

From: ["Johnston, Sadhu" <Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca)
To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
CC: ["City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"](#)
["Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca)
["Rosa, Donnie" <Donnie.Rosa@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Donnie.Rosa@vancouver.ca)
Date: 12/13/2020 10:23:06 PM
Subject: Strathcona Park Encampment Closure Announcement

Dear Mayor and Council,

As per Paul's email last week, on Monday morning the Vancouver Park Board and the City will be announcing our plans to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness and to eventually decamp Strathcona Park, with the help of partners including BC Housing. Below please find the news release, along with key messages and Q&As that you can refer to if needed once the announcement has been made. A Vancouver Sun article will also appear tomorrow following an interview with Park Board Chair Camil Dumont. Please keep this information confidential until the City's release has gone out. Any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Best,
Sadhu

Key Messages:

- The City and Park Board are committed to ending the encampment in Strathcona Park as soon as possible, by providing indoor spaces for those currently experiencing homelessness and sleeping in the park.
- The ultimate goal we are working towards is decampment into indoor options. The Park Board and the City are working together to implement several initiatives to support decampment:

The City has identified several properties that can be deployed as temporary indoor spaces to support bringing people experiencing unsheltered homelessness inside. Sites include Jericho Hostel and 2400 Motel, and the renovation of other spaces to create temporary shelters. A 'Fire Chief's Order' was issued on June 25, 2020 to outline Fire Safety regulations for those living in the park. Enforcement of the order, or any new order, will include the removal of propane tanks and flammable materials, as well as ensuring proper spacing of tents and structures to limit the risk of fire spread.

Once indoor spaces are available for people staying in Strathcona Park, the Park Board has authorized General Manager Donnie Rosa to enforce the Parks Control By-law prohibition against overnight camping in the park. However, the goal of all of the partners is to work together and with people experiencing homelessness in the park to support their voluntary transition indoors.

Separately, the City has also applied for funding of up to \$51.5 million to support creating permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness through the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative, and are anticipating a response in the near future.

Staff continue to actively work to house people experiencing homelessness at the park and across the city while these indoor solutions are being organized.

People have a fundamental right to temporarily shelter overnight in parks when no adequate shelter is available, as per the Park Board bylaw (recently revised). The bylaw that allows for temporary shelter overnight applies to those who are experiencing homelessness, and not to those who are choosing to be in the park overnight and set up structures as an act of protest or advocacy.

While work continues to bring the additional temporary spaces online, BC Housing and the City of Vancouver are working together to plan for some interim essential services for people sleeping in Strathcona Park.

Q&A

Q: Why is it taking so long to find housing for people sleeping in the park?

A: We recognize the urgency of this situation and we share people's frustrations that it is taking a while to house people. The ongoing lack of housing options for people experiencing homelessness has been exacerbated by reduced capacity at many shelters as a result of COVID-19, therefore we are having to find or create new spaces that can be used. We have now identified four properties that could be deployed as temporary shelter space for people sleeping in Strathcona Park and we are urgently working to activate these spaces, including applying for operating funding from the Province. Two of them will require renovations which do take some time.

Q: When will you be moving people into 2400 Kingsway Motel and Jericho Hostel?

A: Staff are developing plans for activation of these facilities on a temporary basis, including securing operating funding and non-profit operators. We are also hoping to activate two other sites in partnership with BC Housing and will begin renovations as soon as possible in order to ready the spaces for occupancy. We will share information about all sites once they are confirmed.

Q: Will you consult the local community before moving people from Strathcona into these facilities?

A: As per regular shelter creation processes, staff will organize an information session for neighbours of any shelter or temporary housing deployment that introduces the Operator and the Operational Plan. These sessions provide an opportunity for the community to learn about the plans and comment on the operational plan before opening.

Q: What types of services are being considered for the park?

A: BC Housing has approached the City to put in a warming tent and some showers and we are working with them to confirm the operational requirements.

Vancouver Park Board

News Release

December 14, 2020

Vancouver Park Board and City committed to ending encampment, providing indoor shelter, for those sleeping in Strathcona Park

The Vancouver Park Board, City of Vancouver, and partners are committed to ending the encampment in Strathcona Park as soon as possible. All partners continue to work on long-term solutions, but in the meantime several short-term solutions are underway, including providing temporary indoor spaces.

The City has identified several properties that can be deployed as temporary indoor spaces to support bringing people experiencing unsheltered homelessness inside. City-owned sites include Jericho Hostel and 2400 Motel as directed by Vancouver City Council, with the use of the Jericho Hostel also recently approved by the Park Board. The City is also working with BC Housing to secure additional temporary shelter spaces.

City staff are working to activate these facilities as soon as possible, including applying for operating funding from the Province, notifying the surrounding communities, planning and implementing renovations, and securing non-profit operators.

“The status quo at Strathcona Park is not OK. We need a resolution to the encampment. I believe we are on track to do that,” said Camil Dumont, Park Board Chair. “In order to get there, safer, dry, warm, indoor shelter for the many people currently stuck outdoors needs to be made available. Securing that option is a significant challenge. Thankfully, this work is under way. It’s a complex effort. I am very encouraged by the work of our partners which aims to ensure indoor space that is as dignified and as safe as possible is made available to the people taking refuge in Strathcona Park. That said, there is still much to do. We strive to ensure that Strathcona Park will again, soon, be a space that is welcoming and accessible to all. We also need to help ensure people are as safe as possible in the interim, in the park, and in the community at large.”

Once indoor spaces are available for people staying in Strathcona Park, the Park Board has authorized General Manager Donnie Rosa to enforce the Parks Control By-law prohibition against overnight camping in the park. However, the goal of all of the partners is to work together and with people experiencing homelessness in the park to support their voluntary transition indoors.

While work continues to bring the additional temporary spaces online, BC Housing and the City of Vancouver are working together to plan some interim essential services for people sleeping in Strathcona Park.

“We and our partners want to ensure that people have a safe, warm place to sleep indoors,” said Sandra Singh, General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services for the City of Vancouver. “This winter is particularly difficult. The combination of the pandemic and the falling temperatures is making a difficult situation even worse and we are in active discussions with the Province regarding funding to provide shelter and housing options as soon as we can. Of course, given we are in a pandemic, we will also engage with Vancouver Coastal Health to ensure we have appropriate protocols and procedures in place as we do this work.”

In addition, a ‘Fire Chief’s Order’ was issued on June 25, 2020 to outline Fire Safety regulations for those living in the park. Enforcement of the order, or any new order, will include the removal of propane tanks and flammable materials, as well as ensuring proper spacing of tents and structures to limit the risk of fire spread.

Separately, the City has also applied for funding of up to \$51.5 million to support creating permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness through the federal government’s Rapid Housing Initiative, and are anticipating a response in the near future.

City staff also continue to actively work to house people experiencing homelessness at the park while these indoor solutions are being organized, with the ultimate goal being decampment into permanent shelter options. These efforts are in addition to ongoing work to house people experiencing homelessness across the city.

-30-

Note to Editors:

Please find Park Board in camera decisions related to this announcement below:

- <http://parkboardmeetings.vancouver.ca/InCam/InCamDECISION-StrathconaParkDecampmentPlan-20201116-RELEASED.pdf>
- <http://parkboardmeetings.vancouver.ca/InCam/InCamDECISION-COVID19-TemporaryShelterJerichoHostel-20201116-RELEASED.pdf>

Media contact:

Vancouver Park Board

pb.communications@vancouver.ca

City of Vancouver

City Manager

Sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca

(604)873-7627