Alberta Point-in-Time Homeless Count: Red Deer Preliminary Report

On October 16, 2014 the City of Red Deer worked with community partners to conduct the first ever provincial Point-in-Time Homeless Count. Over 200 volunteers and 10 organizations participated in the local count.

Alberta's Cities Leading the Way

This effort is part of a broader initiative led by the 7 Cities on Housing & Homelessness in collaboration with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness to develop a harmonized approach to homeless counts nationally. Alberta is the first jurisdiction to implement measures towards a more standardized methodology, leading the way in Canada. Though counts across Alberta are becoming more aligned, this is the first time this effort has been undertaken and future counts will improve from ongoing learnings.

This count serves two important functions: it provides a current snapshot of our overall homeless population and enables us to examine how this population changes over time. By aligning methods across Alberta's cities, we can examine trends using the same definitions. Ultimately, this helps us inform solutions to support the goal of ending homelessness in our communities.

Red Deer's Homeless Population Snapshot

A total of **137** people were enumerated on the night of the count. Preliminary results show:

- 67% of those counted were in emergency shelter and 9% were in a short-term housing facility.
- A further 16% (22) were enumerated during the street count and confirmed they were sleeping rough (in parks, on the street, etc.).
- A further 8% were sheltered in a public system (hospital, Alberta Works).

Population Enumerated (n=137)	Total Number	Percentage
Street Count*	**22**	**16%**
Confirmed Rough Sleepers	22	16%
Facilities Count	**115**	**84%**
Emergency Shelter	92	67%
Short-Term Supportive Housing	12	9%
Public Systems	11	8%

Conducting a street count is not precise. Many variables will affect whether someone observed outside at the time of the count will remain outside for the duration of the night or already have alternative shelter plans.
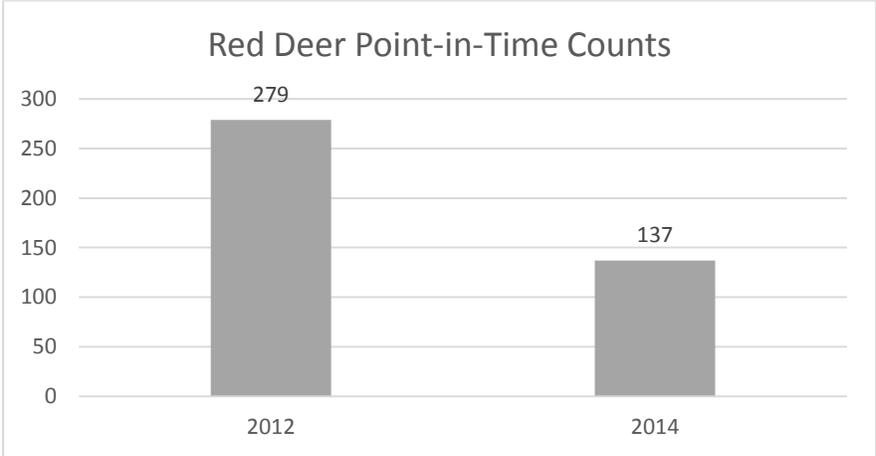
There were 99 of those enumerated who participated in the survey. From these, the following demographic trends emerged:

- The gender breakdown for those surveyed was: 25% female and 75% male.
- There were 3 (3%) of those surveyed who reported having a total of 3 accompanying minors with them.
- About 24% of those surveyed self-identified as Aboriginal – a total of 24 people.
- About 18% of were children and youth up to the age of 24, totalling 18. Note that this includes the 3 children with parents.
- Notably, 44 (44%) of those surveyed reported being new to Red Deer (under 1 year).
- About 10% reported being immigrants to Canada.

Sub-Population Surveyed (m=99)	Total Number	Percentage
Male	74	75%
Female	25	25%
Aboriginal	24	24%
Immigrant	10	10%
Migrant (< 1 year)	44	44%
Children &Youth (up to 24 years)*	18	18%
* Note: This includes 15 youth surveyed and the 3 children accompanying parents.		

Broader Trends

Comparing the 2014 and 2012 counts should be done with caution as the methodology used changed; however, overall the 2014 count showed a decrease of 51% over the two year period. While the efforts driving the Plan to End Homelessness have had impact on these figures, the full methodology also shifted which makes comparison difficult. The full report will explore this in further detail.

Population Growth. It is important that results of the count must be contextualized in the broader economic trends impacting Red Deer. The city is experiencing population growth year over year: in 2014 there were 1,476 new residents added to the population reaching almost 100,000. This is in part related to the economic opportunities presented by the community, whose unemployment decreased to 3.9% in October 2014.

Mobility. We see a considerable level of mobility among the homeless population surveyed as well – about 44% of those surveyed reported being new to Red Deer under 1 year – this is notably higher than the general population at about 19.2% reported to have moved from outside Red Deer within the last year in the 2011 NHS as well.

Housing. Though vacancy rates increased from 1.6% in 2013 to 2.1% in 2014, the average rental costs grew by 5% ($52). More than a quarter of Red Deerians are experiencing housing affordability challenges and about 1 in 10 are in low income according to Statistics Canada (2011).

Socio-Economic Indicators	Red Deer	Sources
Unemployment	3.9% down from 4.9%	Reported in October 2013-14, Statistics Canada.
Population growth	1.5%	Difference between total population reported in City of Red Deer by 2013 and 2014 Municipal Census
Mobility (resided outside 1 year ago)	19.2%	National Household Survey 2011, CA Refers to the status of a person with regard to the place of residence on the reference day, May 10, 2011, in relation to the place of residence on the same date one year earlier
Housing Affordability	26.5%	National Household Survey 2011, Percent of households spending more than 30% of 2010 total income on shelter
Rental vacancy rates	2.1% up from 1.6%	Comparing April 2014 to April 2013 from CMHC Rental Market Statistics Spring 2014, Vacancy and Availability Rates (%) in Privately Initiated Rental Apartment Structures of Three Units and Over
Rental costs	$892 up from $840	
Low Income	11.6%	National Household Survey 2011 Percent of persons in households in low income based on LIM-AT
Aboriginal People	5.2%	National Household Survey 2011 Percent of population self-identify as Aboriginal.
Immigrants	10.6%	National Household Survey 2011 Percent of population who was foreign-born.

Full Report

The data from the count will then be tabulated, and analyzed with the assistance of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. A full report will be produced in January 2015, which shows the data trends, and breaks down the results.

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