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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 4/14/2023 10:11:59 AM
Subject: Upcoming Information Bulletin: City of Vancouver provides update on East Hastings (April 14, 2023)

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to inform you that the City will shortly issue an information bulletin providing an update on the East Hastings encampment removal operation. The City has made significant progress in removing the majority of entrenched structures and reducing the immediate fire risk posed by structures adjacent to buildings.

Please keep this information bulletin embargoed until it is sent out via the City media account at approximately 11 am.

Best,
Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

City of Vancouver
Information bulletin
April 14, 2023

City of Vancouver provides update on East Hastings

As part of the City's commitment to public safety, City crews, with the support of the Vancouver Police Department (VPD), have been removing entrenched tents and structures in the East Hastings encampment over the past several months, with a larger removal event taking place on April 5 and 6. Over the past week significant progress has been made in removing the majority of entrenched structures and reducing the immediate fire risk posed by structures adjacent to buildings.

As part of the operation on April 5 and 6, crews took down 94 entrenched structures and removed 50 propane tanks from the encampment zone. Over 71 personal storage totes were also provided to individuals. Additional belongings were either impounded for future access or if permission was granted, disposed of.

Since August 2022, more than 90 people accepted and moved into housing, and more than 165 people have accepted referrals to shelter. An additional 18 individuals accepted shelter offers on April 5 and 6.

City crews have removed an average of 2500 kilos of garbage from the encampment on a daily basis in an effort to keep the area as clean and accessible as feasible for residents, businesses and those living on the street. Washrooms, storage facilities and drop-in spaces were also established to respond to the encampment.

While the work to bring the encampment to a close quickly was necessary and planning was kept as

discreet as possible to mitigate any public and staff safety risks, the City – like others – always remains concerned about the impacts of any action on people in crisis, especially when there may be modified access to health services. Vancouver Coast Health (VCH) was provided information and time to plan for their service continuity. The City appreciates that VCH mobilized to have mental health supports on standby in the event anyone in the encampment needed those supports during the work on April and April 6. VCH Public Health has confirmed that the rate of visits to and overdoses at Insite and Vancouver OPSes last week was consistent with the same period in [previous months](#).

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services (VFRS) received 28 fewer overdose related calls the week of April 3-9 than the previous week and 86 fewer than the two weeks earlier.

Street-Level Safety Improvements

The City is already seeing a marked improvement in safety and sidewalk accessibility compared to last week. VFRS has confirmed a nearly 60 per cent decline in outdoor fires in Vancouver over the past week and a nearly 30 per cent decline in fires in the Downtown Eastside since April 5. The Vancouver Police Department has recorded no stabbings or serious assaults in the encampment area since last Wednesday and there are indications that street-level assaults are trending down.

Staff continue to approach this work in a manner that respects the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. The City and partners will also continue providing additional support to people who are sheltering outdoors on East Hastings and other parts of the community. These supports include access to food, laundry services, washrooms and storage for their belongings through various social service locations in the community.

Connecting People with Housing Options

The Homelessness Services Outreach team has been visiting the encampment since August 2022 to connect with people and support them in accessing income, shelter, housing (when available) and other supports. Since August, more than 90 people accepted and moved into housing, and more than 165 people have accepted referrals to shelter. An additional 18 individuals accepted shelter offers on April 5 and 6.

Shelters are a dignified and safer option compared to encampments. In the case of the encampment, accepting shelter is a first step to connecting individuals with longer-term housing solutions. Shelters provide a safer and more conducive environment for staff to understand and meet an unique individual's needs before referring them to a suitable option. The City hopes that going forward advocates will encourage people to accept shelter and move indoors so we can better work to connect people to the supports they need.

The Need for a Regional Approach

The City will also continue to work in partnership with the Province, including BC Housing, to respond to homelessness by building longer-term supportive and social housing, and activating emergency shelter spaces, as well as by advocating for adequate income, health, and housing support in communities across the region.

Vancouver currently has 25 per cent of the region's overall population but operates 75 per cent of the region's shelter spaces, 77 per cent of the region's supportive housing units and 50 per cent of the region's social housing. The City looks forward to partnering with other municipalities, senior levels of government and non-profit partners as we work towards a much-needed regional approach to address this crisis on a regional scale.

Work Ahead along East Hastings

The City has an obligation to keep City sidewalks clear and ensure building entrances and fire connections are accessible as per the Fire Chief's Order and Street and Traffic By-law. This work is not unique to the DTES and is critical in terms of addressing life and fire risks and ensuring neighbourhoods are safe and accessible to all. To prevent entrenched structures from returning to East Hastings, teams will continue their ongoing work to remove structures as they are erected.

When removing materials on East Hastings, staff work with individuals along East Hastings to identify what items need to be stored or disposed of. Our crews receive extensive and specialized training for the work they do, including emergency response procedures, how to link people with resources available through our community services team, violence prevention and de-escalation, and Indigenous relations and cultural safety.

Since August, the City has provided people along East Hastings with large wheeled totes for personal storage which they can bring with them or have them stored/impounded by the City for retrieval within 30 days. Individuals can also bring these totes to the accessible temporary storage facility at Main and Hastings which is operated by Aboriginal Front Door.

Background: <https://vancouver.ca/news-calendar/city-of-vancouver-to-bring-east-hastings-encampment-to-a-close.aspx>

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