan or Policy?
Prince Rupert	City – No NCTS – maybe (they were unsure)	No. They have a Climate Adaptation Plan that suggests the municipality compile list of available spaces for WCs. A policy/plan is coming in the future.
Mackenzie	Yes (claim beverages, snacks, staff overtime)	No. They use EMCR policies. In progress of drafting a policy for warming centres.
Fort St John	Yes, for warming kits and jackets	
Vanderhoof	No. They are approaching BC Housing to see if they can get something for next fall	No
Dawson Creek	Yes	No. They follow the EMCR guidelines and open up a warming center and promote free/low barrier indoor City facilities available to the public through their Facebook page.
100 Mile House	No	No. Working on emergency management plan and review of policy manual. May come out with something by the end of the year.
Terrace	Yes	No. Warming Centre overview and FAQ sheet prepped for media and public.

The following table displays municipalities' responses to the following questions:

- Does your community have a warming centre or shelter that operates during extreme cold weather events? If yes, could you please provide details about the location, hours of operation, and services provided?
- Are there weather thresholds set to open a warming centre? If so, please detail the approval requirements to open a warming centre.

Community	Are weather thresholds set to open a Warming Centre?	Are there approval requirements to open a Warming Centre?
Prince George	Cold Weather Notification - Temperature is -10°C or colder for two or more consecutive 24-hour periods. Extreme Cold Warning (level 1) - Temperature is -10°C or colder for two or more consecutive days AND overnight temperature -15°C or colder. - Extreme Cold Warning issued by Environment Canada, and/or EMCR. Extreme Cold Emergency (level 2) - Temperature is -15°C or colder for two or more consecutive 24-hour periods AND forecast indicates that daily highs will decrease day-over-day for three or more consecutive days.	Open if approved from EMBC for funding. Steps to open WC are laid out in the Policy.
Williams Lake	Environment Canada extreme cold events	
Mackenzie	Not set. Typically begin to consider opening a centre at -20 with sustained wind. This decision is also affected by EMCR policies and changing weather conditions.	Open if approved for EMBC funding.
Vanderhoof	They usually use -10. "*We started off as a drop-in warming centre only open in cold temperatures (we were thinking -10) and somehow that morphed into 2/7 all winter.*"	"*Vanderhoof has been working hard to try and facilitate a warming shelter this year, but we haven't been successful so far. I'd be very interested in what you come up with because we're struggling!*"
Dawson Creek	-10 for over 24 hours. Use both Weather Network and Weather Canada	
100 Mile House		No demand for WC.
Terrace	They don't specify (assume they are using EMCR policies)	If funding is approved by EMCR, the partnered EWC can be opened

Community	Are weather thresholds set to open a Warming Centre?	Are there approval requirements to open a Warming Centre?
		If the partners can provide the space and adequate staff (a minimum of two trained staff members), an EWC can be opened.

The following table summarizes the ways in which organizations within each community are coordinating their planning and response to extreme cold.

Community	Multi-organization Coordination
Prince George	7 different organizations operate WC's (in Extreme Weather Plan) WC's - operated by community groups. Water/resource stations - operated by municipality.
Williams Lake	Overnight shelter (funded by BC Housing, operated by CMHA) used as daytime WC during extreme cold weather. City may out up tarps and heaters in the park. Council passed resolution to prohibit Rec Centre to be used as WC.
Prince Rupert	Warming centre operated by North Coast Transition Society - staff dependent. Salvation Army and churches open ad hoc during extreme weather as well.
Mackenzie	Recreation Centre. Use regular hours unless heat/cold warrants staff overtime hours to stay open longer.
Fort St John	Community facilities open during normal operating hours. Local non-profits supporting those needing WCs. Salvation Army received funding from BC Housing for Extreme Weather Response Program for cold weather beds (Nov-March).
Vanderhoof	*"This was a stumbling block. We feel it is not a municipal responsibility so have been trying to get other groups to take it on. So far only the women's shelter said they would provide one staff member; we've been told you need 3 at all times in case of an OD."* *"We were trying to establish a 24/7 shelter open from the end of November to the end of March. The thought is it would be hard to staff a temperature-dependent centre."*
Dawson Creek	Operated by Nawican Friendship Centre Open 24/7 upon activation of EMCR task number. This facility has a capacity to host up to 30 individuals, and to provide them with a

Community	Multi-organization Coordination
	source of bottled water and other drinks (coffee, hot chocolate), snacks, warmth, and general respite from the cold of the day.
100 Mile House	Municipal office and arena. CRD library. Interior Health homeless outreach worker comes to check on their one homeless person occasionally.
Terrace	To provide space: Gitlaxdax Nisga'a Terrace Society and The Garage Community Space To provide staff: Terrace and District Community Services Society (TDCSS), Gitlaxdax Nisga'a Terrace Society and ‘Ksan Society

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