

Penticton 'heart and hammer' approach on national stage

(Penticton, BC – November 15, 2023) – The introduction of Community Safety Officers and the use of a 'heart and hammer' approach to responding to homelessness were showcased at the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference last week.

"This recognition reaffirms that expanding the CSO program and creating a Social Development Department were steps in the right direction," says Blake Laven, director of development services for the City. "Council has made creating a safe and resilient Penticton a priority and these are examples of how we're working towards that goal with innovative approaches and in collaboration with our partners."

Angie Williams, the CSO program supervisor, and Jamie Lloyd-Smith, the City's social development specialist, were presenters at the annual conference that brings together thousands of non-profits, government agencies, people with lived experience of homelessness and policy-makers to share national best-practices. Penticton was selected to share the City's response to unsheltered homelessness and how the CSO program was built on blending relationships, trust, compassion, accountability and enforcement.

"We know there is much work to be done but the ability to share how Penticton's program has developed, how our CSO's lead with the heart first and work in partnership with the RCMP, fire and other community partners is an opportunity to reflect on how we can continue to improve," says Laven. "The response from other communities was incredibly positive and Penticton was one of only two communities across the country to present on this unique municipal bylaw response and to share the approach we're taking."

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